

Research Opportunities in Munich

Yvonne Shafer

Munich is both a theatrical city and a city with a great deal of theatre. Throughout the city are interesting theatre buildings, important theatre collections, museums with theatrical material, and statues relating to theatre. The theatres, their archives, and theatre collections are accessible and public transportation in Munich is excellent. Theatre ranges from puppet shows to the classics--indeed, one can see *Faust* performed as a puppet show as Goethe first intended it. In the handsome theatre lobbies, there is an air of excitement and sophistication as the theatre-goers drink champagne and discuss the performances. The audiences are very responsive: they laugh a great deal in plays received very earnestly in America, applaud thunderously when a play is good, and boo long and loud when they do not care for a production.

In order to give a picture of theatre research opportunities various types of productions will be described, followed by a discussion of the theatre museums and several of the famous theatres in the city. In May 1991 there were several dozen plays, ballets, operas and other theatrical performances from which to choose. There are major subsidized theatres and opera houses, small commercial theatres, theatres for children, and experimental groups. A range of plays available on a given night included *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, *The Threepenny Opera*, Cooney and Chapman's *Not Now, Darling*, Durrenmatt's *The Accident*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. There were performances of a British science-fiction comedy presented by the Action Theatre London (in English) called *Black Magic--Blue Love*, a Psychothriller *Murder Voices*, and an evening of song and acting in the OFF-OFF-Theater Club. The political Cabaret called Rationaltheater had a program called *Wir Sind Wieder Mehr*. There was a production described as "structures for five actors" at the Theaterwerkstatt Kelle Riedl, at the ProT-Zeit a performance called, *Orgasmus--Maria hat Geholfen*, Goethe's *Iphigenie*, von Kleist's *Kätchen von Heilbronn*, and Dario Fo's *Open Relationship*. At the Pathos Transport Theater, the Author's Project presented *Sonja und Leo Tolstoi*, there was a British comedy in English called

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Dinner for One, and many other experimental, political, classical and musical productions were listed in the paper for the nearly forty theatres performing. Tickets can be obtained at individual box offices and for a fee hotels will send someone to the theatres to get tickets. In the theatre section of the paper, Kultur Börse advertises a twenty-four hour service of tickets for opera, classic theatre, concerts, and popular theatre. (Telephone 089/6 42 30 60, Telefax 0 89/64 51 99) Tickets for the Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel (the Prinzregenten Theater, the Cuvillés Theater, the Residenz Theater, and the Theater im Marstall) are available at the box office in the Residenz Theater or in the office at Maximilianstrasse 13. Here it is interesting to look at the many large photographs of previous and current productions in the four theatres. The schedules of the repertory theatres are listed in the newspapers, and individual monthly schedules are available at the theatres, in hotels, and in the Deutsches Theatermuseum.

The German Theatre Museum is a good place for the theatregoer to begin a visit not only in Munich, but in Germany as a whole. It is located in the center of the city by the beautiful Hofgarten. This immense collection was begun in 1910 in the home of the Munich actress Clara Ziegler (1844-1909) and was formerly known as the Clara-Ziegler-Foundation. This building was bombed in 1944, but a significant part of the collection was saved and stored by Dr. Günter Schöne, a pioneer theatre historian and a director of the museum. In 1953 the museum was established in its present location. For many years the collection has continued to expand under the direction of Dr. Eckehart Nölle.

The museum consists of several parts, all of which contain fascinating material. The reception area, entered from the Hofgarten, is a pleasant place to sit and read the material which is readily to hand. There are comfortable chairs and sofas and the staff is very pleasant. On a large table are magazines about theatre, programs, brochures from theatres, and the current repertories of the theatres in the city. *Der Spielplan* is a monthly theatre magazine which contains information about productions in Europe, particularly German theatre. Theatrical productions in Germany from Aachen to Wuppertal, and outside Germany from Baden to Zurich are listed by date. There are also lists of concerts and other performances. A subscription costs 65 DM from Löwendruck Bertram GmbH, Postfach 3744, 3300 Braunschweig. The magazine is handsomely illustrated as are *Theatre Heute* and *Die Deutsch Bühne Theatermagazin*. There are also magazines on Munich cultural life, ballet, musicals, and opera. Before going to see a particular play it is useful to stop here and read the reviews and the program. Boxes of index cards are on a table, and it is quick and easy to look up information about a play by the title, the theatre, an actor, or the subject matter. On a shelf are notebooks with reviews and articles. Programs of the plays are also displayed. You can examine the program (which often has interesting information and

illustrations), and buy it at the theatre ahead of time or when you go to the play.

