

CHRISTOPH MARTHALER King Size

A recital with Tora Augestad, Duri Bischoff, Bendix Dethleffsen,
Michael von der Heide, Christoph Marthaler,
Sarah Schittek, Malte Ubenauf and Nikola Weisse



STAGE DIRECTION :

CHRISTOPH MARTHALER

MUSICAL DIRECTION :

BENDIX DETHLEFFSEN

SCENOGRAPHY :

DURI BISCHOFF

COSTUME DESIGN :

SARAH SCHITTEK

DRAMATURGY:

MALTE UBENAUF

LIGHTING :

HEIDE VOEGELIN LIGHTS

WITH :

TORA AUGESTAD

BENDIX DETHLEFFSEN

MICHAEL VON DER HEIDE

NIKOLA WEISSE

PRODUCTION :

THEATER BASEL/THÉÂTRE VIDY-LAUSANNE

WITH THE SUPPORT OF :

PRO HELVETIA - FONDATION SUISSE POUR LA CULTURE

LENGTH : 1H20

GENRE : OPÉRA-THÉÂTRE

PERFORMED IN GERMAN, SURTITLES IN ENGLISH

INTENTION

AND DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT OF “ENHARMONICS”

By “enharmonics”, we mean a technique of musical composition which allows one to write a same sound, at the same pitch, in two different ways; the sound thus takes on two different functions, just like with G-sharp and A-flat. Most composers of the last century have made extensive use of this technique, probably for the following simple reason: it perfectly illustrates the notions of evolution and metamorphosis. And what could be closer to life? According to Christoph Marthaler, without these permanent enharmonics, there would be no possible connection between human beings: no weddings, no engagements, no secret complications, not even the most innocent of kisses... All of this is profoundly evident while remaining completely mysterious, and that is precisely why he has decided to intervene on the subject, flanked by his faithful collaborators.

Together they have imagined a recital akin to a surgical operation, during which they aim to mine the layers that constitute our brain's temporal lobe, to finally reach that obscure centre - that nucleus of night that is the force of “enharmonics”. It is a place of decision where the temperature is pleasant, where everything is in order; a softly-lit interior whose walls are draped with colourful hangings. And in the middle of all this uprightness, there sits the secret object of desire, cozy and orderly all at once: a “king size” bed. This is the place in which the romantic intimacy of lovers and the dreamlike strangeness of paradoxical sleep meet. It is there that, day after day, hour after hour, interactions take place; whether they be blatant or clandestine, with time they will forge individuals' evolutions and futures...

PRESENTATION

A hotel room, at the centre of which sits a “king size” bed, surrounded by blue panelling and floral upholstery - a truly bourgeois, vaudevillian decor. In the intimacy of this room, a man and a woman - accompanied by an older woman - strike up an eclectic musical repertoire, ranging from traditional songs and classical works to “pop music”. According to the pieces they are performing, they outline a few steps of ballroom dance, thus bestowing upon their actions a certain comical dimension. This irresistible zaniness to which Christoph Marthaler invites us is enlivened by the eccentric gestures of the actors. When a man styles his hair although he is bald, when an old woman flaunts her senility, or when pop songs are carried by lyrical voices, laughter is everywhere. Incidentally, it is from this last discrepancy that the director extracts the material of his piece. He seeks to create “enharmonics”, compositions that combine different tonalities and create a heterogeneous sound per se. While this sound matter can create a bizarre effect at first, it is then offset by a more sensitive reality, which relates to human relationships. The desirable peaceful entente of individuals with different personalities is here evoked; however, rather than showing harmonious interactions, it evidences the loneliness, the grotesque conventions and the tragic daily lives of human beings. With “King Size”, Marthaler gives music the lead, thus creating a whimsical show full of tenderness and melancholy.

«CARNET D'ART»

