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## Austrian Playwrights

Muhammet Ali Bas	2
Thomas Köck	9
Azar Mortazavi	17
Maxi Obexer	27
Thomas Perle	29
Volker Schmidt	34
Gerhild Steinbuch	43
Bernhard Studlar	52
Miroslava Svolikova	62
Robert Woelfl	66

Translation: David Tushingham

## **Muhammet Ali Bas**

Born in 1990, the son of Turkish parents, studied German, History and Language Arts in Vienna. While still a student he worked as a youth worker and in cultural education.

In 2010 he was the winner of the first German-Muslim Poetry Slam in Berlin. This was followed by numerous appearances in Germany and Austria. In 2013 he founded the migration archive Vielfaltenarchiv ("Archive of Diversity") in Vorarlberg. He subsequently wrote the exhibition texts for the exhibition 'Arbeyter' ("Workers"), that was presented as part of Emsiana 2013. He has also performed 'Cok güzel ya' at Emsiana 2016 - together with the graffiti artist Calimaat. In 2015 & 2016 he was a participant in ORF Vorarlberg's 'Texte & Töne' Festival. He has created 'Hängebrücke' and 'Es sei so...' as collaborations with the composer Murat Üstün.



In 2016 his play 'NARration' was staged in a working production during the Festival 'Der Blick des Anderen' ("Another View") at Salon5. A second play 'Der Kalif wird uns die Stirne küssen' ("The Caliph Will Kiss Our Foreheads") was given a staged presentation in 2017 as part of the Stückefest at Landestheater St. Pölten.

Muhammet Ali Baş is a member of Literatur Vorarlberg.

### **Der Kalif wird uns die Stirnen küssen (The Caliph Will Kiss Our Foreheads)**

This play tells in a highly comic manner of the efforts of two young men to enroll in jihad. Its principal aim is to expose the absurd reasons that motivate them to do so. Aside from all the usual, frequently discussed explanations, the play attempts to highlight the role of pop cultural elements and religious illiteracy in this. In the course of the play the two young men meet a plethora of quirky, bigoted characters who are in the jihad business primarily to further their own financial interests. This is often grotesquely funny but is also highly instructive. Not only for the figures taking part, but also for the audience. The play tries to make sense of the incomprehensible in a quirky and comic manner without making it appear cute.

Cast: 2 F / 8 M

## **The Caliph Will Kiss Our Foreheads**

**by Muhammet Ali Bas**

### Characters:

Homeless Man  
Peter (19)  
Ali (18)  
Pierre (36)  
Damir (28)  
Gül (25)  
Adrian (32)  
Jamal (30)  
Sheikh (50)  
Berivan (50)

### **Scene 4**

*Damir and Pierre. They get out of the car.*

Damir                    Isn't this a brothel?

Pierre                  How should I know?

Damir                    Well it does say: Venus Sauna Club.

Pierre                  So it's a sauna club then.

Damir                    But that's what they call brothels now, innit? Innit?  
Don't you know that?

Pierre                  Why do you think I would know that? But yeah... You're probably right, it probably is a brothel. I've never been here before. It's my first time, but we've got to go everywhere work demands, you know: it's all for Allah!

*(Pause)*

Damir                    Pierre, did you see that debate on tv yesterday 'Allah's Soldiers'?

Pierre                  Nah, man. My old tv's broken and the new one with the curved screen and all that's not been delivered yet.

Damir                    Look at it on the internet. It really annoys me when I see what's supposed to be the Muslim side of the argument represented as compatible with democracy.

Pierre                  Ah. I don't even watch these things any more since they had a Muslim woman on one of them. As if that wasn't bad enough, she shook hands with all these pale unwashed

tie-wearing kuffar!

Damir She was probably just trying to be polite.

Pierre She shook hands with them!

Damir So what? It's nothing. How would you react if your wife shook hands with a man?

Pierre Like a true brother.

Damir What did he do?

Pierre He sent a couple of Chechens over to see the man. They dragged him out onto the balcony and threw him over the edge. The kafir fell down 4 floors. His forearm broke like a twig when he tried to break his fall. He lay there like that all night. They found him the next morning. In hospital they had to amputate his forearm and the hand with it of course. That was Allah's punishment.

Damir Don't you think that's going a bit far?

Pierre Are you serious? Nobody shakes my wife's hand.

Damir It's just touching hands. No more than that. I shake my sister-in-law's hand.

Pierre Then you brother's not a real man.

Damir He's one extremely masculine individual.

Pierre Masculine? Haha. He's a Serbian who plucks his eyebrows and a friend of the fucking Russians, that's what he is.

Damir Don't talk like that!

Pierre As long as he's not a Muslim, he's not a man.

Damir He can't find the way to Allah!

Pierre That's what I'm talking about... Look, these kuffar like being able to touch the hand of a Muslim woman because they know it's actually taboo. They're not sticking their tongue down her throat or anywhere else but to the kuffar it's almost like that!

Damir Calm down. No way is sticking a tongue down her throat or wherever the same as touching hands.

Pierre Didn't say it was. But for the kuffar it's in the same league.

Damir Have you ever shook hands with a woman?

Pierre Yes damn it.

Damir And did you have sexual thoughts?



Pierre I married her, man! I don't know what you're thinking about. Maybe you shake hands with strange women and don't think nothing of it but that makes you the exception to an unwritten fucking rule!

Damir No man's gonna see anything sensual in that! You're exaggerating!

Pierre Has your wife shook hands with a man?

Damir Come on.

Pierre Has she shook hands with men often?

Damir Shut up, man!

Pierre When are you going to introduce me? I want to shake her hand.

Damir Ah, fuck off!

Pierre You should watch more lectures on the internet! Don't want you to lose your faith.

Damir Who's the one rings you up in the small hours every day to wake you for prayer?

Pierre Allah blesses you for it. What else do you want?

Damir No worries, I spend all my free time in front of the screen, I've almost done the whole video playlist.

Pierre To gain more knowledge of Islam, you've got to watch that on a continuous loop. Over and over. And if you watch any more of them talk shows, then remember: the tie-wearing kuffar are right about one thing. Islam's not a religion for pussies.

Damir Ok Akhi, sure... is it time yet?

Pierre 13:58. Two more minutes.

Damir Ok. So just to make this clear: my wife doesn't shake anyone's hand and that includes yours. Whatever you might have been just imagining, I'm warning you, get it out of your head. It's not funny, you understand? Or the next time I'll send the Chechens round!

Pierre That's right, you lion. A Muslim's a man and not a pussy!

Damir Anyway: it's true. I do have sensual thoughts when a woman shakes my hand, though only since I converted. Since then, every time I touch one I think of sticking my tongue somewhere else. We're the exception here! You

understand?

Pierre If you think so. It's time. Are you ready?

Damir *gives a special knock at the door.*

*They enter Gül's room, joining Ali & Peter..*

Damir As-Salamu-Alaikum, my lions!

Ali *scared* / Alaikum Salam.

Damir *slaps Ali on the shoulder* / How are we doing,  
inshaAllah?

Ali Al-hamdulillah!

Damir Relax, my boy. No need to be afraid, we're brothers! You  
know who we are?

Peter, Ali *nod* / Yes.

Damir We are the Sheik's right / *indicates Pierre* / and left  
hands. So. Let's get straight to the point: we're  
recruiting for jihad. We're looking for Allah's chosen  
martyrs! And you are candidates? / *bends down, sniffing*  
*at Ali and then straightens up again* / I think you're  
Ali, right? Ali, listen my boy: by the smell of you I  
think you could be a martyr. A true martyr. You know  
why? Yes. Because you smell of musk, mixed with a whiff  
of onion hovering around there! What's that you're  
eating?

Ali A burger.

Damir Aha. What kind of burger?

Ali A cheeseburger.

Damir No, no, no! Where's that burger from? McDonalds,  
Hassan's Grill or from Kent?

Ali From the Chinese Helal Grill.

Damir Helal? The Chinaman who's oppressing the Muslims in his  
own country has got a helal shop here?

Ali That's just the name of the shop, they're actually  
Pakistanis.

Damir That's better. Can I have a bite? I'm really hungry. /  
*Ali nods* / I've heard both of you want to go on jihad,  
is that right? / *both nod, say yes* / Then you're in  
luck! Because they've got the famous Al-Caliph Burger!

Pierre The best burgers in the world, isn't that right Pierre?

Pierre Vallah! They've got THE best burgers in the world!

Damir You want to know more? / *they both nod, say yes*

Pierre An Akbar burger in pitta bread, a super juicy beef patty grilled on God's... uh Allah's flame, with thin cut doner slices on top, crispy turkey bacon topped with onion rings and garlic, lettuce and blood red tomato. And to round it off there's the sauce made by a brother who used to run a kebab shop in Germany on top. Creme de la Creme. Served with chips fried in olive oil and Habib Cola with crescent-shaped ice cubes.

Damir In comparison, this burger's crap! / *throws it on the table*

What's in here? / *indicates the paper cup*

Ali Cola... uh Cola Turka! Probably not as good as Habib Cola.

Damir Wash it down. / *drinks*

Pierre So, my lions! You want to go on jihad, but before that you want to give the Sheik a briefcase?

Peter Yes we do.

Pierre Peter? Peter you know that the Sheikh is a busy man.

Peter He'll have time for this.

Pierre We'll see about that. We'll do it like this: you give us the briefcase, we take it to the Sheikh and then we'll get back to you.

Ali No, no, we can't do that!

Peter We have to deliver the briefcase to the Sheikh personally, just us two.

Pierre What's so important about this briefcase? Can it fly or something? Has it got the best bomb recipe in it? Will it get us any further in the fight for Allah?

Peter We can't tell you.

Pierre Well, in that case our work here is done.

Ali *stands up immediately and is about to open the door for them both* / A shame you won't be able to go on jihad...

Peter No, no! Wait! This briefcase is going to make all out lives easier. Yours too! You'll win twice: you get your bonus per head for recruiting us...

Damir                   A bonus per head? We don't get anything like that!

Peter                   Come on, everyone knows that now! And on top of that the  
Sheikh gets the briefcase thanks to your efforts! He'll  
be grateful to you till the end of time!

Damir                   Is that right, Ali?

Ali                     *accepting his fate* / Yes. It's true.

Pierre                  Listen, you little shits. If you're lying we'll declare  
you non-believers: we'll slit your throats and bury your  
heads in that briefcase in the mother earth!

Peter                   Two men, one word! This case will revolutionise jihad!  
Think of the fight for Allah!

Ali                     InshaAllah!

*All exit. Gül comes back on stage. Blackout.*

## **Thomas Köck**

Thomas Köck was born in Upper Austria in 1986 and works as an author and theatremaker. He studied Philosophy in Vienna and at the Free University, Berlin as well as Scenic Writing and Film Studies at the University of the Arts, Berlin. He has been an assistant director for Claudia Bosse and an editor for diaphanes Verlag. His documentary film on the civil war in Lebanon was invited to the Berlin Film Festival's TALENTS programme and nominated for the Bosch Foundation Young Filmmaker's Prize. He has conceived series of readings and events in Vienna, Berlin and Mannheim. His plays are published by Suhrkamp Verlag and have been performed at theatres including the Akademietheater Vienna, Thalia Theater Hamburg, the Ruhrfestspielen



Recklinghausen, Schauspielhaus Vienna and the Karlsruhe State Theatre. He gained his first independent director's credit in 2017. He has been writer in residence at the National Theatre Mannheim and the winner of awards including the Else Lasker-Schüler Prize, the Austrian Theatre Alliance Playwriting Prize, the Thomas Bernhard Scholarship and most recently the Kleist Prize for an emerging playwright. Together with other authors he was also joint founder of the blog 'nazisundgoldmund.net' dealing with the shift to the right across Europe.

### **paradies fluten - verirrte sinfonie (flooding paradise - lost symphony)** (part one of the climate trilogy)

Like bodies of water the words and images that Thomas Köck creates in the first part of his 'Climate Trilogy' close in upon us. Are they floods from paradise rolling up here as a curse, revenge or a blessing for the earth? Or is it earthly paradise itself that is being flooded and made uninhabitable? With powerful language and shot through with melancholy comedy the author brilliantly spans an arc from the early stages of globalisation to the present: from the rubber boom of the late 19th century to which entire regions and peoples fell victim to the madcap export of bourgeois European culture through the construction of the Teatro Amazonas opera house to the story of a dancer who feels the naked power of today's working world - fully flexible, project-based and self-promoting. Will the floods wash the last bit of humanity away from the earth like a face in the sand at the bottom of the sea? A play that includes a drowning ensemble, an exhausted symphony orchestra, two survivors in climate capsules and an average white central European family.

#### **Prizes / Awards:**

Kleist Prize for an Emerging Playwright 2016

Nominated for the Heidelberger Stückemarkt 2016

Opening production at the Autorentheatertage Deutsches Theater Berlin 2016 (production: Theater Rampe)

Cast: variable

Translated into French, Polish and Spanish.

Performing rights: Suhrkamp Theater Verlag

World premiere: Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen

02.06.2016 Director: Sara Ostertag

**jenseits von fukuyama (beyond fukuyama)**

In an institute researching happiness and the future, Dr. Phetka's team is looking for the point of human existence. In reality the aggregate of people's habits, online profiles etc. is gathered together here, saved, analysed, organised and sold on to decision makers. Its aim is to control society without friction. Of course the data cannot be made public - which, of course, is where they end up. While "outside" the "chorus of disappointed expectations" is already rehearsing resistance and protesting against the measurement and evaluation of its biographies, colleagues within the institute are engaged in a deadly competitive struggle.

Snappily taking the absurdities of current thinking to its logical conclusion, with brilliant wordplay and cracking humour, in his Suhrkamp debut Thomas Köck asks what utopias life might hold for us after 'The End of History'.

Cast: 3 F / 2 M

Translated into French, Spanish and Turkish.

