



40 Jahre Years
Museum der Moderne
Salzburg

Raising the curtain! Theater photography by Ruth Walz



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Raising the curtain!

Theater photography by Ruth Walz

The German theater photographer Ruth Walz (Bremen, DE, 1941) is a grande dame of her craft; her work with directors like Luc Bondy, Klaus Michael Grüber, Peter Sellars and Peter Stein is the stuff of legend. After a long engagement at the Schaubühne in Berlin, Walz still works for the Salzburg Festival on a regular basis. It was here that she met artists like William Kentridge and Robert Wilson and found thrilling perspectives at the imposing Felsenreitschule. Among her most famous shots are the pictures she took during the 1986 premiere of *Prometheus Bound*, with Bruno Ganz in the title role. The exhibition devotes an entire chapter to photographs of this singular actor; another is dedicated to the motif of the curtain, which Walz renders in imaginative variations.

“Ruth Walz’s best scene photos are landscape photographs of a performance. The essence of a scene, like the essence of a landscape, does not lie in the striking instant—that is why theater photography is fundamentally incompatible with the snapshot”.
(Botho Strauß) K. S.



Curtain from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, Salzburg Festival, 1996, chromogenic print



Raising the curtain!

Visions of what the theater is and does change, and so does the role the curtain plays. Many of Ruth Walz's photographs illustrate the liberal and playful ways in which stage curtains are used in contemporary productions. In Peter Handke's *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, for example, the gossamer curtain fabric billows behind the actor on the stage as though it were a performer in its own right, adding to the effect of the action.

More recently, stage productions have often used curtains as projection screens. During the Salzburg production of *Salome*, the audience reads "Te saxa loquuntur," "the stones speak of you," on the gauze curtain. The same words appear on the Sigmundstor, popularly known as the Neutor, which connects the old town of Salzburg to its suburbs, above the bust of Archbishop Count Sigismund Schrattenbach, who had the tunnel and gates built in the eighteenth century.

Ruth Walz's photographs of curtains sample the versatility and rich potential of the ephemeral in stagecraft. In painting, the curtain motif often served to demonstrate the artist's expert skill: painters tried to imitate nature perfectly. Photography's representational capacity relieved painting of the function of deceptively accurate depiction. Theater photography goes one step further and eschews the documentation of material artefacts: the curtains, in these pictures, awaken to their own fleeting life. K. S.

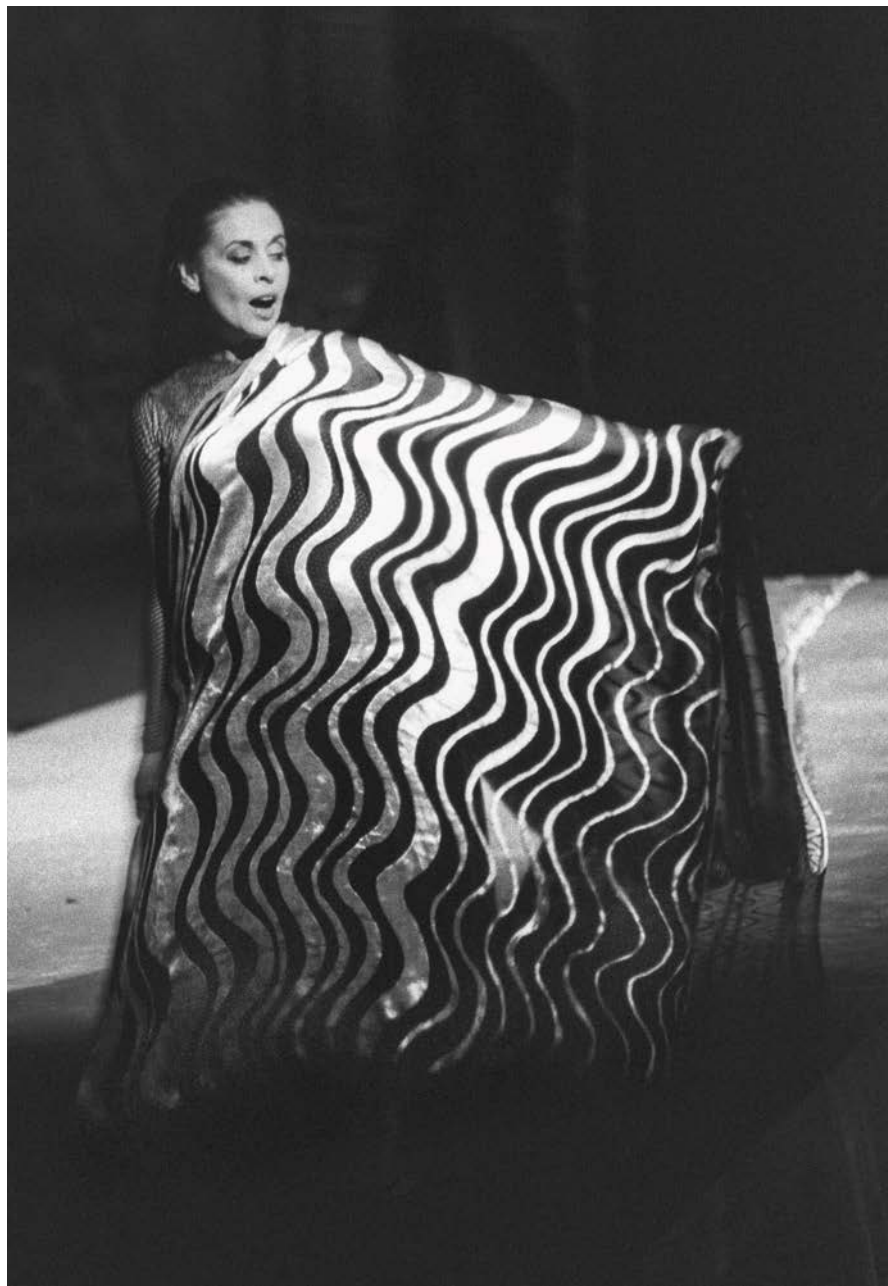


Curtain from *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* by Peter Handke, Schaubühne Berlin, 1994, chromogenic print

