BigMAGAZINE

Inspiration from the world of large print

Special Edition

PERFORMING ARTS

ZIELINSKI

Conveys the sense of the scene

BIG IMAGE INFINITUS

Premiere at the Opera Festival in Salzburg

A GREAT FACE OF THE MISANTHROPE

Big picture in the spotlight at the Royal Dramatic Theatre

Bigmagazine

SPECIAL EDITION • PERFORMING ARTS

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BIG IMAGE SYSTEMS®

WIDE FORMAT PRINTING ON SOFT MATERIALS







BIG IMAGES ARE OUR PASSION

"The position

that Big Image

holds today is just

what our founder

 $dreamed\ of\ almost$

30 years ago"



here is nothing we like better than when we are challenged by our customers, "Are you sure you can produce an image that is 200 square meters in size, round like a football that

can be used both indoors and out, is quick to assemble, easy to store and ready for delivery on Friday?" Well, questions regarding projects like this of various sizes are common for our skilled project managers and sales staff – and in principle, we always accept the challenge! It doesn't matter if the project is only a few square meters of printing for a basement theater or several

thousands of square meters for a world-famous opera house – it's the passion for creating visual experiences with large format images and working together with our clients that drives us forward. The best ideas and the most unconventional solutions will always come from close dialogue with the customers.

The position that Big Image holds today is just what our founder, Werner Schäfer, dreamed of almost 30 years ago – and he dared to follow his dream! To trust our instinct, to be proud of the passion we have for the large image industry and to find unconventional,

unexpected solutions, are things we try to do today as well.

For several years now, we have had extensive collaboration with our German subsidia-

ry and the Technical University of Berlin to develop and build our new large printing machine known as Infinitus. The machine is now in production and we are so happy about it that we could burst with joy! Watching images of 12 meters wide by any length (the record so far is 38 meters) coming off the machine, completely seamless, is a fantastic feeling – truly a dream come true!

If you have any questions or ideas on what we can do better – please contact me by e-mail: andreas@bigimage.se

Andreas Skantze
MANAGING DIRECTOR BIG IMAGE



AS EVER THERE WERE forceful vocal sounds, an exquisite team and stars such as Rolando Villazón, Olga Peretyatko and Marianne Crebassa. And yet everything was different at the opening opera of this year's Mozart Week.

As soon as the Mozarteum Foundation in Salzburg emits the first cultural drum roll of the year, cultured tourists and locals can expect the works of classical artists, primarily of course the city most famous son. In the past these works have been interpreted with gusto by international stars in a contemporary manner. Directors' theatre, you could say. This year the Canadian director Marshall Pynkoski served up something different: "Lucio Silla", an early work by Mozart in the style of the 18th century, with painted views and baroque costumes.

This is how it was described by the press: Pynkoski's "sentimental staging in the precisely painted and built architectural panoramas by Antoine Fontaine, lit often only in a subdued manner from the ramp by Hervé Gary, looks like an old engraving and yet constantly interrupts the apparent historical suggestion."

"The art of stage painting forms the foreground."

Those who wish to stage historical work as close to the original as possible rely on the precision and craft of the stage painters, who place the brilliance and the power of great paintings in the foreground, while knowing the limitations of art. Pynkowski and Fontaine's team, when designing the backdrop with Roman columns, bucolic landscapes and cloud horizons, decided to use a mixture of painting and reproduction. Martin Kern, head of visual media at the Salzburg Festival: "Painting a horizon that is 11 x 23 metres not only exceeds our spatial and financial possibilities. One can paint in sections, certainly. But this produces ugly seams that become visible when lit from behind."

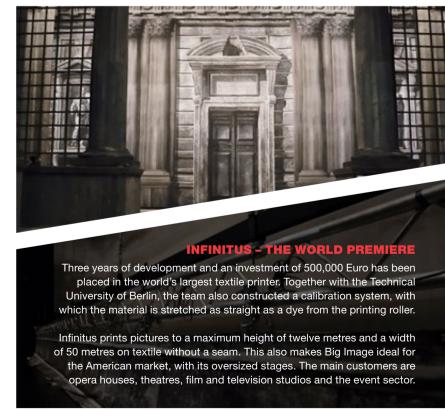
The art of reproduction: Stage painters complete a picture on a small scale, which is then – piece by piece – photographed, digitalised, artistically processed and printed on a large scale. This preserves the suggestion

of a painting. Details can be added or removed and the colouring can be altered. "For three years we've been working on transferring the quality of theatre painting to the digital world, with its ideas of time and cost," explains Kern. Also with Big Image.

