

CRYING HANDS

DEAF PEOPLE IN HITLER'S GERMANY

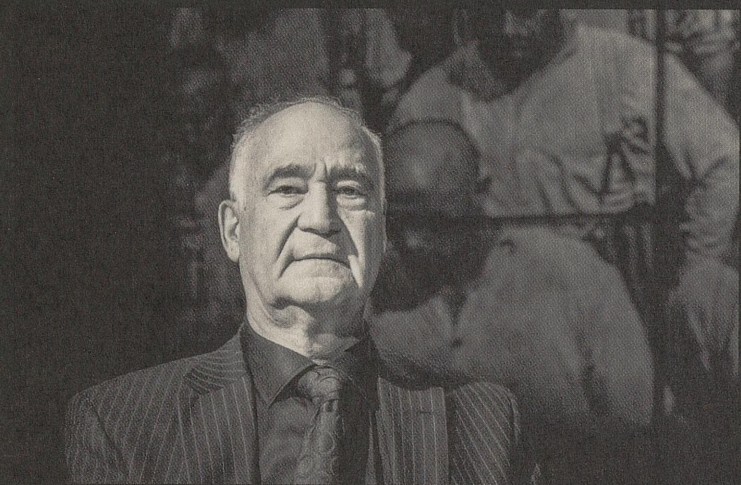




Ipek D. Mehlum | Actor - Gertrud



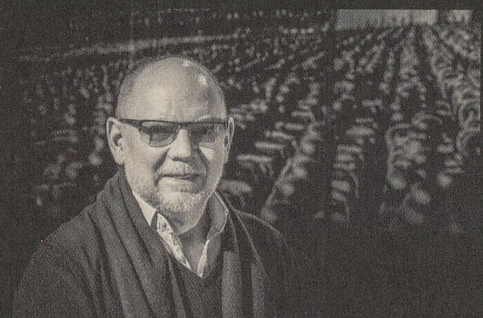
Ronny Patrick Jacobsen | Actor - Hans



Eitan Zuckerman | Actor - Narrator



Kjersti Fjeldstad | Voice Actor



Bentein Baardson | Playwright and Director



Ingeborg Kvamme | Scenic and Costume Designer



Solvi R. Zuckermann | Sign Language Script / Interpreter

A nightmare from real life

Teater Manu is the only sign language theatre in Norway. We therefore have an obligation to present different types of productions, aimed at children, adolescents and adults.

We are trying something new this time. We are presenting what we call a 'docudrama'. We start before World War II, when Hitler had come to power and was spreading the ideology of Nazism. Many people will probably think that they have heard this before, there is nothing new here. Many people are familiar with the tragic fate of the Jews. Millions of people were deported and killed during the war. People are not as familiar with the fact that the Nazis' extermination plan included deaf people. Many people ended their lives at concentration camps.

There is little information about what deaf people did and the reasons for their choices. It is important for deaf people who are alive today to be told this story in sign language. It has to do with our identity. It is the story of why deaf people had to experience the most gruesome acts and, not least, why deaf people were inspired by Nazi ideology. How could this happen? And the main question: Could it happen again? Many people would say "Yes". Similar things are happening in the world today. Our world is constantly being tested. These are important questions that need to be addressed, and which we need to take a stand.

I would like to thank our deaf friends in Israel, who shared their stories and experiences with us. Their contributions have allowed us to communicate true, authentic stories. These stories are very valuable to us all.

I would also like to thank everyone who have contributed in making this play realized. Not everyone will have the chance to see this play live, but the good news is that we have made a film, an adaptation of this play. Borders won't stop us from spreading this story around the world.

Welcome to an intense show.
Mira Zuckermann – *Artistic Director*





Cast

Ipek D. Mehlum Actor – Gertrud
Ronny Patrick Jacobsen Actor – Hans
Eitan Zuckerman Actor – Narrator
Kjersti Fjeldstad Voice Actor

ARTISTIC TEAM

Bentein Baardson Playwright and Director
Ingeborg Kvamme Scenic and Costume Designer
Tine Tommassen Dramaturge
Torkel Skjærven Lighting Designer
Erik Hedin Sound Designer
Simon Valentine Video Designer
Sølvi R. Zuckermann Sign Language Script / Interpreter
Trond Ivar Bækken Researcher

TECHNICAL TEAM

Ola A. Neegaard Producer/ Technical Leader
Yasin Gyltepe Technical Manager
Agata Wisny Stage Manager
Bjørn Grønnerud Set Production
Ingvill Fjeldstad Costume Production
Kjersti Alm Eriksen Props Production
Anne Stordal Interpreter/ Tour Management /
interpreter Coordinator
Olgeir J. Hartvedt Stage Technichian
Jan Harald Ovrum Lightning Manager
Abdelhakim Aggoun Stage Technichian Assistant

ADMINISTRATION

Mira Zuckermann Theater Manager and Artistic Leader
Mari Hjelmtveit Head of Administration
Morten Sletten Head of Communication and Marketing
Jeanett Rønneberg Hagen Administration / Ticket Sales
Dag Jensen Production Photos
Dimitri Kayiambakis Designer
Kulturme glerne / Hilde Crone Leinebo PR