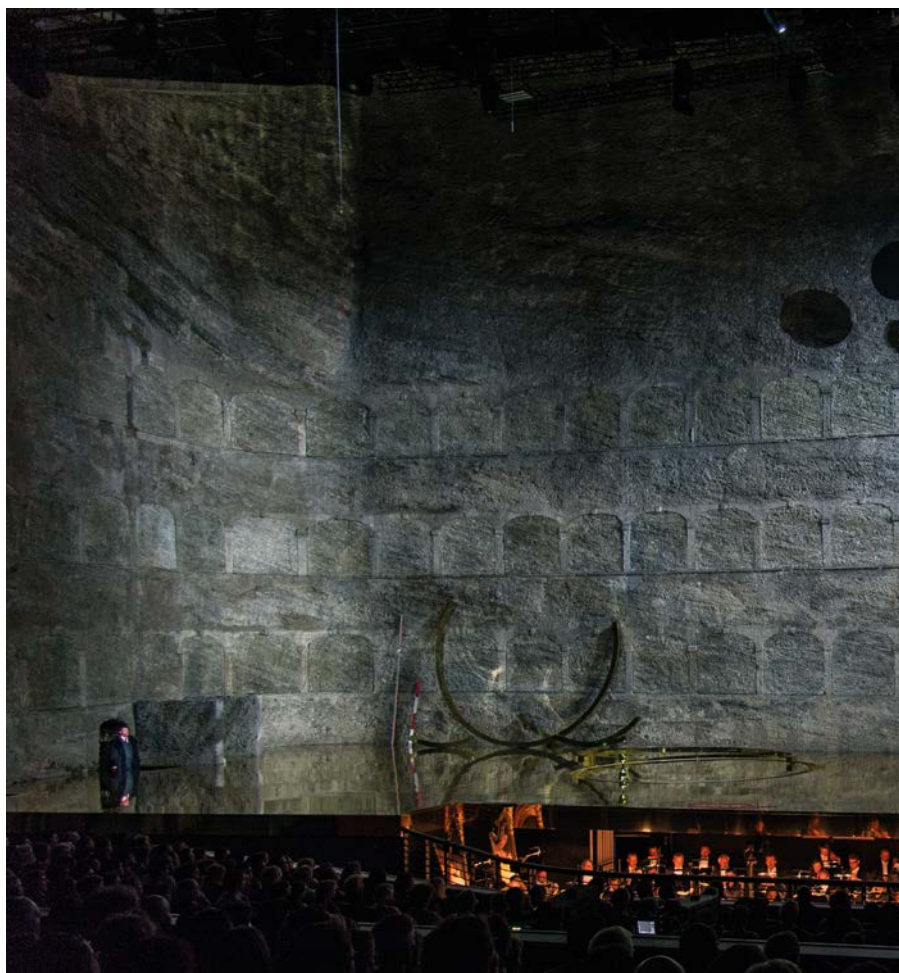
Salome does not dance

Ruth Walz's black-and-white photographs record the movements of Catherine Malfitano, the singer playing the role of Salome. In light of today's debates around sexism, however, we may wonder: do we still want women to be depicted as objects of desire? Princess Salome, whose story is told in the New Testament, prompts the murder of John the Baptist. She demands his head as reward for a dance that her stepfather Herod has requested from her. The crisis of Richard Strauss's opera *Salome*—and typically also the visual climax of the stage action—is the “Dance of the Seven Veils.” The libretto, which is based on a play by Oscar Wilde, portrays Salome as the quintessential *femme fatale*, a demonic seductress.

