



## AN ANGEL COMES TO BABYLON

### PROJECT SUMMARY

The project "Babylon" focuses on the work and impact of two authors: Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Sherzad Hassan. Friedrich Dürrenmatt would have become 100 years old in January 2021, and the Kurdish author Sherzad Hassan, who is internationally famous as a supporter of women's rights, but also as a chronicler of Kurdish subjectivity and identity, celebrates his 70th birthday in the same year. His main field is the description of the "liminal" position of the Kurdish population in the border triangle of Syria, Iraq and Turkey. Some of his very well-known works are "Lausanne", "Marlin", "The Game of Changing Beds", "The sad song of foreignness", "Secret", "Smoke", "The scarecrow's alley", and "Azrael". What has not (yet) been noticed in the Swiss reception on the occasion of Dürrenmatt's 100th birthday is that Sherzad Hassan translate the English version of "An angel comes to Babylon" to Kurdish, in the 1990s. This exciting path of exposure is now worth researching with a special project and performing the piece practically, sensually, haptically, musically, and rhythmically. The play and its associations with catastrophic events (such as war, only to name one) is one of Dürrenmatt's many confrontations with "the construction of the tower" and the roots of our mythology - hence the title "An angel comes to Babylon". Through the filter of the Kurdish translation, however, other aspects of the play open up and its fairy-tale character establishes a connection to current events and claimed victims among the Kurdish and Yezidi population.

Upon the founding of an "Emmental/Kurdish stage" by a group of those fond of these two areas and their related topics- a conglomerate of actors from the group 400asa (Swiss BAK Theatre Prize 2016) and visual artists - a special "hiking format" will be created which will be lasting several hours, starting from

Konolfingen (Friedrich Dürrenmatt's birth place) and ending in "Wanner" (Mesela member and sculptor, Werner Neuhaus' farm), commemorating the work of Friedrich Dürrenmatt and also focusing on its Kurdish translation by Sherzad Hassan with Swiss and Kurdish artists.

The project "An angel comes to Babylon" is the first part of a three-year-long project trilogy entitled "Cantons/Cantonê/Cantons", which the "Verein Mesela" is developing in cooperation with "Maison du Futur" from 2021 to 2023. At the center of the project is the connection of Helvetian culture and politics with the history of Kurdistan in the context of the Treaty of Lausanne, which will be one hundred years old in 2023.

Background: In 1923, the victorious powers of the First World War divided the territory of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire among themselves in the Treaty of Lausanne. This also included the treaty defining the current borders of Turkey and Greece. Contrary to what was promised by England and Turkey in the first negotiations, the Treaty of Lausanne did not grant the Kurds any autonomous territory. Until today they are the largest ethnic group in the world without a country of their own.

The project "An angel comes to Babylon" deals with the interaction of literature, visual arts and ecology with a focus on Switzerland and Kurdistan. At the center of the investigation are the cultural, political and mythological similarities in the works and biographies of Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Sherzad Hassad.

The second part of the project "Kobane" (2022) will erect a monument of destruction in Kobane, commemorating the genocide of the I.S. against the Yezidis. In addition, a virtual monument will be erected to make the memory of the Kurds accessible also from a distance.

The third part, "Lausanne" (2023), focuses on the effects of the Treaty of Lausanne on the Kurdish population. In discursive, theatrical, performative, and installation formats, the origins and consequences of the treaty are dealt with, and the question is posed as to what role Switzerland and Europe can play in redefining the future of Kurdistan.

(Part 1 will also be shown in Kobane and Erbil, but also in Sulaymaniyah. The scenes of the play will be developed in a way that they can be taken over by a site-specific local ensemble at each venue after a short rehearsal period. The production is committed to the guidelines of sustainable cultural production. This reduces unnecessary travel and creates a cultural exchange and a real process of participation with the local people.)

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