

# ECHT!

7. FESTIVAL  
POLITIK IM FREIEN THEATER  
13.- 23. NOVEMBER 2008 // KÖLN  
[www.bpb.de/politikimfreientheater](http://www.bpb.de/politikimfreientheater)



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## ECHT! Theatre in Cologne – Theatre for Cologne – Theatre with Cologne

### The German Federal Agency for Civic Education presents the programme of the 7<sup>th</sup> “Politik im Freien Theater” festival

On Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) is happy to present the programme of the 7<sup>th</sup> “Politik im Freien Theater” festival. Under the *leitmotif* “ECHT!”, or “REAL!”, 16 selected productions from the international independent theatre scene will present their work at the event in Cologne, which is taking place from the 13<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> of November.

“Don’t make political theatre – be political when you make theatre!” Curator Rainer Hofmann used that quote, loosely based on something once said by Jean-Luc Godard, as his primary guideline when creating the programme for the festival. The President of the bpb, Thomas Krüger, has also stressed the importance of the festival as a platform for productions that seek to engage in political discourse and excite discussion of socially relevant topics.

The productions span the spectrum of performance art, from plays and other pieces that are acted to work that falls into the no-man’s land between theatre and the other arts. The programme includes groups that perform “classic” theatre, as well as music, dance movement, and puppet theatre, performance art, and interventions in public spaces.

Outstanding productions from Germany, Austria and Switzerland will be shown at the festival - many of them are appearing in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia for the first time ever. Under the slogan “Made in Cologne”, five debut performances that have been written and produced specifically for the event will also premiere. And under the sponsorship of the NRW Foundation for the Arts, this year’s festival includes an international category showcasing non-German works.

The “Made in Cologne” productions will incorporate both the city and its citizens by involving them directly in the performance. In their piece “KURZ NACHDEM ICH TOT WAR *von häusern & menschen*”, the group matthaei & konsorten have pieced together real-life Cologne stories to create a fictional biography that the public can “experience” via a staged tour of the city.

The German-language productions encompass six very different pieces. In *Die Schwarze Kammer* (The Black Chamber), a gothic opera sung by ghosts, the Swiss group Mass & Fieber explore the nature and horror of civil war. *Der Report der Magd* (The Handmaid’s Tale), a performance from the Jena Theatre based on Margaret Atwood’s novel, takes place in a dystopian society. Under threat of extinction, women there have been degraded to little more than brood mares.

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One highlight in the international category is the production by Dutch company Hotel Modern. The performers move like giant war correspondents through a miniaturised replica of Auschwitz, zooming in to close-up shots with cameras to examine different aspects of the awful unfolding events. "It's a tremendous way to address one of the most difficult topics imaginable," said Rainer Hofmann of the piece, called simply "Camp". The group will answer questions about their work in an open forum and podium discussion following the performance.

Other highlights include a piece from the Tallin-based Teater NO99: "HEM, or Hot Estonian Men", which has become a cult hit in the group's home country. And Akillas Karazissis and Michael Marmarinos are unwilling to compromise on the question of politics in theatre in their piece "Stalin – a debate on (Greek) theatre".

The stages at ECHT! are spread throughout the city. Productions will take place at the following venues: the *Alte Feuerwache*, *Bürgerhaus Stollwerck*, the *Orangerie theater im Volksgarten*, *Studiobühne Köln*, *Schauspielhaus Köln*, *Theaterhaus Köln* and in the "Live Music Hall". In Cologne's Maastricht Street, a vaulted underground venue has also been converted to house a diverse collection of work that includes a video installation from Cologne artists Hofmann & Lindholm entitled *Serie Deutschland – Etappe Köln-Bonn* (Germany Series – the Cologne-Bonn Stage).

The festival will open on November 13<sup>th</sup> (2008) at 7:30 p.m. in Cologne Theatre (*Schauspielhaus Köln*) with a performance of the production "Hell on Earth". A breakneck dance performance put together by Berlin-based troupe DorkyPark, led by Constanza Macras, the piece's dancers include immigrant kids from the city's "problem" Neukölln district.

The centre of the festival can be found at the heart of Cologne's 'Belgian Quarter', where the Café Hallmackenreuther (Brüsseler Platz 9) is set to become a meeting point and ECHT! party-zone.

More information and images available for download can be found at:  
[www.bpb.de/politikimfreientheater](http://www.bpb.de/politikimfreientheater)

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