Bulletin boards have current articles about theatre and playwrights. One clipping stated that a Bertolt Brecht Prize of 25,000 marks will be given by the city of Augsburg where Brecht was born. There were also articles about the reaction of German theatre to the Gulf War. Press releases from theatres often provide useful information. For example, Susanne A. Prinz, dramaturg at the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz, had written a release which indicated that in connection with *Into the Woods*, there was an exhibit of Sondheim material which was open one hour before the performance. Also on the walls are posters of current and previous productions such as the Kammerspiele's *The Lady From the Sea*, a striking poster for Strindberg's *Dance of Death* at the Prinzregenten Theatre, and several American plays including A. R. Gurney's *Love Letters*. The posters are unfortunately not for sale in the museum, but can be purchased at the theatres. In glass cases are catalogues from exhibitions of material from the collection which can be purchased. The prices range from less than a dollar to 68 DM. I bought several beautifully illustrated catalogues about Richard Wagner's work in Munich, Expressionistic theatre, Ibsen and Norwegian stage design, a sketchbook of the last work of Caspar Neher for the opera *Der Zerrissene*, and a booklet about Piscator and the stage. A large handsome book *Theaterfotografie* with a startling photograph of *The Bacchae* on the cover describes the museum collection of theatre photographs and includes many examples from the 1989/90 exhibition. These photographs illustrate the innovative stage design which has characterized German theatre in this century, and show productions of plays, ballets, and opera. The book begins with pictures from 19th century theatre with several unusual photos of Sarah Bernhardt and a number of photos of Wagner and productions of *The Ring*, and continues with photos of Gustaf Gründgens (the Mephisto figure), Josef Kainz, Fritz Kortner, and other performers, and concludes with dramatic photos of contemporary theatre. This exhibit was one of the temporary exhibits which take place throughout the year.

In the halls and stairways on the way to the exhibition room are a number of works of art such as a bust of Tilla Dariaeu, paintings of Eleanora Duse, a 1770 painting of a group of wandering players performing in a square, and a 1780 theatre scene with the actors, as well as the prompter, in powdered wigs. The current exhibition is called "Theatervisionen." It is a series of paintings by Maike Grumann of her impressions of various plays by Shakespeare with explanatory notes by Dr. Nölle.

A permanent exposition space is under construction in the museum. In 3-4 years an exhibit of theatre history from the ancient Greeks to the present will be open to the public. The accent will be on models of theatre buildings which are being constructed by artists, but there will be other material from the museum collection as well.

On the top floors of the building are the museum offices, the library, and the archives. Dr. Heinrich Huesmann (a notable expert on the work of Max Reinhardt) was extremely helpful in explaining the collection to me. The library has 25 places for readers and material can be photocopied. It contains 80,000 volumes which include books on German and foreign theatres, operas, ballets, etc. In the collection are books on German film, theatre yearbooks, libretti, periodicals, magazines, and reviews. Dr. Huesmann is in charge of the archive which has about 50,000 letters, manuscripts, and diaries (including Max Reinhardt's), about 300,000 programs, more than a million clippings of criticism, choreography, actors' analysis of roles, about 4000 tapes, phonograph records, manuscripts, prompt scripts, designs, and other materials needed by theatre historians, dramaturgs, designers, directors, and actors. The collection is growing continually thanks to gifts and purchases. Notable figures such as Carl Orff, Ingmar Bergman, Peter Stein, and Dieter Dorn have found the collection useful in their work. In the museum collection are portraits, scene designs, life and death masks, and works of many designers from Galli-Bibiena to Teo Otto and contemporary theatre artists and architects. The collection is so thorough and widespread as to defy a detailed description. For example, the negatives in the photograph collection number more than 1.9 million. To use the collection it is wise to write ahead to inquire about specific holdings and accessibility. The address is 4a Galeriestrasse, and the telephone is 0 89/22 24 49.

A museum which is very popular with Germans, including young people, is the Valentin Museum in Isartor (founded in 1959). This is easy to reach on foot, but is often overlooked by Americans in Munich. It is notable for a variety of reasons. It is in a tower which was part of the old city walls, so it is architecturally of interest. The peculiar and fascinating collection reflects the eccentricities of the great German comic actor Karl Valentin. It opens not at 11:00 but 11:01, and the entrance fee is a small, but slightly odd figure. Walking up the curved staircase of the tower, one sees a wallet apparently dropped by the preceding visitor, only to find on stooping to pick it up that it is glued to the floor. The museum itself is literally stuffed with memorabilia, photographs, costumes, properties, and wax figures reflecting the long career of Valentin (1882-1948).

