ZEITGEIST DC

NEW PLAYWRIGHTS FROM AUSTRIA, GERMANY, AND SWITZERLAND
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THE PROJECT

In 2012, ZEITGEIST DC continues to bring together innovative theaters from Washington and NYC with new European theater. Audacious and funny, timely and provocative – the playwriting coming out of Germany, Switzerland and Austria today breaks new ground and unabashedly tackles difficult subjects.

Three new, popular plays from these countries will appear in Washington and New York in June 2012, in readings in English with directors and casts from American theaters. Each playwright will be in residence during the week of their play’s readings and will meet local artists. A discussion with the audience and a reception round out each evening.

Gillian Drake is curator of the project.
WHY ZEITGEIST DC?

- The plays appeal to an American audience: they speak to people through the timeliness of the topics and the innovative way they deal with theater tradition
- The dialogue relates to themes relevant for society: development of society, emotions and sentiments come to life
- Issues of global importance are broached within the context of the German language: migration and integration, homeland ties and patriotism, the persistence of tradition
- American directors and actors adapt the plays and interpret them in new ways
- Each of the three plays represents a different approach to home/away, familiar/foreign, old/new
- Each of the playwrights has won several important awards within the German-language theater scene
- Each theater takes responsibility for its own publicity, and becomes a partner on the project
- Through these plays and playwrights, the American audience gains insight into how the German cultural scene functions and is supported
- New audiences are reached and theaters expand beyond their normal closed structures
- The cooperation with the Swiss Embassy and the Austrian Cultural Forum enables Zeitgeist to obtain broader recognition
Goals

- current social developments in Europe are depicted
- parallels to an increasing globalized world Europe – US become visible
- new artistic ways push the intercultural dialogue with the US

Target Audience

The program's main focus is on theater professionals and critics in the US, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In this way, Zeitgeist is amplified by further multiplicators and achieves a bigger impact.
"Zeitgeist offers the hottest plays in Europe right now."

“There are plans to make Zeitgeist a two-way street next year, with presentations of recent U.S. scripts in German-speaking Europe. Cold Country playwright Finger said that the move comes at the right time. Europe’s financial distress, he speculated, will make its thespians all the more interested in other theatrical traditions and production models.”
June 11, 2012 Arena Stage, Washington DC
Director: Ameneh Bordi

Director: Jade King Carroll
THE PLAY

Comically reducing virulent immigrant stereotypes to absurdity, this surprise hit shows young second- or third-generation German-Turks on whom their teacher works off her educational mandate with a gun in her hand and Schiller’s Enlightenment ideal in her brain until all the clichés stand on their heads.

"Verrücktes Blut (Crazy Blood) is a piece for our times [...].” – Andreas Rossmann, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

"The season’s winner!" – Wolfgang Höbel, Der Spiegel

"The play is manic and outrageous." – Egbert Tholl, Süddeutsche Zeitung
WHY CRAZY BLOOD?

In times when people are afraid of "foreign infiltration" in their own country, these themes are also relevant for American society:

• addressing integration, migration, people of color, a new caste system
• cliché of the young colored / white / migrant without prospects
• the "German Gaze " (Jens Hillje) aims at exaggerating the perception of stereotypes
• the reference to Schiller and to the Enlightenment is multilayered
• education
• violence and gun possession

Trailer Theater Ballhaus Naunynstrasse:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHVZZq56Dgo
THE AUTHORS

**JENS HILLJE** (*1968) / actor, playwright, director

- Studied applied culture studies in Perugia, Hildesheim and Berlin
- Theater projects with children and young adults
- 1996-1999 co-director and dramaturg at the *Baracke* at *Deutsches Theater*
- 1999-2009 member of the artistic direction and chief dramaturg at the *Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz*
- Invitation to *Theatertreffen 2011* as co-author and dramaturg of *Crazy Blood*

**NURKAN ERPULAT** (*1974) / actor, playwright, director

- Actor's training in Izmir, Turkey
- Directing and theater pedagogy studies at the Berlin Academy of Dramatic Arts *Ernst Busch*
- Numerous invitations and guest performances at national and international theaters
- Starting with the 2011/2012 season, resident director at *Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus*
THE TRANSLATOR

PRISCILLA DIONNE LAYNE

- In 2008, she received the Susan Sontag Prize for Translation for her translation of Zaimoğlu’s *Koppstoff* from German into English.
THE DIRECTORS

AMENEH BORDI (ARENA STAGE, WASHINGTON DC)

- Young director working in New York and Washington
- Studied cultures and languages of the Middle East
- Founder of Namayesh Productions for intercultural play development
- Professional experience with classical pieces, staged readings and own productions

JADE KING CARROLL (NEW YORK THEATRE WORKSHOP, NEW YORK)

- Winner of the Paul Green Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Professional
- Directed numerous international plays
- Won the New Generations Future Leader Award for her artistic work
June 18, 2012 The Studio Theatre, Washington DC
Director: Serge Seiden

June 21, 2012 Playwrights Horizons, New York
Director: Adam Greenfield
THE PLAY

Times are always hard. Something that is also true for Hanna's family: Her brother died two years ago, and his death holds an open family secret. When everything is revealed, all that remains is to keep silent - or run amok.

