

NEW RELEASE JULY 2022



Hans Jörg Michel
THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS
THEATER PHOTOGRAPHY
AT NATIONALTHEATER MANNHEIM

Edited by Nationaltheater Mannhei
 Texts by Ralf-Carl Langhals, Claude W. Sui
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A documentation of acting and stage performance over the course of time

Hans Jörg Michel, one of Germany's most important theater photographers, has accompanied and documented, among others, the Nationaltheater Mannheim for over thirtyseven years. In this publication, numerous outstanding personalities of the cultural, political, and theatrical landscape are thus portrayed on stage and backstage. A journey from black-and-white to color, from analog to digital. Here, you can immerse yourself in old productions, perhaps discover familiar faces, and take advantage of the opportunity to follow a little of the aesthetic and technical development of theater photography. At the same time, singers and actors are presented who were particularly formative for the Nationaltheater or who started their stage careers in the ensemble there, such as Jörg Hartmann, Matthias Brandt, Rainer Bock, Hedi Kriegeskotte, and many more.

From the text *The Subtle Observer—Hans Jörg Michel—Four Decades of Theater Photography* by **Prof. Dr. Claude W. Sui**:
When the Nationaltheater Mannheim under the direction of Jürgen Bosse was desperately looking for a new photographer for stage dramas, Michel was hired right away in 1984. He stayed there until he retired in 2021. During this time, Michel experimented continually and developed his own style and also worked regularly at renowned theaters and opera houses, such as Berlin State Opera, Hamburg State Opera, German Oper am Rhein, Cologne Opera, Zürich Opera House, Oper Basel, and Salzburg Festival.
The images of a theater photographer are mainly influenced by the existing stage design, illumination, and stage directions the actors follow. On the one hand, Hans Jörg Michel is committed as it were to the director to document the play and filter out from scenes of the play the atmosphere and ideal mimical expressions and gestures

of the artist. On the other hand, he would like to create a genuine image that goes beyond the mere documentary. Thus, he finds himself in a given artistic space in which he captures essential elements. Michel's images, be they analog or digital or black and white or color, rise above the many independent images that are composed of fragments kaleidoscopically. These are dissociated from the original stage content thus allowing for a new and independent view. The observer does not necessarily have to have been previously aware of the intention of the poet or director, rather through Michel's photographs, people's own associations and inspirations are released into the interplay of their own imagination; their own stories can unfold in our spaces of a productive phantasy.

From the text *The Eye of the Beholder. A glimpse into Hans Jörg Michel's world of theatre images* by **Ralf-Carl Langhals**:
Anyone looking at the photographs in this volume will rapidly find them — the special "Michel moments". As with lyric poetry, it is the blank space that creates in Michel's oeuvre the room for imagination and his defining aesthetic. A head turned away, a profile that is merely suggested, the moment of greatest chaos, the immortalised tenth of a second before the ultimate exit, the short, concentrated silence before THE great, all-destructive sentence, the all-forgiving aria. The feeling for the moment and momentum that sets theatre apart also sets this artistically minded observer with the camera apart.

Exhibition
 Nationaltheater Mannheim, Germany
 01.07.–30.07.2022

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