In point of fact, the museum would be more accurately described as the Valentin-Karlstadt Museum, since the careers of Liesl Karlstadt (1892-1961) and Valentin were intertwined for 35 years. By 1907 Valentin was the leading comedian in Munich where his admirers included Brecht. From 1911 on he worked with Karlstadt in Munich and on tour throughout Europe. They both wrote and performed a wide range of skits, musicals, and plays. They opened a Panoptikum in 1934 and pictures and properties from that are on display, as well as material from the Lach und Gruselkeller, a sort of fun-house which Valentin opened in 1937.

The most interesting material is that which shows the character of their stage and movie work. There are photographs showing the tall, skinny Valentin in various costumes portraying such characters as an improbable looking aviator in *The Flight to the Moon* and a batty musician in the obviously chaotic *Orchestra Rehearsal*. The many photographs of Karlstadt reveal a wonderful range of types including a Baby Snooks sort of character, an ugly, angry old woman, a blushing bride, a debutante, a cleaning lady, and a dapper young man. It is strange that she is so little known here, and rarely mentioned in reference books, since she wrote scripts with Valentin, and was hilarious in both male and female roles. Some of these scripts, and many ludicrous hats and properties are in the museum, as well as a photo of Valentin in his workshop creating properties and effects. It was pleasing to see a crowd of both young and old people grouped around an antique phonograph listening to a funny cross-talk routine between the two comics.

On the second floor of the museum are statues, photographs of other German performers such as Weiss Ferdl and Oskar Paulig, as well as a remarkable collection of photographs and recordings of folksingers. At the top of the tower is the Turmstüberl, a little cafe with wonderful views of the city from the windows on all sides. Furnished in Jugendstil, the room reflects Munich's cultural past as well as Valentin's peculiar sense of humor: on the entrance door is a sign saying, "Beware of the dog!" and hanging from the ceiling are ear trumpets, a mandolin, a picnic basket, a sword, a bird cage, and other props which conjure up images of hilarity and disorder. More pictures from plays are on the walls. The charming aura is created by the furnishings and Thonet bentwood chairs: these are the real thing, got from the famous Café Grössenwahn, the meeting place for artists and actors. The brochure in the cafe notes proudly that the visitor may be sitting on a chair occupied in previous years by Frank Wedekind or some other notable performer or writer. After spending a couple of hours in this museum one can only regret never having seen Karlstadt and Valentin on stage. However, it is possible to see them on film, since beginning in 1912 their acts were filmed. Some of these films are in the film museum which is part of the Munich Stadtmuseum.

The Stadtmuseum is in the center of the city, close to the Marienplatz. Within the building are a number of collections. The film museum has no exhibition, but shows films, many of them quite rare, twice a day. There is an exhibit of the history of photography with early movie cameras, photographs of performances of Dada plays and performances at the Bauhaus, and, of course, photographs of people connected with the theatre. Unusual pictures of Brecht, Shaw, Helene Weigel, Marilyn Monroe and Max Reinhardt are on the walls. The wonderful "Kaiser Panorama" (the last one in existence), a type of Laterna Magica was enormously popular from 1883 up to the First World War, but was then replaced by films. This panorama was visited by many notable writers and performers including Franz Kafka. Another exhibit of interest is Moriskan Raum, which has ten dancing figures created in 1480 for

the old town hall. The large, lifelike characters in a variety of poses and costumes are performing the Moriscan dances popular in the 15th century.

The exhibition in the Munich Stadtmuseum of most interest for theatre scholars is the Puppentheatermuseum. This is an enormous collection which fills an entire floor of the museum. Entering the collection, the viewer goes by the highly decorated façade of an old movie theatre called the Laugh House and a huge statue of a goddess which previously graced the front of another movie house. All types of puppets are represented in this collection, and puppet plays are presented in conjunction with the Society for the Furthering of Puppet Plays. The history of puppetry in Germany is very significant. Goethe was inspired to write *Faust* by a puppet play he saw as a child and other German playwrights were inspired by puppets. In the exhibit are the puppets for Arthur Schnitzler's *The Brave Cassian* and nine puppets from Wedekind's *Death and the Devil* produced in Baden-Baden in 1920. The Berlin actor Dieter Mann said in an interview regarding his performance in *The Servant of Two Masters* that he was highly impressed by Bert and Ernie on Sesame Street! In recent times puppet theatre in the eastern part of Berlin was regarded as so significant that it was subsidized by the government.