Performing rights: Suhrkamp Theater Verlag

Prizes: Osnabrück Playwriting Prize 2014

World premiere: Theater Osnabrück

17.05.2014 Director: Gustav Rueb

**flooding paradise - lost symphony**  
(part one of the climate trilogy)  
**by Thomas Köck**

**restless flood of material**  
**drowned bodies go past**

**tempo rubato**  
**measured**

and another one goes past this time one frozen in a scream and with a  
freshly dried  
hairline the hole in its neck gleaming black before the flow of material  
drags it away again

from which another one now shoots up that can't say any more either  
simply amazed  
at the state of the world well what can one say a vale of tears isn't it  
a vale of tears Marianne's grave yet again  
mouth open arms outspread she was ready to jump

now to one side  
another one shouts beneath her one that's on the way up overworked  
exhausted in a torn dress eyelids still flapping cheerfully  
little eyes jingling in the gushing stream fingers searching twitchily  
for the hand that held them when the fire or was it only an unfortunate  
storm  
a burnt out gas pipeline Europe's veins burst under one's own house

from the distance another one now waves surfaces briefly  
hello yes it's wonderful that we can hug crazy isn't it  
fingers wrapped round his smartphone eyes empty and white his shirt open  
then he's dragged off again by the summoned material

another tears himself away in his hand no longer the child he  
sees eyes rinsed out into the wet 200 metres deep only bodies kicked  
stirred up  
there's always room down there  
in all the floods and passes by now with an empty look

that's enough over now thinks another shaking herself off her body is  
shaking briefly  
she never really wanted anything to do with them here career-obsessed  
idiots  
she always thought now bubbles of air are coming out of their ears

no no no  
now others in chorus  
no no no  
several together now best to be loud passing by in a fishing net  
no no no we the European Parliament have decreed  
legs thrashing helplessly in the mesh  
then they are carried away again caught up in the net their motionless  
fingers

behind them surprisingly another rather younger one

in the recent crisis she jumped out of her apartment before state powers  
could clear it  
she's now lower down where the rents aren't so high and there's room for  
everyone  
down below there's always something free

another one whose neck has been strangled surprisingly popping up out of  
a bad joke  
long since forgotten by the market or was it a suicide bomber with  
explosive belts  
of the homemade variety tomato tins ravioli with  
c4 and little nails a city library a badly run theatre that he visits  
unworthy  
of living in thirty winter jackets felt in his hair nights in the camp  
are long

yes and now the ones in the fishing net again who can only agree slowly  
rowing back again soaked through  
the invisible hand club a bad joke the men in suits in the fishing net  
so who's supposed to pay for the climate  
we say the world would be fine  
if as little would come out of a car's exhaust as from an EU ministry  
the world would be fine

no land in sight any more from the edge of the stage  
others are shouting now  
no land in sight any more from the edge of the stage

now various definitions pass by of the late modern notion of the subject  
a great commotion of the approaching community  
pelting each other with ideas that have been talked to death  
and fragments of discourse nobody has understood for ages

and now some people in rococo protective clothing too  
with frilled millstone collars and chemical protective gloves  
infected excluded sacrificed wounded scared screaming certainly  
too many are always screaming too many  
but no cry can escape this flood of material any more  
no scream is a match for this associative herb

now out of the flood of material climbs a market  
much the worse for wear shakes off piles of  
material deregulates itself  
quite naturally emancipates itself  
the internal markets and the investment markets are screaming  
and the financial centres and private investors are quaking  
running hysterically to the banking front with garden shears  
the currency what is the currency

too late again wrong turning we  
the ones in the fishing net rushing past again we the mating ritual of  
elephants  
everything happens on a higher level stirs up a lot of dust  
and it takes a very long time for anything to come of it

the market is leaking badly running from the



rears up it  
floods rapid turbulence this market  
it expands  
does what it wants shares

diving down again the floods god-like shoo  
crisis regions forward in non-chronological order  
followed by humanitarian interventions that  
move in behind them with aircraft carriers a state of law and  
its watery grave

icebergs break on the horizon and glaciers melt  
many divorces altercations disputes  
relationships in crisis as far as the eye can see  
because the market the old fucker gets the blame and  
rebels forcibly and froths down into the floods

however  
prompted memories arise out of the flood of material  
ownerless  
falsely told stories and  
long forgotten possibilities  
the only herb  
that can take on the market and its imaginative power  
vague open source memories go past events without owners  
chattering endlessly talking endlessly telling one more time  
and now out of the flood of material climb pasts that never happened  
now the ones in the net again  
no no no  
we still remember  
even if it's wrong  
we will still tell you  
even if we're lying  
and they're gone  
sunk in a chorus of mute top executives

wait  
I've just thought of something  
one shouts going past  
his mouth full of water  
for example

**beyond fukuyama**  
**by Thomas Köck**

Before we begin, speaking exercises: words that have an important role in my cultural circles whose meaning is not always immediately apparent that I carry with me without always knowing what I should do with them, at random, accidental associations forming a sequence of sounds for speaking exercises and especially for self-discipline, best done individually:

Freedom, money, career, sex, life, money, state, standardisation, performance, ambition, cheat, ego, society, money, love, spectacle, crisis, loneliness, money, desire, guilt, hate, greed, envy, money, pressure, success, money, sex, study, work, foresight, contraception, Billyboy, Durex, Trojans, pregnancy, safety, precautions, planning, trust, money, mother, success, recognition, money, technology, Facebook, happiness, depression, panic attacks, psychoses, anxiety attacks, loneliness, stutter, silence, stillness, end, alienation, nausea, shame, money, passion, community, friends, friendship, girlfriend, relationship, children, home, hypocrisy, assaults, abuse, taste, art, money, law, machines, age, YouTube, coincidence, fate, idea, money, conscience, opportunity, silence, fear, loss, demotion, sinking, left behind, broken, burden, sin, money, exploitation, prostitution, deception, swindle, kindness, disguise, deceit, work, iPhone, iPad, iMac, iPorn, predictability, reality, truth, television, theatre, asshole, war, money, war, money, oil, uprising, meaning, happiness, money, relationship, right, dirt, liberal market economy, stock exchange, basic income, precariat, friends, mother, father, bankrupt, sadness, child, past, memory, disappearance, remain, suicide, go, grieve, reproduction, society, body, discipline, death, life, money, money, money, money, money.

Prologue

Happiness, the late noughties

Peer: -

Miriam: -

Peer: -

Miriam: -

Peer: -

Miriam: I asked him what he thinks about when he's masturbating.

Peer: -

Miriam: -

Peer: -

Miriam: 98 % of the population of Western Europe masturbates once a month, 78% of the population of Western Europe has sex at least once a month, orgasm is a relatively normal part of your life.

Peer: Don't know what I think about.

Miriam: Skin rubbing against skin, your eyelids shut, your thoughts melt into your body, you become one with yourself, you can be entirely self-sufficient, creating happiness with your own hands.

Peer: Happiness?

Miriam: Is what he said then.

Peer: Happiness?

Miriam: I told him, it's not that difficult, I only asked him what he thinks about when he has a wank. God. I mean, it's a moment of complete self-satisfaction, we can produce happiness totally autonomously. Come one! The best feeling in the world! Happiness!

Peer: -

Miriam: You take your trousers down, it feels warmer, you touch yourself, your consciousness expands, both halves of your brain join together, everything around you retreats, your body throbs and heaves, and you're happy while you're working on yourself, aren't you? And I only want to know what do you think about? What do you think about when you're wanking, Peer? Happiness, Peer, happiness!

Peer: Breasts.

Miriam: Breasts.

Peer: Hard nipples smelling of Nivea,

Miriam: he says and puts his shirt on, fumbles around with the collar, the best feeling in the world, I say, the only self-sufficient moment in

your entire life, happiness, people kill for it, others are destroyed by it and you see nipples with body lotion and you're happy? Happiness?! Hand on heart! And he nods and says, yeah, sure, profane, isn't it? But you wanted to know.

Peer: you asked me, so I told you. You think I imagine sunsets on the North African coast?

Miriam: Then he tucks his shirt in and says: I need more time for myself, to finally take care of the essentials, you understand, the essentials,

Peer: You understand? It's got nothing to do with you.

Miriam: I say, I don't understand. Peer?! PEER?!

## **Azar Mortazavi**

Azar Mortazavi was born in Wittlich/Rhineland Palatinate and studied Creative Writing and Arts Journalism in Hildesheim. In 2008 she took part in the international Festival Of Young European Playwrights in Utrecht. For her play 'Todesnachricht' ("Death Notice") (world premiere 2011 Pfalztheater Kaiserslautern) she was awarded the Else Lasker-Schüler



Playwriting Prize for 2010. In 2011 her short play 'Himmel und Hölle' ("Heaven and Hell") was invited to the inaugural Karlsruhe Playwriting Festival at the Baden State Theatre in Karlsruhe. In 2012 she was awarded the WIENER WORTSTAETTEN's Exile Dramatist Prize. With her second play 'Ich wünsch mir eins' ("I have one wish") (world premiere 2012, Theater Osnabrück, director: Annette Pullen) Azar Mortazavi was invited to the Mülheimer Theatertagen and the Autorentheatertagen Berlin 2013. In 2014 'Urteile' ("Judgements"), a documentary theatre project about the victims of the NSU in Munich created in collaboration with the director Christine Umpfenbach, was premiered at the Residenztheater in Munich. Her play 'Zwischenzeit' ("Meantime"), a WIENER WORTSTAETTEN commission, received its world premiere in 2014 at the Nestroyhof Hamakom Theatre in Vienna. Azar Mortazavi's work with the Ballhaus Naunynstraße has concluded the stage adaptation of Aboud Saeed's 'The Cleverest Person on Facebook'. She was also responsible for the text of the youth play 'Revolution of Colour', based on the novel 'Kara Günlük - Sesperado's Secret Diaries' by Mutlu Ergün-Hamaz. This play was invited to the 2017 Theatertreffen der Jugend.

### **Unter Deutschen (Among Germans)**

One day Isabell turns up at Leyla's door, her neighbour from the flat upstairs who has just moved her furious mother into a care home and whose husband suffering from migraine soon turns out to be a ghost. Leyla lives with Ibrahim, who is not her husband and has other things to do than start a family or go on Mediterranean holidays with her. The fact that he works as a translator in the city's overfilled gymnasiums and that his naturally dark beard is a source of irritation in the neighbourhood will determine his fate when something happens in the city.

Even before this happens, there is a great deal in the air that cannot be put into words. Nevertheless Isabell takes an enthusiastic interest in Leyla, this arid young woman. Her unexpected visits soon become a daily occurrence. Initially to borrow milk, then bearing a cake and ultimately simply because talking is easier with two and she can recover from sitting speechlessly opposite her mother's tirades.

A foreign man with a beard. A young dark-haired woman with a German passport. A lonely neighbour who only means well. A sad old woman who transforms her fear into anger one last time.

With powerful concentration and a sure grasp of her characters that eschews any linguistic tricks Azar Mortazavi draws narrative circles that gradually contract like a web, mercilessly narrowing the room the characters have to manoeuvre in the direction of tragedy.

It is an impressive demonstration of how quickly we can turn into strangers, how we become mute if what is most important remains unsaid and what has been said metastasises inside our heads, turning neighbours into suspects and people into categories.

In Mortazavi's text every fragile bond of intimacy that its characters awkwardly attempt to form dissolves into misunderstanding. Thus in 'Among Germans' Azar Mortazavi nails a present-day society by its populist heart, one that looks away when unable to cope with the complexity of world events and attempts to use readymade categories and associations to determine what is alien.

Cast: 3 F, 1 M

Performing rights: schaeferphilippen

### **Zwischenzeit (Meantime)**

Maria is visited for the first time in years by her half-sister Mina, who left with her father for his homeland while she was a teenager, leaving behind the small German town, her half-sister Maria and the mother they both share.

After her father's death she is forced to return to Germany - however, she continues to project her unfulfilled desires onto her father's distant country that remains with her as a dream.

In the middle of the night Mina suddenly stands at the door of Maria's small family home: in the meantime she has had a child with her husband Toni. Toni, a lawyer who does not accept any clients because he is afraid of the power of his own words, goes for a walk every night before returning home to dream of the inapproachable Anja, who in turn hopes to be approached by one of the lonely beer-drinkers at the bar. He can sense the exhausted Maria is waiting for him and that the love between the two of them will not last long. The image of a small, successful family that Maria has created to disguise her loneliness shows clear signs of wear that do not escape Mina's notice.

The characters lost in their own darkness stand opposite each other in the middle of the night. Their dawning awareness of a lack of fulfilment, nourished by desire and cemented by disappointment, determines each one of these damaged life stories which tell of how so much should have been different. In this single night Mortazavi's text condenses what was hoped for but remains un-lived, what has been passed by and cannot be returned into a cool and at the same time intimate study of people who remain free from each other, for whom there seems to be no place that can move them to stay. With disarming poetry the characters bear their surprise that their lives are painful ones through the cold streets at night and the hallways of their apartments that might offer shelter from the darkness but cannot be their home.

Cast: 3 F, 1 M

Performing rights: schaeferphilippen

World premiere: Theater Nestroyhof Hamakom (Vienna) 17.11.2014 Director: Hans Escher

**Among Germans**  
**by Azar Mortazavi**

Scene 12

Mrs Grau: Open your mouth and: out with it, out with the fear, out with your grim anxieties. Out with the sombre shadow of the past.

Open your mouth and scream, scream like there's no tomorrow.

*Mrs Grau points to her throat.*

Nothing.

*She tries to make a few sounds. Then she shakes her head.*

I draw the curtains to one side and throw open the window: cars driving by, a foreign, cold city.

I'm nobody any more. I've been extinguished.

I was barred from my world.

And I can't recognize anything any more.

I sit by the window... nothing seems familiar.

Scene 14

Leyla: Must have fallen asleep.

Ibrahim: Yes.

Leyla: How long have you been watching me?

Ibrahim: A while. You were in such a deep sleep, it seemed like you never wanted to come back.

Leyla: Memories are to be found in dreams.

Ibrahim: She was here when I came home.

Leyla: Who?

Ibrahim: Your neighbour, she was cooking. Does she visit you every day?

Leyla: She's lonely.

Ibrahim: She's glued to us. Sucking on tight and staring.

*Leyla shrugs.*

Ibrahim: You look pretty, all tousled like that.

*Ibrahim sits down beside her.*

Leyla: I genuinely believed that nothing and nobody could touch us. And

now we're sitting here with our dreams ruined.

Ibrahim: Your calm breath beside me. Your silent sleep. I've watched you, all night sometimes, because I could never see enough of you.

Leyla. That's rubbish.

Ibrahim: You're so unromantic.

*Leyla laughs. They begin play-fighting. Pause.*

Leyla: Will you finally stop these translations.

Ibrahim: Don't start that again.

Leyla: Just stop it and get on with your studies.

Ibrahim: So that's it.

Leyla: So you can finally make some progress.

*Ibrahim laughs bitterly out loud.*

Leyla: We've always wanted a family.

Ibrahim: Times change.

Leyla: A bigger flat. And then a baby.

Ibrahim: That's all? And a summer holiday on the Mediterranean?!

Leyla: Why not? What's so wrong with that?

Ibrahim: I'll do it, ok.

Leyla: What will you do?

Ibrahim: I'll get on with my studies.

Leyla: Oh right.

*Ibrahim exits.*

Leyla: No enclosed spaces, you can only escape from evil thoughts under the open sky. So run, run all night, the darkness is like a protective space, like a parallel universe, a silent, dark utopia. Turn it off, create spaces without reference points, hunt down the memories, erase them, erase yourself and be nobody any more. No sleep, sleep guards dreams, and they are unpredictable. They can deceive you, mercilessly, keep memories awake, depicting your past life as if it was still there.



Scene 15

Mrs Grau: Oh. It's you.

Isabell: Were you expecting anyone else?

Mrs Grau: Who could I have been expecting? Why are you grinning like that?

Isabell: I'm not grinning.

Mrs Grau: You're smiling blissfully away to yourself as if you've got a beautiful secret.

Isabell: Me?

Mrs Grau: Can you see anybody else here? I can't stand seeing you happy.

Isabell: What kind of person are you?

Mrs Grau: You've locked me up in here while you dance through the world grinning.

Isabell: What was I supposed to do?

Mrs Grau: You've taken everything from me and hidden me in this city.

Isabell: I actually wanted to ask if you fancied going for a walk.

Mrs Grau: A walk?! Where to, for God's sake?!

Isabell: You can go for very nice walks here. There's a park and a river and city woods.

Mrs Grau: That park's full of them.

Isabell: Just temporarily.

Mrs Grau: Is it hell. How stupid are you lot? They've gone and stuck a whole load of hopeless cases right under my nose.

Isabell: They won't be there for ever.

Mrs Grau: Oh, right.

Isabell: They put them all in that sports hall, who could have known?

Mrs Grau: Loitering around in the park - all day long.

Isabell: What else can they do? You'll see, in a few weeks' time they'll be gone from here.

