

Aino Laberenz & Mavie Hörbiger

episode 4

The Culture & Technology Podcast

<https://culture-technology.podigee.io>

Episode 4: Theatre in a Pandemic
Mavie Hörbiger x Aino Laberenz

INTRODUCTION

When we're unable to gather in person, unable to experience the magic of encounters and exchange in physical proximity, what is lost? For the bonus Episode 4 of the Culture and Technology Podcast – recorded in German – two friends and doyennes of theatre, actor Mavie Hörbiger and costume designer Aino Laberenz pick up the phone to consider how the pandemic's restrictions have cast new light on

their metier. By calling into question the relevance of art in times of crisis, they find its role to be of existential importance.

GUESTS

Mavie Hörbiger is an actor and a member of Vienna's Burgtheater ensemble.
twitter.com/hoerbiger

Aino Laberenz is a costume designer, author, co-founder of Operndorf Afrika and the estate executor for her late husband and collaborator Christoph Schlingensiefel, whose work she continues today. [instagram.com/ainolaberenz](https://www.instagram.com/ainolaberenz)

HOST

Severin Matusek is a writer, producer and editor who has spent the last decade researching how technology transforms culture, communities and society.

WORKS AND PEOPLE IN CONTEXT

- **Christoph Schlingensiefel** (1960–2010) was a German theatre director, filmmaker, performance artist and activist whose legacy was characterised by experimental and provocative works. In 2009, he initiated the art and education project Operndorf Afrika, an 'opera village' near Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Developed together with Burkina Faso architect and activist Diébédo Francis Kéré, the space intended as a meeting place for education, cultural encounters and exchange. Schlingensiefel died of lung cancer in 2010 at the age of 49. His estate is held and archived by the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. schlingensiefel.com
- **Kein Falsches Wort Jetzt** is a 2020-published book of selected conversations with Christoph Schlingensiefel, compiled by his wife and collaborator Aino Laberenz to offer an insight into his beliefs, work, and life. In German.
kiwi-verlag.de/buch/christoph-schlingensiefel-kein-falsches-wort-jetzt-9783462055085
- **Die Letzten Zeugen** was a contemporary witness theatre project by Doron Rabinovici and Matthias Hartmann performed at Vienna's Burgtheater on the 75th anniversary of the 1938 November Pogrom, in which actors shared the stories of six Holocaust survivors seated behind a transparent partition, before they each stepped forward to share a few personal words. The work is available to watch in full: youtu.be/ju_NuLh2CF4

CREDITS

The Vienna Business Agency supports businesses, the economy and the city in developing the Austrian capital's creative industries and shaping its future trajectory. viennabusinessagency.at

Editorial Team: Paul Feigelfeld, Anna Dorothea Ker, Severin Matusek, Elisabeth Noever-Ginthör, Elisa Stockinger, Heinz Wolf.

Theme Music by Zanshin.

The topics of the Culture & Technology Podcast will be further discussed at the Creative Days Vienna 2021 - part of Vienna UP'21. <https://viennaup.com>

EPISODE SUMMARY

In case German isn't your language, but you're interested in tracking Mavie and Aino's conversation, here's a broad overview of the topics they covered:

- **The unique beauty of theatre**
 - Its real-time response within a particular moment (the essence of theatre, compared to, say, film)
 - However, it's very challenging it is for theatre to react to systemic change and political upheaval in the present moment, given that it's a huge entity with lots of moving parts
- **The awkwardness of theatre in adapting to the digital**
 - The previously-mentioned beauty can't be replaced – questioning of what the theatre can offer that Netflix can't
 - This has been answered by the Covid-induced lockdown, which has made clear the irreplaceability of presence/connection of a shared experience with others that the theatre offers in comparison to digitally-distributed art forms
 - The difference between theatre and museums in this respect? Is the museum experience easier to replace with the digital? Mavie argues no
- **The role of art in times of crisis**
 - Question about relevance of art in times of crisis – how essential is it?
 - Existential. The importance of art in helping us ask and work through questions
- **Aino Laberenz's book, *Kein Falsches Wort Jetzt***
 - The title is a quote from Christoph Schlingensiefel referring to to reconcile Germany's dark past in conversations – Mavie stresses its ongoing relevance
 - The role of technology in Christoph's life: "The digital, personified" – stemmed from the analogue (he did everything himself – the light, camera etc.) but was also really into the latest technological developments. Managed to align both elements.

