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# Buffalo Bill in the Prater

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“Go West – Das Country-Rock-Musical” gallops back onto the stage of the Wiener Metropol as a gleefully anarchic Austro-Western, splicing honky-tonk energy with Viennese irony and a hearty dose of musical-theatre showmanship. Anchored by Andy Lee Lang, who once mehr “reitet wieder” in a new version of the 2010 cult hit, this revival understands itself not as a mere nostalgia project, but as a lovingly sharpened update that tests how far the Western myth can stretch when it collides with Prater kitsch, vampire pop culture and the neuroses of an exhausted rocker.

The central stroke of wit lies in relocating the Western showdown to the “Goldmine”, a Western saloon planted in the middle of the Wiener Prater. This setting immediately frames the piece as a musical about role-playing: the Wild West is already a theme-park fantasy, and the characters are performers inside that fantasy, selling cowboy dreams by the drink. When the washed-up Austro-rocker Gogo stumbles into this world and slowly reinvents himself as a Western hero, the evening becomes a playful reflection on how performance can turn failure into myth.

The antagonist, Schurli Schultze – a picture-book Prater “Strizzi” and unscrupulous leaseholder – embodies a different kind of show business: he wants to erase the saloon’s dusty cowboy aura and replace it with “Twilight”, a vampire-themed hotspot for the next generation. This clash of concepts (Buffalo Bill versus Edward Cullen) gives the musical its comic motor. The battle is never just about rent and contracts, but about who gets to define the fantasy landscape of the Prater: the analog cowboy dream or the glossy undead of teen pop.

At the heart of the show stands Gogo, an “ausgebrannter” Austro-Rocker whose midlife crisis reaches absurdist heights when a botched “Seelenrückführung” convinces him that the spirit of Buffalo Bill lives inside him. This is both a brilliant theatrical joke and a surprisingly poignant metaphor: the tired musician, squeezed dry by the industry, finds a new, ridiculous courage by borrowing the persona of a legendary showman.

From this premise springs the musical’s central trajectory: Gogo, who begins as a man on the verge of artistic and emotional bankruptcy, slowly grows into the “Turm in der Schlacht”. His resistance against Schurli’s mafia-like machinations is funny and touching at once, because the audience always knows that his heroism is, in a sense, self-invented. Yet this is precisely where the show’s emotional core lies: the

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liberating claim that even the most broken performer can step into a role large enough to save a community – or at least a bar.

Schurli Schultze, “der Gesetzlose”, is drawn in the tradition of Viennese underworld comedy: half menace, half caricature. His vision of a vampire-themed “Twilight”-club reveals him less as a visionary entrepreneur and more as a desperate trend-follower, anxious to monetize the youth market. Around this central duel, the ensemble populates the Goldmine with bartenders, regulars, Prater-types and romantic interests, all contributing to a world that constantly oscillates between cartoon and affectionate social observation.

Musically, “Go West” rides confidently on the crossover terrain where country-rock, rock’n’roll and Austro-pop intersect. Well-known country rock evergreens supply instant recognition and rhythmic drive; they are woven together with new songs by Christian Deix, which add a specifically local flavor in text and attitude. The score favours directness and groove: refrains are catchy, harmonic progressions familiar but not lazy, and the arrangements leave room for the band to sparkle.

The new choreography uses this musical foundation to build a kinetic, almost cinematic sense of motion. Line-dance patterns morph into barroom brawls, saloon show numbers and tongue-in-cheek confrontations between cowboys and vampires. The bodies on stage articulate the cultural clash as clearly as the dialogue: broad-shouldered, boots-stomping Western postures face off against the sleek, slightly gothic cool of the “Twilight” contingent. The ensemble’s “Spielfreude” is essential here; this is a show that asks its dancers and singers to be clowns and action heroes in the same breath.

What keeps “Go West” from dissolving into pure silliness is its carefully balanced tone. The piece delights in “Wiener Schmäh” – the laconic one-liners, the resigned asides, the affectionate mockery of both American myth and local types – but it never loses sight of the emotional stakes. The humour is loud and often outrageous, yet the book consistently allows quiet moments in which Gogo’s burnout, the fear of failure, or the vulnerability of love shimmer through the jokes.

Love, true to musical-theatre convention, is not neglected. Romantic entanglements and tentative connections thread through the brawls and bravado, giving the story a beating heart beneath the parody. When the music softens and the bar lights dim, “Go West” reveals itself as a story about second chances: for a washed-out musician, for a struggling venue, and for a community that must decide which of its dreams are worth fighting for.

Ultimately, “Go West – Das Country-Rock-Musical” positions itself as a joyous hybrid: part Western spoof, part Prater folklore, part rock concert, part midlife-crisis comedy. Its greatest strength lies in the way it allows all these layers to coexist without apology. Andy Lee Lang’s presence gives the evening star

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wattage and musical authority, but the production's true achievement is ensemble-based: a company that throws itself fearlessly into an absurd premise and emerges with a show that is fast, funny, and unexpectedly heartfelt.

This is not a Western that strives for authenticity; it is a Western that proudly admits it is a show – and, in the spirit of Buffalo Bill himself, turns that admission into its most irresistible weapon.

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