For the printing professionals, this contract

"Creative heads like Schäfer and Müller have enabled a future for us."

was a superlative one in many ways. Mozart Week – an event of international renown, the Salzburg Festival – a respected customer with the highest standards of quality, 766 square metres of material of many different colours – the first giant print on Infinitus. Everyone at Big Image was aware of the importance of the premiere print, and for Salzburg it was a matter of trust. "We have been working together successfully for ten years. We appreciate the quality of the pictures, the trained eye of the staff. So why



shouldn't Infinitus do that for which it was built – seamless printing?"

At times the crew at Big Image were on the edge of their seats during the development of their innovation. No surprise. No less than three years of research and 500,000 Euro in necessary development costs were at stake. Project manager Andreas Paul describes the challenges: "Will the print head withstand the pressure without blurring the colours? How should we deal with different tensions in the picture arising from different depths of colour? And will the transport of the material from the calibration unit to the printing roll work?" Questions upon questions.

Naturally they had to learn from a few mistakes. There were slight distortions in the palace picture made from mesh, which only became visible when hung in the "House for Mozart". The corrected print came quickly. What was decisive, however, was the end result: six pictures on mesh, gauze and untreated cotton. All of which was seamless and with a more intensive and abrasion-resistant colour than ever before. "For the first time we saw the dimension and the potential of Infinitus. We really appreciate the work of senior manager Werner Schäfer and ink developer Klaus Müller. Such creative and visionary heads have made our future possible." Well, if Paul says so ... Incidentally, the future has an address: Wetzlaer Strasse 46, 14482 Potsdam. The move into the new production halls, 3,600 square metres in size, in the immediate vicinity of the famous Babelsberg Film Studio, is set for June.

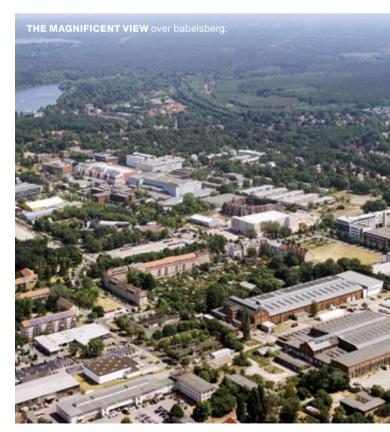
"We can't wait to see what else will come from Big Image."

For Werner Schäfer, a dream has come true. After many exciting and exhausting years, he can cast his glance to the prints on location in Salzburg: large, beautiful and seamless. No wonder that he has a few tears in his eyes: "Fantastic!" Kern says: "We can't wait to see what will come out of Big Image in future." The Salzburgers have a few things on their wish list – prints on fluorescent material, in gold or on varnished wood. At any rate, the next job for Infinitus has already been lined up: "The Master Singer of Nuremberg". The premiere is in August.

Until then, lovers of "Lucio Silla" can admire the pictures from Mozart's age during the Salzburg Festival from July until September. Mozart lives on.







THE HISTORY OF BIG IMAGE

NAME WERNER SCHÄFER WHO FOUNDER OF BIG IMAGE AGE 74 YEARS

he story of Big Image began in 1981.

Werner Schäfer worked as an industrial photographer and was traveling in Australia when he first came into contact with really large images. It was love at first sight. Not just because the larger size did so much for the picture. Werner quickly realized the advantage of printing images on fabric that did not need to be handled with the caution that fragile paper images require. Photos printed on fabric could be quickly taken down, folded and used again and again. That realization would make him a leading figure in the world when it comes to the art of printing large images on soft, flexible materials.

When Werner came home from Australia, he became aware of one of the few large image printing presses in the world. It was located in the Liverpool area, and was owned by a company that had just started to produce large format images. Werner became their agent for Scandinavia and for a few years sold the

most large format images in Europe. But still, he was not quite satisfied. The images were not of high enough quality.



Werner's interest in culture was first

realized during his childhood in Berlin. Large format images were something new and Werner wanted to use them to make image viewing an even more pleasurable experience. He decided to buy a used airbrush printer of his own from the U.S. and in 1987 he set up shop in an empty factory building in Täby, outside of Stockholm, and founded Big Image, which was then known as ScanaPrint AB.

