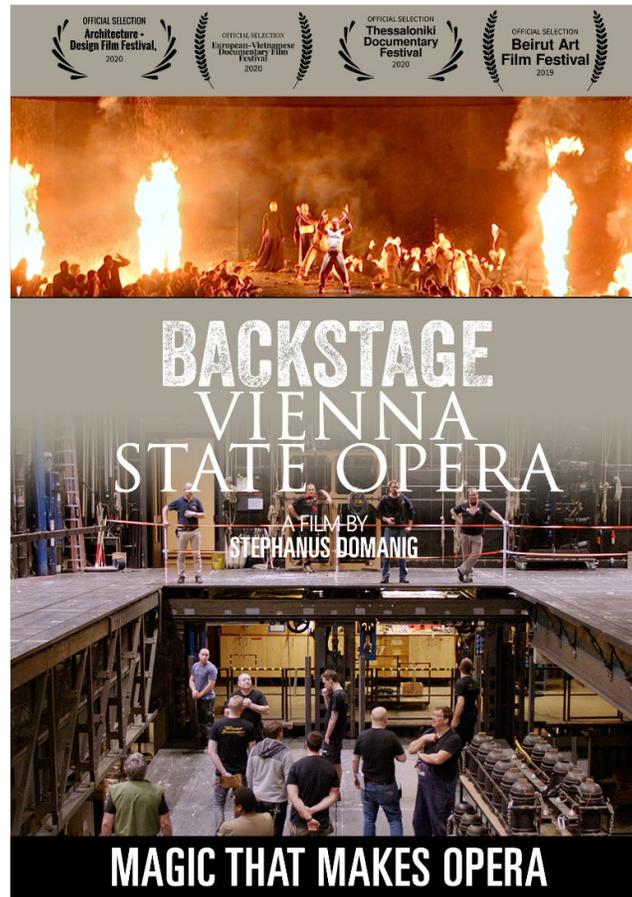


BACKSTAGE VIENNA STATE OPERA



A FILM BY

STEPHANUS DOMANIG

96 mins / Color / 2019 / German, English Subtitles / Austria



EPF MEDIA

324 S. Beverly Drive, PMB 437

Beverly Hills, CA 90212

(323) 301-3663

Website: www.epfmedia.com

Email: larry@epfmedia.com

FILM FESTIVALS

Beirut Art Film Festival, Lebanon

The Austrian Film Week in Ukraine

Architecture + Design Film Festival, Canada

European-Vietnamese Documentary Film Festival, Vietnam

Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, Greece

German Film Festival, Australia

SYNOPSIS

In 7:00 am – 11:00 pm shifts that last for months, the men and women of the Vienna State Opera work tirelessly to prepare the performances that amaze and inspire the audience. Hundreds of craftspeople, musicians, directors, actors, designers, producers and more all work together to produce spectacular performances at one of the largest opera houses in the world. Backstage Vienna State Opera gives a behind-the-scenes view of the energy, talent and commitment found at the opera house.



DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

2003 - to be on the safe side, I tried to get a box seat from which I can escape if necessary. A Richard Wagner opera for the first time: "Tristan and Isolde" - five hours!

Actually, an impertinence, but in the box at least one with an "exit strategy".

Since I started working as a film director, I was, over and over again, involved with operas. I already shot a few scenes at the Vienna State Opera for my diploma film JAGO at the Film Academy. For two documentaries, BALLET SPECIAL and JUST BALLET, we filmed at the Ballet Academy of the Vienna State Opera for several months each. Even for FOR MY SISTERS – a film, primarily about jazz - I returned to the opera again.

Somehow, the Vienna State Opera seems to attract me...

But would I classify myself as an opera fan – I don't know.

Then it starts, the famous love opera. According to a friend who is a true "opera fanatic" it's supposed to be "breathtaking"

The convoluted text ticks lengthy and constantly repeated over the subtitle system. The action on stage is static, and on top of everything the music is heavy, broad and sombre.

What am I doing here?

Why does this still exist today?

Isn't that the complete anachronism?!