“King Size” does not tell a story, does not demonstrate anything, does not say anything; but it speaks a language that awakens in us the most secret of energies, the most frenzied of moods. Basing itself upon the process of enharmonics, which rests on the chromatic identity of two different notes (...) and allows for startling variations when wielded with skill, “King Size” fuses music and theatre in a heretofore unseen manner. In a blue room with a king-size bed, four characters cross paths without seeing each other: a bald and single pianist, a couple of demented singers, and an old woman in the throes of an existential crisis. Each character plays their role, attends to their occupations and obsessions, contrives their life to the point of radical absurdity. They cohabit but see only themselves, sentenced to an intimate fate, caged by their habits. The show then takes on quite a complex form. At first sight, we are in a madcap, exploded boulevard comedy; but also in a piano recital of phenomenal quality; what’s more, in a loony operetta where everything is a pretext for the couple of the story to burst into song; in the end, we are in a non-place, a non-time, a fissure or an excrescence of reality. While the pianist unleashes himself, the couple sing grandiloquent operas while dancing like Yé-yé singers, followed by Michel Polnareff songs while dancing like ballerinas – all in rapid succession. Meanwhile, the old woman sits on the bed, opens her bag, takes out a spatula and begins to eat spaghetti from her bag, with a listless and doleful expression. Then the singer finds herself under the bed, her partner enters a cupboard, the pianist styles his hair even though he is bald. Marthaler repeats and repeats again until the most inconceivable exasperation, pushes comedy to the very edge of hysteria, stretches out a two-line refrain over ten minutes. He never hesitates to push to the limits the expectations of an audience who, after having laughed once, would like the show to be a lively and farcical comedy. He then creates the most visionary form of comedy in the world, the most futuristic humour, the most violent and incomprehensible hilarity. It is totally funny – not because of a bulimic succession of “jibes” or “situations”, not because of a torrent of words or vaudevillian excess – but through the psychological manipulation of the audience, through running gags emancipated from their desire to seduce, through a comedy of exasperation where the sole characters, who are living their impossible lives with the most complete determination, constitute the comedic process. When all is said and done, it is the healthiest, most brilliant, most human form of humour there is, far from brutish laughter and lazy ribbing. Here, laughter is no longer a reaction to the superficial stimulation of a cerebral spot or the breaking down of moral and mental doors in a forced cataclysm; it is the sad and anxious laughter of life, the mad and tragic laughter of nonsense, of the misery of the individual, of the stupor of human relationships – but without a word, without a joke, without a single comical misunderstanding, without anything inherently funny. It is the laughter of abandon, the laughter of exhausted existences: it is the very laughter of the future, that emitted by men alone in the earthly machine, that of the struggle of intimacy against the violence of communitarianism, of the collective, of conviviality, of “living in harmony”. It is the laughter of the refuge in oneself, of the modern drama, of the constantly and falsely overstated “I”, ever more crushed by tribal obligation. It is the laughter of chagrined loneliness and the hurricane of small gestures.

TEXT EXTRACT

Le chapelier, Erik Satie
 Le chapelier s'étonne de constater
 Que sa montre retarde de trois jours,
 Bien qu'il ait eu soin de la graisser
 Toujours avec du beurre de première qualité.
 Mais il a laissé tomber des miettes
 De pain dans les rouages,
 Et il a beau plonger sa montre dans le thé,
 Ça ne le fera pas avancer davantage.
 Mélie mélodie, Bobby Lapointe

Oui, mon doux minet, la mini
 Oui la Minie est la manie
 Est la manie de Mélanie
 Mélanie l'amie d'Amélie...
 Amélie dont les doux nénéés
 Doux nénéés de nounou moulés
 Dans de molles laines lamées
 Et mêlées de lin milanais...
 Amélie dont les nénéés doux
 Ont donné à l'ami Milou
 Milou le dadais de Limoux
 L'idée d'amener des minous...
 Des minous menus de Lima
 Miaulant dans les dais de Damas
 Et dont les mines de lama
 Donnaient mille idées à Léda...
 (...)

SONGS, SOUNDS & TRANSITIONS

«Biliti» by Francis Lai
 «Wachet auf, wachet auf es krächte der Hahn» by Johann Joachim Wachsmann
 «Die güldne Sonne» by Johann G. Ebeling
 «I go to sleep» by The Kinks
 «Seit ich ihn gesehen» by Robert Schumann
 «Le Chapelier» by Erik Satie
 «Ouvre» by Suzy Solidor
 «Tristan and Isolde» by Richard Wagner
 «I'll be there» by The Jackson 5
 «Mélie Mélodie» by Bobby Lapointe
 «Le nozze di Figaro» by W.A. Mozart
 «You could drive a person crazy» by Stephen Sondheim
 «Übre Gotthard flüget Bräme» by Geschwister Schmid
 «Stille Liebe» by Robert Schumann
 «Dein Angesicht» by Robert Schumann
 «Des Sennen Abschied» by Robert Schumann
 «Titelmelodie Schwarzwaldklinik» by Hans Hammerschmid
 «Biene Maja» by Karel Svoboda
 «Solang man Träume noch leben kann» by Münchener Freiheit
 «Andante» by Ludwig v. Beethoven
 «Tout pour ma chérie» by Michel Polnareff
 «Abbigsternli» traditional Swiss song
 «Come heavy sleep» by John Dowland
 «Fangad av en stormvind» by Carola
 «Sonny Boy» by Al Jolson
 «A bendlied» by Robert Schumann
 «A dagietto» from Gustav Mahler's 5th Symphony
 «Die Wut über den verlorenen Groschen» by Ludwig v. Beethoven
 «Dem Schmerz sein Recht» by Alban Berg
 «Es waren zwei Königskinder» traditional song



