

steirischer herbst '25 – Preliminary Review

The 58th edition of steirischer herbst ends on Sunday. Under the provocative and rousing title *Never Again Peace*—inspired by Ernst Toller’s prophetic satire *Nie wieder Friede* (1934–36)—this year’s festival dealt with the rise (and return) of authoritarianism and the never-ending wars in the world. Through performances, a large group exhibition, discussions, and other events, steirischer herbst '25 offered fresh perspectives on current conflicts. Like Toller’s play, these reflections were often somber, but never without humor.

Director and Chief Curator Ekaterina Degot:

Once again, steirischer herbst has reacted to the difficult political climate in the way that only art can—it was political without being dogmatic, artistic without being formalistic, deep and yet full of humor. That makes me proud.

Even before the official end of the festival on Sunday, steirischer herbst '25 has already attracted **over 50,000 visits to 39 venues** at more than **440 events**, including the festivals-within-the-festival ORF musikprotokoll, Out of Joint, and the Partner Program. As a producing festival, steirischer herbst **commissioned forty-two new artistic works** for the program of *Never Again Peace*. **Twenty-six** of these were on display in the **exhibition at the BAU**, which invited visitors to explore the former Bauer distillery, as transformed by artists, for the duration of the festival.

This year, the **education program** was expanded to **31 formats** and has currently recorded around **4,000 visits**—1,000 more than at this time last year. In addition to events for schools, the various guided tours of the BAU were particularly popular this year; their number more than tripled due to high demand. The results of the artist and DIY workshops were also impressive. Charlotte Gash, for example, worked with young people to design the stage set for the children’s play *Stell dir vor, es ist Friede, und niemand will hin* (Imagine There Is Peace, and No One Cares), staged in cooperation with the Theaterfabrik Weiz at TaO! on 8 November.

More than **1,000 participants** from **40 countries**, together with over **100 local partners and initiatives**, contributed to this edition of the festival. For example, the Grazer Kapellknaben choir sang in Helga Lázár’s *Nie wieder Friede (nach Ernst Toller)* (No More Peace (After Ernst Toller)), and the

Hobbyhorsing Graz and Fahrradküche Graz associations collaborated with renowned artist Ahmet Ögüt on his installation at the BAU while also being part of the education program there.

As usual, the **cooperation with Ö1** for the festival podcast carried steirischer herbst beyond Graz and Styria, reaching an average of **120,000 listeners per program** this year.

With a **total budget** of ca. 4.46 million EUR for steirischer herbst '25, the **value creation** for the City of Graz and the Graz-Umgebung district was ca. 62 percent, for the whole of Styria ca. 73 percent, and for Austria ca. 85 percent of the budget.

In addition to ample local and national media interest, the festival was once again covered by a wide range of international media outlets this year, including ARTE (Germany/France), *Art Monthly* (United Kingdom), *Artforum* (United States), *Arts of the Working Class* (Germany), ArtsHebdoMedias (France), *DELO* (Slovenia), Deutschlandfunk Kultur, *Dnevnik* (Slovenia), DreamIdeaMachine (Greece), *e-flux criticism* (United States), *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Poland), *Juliet* (Italy), *KUNSTFORUM International* (Germany), *Kontur* (Slovakia), Kulturpunkt.hr (Croatia), *Mladina* (Slovenia), nachtkritik.de (Germany), NDR / *titel thesen temperamente* (Germany), *NO NIIN* (Finland), *Observer Cultural* (Romania), *Le Quotidien de l'Art* (France), *Rekto:Verso* (Belgium), *Revista Arta* (Romania), RTVE (Spain), RTV SLO (Slovenia), *Scena 9* (Romania), *Spike* (Austria/Germany), *Tagesspiegel* (Germany), *taz* (Germany), *Texte zur Kunst* (Germany), and *Theater der Zeit* (Germany).

Outlook

There are numerous highlights left before the festival ends on Sunday:

Tonight at 18:00, **Tomer Dotan-Dreyfus** and **Richard Schuberth** discuss the question *Was darf man über Gaza sagen?* (What Is One Allowed to Say About Gaza?) as part of the herbst peace talks. Plus, there are two more herbst cabaret premieres: **Edwin Ramirez's** *Run Daddy Run: Graz Edition* (2025) and **Lau Lukkarila's** *Confessions of an Ex-Perfectionist* (2025).

