**Jury Decision**

As a director in Europe’s great theatres, Christoph Marthaler has created a narrative style that has influenced and significantly revived contemporary spoken and musical theatre. Many of his productions make a collage of text passages and pieces of music that are combined into a new work. This new work has been noticeably shaped by the artists who have participated in it, primarily set designer Anna Viebrock and dramaturge Stephanie Carp as well as a group of actors and musicians who have been closely connected to Marthaler for several decades. Marthaler’s productions have developed an unmistakable look and sound through their rhythmical way of speaking and singing. The characters seem to have fallen out of time, whereby one senses all the more how time has left its mark on them.

What connects Henrik Ibsen and Christoph Marthaler is the fact that both of them arrived at their own art, a form of art that had never previously existed in the theatre. Marthaler’s productions are characterised by his magical slowing down of life processes and his predilection for solitary forms of existence. At the heart of Marthaler’s creations is always a theme that unfolds within these often ritualised worlds, which appear to be outside of time, as an assemblage of choric musical works, slapstick and monologues. Marthaler’s productions have taken circuitous routes, which in the meantime have become famous, in order to very surprisingly and forcefully reflect these themes – from the reunification of the Germans, euthanasia at the time of the Third Reich up to the invasion of the digital media into the felt reality of relationships, as well as the themes in the world of Maeterlink, Goethe or Horváth. Marthaler’s world is therefore poetic yet engaged, when one understands engagement as an attitude that demonstrates a different understanding of power, one that is not based on force and hierarchy but rather on equality and prefers the singular path to the main road.

Christoph Marthaler studied classical music in Zurich and pantomime with Jaques Leqoc in Paris. After that, he worked as a stage musician at various state theatres, founded at the same time an independent theatre group and developed his own projects in the fringe scene until he arrived in 1989 at the Basel Theatre, where he staged a series of Lieder recitals and productions. The very personal style of these productions and Marthaler’s new theatrical language became famous through the performance of “Murx den Europäer! Murx ihn! Murx ihn! Murx ihn! Murx ihn ab!” (“Screw the European! Screw him! Screw him! Screw him! Go screw him!”) in 1993 at the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz in Berlin, followed by the major success of his production of “Goethes Faust Wurzel 1 + 2” (“Goethe’s Faust Root 1 +2”) at the Hamburg Schauspielhaus. After a time as artistic director at the Zurich Schauspielhaus in the early 2000s, he has staged operas at the Paris Opera, the Teatro Real and most recently the Hamburg State Opera, operas which have been enthusiastically received by audiences and the press. He has received numerous prizes, among them, the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, the Premio Ubo, the Nestroy Theatre Prize and the German Theatre Prize The Faust.

Although Ibsen the dramatist may function very differently from the Swiss theatre magician, both are capable of giving rise to scenic worlds whose stories unfold almost by themselves and which are inhabited by people whom we think we know well. Ibsen and Marthaler are artists of recognition. Their work is based on the smallest particles of everyday life, on the phrases, conventions and typical gestures of a well-known society, which are suddenly re-assembled into a very different view of life. Their plays show human types on whom their gaze rests until these characters begin to seem notorious and unreal. In Ibsen’s case, it is society that falters, in Marthaler’s, it is human beings. For Ibsen, with his Nordic absoluteness, everything was at stake. With Marthaler, a good deal of Swiss anarchism comes into play. Like Ibsen, he has an eye for the smallest detail and develops from these particles his scenic tableaux, which often celebrate acutely threatened life environments in their idiosyncrasy, their wealth of alternative knowledge and a world-shifting logic. You sense in these views of society Marthaler’s receptiveness to people who have difficulty with the modern challenge of having to function and be flexible. They are looking for a different sense in life or have found that sense in absurdity.

The awarding of the Ibsen prize to Christoph Marthaler honours this inimitable theatrical language, its capacity for formal abstraction and experimental arrangement, its humanistic receptivity but at the same time also the challenge that it continues to be for the audience.