

Saturday, October 26, 2024, 2pm and 8pm
Sunday, October 27, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Mummenschanz

50 Years

Artistic Director
Floriana Frassetto

Cast

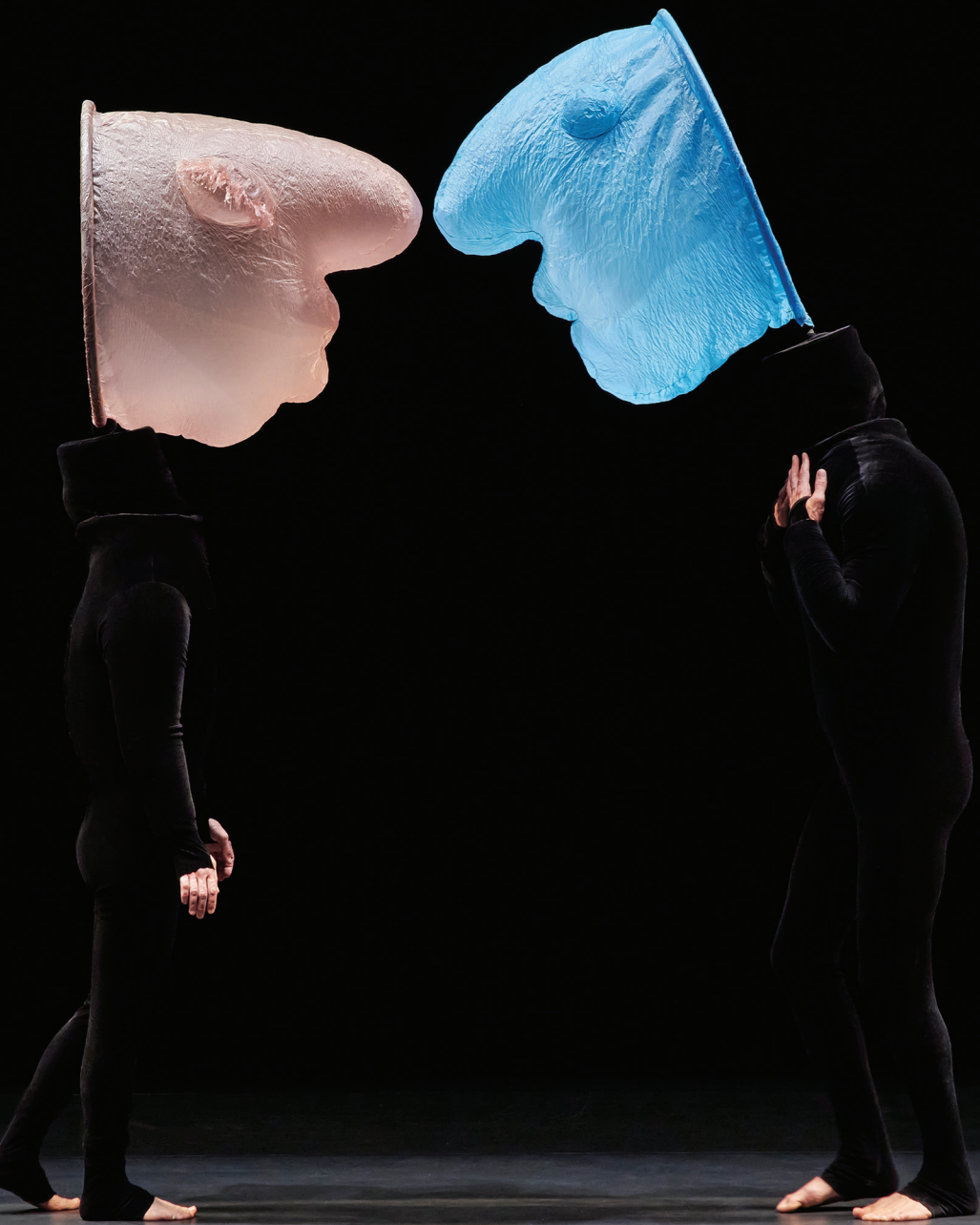
Floriana Frassetto
Christa Barrett
Tess Burla
Samuel Müller
Eric Sauge
Manuel Schunter

Kelly Irwin, *tour manager*

Eric Sauge, *technical director and lighting designer*
Madison Kielczewsk, *technician*

*This program will be performed without intermission
and will last approximately 90 minutes.*

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Since it was founded in Paris in 1972, **Mummenschanz** has been a global touchstone for contemporary mask-based theater that transcends cultures and linguistic boundaries. The theater company's three founders, Floriana Frassetto, Andres Bossard, and Bernie Schürch, conquered the world without saying a single word, but by using a purely visual language of unsupported masks against a black background. As Mummenschanz, they carved out a new niche in the performing arts.

With Andres Bossard's passing in 1992 and Bernie Schürch's retirement in 2012, Floriana Frassetto remains as the main artistic driving force behind the multi-award-winning troupe. The foundation has put on a host of full-length productions over the past 50 years. The masks, performance techniques, and repertoire have all evolved over the course of more than 100 productions, and Mummenschanz has used them to great effect on every continent. A half-century after it was founded, the troupe continues to be one of the most popular theater attractions worldwide, and is adored by critics and audiences alike.

To mark the foundation's anniversary, Floriana Frassetto—the poet of silence—has devised a production that will take the public on a 50-year journey through the fascinating world of Mummenschanz. It will take a look at the most popular, successful productions of years gone by, featuring legendary characters such as the Clay Masks and the Toilet Paper Faces. *50 Years* will also see appearances by the delicate, air-filled Giants, the Pipe Creature, and plenty of other bizarre objects and shapes brought to life by the troupe's performers. The production will also include sketches featuring surprising new forms and characters that capture the signature Mummenschanz spirit.