Theater: yes please, anytime - people negotiate human things. It's about big topics, possibly told in an exaggerated way: sometimes serious, sometimes funny, sometimes worse, sometimes better and from time to time even jawdropping. At least in the theater - unlike in the opera - the dialogues usually take place in real time. And you die when you get stabbed in the back and you don't start singing.

Music has always been of great value to me! I have gotten to know and like a variety of styles in music, for all the different aspects in life – including "classical"

music. However, opera? Antiquated themes, singers who often act badly. A sluggish plot whose progress seems to be permanently blocked by the music.

After an hour I look at the clock, to see that it has barely been 20 minutes.

But suddenly it happens: Imperceptibly and unplanned, I sink into this dark stage world, unconsciously accepting the rhythm of the slowly increasing sounds and voices. It's the music in combination with the entire action on stage: the cast that doesn't really fit their role as lovers, the stage set bathed in cold blue, the choir that suddenly and eerily appears, the changing stage, the dark story. All of this gradually blurs into a whole that increasingly captivates me. I no longer put up any resistance and surrender myself to this flow of music, light and emotions. When Isolde finally dies and I emerged from this great whirlpool, I hadn't looked at the clock for what felt like eternity. I wipe - embarrassed - a small tear from the corner of my eye.

What happened to me? Apparently, I fell for the opera: it softened me, hypnotized me, touched my innermost being, enchanted me. How does this force of direct emotionality come about?

Perhaps it is precisely this ambivalence and unpredictability, the fascination and simultaneous rejection that attracts me. For many people, opera is a dusty, elitist, and essentially anachronistic art form whose necessity in the 21st century seems questionable. And yet more than 2,000 people sit and stand as an audience in the Vienna State Opera every day. Most are not tourists. I assume they are all waiting and hoping for the spell to work that evening.

Even today, I immediately recognize every passage from Verdi's OTELLO - music that we used for JAGO at the time and of course heard very often in the editing room. Years later, the cutter and I were at the State Opera when OTELLO was being performed. It was like listening the

"Sgt. Pepper's" album by the Beatles: You know every number and could sing it along, if only you were able to. It would probably be the same with many other operas, and when I think back to TRISTAN UND ISOLDE, I know that there is incredible power in this art form: bigger than life!

Werner Schroeter, one of the great directors, once described opera as "one of the most complete forms of art": "Music, visual arts, drama, song and words that are relieved of their banality". For me, opera is fascinating and at the same

time a phenomenon that I would like to get closer to with this film. An emotional film research trip into the POWER PLANT OF EMOTIONS, as Alexander Kluge, the German filmmaker, philosopher, and writer, described the opera: A journey to the magicians and the people who work in the opera to make "opera" possible.

Stephanus Domanig

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Stephanus Domanig, born in 1967 in South Tyrol, Italy, is a graduate of the Film Academy Vienna, specializing in film directing. **WALTER ARLEN ARLEN'S FIRST CENTURY** premiered at the Viennale 2018, and was shown at the Diagonale 2019, Tel Aviv Epos Film Festival 2019, and the Los Angeles Jewish Film Festival 2019. His other films include **FOR MY SISTERS** 2014, **JUST BALLET** 2012, **RAUNACHT** 2006, **LUCY McEVIL - Disease on a winter journey** 2005, and **BALLET SPECIAL** 2003. He has also done various TV productions for the German cultural broadcaster "Arte" and "3sat / ZDF." Stephanus Domanig lives and works with his family in Vienna and in Lower Austria's Waldviertel.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Director **Stephanus Domanig**

Writers **Stephanus Domanig, Martina Theininger**

Producers **Mathias Forberg, Viktoria Salcher**

Cinematographers **Judith Benedikt, Eva Testor**

Editor **Ulrike Kofler**

Production Manager **Peter Janecek**

Sound Design and Sound Engineer **Franz Moritz**

Sound Engineer **Bernhard Maisch**

Assistant Sound Design **Hubert Grisseemann**

Visual Effects **Jana Grimm**

Drone Camera **Roland Furian**

Ass't Camera **Josef Kernegger, Gerhard Leitner, Birgit Obkircher Nino Pfaffenbichler**

Drone Camera **Vincent Seidl**

Assistant Editor **Lisa Zoe Geretschläger**

Color Correction **Ulrich Grimm**