



CHECKMATE

A Theater Sculpture
by Daniel Tharau and Wolfgang Weileder
performed by
Gabriele Heller and Rusty Ross

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Amphitheater, School of Visual Arts, New York City

*Ein Mann sagt: „Matt!“ in einem Spiel
A man says „checkmate!“ within a game*

*und meint, man könne nichts dagegen tun,
and believes nothing can be done about it,*

*doch niemand macht da mit,
but no one will join him,*

*und keiner stimmt ihm zu.
and nobody agrees with him.*



CHECKMATE

At the 20th of January 1996 the Theater Sculpture **CHECKMATE** took place at the SVA-Amphitheater, New York City. Only one performance was shown. Starting point of the Theater Sculpture was a sentence by Walther von der Vogelweide ("Erste Reinmarfehde"):

*Ein Mann sagt: "Matt!" in einem Spiel und meint, man könne nichts dagegen tun,
doch niemand macht da mit, und keiner stimmt ihm zu.*

*A man says "checkmate!" within a game and believes nothing can be done about it,
but no one will join him, and nobody agrees with him.*

This sentence was randomly chosen from one of the oldest German poetry collections.

The contents and formal structure of the sentence determined the Theater Sculpture to a partition of four sections.

CHECKMATE lasted one hour. Two actors performed four short plays and recited four texts. Constantly they varied the theaterroom with eight chairs and 24 crutches. In the final part a deconstruction and a rearrangement of the crutches happened, joined with the narrative closing of the short plays - to a connection of theater and sculpture.

Structure 1

War



Ein Mann sagt "Matt!" in einem Spiel

1: Victory His activity Knowledge Objectivity

- A: Two soldiers in different uniforms. Soldier A has wounded Soldier B.
- B: A single woman. She is on the phone. She seems to have a conversation with a male. The woman speaks very bad about herself. She says it would be all her fault, she would not be strong enough for living and would do everything wrong. She asks the man to forgive her. But it seems the other person is hard. After he has confirmed his disgust about her, he hangs up.
- C: A couple sits in a restaurant. The man tells the woman that he has bought a restaurant.
- D: Two women sit in a car. The driver tells about her car, house, family, career. The hitchhiker tells about travelling, different men, sleeping outside...

und meint, man könne nichts dagegen tun,

2: Triumph All inactivity Faith Subjectivity

- A: Soldier A wants to smoke and asks soldier B for fire.
- B: The woman is in a very bad mood. She drinks and speaks to herself. She speaks about her hopelessness, about suicide.
- C: The man begins to make jokes about the waiter.
- D: The women sit together on a bed closely. They look TV. In the TV is a wonderful nature at night visible and a bird is audible. The women are both sad and in high spirits at the same time. Mutually they imagine their lives.

doch niemand macht da mit,

3: Alarm Their activity Knowledge Objectivity

- A: Soldier B says, that he won't give fire. Soldier A shoots B to death.
- B: The woman begins to cry.
- C: The woman begins to quarrel with the man. She goes into the bathroom.
- D: Both women lie on the bed. There is a distance between them. They speak about the reasons for their respective lives, about the special advantages. With their words they begin to hurt each other more and more.

und keiner stimmt ihm zu.

3': Immobility All inactivity Faith Objectivity

- A: Soldier A stands near the dead body of soldier B.
- B: The woman does make-up in her face. She switches on the radio. Then she walks out - in the auditorium.
- C: The waiter makes love with the woman.
- D: Both women stand in front of each other.

?



Structure 2 (Continuity)



- 0> ENTRANCE of the auditorium
- Gabi beginning :
- Rusty beginning:
- Gabi ending _____ :
- Rusty ending _____ :
- Crutches _____ : chaos
- Chairs _____ : chaos
- Screen _____ : up
- Light _____ : fluorescent front

1: *Ein Mann sagt: "Matt!" in einem Spiel* - (Played)

1A: Two soldiers in different uniforms. Soldier A has wounded Soldier B.

Gabi beginning : behind the auditorium

Rusty beginning : at the elevator

Gabi ending : stage center

Rusty ending : stage left

Crutches : get moved

Chairs : get moved

Screen :

Light :

1C: A couple sits in a restaurant. The man tells the woman that he has bought a restaurant.

