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Myths of Everyday Life

Wiener FestWochen, 22.06.2026 [ENA]

This is a formally lucid yet intellectually ambitious contribution to Vienna's long tradition of documentary theatre, transforming the city's lived experiences into a collectively authored urban mythography. At the core of Mattias Andersson's project lies a simple but radical question addressed to Vienna's inhabitants: "Is there a particular moment in your life that you would like to see performed on stage"?

In collaboration with the Institute of Sociology at the University of Vienna, the production team conducted around one hundred interviews, sampling participants along socio economic lines to approximate a cross section of the city's population.
What emerges is less a conventional play than a "collective narrative" in which everyday anecdotes—banal, comic, traumatic, and existential—are elevated to the status of mythic episodes, not by exaggeration but by careful framing and repetition. Conceived as a co production between Volkstheater Wien and Wiener Festwochen (Free Republic of Vienna), the work is anchored in Andersson's direction and Ulla Kassius's stage and costume design, which provide a restrained yet flexible visual framework.

The ensemble of Volkstheater actors—among them Bernardo Arias Porras, Aleksandra Corovic, Nancy Mensah Offei, Paula Nocker, Karoline Marie Reinke, Günther Wiederschwinger and Johanna Wokalek—perform an array of roles, moving fluidly between narrator, witness and surrogate for the anonymous interview partners.
Musical direction by Anna Sóley Tryggvádottir and the lighting design of Charlie Åström contribute to an atmosphere that oscillates between intimacy and estrangement, underscoring the oscillation between documentary testimony and theatrical artifice.

Historically, "Mythen des Alltags" can be read in dialogue with European documentary and verbatim theatre, from the political projects of the 1960s to more recent participatory works such as Rimini Protokoll's "100% Wien," explicitly evoked in contemporary criticism.Here, Andersson reworks the genre by resisting the temptation to present the interviewees themselves as spectacle; instead, he insists on the mediating function of the ensemble, foregrounding the transformation of experience into representation. This decision places the piece within a broader debate about the ethics of "real people" on stage, a discourse also associated with Milo Rau's work, which commentators have mentioned in connection with the Volkstheater's recent program.

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Thematically, the performance constructs a kaleidoscopic portrait of Vienna as a city defined not by a single grand narrative but by a dense weave of micro histories. Moments of quiet domestic routine stand beside stories of migration, loss, humiliation, and unexpected joy, with the production deliberately juxtaposing the “banal” and the “existential” to question received hierarchies of what counts as history. By assembling this material into what the festival describes as a “polyphonic panorama,” Andersson offers a theatrical homage to urban diversity while also exposing the fault lines of class, language, and origin that structure contemporary Vienna.

Critics have described the evening as moving, humorous and overabundant, a “kaleidoscope of the city” whose very length testifies to the impossibility of fully containing urban life within a single performance frame. Premiering in May 2026 as a central project of that year’s Wiener Festwochen, “Mythen des Alltags” can already be seen as a key document in the city’s performative self reflection at a moment of social diversification and political tension. For future theatre historians, the production will likely stand as a paradigmatic example of early twenty first century documentary theatre: an artwork that treats sociological fieldwork not merely as preparation but as its very medium, and that understands myth not as escape from reality.

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