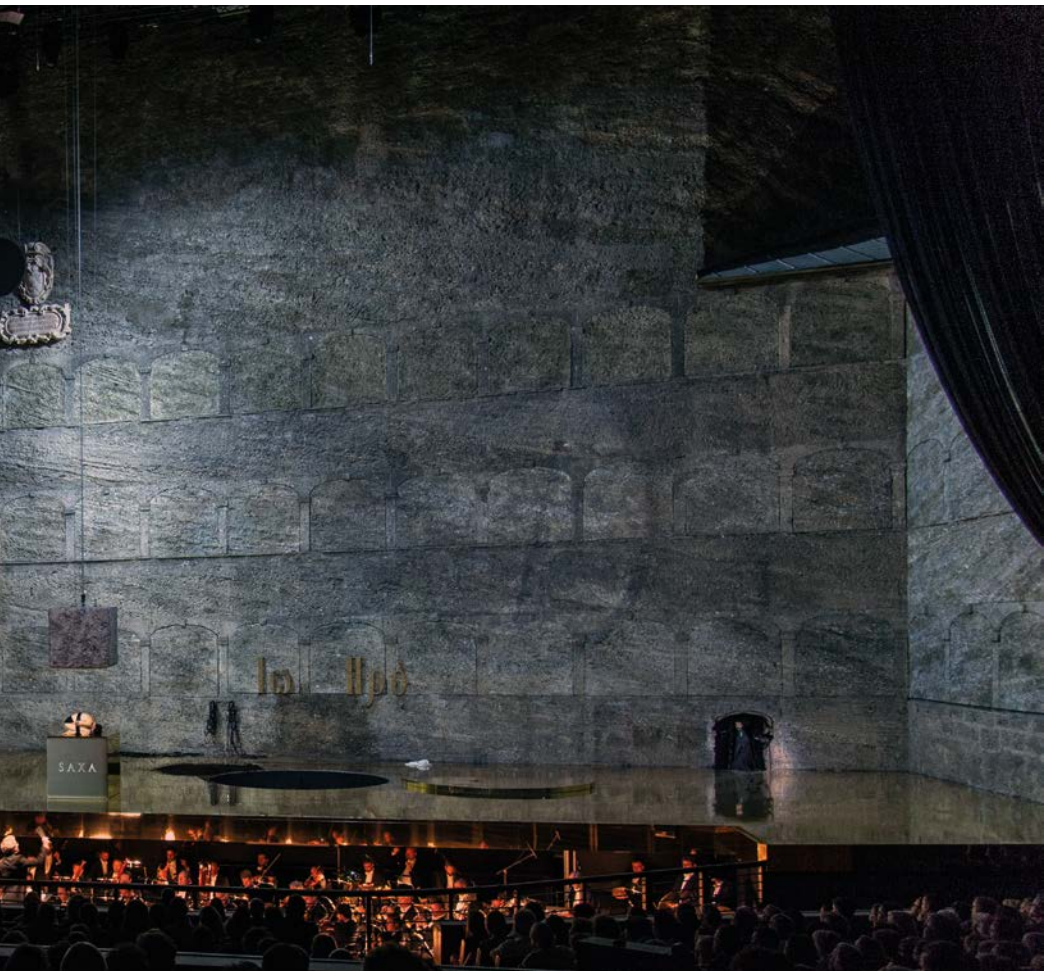
In the 2018 production, Salome, tied up in a fetal position with black ribbons, cowers on a squared stone. The Latin word *saxa*, rocks, is engraved on the sacrificial block. A second block is lowered from above, threatening to crush the delicate figure. Even without Strauss's suggestive music, one senses the ferocious response that Salome's powerful dance will elicit—even though, in this instance, it takes place only in the viewers' imagination. K. S.



Catherine Malfitano as Salome in *Salome* by Richard Strauss,
Salzburg Festival, 1992, gelatin silver print on baryta paper



Asmik Grigorian as Salome in *Salome* by Richard Strauss,
Salzburg Festival, 2018, chromogenic print



Bluebeard

Judith must open seven doors to understand her fate: though determined to light up Bluebeard's castle with her love, she ends up murdered just like the three women before her. The 1995 production of Béla Bartók's one-act opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* is directed by Robert Wilson, who also designs the scenery. It is minimalist, graphical, with a bright spotlight trained on the dreaded figure.

In Romeo Castellucci's staging, by contrast, the scene is dark and bare. Flames suddenly blaze up, and water floods the stage. The flames spell the word "Ich," "I," representing Bluebeard's quest for his identity as well as Judith's own; in this production, she is guilty, too, having murdered her child. K. S.