Today and tomorrow, **Theater im Bahnhof** and **Das Planetenparty Prinzip** once again explore inheritance (*ERBEN*), while *The Great Resignation* by **Franz von Strolchen** can still be seen daily through Sunday.

On the last day of the festival, Palestinian-Israeli actor **Yousef Sweid** explores a life between cultures with **Isabella Sedlak** in *Between the River and the Sea* (2025)—a definite highlight. On Sunday, there is also a final tour of the exhibition at the BAU with chief curator **Ekaterina Degot**.

herbstcafé still offers a packed program, with a reading by **Nazis & Goldmund**, a discussion with **Herwig G. Höller**, **Christine Frisinghelli**, and **Herbert Nichols-Schweiger** on the festival's history (*Wer hat Angst vorm steirischen herbst?* (Who's Afraid of steirischer herbst?)), and, of course, several DJ sets: **DJ Shrimp** on 10.10., **SOWIE** on 11.10., and—for the herbstcafé closing evening—**On Bells** on 12.10.

After the festival, **herbst education** shows a new version of the Ernst Toller play that lent the festival its title, developed by children and young adults in cooperation with Theaterfabrik Weiz: *Stell dir vor, es ist Friede, und niemand will hin* (8.10., TaO!).

Institutions in the Partner Program offer a dense program beyond the end of the festival: **Camera Austria** shows the exhibition *Repeatedly failing to align with light* until 9.11.; at **esc medien kunst labor**, *OUT OF CONTROL* can be seen until 14.11.; and at **Grazer Kunstverein**, **Paul Burr's** solo exhibition is on view through 23.11. **HDA – Haus der Architektur** focuses on **Hermann Czech** until 12.12.; **QL-Galerie** exhibits **Andrea Scrima** through 7.11.; *After Laughter* at **Schaumbad – Freies Atelierhaus Graz** stays open until 31.10.; and **< rotor > Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst** tells of *STRANCI – vom Fremdsein* (Of Being a Stranger) until 12.12. *Possessed Mountains* at **Forum Stadtpark** already closes tomorrow. The **preKARTE '25** by **APORON 21** ends on 12.10. (at Rösselmühle) respectively on 18.10. (at Kunst Klub Kräftner).

Today, the exhibition *how do you not lose history* opens at **Pavelhaus**, which, like some others in the Partner Program, is on view until next year. These include the exhibitions at **Graz Museum** (*Ins Ungewisse. Graz 1945–1965*), **KULTUMUSEUM** (*Gott hat kein Museum | No Museum Has God*), and **Kunsthaus Graz** (*Unseen Futures to Come. Fall*), where, on Sunday, the last day of **Milica Tomić's** solo show (*On Love Afterwards*) coincides with the festival's end.

As in previous years, works commissioned for *Never Again Peace* travel on to other exhibitions and performance venues, for instance, **Pauline Curnier**

Jardin's film screened at the BAU is also shown by Netwerk Aalst and M HKA, Antwerp, while **Dana Kavelina's** video in the exhibition is part of the Kyiv Biennial 2025 in Warsaw. Already on 4.10., another video from the BAU, **Candice Breitz's** *Dear Esther*, was part of Breitz's show *A Song for Esther* at Kampnagel, Hamburg. *Tribute to Kurt Jooss's "Green Table,"* the opening performance by **Manuel Pelmuş and Frédéric Gies**, will be performed at Dance Is Ancient, Malmö. **Theater im Bahnhof** and **Das Planetenparty Prinzip** also deal with *ERBEN* (HEIRS) at Vienna's Theater am Werk. *Violenza 2025* by **Michiel Vandevelde, Pankaj Tiwari, and Eneas Prawdzic** will be shown in Germany, and the **Kreolex zentre** is performing its *Tribute to the Unknown* at Kulturfabrik Moabit, Berlin.

Two publications relating to this festival edition are being prepared, the **catalogue** and the **reader**, which are scheduled for publication in spring 2026.

Already next week, the **Open Call for the steirischer herbst '26 Partner Program** will be published.

steirischer herbst '26 takes place from 24 September to 18 October 2026.

Press photos from the entire festival are available in the press section of our website. If you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact us at any time: steirischer herbst Press Office, press@steirischerherbst.at, +43 316 823 007 65