Mrs Grau: I might be six feet under by then.

Isabell: Mum.

Mrs Grau: What do you think happens to an old tree that gets lovelessly ripped out of the earth and planted somewhere else? It rots.

Isabell: Mum. Come on. Just a little stroll.

Mrs Grau: Ah, get out of my sight.

Isabell: Are you chucking me out?

Mrs Grau: Get out of it.

*Isabell exits. She runs through the park.*

## Scene 16

Ibrahim: What are you doing here?

Isabell: My mum's in an old people's home just round the corner. And you?

Ibrahim: Oh. There's always something to do here.

Isabell: How's Leyla?

Ibrahim: Good, I think.

Isabell: Did she like the food?

Ibrahim: Yes. Yes.

Isabell: We could do it again if you want.

Ibrahim: What?

Isabell: Cook together.

Ibrahim: Why not?

Isabell: You see back there? That's where she is. I chose that home for her.

Ibrahim: Looks nice.

Isabell: You think so? In your country you don't just stick old people in a home, do you? That's what you're thinking. Am I right?

Ibrahim: I wasn't thinking of anything.

Isabell: But I had no choice. It's not so easy with my mum. You know, she can be very short tempered. But who am I telling?

Ibrahim: I'm sure it's the right thing.

Isabell: I chose this home specially because the park is so close by. My

mum always wanted fresh air, you see? And then this.

Ibrahim: And then what?

Isabell: She's afraid.

Ibrahim: Why are you telling me this?

Isabell: We're neighbours.

Ibrahim: I really haven't got any more time.

Isabell: Say hello from me!

*Ibrahim exits.*

Mrs Grau: You don't know him, do you?

Isabell: Were you watching us?

Mrs Grau: I followed you and then I saw you standing there. With that man.

Isabell: He's my neighbour.

Mrs Grau: Well at least he can speak the language properly. You're not sleeping with him are you?!

Isabell: Mum. Please. He's married.

Mrs Grau: Ha, as if that would stop him.

Isabell: You don't know him at all.

Mrs Grau: Just don't let yourself be charmed by those black eyes of his.

Isabell: What are you talking about?

Mrs Grau: That daft grin of yours just now.

Isabell: You're imagining things.

Mrs Grau: Where men are concerned, women always have their heads switched off.

Isabell: Let's go back. It's cold.

**Meantime**  
**by Azar Mortazavi**

Scene 3

Mina: It's nice here.

Maria: What?

Mina: *slowly and clearly* Nice here.

Maria: We want to move soon, out of the city, out of this flat, to a house, in the country maybe. With a garden. Then I'll grow vegetables. Toni just needs to keep going a bit longer. We're saving up the money and we're going to buy a house. Are you listening to me? You're standing by the window staring into the darkness.

*Maria stands next to Mina by the window.*

Toni's a lawyer.

Mina: Really?

Maria: Yes. His office is at the other end of the city, where the rent's cheaper. One or two more years. He's only just started, he needs time to build up a reputation and everyone starts going to him.

Mina: *ironic* Wow, a lawyer.

Maria: Not many people get through studying law. Find yourself a man who can provide well for you, Mum always said. We needed every penny. She would often ask after you.

Mina: Really?

Maria: She really wished you would come.

Mina: I was busy.

Maria: Oh yes. You were BUSY.

Mina: Leave it.

Maria: I often wondered what your life was like, I'd try to imagine how you spent your days. I don't know anything about you. So tell me something. Tell me about your days. When do you get up? When do you go to bed? Do you wake up on your own in the morning or is there someone lying there next to you? Mina, Mina, Mina, you've turned to stone. You don't say a word any more, you just stand there, leaving me alone with my questions. Do you still enjoy swimming? Before we never used to be able to get you out of the water. It was like you felt happier there, almost like an escape into another world. We used to shout: Come out, Mina, before you turn into a fish. Leave her alone, he'd tell us, let her swim,

she has to swim like birds have to fly. He taught you to swim. He chose it for you and it was as if that was why you loved it so much.

*Maria looks at Mina for a while.*

You're the spitting image of your Dad. Did you know that he was the only one who could quieten you down? Eh? With those Persian songs. I learnt them off by heart and sang them for you. Do you remember?

Mina: I must have forgotten.

Maria: Well, you were so little. Oh these old stories. After such a long silence. I could show you photos. Me pregnant, me and the baby, the baby when he was still tiny, they grow and grow and grow, it can get quite scary. *(shocked briefly at what she has said herself)* Look, that's what he looked like when he'd just been born, freshly delivered.

Mina: Pretty.

Maria: *(to herself)* He's not on a single photo.

Mina: Toni?

Maria: He has to work, can't take a single day off. He's always got to work. But he's not going out all the time, not like your Dad used to, he's not like that. What are you looking at me like that for?

Mina: You're getting more and more like your Mum.

Maria: Your Mum. You say that as if you had nothing to do with her, but she was your Mum too, Mina, even if you never wanted to believe that.

Mina: Cuckoo's what the other kids in the class used to call me.

Maria: *(laughs)* Yeah. Yeah. You two? Sisters? They used to shout and shake their heads in disbelief. Half-sisters, I would say, to explain. They thought you were adopted, no wonder.

Mina: You think that's funny.

Maria: Oh, come on, let me have a laugh at the old stories, you're still as touchy as ever.

Mina: You laugh just like them, it's cruel laughter.

Maria: I'm allowed to laugh in my own house, aren't I?

Mina: Go ahead.

*Maria clears away the plates.*

Maria: You've hardly touched your soup. Didn't you like it?

Mina: I did.

Maria: Would you like a drink? Some juice, tea, water?

*Maria walks out without waiting for Mina's answer.*

*Mina: to herself* This godforsaken place.

#### Scene 4:

Toni: Only when this place is swallowed in darkness, do I set off on the way home. I walk 15 kilometres on foot. There is a bus, but I walk. I like walking. The ways home are full of promises, on the ways home I am a free man. And then I sit down in this pub on the corner, I can take a break there, find some peace, think, everything is alright, think, it will be ok somehow, there I can forget about the baby and Maria and I can watch this woman, as she walks from the entrance to the bar, as she very carefully takes off her coat, as she sits down on the bar stool, crosses her legs and orders a coffee.

Anja: Now my moment comes, these few steps from the door to the bar belong to me alone. I take my time, I unbutton my coat, carefully I put my coat down on the bar stool next to me. I pretend that no one's watching me but I know they're not letting me out of their eyes for a second, they're watching every single step I take. And then I sit there, order a coffee like I do every evening that tastes terrible like it does every evening.

The usual? asks the man behind the bar, who must have been good-looking once, yes, the usual, that girl again, who comes here to drink coffee, he laughs, he winks, I smile.

## **Maxi Obexer**

Maxi Obexer studied Comparative Literature, Philosophy and Theatre Studies in Vienna and Berlin. She writes fiction, stage and radio plays and made her name with political dramas and essays. Her work in recent years as a dramatist, author and lecturer has repeatedly examined European policies towards migration.



She has been awarded prizes and scholarships by institutions including the Akademie Solitude, the Academy of the Arts, Berlin, and most recently she was the winner of the 2016 Eurodrama Prize for 'ILLEGAL HELPERS'.

She has been a visiting professor at Dartmouth College, USA, at the University of the Arts, Berlin, at the German Literature Institute in Leipzig and at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

Maxi Obexer has a long-standing interest in advanced education in the field of dramatic arts. Together with Sasha Maria Salzmann she founded NIDS, the "New Institute of Dramatic Writing" in 2014: [www.nids.eu](http://www.nids.eu)

Obexer has also developed numerous performances in recent years as collaborations with artists working in contemporary visual arts and music. In 2008 she created the installation 'Defending Europe' together with the sonic artist Hannes Hölzl for the European Art Biennial Manifesta 7.

'The Ghost Ship', her most frequently performed play to date, is also a critical examination of the responses to refugee crises: a modern requiem about the many dead washed up on Europe's shores and the indifferent reactions to this (world premiere: Theaterhaus Jena, 2007).

Her plays have been performed at the state theatres in Brunswick and Dresden, the theatres in Basel and Freiburg, at the regional theatres in Swabia and Tübingen, Theaterhaus Jena and the theatre die Rampe in Stuttgart.

ILLEGAL HELPERS was produced as a radio play by WDR in 2015. The eponymous stage play received its world premiere at Schauspielhaus Salzburg in January 2016, followed by a German premiere at the Hans Otto Theater in Potsdam.

HOT Potsdam then commissioned Maxi Oberer to write 'Going or Staying' on the specific situation of refugees in Potsdam.

Obexer's plays have been translated into several languages including French, English, Bulgarian, Czech and Romanian.

She is currently developing a new play for the 2017/18 season at National Theatre Mannheim.

### **Illegale Helfer (Illegal Helpers)**

This documentary play addresses the plight of the people from all walks of life who seek to provide aid and shelter to migrants—even though it is against the law. A powerful insight into a contemporary tragedy that threatens to engulf Western Europe, ILLEGAL HELPERS provides a sharp look at those who help and those who callously sit by doing nothing.

cast: 4 F, 7 M

Performing rights: schaeferphilippen

Translated into Bulgarian, English, French and Czech.

World premiere Salzburger Schauspielhaus 2015; Hans-Otto-Theater 2016

Radio play, WDR 2015. Director: Martin Zylka

Funded by the Film Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia

Robert Geisendörfer Prize 2016; Eurodram Prize 2016.

Editor and Dramaturg: Isabel Platthaus

### **Das Geisterschiff (The Ghostship)**

Das Geisterschiff (The Ghost Ship) tells a story that took place in December 1996. Then, 283 refugees drowned off the southern coast of Italy, and their death was silenced for years. The legend of a "ghost ship", whose existence and sinking was only unearthed by an Italian journalist six years later, haunted the area. Maxi Obexer focuses less on the reconstruction of the incident than on how it was handled.



# Illegal Helpers

A Play  
by  
Maxi Obexer

With content-related and formal contributions by Lars Struder

Translated from German (Illegale Helfer) by

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British English version

Translation prepared June 2016, subject to further minor revision

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**Note:**

The statements made by the play's characters originated in interviews with various people, some of whom had already broken the law multiple times and been charged with providing aid to illegal immigrants. Others could be subject to legal action, if their activities became known to the authorities.

The author wishes to thank all of the many people who through their accounts led us into a hidden world of humanitarian deeds.

**Characters:**

Legislator

Genner: Austrian, ca. 70

Lukas: Swiss-German, ca. 45

Ulrike: Swiss, ca. 80

Florian: German, student, 25

Teacher: ca. 55

Judge: ca. 60

Female activist: ca. 50

Susanna: without legal status, ca. 30

Male activist: Austrian, 40, in a wheelchair

Lawyer: ca. 35

**Scene 1**

*The position taken by Genner is clear and steadfast; he can, depending on the situation, be presented to the audience either as a hero, sitting as if on a throne, facing out, or as a criminal offender, depicted in profile like in a police mugshot.*

Genner: Civil courage is more important today than ever, because deportations can be prevented! If an asylum seeker has applied for asylum and if he's threatened with deportation and he goes underground and he doesn't show up anywhere for eighteen months, then the Dublin Regulation ceases to apply to him. But eighteen months is a longtime. Where's he supposed to go for all that time?

Lukas: *Turning somewhat diffidently towards Genner*  
I was spending some time with my kids in the mountains at my friend Jonas'. He farms a forest and several fields in the southernmost foothills of the Swiss Alps in Ticino, right on the Italian border. We help with the milking, we make cheese, make hay, and that spring, around Easter, we were making improvements to the narrow path that leads from the mountains into the valley. We were dragging these big granite rocks from the bed of a nearby stream up to the path and building a retaining wall in a sharp curve. It was a cool morning, and then suddenly the two sheep dogs started up.  
A tall, burly man, maybe mid-twenties, came down the footpath, leaning on two sticks, walking slowly, taking each step uncertainly, looking exhausted and as if he was struggling to keep his balance. He spoke to us quite happily, in English we could barely understand, he was beaming, and he asked if this was Switzerland.  
We told him it was. The man was grateful, in fact he was thrilled, Switzerland! It was a dream come true, and next he asked us whether, if he followed the path into the valley, he'd come to a village.

Yes, we said. I could feel how pleased it made me to be able to help him in this way. He said all sorts of blessings, God bless you, he said in English, I think he took my hand in his, I think he touched my head.

Genner: The civilian population has the obligation to provide sheltered places in which those in need of protection, and individuals who've been traumatized or tortured and therefore deserve protection can go into hiding until the 12 months have passed. Until then they have to stay somewhere and there are in fact people who will help out of good will, private individuals, monasteries, churches, farms – there are lots of them!

Lukas: Yes, he was really pleased, he was beaming. He hugged us. Switzerland, he kept saying. That's the way to the village, we told him.

Genner: Those people-traffickers who are honest, who do good work, who safely lead their customers out of a country of misery and hunger, of terror and persecution, and get them in safely, in spite of the border controls, into our "free" Europe, I have respect for all such people. They provide a service, they carry out a socially useful activity and they have the right to a commensurate honorarium.

Lukas: Yes.  
We may well have sent him straight to his own ruin. Because down in the village, the neighbours watch over the street, terrified of refugees.  
That path used to be the main route for the smugglers and refugees. The people in the village felt so afraid that they felt it necessary to put bars on the ground-floor windows and to get themselves shotguns.  
One time there was a neighbour who used to travel around the world on board ships, he came back home late at night. When he opened the door he found himself looking down the barrel of

a loaded gun his wife was pointing right at his face. She assumed it was foreigners trying to get through the door. Those neighbours were probably the first ones to report him to the authorities. In Chiasso there's a reception camp. After he'd gone, it suddenly went through me like an electric shock. We should have kept him there in the mountains! Should have protected him. We should have let him rest for three days, wrapped him up in blankets, killed a chicken and made a soup for him. Studied those incredibly detailed Swiss maps with him and talked on the phone with my aunt Ulrike, who's been helping refugees for more than 20 years.

Would he have had a chance? The three days wouldn't have amounted to illegal conduct, would they? We could have simply helped him. Wasn't that a failure to assist a person in danger? Don't we also have duties towards these people?

Legislator:

Council DIRECTIVE defining the facilitation of unauthorized entry, transit and residence.

1) One of the objectives of the European Union is the gradual creation of an area of freedom, security, and justice, which means, *inter alia*, that illegal immigration must be combated.

The council of the European Union HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

Article 1: general infringement:

Each member state shall adopt appropriate sanctions on

a) any person who intentionally assists a person who is not a national of a Member State to enter, or transit across, the territory of a Member State in breach of the laws of the State concerned on the entry or transit of aliens

Lukas:

Why did I surrender him to the authorities when I know they aren't on his side, just as I'm not on their side. Why did I just watch him walk away? Was I afraid?

Legislator:

Article 2: Instigation, participation and attempt

Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the sanctions referred to in article 1 are also applicable to any person who:

- a) is the instigator of,
- b) is an accomplice in, or
- c) attempts to commit an infringement as referred to in Article 1 (1) a) or b)

Lukas: Afraid of the laws? Did the laws restrain me? Did they make me hesitate? Laws that are not my laws, that punish me for providing aid?

Legislator: Article 3: sanctions

Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the infringements referred to in Articles 1 and 2 are subject to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.

Genner: People disappear into administrative detention. And we don't know anything about it. We only find out if someone, a friend, a relative, a brother, a father, an uncle, comes to us and says: my brother was taken away.

