

# BARBARA MUNDEL

Theaterintendantin, Regisseurin und Dramaturgin

## Biography

Born in Hildesheim in 1959, Barbara Mundel, after graduating from high school, studied contemporary German literature, art history and theater studies in Berlin, Frankfurt am Main and Munich. Parallel to her studies, she began working in theater at the Landesbühne Hannover as an assistant director; this work soon expanded into the dramaturgic field and included music theater in addition to spoken theater, particularly in a close and regular cooperation with Herbert Wernicke in Darmstadt, Mannheim and at the Deutsche Oper in Berlin and the Schwetzingen Festspiele.

From the mid-1980s, she worked as an assistant to directors such as Alfred Kirchner, Wilfried Minks, B.K. Tragelehn, Werner Schroeter and Franz Xaver Kroetz at the Bayerische Staatsschauspiel München (theater director: Frank Baumbauer).

At the beginning of the 1990s, she worked as an independent director, first at the Ruhrfestspiele in Recklinghausen and at the Theater Basel. After creating her own works at the Frankfurt Oper (*Der Barbier von Bagdad*, 1994, *Samson und Dalila*, 1995) and at the Salzburger Festspiele 1994 (*L'Histoire du Soldat*), she moved on the team at the Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin as a dramaturge and worked with such directors as Frank Castorf, Johann Kresnik, Christoph Schlingensiefel and Christoph Marthaler.

The Volksbühne Berlin's opening for new media, the integration of other forms of art in theater works, including symposiums and thematic weekends in a theater context, were all a focus of her works. Among other things, a result was the integration of visual arts into the theater in the form of monthly art projects in the newly founded Kunstsalon der Volksbühne as well as the founding of the Neuer Volks Im, a film production and distribution company in cooperation between the Volksbühne and Christoph Schlingensiefel.

From 1999/2000 until 2003/04, Barbara Mundel was the director of the Luzerner Theater. Here she worked with the still unknown directors René Pollesch and Sebastian Baumgarten, among others; she supported them systematically. She drew a great amount of attention, above all in the national press, for her brave program that considered theater branches in a new way.

Afterwards, Barbara Mundel was the head dramaturge at the Münchner Kammerspiele, where she developed the urban space project Bunny Hill with Björn Bicker along with dramaturgical work with Johann Simons (*Die zehn Gebote*), among others.

In 2006/2007, she became theater director at the Theater Freiburg. With her team, she initiated a debate that soon spread throughout Germany about a City Theater for the Future. Here she promoted a new legitimacy and opening for publicly funded city theaters in pluralistic urban societies. The focus of her work was also on participative forms: how can citizens become protagonists on their stages? Weekends about political *subjects*, the construction of temporary exterior venues in residential areas (such as the Finkenschlag), performative forms and the creation of an "expanded ensemble" (e.g. in Graham Smith's School of Life and Dance) characterized her 11-year directorship as well as promoting a committed ensemble or cooperation with directors such as Felizitas Brucker, Robert Schuster, Tom Kühnel, Christoph Frick, Jarg Partacki, Viola Hasselberg, Sandra Stunz, Calixto Bieto, Ludger Engels and the choreographer Joanne Leighton (*Die Türmer von Freiburg*).

Recently, an experiment-friendly curated program emerged from the dance department pvc (in cooperation with Theater Heidelberg); occasionally, this was done with the Museum für Neue

Kunst. The opera succeeded with musical rediscoveries (*Die Königin von Saba*), world premieres (*Kaspar Hauser*, *rusades*) as well as new interpretations of the repertoire (*Wagner's Ring*).

During Barbara Mundel's directorship, the Theater Freiburg was repeatedly honored for its "remarkable theater work beyond major centers" (*Die deutsche Bühne*).

In addition to her work as theater director, dramaturge and director (most recently in Freiburg: *Cendrillon* by Jules Massenet), Barbara Mundel was a guest professor at the Institut für Angewandte Theaterwissenschaft in Gießen as well as a lecturer for theater directing at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt/Main. On commission by the Goethe Institut, she did a lecture tour on the Contemporary German Stage Concept with stations in Sri Lanka, India and *Bangladesh in the mid-1990s*. Afterwards, she had a ten-month stay in Australia with further teaching assignments as well as the production of a radio play on Walter Benjamin.

Barbara Mundel is a member and assistant director of the university council of the Musikhochschule Freiburg and a member in the administrative council and in the artistic committee of the Deutscher Bühnenverein. She is in the council of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg and in the expert council Kulturagenten für Kreative Schulen for the German Federal Cultural Foundation/Stiftung Mercator.

In addition, she regularly accepts jury assignments: 2015 for the FAUST prize of the Deutscher Bühnenverein; 2016 for the Körber Stiftung (*Körber Studio Junge Regie*). Over the course of three years, she was a jury member of the German Federal Cultural Foundation for independent project support as well as in the jury for the art prize of the Bundesland of Baden-Wuerttemberg and is also in high demand as a member of selection committees to occupy new directorship positions.

During her Freiburg directorship, festivals such as *Politik im Freien Theater* (2014) or the 3rd citizen stage festival *Bürgerbühnenfestival Heart of the Cities* (2017) took place.

In 2016, the Theater Freiburg was the host for the FAUST prize award ceremony.

After the city council of Freiburg overruled her ambitious draft for the city anniversary 2020, Barbara Mundel started a coaching programme, which she successfully completed summer 2018.

Summer 2018 she also started working for "Ruhrtriennale-Festival der Künste".

In October 2018 the city council of Munich nominated her as the new director of the Münchner Kammerspiele, starting repertory season 2020/21.