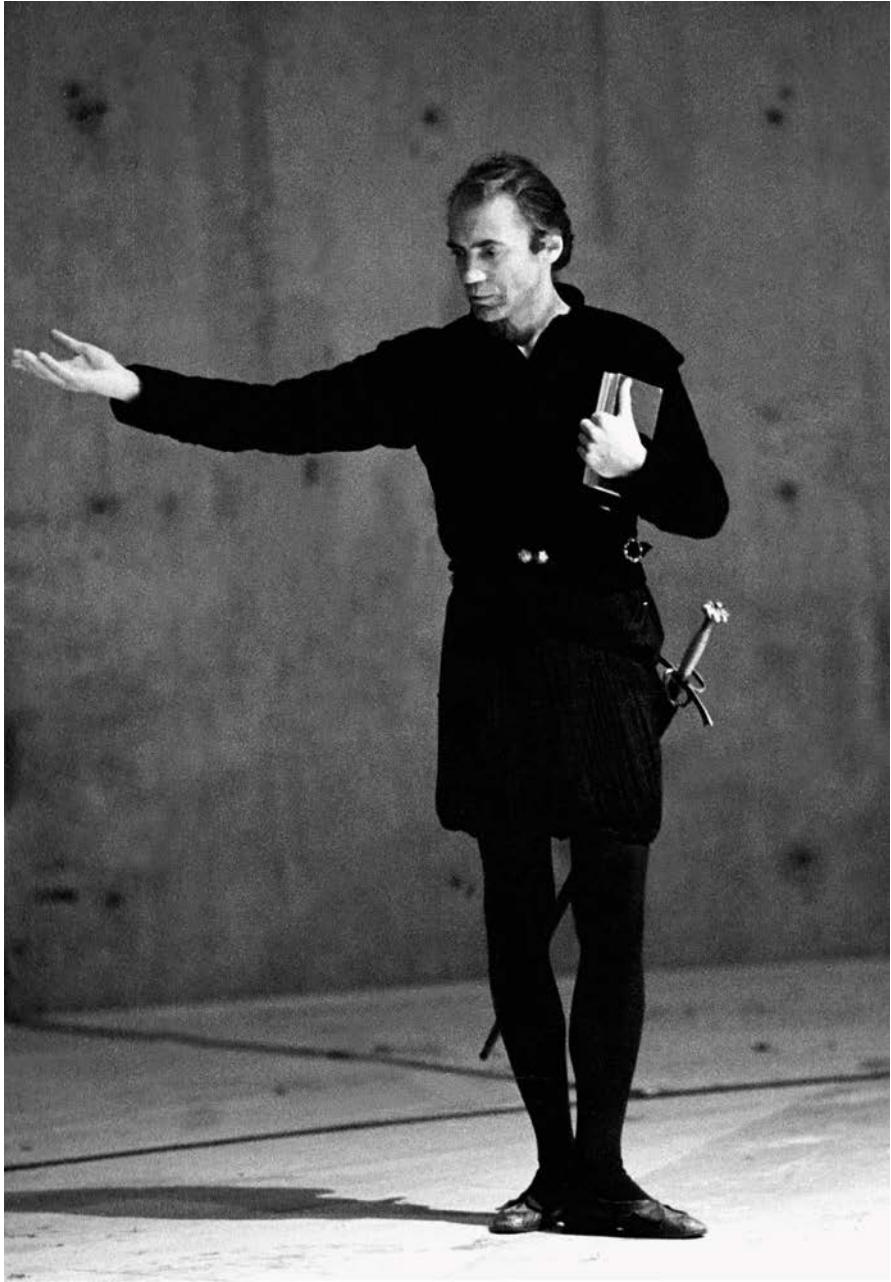


Top: Markella Hatziano as Judith and Robert Hale as Blaubart in *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* by Béla Bartók, Salzburg Festival, 1995, gelatin silver print on baryta paper
Bottom: Ausrine Stundyte as Judith and Mika Kares as Blaubart in *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* by Béla Bartók, Salzburg Festival, 2022, chromogenic print

For Bruno Ganz, whom else?

Thomas Bernhard dedicates his play *The Hunting Company* to him with the words “For Bruno Ganz, whom else.” Ganz’s Salzburg Festival debut in Bernhard’s *The Ignoramus and the Madman* in 1972 draws rave reviews from critics and audiences. So does his portrayal of Prometheus in Klaus Michael Grüber’s production of *Prometheus Bound* in Peter Handke’s translation. Karin Kathrein sums up the premiere in *Die Presse*: “How this actor fully inhabits the text, how everything is brought to life, every shade, every nuance is rendered, how the tension is maintained, how the man of sorrows overshadows the insurgent and compassion eclipses knowledge, that ranks among the highest achievements of dramatic art.”

For over twenty years, Bruno Ganz is the bearer of the Iffland-Ring, an accolade that each holder passes by will to the “most worthy actor of the German-speaking theater for life.” After establishing his renown among live audiences with his work under Peter Stein at the Schaubühne in Berlin, Ganz branches out into the cinema from 1977 on—his performance as the mortal angel in Wim Wenders’s *Wings of Desire*, in particular, is iconic. Ruth Walz, his partner until his death in 2019, shares her very personal perspective on Bruno Ganz with us. K. S.



Bruno Ganz as Hamlet in *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, Schaubühne Berlin 1982, chromogenic print



Top: *Bruno Ganz*, Venice, n. d., gelatin silver print on baryta paper

Bottom: *Bruno Ganz and Botho Strauß*, Subiaco, 1976, gelatin silver print on baryta paper

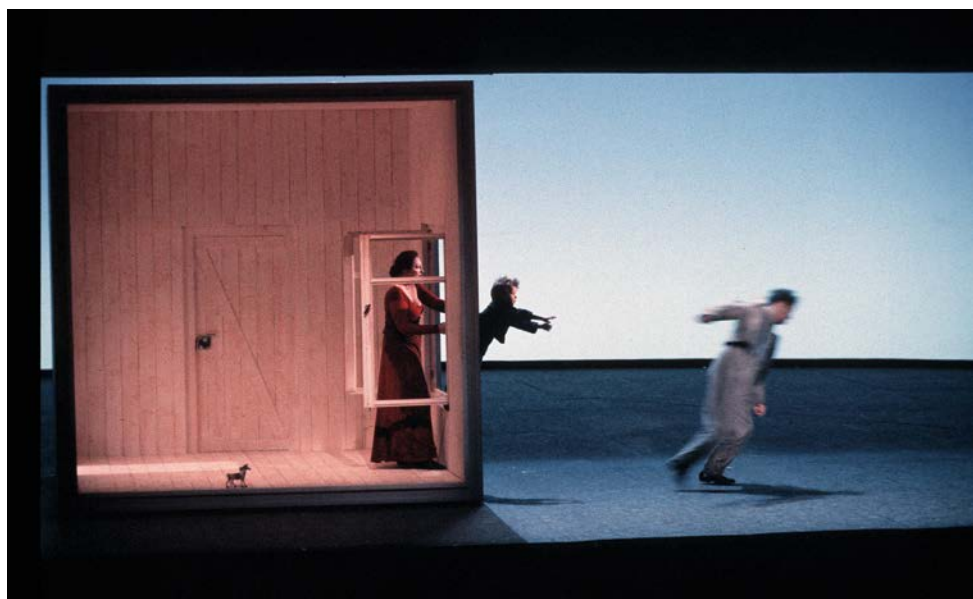


Bruno Ganz as Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound* by Aischylos, Salzburg Festival, 1986, gelatin silver prints on baryta paper

Wozzeck

Alban Berg's opera tells the story of the simplehearted soldier Wozzeck, who does his best to provide for his lover and their child, even volunteering as a subject for medical experiments. When he is mocked by everyone and his lover cheats on him, catastrophe ensues: he murders Marie and drowns himself.

In both productions, the room in which the cruel medical experiments are conducted is claustrophobic. In William Kentridge's staging, the scene between Wozzeck and the doctor is set in a wardrobe flooded with light. Spotlights pick out the section of the stage on which the action takes place and the singers perform at a given moment. The entire stage becomes a tableau teeming with detail in which the projections take on a life of their own and complement the action with additional aesthetic aspects. K. S.



