

The Haifa Center for German and European Studies Guest Lecture

Theatre in order to Remember: Performative Interventions in Austria's Cultural Memory post 1945

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The eightieth anniversary of the November Pogroms of 1938 this November is followed by another anniversary: the fortieth anniversary of the staging of Thomas Bernhard's *Heldenplatz* in the commemorative year 1988. This play constituted one of the first debates in the theater of the Second Republic and one of the greatest public controversies concerning Austria's participation in the Holocaust and demonstrating the public incapacity or unwillingness of its inclusion in the cultural memory of the Second Republic.

The staging of *Heldenplatz* was throughout a series of critical but so far hardly remembered theater performances: After the end of WWII, Stella Kadmon left Palestine and re-immigrated to Austria to continue running her famous theater *Der liebe Augustin*. Founded in the late 1920s, *Der liebe Augustin* was one of the critical variety and cabaret theaters that flourished during the interwar years and were effaced together with their operators by the Nazis, but the only

continuing critical stage show after 1945 (then known as *Theater der Courage*) until George Tabori founded *Der Kreis*. In the context of the controversy raised by Waldheim running for the UN office in the elections of 1986, Tabori was chosen to run the *Schauspielhaus*. There, at *Der Kreis*, he initiated theater experiments which focused on "theater as therapy", using therapeutic methods to question the Austrian victimhood narrative(s) of the postwar period.

This presentation argues that these performances critical examined, postulated and thus functioned as intervention in Austria's cultural memory from "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" [accomplishment of the past] to "Aufarbeitung" [revision] (Theodor W. Adorno).

Thursday, December 13th, 2018

12:00 – 14:00

Minerva Center (Room 1013), Terrace Building

The lecture will be held in English and will be open to the public

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