So we go to the prison, we obtain the power of attorney and then we represent them.

It's also sometimes happened that we've brought someone back, someone who was in the process of being deported. Not long ago there was a Chechen, a man who had been tortured, and he was taken back after the colonel had to reverse the decision. He was allowed back into the asylum process, and the deportation was declared illegal. Now we're also going to file for compensation for wrongful imprisonment.

Lukas: Genner, what's the deal with you anyway?

Genner: What do you mean?

Lukas: What kind of person are you?

Genner: I advise and represent asylum seekers through the procedure for being granted asylum.

I write appeals for them.

I accompany them when they're called in for questioning.

I bring their cases to the attention of the public.  
I expose deficiencies.

Lukas: But apart from that, what kind of person are you?  
Why do you do it?

Genner: I've been politically active since I was 17.

Lukas: But *why* do you do it?

Genner: I was involved in the student movement in 1968, I was part of the youth organization called Spartacus that led the struggle against homes and reformatories.

Lukas: And on a personal level?

Genner: The work I'm doing now is the most important part of the political life I've led.

Lukas: You get attacked. Threatened. Charged with crimes.  
Civil liberties organizations drape you with medals for courageous acts. But the public prosecutor's office is constantly serving you with summonses. You're a criminal because you break the law by helping others – you have to break the law in order to help! You live like a pauper because nobody earns anything by working for asylum-seekers. What makes someone like you put up with all that? Are you an altruist? Or are you suffering from some sort of helper syndrome?

Genner: I get the strength to carry out my often very gruelling work from many motives and sources; and one of them is hatred.

Lukas: Hatred!?

Genner: Hatred for injustice and for those who commit injustice.  
And another is the wish to help people, I take great pleasure every time a refugee gets asylum through my efforts. I take pleasure in the few bastards we were able to get thrown out of the system. There have been too few of those, but still, there are some.

Lukas: Genner. ... Was there a moment, a provocation right at the beginning ... - something that made you follow this path, a spark that got ignited and made you into the person you are today?

Genner: I come from a family that was politically active during the Nazi era and that was persecuted on racial grounds, and that left an impression on me. Is that the kind of reason or spark you're looking for?!

-----  
Lukas: Maybe I should ask myself the same question, what kind of person am I?  
I get bogged down with my crisps and my remote control, and the more I look at myself, the heavier I get, the more I sink into my sofa. The more I watch TV, the further away from me they get – they drift away into the smoothness of news reporting, the bright shine of disaster reporting. LOOK! LOOK! THAT'S WHAT YOU SHOULD DO! DON'T LOOK AWAY! But how can I look without their getting further away. I no longer trust what I can see, I don't believe it's real, that their WANTING TO BE TRUE is real.  
But here's what's worse still: I also no longer believe MYSELF in what I'm seeing! And if ever something is real, like a person, what do I do then? I stay on the level of the abstract. Isn't it better, then, not to see anything? Does it have anything to do with me? Should it? Why should I care? Can I do anything? Why should I? In order to be a good person? I don't think so. Isn't the answer maybe a question: what kind of person do I want to be?

## Scene 2

Ulrike: *A Swiss woman, elderly, calm, slow, focused, friendly*  
Maybe I should start by going in order. The very first one was from Bangladesh, Mamun, a young man who'd just turned sixteen, the second young man, Tarek, came from Afghanistan, he'd finished his undergraduate degree, then there was the third one, he was an Eritrean, from an ethnic group that was persecuted, he was a serious athlete, who actually made good money from it, back then, that was Dehab. All three of them had traveled on their own. Then through Dehab there was his friend



Margareth Obexer

## THE GHOST SHIP

A Play

translated by Dr. Marlene J Norst

“Perhaps, we’ve got those two thick planks of wood in our heads,  
that are missing from our wall” Hans Henny Jahnn

## Cast

1 Female Journalist - young

1 Male Journalist - young

1 Female Curator - young to mid /late thirties

Passenger 1 - middle-aged or older

Passenger 2 - middle-aged or older

Fisherman - young to late thirties

Curators - middle-aged.

Mayor - middle-aged or older

Priest - older

## Brief Note:

Although there are different and changing scenes, it is advisable not to stage them naturalistically but on a single stage space. The actors are partly on stage already or remain on stage after their entry, which takes account of the fact that, although the play is a fiction, it is based on documentary evidence and has the potential for further “negotiation”.

The use of film and/or video material might well be considered so as to provide visuals of the ship-wreck, other ships and refugee boats, while Live-Cams could be used to show the on-looker as someone who looks on.

## 1. Scene

*In the plane, safety-belts snap shut. The engines rev up for take-off. Through the loud-speaker one can hear the ritual of the safety precaution announcements being made by the stewardesses.*

Ladies and Gentlemen, Your safety is our main concern – we would now like to acquaint you with our safety measures – as long as the light is on, please remain in your seats with your seat –belts fastened - all emergency exits are marked with the sign “exit”- in the unlikely event of a power-failure, pull the oxygen mask towards you and put it over your mouth and nose. Only then help other passengers. Ladies and Gentlemen, we wish you a pleasant stay on board.

Female Journalist:

The jets accelerate applying pressure to the stomach, to the seat. Microphone, headphones, headset sound-carrier. Forgotten anything? I’m ready. Quick. *Into the microphone.*

“Six years ago a human tragedy took place on the Sicilian Coast. While people began celebrating Christmas in the little seaport of Portocelleste just 19 kilometres away, 300 refugees from the “Iohan”, were forced onto a little Maltese fishing cutter officially registered as F174. It was a stormy night and the boat was overcrowded. A few miles later the engines stopped. SOS signals were sent to the “Iohan”. But instead of rescuing them, the mother ship brought them death. It came back and rammed the cutter. A huge leak caused it to sink rapidly. As it capsized, 283 people from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India disappeared from the face of the earth. The remaining seven landed in Greece and reported the accident- but it was decided to deport the survivors and this decision was upheld. Weeks later, fishermen found body parts in their nets. They threw them back into the sea. Like sick fish, one might say, or fake fish.

For six years the inhabitants shrouded themselves in impenetrable silence. There were official denials of the incident. The cutter became a Ghost Ship and no one could say for sure whether it had

ever existed. Until a fisherman handed over to a daily newspaper a laminated identity card belonging to a 16 year old boy. He had pulled it out of his net together with a whole heap of clothes, bones and calamari. A journalist equipped with a technically highly developed under-water camera provided the proof. The pictures of the 108 metre deep grave went round the world. But that's all that happened. The dead still rest at the bottom of the sea and, as yet, not a single death -certificate has been issued. .  
The place where it was found, which lies 36 .25 degrees north and 14.34 degrees east in international flood waters is, from a bureaucratic point of view, a no-man's-land. That'll do for now.

- Male Journalist: They were fished out of the sea? Like fish in a net?
- Female Journalist: A red ruby glittered on the finger of one of the dead, briefly, before the fisherman threw him over the railing.
- Male Journalist: Did he remove it?
- Female Journalist: As he caught sight of the ring, it struck him for the first time that the dead man might have relatives.
- Male Journalist: He didn't remove the ring.
- Female Journalist: One of them saw, something fall off one of the bodies And roll across the deck.
- Male Journalist: That'll have been the head.
- Female Journalist: It was the head.
- Male Journalist: That's what I thought it would be -the head.
- Female Journalist: It gave him a fright.
- Male Journalist: Gave him a fright, did it?
- Female Journalist: Yes. Then he took a shovel. *Pause*
- Male Journalist: Are you reproaching the fishermen because they



Male Journal: Yes, precisely.

Female Journalist: Well then, it's not the upright gait, but the prone corpse that makes the difference. It's only by way of the corpse that humans became human.

Male Journalist: Because we can't fly?

Female Journalist: The things you say!

Male Journalist: I once pulled out a boot while I was fishing. I threw it back again. Should I reproach myself?

Female Journalist: For throwing away a corpse, yes.

Male Journalist: Am I glad that no corpse was attached to it!

Female Journalist: What's that supposed to mean?

Male Journalist: Well, I'd take fright too then.  
They can get you implicated. Corpse can.  
Quit apart from the germs.  
And besides, I don't know.

Female Journalist: What don't you know?

Male Journalist: I don't know, if the thing's big enough. Yes, whether the story's big enough, that's what I don't know. Corpses in nets, is still OK. That one threw them back into the sea, yes, that isn't a bad story. But somehow. After all, they were already dead, weren't they?

Female Journalist: In the case of corpses, you have to assume they're dead.

Male Journalist: And the business of the death certificate. I don't know. Didn't they die of their own accord? I mean no one forced them. They didn't even come far enough to be sent back.

Female Journalist: Providing a death certificate is no big deal/

Male Journalist: Exactly.  
All in all, it's exactly that -  
No big deal.

Female Journalist: In a way, not issuing a death certificate is worse  
than deporting them, because-

Male Journalist: Because?

Female Journalist: Because...because that isn't nice.

Male Journalist: Isn't nice?

Female Journalist: Because it upsets our culture. That's why.

Male Journalists: I'd like to hear that from the dead themselves.

Female Journalist: They are, however, dead.

Male Journalist: It's true you'll never get no tolerance but, with a little  
bit of luck, you'll get your death certificate.

Female Journalist: Certainly, it would be altogether better, if they were still alive.

Male Journalist: But that's not why we're here.

Female Journalist: You don't go throwing your Grandmother into the sea,  
when she's dead either, now do you?

Male Journalist: .No. But that's not why we're here, either. *Pause.*  
Actually, perhaps it would have been best, if they'd never  
lived.

Female Journalist: You can never know that.  
Anyway, didn't we want to win the prize?

Male Journalist: That's right. The prize.

Female Journalist: Our prize.



Male Journalist: That's right/ Our prize. *Reads*  
The European Congress concerning Europe's growing  
unease with regard to certain incidents in the European  
margins  
A title-

Female Journalist : - with us as the winners for the best, most intelligent,  
unerring junior contribution !

Male Journalist: that stares at you like a bird at a snake.

Female Journalist: I want it. Can you understand? I want that prize.  
We're landing.

Male Journalist: I always did want to go to Sicily.

## 2. Scene

*The Curator at the railway station, she is phoning, rhythmically, factually, rapidly ,  
sounding a bit as if high on coke.*

Curator: Listen, Rudi! I've got them! Yes!  
Well, as good as. It depends on you, Rudolph/  
Rudi, my treasure, the group is called " Much Identity"  
Yes, "much" like "much", and their idea is nothing less  
than a new world-classification system! Yes/ They divide  
the world up in a new way according to:  
spices, smells and tastes,  
They subdivide countries by the way they smell.  
States are created like:  
Safran, Coriander, Garlic or Pepper  
Identity cards, passports.  
are all a matter  
of whether those belonging to the territory of Curry, Paprika.  
or Chili, are to be numbered among  
Cloves, Cinnamon, Vanilla  
or Juniper, Thyme and Fennel.  
There'll be new axes,

## **Thomas Perle**

Thomas Perle was born in Romania in 1987. In 1991 he emigrated with his family to Germany where he grew up trilingual. From 2008 to 2015 he studied Theatre, Film and Media Studies at Vienna University. While still a student he interned in the Dramaturgy Department at the Vienna Volkstheater and was an Assistant Director at Schauspielhaus Vienna from 2010 to 2012. In 2013 he won the Exile Literature Prize and in 2014 he was Writer in Residence at LOISIUM as part of ORFIII's young writers' programme. Since 2015 he has been a member of the theatre writers' laboratory WIENER WORTSTAETTEN and he won the Starting Scholarship for Literature in 2015.

On 2016 he won first prize at the 28th Nürnberger Kulturläden Literary Prize. He has also directed his own productions, most recently at Nuremberg State Theatre. In 2017 his play 'mutterseele. dieses leben wollt ich nicht' Received its world premiere at WERK X-Eldorado.



### **mutterseele. dieses leben wollt ich nicht. (mother soul. i didn't want this life)**

Rita lives a wasted life. One that she never wanted to be like this. She met Gerhard, got pregnant and married the father of her child Marie. Married life quickly became hell. Alcohol, introduced as something incidental, increasingly becomes the most important part of Rita's world, once Gerhard has disappeared from it.

The adult Marie, traumatized by her childhood with an alcoholic mother, tries to live her own life differently. There's no way she wants to be like that.

She falls in love with Sven, keeping her mother hidden from him, just like the pregnancy which sets something off inside Marie. Something that threatens her happiness.

Alcohol addiction as transgression. A single glass, a single bottle too much. Too much to be able to lead a normal life.

Cast: 3 F, 2 M

Performing rights: Österreichischer Bühnenverlag Kaiser & Co

World premiere: Werk X Eldorado (Vienna)

6. 3. 2017 Director: Lina Hölscher

### **ein stück ein fleck in den karpaten (AT) (a piece a patch of land in the carpathians) (working title)**

About the story: between the 18th and 19th centuries German settlers are moved to the Carpathians. They come from Slovakia and from the Salzkammergut in Austria. Poor families with many children. The men work as loggers up in the mountains, returning to the valley once every three weeks. The women take care of the fields and look after the children. The Magyars already live here. They were also settled here to "magyarize"

the region. At the same time there is also a wave of Jewish settlement leading to the opening of the first shops and bars. Romanians and Ukrainians come from other valleys. Nationalism has not made it this far. Though the borders suddenly change, the monarchy remains in the heads of the people. Now they are living in a new multi-ethnic state, a Romanian one. For the people nothing much changes. Even when the second great war breaks out, the Germans from this region do not understand at first why Jews should be "different", continue shopping in their shops and drinking in their bars. Until one day the borders are moved again and now the Horthy government takes power which orders the Jews to be deported. In the first deportation all Jewish men are taken "to work". In the second deportation all the women, children and old people are taken away "to reunite their families".

Later the few survivors of the holocaust return and arm themselves against the Germans, going from house to house searching for the few possessions that were stolen from them. They don't come back from the camps until after the Germans and don't know that while they were away the Germans' houses were plundered too. For the Jews this is no longer home. They leave this place in the Carpathians and establish a new home in Israel. They have all disappeared like the once beautiful synagogue that socialism forces to make way.

Where it once stood there is now an apartment block where Romanians live. More and more of them are settling here. When socialism collapses the village once again begins to bleed dry. The Germans leave to look for a new home in Germany. Only this Germany has nothing to do with their German-ness, which they have to affirm when they are made citizens. 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the collapse of Austria-Hungary. The state was a very peculiar construct, which can be compared to the present European Union in which this spot in the Carpathians now finds itself. Why could the different peoples in this place live together in peace - and how did they do it? How did they communicate with each other in different languages, and how could one language find its way into another?

Here a range of characters are heard, a range of languages that can be woven together. A look back at history, a memory from which we can learn for a European future.

This play is about the everyday nature of co-existence, the confusion of languages, the confusion of cultures on unpaved streets. A mosaic of everyday and mystical stories of a place in the middle of the Carpathians.

Cast: variable

Free rights for world premiere

**mother soul. i didn't want this life.**  
**by Thomas Perle**

**daughter joy. no way she'll live to be a hundred.**

*the daughter was happy. her mother was doing so well. for a while. the mother was good. a good child. that death didn't want to take yet. living room. tv is on. rita on the sofa. looks mesmerised and stupefied at the flickering box. in the cupboard hidden plastic bottles.*

marie                    hi mam!

RITA                    *does not look at her daughter.* hello child.

marie                    what are you watching?

