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International Press Service

Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Gundermann: All or None

Schauspielhaus Dresden, 11.04.2025 [ENA]

The Staatsschauspiel Dresden's production of "Gundermann: Alle oder keiner," directed by Tom Kühnel, is a theatrical tour de force that masterfully encapsulates the multifaceted life and legacy of Gerhard Gundermann. This revue transcends traditional biographical storytelling, offering audiences an immersive experience that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally resonant.

The ensemble cast delivers a performance of remarkable depth and versatility. In a bold and innovative move, six actors—three women and three men—collectively embody Gundermann, each donning his signature attire: striped shirt, blue trousers with suspenders, and the iconic blonde Vokuhila (mullet) wig. This multiplicity of representation serves as a powerful metaphor for the complexity of Gundermann's character, illustrating the myriad facets of his personality and the diverse roles he played throughout his life.

The musical reinterpretations are nothing short of groundbreaking. Audiences are treated to a kaleidoscope of genres, each song reimagined to offer fresh perspectives and evoke new emotions. "Hoywoy" is transformed into a high-energy Balkan-Punk anthem, "Linda" is delivered with the raw intensity of a Metal ballad, and "Und musst du weinen" is reinterpreted as a pulsating Techno track. These audacious arrangements not only pay homage to Gundermann's original compositions but also breathe new life into them, making them accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences.

The live band, under the expert musical direction of Matthias Trippner and Jan Stolterfoht, provides a robust and dynamic accompaniment that seamlessly complements the onstage action. Their synergy with the actors is evident, creating a cohesive and immersive auditory experience that resonates deeply with the audience. Kühnel's direction is both insightful and inventive. He deftly navigates the complexities of Gundermann's biography, exploring themes of idealism, betrayal, and redemption with a nuanced touch. The use of multimedia elements, including film projections and audio recordings, adds layers of depth and context, enriching the narrative without overwhelming it.

Particularly poignant is the incorporation of archival footage, which bridges the past and present, allowing audiences to draw connections between Gundermann's experiences and contemporary societal issues. The production does not shy away from the more controversial aspects of Gundermann's life, including his involvement with the Stasi. These moments are handled with sensitivity and honesty, prompting reflection

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and dialogue. This balanced portrayal ensures that Gundermann is neither vilified nor lionized but presented as a complex individual navigating a tumultuous historical landscape.

Visually, the production is a feast for the senses. Jan Pappelbaum's set design, combined with Leonie Falke's costume work, creates a rich tapestry that captures the essence of the era while allowing for creative expression. The lighting design by Peter Lorenz further enhances the mood, transitioning seamlessly between the exuberance of musical numbers and the introspective moments of the narrative. Critics have lauded the production for its innovative approach and emotional depth. The "Sächsische Zeitung" praised it as "a brilliant mix of irony and melancholy," highlighting its ability to balance humor with poignant reflection.

In conclusion, "Gundermann: Alle oder keiner" at the Staatsschauspiel Dresden is a masterful exploration of a complex figure, brought to life through innovative direction, stellar performances, and dynamic musical reinterpretations. It stands as a shining example of theater's power to illuminate history, challenge perceptions, and evoke a spectrum of emotions. This production is not merely a biographical recounting but a profound meditation on art, identity, and the human condition. A must-see for theater enthusiasts and newcomers alike, it promises an experience that will linger in the mind and heart long after the final curtain call.

Bericht online lesen: https://culture.en-a.eu/kunst_kultur_und_musik/gundermann_all_or_none-91174/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:
V.i.S.d.P. und gem. § 6 MDStV: Dr. Nadejda Komendantova

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