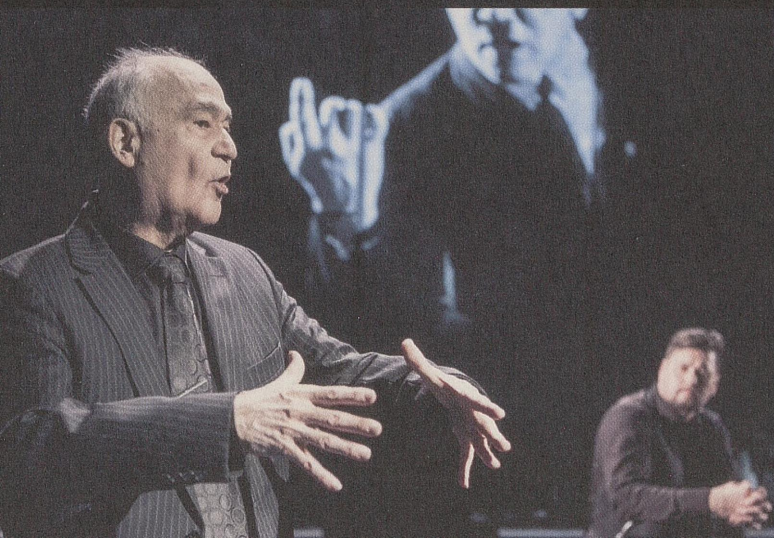
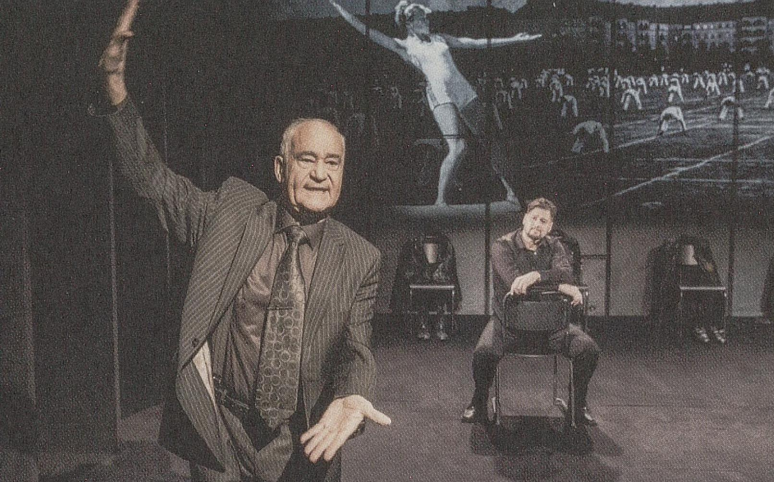
Marianne Larosi Interpreter
Siri Gjellan Interpreter
Vigdis S. Peterson Interpreter
Guri Holtungen Interpreter

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Hava Savir, Ruth Leibinger and Mark Zourov.

We wish to thank everyone for their contributions with finding stories and inspiration. A special thank goes to the survivors in Israel, which we interviewed. We know how hard it was for you to tell your stories.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Crying Hands: Eugenies and Deaf People in Nazi Germany by Horst Biesold, published in English by Gallaudet University Press, Washington, DC.



A few words about the dramatization

Teater Manu has long wanted to stage a dramatized account of the fates of deaf people in Europe, from Hitler's assumption of power until the end of World War II. The project was strongly inspired by the 1998 conference "Deaf People in Hitler's Europe, 1933-1945", which was hosted jointly by Gallaudet University and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The fates of the deaf in Nazi Germany has been a neglected topic in the story of the Holocaust. It is only recently that this almost unknown chapter of history has been the subject of documentation and research. This material, not least represented by Donna F. Ryan and John S. Schuchman, has provided the source for my dramatization, together with personal interviews of 10 deaf survivors of the Nazi atrocities.

When Artistic Director of Teater Manu Mira Zuckermann asked me to take on the role of playwright and director of the project, I had absolutely no knowledge of the statutory sterilization of deaf men, women and children in Germany in the 1930s. Nor was I aware that already then the Nazis had implemented systematic measures to eradicate the deaf, and that they considered this to be a natural part of their eugenics programme.

As I immersed myself in the material and studied it, including the considerable writings of Horst Biesold, it became clear to me that this undiscovered part of our history had to be communicated in a documentary manner, using photomontages – literally as a historical/visual backdrop to the actors' performances. My time spent at the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem and the Jewish Museum in Berlin reinforced my desire to have this type of stage design.

Inspired by the interviews of the ten deaf survivors in Israel, I focused on two characters – Hans and Gertrud. They are fictitious,

but most of what they say comes from actual stories or events.

"Crying Hands" tells the tale of Hans, who was born deaf, and his young adulthood in Berlin before the war broke out. He was very interested in motorcycles, and together with many other deaf people, he joined a Nazi stormtrooper unit, and participated in the victory parade when Hitler came to power in 1933. The stormtrooper unit was shut down shortly afterwards on the orders of the Nazi leadership, as Hitler did not want disabled soldiers.

The production follows Hans' fate as a deaf political prisoner in Sachsenhausen, and later we witness his struggle to survive the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Gertrud is the second character in this production. She is a German hearing person, born into a wealthy, respectable family. She

studies medicine and develops an interest in the Nazi theories regarding race at an early age. She eventually becomes directly involved in the systematic marginalization of the deaf. Gertrud's life changes brutally when it turns out that her grandmother is Jewish. The production can be considered a 'docudrama'. The whole performance is accompanied by projections of photos and there is a narrator who presents facts to go with the actors' performances. The two actors are the bearers of stories on behalf of many individuals, all interwoven into a tale.

It is hard to call "Crying Hands" an ordinary theatre production, it does not tell a fictional tale. It is not fiction, we are not putting on masks and we are not making up a story. We just want to tell the audience about true events. Unfortunately, reality can sometimes be worse than anything we can imagine.

Bentein Baardson





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