The printer had an infinitely complex control system with hundreds of knobs that needed to be set up in different ways. He did not manage to get it to work. Would he give up or continue? After many sleepless nights of consideration, he decided to invest everything. Werner learned the large image printing technology from scratch and also developed it further. In collaboration with students from the Royal Institute of Technology, he took printing technology to a whole new level resulting in images of even higher quality.

In 1995 Werner started Big Image's sister company in Berlin. Currently, there are approximately 60 people working in the two companies. In 1998, Big Image moved to its current location in an old aircraft hangar in Täby.

Currently, Werner is owner and chairman and functions primarily as a source of inspiration for the company while his daughter Johanna, and CEO Andreas Skantze, lead the family business and carries the vision forward – to make the world more exciting through big image experiences.

TEXT /// PER WRANGENBERG TRANSLATION /// BEEP

LITTLE BIG THINGS

BIG HELLO'S FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD



DIFFERENT MASTERPIECE IN BERLIN

In Wannsee, outside Berlin, thousands of visitors came to view Katharina Thalbach's interpretation of Mozart's The Magic Flute. The masterpiece was performed under a 27 meter wide and 18 meter high pyramid of vinyl prints produced by Big Image. A musical and performance arts piece with the huge stage design also becomes a visual feast for the eyes.



ROXETTE WORLD TOUR

In 2011, Roxette went out on the road with a tour covering 52 stops worldwide. The backdrop is printed on Cloth, a material that is particularly easy to transport on tour. Big Image's own airbrush printing technique makes it possible to print on untreated cotton material.

NEXT STOP BROADWAY!

A backdrop produced in Berlin, for the Broadway adaptation of the famous Bond movie Casino Royale. Printed on the 12 meter wide Infinitus machine.





... that's what the stage directors in the Zurich Opera House generally get. Theatre painting, digital large-format pictures, projections, screen prints – every technique is a style and is justified, says head of stage design Jörg Zielinski.

TEXT /// BIRGIT HIEMANN TRANSLATION /// BIG IMAGE FOTO /// OPERNHAUS ZÜRICH

» What, in your view, must a stage set be able to do?

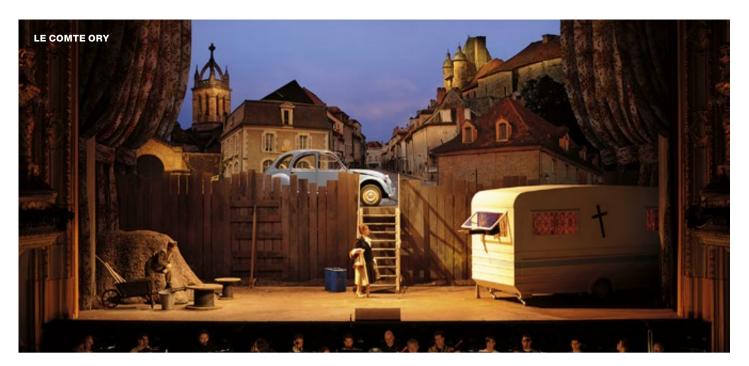
Ideally it tells a story. But not necessarily that which is contained in the script. The stage set transports the interpretation that the directorial team finds. It is an independent part of the production.

» If we look at the last 20 years, what has changed?

Today stage designers place greater value on materiality. They tend to use original materials instead of copying them by theatrical or artistic means. Whereas a metal wall was once reproduced with plywood, material and paint, it is now placed on the stage in reality. That also represents the altered perception of the audience, who are exposed today more than ever to optical stimuli. It is also noticeable that the opulence of the 1960s and 1970s has declined. Theatre is increasingly addressing the question: What does material mean today? That is more important than the presentation of an event.

» And where are we headed?

I do not like to predict trends, but see evolution rather than revolution. Of course the performing and visual arts are continuing to develop further. Photography and video art, for example, have attained a greater role in the last decade.







» What does that mean for stage design?

The lines have become clearer, in part more reduced. We show more signs, not a forest of images. That means that today we need to be more precise. The devil is in the detail. A mistake up close multiplies from a distance. That presents great challenges to the techniques.

"EVERY STYLISTIC
DEVICE IS JUSTIFIED ALSO IN THE FUTURE."

» Such as?

Mainly theatre painting, digital large format pictures, projection and screen printing.

» Do traditional theatre crafts have any chance of survival in an age of digital communication?

Of course. They all have their justification – also in the future. Large-format prints allow us to provide the desired authenticity. Painting, in contrast, is less exact; a forest, for example, can appear more diffuse and blurred, which can then convey feelings better in certain circumstances. And recently screen printing was ideal for copying old wallpaper.