Gabi beginning : stage center

Rusty beginning : stage left

Gabi ending : behind the auditorium right

Rusty ending : behind the auditorium right

Crutches : heap stage right

Chairs : heap stage left

Screen :

Light :

1B: A single woman. She is on the phone. She seems to have a conversation with a male. The woman speaks very bad about herself. She says it would be all her fault, she would not be strong enough for living and would do everything wrong. She asks the man to forgive her. But it seems the other person is hard. After he has confirmed his disgust about her, he hangs up.

Gabi beginning : behind the auditorium right

Rusty beginning : behind the auditorium right

Gabi ending : behind the auditorium right

Rusty ending : behind the auditorium right

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :

1D: A woman and a man sit in a car. The driver tells about his car, house, family, career. The hitchhiker tells about travelling, different men, sleeping outside...

Gabi beginning : sitting on the speakers-corner

Rusty beginning : sitting on the speakers-corner

Gabi ending : sitting on the speakers-corner

Rusty ending : sitting on the speakers-corner

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen : gets down at the end of the scene

Light :

1>: COMIC I (Gabi)
Gabi beginning : goes to the piano
Rusty beginning: goes to the switchboard
Gabi ending : at the piano
Rusty ending : at the switchboard
Crutches :
Chairs :
Screen : down
Light : at the end Rusty switches fluorescent off,
backfluorescent on

2: *und meint, man könne nichts dagegen tun*, - (Played)

2D: The woman and the man sit together on a bed closely. They look TV. In the TV is a wonderful nature at night visible and a bird is audible. The woman and the man are both sad and in high spirits at the same time. Mutually they imagine their lives.

Gabi beginning : on speakers-corner behind the screen
Rusty beginning: on speakers-corner behind the screen
Gabi ending : on speakers-corner behind the screen
Rusty ending : on speakers-corner behind the screen
Crutches :
Chairs :
Screen :
Light :

2A: Soldier A wants to smoke and asks soldier B for fire.

Gabi beginning : appears gallery center
Rusty beginning: stumbles 'wounded' down the stairs
Gabi ending : stands stage center
Rusty ending : lies stage left
Crutches : get leaned under the railing
Chairs :
Screen :
Light :

2>: CRAZY - Monologue (Gabi)

Gabi beginning : sits above the exit sign
Rusty beginning: lies stage left
Gabi ending : sits above the exit sign
Rusty ending : lies stage left
Crutches :
Chairs :
Screen :
Light :

2C: The man begins to make jokes about the waiter.

Gabi beginning : runs to the chairs

Rusty beginning: runs to the chairs

Gabi ending : drives chairs to the elevator

Rusty ending : drives chairs to the elevator

Crutches :

Chairs : get into the elevator

Screen : Gabi drives the screen up

Light :

2B: The woman is in a very bad mood. She drinks and speaks to herself. She speaks about her hopelessness, about suicide.

Gabi beginning : at the entrance

Rusty beginning: on the railing right

Gabi ending : standing on the railing center

Rusty ending : on the railing right

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :

2>: COMIC II (Gabi)

Gabi beginning : goes to the piano

Rusty beginning: goes to the switchboard

Gabi ending : at the piano

Rusty ending : in the light-cabin

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light : at the end Rusty switches fluorescent on, lights on

3: *doch niemand macht da mit, - (Played)*

3B: The woman begins to cry.

Gabi beginning : in front of the railing

Rusty beginning: behind the railing

Gabi ending : in front of the railing

Rusty ending : behind the railing

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :

3D: The woman and the man lie on the bed. There is a distance between them. They speak about the reasons for their respective lives, about the special advantages. With their words they begin to hurt each other more and more.

Gabi beginning : on speakers-corner

Rusty beginning: on speakers-corner

Gabi ending : on speakers-corner

Rusty ending : on speakers-corner

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :

3>: HATE - Monologue (Rusty)

Gabi beginning : on speakers-corner

Rusty beginning: stands stage left

Gabi ending : on speakers-corner

Rusty ending : stands stage left

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :

3A: Soldier B says, that he won't give fire. Soldier A shoots B to death.

Gabi beginning : on speakers-corner

Rusty beginning: lies stage left

Gabi ending : stands stage right

Rusty ending : lies next to the crutches below the railing

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :

3C: The woman begins to quarrel with the man. She goes into the bathroom.

