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The Addams Family Brings Gothic Charm

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A family dinner can be a dangerous occasion, particularly when the guests include returning ancestors and the hosts regard a cemetery as an agreeable garden. Bühne Baden's "The Addams Family" embraces this delicious collision of domestic familiarity and macabre imagination. It is directed and choreographed by Francesc Abós with the musical direction by Michael Zehetner.

This production places an affectionate question beneath its gothic exterior: who gets to decide what counts as normal? Its answer promises humour, theatrical invention and a generous understanding of human difference. The musical, with a book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice and music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa, draws on the characters created by Charles Addams. Anja Hauptmann supplies the German translation. Its central conflict is wonderfully suited to musical comedy: Wednesday Addams falls in love with Lucas Beineke, the son of a deeply conservative family. When their households meet, incompatible expectations collide, while the Addams ancestors return to earth for a night, adding another dimension to the chaos.

What makes the premise attractive is its reversal of perspective. The apparently respectable visitors enter a world whose inhabitants have no desire to apologise for themselves. Their discomfort becomes an opportunity to examine the assumptions hidden inside conventional behaviour. Rather than asking the Addamses to become acceptable, the story invites everyone to reconsider the limits of acceptance. Abós identifies this openness as the production's essential message: encountering unfamiliar people can reveal unexpected truths about oneself.

The romantic framework gives that idea a human scale. Wednesday and Lucas are not simply representatives of opposing households; their relationship raises questions about loyalty, independence and the courage required to introduce change into a family. For musical theatre, this is fertile territory. Private feeling and public embarrassment can occupy the same moment, allowing comedy to expose emotional stakes rather than distract from them.

Drew Sarich and Ann Mandrella head the cast as Gomez and Morticia, with Celena Pieper as Wednesday and Timotheus Hollweg as Lucas. Their casting establishes two generations at the centre of the drama: parents negotiating their daughter's changing life, and young lovers attempting to create a future beyond inherited expectations. The production materials provide no basis for judging individual performances, but

Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

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the distribution offers a clear framework for contrasting romantic impulses, family allegiances and comic temperaments.

From a musical perspective, the production's appeal lies in the relationship between character and exaggeration. Macabre comedy requires precise control: if every moment becomes a grotesque flourish, emotional distinctions disappear. Conversely, excessive earnestness can flatten the delightful absurdity. Lippa's songs, performed here with Bühne Baden's orchestra, offer the means to negotiate those extremes. Under Zehetner's direction, the artistic challenge will be to connect musical energy with intelligible storytelling, ensuring that humour and affection remain partners rather than competitors.

The supporting company extends the possibilities. Christian Graf plays Uncle Fester, Victoria Schubert the grandmother, and Gerhard Karzel Lurch. Thamos Hollweg and Luis Tazber share Pugsley, while Missy May and Boris Pfeifer appear as Alice and Mel Beineke. Together with the chorus and dance ensemble, these roles create a community whose eccentricities can generate both spectacle and intimacy. The enjoyment lies in discovering relationships beneath the recognisable silhouettes.

Sam Madwar's stage design and Conny Lüders's costumes frame a production drawing inspiration from the cartoons, television series, films and "Wednesday." The press materials evoke headless or impaled ancestors, Thing mixing drinks, torture racks beside guest beds and romance in a cemetery. Such imagery promises abundant visual wit. Its strongest theatrical purpose, however, is not simply to accumulate curiosities, but to establish a household where the extraordinary possesses its own reassuring everyday logic.

Ultimately, the production's most attractive promise is belonging without conformity. Its humour offers distance from ordinary anxieties, while its family story brings those anxieties recognisably close. Without claiming firsthand knowledge of its execution, one can welcome this interpretation's warmth: an invitation to enjoy difference rather than merely tolerate it. Beneath the shadows and deliciously strange decorations, Bühne Baden proposes something unexpectedly bright: a musical world in which love need not make people alike to bring them together.

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Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
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