Top: Matthias Goerne as Wozzeck and Jens Larsen as Doctor in *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg, Salzburg Festival, 2017, chromogenic print

Bottom: Deborah Polaski as Marie, Konradin Schuchter as Mariens Knabe and Albert Dohmen as Wozzeck in *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg, Salzburg Easter Festival, 1997, chromogenic print

what was *there* what was there

Loneliness and Madness. Violence and Tenderness. Love and Jealousy. Gender and Secrecy. Hopes of Love that Fade Away. Battle Scenes that End in Heaven. A light, as Though from Another World. A Laugh that Overcomes All Evil. Moments when Time Stands Still, in a Space, with a Gesture, through a Glance. Theatre can offer you all that. If you look at it in the right way. Seen through the viewfinder of Ruth Walz, even the weakest, the most unassuming production may acquire a breath of Superior Wisdom, Tragic Uncertainty or Inner Tenderness.

Photos by Ruth Walz don't catalogue the details but rather explain the incidental: the halftones and the glances that meet at the decisive moment. She sees through the secret devices of the directors and actors, the set builders, the light designers, the costume makers when these already believe in their effect.

A bending leg, an extended finger, a shadow on the wall, a hand over the edge of the stage—warm signifiers instead of cold symbols: in harmony with programme booklets; not with advertising posters—that's how Ruth Walz photographs the theatre. S. S.



Libgart Schwarz as Marie Steuber in *Time and Room* by Botho Strauß, Theater Akzent, Schaubühne Berlin, 1989, chromogenic print

Portrait photographs

Ruth Walz is not a portrait photographer. Her close-up shots of individuals do not feel posed in any way. Rather, they let us glimpse famous artists, eminent writers, and international stars as though they were our friends. The appeal of these pictures lies in their being taken from life. The sitters are always doing, thinking, saying something. They never gaze, expecting to be photographed. The result is a distinctive mental concentration that speaks from their eyes and gestures, instilling in us a sense of profound familiarity. These photographs cast an unbreakable spell of intimacy. S. S.



*Edith Clever
and Peter Handke, n. d.,
gelatin silver print
on baryta paper*

Biographical notes on the sitters

Claudio Abbado

1933 Milan, IT–2014 Bologna, IT
Chief conductor of La Scala, Milan, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic, music director of the Vienna State Opera. He is artistic director of the Salzburg Easter Festival from 1994 until 2002.

Gilles Aillaud

1928–2005 Paris, FR
French painter and graphic artist. Starting in 1972, he also works as a scenographer.

Pierre Audi

1957 Beirut, LB–London, GB
French-Lebanese theater director. He is artistic director of De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam, from 1988 until 2018 and of the Holland Festival from 2005 until 2014.

Moidele Bickel

1937 Munich, DE–2016 Berlin, DE
The costume designer works both for the stage and for film and television productions. Starting in 1972, she contributes to a series of productions of the Salzburg Festival that concludes with the premiere of Marc-André Dalbavie's opera *Charlotte Salomon* in 2014.

Luc Bondy

1948–2015 Zurich, CH
A theater, film, and opera director, Bondy is codirector of the Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, Berlin, from 1985 until 1988. In 1992, he directs a production of Richard Strauss's *Salome* for the Salzburg Festival, followed, a year later, by the world premiere of Botho Strauß's *Das Gleichgewicht* and, in 1995, the new production of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. He is director of the Vienna Festival from 2002 until 2013.

Romeo Castellucci

1960 Cesena, IT–Amsterdam, NL and Cesena, IT
A cofounder and artistic director of the theater company Societas Raffaello Sanzio, the director also writes widely on the theory of his craft; in 2008, he and Valérie Dréville are associate artists at the Festival d'Avignon. For the Salzburg Festival, he directs Richard Strauss's *Salome* in 2018, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in 2021, and Béla Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* in 2022.

Patrice Chéreau

1944 Lézigné, FR–2013 Paris, FR
The French film, theater, and opera director, screenwriter, and actor directs Mozart's *Don Giovanni* for the Salzburg Festival in 1994. His film *La Reine Margot* starring Isabelle Adjani wins numerous awards and is widely seen as a masterpiece. In 2001, he wins a Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival for his film *Intimacy*.

Edith Clever

1940 Wuppertal, DE
The actress is a member of the ensemble of the Schaubühne in Berlin from 1971 until 1989, working with Klaus Michael Grüber, Luc Bondy, and Peter Stein. The latter brings her to the Salzburg Festival for his 1994 production of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. She appears in the part of Jedermann's mother in *Jedermann* from 2017 until 2020, then, in 2021, of *Death*.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

1929 Kaufbeuren, DE–2022 Munich, DE
The poet and writer, who wins the Georg Büchner Prize in 1963, is considered one of Germany's foremost intellectuals. Together with Franz Greno, he edits the book series *Die Andere Bibliothek* from 1985 until 2007.



Moidele Bickel, n. d.,
chromogenic print

Péter Esterházy

1950–2016 Budapest, HU

The writer and essayist intertwines the history of Central Europe with his own family's tale. In 2004, he wins the Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels for his magnum opus *Celestial Harmonies* and the subsequent *Revised Edition*.

Betty Freeman

1921 Chicago, IL, US–2009 Los Angeles, LA, US

The photographer and trained concert pianist has a long career as a music and event manager, promoting musicians like John Cage, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and Helmut Lachenmann. Cage dedicates his *Freeman Etudes* to the patron of the arts.

Achim Freyer

1934 Berlin, DE

Bertolt Brecht's protégé at the Berliner Ensemble, Freyer works as a director after escaping from East Germany. In 1988, he founds the Freyer Ensemble, which includes actors, dancers, acrobats, musicians, singers, directors, and scenographers. He is also a visual artist, presenting his work at documenta, Kassel, in 1977 and again in 1987.