RITA                    my programme  
sh

marie                    ok.  
*looks at her mother briefly. goes into the kitchen.*  
*unpacks tupperware from a bag.*  
brought you some food.  
not too fatty.  
you're not allowed fat things.  
like the doctor said.  
i've got you some rice.  
with chicken.

RITA                    yeah yeah.

marie                    *to herself.* thanks child. you're welcome mam.  
*goes to her mother.* shall i warm it up for you?  
--  
mam?

RITA                    what?

marie                    shall i warm it up for you?  
mam.

RITA                    what? warm what up?

marie                    the food  
that i brought you  
the chicken and the rice.

RITA                    what rice?  
what chicken?  
what rubbish are you talking?

marie                    you've been drinking.

RITA                    what?  
me?

no  
 i haven't!  
 marie you have!

RITA what are you talking about!  
 are you thick?

marie i can smell it!  
 I can see it!

RITA rubbish!  
 you can't smell shit!  
 now let me watch my programme.  
 what are you doing there?

marie *begins angrily opening cupboards and looking.*  
*knows very well that there are some bottles hidden here.*  
 what have you been drinking?  
 hm?  
 where's the stuff?  
 tell me!

RITA *gets up. can't.*  
 i didn't!  
 I didn't do it!

marie can't even stand up.  
 you're drunk!

RITA no!  
 i am not!

marie what's that then?  
*holds a small plastic bottle in her hand.*  
*opens it. smells it.*  
 spirits!

RITA for visitors

marie what visitors?  
 you never have any visitors!  
 who else?

RITA friends

marie you haven't got any!  
 you've only got me!  
 i'm the only one you've got!

RITA i didn't want you!

marie what?

--

RITA leave me in peace!

marie                    what did you say?

RITA                    yes.  
--

leave me in peace.  
go on.  
leave me!

marie                    you didn't want me you said?

RITA                    yes  
never wanted you.  
that dog put the ring on my finger.  
marriage ruins everything.  
remember that!  
and kids even more.  
but i brought you into this damned world.  
in which i wanted to achieve so much  
so much more.  
with the ring i was just a mother creature.  
for you.  
yes.  
i never wanted that.  
you hear me?  
now piss off!  
leave me in peace!

marie                    die!  
*storms out of the flat.*

## **Volker Schmidt**

Volker Schmidt was born in Klosterneuburg in 1976. He is a writer, director and actor. Trained as an actor at the City of Vienna Conservatoire. Acting engagements in Vienna, Berlin, Graz and elsewhere. As director, productions for the Wiener Festwochen, Hanover State Theatre, Brunswick State Theatre, Theater St. Gallen, Theater Magdeburg, Neuköllner Oper Berlin,



Schauspielhaus Vienna, Latvian National Theatre Riga, German State Theatre Timisoara and in Copenhagen, Moscow, Skopje and in Bhutan. Since 2002 he has worked as a playwright with world and national premieres at theatres including Theater Heidelberg, Hanover State Theatre, Schauspiel Leipzig, Stadttheater Ingolstadt, Schauspielhaus Vienna, Volkstheater Vienna, Schauspielhaus Graz.

He has won numerous prizes including both Jury and Audience Prizes at the Heidelberger Stückemarkt with *The Mountainbikers*, Berlin Prize for Children's Theatre, invitations to festivals include Stückemarkt at the Berlin Theatertreffen, Festival of New Plays Santiago de Chile, NET-Festival Moscow. His plays have so far been translated into eleven languages and performed from Utrecht to Novosibirsk.

In Vienna he works regularly with his independent company *new space company*, with whom he won the Nestroy Prize for Best Off-Production for *koma*.

### **Die Textiltrilogie (The Textile Trilogy)**

(Man muss dankbar sein/Ihr könnt froh sein/Wir sind glücklich)

(Got to be grateful/Count yourselves lucky/We are happy)

Economic prosperity in the world has been reversed: where poverty once reigned the so-called industrialized nations can now be found and in Europe, which was once rich, living standards are in decline. Among those affected are Liesl, Kathi and Hanni – three seamstresses in a low paid factory. Though they attempt to convince the representatives of NGOs that everything here is absolutely fine, it soon becomes clear just how precarious their life really is. If only they could have a fresh start elsewhere! Their only option is escape. And indeed they manage to get over the border into one of the completely isolated industrialized nations. But here too there is nothing but illegal work and exploitation. What should they do? Leave? Stay? Integrate? How do you do that? And does it make you happy?

In sculpted artificial language that is sharp and bitter and reminiscent of Werner Schwab, the Austrian writer Volker Schmidt depicts the fate of his three protagonists in a merciless and thoroughly commercialized world. With his trilogy of plays that began in 2007 in Vienna with 'Got to be grateful' and was completed in 2017 in Nuremburg with 'We are happy' he manages to achieve an artfully pointed view of globalization and migrant work with all its disasters and absurdities.

Cast: 3 F

Performing rights: Felix Bloch Erben Verlag, Berlin  
Translated into Russian.

World premiere: 2007, Theater Drachengasse, Vienna  
Director: Volker Schmidt

World premiere: 2014, Theater Kosmos, Bregenz

Director: Hubert Dragaschnig/

World premiere: 2017, Nuremberg State Theatre, director: Anne Bader



TEXTILE TRILOGY  
PART 1 - GOT TO BE GRATEFUL  
by Volker Schmidt

10. FLAXHAARAT'S GIRL

**kathi**

liesl

**liesl**

no

**kathi**

what?

**liesl**

no

**kathi**

why?

**liesl**

no means no

you must have lost it from your vocabulary

the word no

**kathi**

don't be rude

**liesl**

the word no is part of life

**kathi**

don't tell me about life

**liesl**

i too have lived  
indeed I have  
i too have a story to tell  
i've told my story  
so often i've told it  
i've forgotten  
and now for a change  
no  
because now the three seamstresses are coming  
no no no  
a strike  
yes indeed  
we're going on strike against life  
until it has to change

**kathi**

you've not understood anything

**liesl**

more than you think

**kathi**

anything at all

**liesl**

i've understood  
when I clawed on tight to the mattresses  
during my love duties  
when i closed my eyes  
beneath the sweat of their randiness  
when I turned cold as a dead fish  
so I could keep living  
i knew then  
i understood

that there's got to be a no somewhere  
in this life  
that this yes yes yes yes  
this yes i'm coming  
this yes harder  
this yes come on fuck me  
this shitty yes to this shitty life  
is just an excuse  
because we just let the word no walk away  
under our cowardly eyes  
we let it go  
because it's cosier  
to always wear a yes on your lips  
because it turns them on  
the dicks of this world  
our yes

but it still exists  
hanni's right about that  
there's definitely a no somewhere  
it is there  
like a footprint  
in the sand  
five tiny toes  
and no less  
(liesl starts singing a song.)

**kathi**

you immodest thing

*liesl carries on singing.*

**kathi**

you overestimate yourself  
out of all proportion

*liesl carries on singing.*

**kathi**

that no of yours  
is powerless  
no sand in the works  
will help you there

*liesl continues singing*

**kathi**

you know where you'll end up  
if you don't do  
what's demanded of you

*liesl carries on singing.*

**kathi**

you are replaceable  
within a few minutes  
you are replaceable

*liesl carries on singing*

**kathi**

our boss will not be pleased  
will not be nice to you  
not nice  
don't stick your neck out  
don't stick it out  
that neck of yours  
away  
away  
away  
away

away  
with her  
hanni  
liesl  
away  
*(kathi is overheating.)*  
got to be grateful  
when from the world bank's point of view we're  
when we're  
when i'm always  
what i could ladies and gentlemen i have always we're one of the first of  
the of course you can't compare that when we only want to make it clear  
that because that is  
that is the  
that's the  
that's

*the gears stick. the engine dies.*

**hanni**

that's over  
your phrases  
your castles in the air  
your threats

over and over  
over and over you draw  
fresh breath  
fresh air  
and exert your energy  
on resisting the run of things  
yet events march straight past you  
because you were sidelined long ago

you must learn to threaten  
because things have happened

before the yes of the world  
that you should have hidden  
among the textiles  
everything has turned out  
the way you didn't want  
everything  
you've gambled away your credit

**lies1**

you  
you  
you need to be afraid of your boss now  
really afraid  
because you've failed  
you're in a poor state now  
i wouldn't want to be in your shoes  
and i'm wondering  
where i could find a scrap of pity

now dance  
my little dancing bear  
my trained monkey  
up on the table  
now dance for me

is she deaf  
is it too hot here  
should i open a window  
get up and swing your hips  
kathi dear  
jump to it

*(kathi dances. hanni despairs. that's not what she wanted.)*  
show us what you've got  
not so shy

put more fire in it  
that's better  
now you're cooking  
you like that too don't you  
say that you like that too  
you see hanni  
how i make her dance  
you see how easy that is  
top becomes bottom  
left becomes right  
false becomes true  
welcome  
welcome  
welcome

*they sing a song*

## **Gerhild Steinbuch**

Born in Mödling (Austria) in 1983, studied Scenic Writing in Graz (graduating in 2006) and a Master's in Dramaturgy at the "Ernst Busch", Academy of Dramatic Arts, Berlin (graduating in 2016). She works as a writer in theatre and music theatre, a freelance dramaturg and a translator from English.



In 2003 Gerhild Steinbuch won the S chaubühne am Lehniner Platz, Berlin's playwriting competition with 'kopftot' ("headdead"). Since then she has won numerous literary grants and prizes including the Young Author's Scholarship of the Hermann-Lenz-Stiftung, the Young Literature Prize of the magazine manuskripte and the State Scholarship of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture. She has taken part in the Vienna Burgtheater's Werkstatttagen, the Royal Court Theatre, London's Summer School and the Ingeborg-Bachmann Prize. She has won the Author's Prize at the 4th Franco-German Autorentage and was a scholar at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, the prose writer's workshop at the Literary Colloquium Berlin and the Author's Laboratory at Schauspiel Frankfurt.

Gerhild Steinbuch's plays are represented by the Rowohlt Theater Verlag. Her translations for the Berlin Schaubühne include 'The Yellow Wallpaper' by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2013) and 'Ophelia's Room' by Alice Birch (2015), which were both directed by Katie Mitchell. In 2016 Gerhild Steinbuch worked under the direction of Philipp Becker as a dramaturg for the Tellspiele Altdorf.

In 2016/17 she was awarded the Hannsman-Poethen scholarship of the State Capital Stuttgart. The resulting musical performance was given its world premiere in February 2017 at the ECLAT Festival for New Music. The theatrical work she developed together with Laura Linnenbaum 'Beate Uwe Uwe Selfie Klick' on the NSU and the European right was invited to the 2017 Heidelberger Stückemarkt. She is currently working on a commission from the Deutsche Oper Berlin / Münchener Biennale to be given its world premiere in 2018.

Gerhild Steinbuch teaches at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and at the German Literature Institute in Leipzig. She is a founder member of von 'Nazis & Goldmund', an alliance of writers against the European right: [www.nazisundgoldmund.net](http://www.nazisundgoldmund.net)

## **MS POCAHONTAS**

Pocahontas, Version 1: A beautiful woman meets a well-travelled stranger in the wilderness. Nothing connects them, nothing may connect them but their love overcomes the chasm between their peoples.

Pocahontas, Version 2: An eleven-year-old girl is attacked by a group of brutal invaders, raped and kidnapped: her people is conquered, her home destroyed.

History is written by the victors, stories by Disney - and the crew of Gerhild Steinbuch's already rather ramshackle ship Pocahontas, equipped



with buckets of paint and brushes, make a great effort to depict their story in the brightest possible colours for the audience. However they soon notice that maintaining a positive self-image is hard work: "No sooner have you given the world something beautiful, horror immediately begins to seep through." Above all when the world keeps turning and one is confronted with the consequences of this beautification. Suddenly the protagonists see boats heading towards their own coastline full to the brim with people seeking help and shelter. And fear and defensiveness set in while at the same time they hastily assure each other of being on the side of the good guys

Cast: variable

Performing rights: Rowohlt Theaterverlag

World premiere: 17. 05. 2015, Schauspiel Frankfurt

Director: Laura Linnenbaum

### **GUTE GESTÄNDNISSE BESSERER MENSCHEN (GOOD CONFESSIONS BETTER PEOPLE)**

During the week people suffer their way miserably through their lives, slipping out of their rotting apartments into the office, an imposition on others and barely able to put up with themselves. But on Sunday they go to the woods, like everyone else, dressed in leisure wear, with an apple, thermos and sandwiches. Because the woods are a socially acceptable leisure destination: here people become creatures, their facades drop, nature breaks fresh ground. Knowledge of one's own misery, mutely tolerated humiliations, apathy and desolation: none of these count any more when you go hunting together, when you've got your opponent in front of you, when flesh meets flesh and the first bone breaks.

'Good Confessions Better People' descends into the abyss of everyday life. Like in a distorting mirror these average individuals appear both sympathetic and monstrous at the same time: their desire is insatiable, every one of their caresses an assault. The noose of longing, loneliness and violence draws ever tighter - until in the woods killer and victim, tenderness and brutality finally become one.

Cast: variable

Performing rights: Rowohlt Theaterverlag

Free for world premiere

**MS POCAHONTAS**  
**by Gerhild Steinbuch**

1. UTOPIA/IF EVERYTHING ELSE IS LIES THIS HERE IS TRUE

There was once a faraway land called America, or Europe, or Pandora, uh  
I don't really know any more.  
But it was a whole space ship journey away  
And full of wildness, strangeness and beauty  
And the people there, the people who arrived there, fell in love  
And this love was a very strong and beautiful love  
It moved mountains, this strong, beautiful love  
It broke down borders, yes that's what it was like  
And in their amazement the people abandoned their bodies  
And they flowed into the wild and beautiful wilds  
Growing and weaving themselves into them  
And the world suddenly became a tame world  
And they suddenly became very fearless

That was easy.

Yes  
And if they didn't die -

2. IN A CASE OF GLASS:

THE PRINCESSES WHO WERE ONCE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESSES HAVE PUT ON THEIR  
PRETTIEST DRESSES, THEY MOVE LIKE THEY DID BEFORE, BEFORE IS A LONG TIME  
AGO.

It was once said, so we have heard, that it was necessary to tell of a  
beginning  
A beginning that matters  
We have heard it was  
It was said it was necessary to tell of a break intervention opening  
Then something new would begin.  
But why begin something new when there is already something old.  
When there is a story.  
When there is a story that is something beautiful.

We tip out our bucket of paint, we smile, we tip out our bucket of paint,  
we smile, we smile, we tip out our bucket of paint, we wave, we tip out  
our bucket of paint, we tip out our bucket of paint, we tip out our  
bucket of paint, we tip out our bucket of paint, and look: a beautiful  
bright river.

