

Premiere / First ever performance in Frankfurt

PUNCH AND JUDY

Opera in one act by Harrison Birtwistle

Text by Stephen Pruslin

Performed in English with German surtitles

Conductor: Alden Gatt

Director: Wolfgang Nägele

Set Designer: Thilo Ullrich

Costume Designer: Marlen Duken

Lighting Designer: Joachim Klein

Dramaturge: Deborah Einspieler

Punch: Jarrett Porter

Judy / Fortune Teller: Cecelia Hall

Choregos / Jack Ketch: Liviu Holender

Pretty Polly / Witch: Danae Kontora

Lawyer: Sven Hjörleifsson

Doctor: Alfred Reiter

Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester

Tragicomedy or comical tragedy? The one act opera *Punch and Judy* by **Harrison Birtwistle** (1934-2022) is both. The music and action are jam-packed from start to finish, condensing existential issues: birth, death, violence, madness into very tight timeframes. This murderous spectacle teems with typically English black humour. Punch and Judy led the cast in a traditional English puppet show. Punch is the English version of Germany's Kasperl, both born of Punchinella. Birtwistle's work breaks with convention, there's no narrative plot and everything's exaggerated. But Birtwistle's music is highly original, funny and daring, leading to scurrility and disaster. The theatrical world in the puppet show seems more real than reality. It's clearly audible that *Punch and Judy* was written by a British avant-gardist. Birtwistle was one of a new generation of British composers who consciously strove to distance themselves from Benjamin Britten and his generation's tonal world. They looked to European avant-garde movements instead, searching for radical new forms of music theatre.

The action: The puppeteer Choregos watches his puppet Punch staging an anarchical play. After murdering family members and other people, Punch goes on to murder the puppeteer and hangman. After he fails to win Pretty Polly's love he goes back to his theatre. Nothing happened. It was all pretend.

This first ever performance in Frankfurt is led by Kapellmeister **Alden Gatt**, who conducts a revival of *Macbeth* later in the season. Director **Wolfgang Nägele** recently staged *Falstaff* at Theater Bielefeld, *Il tritico* at Saarland's State Theatre and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Korean National Opera in Seoul. He worked closely with Hans Neuenfels from 2007 to 2016. Pretty Polly is sung by the Greek coloratura soprano **Danae Kontora**, back in Frankfurt where she sang the Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*) and in *Elijah* conducted by Sebastian Weigle. Judy is **Cecilia Hall** and Punch is **Jarrett Porter**. Both Members of Oper Frankfurt's Ensemble.

Premiere / First ever performance in Frankfurt: Thursday December 11th 2025, at 19hrs
in the Bockenheimer Depot

Further performances: December 14th, 18th, 20th, 22nd, 28th, 30th 2025
All performances begin at 19hrs.

Tickets cost: € 20 to € 80 (with a 12.5% pre-booking fee when not purchased direct from the theatre)

Tickets can be obtained from the usual outlets, by telephone +49 (0)69 – 212 49 49 4 or online www.oper-frankfurt.de.

We do hope you might be able to publish this event. For further information, ordering photographs and reserving press tickets please contact Holger Engelhardt (Leitung Pressereferat) on +49 (0)69 – 212 46 727. His fax number is +49 (0)69 – 212 37 164 or you can email him on holger.engelhardt@buehnen-frankfurt.de.