Asmik Grigorian

1981 Vilnius, LT

The soprano makes her debut at the Salzburg Festival as Marie in Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in 2017. Her performance in the title role of Richard Strauss' *Salome* in 2018 is hailed by critics and audiences alike and earns her an Austrian Music Theater Award in the *Best Female Lead* category.

Klaus Michael Grüber

1941 Neckarelz, DE–2008 Belle-Île, FR

The director makes theater history with his productions at the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer, Berlin, where Bruno Ganz, Jutta Lampe, Angela Winkler, and Otto Sander are among his favorite actors. He first works for the Salzburg festival in 1986, directing Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* at the Felsenreitschule with Ganz in the title role.

Peter Handke

1942 Griffen, AT–Chaville, FR

One of the most eminent writers in the German language, Handke is honored with the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2019. He lives in Salzburg from 1979 until 1987. He also works as a translator, rendering Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* from ancient Greek into German.

Markus Hinterhäuser

1958 La Spezia, IT–Salzburg, AT

A pianist by training, Hinterhäuser specializes in interpretations of contemporary music, championing the works of Luigi Nono, Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, Morton Feldman, György Ligeti, and Galina Ustvolskaya, and contributes to music theater productions directed by Christoph Marthaler, Johan Simons, and Klaus Michael Grüber. Having overseen the Salzburg Festival's concert program from 2007 until 2011, he serves as artistic director of the Vienna Festival in 2014–2016 and is appointed artistic director of the Salzburg Festival in October 2016.



Krzysztof Warlikowski, n. d.,
chromogenic print

Erland Josephson

1923–2012 Stockholm, SE

The actor, director, and writer rises to international fame with his performance as the leading man in Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*.

William Kentridge

1955 Johannesburg, ZA

One of the most popular artists working today, William Kentridge wins the Kyoto Prize in 2010 for his successful efforts to fuse traditional drawings with animation and other media. Like the Nobel Prize, the award is generally recognized as one of the world's premier honors for scientific and cultural achievements. Starting in the 1970s, Kentridge also works for the stage; in 2017, he directs Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* at the Salzburg Festival.

Imre Kertész

1929–2016 Budapest, HU

The Hungarian writer's debut novel *Fateless*, published in 1975, ranks among the most important works of literature about the Holocaust and establishes his great renown. He is awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2002.

Corinna Kirchhoff

1958 Düsseldorf, DE–Berlin, DE

The German actress makes her stage debut at the Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, Berlin, as Irina in Peter Stein's production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. At the Salzburg Festival, she appears in a number of roles, including as Genia in Schnitzler's *The Vast Domain* in 2002 and as Hippolyta/Titania in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2007.

Jutta Lampe

1937 Flensburg, DE–2020 Berlin, DE

One of the most prominent members of the ensemble of the Schaubühne, Berlin, for three decades, she works with distinguished stage directors such as Peter Stein, Klaus Michael Grüber, Luc Bondy, and Robert Wilson. In 1993, she takes the part of Lilly Groth in Botho Strauß's *Das Gleichgewicht*, directed by Luc Bondy for the Salzburg Festival.

Christoph Marthaler

1951 Erlenbach, CH–Paris, FR

The Swiss director and musician works at the Theater Basel from 1988 until 1993; he is artistic director of the Zürcher Schauspielhaus, Zurich, from 2000 until 2004. The scenographer and costume designer Anna Viebrock is a permanent member of his team since his Basel days. For the Salzburg Festival, he directs Leoš Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová* in 1998, Ödon von Horváth's *Zur schönen Aussicht* in 1999, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* in 2011; his production of Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff* premieres in 2023.

Ingo Metzmacher

1957 Hannover, DE–Berlin, DE

Metzmacher launches his international career with a stint at the opera house La Monnaie in Brussels in 1988. He is chief conductor of the Hamburg State Opera from 1997 until 2005, then chief conductor of the Dutch National Opera and, from 2007 until 2010, chief conductor and artistic director of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. In 2016, he is appointed artistic director of the KunstFestSpiele Herrenhausen, a festival in Hannover. At the Salzburg Festival, he conducts the premiere of Wolfgang Rihm's opera *Dionysos* (2010) and works of music theater by Luigi Nono, Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Harrison Birtwistle, Wolfgang Rihm, and George Enescu.



Angela Winkler, n. d.,
chromogenic print

Jeanne Moreau

1928–2017 Paris, FR

In the 1950s and 1960s, the French character actress, who also directs films and sings, is one of the most popular movie stars associated with the *Nouvelle Vague*. Perhaps her best-known performance is as Catherine in François Truffaut's film *Jules and Jim*, released in 1962. She makes her directorial debut in 1976 with *Lumière*, a film about a forty-year-old actress.

Gerard Mortier

1943 Ghent, BE–2014 Brussels, BE

The opera and theater director and administrator leads the Salzburg Festival from 1991 until 2001. He opens the festival to younger audiences and initiates programming changes to bring it into the twenty-first century. He goes on to found the Ruhrtriennale festival in 2002, serves as general director of the Paris Opera from 2004 until 2009, and is appointed artistic director of Teatro Real, an opera house in Madrid, in 2008.

Péter Nádas

1942 Budapest, HU–Budapest und Gomboszeg, HU

Nádas begins his professional career as a photographer and photojournalist. The Hungarian censors block the publication of his debut novel until 1977. He wins numerous international literary awards, including the Austrian State Prize for European Literature. The Kunsthaus Zug presents his photographic work in 2012.