CHRISTOPH MARTHALER

Stage direction

Born in Erlenbach in the Canton of Zürich, Christoph Marthaler first trained as an oboist and flautist before turning to the theatrical world. He took his first steps at the Lecoq School in post-May 68 Paris. Inspired by these two artistic worlds, he then began to create shows in which music and words are in constant dialogue. His first musical piece, "Indeed", saw the day in 1980 in Zürich. Several different projects would follow, including a performance at Basel train station in 1980, for the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht. One year later, he parodied the Swiss national anthem with "Quand le cor des alpages se mue, Suisse, tue, tue!!" ("When the alpine horn transforms, kill, kill, Switzerland!!"); a performance in which Swiss soldiers tirelessly strike up "Die Nacht ist ohne Ende" (The Night is Without End). His meeting with the scenographer Anna Viebrock and the dramaturg Stephanie Carp in 1991 would nurture his career thanks to fruitful collaborations. After having staged now-classic pieces such as Pessoa's "Faust" or Horváth's "Kasimir and Karoline", he became director of the Schauspielhaus from 2000 to 2004. Since then, his creations have succeeded each other on stage, such as "Groundings, a Variation on Hope" in 2004, "Riesenbutzbach. A Permanent Colony" in 2009, "Papperlapapp" in 2010 (a show born of his status as associate artist), "My Fair Lady. A Language Laboratory" in 2012, followed by "King Size" and "Last Days. An Eve" in 2013.

As a director, Christoph Marthaler stands out with his innovative aesthetics, anchoring his plays in the scenery of daily life - such as that of waiting rooms or cafés - thus playing with the forms of representations. He presents ordinary figures in a shattered world, in the throes of existential and relational questions; touching on the human condition with tenderness, humour and humanity. A master of slowness, irony and discrepancy, he has invented an idiosyncratic scenic poetry, made of lyrics, songs and music.



© Björn Jensen

MALTE UBENAUF

Dramaturgy

After studying music and literature, Malte Ubenauf worked as a director in several theatres of Germany and German Switzerland, before converting himself to musical theatre dramaturgy. In 2003, he joins forces with Christoph Marthaler (Zürich Schauspielhaus) and works at his side on some of his productions, such as "Meine Faire Dame" and "Lo stimolatore cardiaco". He has also worked alongside Falk Richter, Luk Perceval, Robert Lehniger, Jonathan Meese and Armin Petras.

BENDIX DETHLEFFSEN

Music

A graduate of the Musikhichschule of Cologne, Bendix Dethleffsen - trained by Michael Luig - was the assistant of Ingo Metzmaker at the Hamburg Opera during his studies. Then, from 2001 to 2006, he occupied the post of orchestra director at the Aalto music theatre in Essen. He has directed numerous operas and ballets, such as "The Magic Flute", "Don Giovanni", "The Barber of Seville", "The Nutcracker" and "Hansel and Gretel". Since 2006, the artist is in charge of the musical direction of Christoph Marthaler's creations.



TORA AUGESTAD

Musician, singer and actress

Born in 1979 in Norway, Tora Augestad studied classical singing and jazz in Oslo and Stockholm, and specialises in the repertoires of the 20th and 21st centuries. She finished her training in German music in Munich and Berlin before obtaining her diploma in cabaret singing at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo. She has shared the stage with musical partners such as the Philharmonic Orchestra of Bergen, the Oslo Sinfonietta for "Pierrot Lunaire" and the Vienna Klangforum for "Quatre chants pour franchir le seuil" by Grisey directed by Sylvain Cambreling. Her collaboration with Christoph Marthaler begins in 2010 with "Beat Furrer", a musical comedy by Wüstenbuch, followed by "Meine Faire Dame", a retelling of "My Fair Lady" which was programmed in Naples, Avignon, Edinburgh and Paris after its success in Basel; she also performed in "Lo stimolatore cardiaco", a homage to Verdi. In 2004, Tora Augestad founded an ensemble with artists from the Norwegian jazz scene, with whom she explores the landscape between avant-garde and pop music. She has also been appointed deputy director of the Hardanger Musikkfest.