One two three. We come in peace. On our prettiest crossing ships with our  
prettiest buckets of paint in our prettiest princess clothes with our  
prettiest princess bodies we have entered to bring into the world what  
you have not previously heard of, something that might be told of in  
stories: a love? No, of course not. But it is the story of a love that  
must first find its equal. Please don't do this at home! Or there won't  
be a single stone left on top of another. Well, there won't be anyway  
once we get to it. Once we arrive. But in peace, always in peace, we  
attach importance to that. We start waving joyfully and harmlessly, we

seem joyful and harmless. People don't like leaving their safe areas of independence to let another person in, no, to become involved with another person, yes, people don't like letting others into their own area, but they will pull open all the doors with spirit and enthusiasm if someone presents them with a kind and above all beautiful, no, as soon as someone presents them with an above all fresh innocent face, which shows no more than femininity and innocence. We smile. We have mastered feminine virtues in our sleep: blowing, sucking, sewing, crocheting, knitting, silence, sweating, throwing, shooting, beating. Our clothes have a very pretty, very pure hem on which the dirt that we have been dragged through cannot be seen. Our bodies are rinsed with the garden hose, the holes thoroughly disinfected, so one may happily enter when one comes in, no, over us. There is always one who comes once we do arrive. Once they get round to it. Well, but the story of a love is sadly one that nobody gets into at once. Entry needs to be gained with a certain, let's call it power, with violence. Yes, if I always cried love whenever I didn't feel any then I would never stop crying. If I always felt love whenever I cried then yes, then I would never stop ignoring. Here anyone who wants can join in. All the boundaries have been lowered, now we're waiting for someone to settle down here on our territory. I maintain no claim to it. No, neither do I. Neither do I. Yes, we can see that. Yes, the offer seeps out of me so impetuously that the most it can be sold as is a special offer. Yes, this boundary can be overcome, just as bodies can be overcome. Yes, this border can be turned, as only borders can be twisted and turned that had previously been gouged into the landscape for this purpose. Or arms and legs. Never mind.

One two three. We come in peace. On our crossing ship of love we sail off smiling, we come in peace, heart, heart double heart, wait a moment, we smile, knock knock, who's there? Yes it's the good stranger slash conqueror slash prince, where?, a prince?, so he boards the ship, the stranger, he enters this our new land and he climbs away over us. No, that's not true, yes, fortunately not, first he settles down upon us. Before he then interrupts this activity in order of course to return later with reinforcements he has something else to give or throw away, no to unload. So we interrupt our occupation with our beloved ship's crossing and are now briefly all woman. Anyone who wants may penetrate. Also a virtue. And the best know stories are also the most beautiful aren't they? Yes, at least you know what you've got with them. Business is booming, we're not complaining. And everyone has fantasies of discovery. Or did you never play out adventures when you were little? Well, I was always a spaceman. I was David Attenborough or Konrad Lorenz. Well, I was always Hitler. Say Winnetou. I was always Winnetou. So the conqueror sets foot on this land. History will be written or something else written down, an unwritten law for example on whose invisible but substantial existence a few minorities more or less will subsequently be able to bite their teeth out. Or be able to have their teeth ripped out. Humility is still a virtue, am I right? Yes if you get properly fucked through and never look each other in the face then at least you know what you're worth. Well, there's not a long way you can go below that, I'd say. Alright, yes, I would like to be an intact human being. The sort of person you like to meet, a human person. A person from the beginning, a child person, who's still growing. I'd like to be as I once was. Yes, you can spend a long time wishing for that. Yes, if I always had to cry the victim whenever I'm playing one, then I'd never stop crying. Yes, if I always cried the victim whenever I see one I'd never be able to stop

shouting. Yes, if I would always play the victim so I wouldn't see any more of them then I would never stop playing. If I always were the victim when I was one then, yes, I would never stop being stunned. No, it only looks like that. No, it doesn't look like that either. No our borders can't be seen by looking at us, that would be even more beautiful. And what would beauty be if it was an unlimited beauty? No we do not exclude anything here, that would be even more beautiful. But what would freedom be if it were nothing but unlimited beauty? Yes, an unlimited freedom like that, oh, that would be beautiful. No, that would be a lie. The story of a love is ultimately a story that has to be tramped down first in order to shine subsequently in new and unsuspected glory on the foundation thus prepared. Yes if anyone ever arrives, if he forces his way in with his wild power, then you'll know once more where you belong. No, who belongs where. That the other is a stranger to me, I love and cherish, I value that. Yes, I don't study anything, I don't analyse anything. Intelligence destroys the sharp image of the first impression, everyone knows that. So we maintain our distance, in order to recognize something else. In reality it is like this: you will see if you are in the right place if the shoe fits and this one here fits as if it has been moulded onto you, so it's clear who has a right to be standing here and who doesn't. We preserve this feeling of being a stranger so that we don't notice the other, no, so we really do notice him. And this story is a beautiful story. This story of this submission is a beautiful story. In every break, no, in every intervention, lies a beginning. And it's always our beginning, we would say. Beautiful.

**GOOD CONFESSIONS BETTER PEOPLE**  
**by Gerhild Steinbuch**

She says they said we could have gone too that's what she said  
they said

Yes we could we could really have gone too or not

We would have known beforehand we would

If we could have gone beforehand

We would they said we would never have got into it

We'd never have got into it if we'd gone

Yes

Then we would have gone after all or maybe not

If we had then at least we'd really or not why

Yes

Why why why why why

Why why why why why why

Why why why why why

Why why why why why why yes

But

Sympathy sympathy great sympathy

But listen to our advice they would have said they would have said

Listen to our advice

A love yes a love

That makes everything easier a love like that a beautiful love

Is the foundation we're standing on the

Foundation that you're not and that's where the problem starts

Because if the foundation's missing it can happen

Well

But

A love like that that

It is a beautiful thing

In its most beautiful festive clothes

In its most beautiful everyday clothes

Yes a love like that is a beautiful thing

In its most beautiful Sunday clothes  
In its most beautiful bedclothes  
With the most beautiful sound in its ears  
With its slap in the face  
With its torn ear drum  
With all its abstinent glory  
A love like that yes a love LOVELOVE big  
Emotions emotions tears beautiful white handkerchief  
Emotions big tears sign of a warning finger pointing  
Friendship!  
Self-respect finger pointing self-respect self-respect  
Friendship!  
Don't always let everything gush over you No  
Don't always let yourself go like that they say they say  
You really would have I would not  
But if you stop now they say if you  
If you stop letting yourself go then love is bound to come yes  
A beautiful really beautiful love  
Such a beautiful love of proportion and rules  
Such a beautiful humourless beautiful love  
A quiet a nice a lovely lovelove

Passing on a feeling of security through silence  
Passing on a good feeling through lacking a story of your own  
A kind cheerful a lovely a nice merging into the other  
A growing towards the stories of another that don't interest you  
anyway  
A slow beautiful disappearance in the interests of togetherness  
Togetherness you most beautiful virtue of all  
You'll follow just after modesty and being nice  
Yes she says I think I can do that  
Because being inconspicuous was always my strong point  
Lack of personality yes that

That was always my strong point

Yes a love that really is something beautiful

Yes, a love, that really is something beautiful. Ultimately you have to beautify the work with something, here in this joyless institution, in which it's unclear who is on which side. We're all the same in the end. Yes, on Sundays we take off our disguises. Like this and only like this, we recognize each other. Recognize ourselves in recognizing others. Fine, transitions between people are ultimately in themselves fluid. No, between bodies. No no no, it's important to set limits. Yes, limits between internal and external, I agree with you about that. No, between indoors and outdoors. Sundays in the woods. If I have to spend all week dealing with such creatures then ultimately there are times I simply need something beautiful. Is that so hard to understand? No, it's not, you are sensitive after all, no, we are sensitive, we are equipped with humanity, but there are times, when you've spent all day dealing with creatures, you've spent all day surrounded by these creatures, that there are times you ask yourself whether you yourself, where one ends and the other, no, but when you spend all day with creatures like that, well, often I'm overcome, no, but there are times, admittedly, but there are times when I'm overcome by such anger that I could, and I know I shouldn't, because my position is a very sensitive position, but also on behalf of my colleagues if one, and you really do want admittedly, can you understand that? You would really most like to, no, not take it in hand, we're not creatures, but you would like to, yes, alright, yes, you can go ahead and say it, it's not an issue, yes, well I would say the same in your position, well, well, yes, you'd want to give every one of them a rope to make a free decision about the course of their lives, yes indeed, and then go into the woods on Sundays with them, nip it in the bud, fine, anyone who doesn't want to doesn't have to, but of course they'll then yes, I would have done that too, yes, now another one's killed themselves, well, I would have done too in their position. Sorry. Sorry but a human being really can't go on living with something like that, and neither can a creature, just imagine that women WOMEN, or children, I know you don't want to, yes, you have to if you're going to spend all day with these and, yes, yes, and yes, and when I do imagine it, then I really want to, what I really want to do, because you know that people like that are never going to change, optimists who say it might be different, I'll pat them on the back, those people, I respect and admire them for their belief in goodness, but if they, believe me, if they could see for just one day, yes, believe me, if they could see for just one day what I see every day and hear what I hear every day, they'd know better, believe me. Really, to reach these people you sometimes need something of beauty. There are people and then there are creatures. And you can smile away as much as you want,

nobody's going to be taken in by that. Nobody's going to be taken in by you. You can express as much love as you want, nobody's going to be taken in. Something is growing under my heart, it's spreading and festering, its' getting bigger all the time. Yes, but no one can help you there, I'm sorry, we're sorry. There are people worth loving and then there are the others. Yes if it ever arrived. If love ever arrived. But there are people worth loving and then there's you, don't fool yourself. No, I'm not fooling myself about that. But there are times I do wish. Well. Sometimes I wish I do wish. And I know I'm not a personperson like that, no, of course not, no, I don't fool myself. I don't kid myself. But, and I know I can't change anything about this, I'm not fooling myself, but, yes, I'm not fooling you. There are good people and there are better people and then there are the others. Yes, if you're a creature then there's nothing you can do about it, don't fool yourself. The you'll touch no one, you'll have no contact with anyone and another person will only stay if you hold onto them, if you stick your claws into them and they will feel sick when they smell you and they'll be sad when they see you if they see you for longer and then you'll have to keep your distance if you want them to stand you, always keeping your distance so they don't notice what you actually are and throw you out of their lives forever. I know all that but sometimes I wish. I wish. I wish for a feeling that's so great that everything I once was, no, that everything I am, disappears beneath it. That someone smashes it, that someone kicks it with a force that I am unable to recover from. I wish for total destruction that I cannot achieve myself.

But dear man, man that is no reason to end your life

Now don't cry in the landscape man come come on you you can come closer

Because this beautiful cutting here is not for being alone

Because this beautiful cutting is not for crying all on your own

This beautiful cutting is ultimately our place of refuge

Here we all put off our disguises

Yes in the woods people come together

Come here

Alright

Come here

Alright yes alright

Alright and now I'll put my arms around you



## **Bernhard Studlar**

Born in Vienna in 1972. 1991-1996 Studies at Vienna University (Theatre Studies, Philosophy, German, Journalism).  
1995-1998 Dramaturg and Assistant Director at Theater der Jugend, Vienna.  
1998-2002 Studies Scenic Writing at University of the Arts.



Bernhard Studlar writes plays as a solo author and as part of a writing duo with Andreas Sauter. 2001 Writer's Prize at the Heidelberger Stückemarkt for his play 'Transdanubia Dreaming', that was given its world premiere in January 2003 at the Burgtheater Vienna. The first play written together with Andreas Sauter, 'A. is Another' was awarded the Kleist Prize for Young Playwrights in 2000 and the Radio Play of the Year award by the Radio Basel Foundation in 2004. 'All about Mary Long' won the prize for Best Radical Comedy from Kassel State Theatre (world premiere Donaufestival 2004). In December 2003 'Mariedl-Kantine' premiered at the Burgtheater Vienna.

In 2006 he adapted Julie Zeh's novel 'Spieltrieb' for the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg and wrote the commissioned play 'Me and You and the EU' for the same theatre.

From 2010 to 2015 Bernhard Studlar wrote a series of four successive plays for the Rabenhof Theatre in Vienna: 'Human Being Parcival', 'Don Q', 'The brilliant city musicians - every man for himself' and 'Robinson Crusoe' as well as a trilogy of children's play about space ('Round the corner'), time ('See you later') and food ('Tuck In').

In 2014 he adapted Julie Zeh's novel 'Zero Hour' for Theater Bonn. In 2015 his play 'Die Ermüdeten oder Das Etwas, das wir sind' ("The Exhausted, or whatever we are" was given its world premiere at Schauspiel Leipzig. In March 2017 his commissioned play 'Starless Night' received its world premiere at the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava.

In 2005 he was joint founder together with director Hans Escher of the intercultural playwriting project WIENER WORTSTAETTEN.  
[www.wortstaetten.at](http://www.wortstaetten.at)

Bernhard Studlar lives a freelance writer in Vienna.

### **Me and You and the EU - Borderline Experiences (Fun & Horror)**

The place where this story takes place is a utopia: the *Cafeo Europeo*. Karoline, Kardinal and the waiter sit there dreaming of change. They are waiting for a New Europe, wistful, nightmarish and usually musical. They believe it is getting harder and harder for people to find their way. Regardless of whether they are at a road junction, a border crossing or in their own apartment. The play deals with the loss of security and people's longing to arrive somewhere.

Cast: 1 F / 2 M

World premiere 2006, Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg

Director: Roger Vontobel

Performing rights: henschel Schauspiel Theaterverlag, Berlin

**Nacht ohne Sterne (Starless Night)**

A city somewhere in Europe. Its inhabitants' paths cross or part forever in this starless night. Sirens wail constantly and there are demonstrations on the streets. Two men are killed, one in the theatre, the other in the street. A third who is mortally ill, throws himself out of a window. Its themes are gambling debts and guilt, fears about making a living and the desire for a little happiness and security. An actress with angel wings saves one and leaves the other, a doctor sacrifices herself for her profession, a girl wanders aimlessly through the streets. Death joins her and gives her a parting letter from her father. He is the only one who always knows what to do, doing his work efficiently and professionally. When it gets late (too late) the characters meet in the *Bar a nox*. They walk drunkenly over the cemetery of their dreams.

'Starless Night' tells of how the blanket of civilization is getting thinner in a time when terrorist violence and social inequality play into the hands of populists of all shades.

Cast: 5 F / 5 M

World premiere 2017, Slovak National Theatre, Bratislava

Director: Jan Luteran

Translated into Slovak.

Performing rights: henschel Schauspiel Theaterverlag, Berlin

## **Me and You and the EU - Borderline Experiences (Fun & Horror)**

**by Bernhard Studlar**

### **Prologue / Author's Foreword**

*There are no boundaries. Not for thoughts, not for emotions. Boundaries are created by fear.*

*(INGMAR BERGMANN)*

The following story is not necessarily true. Any similarity with living persons is purely coincidental, entirely possible and in some way desirable. The place where the story takes place is a utopia: the CAFEO EUROPO

Very many empty tables and chairs, gentle lighting and not very fresh air. The waiter shuffles about between the tables, the chairs, the counter and an unseen kitchen. He meanders in thought too. In one hand a cloth for wiping the tables, in the other a fly-swatter. As if there is something to be dealt with.

But to continue.

In the background a cream-coloured telephone on the wall. At first glance one might think it no longer works, but this would be a serious mistake. It simply doesn't ring any more. Indeed it can generally be said that silence is an essential feature of this story.

And somewhere in the background someone is sitting. This yawning man is called Josef Kardinal. But what is a name - nothing at all.

At one point Kardinal stands up and puts a coin in the jukebox. Music that sounds strangely distant. At certain points in the song both the waiter and Kardinal sing or hum along gently.

Then it is quiet again.

And whichever latecomers have yet to arrive are out of luck, because it starts like this:

## 1. Do you speak European?

Into the silence.

WAITER        You've been silent for weeks. Why?

KARDINAL     yawns.

KARDINAL     Sorry.