Arvo Pärt

1935 Paide, now EE–Laulasmaa, EE

The Estonian composer—who emigrates to Vienna in 1980—ranks among the preeminent contemporary masters of his craft. His oeuvre is abidingly popular and garners numerous honors, including the Praemium Imperiale, awarded by the Japanese Imperial family, in 2014 and the Swedish Polar Music Prize in 2023. He dedicates the performances of his works during the 2006–2007 concert season to the memory of the murdered Russian-American journalist and human rights activist Anna Politkovskaya.

Howie Seago

1953 Seattle, WA, US

The actor and theater director, who is deaf since birth, is a member of the National Theatre of the Deaf, where he is discovered by Peter Sellars. In Europe, he plays parts in Aeschylus's *The Persians* at the Salzburg Festival and the Edinburgh Festival in 1993, and in the Oscar-nominated film *Beyond Silence* (Germany, 1996). Seago is an outspoken advocate for greater recognition of sign language and deaf culture.

Peter Sellars

1957 Pittsburgh, PA, US–Los Angeles, CA, US

The theater and opera director rises to international renown with innovative interpretations of classical masterpieces and champions the music of the twentieth century and contemporary compositions. He makes his Salzburg Festival debut in 1992 with Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*.

Botho Strauß

1944 Naumburg, DE–Berlin, DE

The writer and dramatist is dramaturge at the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer, Berlin, from 1970 until 1975 before dedicating himself entirely to writing. He wins the Georg Büchner Prize in 1985. His play *Das Gleichgewicht* premieres at the Salzburg Festival in 1993 in a production directed by Luc Bondy.



Betty Freeman, n. d.,
gelatin silver print on baryta paper

Peter Stein

1937 Berlin, DE–Amelia, IT

Many of the theater, opera, and film director's mises-en-scène make theater history; none more so than his seminal productions at the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer, Berlin. Edith Clever, Bruno Ganz, Jutta Lampe, Otto Sander, and the other members of his ensemble there help him develop his distinctive directorial style. His success enables him to move the company to a new home—the Schaubühne am Lehninger Platz. He leads the theater division of the Salzburg Festival from 1991 until 1997.

George Tabori

1914 Budapest, HU–2007 Berlin, DE

Rejecting the concept of the director as too authoritarian, Tabori calls himself a “playmaker.” He emigrates to the U.S. in 1947, working as a screenwriter and collaborating with Bertolt Brecht and Alfred Hitchcock (*I Confess*, 1953). He returns to Europe in the early 1970, initially settling in Germany. He leads the Theater Der Kreis in Vienna from 1987 until 1990, then moves to the Burgtheater under Claus Peymann, where he creates groundbreaking productions. He is also a playwright; his play *Mein Kampf* (first performed in 1987), in particular, is widely celebrated.

Martin Walz

1964 Zurich, CH–Berlin, DE

Ruth Walz's son works as a director, screenwriter, actor, and, since 2010, also as a photographer.

Krzysztof Warlikowski

1962 Szczecin, PL–Warsaw, PL

The Polish theater and opera director is renowned for his productions of contemporary works, his modern perspective on Shakespeare's plays, and his subversive interpretations of Greek tragedies. He is the founding director of the Nowy Teatr Warsaw, established in 2008. In 2021, he is awarded a Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement by the theater division of the Biennale di Venezia. His production of Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth* premieres at the 2023 Salzburg Festival.

Robert Wilson

1941 Waco, TX, US–New York, NY, US

The director, painter, lighting designer, scenographer, video artist, and architect is widely hailed as a radical innovator of the stage. His work for the Salzburg Festival includes productions, in 1995, of Béla Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* starring Jessye Norman. As part of the celebrations of the 250th anniversary of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's birth in 2006, he installs a permanent exhibition in Mozart's birthplace.

Angela Winkler

1944 Templin, DE–Berlin, DE

Peter Stein discovers the actress and brings her to the Schaubühne in Berlin, where she is a member of the ensemble from 1971 until 1978. Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta's film *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* based on the novel of the same title by Heinrich Böll, released in 1975, makes her a star. In 1979, she plays Oskar Matzerath's mother in Schlöndorff's Oscar-winning screen adaptation of Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, which wins her international fame. Her debut album *Ich liebe dich, kann ich nicht sagen*, with interpretations of chansons by Barbara, Edith Piaf, and others, comes out in 2011.

Andreas Zechner

1968 Linz, AT–Salzburg, AT

After seven years in Stuttgart, where he serves as technical director of the Staatstheater Stuttgart, Europe's largest company producing straight theater, opera, and dance performances, and a stint in Munich, Zechner, a mechanical and mechatronics engineer by training, joins the Salzburg Festival as technical director in 2013. B. H.



Jeanne Moreau, n. d.,
gelatin silver print on baryta paper

Anna Viebrock: Inventing what one finds

The stage portal of the Großes Festspielhaus, the Salzburg Festival's premier venue, is 99 feet wide, fully twice as wide as the Vienna State Opera's. Yet the scene and costume designer and director Anna Viebrock is undaunted by these enormous dimensions. Close observation of reality plays a key role in her practice; she keeps a "visual diary," collecting movable pieces that she fuses in an artificial and equivocal new reality.

As part of her work, Viebrock travels to places that provide her with inspiration related to a particular play or opera. For the Salzburg production of Leoš Janáček's opera *Káťa Kabanová*, she



Lohengrin by Richard Wagner,
Salzburg Easter Festival, 2022, chromogenic print

visits Brno in the Czech Republic, where the composer spent much of his life. Exploring the city, Viebrock discovers prefabricated buildings that serve her as a visualization of the dead end in which Kabanová finds herself, while also involving the audience in the action: the neighbors watching from the windows of the apartment blocks demonstrate the voyeuristic gaze on the heroine's life that is ultimately the spectators' as well. In a production of *Lohengrin* in 2022, the audience is confronted at the very beginning by the forbidding sight of a fortification: Viebrock discovered it in Hütteldorf (Vienna).

