

## steirischer herbst '25—*Never Again Peace* 18.9.–12.10.25

The 58th edition of steirischer herbst is titled *Never Again Peace*, inspired by Ernst Toller's prophetic satire *Nie wieder Friede* (1934–36). Written in exile, his text showed—long before the outbreak of World War II—how quickly peace-loving societies can, under a fictitious threat, lapse into cries for war, xenophobia, and enforced conformity. In the play, Napoleon sends an anonymous declaration of war from Olympus to the mountain republic of "Dunkelstein." Immediately, the same people who had just sung peace hymns cry "War!" The parallels to the present are striking. The familiar "Never again," once chanted by concentration camp survivors as an eternal warning, now rings hollow in light of the suffering of civilians caused by Putin's aggression against Ukraine or Netanyahu's war in Gaza.

Director and chief curator Ekaterina Degot on this year's theme:

*"The wars in Ukraine and Gaza show that the world order established after World War II has begun to falter. Key terms of remembrance, such as 'Never again' or 'antifascism,' are today being perverted and misused by new dictators. From the very beginning, steirischer herbst was founded on the sense that the dark forces were never entirely defeated. That struggle continues today."*

In this year's edition, steirischer herbst presents forty-two newly commissioned works as part of the *Never Again Peace* program, questioning the unresolved contradictions giving rise to the very idea of endless war and how these are reflected in Austria and Central Europe. Through artistic means, the festival offers alternative narratives of past and present conflicts that differ fundamentally from the familiar politics of remembrance centered on the duality of victim and perpetrator. As with Toller, these stories are often dark, yet never without humor.

### Opening weekend (18.9.–21.9.)

On 18 September, steirischer herbst '25 opens at Freiheitsplatz (Freedom Square), a square that was last renamed in 1938, shortly after the Anschluss. The collective **LIGNA** therefore explores contested notions of freedom and shifting political systems in an interactive audio performance that eventually leads the audience into the neighboring Schauspielhaus. There, **director Ekaterina Degot** delivers her traditional opening speech before everyone returns to the square, where the party begins with drinks and music by **Paganin Soatnquartett**.

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The opening continues with a double bill at Helmut List Halle: while **Manuel Pelmuş and Frédéric Gies** revisit Kurt Jooss's groundbreaking 1932 ballet *The Green Table* as a solo, queer icon Ivo Dimchev pushes the limits of the reasonable in *Hot Sotz* (2025). The evening concludes with a party in the grand foyer and Halle B, directed by **Ivo Dimchev** and featuring DJ sets by **anxxxious\_t** and **aua&angst** from the Vienna collective **KISSEN**.

On Friday, 19 September, the exhibition of *Never Again Peace* opens in the former Bauer distillery—an abandoned industrial site renamed BAU for the festival—with a series of performances. Starting at 17:00, **Maria Vilkovisky and Ruthie Jenrbekova (Kreolex zentre)** deliver their version of Allen Ginsberg's Vietnam War poem *Hum Bom!* as a rapid-fire duet, while **Max Höfler** and **Andreas Unterweger** contribute the artistic intervention *Haus Steiermark* (Haus of Styria, 2025). In the attic, **Nástio Mosquito** presents his performative installation *THEY THE THEM ARE WE: MONO(i)DIALOGUES* (2025) in four time slots (18:00, 19:00, 20:00, 21:00). At 19:00, **Ahmet Öğüt's** *Bed Race*, part of his installation *Sports Club of the Forbidden Colours* (2025), is not to be missed in the courtyard. A concert by **Austroflop** and a DJ set by **GreyNote** bring the dense opening program at BAU to a close.

At Dom im Berg, **Augustin Maurs**, together with a choir and ensemble, presents *The Story of the Wolf Tone* (2025), using this sonic outsider to explore what is excluded from harmonic music and harmonious societies.

In addition, the herbstcafé program kicks off on Friday, with a DJ set by **Misonica**. A total of eight times, on Fridays and Saturdays, the series offers grooves, ambient sounds, drones, and beats alongside performances and discussions.