The collection is important not only for the puppets, but for the elaborate period scenery in which many of them are displayed. It is better to go to the museum on a weekday (the museum is open Wednesday through Sunday) because demonstrations are given to visiting school children of the way the puppets and machinery work. One theatre is about five feet high, with columns painted on canvas. In front of a painted backdrop showing a complex battle scene are Sicilian puppets about four feet high operated with metal hooks and wires. Another elaborate display is the setting and puppets for Mozart's *The Escape from the Seraglio*. An elaborate 1859 setting with wings and a backdrop shows mountains and palm trees with a puppet crocodile onstage in *Kasperl in the Wild*. An 18th century Jesus figure, an angel and Joseph are part of the exhibit showing religious puppet plays. There is a great deal of material related to the work of Graf von Pocci and the many famous Munich puppet theatres. A model shows the Müncher Marionetten Theater and der Blumenstrasse which was built in 1900. There is a funny grotesque Punch and Judy show, and many beautiful traditional marionettes including some Parisian commedia dell'arte figures from 1880. An exhibit shows the work of a touring puppet theatre which performed in Southern Germany from 1868 to 1936 with two foot high marionettes and wing and drop scenery. Three foot high Faust, Mephistopheles and Kasperl puppets are from a production in 1900. Some puppets from 19th century England featured beautifully carved heads. A handsome set of knights and Scaracens were made in Belgium. From 1900 there is a circus setting with marionette clowns. There are several very old, handsomely painted curtains from various periods. One is from the 1858 puppet theatre of Papa Schmid and another was used in a

Munich theatre in 1909. There is also a set of puppets made by artist Paul Klee for his son in 1916.

There are some disturbing puppets from the period of the two world wars which show the dark side of the power of theatre. From 1917 are several puppets which are caricatures of British types including a British military officer and a severe butler. These were from a play for children which ridiculed English society. Even more disturbing is the display of puppets from 1943. It seems particularly unsavory that the charming and innocent quality normally associated with puppet shows should be altered for purposes of indoctrination. These hand puppets are from the Reichsinstitute für Puppenspiel in Stuttgart. There is a Hitler, a foolish British explorer, and a Jew in a traditional gaberdine. There are several scripts about Jews, and a letter concerning the productions which closes with "Heil Hitler."

The varied types of theatre represented in this collection range from simple children's tales such as *Cinderella* to presentations for adults. A poster for a Panoptikum showed scenes entitled *Secrets of the Boudoir* and *Gorilla Abducts Farmer's Daughter*. In addition to the marionettes and hand puppets are many shadow puppets, some from 1820 made of metal. One room features large muppet type figures, some of which were in science fiction television shows and movies. In addition to the puppets and their settings there are artistic posters of puppet theatre, model theatres with paper puppets, 19th century mechanical wind-up dolls which play music, and a large puppet workshop with tools, ribbons, patterns for tiny dresses and gloves, and tinsel jewelry.

Beyond the puppet exhibit is a bizarre exhibit of popular entertainment, some of which is truly eerie. A dimly lighted wax museum with freaks made me wish for company. On the cheerier side are a carousel, windmill and wagon from a 1910 flea circus, circus figures, and a huge King Kong which moves. There are panoramas, a 1900 mechanical theatre *Teatrum Mundi* with moving scenery and figures, and a shooting gallery from England called "Smash Hitler!" with a gun to shoot at Hitler's face. In the courtyard of the museum is a cafe and a working carousel.

All in all this museum is engrossing and varied and one could easily spend several hours looking at the exhibits. From the earliest folk puppets, through Wedekind's dancing vamps and some 1920's Grosz-like caricatures, through the alarming evidence of Nazi use of puppet theatre to influence children, the exhibits relate closely to society. Puppet plays were not only charming fairy tales, but a depiction of the pleasures and concerns of society and a means of creating a world view for children.