Gabi beginning : sits on chairs in the elevator

Rusty beginning: climbs on the chairs in the elevator

Gabi ending : crouches between the crutches

Rusty ending : runs back and forth between crutches and elevator

Crutches : at the end the crutches get kicked down?

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :

- 3>: COMIC III (Gabi)
- Gabi beginning : goes to the piano
 - Rusty beginning: goes to the switchboard
 - Gabi ending : at the piano
 - Rusty ending : at the switchboard
 - Crutches :
 - Chairs :
 - Screen :
 - Light : at the end Rusty switches off the fluorescent



3': *und keiner stimmt ihm zu.* - (Narrated)

3'A: Soldier A stands near the dead body of soldier B.
Gabi beginning : goes to the crutches
Rusty beginning: goes to the crutches
Gabi ending :
Rusty ending :
Crutches : deconstruction and reconstruction
Chairs :
Screen :
Light :

3'B: The woman does make-up in her face. She switches on the radio. Then she walks out - in the auditorium.
Gabi beginning :
Rusty beginning:
Gabi ending :
Rusty ending :
Crutches : deconstruction and reconstruction
Chairs :
Screen :
Light :

3'>: SANYO - Monologue (Rusty)
Gabi beginning :
Rusty beginning:
Gabi ending :
Rusty ending :
Crutches : deconstruction and reconstruction
Chairs :
Screen :
Light :

3'C: The waiter makes love with the woman.
Gabi beginning :
Rusty beginning:
Gabi ending :
Rusty ending :
Crutches : deconstruction and reconstruction
Chairs :
Screen :
Light :

3'D: The woman and the man stand in front of each other.

Gabi beginning :

Rusty beginning:

Gabi ending :

Rusty ending :

Crutches :

Chairs :

Screen :

Light :





Texts

COMIC

- A dog eats from its bowl.
- A smaller dog observes that.
- On a closet is a package with poison.

- Two cars stand side by side at a red traffic light.
- When the light shows green, one car darts off.
- The other car turns off.

- A soldier stands in a destroyed house.
- He licks an icecream.
- He licks the icecream.

CRAZY

Won. To be the victor. I feel good. Blood fleeds through veins. Soft is my punch. Eyes lie on the pavement. How are you? Your feet hang aside. Ants walk through your body. I snicker. Because I'm just. - To walk on a path full of stones, only pale green between. To walk faster. (Loughing) Turns faster and faster. The arms reach over the meadows. Hands graze in the soil. A forest of weapons grows up. A cage with iron bars. Black lines in front of the sky. A Plup-noise. The steel pierces through my body. The block is inside me. - To lie on a white leaf. Looking not allowed. White walls. Only me. No movement. Long or short. Do I feel good or bad? At that time I get stretched over the bed totally. My body tears soundless. The bones float away. Hold me Sajaschka! (Who is Sajaschka?) The bones snap at each other. Sometimes they hop out of their hipbones. I don't like that, the wipe up. But in this time nothing was going on. I'm save here in my room with the dark doors. Now I will go to the switch. Do I know, what I'm doing? Green meadows with little trees and sheeps. And if I now

HATE

You awful pig. You little piece of shit. You are the one, whom I never could like. Every part of you is like a piece of fat from the pig, rancid but still living fat, which stinks and bubbles in the sun. Everything you are doing, I don't want. I'm not interested in anything of you. You are like a fart for me, which a fat old man let off in his shitty john. Turn around that I must not see this arse, which sits in your upper part. Do you know, what I would like to do? I would like to grab in your nose with a crowbar and then I would like to press these crowbars in your head and then I would rip apart the two parts slowly. Do you notice finally that I despise you, that you are simply not loved by me. Or must I tell you even now that I would like to wring your knees. Is this enough? You think that's only rubbish I'm saying. I warn you, I mean it seriously. I have such a feeling against you. Understand it and vanish. Vanish. Get lost. No, you are still standing. In Ordnung. You wanted it. USWINDE YOU LITTLE SCHEISSE. I see A 8 ~/2—]f+ kl__` μ±'†*œ. With my fingers I want to rub gently over your face; to sense the warmth which is inside you.