"Cold Country deploys a sparse, poetic language and highly intense characters to show what it is like when the corset forced on us no longer fits and almost threatens to burst. What it is like when a new start is bound to fail because we know nothing but our own world, are imprisoned in our own cosmos." – Fischer Verlag

"[…] a indigestive lump of Switzerland [...]" – Simone Meier, Theater heute 11/2006
WHY COLD COUNTRY?

Themes of global importance:

- dissolving of old structures within society: urban vs. rural
- generation gap: revolt against the father's world and the values that come with it
- breaking with the daily routine
- violence
- literary references to mythology
THE AUTHOR

RETO FINGER (*1972) / playwright, author of radio plays

- Law studies in Zürich and Amsterdam
- He writes his first play *Swimming like Dogs* in the framework of an authors' workshop at the Theater Winkelwiese in Zürich, followed by staged readings at the Vienna Burgtheater and the Thalia Theater in Hamburg
- In 2005 he is rewarded the Kleist Prize for Young Dramatist for his play *Cold Country*
- Author in residence at the Theater Mannheim and the Schauspielhaus Zürich
- Currently working at the Schauspielhaus Bochum
THE TRANSLATOR

KARIN ROSNIZECK

- German actress and translator based in Washington DC
- Cultural coordinator at the US Consulate in Munich
- Organized staged readings of contemporary American playwrights in Munich
THE DIRECTORS

SERGE SEIDEN (THE STUDIO THEATRE, WASHINGTON DC)

- Associate artistic director at the Studio Theatre
- Experience in many fields related to the theater process (production, casting, direction)
- Video documentation of his own stagings

MORITZ VON STUELPNAGEL (PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS, NEW YORK)

- Artistic director of Studio 42
- Former Resident Director at Playwrights Horizons
- Guest director at over a dozen universities, including Juilliard, NYU, Rutgers Mason Gross, Boston University
June 25, 2012 The Shakespeare Company, Washington DC
Director: Jenny Lord

June 28, 2012 Soho Rep, New York
Director: Jeremy Bloom
THE PLAY

On Chirping Hill (Grillenparz), a rural place near an Austrian village, the employees of a local company come together for an annual midsummer-night's party, a chance to get back to nature and loosen up. However, this year's event is going to be different because of what happened last year. All will be revealed and commented on in song by a chorus of crickets.

"Early morning horror in Bambiland." – Georg Petermichl, nachtkritik.de

"Young playwright Thomas Arzt takes a nasty look at staring and looking away, at structures of power and derailment." – Oberösterreichische Nachrichten
WHY CHIRPING HILL?

Themes of global relevance:

• violence
• feudal division and power structures
• alcohol, the great leveler
• homeland ties / patriotism
• discrepancy between nature and social structures
• literary references to Horváth and Grillparzer

Trailer Schauspielhaus Wien:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGaoB--AHGY
THE AUTHOR

THOMAS ARZT (*1983) / playwright, director

- Theater, film and media studies
- In 2008, he wrote Chirping Hill in the framework of the author project Stück/für/stück at the Vienna Schauspielhaus
- Chirping Hill was awarded the Hans-Gratzer scholarship and premieres at the Vienna Schauspielhaus in April 2011
- Resident author at the Vienna Schauspielhaus during the season 2010/2011
- Playwright scholarship from the city of Vienna and Thomas-Bernhard scholarship at the Landestheater in Linz
- In May 2012, his play Alpenvorland wins the Author's Prize at the Heidelberger Stückemarkt
THE TRANSLATOR

NEIL BLACKADDER

- Specialist for translation of contemporary plays from German into English
- Winner of the PEN Translation Fund Grant
THE DIRECTORS

JENNY LORD (THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY, WASHINGTON DC)

▪ Resident assistant director, actress and choreographer
▪ Directing experience at a great variety of theatres in the US (New York, San Francisco, San Jose, Dallas, Washington DC)

JEREMY BLOOM (SOHO REP, NEW YORK)

▪ Resident director at Soho Rep
▪ Performance Studies at Northwestern University
▪ Broadway experience
Monday, June 11, 2012, 7 pm
CRAZY BLOOD at the Goethe-Institut

Monday, June 18, 2012, 7 pm
COLD COUNTRY at the Goethe-Institut

Monday, June 25, 2012, 7 pm
CHIRPING HILL at the Embassy of Austria

Following each reading, the director, playwright and cast will participate in a discussion on how the plays can be of further interest to theaters in Washington and the USA.

RSVP to rsvp@washington.goethe.org
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.