Saturday, 20 September, begins with guided tours at BAU and the discourse program Ideas at Orpheum Extra: artists **Candice Breitz, Dana Kavelina, Miklavž Komelj, Nástio Mosquito, and Haim Sokol** discuss the question *Is Humanity Prone to War or Peace?*. Another conversational format is the herbst peace talks, which take place four times, at 18:00, at Orpheum Extra and at Forum Stadtpark (basement).

A controversial highlight on Saturday, 20 September, is the premiere of *Violenza 2025* (2025) by **Michiel Vandeveld, Pankaj Tiwari, and Eneas Prawdzic** at Orpheum. The piece deals with the male fantasies of the new right-wing youth and their growing popularity. This is followed by an audience discussion with the artists as part of herbst education, which once again expands the festival with low-threshold access through a wide range of formats such as workshops, tours, and the popular *Eat and Greets*. Also worth mentioning are the weekly interactive tours *Raus aus dem BAU* (Out of the BAU) as well as exhibition talks with experts.

The wide-ranging partner program includes **KRA** tackling the climate crisis in their *Mission Arnold Schwarzenegger: Episode 1*; **Tom Burr** opening at **Grazer**

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**Kunstverein**; and in Hartberg, **Haus Lebt 2025** launching the series *Wish You Were Here* already on Thursday, 18 September, with performances, readings, and a pizza brunch, guiding visitors through layers of time by way of geological and historical explorations. For those interested, a free shuttle bus will run from Graz to Hartberg and back on Sunday, 21 September.

Also in the partner program, the premiere of **Lorraine Hansberry's** *Les Blancs* takes place on 19 September at **Schauspielhaus Graz**, while on 20 September, **APORON 21** opens *prekARTE '25* under the title *KUNST/ÜBER/LEBEN*. On the same day, **OMAS GEGEN RECHTS & Friends** takes over Graz's city center with their *RÜCKwärtsParade* (Retrograde Parade), and **< rotor > Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst** hosts the opening of the exhibition *STRANCI – vom Fremdsein* (Of Being a Stranger). Starting Sunday, the **Pavelhaus** in Bad Radkersburg poses the question: *how do you not lose history*.

### Exhibition at the BAU (20.9.–12.10.)

The central exhibition of *steirischer herbst* takes place in the former Bauer distillery in Graz. For the duration of the festival, the complex is renamed BAU—a word with many meanings in German, ranging from den to building and even, colloquially, prison. This multiplicity is also reflected in the curatorial program.

The building's labyrinthine architecture becomes a metaphor for a polarized society that nonetheless finds itself in the same "boat of history." Across several floors—or decks—visitors encounter entangled stories of growing repression and escapes to freedom, of perpetual wandering and enforced hiding, as they are increasingly produced by the wars in Gaza, Ukraine, and elsewhere.

The turmoil of Graz's postwar years is evoked in the special project *Six Characters of Hotel W.*, featuring literary contributions by **Tomer Dotan-Dreyfus**, **Erich Klein**, **Miklavž Komelj**, **Madame Nielsen**, **Maria Stepanova**, and **Ilija Trojanow**, staged as a curatorial intervention.

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### Artists in the exhibition

Carla Åhlander and Gernot Wieland	Angélique Aubrit & Ludovic Beillard
Candice Breitz	Pauline Curnier Jardin
Eva Ďurovec	Gelitin
Pedro Gómez-Egaña	Elias Holzknecht
Kurt Jooss	Dana Kavelina
Nástio Mosquito	Stephan Mörsch
Olaf Nicolai	Ahmet Öğüt
Illya Pavlov	Haim Sokol
Mounira Al Solh	Philippe Vandenberg
zweintopf	

### Second week (22.9.–28.9.)

In the second week, **Helga Lázár's** *Nie Wieder Friede (nach Ernst Toller)* (No More Peace (after Ernst Toller), 2025) premieres on Friday, 26 September. The rarely performed comedy is staged as a grotesque end-time variety show, a virtuoso puppet theater in the eternal cycle between destruction and reconciliation.