- **Truth and lies on stage**
 - Aino: “Direct experience” is what makes theatre so special
 - Mavie: “Gemeinsames Lügen” – mutual process of lying and believing.
 - Aino asks Mavie what her most important stage experience was: the answer is “Die Letzten Zeugen,” a work sharing the stories of six Holocaust survivors
 - Aino points out this is the opposite of a lie – the quintessence of truth
 - This ties back to the question of the systemic relevance of art – to share and tell stories, to bear witness, art is an archive
 - Mavie asks about the archives of Christoph’s life that Aino leads – e.g. Akademie der Künste (paper form) and they talk about the challenges of digitalising the analogue (e.g. how even disks don’t fit at some point into the latest tech of the day, that computers expire and don’t keep up with the times)
- **Miscellaneous points of interest**
 - Discussion on made-up dialects just for theatre and radio e.g. Paula Wesseley vs. Katherine Hepburn’s ‘transatlantic’ dialect, the old Bavarian speech of the character Pumuckl, and Michael Fassbinder
 - Brief side note about whether God/Jesus exists
- **Can theatre adapt?**
 - Mavie points out how after the first lockdown, theatres returned to normal: same programming, same directors etc – as if nothing had changed, which surprised her, as everyone had changed during the lockdown. Questions whether theatre was really a reflection of society at that point
 - The freedom of the stage as a space for fantasy/escapism – especially important during times guided by strict rules

TRANSCRIPT

“Die Frage stellt sich in dieser ganzen Krise, oder was auch immer, finde ich umso mehr, systemrelevant hin oder her. Klar, man kann sagen, Nahrung, Gesundheit – das ist alles systemrelevant, Bildung. Und was ist der Stellenwert der Kunst?”

Hello and welcome to the Culture and Technology Podcast. I’m your host, Severin Matusek. The Culture and Technology Podcast is a virtual salon initiated by the Vienna Business Agency in which experts from Vienna and around the globe explore how technology is reshaping the future of culture.

This episode is a bonus episode. It’s held in German between two old friends, actor Mavie Hörbiger and costume designer Aino Laberenz. Together, they discuss the state of theatre in the age of digital technology. If you don’t speak German, please check out the show notes in your podcast app, where we’ve summarised the key

points so you can follow the conversation. The following episodes will be in English again.

In dieser Folge des Podcasts geht um Theater und es geht um die Krise, in der sich das Theater und die Kultur im Allgemeinen befinden in einer Zeit, wo Theater, Museen und Konzerthäuser aufgrund einer globalen Pandemie geschlossen bleiben. Der Stellenwert der Kunst wird während der Pandemie hinterfragt. Das direkte Erleben von Kunst und Kultur wird durch das medierte Erleben durch Technik ersetzt.

Was macht das mit den Schauspielern und anderen Kulturschaffenden? Wie muss sich das Theater weiter entwickeln um weiterhin relevant zu bleiben?

Für diese Folge des Podcasts wählten wir das Format des Interview Magazins, das 1969 von Andy Warhol gegründet wurde. Zwei alte Freundinnen besprechen die Lage der Welt am Telefon im Dezember 2020: Mavie Hörbiger, Schauspielerin am Burgtheater in Wien. Und Aino Labrenz, Kostümbildnerin, Autorin, Mitgründerin des Operndorfes Afrika und Nachlassverwalterin von Christoph Schlingensief.

Mavie und Aino erörtern die Frage: was ist die Rolle des Theaters im Zeitalter der digitalen Technologien?

Mavie und Aino, Willkommen beim Culture and Technology Podcast