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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Dazzling Dystopia: Bumm Tschak oder der letzte Henker

Akademie Theater, 12.09.2025 [ENA]

Stepping into the Akademietheater for *Bumm Tschak oder der letzte Henker*, an electrifying "Richtspiel" (judgment play) by Ferdinand Schmalz, is like entering a fever dream that throbs with urgent energy. Under Stefan Bachmann's visionary direction—a continuation of his compelling collaboration with Schmalz—this co-production with the Bregenzer Festspiele riffs on the darkest edges of escapist cultures.

It is also about democratic fragility, and human spectacle in a future where the death penalty returns as political theater. The premise alone—a nightclub slash execution chamber called Schafott, where a guillotine-style show culminates each night—sets an unflinching, surreal tone. It's both macabre and entrancing, a darkly playful reflection on what happens when society thirsts for distraction while justice disintegrates.

Max Simonischek gives a memorably odd performance as Josef, the club owner bound to death's spectacle as easily as he flips records. His jittery, off-center presence is mirrored by Thimeo Strutzenberger's flamboyant Mistress of Conference, Flo's brittle bitterness embodied by Maresi Riegner, and a chillingly pragmatic Chancellor played by Melanie Kretschmann—together they form a grotesque chorus of dark charm. The ensemble's stylized diction and choreographed movement, under Sabina Perry's body work, combined with Olaf Altmann's geometric, guillotine-suggesting set, lit with razor-sharp contrasts by Bernd Purkrabek, do not just tell a story—they drop you inside its febrile rhythm.

What makes **Bumm Tschak** especially outstanding is its genre-bending audacity. Schmalz's sharp, elliptical language—delivered in chants and rhythms—keeps the audience off-balance in just the right way. It smartly avoids conventional theatrical storytelling, favoring a surreal, dance-like pace that forces the viewer to stay alert, even when disconcerted. Yet, amid all the macabre showmanship, there's a glimmer of profound insight: "Harte Zeiten erfordern eben harte Mittel," the play seems to warn, urging spectators to reckon with how easily democratic safeguards can erode in the public's hunger for oblivion.

All in all, *Bumm Tschak oder der letzte Henker* is an exhilarating triumph—a dark carnival of politics, performance, and peril. It's bold, theatrical, and thought-provoking: a show that pulses, provokes, and ultimately leaves you breathless with the provocative thrill of its design. A must-see that confirms both Schmalz's fearless dramaturgy and Bachmann's daring directorial vision.

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