That same day, the usually quickly sold-out herbst cabaret opens in the Forum Stadtpark basement with a double bill by **Liina Magnea** and the **Seven Trials Theatre Troupe**. In *Lottery Paradox / Fiasco* (2025), Magnea combines music, spoken word, and choreography to stage a crisis that feels both disturbingly familiar and alluring, while the Seven Trials Theatre Troupe offers the audience a questionable gift. In *The Present: A Bouffon Show* (2025), however, anticipation may well be the greatest pleasure.

As part of the herbst peace talks, **Ed. Hauswirth** and **Claudia Unger** ask on 26 September: *Wo stehen die Konservativen eigentlich?* (Where Do the Conservatives Actually Stand?). herbst education also continues their program in the second week with a series of workshops and tours. The potato plays a central role here, with **Gernot Wieland's** workshop *Potato Print Psychodrama* and **Alexander Wolff's** (ztscrip) workshop *The Life of Kartoffel: A Fanzine About Great Success*. In addition, there are exhibition talks with experts, the first taking place on Wednesday, 24 September, at BAU, followed by a *Drink and Overthink*. At the intersection between the education and partner programs, **Zentrum für Wurfkeramik**, who are also represented with an exhibition at **Rhizom**, offer a workshop.

As in previous years, the second weekend places a special focus on the Partner Program. The exhibitions tour with curators and directors begins on Saturday, 27 September, at 10:00 at the **KULTUMUSEUM Graz** (*Gott hat kein Museum / No*

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*Museum has God*). It continues with stops at **HDA – Haus der Architektur** (*Hermann Czech – Approximate Line of Action*), **Camera Austria** (*Repeatedly failing to align with light*), **Kunsthaus Graz** (*Unseen Futures to Come. Fall* and *Milica Tomić: On Love Afterwards*), **< rotor > Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst** (*STRANCI – vom Fremdsein* (Of Being a Stranger)), **Forum Stadtpark** (*Possessed Mountains*), and finally **esc medien kunst labor** with the exhibition opening of *OUT OF CONTROL*.

The herbstcafé program continues with a concert by **VERETER** on 26 September and a DJ set by **Tabebti a.k.a. Cooky** on Saturday, 27 September.

### Third week (29.9.–5.10.)

Christian Winkler, aka **Franz von Strolchen**, returns to this year's festival following his successful production at steirischer herbst '24. In *The Great Resignation* (2025), he asks whether machines too can give up—a theme undoubtedly urgent in times of the frighteningly rapid rise of AI. Under the title *Tribute to the Unknown* (2025), the artists of **Kreolex zentre** present a program with their own poetry and songs about war, oppression, and resistance at the herbstcafé on Saturday, 4 October.

The third week is also dedicated to two **festivals-within-the-festival**:

**Out of Joint**, the literary festival within steirischer herbst, is titled *ich krieg die krise* (I'm Having a Crisis) this year and begins on 30 September at **Literaturhaus Graz** with a conversation featuring Austria's perhaps best-known contemporary philosopher, **Konrad Paul Liessmann**, asking *Was nun? Eine Philosophie der Krise* (What Now? A Philosophy of Crisis, 2025). Further guests in the following days include **Franz Schuh** and **Robert Pfaller**. As is by now tradition, the literary show *Roboter mit Senf* concludes the first of the festivals-within-the-festival on 3 October.

The **ORF musikprotokoll** opens on Thursday, 2 October, with an equally dense program. The theme of this year's festival for contemporary music is *regel:bruch* (rule:breaking), addressing questions of musical and perceptual order. What can music be today? Numerous new commissions from contemporary composers present different ways of dealing with rules and expectations. A detailed program overview will be given at a dedicated press conference on **30 September at 10:00** at the Graz Museum.

In the herbst peace talks, Brigadier General **Philipp Eder** and **Ilija Trojanow** discuss—under the title *Mit Sicherheit in den Krieg?* (Safely Going to War?)—questions such as: Are there just wars? Are there good deserters? Are we conducting a democratic discourse on rearmament? Is “achieving peace without weapons” naïve or urgently necessary?