Munich has many theatres, some of them, such as the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz, beautifully restored after extensive damage in World War II. One of the most famous of these is the Altes Residenz Theater, more commonly called the Cuvilliés-Theater. While the Residenz Theater on Max-Joseph Platz is being restored the Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel is performing

in the Prinzregententheater and the Cuvilliés. In earlier years ballets and other performances have been given there. It is really exquisite to see a classical ballet in this setting. The small theatre is often sold out, but it is possible to see it in a leisurely fashion by paying a small entrance fee in the daytime. Naturally, the people of Munich are enormously proud of this theatre which has been described by Baur-Heinhold as "one of the very finest rococo theatres." In 1750 Francois de Cuvilliés was commissioned to build the theatre in the Elector's Munich palace, the Residenz. Masters of German rococo sculpture carved the wooden figures and decoration. The beautiful draperies, caryatids and cherubs are in a color scheme of gold, white and red. The elegance of the royal box, the eight chandeliers, and the incredible trompe l'œil painting contribute to the beauty of this theatre. During World War II the interior was entirely dismantled and stored in the countryside for safety. The building was destroyed by bombs, but between 1956 and 1958 the theatre was reconstructed in another wing of the Residenz.

Another architecturally significant theatre in Munich is the Prinzregententheater. It was first conceived as a Festspielhaus to be modeled after Wagner's theatre in Bayreuth. The building was designed by Max Littman and the first performance was given in 1901. The beautiful auditorium with its highly decorated ceiling and continental seating are worth careful examination as is the large, elegant buffet with a decorative motif of flowers and plants. The theatre was so severely damaged in the war that some books indicate it was totally destroyed. In fact, it was occasionally used after the war, but in March 1964 was closed because of its damaged condition. The Friends of Prinzregenten Society was formed to raise funds to rebuild it, and in 1988 it reopened with great celebration. Looking toward the one hundredth birthday in ten years, the society is attempting to raise funds to complete the restoration and replace the unsightly lighting instruments. At present plays are presented in repertory including *The Marquis of Keith*, *the Good Woman of Setzuan*, and *The School for Wives*. Despite the intrusive temporary lighting instruments and scaffolding, the simplicity and elegance of the theatre can still be appreciated.

The Kammerspiele is another historically important Munich theatre. Built in 1911, the theatre has been the site of many important productions. Under the direction of Otto Falckenberg, *Ghost Sonata* was presented in 1915. In 1917 he became the director of the Kammerspiele and from then until 1944 he kept the theatre in the vanguard of experimental productions and encouraged new playwrights. In 1922 he staged Brecht's first play, *Drums in the Night*. The theatre was bombed in 1944, but was rebuilt at the end of the war at the same time that the Otto-Falckenberg School was established. In 1961 a smaller theatre, the Workroom Theatre, was opened. Dr. Wolfgang Kindermann has been associated with the theatre for 36 years and is extraordinarily helpful regarding the history of the theatre and the use of its archives. These include reviews and photographs, but only post-war. The

theatre is highly subsidized and independent so that the present director, Dieter Dorn is free to continue the policy of experimentalism and a non-commercial approach to theatre. In recent years such figures as Peter Stein, Ellen Stewart, and Robert Wilson have been guests in the theatre. There is also a strong connection with Thomas Langhoff and the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. In May the Kammerspiele performed several plays in Berlin as a result of the reunification of the country. Berlin audiences were fully appreciative of the excellence of the performers and it was difficult to get tickets for the productions.

Langhoff's *The Lady From the Sea* is one of the many outstanding productions audiences can see in the Kammerspiele. Two other plays in the extensive repertoire are *Faust*, and a superb production of *The Playboy of the Western World* directed by Helmut Griem, the actor who plays Faust. The commitment of the Munich audience to good, demanding theatre is demonstrated in the latter production which ran two hours and fifteen minutes without intermission. The unusual setting by Ezio Toffulutti emphasized a grotesque quality appropriate to the play. This is the only production I have seen of this play in which I could understand all the dialogue (no thick brogue), and in which the comic and serious elements of the play were in balance. It was a very funny and very poignant performance and the audience responded strongly throughout. Seeing the performance a few weeks after I did, Professor Oscar Brockett noted the same qualities and said it was the best production of the play he had ever seen. This theatre is clearly in the forefront of theatrical productions and is well worth a visit. As it is usually sold out, it is a good idea to arrange tickets as early as possible.

The pride of the people of Munich in their theatre is apparent to the visitor. Near the Marienplatz is a statue of Juliet, indicating the familiarity of the people with Shakespeare, and there are other statues and memorials to theatre artists throughout the city. In the Viktualienmarkt (where all classes of people go to buy fresh fruit, flowers, and vegetables and have a wurst and beer) there are statues of Liesl Karlstadt and Karl Valentin. These are often decorated with flowers and are fond remembrances of the theatrical history of the city. Despite the pain and destruction of two wars, the theatre and the people exude a vibrant quality and an exciting cultural aura.

Boulder, Colorado