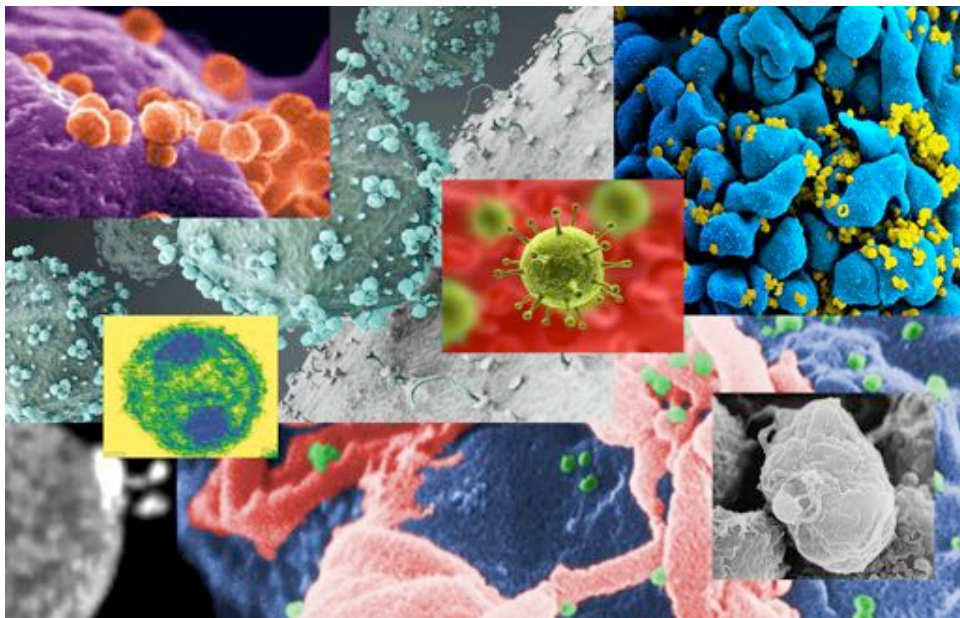


Johannes Müller / Philine Rinnert

AIDS FOLLIES

Music by Genoel von Lilienstern

A Johannes Müller / Philine Rinnert production. Co-produced by Sophiensaele Berlin, brut Wien and Theater Rampe Stuttgart, 2018. Funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and by the City of Berlin – Department for Culture and Europe.



The life of Gaëtan Dugas was not a long one. The Canadian died at age 31 in 1984 from liver failure, a complication of the AIDS virus. Before his early death, the Air Canada flight attendant was veritably demonised. He was known as Patient Zero – the man who first brought HIV to the U.S. However, as studies now show, Dugas is not even close to being Patient Zero. The University of Arizona has conducted DNA analyses of blood samples taken at the end of the 1970s and has finally acquitted the Canadian.

After their recent project *READING SALOMÉ* (Jury Prize at the Favoriten 2016 theatre festival), Johannes Müller and Philine Rinnert have taken the definitive and long over-due acquittal of Gaëtan Dugas as impetus for examining AIDS in the context of musical theatre, and specifically its significance in the perpetuation of

stereotypes and national front lines. Their work combines the history and progression of the virus with their research on the life of the legendary Patient Zero.

The unknown history of the virus includes not only the 'homosexuals' (as they were stigmatized, invoking a 'gay epidemic'), the 1980s art scene and the 'Africans' (reinforcing a racist stereotype), but also a story of colonialism, in which new major cities and lack of hygiene played roles in a system of forced immunisations.

For **AIDS FOLLIES**, Johannes Müller and Philine Rinnert will meticulously document the life of Dugas and continually retrace the virus through comprehensive research.

In terms of form, they will revisit and incorporate the renaissance of the revue in the 1980s performance scene. In the tradition of commissioning a single composer for the numbers in a revue, composer Genoel von Lilienstern will contribute a new song cycle. He will set to music various findings and text materials of the research while referencing the music that populates the story of the virus: love songs from various decades, European and African arias and Cameroonian pop, as well as colonial marches, porn sounds and the droning language of 'scientific' educational films. Employing the form a Lieder cycle, he will convey development phenomena from the HIV cycle into the aural experience.

The musicians and performers will present the material in a succession of staged and musical numbers – elevating, simulating, singing and translating the national idiosyncrasies of viruses into formal choreography: an ever more complex composition combining science, citation and surprising cross-connections that expose the machinery of political propaganda and the projection of societal bogeymen. The music and performance make recourse to the formalism of 1980s art as well as to repetition, elongation, abstraction and minimal rhythmic shifts

What unfolds is a individual who was demonised for decades, a diorama of the world of viruses and a history of civilisation, which begins in the New York art scene of the 1980s and backtracks to the soon-to-become German colony of Cameroon, where on the Ubangi River we find an ape: the true Patient Zero.