At present we combine the strong visual element of projection in the production "The Flying Dutchman", with a large print measuring 2x3 metres. As a result, the set suddenly appears to be three-dimensional. So one thing does not exclude the other.

Our philosophy: We want to implement that which the stage designer imagines, what his inner feelings say. That might be a painted picture for 80 Euro per square metre or equally a large-format digital print that costs half of that. We do not decide according to purely technical or economic aspects.

» Don't you need to take costs into account?

Of course we do. But Zurich Opera House, compared to many German theatres, is in a comfortable situation. We are subsidised to 60%, which spares us from the immense pressure to save money.

"WITHOUT BIG IMAGE MY MANNER OF EXPRESSION WOULD BE MORE LIMITED"

» What attracts you to large-format prints?

The many creative possibilities and of course the competitive prices. Many stage designs have only been possible at all thanks to large-format prints: films that can be lit from behind, printed tulle which, when illuminated from behind, disappears as if by magic. Even stage designers of ballet sets are becoming convinced. Added to this is the trend for more detail that is supplied best of all by the large digital prints.

» There are countless firms providing large-scale digital image communication. Why Big Image?

Never change a running system. Never change a winning team. Without Big Image my manner of expression would be more limited. We get a complete service from consultation to aftercare, absolute theatre expertise, lower prices than those of competitors, and above all constant new technical updates. At the beginning of the 1990s prints were made on blinds, now there is Artist Heavy, which can be printed and lit wonderfully from both sides, allowing day and night scenes.





After studying theatre and event technology in Berlin he trained in Basel and Zurich. The native Berliner has lived in Switzerland since 1991 and began his career at Basel Theatre. He now works as a stage designer and head of production at the Zurich Opera House.

Jörg Zielinski gathered international experience in "The Really Useful Group", founded by Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber and in the Shanghai Opera House, among other places.

The 48 year old teaches theatre production at the Technische Berufsschule in Zurich and lectures at the Zurich Academy of Arts and at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in Peking. His passion is pinhole photography.

"CHINA PERFECTS THAT WHICH EXISTS, EUROPE IS MORE INTERESTED IN CHANGE."

» ...or now seamless stage scenes, twelve times five metres in size...

Exactly. That gives us the chance to play with light in a totally new way. This makes changing horizons conceivable – something very special.

» You teach at, among other places, the Zurich Academy of Arts, which cooperates with the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in Peking. Big Image has never delivered to China. What do the Asians do differently?

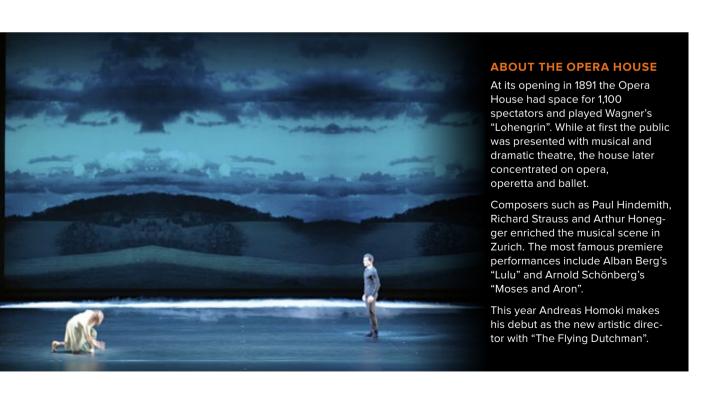
The Cultural Revolution destroyed a lot of knowledge about the old crafts. There is a lack of mature understanding for different techniques. That limits the realisation today. Added to this are the very demagogic thought processes, which inhibit the imagination or ideas of achieving certain things by means of colours and techniques. The experience of the event is more important than accuracy. On the other hand, the Peking Opera is a totally different art form: it is concerned with the reproduction of the same thing over and again, the perfection of that which exists. The copy of the actual work is more important than the interpretation, the further development. Europe is more interested in change: What happens if...

» What feeling do you get at premieres in which you are involved – tummy ache, moist eyes?

It depends. If they are my own stage designs, I do not attend the premiere. I just can't stand it. If I am involved as head of production, I sometimes let out a "Wow, that looks great!" a feeling of satisfaction.

» Are we listening to an utterly content Jörg Zielinski?

No, that would mean the end for every artist. My greatest wish is to disprove Newton and to remove gravity from the stage. What a theatre that would be!