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As a counterpoint, audiences can then stay at Forum Stadtpark to enjoy the second double bill of the absurd and offbeat herbst cabaret: **Charlotte Gash** whisks the audience away to an illegal cabaret club in *The Gash Club* (2025), while **Zaid Alsalamé**, with his age-old tale *1000 Euro und eine Nacht* (One Thousand Euros and One Night, 2025), questions coexistence in today's world.

In the Partner Program, late-night legend **Harald Schmidt** invites audiences to **Opera Graz** on 4 October for a journey through **Dmitri Shostakovich's** fast-paced operetta *Moscow, Cheryomushki*—a musical firework that dissects the social ills of his (and our) time with humor and irony. Alongside further performances of *Les Blancs*, the **zweite liga für kunst und kultur** also deserves mention, presenting *Die traurigsten Lieder der Welt – eine Bestattungsberufung* (The Saddest Songs in the World – A Funeral Vocation) at the herbstcafé. On Friday and Saturday, the program continues late into the night with DJ sets by **DJ Keshi** and **Nikolay Karabinovych**.

### Fourth week (6.10.–12.10.)

Two of Graz's cheekiest theater ensembles are joining forces. **Theater im Bahnhof** and **Das Planetenparty Prinzip** tackle a universal theme in their performance *ERBEN – Wer kriegt das Haus?* (HEIRS – Who Gets the House?, 2025). Between mad rushing and silence, scenes, voices, and bodies overlap. The personal collides with social debates on justice and the future.

The title of the production by **Nazis & Goldmund** may be long, but it hits the mark. In *Chronicles pt. 2 (es gibt jetzt wirklich schon genug Faschisten in diesem Land oder was denkst Du, Mario)* (Chronicles, Pt. 2 (There Are Already Enough Fascists in This Country, Or What Do You Think, Mario?), 2025), a dialogue unfolds between text and sound, memory and prognosis: What has happened since 2015? How did fascism find its way back into parliaments, onto the streets, into everyday rhetoric? Perhaps the performance at the herbstcafé on 11 October will provide some answers.

On Sunday, 12 October, Palestinian-Israeli actor **Yousef Sweid**, together with **Isabella Sedlak** (director and coauthor), explores a life between different cultures and narratives in the performance *Between the River and the Sea* (2025)—recently presented at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

The discourse formats of this year's festival also turn to geopolitically sensitive issues in the fourth week. At the Graz Museum, **Herwig G. Höller** and **Anton Shekhovtsov** ask *What Does the War in Ukraine Mean for Europe?*, while in the herbst peace talks **Tomer Dotan-Dreyfus** and **Richard Schuberth** debate the situation in the Middle East and its impact on the current climate of political discourse: *Was darf man über Gaza sagen?* (What Is One Allowed to Say About Gaza?).

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Once again, herbst education offers numerous programs, including workshops with **Charlotte Gash** and the interactive tour *Raus aus dem BAU*. Also noteworthy is the *Behind the Scenes* tour with **director and chief curator Ekaterina Degot** on Sunday, 12 October.

For one last time, the high and offbeat art of cabaret is celebrated in the Forum Stadtpark basement, where queer disabled artist **Edwin Ramirez** embarks on a humorous yet moving search for father figures in *Run Daddy Run: Graz Edition* (2025), while **Lau Lukkarila** shares memoirs of sex escapees and half-forgotten phone conversations in *Confessions of an Ex-Perfectionist* (2025).

On Sunday, 12 October, **Herwig G. Höller** turns to the history of the festival in the Ideas program. At the herbstcafé, he speaks with **Christine Frisinghelli** and **Herbert Nichols-Schweiger** about *Wer hat Angst vorm steirischen herbst? Zu historischen Versuchen, das Festival zu zerstören* (Who's Afraid of steirischer herbst? On Historical Attempts to Destroy the Festival)

Finally, the herbstcafé once again offers sounds and beats by **DJ Shrimp** (10.10.), **SOWIE** (11.10.), and, as a Sunday finale, **On Bells**.

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Details on all events and artists can be found at [steirischerherbst.at/en](https://steirischerherbst.at/en) as well as in the **program book** (DE/EN), which is available free of charge at the herbstcafé and at all *Never Again Peace* event venues. For the exhibition at BAU, there is a separate free **exhibition guide**.