SANYO

Hey, my name is Sanyo. I have come, because ... Yes, here I'm standing. Yes, I'm Sanyo. Please have a little patience with me. Patience is important, if you want to get old. Why? I don't know. Excuse me, but what is in that bottle. I didn't understand you. You are joking. Listen, I think that's not funny. Listen to me! In my eyes I see the sea. What? Yes! The sea. Nothing else at the moment. Robotron! Turn the eyes! Sand drifts in my eyes. Brightness hoch. White sand. Do you know, then I screamed. The sand blue calm, always again a grain in my eyes and I screamed. Because I didn't understand, what I saw. What? It was not right. It was a lot of wood and masts above. I turned around and buried my eyes in my hands. Da war ein Schiff. The ship laid in front of me, shimmering in the lightness. I had seen a man, who was, who stood at the mast, who stood like binded. Rushing. Digitalized words. Hissing, roaring. I had to concentrate. He said. His voice CONTINUE he said. Above, wrapped in white sacks, men laid. They laid confused. Heads with wide opened, fixed eyes. Bluegreen facial bones. Shriveled skin. Fluttered like rags. But I knew that they live. I felt they feigned. CONTINUE said the mastman. Was he binded? Hissing. Wind. A wave came and washed over my feet. Warm. Tender.



Photography by Maureen McInerney

The performance is documented on VHS video.

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GABRIELE HELLER is working as an actress, a teacher of improvisation theater and an assistant director in Germany. In 1992 she founded with six other actors the Fast-Food-Improvisation-Theater, which now tours all over Germany. Their performances at the Heppel & Ettlich Theater in Munich sell out weekly. She worked as an assistant director at the Nationaltheater Mannheim. Also she has directed *Evol* by Pavel Kohout for the Munich theater company Die Baracke. Since 1994 she is an assistant director for radio drama at the Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Public Broadcast). She holds a MA for German literature and theater from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

RUSTY ROSS has very recently completed a degree at Northwestern University in Chicago. Since then, he appeared in *Big River* at Allenberry Playhouse (Pennsylvania) as Tom Sawyer, in Robert Willson's *Alice* at Brooklyn Academy of Music, in a national tour of *A Christmas Carol*, and in *The Witch Who Was Afraid of Witches* at the Emelin Theatre (New York). Other recent roles include Sonnerie in Peter Barnes' *Red Noses*, Peter Patrone in *The Heidi Chronicles*, and Will in *Both Loved and Alone* at Northwestern University, as well as Huck Finn in *Big River* and Action in *West Side Story* at the H&A Dinner Theatre (Kansas). Also a lighting designer, Rusty has most recently lit productions of *The Wall of Water* and *The Secret Rapture*.

DANIEL THARAU is a free lance theater director in Germany. Recently, he directed the German debut of *File: Ronald Akkermann* by Suzanne van Lohuizen at Deutsches Theater in Göttingen. He has also recently directed *The Physicists* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt at the Theater der Altmark in Stendal, the debut performance of *Dialogue in D-Major* by Javier Tomeo at the Staatsschauspiel Stuttgart and the debut performance of *Baby* by Susan Sontag at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg. There he was an assistant director for three years before that, and worked with Jürgen Flimm and Robert Wilson (*Alice*), among other theater artists. In New York City he worked on *Famine Plays* by Richard Caliban at the CUCARACHA-Theater, and directed the 16mm short-film *The Woman in the Shaking House*. In 1990 he graduated from Otto-Falkenberg-Schule, Munich.

WOLFGANG WEILEDER is a sculptor and photographer. Exhibitions include *Debütantenpreis 1995* at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, *Ortung* at GSF-Forschungszentrum in Munich, *Kunststudenten stellen aus* at Kunsthalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn, a one man show at the Kunstforum, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich, *anvisiert* and *Kunstflug* at Deutsches Museum in Munich, *BOAT* at Hatton Gallery in Newcastle, England (a one man show), *JETZT* at Künstlerwerkstätten Lothringer Strasse 13 in Munich and *Konfrontation* at Galerie der Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Dresden. He studied at the University of Fine Art in Newcastle, England and at the Academy of Fine Art in Munich, where he graduated in 1995. Now he is in the MFA Photo program of the SVA with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

CHECKMATE is Daniel and Wolfgang's second collaboration; the first was *Class Enemy* by Nigel Williams, which they produced in 1983 when they were in high school together.