The 2000–01 season preview booklet produced by the Zürcher Schauspielhaus in Zurich introduces Viebrock as an “enlarger and condenser of spaces and specialist for wood paneling, waiting halls, and apron dresses”; rather than illustrating stage directions, she uses them as cues for her own research, in which—as she puts it in one of her books on theatrical spaces—“I invent what I find.”
K. S.



Adriane auf Naxos by Richard Strauss,
Salzburg Festival, 2001, chromogenic print

Working in series

Ruth Walz is known for painstakingly preparing her theater photography and for the comprehensiveness of her documentations. Her approach was informed in part by a piece of advice that Bertolt Brecht's photographer Ruth Berlau gave her: she recommended photographing each production in such detail that the material might be gathered in a model book and the entire play might be reconstructed from countless pictures.

Yet the momentary, too, is often best captured in extensive series. The recollection of the ephemerality of the action on the stage is illustrated by subtle transformations and minimal alterations. Consider, for example, the series of pictures showing a translucent curtain billowing before cool surfaces. The gossamer fabric contrasts with Harald B. Thor's imposing stage design for the 2019 production of Giuseppe Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. The opera singer Jessye Norman's and the actor Michel Piccoli's gestures and facial expressions, meanwhile, are so manifold and so deeply moving that they make up for photography's inability to transmit the words and music to the beholder. K. S.



Jessye Norman in *Erwartung* by Arnold Schönberg,
Salzburg Festival, 1995, gelatin silver prints on baryta paper

Ruth Walz—A life in pursuit of the moment

She takes her first photograph with the Hasselblad. The year is 1967: the dress rehearsal for a guest performance of Giorgio Strehler's *Giants of the Mountain* at the Freie Volksbühne Berlin. Ruth Walz, a young photography student, has just been admitted to the renowned Lette-Verein. Now she is in the dark auditorium, her nerves abuzz. She is standing in the third row—far too close to the stage.

Strehler's youthful assistant, the handsome Klaus Michael Grüber, dressed in a white suit, is sitting behind her. The magnificent Valentina Cortese, in the role of Countess Ilse, enters the stage. She defends the art of the theater against the giants with great verve, exclaims, gesticulates, is besides herself. Then she abruptly pauses for a moment, leans back in a chair, and rests her chin in her hand, absorbed in thought. Silence descends, all is motionless. And now, suddenly, the so-called Hasselblad thunder: with two deafening ratcheting noises, the shutter curtain opens and closes. That is the first picture. The first evanescent moment is in the box—caught like a wild beast.

Two years later, in March 1969, a twenty-eight-year-old Walz receives her apprenticeship diploma certifying that she has attained a “good” command of the photographer's craft. She had previously studied psychology in Munich for seven semesters and given birth to a son. Ulrike Meinhof, on whose film *Bambule* she works, introduces her to Berliner Kindl's advertising copywriter, and so she earns the money for her first photography equipment with pictures of foaming beer.

In her free time, she attends public rehearsals whenever she can and conceives the ambition to outflank her established colleagues by rapidly developing the colors of her slides. She picks up her first official commissions. The era of the Schaubühne under Peter Stein's direction begins in 1970. The West Berlin theater community is in uproar; Ruth Walz absolutely wants to work there. In 1976, she is engaged as the theater's inhouse photographer. From day one of her employment, she shadows the company's work starting with the first read-through, attends plenary meetings, archives the genesis of productions in front of and behind the curtain, accompanies the ensemble on research trips, provides the set and costume designer with visual ideas.

Throughout the 1980s, she is involved in all major productions at the Schaubühne, working for Peter Stein, Klaus Michael Grüber, Luc Bondy, and, later, for Robert Wilson and Andrea Breth.

In 1990, she resigns from her position at the Schaubühne to devote herself to freelance photography full-time. Most of her favorite directors now work at other stages, and she follows them throughout Europe. In particular, she is a fixture at the Salzburg Festival, the Vienna Festival, and the Amsterdam and Paris operas. In 1999, Walz takes a year to photograph Peter Stein's monumental production of Goethe's *Faust*, which premieres during the EXPO world's fair in Hannover. Her pictures are gathered in a voluminous photobook. Major books documenting the theatrical stage follow over the next several years: *Der Verwandler—Klaus Michael Grüber*, *Träumen Suchen Spielen—Jutta Lampe*, *In die Luft schreien—Luc Bondy*, *70 Blätter für Botho Strauß*.

Most recently, Ruth Walz has focused on photographing opera productions—by Deborah Warner, Peter Sellars, Pierre Audi, Dmitri Tcherniakov, Krzysztof Warlikowski, and Romeo Castellucci. S. S.



Monika Ritterhaus, *Ruth Walz and Bruno Ganz*,
Hannover, 2000, gelatin silver print on baryta paper

Colophon

Published in conjunction with the exhibition

Raising the curtain!
Theater photography by Ruth Walz

June 23–November 12, 2023

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Registrar: Susanne Greimel
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Museum der Moderne
Salzburg

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Curtain from *Denn alle Lust will Ewigkeit*,
Residenzhof, Salzburg Festival, 1999,
chromogenic print

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Back:

Thomas Holtzmann as Brutus and Gert Voss
as Marc Anton in *Julius Caesar* by William
Shakespeare, Felsenreitschule, Salzburg Festival,
1992, gelatin silver print on baryta paper



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