WAITER        I get tired of life myself sometimes. (*KARDINAL yawns again*)  
But why are you so silent? You only ever talk to your beer.

KARDINAL     Yes, why?

WAITER        That's what I'm wondering. And that's why I'm asking you now  
in person.

KARDINAL     Because I can't think of anything better. (*sneezes*) I got a  
chill yesterday.

WAITER        It's happened to a lot of people in the city. I've noticed  
that. It's been going on for some time. People don't talk any  
more. Nobody says anything. Especially in the cold season. No  
words, just hot air that condenses when they open their  
mouths.

KARDINAL     And germs.

WAITER        And germs.

*Silence.*

KARDINAL     We all emerge from nothingness and return into great stinking  
nothingness once again. That's all I can think of at the  
moment. A beer please. (*Pause*) A large one.

WAITER        A large one.

*The waiter shuffles to the counter. Kardinal yawns.*

KARDINAL     Sorry.

WAITER        It comes from a lack of oxygen. You don't breathe enough.

KARDINAL     It's chronic in my case. A disease. (*yawns*)

WAITER        Perhaps it might be enough if you went out into the fresh air  
for five minutes.

KARDINAL     And get even colder? No way. Anyway, I'm waiting.

WAITER        Just don't tell me it's for better times.

KARDINAL     Come off it. Don't be ridiculous.

WAITER        That's all right then. I'm reassured. Here's your beer.

KARDINAL Thank you. Cheers.

WAITER Cheers. *(Pause)* So what are you waiting for?

KARDINAL The New Europe.

WAITER Aha. *(Pause)* Look. There it is...

KARDINAL Where?

WAITER ... the beast. *(swats a fly)* Got it. The longer they fly around in a room, the more tired they get. And if you don't get them first, they fall off the wall all by themselves.

KARDINAL A shock like that in the bright light of day is just what I don't need.

WAITER I'm sorry. It's a reflex I've got from my time in the Army. Killing time is the same as killing flies. *(Pause)* So? What exactly are you waiting for? With the New Europe?

KARDINAL No comment.

WAITER A shame. *(Pause)* I'd be interested to find out what's going on inside your head.

KARDINAL Inside my head blood circulates.

WAITER Inside my head someone occasionally cries for help, and it isn't me.

*Silence.*

KARDINAL I'm sure there are people living out there who are guaranteed to be less happy than us two. Only they don't know that. Not yet. But soon a day will come when someone tells them. And then they will come and take their revenge.

WAITER You're a doom-monger, Mr Kardinal.

KARDINAL I'm a realist. Always have been. It protects one from certain disappointments.

WAITER I don't expect much myself anyway.

KARDINAL The New Europe will come and spit in our glasses. It will take what belongs to us which will then belong to it. And to a certain extent that's only fair.

WAITER And why should this New Europe choose your beer to spit in?

KARDINAL Because I can't defend myself. And those who can't defend themselves are always the first who have to believe in it.

WAITER If you're going to carry on talking like that, I'd prefer it if you were silent.

KARDINAL    You see.

WAITER       Another beer?

KARDINAL    Yes please.

*The waiter shuffles to the counter.  
On the way he swats a fly.*

WAITER       Splat.

KARDINAL    They can't defend themselves either.

WAITER       Are you an animal lover?

KARDINAL    Depends on the animal. Does that surprise you?

WAITER       That you'll stick up for the flies here in the café does surprise me.

KARDINAL    I was just trying to clarify something.

WAITER       Oh right. *(puts his beer down in front of him)* Cheers.

KARDINAL    Thank you. *(drinks)*

*Pause.*

**Starless night**  
**by Bernhard Studlar**

**6. The Doctor & The Patient** (work is work and death is death)

*Later. Night.*

*Hospital room.*

*Silence, occasionally interrupted by an announcement.*

Patient                Why won't the windows open?

Doctor                Is that why you called me?

Patient                No.

Doctor                Good. I'll tell you anyway: so that patients like you  
don't jump out of the window.

Patient                A shame. Then you'd be rid of me. And so would I.  
*(Pause. He looks out of the window.)*  
Don't you find it horrible, having to be part of this  
world?

Doctor                Why did you refuse? I've just heard from a colleague. /  
Why?

Patient                The same image every night. Burning cars in the street.  
Demonstrations. Anger.

Doctor                Your daughter had to have acute treatment from the  
nurses. Did they tell you that?

Patient                It's very simple. One or two firelighters on the tyres  
and "whoosh!" the car's in flames. The German mid-range  
ones burn best. And the Japanese ones. That's what I  
read.

Doctor                She was willing. Willing to be a donor. For you. Her  
father.

Patient                Burning anger fills the air.

Doctor                Are you even listening to me? Hello?!

Patient                I'm right with you.

Doctor                The stem cell treatment is your last chance. Your  
daughter...

Patient                Will you leave my daughter alone!

Doctor                Me?

Patient                Yes. You. Your colleagues, the entire hospital is poking  
its nose into my life and my daughter's life. I have  
written to her and made it quite clear. She should never

have come. I reject this treatment.

Doctor               Why?

Patient               That's none of your business.

Doctor               There's no other option for you. Is that clear?  
                           *(No answer.)*  
                           Is that clear?  
                           *(No answer.)*  
                           Fine, then I can go now.

Patient               A single injection and it's all over.

Doctor               I beg your pardon?

Patient.               You understood exactly what I meant.

Doctor               We're not even going to talk about that. You know  
 that...

Patient               Yes, but not everywhere. Please, come with me.

Doctor               How do you imagine that? I can't get away from here.

Patient               I'll arrange everything. And pay for it. I've got nobody  
 else I can ask.

Doctor               Didn't you get your sleeping pills?

Patient               Don't change the subject.

Doctor               Some sleep would do you good.

Patient               Please. I beg you.

Doctor               I've got to go.

Patient               Have you ever been to Amsterdam?

Doctor               No.

Patient               Well then. Or would you prefer Switzerland? I would  
                           favour Amsterdam. A beautiful city. You're welcome to  
                           stay longer. A week? Take some time off. I think a week  
                           is enough time to see the city. One last beautiful day  
                           will be enough for me. And then...

Doctor               Euthanasia is illegal here.

Patient               That's why we're going to Amsterdam.

Doctor               We are definitely not going to Amsterdam. I'd lose my  
                           job if...



Patient            You could travel as a private individual. Or as my lover maybe?

Doctor            Can we continue this conversation on a professional basis?

Patient.           As you wish, Doctor.

Doctor            Thank you. It's not been an easy night so far.

Patient            I'm sorry about that.

Doctor            That's alright. It's my job.

Patient            May I officially enquire whether you would be inclined to assist me with euthanasia?

Doctor            If anyone found out about that, I would lose my job.

Patient            Is that what you're most worried about?

Doctor            Yes. Any objections?

Patient            No.  
(Pause.) I'd like to have your worries.

Doctor            Sorry, that wasn't very... I've had a hard day.

Patient            You've already told me.

Doctor            Sorry.

Patient            That's alright. The unfairness of it's not your fault. You've got your life and I've got mine. We're all bookkeepers of our own business. We keep an account and suffer losses. Day by day. Then one day we add it all up. Draw a line underneath it and move on. We are God's puppets, my mother always said. And she wasn't even religious. She died of cancer too.

Doctor            Your daughter ...

Patient            I don't want to owe her anything. You understand? Not her and not anyone else. It's the way I've always lived. For myself. Alone. I was a shit father. Vanished when she was 5 and took no further interest in her. She wrote me letters and I let her down. I paid alimony and sent birthday presents. That was it. She deserved something better.

Doctor            Have another think about it. It could be an important step in your relationship with your daughter.

Patient            There is no relationship.

Doctor            I think she might see that differently.

Patient            My life - my disease. There's no more. At the end of this desolate day I'm left with myself and my fucking cancer.

*Pause.*

*The doctor is beeped.*

Doctor            I'm needed in theatre.

Patient            Go. Whoever it is. They'll need your help.

Doctor            Do you want a sleeping pill now?

Patient            It makes no difference whether I sleep or whether I lie awake. I don't need anything any more.

Doctor            I've got to go.

*She is about to leave.*

Patient            Thank you.

Doctor            What for?

Patient            For listening to me.

*Suddenly The Doctor hugs The Patient. He returns the hug. They stand there like that for a long time. Outside there are still disturbances. One might think they were lovers.*

*The Doctor is beeped a second time. She lets go of him.*

Patient            You smell of smoke.

Doctor            Sorry.

*The Doctor has left.*

*The Patient stares out of the window. There is still fire outside. Still night.*

*Blackout.*

—

## Miroslava Svolikova

Miroslava Svolikova was born in 1986, studied Philosophy in Vienna and Paris, Fine Art at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and Scenic Writing at uniT Graz. Svolikova has had numerous exhibitions, is engaged in a music project and has been published in anthologies and literary magazines. In 2015 she won the Retzhof Drama Prize for *die hockenden (the crouchers)*. In 2016 she was awarded Schauspielhaus Vienna's Hans Gratzler Scholarship for *Diese Mauer fasst sich selbst zusammen und der Stern hat gesprochen, der Stern hat auch was gesagt (This wall is pulling itself together and the star has spoken, the star said something too)*. Both plays were invited to the Autorentheatertage Berlin in 2017. Svolikova has also been awarded the literar mechna Playwriting Award (2015), the Schiller Memorial Prize's Young Writer's Prize (2016), the Hermann Sudermann Prize (2017) and the Playwriting Scholarship of the Austrian Federal Chancellor's Office (2017).



**Diese Mauer fasst sich selbst zusammen und der Stern hat gesprochen, der Stern hat auch was gesagt. (This wall is pulling itself together and the star has spoken, the star said something too.)**

There once was Europe. A futuristic museum holds relics from a time when walls were important: contracts, chewed ballpoint pens for signing contracts or the "shy institution". And the hologram is the "guide" in this museum which no one visits any more. But then three characters arrive who have won a competition and are determined to take over a job. What job? That is the question. And the museum has a cleaner who thinks she was born to be a theatre director. And she does indeed read out a wonderful poetry programme.

The hologram explains the past or what is in the museum to these characters with verve and under some time pressure – but one cannot simply help oneself to a piece of history. The star enters, a fallen star that had something to do with a so called "onion". While he is cooking he thinks about society and stumbles across a piece of paper saying "You all have to stick together." The wall also enters: this is an old story. What it hold together, who it has held back, who it has kept apart. And also the spit that speaks to the "future, past and coming generations": "I am all the corpses people have climbed over. I am all the rest. I am the calloused hand that built everything, I am the bleeding womb that gave birth to everything, I am the beheaded calf and the trampled chicken, I am the murdered people, I am the life given away, the unbroken straw and last year's parking ticket, I am always there. (...) I am the tar of history, I am you. I am many."

In an age when the theatre urgently needs political comedies, Miroslava Svolikova has created an absurd store cupboard of history. An endgame in a time in between past, present and future, in which the here and now appears as a light in the distance. A farce filled with word games and powerful rhythms which is extremely funny. Of course it goes without saying that the hologram has a great deal of trouble telling these stories.

Cast variable.

Performing rights: Suhrkamp Theaterverlag

World Premiere: January 2017, Schauspielhaus Wien, Director: Franz-Xaver Mayr

**die hockenden (the crouchers)**

They crouch in puddles, in mould, in a hollow, and it's hard for them to get up out of it. They have always been there and still are. And it's a good thing they are there: otherwise we wouldn't know what was happening even if nothing is happening. There needs to be someone who tells us that. That's what they do. Perhaps they stood on the ground once but now they have sunk into it and they can only stay close to the earth. And in pubs. There is still room for them there. Even if the pubs burn down now and again. That happens often. But never mind, the pubs are soon rebuilt and then they burn down again, year in, year out. Sometimes they stand and watch, sometimes they walk away. They're familiar with it. No need to worry.

But there is someone who runs, who pisses on the pubs and then leaves. He's special. He's different. They've always known that. They put all their hopes in him. He is going to tell them what the future will bring. They sit down next to him when he rests his head on his arms. He's going to tell them. But he doesn't. He says nothing. He doesn't want to speak. He drinks.

And someone has predicted this, that he will not be the saviour. An old-timer. Each step is a step too far in this place, he says. No one can go further. He can't either. So he stood still, crouched down and now he has lain down. Stating where he has always been.

Cast: variable

World Premiere April 2016, Burgtheater Wien  
Director: Alia Luque

Performing rights: Suhrkamp Theaterverlag

**This wall is pulling itself together and the star has spoken, the star said something too.**

By Miroslava Svolikova

Characters:

character 1  
character 2  
character 3  
the star  
the cleaner  
the hologramm  
the stone/the wall  
the institution  
a bit of spit

**the sieve.** character 1, character 2, character 3

character 1        I won a competition. I was told I'd won a competition and I was given the job of carrying out an important mission. *takes a large sieve.*  
this is about the future! this is a mission. the most important mission of my life. I am ready. I am ready!  
ok. where am I?

character 2        *enters* we are there, I don't know if we're already there yet, there, where we are. which competition did you win?

character 1        a competition with a sieve. I was actually two weeks late but in the end they took me anyway.

character 3        *enters.* I won that competition too.

character 1        I'm ready! I'm ready!

character 2        I've won a competition as well, was this a group project?

character 1        I don't think so. I was explicitly told that I had won the competition. and I am ready!

character 2        I was explicitly told that too.

character 3        they will have known that we wouldn't come here otherwise.

character 2        they'll sit there and tell themselves: now we've got three again.

character 1        that's impossible, I won, anyway, I'm the only character here with a sieve.

character 2        I didn't understand that bit, about the sieve, what do we need a sieve for, didn't it say we could bring something with us?

character 1        it said something but it was something about a sieve.

character 3        I brought a sieve with me too but only a little one *takes out a tea sieve* I understood it more symbolically.

character 2        I'm convinced that it's all a farce anyway and we don't need a sieve and nobody has won anything and it is all one big lie.

character 1        what was in the competition can't be wrong because I won.

character 2        we won the competition so it must be true.

character 3        we all came here, so what was in the competition must be right.

character 2        the competition can't be wrong because we've all read it.

character 3        this is my sieve. that was definitely in the competition.

character 1        I won the competition and now I'm here. I am ready!

character 2        I'm ready too!

character 3        *shouts* we're ready!

character 1        what do we do?

characters 1+2+3 we are ready!

character 3        this is my sieve!

characters 1+2+3we are ready!

character 1        I won!

Characters 1+2+3 we are ready!

character 2        when does it start?

*characters 1+2+3 start speaking again in chorus and then give up.*

**the crouchers**

by

Miroslava Svobikova

one who is spoken of	-	several*
the crouchers	-	several*
the others	-	several*
an old-timer	-	several*

several\*  
several\*

(pause)

what is there.

what is there to be said.  
there's nothing to be said.



*there's basically nothing  
to be said.*

*there's basically nothing  
to be said, if you consider  
it properly*

there's basically nothing  
to be said, but there's a  
lot of talk.

there's a lot of talk and  
then it drops down and  
sticks together.

there's a lot of talk and  
then it lies around  
somewhere.

there's a lot been said  
here. quite a lot was said  
here into the ground.

then someone trod it down  
and made firm ground out of  
it.

on ground like that you  
only stand as well as you  
can.

as long as it lasts.

who knows what ground  
you're standing on.

it's good for sitting on.

who knows what kind of  
ground you grow out of  
there, or what sort of  
earth it is we're standing  
in, or knows the reason,  
the reason for or against  
something.

now everyone's still  
standing there.