This is an anniversary production without words or music—an imaginative, po-

etic journey that needs no subtitles. *50 Years*: taking audiences on a magical, captivating 90-minute journey through the infinite—yet familiar—world of imagination conjured by Mummenschanz.

Fifty years on from its foundation, these “musicians of silence” are continuing to practice their craft. As curious and ready for a challenge as ever, Mummenschanz takes everyday objects and gives them a new lease of life. With its *50 Years* production, Mummenschanz is taking a look back at its history—while writing the next chapter in its story of inimitable, nonverbal language. *50 Years* is a playful, interactive experience and a poetic production for all generations, a fantastic journey through the world of Mummenschanz that is lively, humorous, full of affection, and brimming with imagination.

Floriana Frassetto (Swiss) studied at Academia Alessandro Fersen in Rome from 1967 to 1969. She completed her training as an actress attending a school in mime and acrobatics at Roy Bosier's Teatro Studio. She then worked with the company of Roy Bosier in several school productions that toured Italy. The idea of founding Mummenschanz resulted from meeting, in late 1970, Andres Bossard and Bernie Schürch—two young Swiss clowns called Before and Lost who performed a partially spoken show. Frassetto became the third member of the new company in 1972 and together they co-created the repertoire of Mummenschanz, converting the spoken numbers to masked visuals. Frassetto has performed on tour worldwide for the last 47 years. She considers herself an artisan of fantasy and has always been motivated to construct new shapes along with Schürch. Since his departure in 2012, she has been challenged by the idea of creating a new show, which she has now accomplished, employing plenty of new ideas. This has been possible thanks to a collaboration with Tina Kronis and Rich-



Opposite: Mummenschanz. Photo by MUMMENSCHANZ Stiftung/Noe Flum.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ard Alger. Among Frassetto's other work have been the choreography and the costumes for Giancarlo Sbragia's *Faust* and André Heller's musical *Body and Soul*, and an artistic collaboration with Isabelle Baudet for the children's musical *Oliver Twist* in Lausanne, Switzerland. Frassetto is the artistic director of Mummenschanz.

Christa Barrett (Swiss) was born in Friebourg in 1990. At the age of 17, she joined the Zirkus Chnopf and the Cirque de Loin for three years. Following this, she entered the Accademia Teatro Dimitri in Verscio, Switzerland. During her studies there, she twice won the physical theater award from Migros Kulturprozent. In 2014, Barrett received her bachelor's degree in physical theater. Since then, she has worked with different theater companies, including Poyo

Furioso directed by Hermes Gaido, Fiorenza Ensemble directed by Eveline Ratering, and Commedia Origen Festival directed by Fabrizio Pestilli. Barrett has been a member of Mummenschanz since 2016.

Tess Burla was born in 1981 and grew up in Murten, Switzerland. After completing her studies in psychomotor therapy, she trained as a dancer in Barcelona and Berlin. In 2009, she completed a master's degree in dance education at Zurich University of the Arts. Burla has been a member of Cie Chapeau (and formerly Paula Fliegt) since 2015. She gained experience working with Marcel Leemann, and as part of Brigitta Schrepfer's Somafon, human kinetic movement arts, and Collectif de Marchepied. Burla works as a freelance dancer and is a founding member of cie deux plus. In addition to

dance performances in collaboration with live musicians (Simone Abplanalp and Ursula Hofmann), Burla also made an appearance as part of the clown duo Nasva and Ravu in 2018. Her journey with Mummenschanz began in 2019.

Samuel Müller was born in 1986 and grew up in Ticino and in Bern. From 2004 to 2007, he pursued his bachelor's degree in physical theater at the Accademia Teatro Dimitri SUPSI in Verscio. In 2010, Müller began his master's studies at the Accademia Teatro Dimitri, which he completed with his master's thesis *Backwoodsman*. In 2014, Müller staged his play at the International Theatre Festival of Theatre Schools in Rome, winning the Gemini d'oro for Best Performer. Since then, he has been touring with the family project Dimitrigenerations with Famiglia Dimitri. Müller has performed in various theater and opera productions in Italy and abroad. In 2022 and 2023, he appeared in the play *Block*, by the Theater Madame Bissegger. Müller has been a member of Mummenschanz since 2023.

Eric Sauge (Swiss) is the technical director of the company. With more than 10 years of experience in the entertainment business, he now specializes in lighting and machinery effects. Employment by large organizations has provided him with worldwide travel, and through this experience and

many trips abroad, he has acquired solid knowledge in technical and team management. Back in Switzerland, Sauge has continued to train in the field of lighting for theatrical and television events, in which he mainly has been occupied in the roles of console operator and project manager. In 2014, he first encountered Mummenschanz in Lausanne; wishing to return to the theatre scene, he joined the company as Technical Director.

Manuel Schunter was born in Munich (Germany) in 1985 and has lived primarily in Switzerland since 2007. He completed a his bachelor's degree in physical theater at the Accademia Teatro Dimitri and his master's in expanded theater at the Bern University of the Arts. Schunter has since given numerous performances and toured as a clown in the world of circus and vaudeville (with Circus Monti, Circus Roncalli, Das Zelt, Circus Sarrasani, and at Circus Knie's centenary celebrations, among others). Schunter was a permanent ensemble member with the Theater Madame Bissegger and the Origen Festival. His theater engagements have included performances with the Stadttheater Freiburg, LAC Lugano, and Espace Nuithonie. Besides his activities as a performer, Schunter also directs various stage productions and lectures at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. He has been a member of Mummenschanz since the summer of 2022.