MICHAEL VON DER HEIDE

Musician, singer and comedian

Michael von der Heide is a musician, singer and comedian from the village of Amden in St-Gall, who delights audiences with his musical polyvalence, his charm and his biting humour. When he released his first album in 1996 at the age of 25, critics exclaimed: "a new star is born!". Since then, the singer has given more than a hundred concerts throughout the world (Germany, Austria, Canada, France, Ukraine...) and taken part in many television programmes. He has appeared in several of Christoph Marthaler's creations («Lina Böglis Reise», «Meine faire Dame», «King Size»), presented in such venues as the Zürich Schauspielhaus, the Festival d'Avignon, the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris, the Royal Opera House in London or the Berliner Volksbühne. His artistic collaborations also include Sina, Paola, Martin Suter, Annette Humpe, Nina Hagen and Milena Moser. Michael von der Heide's musical diversity has been awarded with many prizes. For his song "Jeudi Amour", he received the "lièvre d'argent" in the best Swiss pop song of 1998 category. In 1999, he won the Walo Prize in the song category, followed by the Deutscher Kleinkunstpreis the year after. He also has several golden records. In 2010, in Oslo, he represented Switzerland in the Eurovision with his song "Il pleut de l'or". In 2016, to mark 25 years on stage, he is paying tribute to his first musical love with a new show and an 11th album, entitled "Paola".



NIKOLA WEISSE

Actress

Born in Belgrade, Nikola Weisse trained at the Westfälischen Schauspielschule in Bochum. In 1963, she made her stage debut as Eve in Kleist's "The Broken Jug" at the Josefstadt Theatre in Vienna. She has performed at the Staatstheater in Hanover, the Theater Neumarkt, the Théâtre de Brême, the Schaubühne in Berlin, the Basel Theatre and the Schauspielhaus of both Bochum and Zurich. She has directed "Der Blaue Boll" by Ernst Barlach and "Détruire, dit-elle" by Marguerite Duras. Her staging of Patrick Barlow's "The Messiah", the premiere of which was presented at the Basel Theatre, was reprised on the same stage 20 years later. As an actress, she has collaborated with Horst Zankl, Jürgen Flimm, Frank Patrick Steckel, Jürgen Gosch, Herbert Wernicke, Werner Düggelin, Francois Michel Pesenti, Christoph Marthaler, Stefan Pucher, Falk Richter, Anna Viebrock and Elias Perrig. Nikola Weisse has had roles in "Der Gehülfe" by Thomas Körfer and "Jack the Ripper" with Klaus Kinski. She has also participated in "La dernière porte"; "La nuit de l'innocence", an adaptation of the novel by Tahar Ben Jelloun; "Madame Thérèse", from the eponymous novel by Blaise Cendrars; and "Anissija", the biography of a Russian peasant woman by Leo Tolstoy. Nikola Weisse is currently working with Christoph Marthaler on "Meine Faire Dame. Ein Sprachlabor" and "Das Weisse vom Ei - Une île flottante".



DURI BISCHOFF

Scenography

Born in Zürich in 1971, Duri Bischoff creates stage sets for the independent theatre scene. His collaboration with Christoph Marthaler comes to be in 2005 with "Schutz vor der Zukunft" for the Vienna Festival, and "Sausser aus Italien. Eine Urheberei", for the Salzburg Festival in 2007. He works with the director Michel Schröder on five productions: "Quixote", "Une saison en Enfer", "Amphibienmensch", "Herz der Finsternis" and "Babylon". With Anna-Sophie Mahler, he creates a musical theatre piece, "Ars moriendi", which is staged at the Kaserne in Basel and in Berlin for the Impulse Festival. During the last few years, he has created scenographies for several different pieces, such as "Spieler" by Christiane Pohles and "Wüstenbuch" by Christoph Marthaler.

