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Press release

“mit:gefühl” International Puppet Theater Festival

October 17-28, 2018

Press conference
September 19, 2018, 11.00 a.m.
Schauburg Theater

The “mit:gefühl” 2018 International Puppet Theater Festival will showcase puppet theater as a theater for all the senses with more installations and participatory formats than ever before. With 31 productions from ten countries, the festival will present a broad cross-section of contemporary puppet theater.

The title of this year’s festival is “mit:gefühl”. “Mitgefühl” – “compassion or empathy” in German – is a combination of “mit” (with) and “Gefühl” (feeling). As the title suggests, no form of theater makes any sense without feelings. We need to bring all our senses and our feelings to theater if we are to immerse ourselves in its special world and take it for real. This is particularly true of puppet theater, which uses animation to imbue inanimate puppets with a soul. Our feelings are central to the success of animations such as this. During the performance, we are clearly aware that we are watching inanimate objects, but we are perfectly happy to set this knowledge aside for a moment. In a successful stage animation, we temporarily ignore everything our intellect may tell us, what we know to be true, and accept a reality where inanimate objects have been brought to life. When we use our feelings to engage with a performance, knowledge and forgetting enter a teasing relationship and the result is the whimsical shared experience that lies at the core of puppet theater.

A festival for all the senses

The 2018 International Puppet Theater Festival will be a festival of feelings, a festival for all the senses. Yet if we take the other meaning of “Mitgefühl”, it also raises questions about our compassion. We believe that in a theater for all the senses, the audience should also have the opportunity to experience what life is like for those who lack one or more of their five senses. The productions featuring on this year’s festival program cover a wide range of themes and aesthetics. Productions bridging the gap between installation, performance and theater occupy pride of place. Blindfolded members of the audience at the German premiere of *Stone Water Sting* by Lithuania’s Theater of Senses will be led on stage by the actors into mythological parallel worlds brought to life by sound vibrations, smells, tastes and sensations of touch. *Meet Fred* by Welsh theater company Hijinx Theatre is an inclusive production that draws a wry comparison between the life of a puppet and the lives of people with disabilities. *Maniacs*, by Holland’s Ulrike Quade, is an intelligent exploration of moral judgments about the relationship between a man and his sex doll. The common thread that runs through all these productions is the fact that they engage with our feelings, our compassion and our perceptions of reality.

Contemporary puppet theater from Germany, Europe and the USA

One of the highlights of the international program for adults is *D-generation: An Exaltation of Larks* by America's Sandglass Theater. After the performance of this offbeat theater piece set in a care facility, the audience will have the opportunity to go and visit lifelike puppets of the old people who feature in the production.

In *Blind*, Dutch-Brazilian dancer Duda Paiva explores a time when he temporarily lost his sight as a child. Through a unique combination of dance, interaction with life-sized puppets, video and sound, he creates a piece that is both moving and funny.

German puppet artist Frank Soehnle, in addition to his exhibition at the festival (see accompanying program), will be putting on two productions that offer an unusual take on music and puppet theater combined (*Nachtkonzert* [Night Concert] and *Wunderkammer – eine Betrachtung über das Staunen* [Cabinet of Curiosities – Meditations on Wonderment]).

In “B”, Swiss company Trickster-p invites the audience to physically experience (hear, smell and see) their unconventional re-reading of Snow White. One by one, audience members embark on an audio journey through an ephemeral labyrinth that tells of the passage from infancy to adulthood, people's obsession with beauty and human confrontation with mortality.

A varied children's program

In addition to the 17 productions for adults, the program features a further 14 exceptional productions aimed at a younger audience. Now it's the children's turn to experience feelings and compassion, with plenty of fun and laughter thrown in. “A”, by France's Compagnie Skappa!, is an art installation about Paradise that takes children on a journey to share in an experience of a poetically told story about flight. Flight also features in two other imaginative and fun productions: *Zugvögel* (Birds of Passage) by Switzerland's Figurentheater Lupine and *Traumkreuzung* (Dream Crossing) by Ensemble Materialtheater.

The grande dame of Swiss puppet theater, Margrit Gysin, in a small exhibition of her work, will present three productions and three very different children's worlds in a gentle, funny style full of playful delight.

The festival program also features two premieres for children aged 4 and over. In *Tür zu* (Close the Door) at the Schauburg venue, Israel's Ariel Doron presents a crazy bathroom adventure for the fearless and fearful. Meanwhile, *So weit oben* (So High Up) by Munich's Figurentheater Pantaleon is an enchanting piece about what is above and what is below us, based on Susanne Straßer's picture book. A group of animals try to get to a delicious cake out of reach on the highest window ledge of a house.

Accompanying program

The “Cabinet of Curiosities” exhibition (October 18, 2018 – January 27, 2019), by renowned German puppet artist and maker Frank Soehnle, approaches the festival's theme from yet another angle. Soehnle's theater blurs the boundaries between puppet theater, music and the visual arts. His exhibition offers visitors a sensory experience of Soehnle's theatrical universe.

The program also includes a series of workshops and audience discussions. There will be an action room at the Pasinger Fabrik venue, where children can build on their experiences in the theater through play.

Towards inclusion

A program that promises a theater for all the senses can only make us wonder what life must feel like for people who do not have full access to all the senses. Accordingly, the festival, while still not fully inclusive, does include a number of plays featuring people with disabilities and activities in which disabled people can participate. For the festival opening, Stiftung Pfennigparade München's Kreativ Labor is developing a walkabout performance *Parade der Gefühle* (Parade of the Feelings) under the direction of puppet artist Matthias Jungermann. There will also be a workshop for young deaf and hearing people on puppet theater and sign-language poetry. Sign-language interpreting will be available for two productions, and many others do not involve the spoken word at all. The

Theater of Senses production is particularly suitable for the blind, and there will also be a workshop introduction with creative activities for dementia sufferers based on the TimeSlips method. Most importantly, the festival will feature several productions that allow the audience to experience physical impairments in a variety of creative ways, in the hope that this will promote greater understanding and – in keeping with the festival’s title – compassion.

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An initiative of the FigurenTheaterForum München

In cooperation with the Münchner Stadtmuseum – Puppet Theater / Fairground Attraction Collection, Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Puppenspiels e.V., Schauburg – Theater für junges Publikum, Kultur & Spielraum e.V., HochX Theater und LiveArt, Instituto Cervantes Munich, Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism, Evangelische Familienbildungsstätte Elly Heuss-Knapp, and Alten- und Servicezentrum Altstadt

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Tickets

Advance ticket sales from August 2018.

Tickets for many events are available through **München Ticket** and **Reservix**, either as print-at-home tickets or from their booking offices. The central ticket offices at the Marienplatz (1st basement level) and Stachus (2nd basement level) metro stations sell tickets from both ticket agencies (Mon-Sat 9 a.m.-8 p.m.).

Our comprehensive online program contains links to the booking portals of the event venues: www.figurentheaterfestival-muenchen.de

Tickets will also be on sale at the venues from one hour before the start of the event.

www.facebook.com/ftfmuenchen

Press conference: September 19, 2018, 11.00 a.m. at Schauburg Theater

Additional Information

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