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### Artists and collectives

Carla Åhlander and Gernot Wieland, Zaid Alsalame, Angélique Aubrit & Ludovic Beillard, Candice Breitz, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Ivo Dimchev, Eva Ďurovec, Charlotte Gash, Gelitin, Pedro Gómez-Egaña, Elias Holzknecht, Max Höfler and Andreas Unterweger, Kurt Jooss, Dana Kavelina, Helga Lázár, LIGNA, Lau Lukkarila, Liina Magnea, Augustin Maurs, Nástio Mosquito, Stephan Mörsch, Nazis & Goldmund, Olaf Nicolai, Ahmet Ögüt, Illya Pavlov, Manuel Pelmuş and Frédéric Gies, Edwin Ramirez, Isabella Sedlak and Yousef Sweid, Seven Trials Theatre Troupe, Haim Sokol, Mounira Al Solh, Franz von Strolchen, Theater im Bahnhof and Das Planetenparty Prinzip, Philippe Vandenberg, Michiel Vandeveld, Pankaj Tiwari and Eneas Prawdzcic, Maria Vilkovisky and Ruthie Jenrbekova (Kreolex zentre), zweintopf

*Six Characters of Hotel W.*: Tomer Dotan-Dreyfus, Erich Klein, Miklavž Komelj, Madame Nielsen, Maria Stepanova, and Ilija Trojanow

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### Partner Program

Twenty-three projects in Graz and Styria are part of this year's festival. The 2025 partners are: Amalgam, APORON 21, Camera Austria, esc medien kunst labor, Forum Stadtpark, Graz Museum, Grazer Kunstverein, Haus Lebt 2025, HDA – Haus der Architektur, KRA, KULTUMUSEUM Graz, Kunsthaus Graz, manuskripte, OMAS GEGEN RECHTS & Friends, Oper Graz, Pavelhaus, QL-Galerie, Rhizom / Zentrum für Wurfkeramik, < rotor > Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst, Schaumbad – Freies Atelier Graz, Schauspielhaus Graz, zweite liga für kunst und kultur.

### Ö1-Festivalpodcast

Ö1 is once again accompanying steirischer herbst with a festival podcast. Ö1 editors report on events, talk to artists, and explore how the festival affects the city of Graz. Building bridges between positions and venues, creating entryways and networks, connecting opposing perspectives, promoting discourse—this is the goal that the cultural broadcaster has set itself together with the festival team.

The coverage of steirischer herbst '25 is part of the Ö1 podcast *Hört, hört! Festivals mit Ö1*.

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As a podcast: [sound.orf.at/podcast/oe1/festivals](http://sound.orf.at/podcast/oe1/festivals)

### herbstcafé

Neutorgasse 44  
8010 Graz  
10.9.–12.10.  
Tue–Sun 10:00–22:00  
(Fri and Sat until 24:00)

Ticket desk  
Tu–Sun 10:00–18:00  
+43 316 81 60 70  
[tickets@steirischerherbst.at](mailto:tickets@steirischerherbst.at)

For this year's herbstcafé, a central vacant space in Graz is once again brought to life. As a meeting point, hangout, or simply a coffeehouse, it serves as a starting point and hub for all those interested, fans, and friends. Here, visitors can get tickets and information about the diverse festival program, while journalists and professional guests can collect their accreditation documents. Of course, the herbstcafé also offers food and drinks, including a lunch menu from Tuesday to Friday, prepared by **The Underground Kitchen**, always with a vegan option.

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steirischer herbst '25 is curated by Ekaterina Degot, David Riff, Gábor Thury, and Pieterl Vermoortel, assisted by Beatrice Forchini, Tobias Ihl and Lukas Michelitsch, and created by all participating artists, speakers, and partner institutions, as well as the festival's whole team.

For accreditation for the opening days or additional premieres during the festival, please contact [press@steirischerherbst.at](mailto:press@steirischerherbst.at).

Images can be found at: [www.steirischerherbst.at/press](http://www.steirischerherbst.at/press)

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

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