SARAH SCHITTEK

Costume designer

Sarah Schitteck receives her diploma in costume design in 2002 and begins work as an assistant for the Zurich Schauspielhaus and the Berlin Volksbühne. Since 2003, she has been working as a costume designer for several theatres and operas that welcome international productions: the Festwochen of Vienne, the Festspielen of Salzburg, the Schauspielhaus of both Zurich and Köln, the Festival d'Avignon, the Kunstenfestivaldesartes of Bruxelles, the Kammerspiele in Munich and the Volksbühne in Berlin. She works with Christiane Pohle, Clemens Sienknecht and David Marton. Since 2003, Sarah Schitteck has regularly collaborated with Christoph Marthaler on projects such as "La Grande-Duchesse de Gerolstein", "Meine Faire Dame", "Das Wüstenbuch" and "Lo stimolatore cardiaco". We can also see her creations in "Riesenbutzbach", "Schutz vor der Zukunft" - recompensed by the Nestroy Award -, "Platzmangel" and "das Theater mit dem Waldhaus", all presented at the Berlin Theatre. She has also worked for the Basel Theatre on "Pension Schöller" and "Alte Meister".

PRESS CLIPPINGS

In Christoph Marthaler's work, dreams buzz softly, desires are only in tune by the greatest of coincidences and fantasies shyly fill the emptiness of daily life. Be that as it may, the routine carries on obstinately, and the characters devote themselves to it with great uprightness. (...) This madcap musical comedy frees up lung-busting laughter, but also allows a profound melancholy to well up in the face of relentless loneliness.

GWÉNOLA DAVID, «LA TERRASSE»

The audience emerges overjoyed and light-hearted, with a twinkle in their eye. He laughs in the face of clichés, in the face of the decorum, conventions and bourgeois ideals of which our world is made. Our laughter fixes itself upon a melancholic background of loneliness, allowing us to be sad and joyful all at once.

MALTE SCHWIND, «L'INSENSÉ»

With its airs of stuffy musical theatre as well as boulevard theatre contaminated by that of the absurd so dear to Beckett, Marthaler here tenders one of his most beautiful pieces, in a suspended time that Klaus Michael Grüber would not have disowned. A world which we could boil down to these stolen words: "Always having been what I am, and now so different to what I was". A concentration of melancholy which sets off fits of uncontrolled laughter. One hour and 20 minutes of unparalleled joy. An absolute master stroke.

FABIENNE ARVERS ET PATRICK SOURD, «LES INROCKS»

It is furiously off the wall. It is incredibly controlled in its gestures, its choral technique, its dancing body. And perhaps adds one more line to Marthaler's Treatise which he writes, piece after piece... For a life that is not sung, not danced, not laughed... is hardly a life at all.

YANNICK BUTEL, «L'INSENSÉ»

«King Size» glänzt wieder einmal durch die gänzliche Abwesenheit von Hektik, Handlung, Lärm und Text, von gesellschaftlicher Relevanz und postdramatischen Innovationen, ist aber immer noch schöner und auf sanfte Weise verstörender als alles, was das neue, junge, wilde Basler Schauspielteam in dieser Saison gezeigt hat. Niemand kann so elegant und enharmonisch wie Marthaler träumerische Melancholie mit höherem Nonsense verwechseln.

«FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG»

Tora Augestad schlüpft in die unterschiedlichsten Abendkleider, macht sich mit Stöckelschuhen noch grösser, als sie schon ist, und singt hinreissend schlank und rein. Michael von der Heide zeigt beachtliche tänzerische Beweglichkeit und daneben eine stimmliche Präsenz, die von der konkreten Poesie der köstlich plappernden «Méli mélodie» bis zum beklemmenden, todesgeschwängerten «Dein Angesicht» von Schumann reicht.

«BASLER ZEITUNG»

Marthaler begeistert mit einem zauberhaften Abend, der in der Verbindung von Schalk, Melancholie und Poesie ganz die Handschrift des genialen Theaterfinders trägt – ein Abend über die verpuffenden Liebe Sehnsüchte der Vereinsamten. Gewitzt und frappierend setzt er dabei Musik und Lieder ein.

«DER SONNTAG»

CONTACTS

ARTISTIC DIRECTION :
VINCENT BAUDRILLER

**DIRECTION PRODUCTION AND
TOURING :**
CAROLINE BARNEAUD
C.BARNEAUD@VIDY.CH
+41 (0)21 619 45 44

PRODUCTION/TOURING
ELIZABETH GAY
E.GAY@VIDY.CH
+41 (0)21 619 45 22

ANNE-CHRISTINE LISKE
A-C.LISKE@VIDY.CH
+41 (0)21 619 45 83

TECHNICAL DIRECTION :
CHRISTIAN WILMART /
SAMUEL MARCHINA
DT@VIDY.CH
+41 (0)21 619 45 16 / 81