(pause)

if it wasn't for us,  
nothing would be known  
basically.

(pause)

*if it wasn't for us, it  
would remain unfathomable,  
everything here:*

(pause)

if it wasn't for us,  
nothing would actually have  
any meaning.

if it wasn't for us, it  
would all be meaningless.

everything is meaningless.

if we didn't exist,  
everything would be utterly  
pointless.

if it wasn't for us,  
everything that happens  
here would be meaningless.

*nothing is happening.*  
nothing is happening.

is something supposed to  
happen?

it's a good thing we're  
here.

it's a good thing we are.

*you can say it's a good  
thing we exist.*

*a good thing we exist.*

a good thing there's  
someone here who can  
explain everything.

there's only one person  
left who can still explain  
everything here.

(runs across the stage)

that was him!

## **Robert Woelfl**

Robert Woelfl was born in Villach in 1965 and studied at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, where he has since lived as a freelance writer. He has received numerous awards for his plays including the Reinhold Lenz Prize for New Playwriting, the Author's Prize of German Language Theatre Publishers and the Klagenfurt City Theatre Playwriting Prize. For his video essays he has been awarded the Austrian Video Arts Prize. Robert Woelfl has been a lecturer in scenic writing at the University of the Applied Arts in Vienna's Institute of Language Arts since 2011 and has run the Neulengbach radio play festival in Lower Austria for several years.



## **Resource Love**

"What's personal is what's most productive" is the magic formula of current management practice. Only what's personal will generate big profits. But first the personal needs to be cultivated.

'Ressource Liebe' begins with the story of Line: Line has fallen in love with a building. But it's not just any building that she's fallen for head over heels: it's her company headquarters. She had been planning to resign because the company was exploiting her but she can't do that any more. Now she can't leave the company. And since she's fallen madly in love with the building she's been scared she might get fired and wouldn't be allowed inside the building any more.

It is claimed that falling in love with a building and having sex with that building is better in any event than no longer feeling anything at all. The only way to escape the loneliness and sadness in the office blocks of large insurance companies or banks, for example, is to love. And if there are no other people to reciprocate this love because they are also too exhausted from their training seminars or busy preparing for their next meeting, then that love will attach itself to the company premises.

It is obvious that every business will attempt to exploit this yearning for love. This yearning for love should be transformed into a longing for a career and the longing for a career into 100% identification with the business. Love and sexuality have long since become nothing other than tools to increase profit.

Line's dilemma is the same dilemma as the others'. One character after another in the play takes up the thread, tells the next part of the story, telling their own story, in order to find out if what they are telling is really their story. Telling it is a chance, a second chance as it were, giving them a life in which to find out what life is.

What is the conflict? Where is it? Where is the contradiction? Some time ago the contradiction was relocated inside ourselves so that we would not

find it immediately. Whoever put it there inside us is bound to be profiting from it. Someone is definitely bound to be profiting from us. The question is: if other people are profiting so much from me, can I profit from myself? Can I profit from the dilemma I am in? At one point in the play Tom says: "You are in a state of uncertainty. This state of uncertainty is one you have to shape."

In the end there needs to be a happy ending even for a love that is actually a form of depression. For a love that is only a weakness, an old door that can no longer be repaired and which someone is always coming through to rob us.

Cast: 3 F / 2 M

Performing rights: S. Fischer Verlag

World premiere: 2006, Staatstheater Stuttgart  
Director: Sebastian Röhrle

### **Excess Desert**

Sebastian and Finn, two programmers from Stuttgart, drive into the California desert to a place called The Springs of Immortality, hoping to have a brilliant idea for a new computer programme. Apparently everyone who arrives at this loneliest spot in the desert is rewarded with a fantastic idea. All the great programmers and internet entrepreneurs are supposed to have been here. At the same time Sebastian and Finn want to experience something that they can't in their jobs for a car manufacturer where they teach cars to think.

While they are both standing in the desert waiting for that brilliant idea, a woman, Zoe, appears, who explains that some time ago at this precise spot she had the idea for a new programme. It is a programme that allows you to calculate the day the world will end. She has now come back to commit suicide - as the programme has advised her. Sebastian and Finn try to talk Zoe out of committing suicide, partly because they do not want to witness this suicide. On the contrary: they have come here to experience something positive.

Shortly afterwards a man, Josh, appears who is linked to Zoe by the fact that they once came here together and gave each other a kiss. Josh is also a programmer and is working on a programme to make kissing and all other forms of intimacy superfluous. However, he cannot forget that one kiss with Zoe and asks Zoe to kiss him once more.

While the others are arguing about hot dogs and sun cream and the right way to breathe in the desert and whether Zoe's programme works and what that kiss means, Finn climbs up to the Springs of Immortality in order to find the secret of these springs - which of course eludes him.

Zoe is determined not to be dissuaded from committing suicide, either by Sebastian and Finn or by Josh. When she takes out the gun to shoot herself, torrential rain starts, here, in the middle of the desert, where it usually rains for no more than one day a year. This torrential rain seems like the end of the world...

Cast: 1 F / 3 M

Performing rights: S. Fischer Verlag

Free for world premiere

**Resource Love**  
**by Robert Woelfl**

**1**

LINE                   Actually I wanted to resign, I wanted to leave this company but when we moved into the new building, I fell head over heels in love with this building. I don't understand it myself, but I'm totally in love with this building. The first time I set foot inside, when I walked into the entrance hall, that's when it must have happened.

EVA                    But something like that doesn't just happen like that.

DANIEL                Yes. It just doesn't happen.

LINE                   I've got no idea how it happened.

MAREN                Why didn't you tell me this before? I'm your best friend. Why are you only telling me this now?

LINE                   It was actually my firm intention to resign. I'd decided to resign as soon as possible. I was going to act reasonably.

TOM                   Yes. So act reasonably then.

EVA                   Don't you want to resign any more?

LINE                   I can't resign any more.

MAREN                You can resign any time.

DANIEL                You can still act reasonably.

LINE                   I wanted to resign because I felt exploited by this company. I've been exploited by this company ever since the first day I worked here.

MAREN                You never said that. Why did you never tell me that?

DANIEL                Other people in the company get exploited too.

TOM                   It's nothing special, being exploited in this company.

LINE                   I wanted to resign because I had the feeling I was being exploited by this company. But since I fell in love with this building I haven't got that feeling any more. I no longer feel I'm being exploited.

EVA                   But you are still being exploited.

LINE                   Now I'm not sure any more.



TOM                   Why should it have changed?

LINE                  Maybe I still spend too many hours in my office in this company and invest too much of myself. Maybe my situation in this company hasn't changed, but I feel it's changed.

MAREN                I don't know whether you should trust that feeling.

EVA                   You should distrust that feeling.

LINE                  I don't want to distrust that feeling. I don't want to distrust a positive feeling. Why should I distrust something positive?

DANIEL                A couple of days ago you wanted to resign.

EVA                   And now you don't want to any more.

DANIEL                You wanted to and were just about to do it but now you suddenly don't want to do it. Something's gone wrong there.

TOM                   Yes. Something has gone wrong there.

DANIEL                Yes. Something's gone wrong and you've got to ask yourself what has gone wrong?

LINE                  Maybe something has gone wrong but that's not important any more.

TOM                   You've taken a decision and then gone back on it. I think it's sad if decisions are taken and then gone back on. It's sad and weak.

LINE                  But I really can't resign any more. If I told them that from tomorrow I wouldn't be coming in any more, then I'd have to pack all the things on my desk into my bag, I'd have to take all my personal items with me. I wouldn't be allowed to set foot in my office again. I wouldn't be allowed to set foot in this building. For security reasons. I understand that. Though I wouldn't understand it. I would be forbidden to do all that and I wouldn't be able to stand it.

MAREN                I'm on your side. You know that. I'm always on your side, even this time. Though I actually have to feel solidarity with my company.

LINE                  What does that mean, solidarity with your company?

MAREN                I ought to identify with my company.

EVA                   But you do.

MAREN But not enough. Because I support Line. If I take her side, then I'm not identifying enough with my company. And my company could criticise me for that. And it would probably be right. I am not identifying 100 per cent with my company, but that is what I signed.

TOM You signed that?

MAREN Yes.

TOM Why did you sign that?

MAREN Right at the end they gave me a special supplementary contract. I think that was in it. I was so tired and unable to concentrate, I just couldn't read this contract any more. But there was something in it about identification.

DANIEL You signed something you hadn't read first, you shouldn't have done that.

MAREN But it happened and I can't undo it now. I identify 100 per cent with my company. Yes. That's what I signed.

EVA Fundamentally it's nice that you've fallen in love. It's nice somehow. Even if it is complicated.

LINE It's not complicated.

EVA Be glad that it is complicated. If it's not complicated you've always got the feeling that something's missing.

DANIEL That's right. If it's not complicated then it's somehow not complete.

MAREN I'd like to be able to tell people I've fallen in love too. I mean, I am in love, I just can't tell people. I mean I can't tell anyone who. It's got to stay a secret.

TOM Why does it have to stay a secret?

MAREN I can't even tell you that. I can only say that I am in love but everything else has to stay a secret.

EVA Does it have to stay a secret because it's someone from the company?

MAREN I'm not allowed to say anything about that. But it's true. It is someone from the company. And that's why it has to stay a secret.

LINE Every time you have a relationship it's with someone from the company. Every time it's an internal relationship and every time it has to stay secret.

MAREN We phone each other. I can say that. We phone each other several times a day. Four or five times a day. And we agree when we're going to phone again.

DANIEL                   And how do you benefit from this relationship?

MAREN                   I do benefit but I can't now say exactly in what way.

DANIEL                   So how do you know that you are benefiting?

MAREN                   I benefit from it but it's got to stay a secret that I  
am benefiting from it.

**Excess Desert**  
**by Robert Woelfl**

1

ZOE

In North Western Nevada there's a gigantic desert thousands of square kilometres in size. In the middle of this desert there's a place called The Springs of Immortality. It's not easy to find this place. It's not on any map and no navigation system has the co-ordinates. It is a tear in the earth. It's not very long or very wide but it is very deep. If you stand on the edge and look down, you can't make out any ending, just black nothingness. No plants grow in the area round this gap in the earth, no creosote bushes or any other desert shrubs. No animals live here either. Not even lizards or snakes. Some people think this place is the entrance to the underworld. Most of them come here because it is rumoured that anyone who can find this place will be granted a wish. Of course everyone wishes for a brilliant idea, a genius idea for a new programme. It was here that Larry Page and Sergey Brin had their idea for a new kind of search engine, here that Kevin Systrom had the idea that people like looking at pictures and also want to show these pictures to others, and here that Jack Dorsey invented Twitter. Of course this place had already been visited by Linus Torvalds and Bill Gates and Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg and Michael Dell and Steve Wozniak and Larry Ellison and Eric Schmidt and Paul Allen and Jeff Bezos and Jan Koum and Travis Kalanick and Marissa Mayer and Sheryl Sandberg. And I have often come here too. When I've worked for a couple of days at a stretch and not slept and when it's cold and foggy in San Francisco and I haven't got a clue what to do with my life, then I get in my car and I drive here. You drive along Interstate 80 past Reno and then head East for an hour till you reach a tiny place with no gas station but a church made of red wood and a big water tower with a black metal eagle on the roof. At the only crossroads in town you turn left and drive north for two hundred miles till you're standing in front of a dilapidated wooden house left over from the time they built the railroad here. There's a rocky track that starts behind this house. You've got to follow this rocky track for one hundred and twenty miles as far as a huge pile of rocks on the right hand side. You leave your car there and walk the last section on foot. The Springs of Immortality are a special place. I came here today because today is a special day. Today the world will end. And this here is the only place I want to be when it happens.

SEBASTIAN        It could be this place here. And it could just  
as well be over there.

FINN             It's here.

SEBASTIAN        Over there looks just the same.

FINN             It's this spot.

SEBASTIAN        Why's there no sign here? There ought to be a sign here  
that clearly shows where it is. A simple sign would be  
enough. A sign with a name. Or with a red arrow.

FINN             A sign wouldn't be right here.

SEBASTIAN        I don't mean a big billboard. I mean a sign with  
information.

FINN             A sign would destroy everything.

SEBASTIAN        A big sign in bright colours would but not a sign in  
white or grey or black.

FINN             I'm glad there's no sign here.

SEBASTIAN        If there's no sign here then nobody who happens to be  
passing will know what this is.

FINN             Nobody does happen to be passing here. It's not a place  
you pass by accidentally on the way from somewhere to  
somewhere else and take a rest and happen to be looking  
around.

SEBASTIAN        It could be here. But it could be over there too.

FINN             Here on this spot is where you've got to stand.

SEBASTIAN        On the web it looks totally different.

FINN             On the web everything always looks different.

SEBASTIAN        On the web it looks magical.

FINN             It depends what time of day the photos were taken.

SEBASTIAN        On the web it looks as if everything is suspended.  
Everything looks like it's weightless. And harmonious  
somehow. On the web it looks more harmonious.

FINN             The photos were probably taken at sunset.

SEBASTIAN        I imagined it would be different.

FINN                    If we wait until sunset, it will look like it does in the photos.

SEBASTIAN            Sunset is much too long. There's no shade here. You can't stand in the sun for six or seven hours. It's incredibly hot.

FINN                    Of course it's hot in the desert.

SEBASTIAN            Every time I went on holiday I'd have problems with the heat.

FINN                    This is not a holiday.

SEBASTIAN            It's like a holiday.

FINN                    We're not here for a holiday.

SEBASTIAN            I'd have liked to go to Los Angeles. I suggested we should fly to Los Angeles.

FINN                    I wanted to come here, not Los Angeles.

SEBASTIAN            Anyone who's willing to sit in a plane for eleven and a half hours can go to Los Angeles.

FINN                    I didn't want to go to Los Angeles.

SEBASTIAN            You never went there to the convention.

FINN                    I've been to the convention in Cologne.

SEBASTIAN            You can't compare Cologne with Los Angeles.

FINN                    I didn't want to go to a computer games convention, but to a very special place.

SEBASTIAN            The convention in Los Angeles is a special place too.

FINN                    Ever since I first read about it I've wanted to come here. It's a long journey and an expensive journey and that's why I want to make the most of this journey.

SEBASTIAN            What do we have to do now?

FINN                    You don't have to do anything. Just stand here and breathe and wait.

SEBASTIAN            I've got a problem with breathing. I told you that.

FINN                    The most important thing is standing here. It's enough if you close your eyes on this spot and wait.

SEBASTIAN            Don't we have to say something? Don't you have to say a specific phrase? In places like this you usually have to recite some sort of incantation.

FINN                    There's no incantation to say here.

SEBASTIAN            You've got to say that you're here.

FINN                You don't.

SEBASTIAN           You've got to establish contact with the place.

FINN                What do you mean by that?

SEBASTIAN           You have to communicate with the place.

FINN                You don't. You just have to stand here and be mentally prepared.

SEBASTIAN           I don't know if I'm mentally prepared. I've just been on a plane for eleven and a half hours.

FINN                You had time to prepare yourself then.

SEBASTIAN           I get nervous every time I have to fly. All I could do was wait for the flight to be over as soon as possible.

FINN                You were playing games the whole time.

SEBASTIAN           To stop being nervous.

FINN                That's why you're not mentally prepared.

SEBASTIAN           Playing games relaxes me.

FINN                Then be relaxed now and simply wait and see what happens.