Putting up APPEARANGES

When a building that is already unique is staged with special lighting, the magic is overwhelming. Big Image placed the illuminated Eiffel Tower on the stage of the Dresden Staatsoperette – with UV colours and light.

TEXT /// BIRGIT HIEMANN
TRANSLATION /// BIG IMAGE
PHOTO /// KAI-UWE SCHULTE-BUNERT

Beauty has always been in the eye of the beholder. But everyone is agreed when it comes to the illuminated Eiffel Tower in Paris: breathtaking! What could be more obvious than to use the beautiful, flickering tower in the backdrop to Franz Lehár's operetta "The Count of Luxembourg". During the great period of Parisian bohemianism around 1900, in the carnivalesque turbulences of a society drunk with the elixir of life.

That which is currently flickering in a night-time flurry of snow behind a large studio window on the stage of the Dresdner Staatsoperette is nothing new in the field of theatre painting: UV light makes fluorescent colours shine in the dark. "The painting technique to achieve that takes a lot of effort," explains the painting director Franziska Schobbert. "It requires concentration and a trained eye to ensure that there are no overlaps between the UV ink and the normal ink on the white material, and that the shadows for diffuse lights work with a spraying technique."

THE SHOWACT

UV prints can surprise you. People, objects, writing and symbols appear to float, they disappear and reappear again. Effects that are perfectly suited to events. Backdrops with UV colours by Big Image therefore ensure that Heavy Metal concerts can be made into great spectacles with very little effort (page 18). Moreover: the scenery can survive tours that cover many months and continents. It can be folded together, sent abroad by cargo, hung up wet and displayed again. The show must go on.



THE TRICK: UV PAINTS ARE MIXED IN OR EXCHANGED

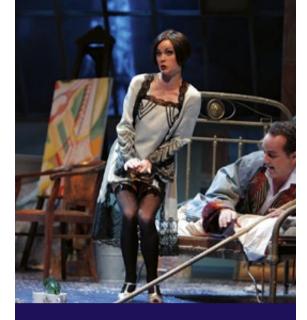
What is new is that large theatre views can now be printed with UV colours – like the Parisian landmark. The trick: CMYK inks are replaced by UV inks or mixed together with them. The template for the Eiffel Tower was a black and white photo for which the CMYK mode (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Key = Black) was removed of Magenta and instead of Yellow, a luminous yellow UV ink was chosen; Cyan and Key ensure a deep black. All of which is laid out precisely in the channels in Photoshop.

So far, so good. The devil, however, is in the detail, i.e. in the colour depth. "We can only see on the illuminated stage how good our work is," says project manager Andreas Paul. Not exactly easy with a view that only displays its qualities in a darkened room. Before the sample print went to the customer, it was observed, simulated, discarded and redone at Big Image. Successfully. A little more black and the picture is perfect.

Particularly good for the theatre and event sector: UV inks can only be printed with the airbrush method. The pigments are too coarse for the tiny nozzles of the inkjet printer. But airbrush pictures in particular very closely resemble the painted original in terms of depth and brilliance of colour. Good for the stage and for the crew at Big Image, who are the only people in the world who can master this technique.

COMPLEMENTARY: LARGE-FORMAT PRINTS AND THEATRE PAINTING

The four theatre painters from the Staatsoperette Dresden would have needed fourteen days to complete the view, which was 66 square metres in size, plus additional days to dry the black paint. Time, space and costs that could now be freed up for other things. It is well known and acknowledged that large-format printing cannot and does not wish to replace theatre painting. "We act as a sensible complement when each understands the work of the others, with all of the benefits and disadvantages," assures Franziska Schobbert. Big Image offers intermediate stages in the printing, so that the theatre painters can place their symbols and their finishing touch. You can admire it all at the next performance of the Staatsoperette Dresden.



THE COUNT OF LUXEMBOURG

The plot is as old as it is new: For a lot of money, an impoverished nobleman enters into a fake marriage with a singer, who can then marry a prince after the divorce and the acquisition of the title of Countess. Things come to pass as they must – the Count and the artist fall in love with each other.

Lehár's comment upon submitting the work after only four weeks of composition: "The nonsense is finished and if it is not successful, it will be your own fault." The theatre crew must have given everything. Cheers for the premiere in 1909 at the Viennese Theatre, cheers once again, 102 years later in Dresden.





ABOVE Using alternating spotlights, the Eiffel Tower glows in a constantly changing light.



Photographer Felix Odell, followed the award-winning contemporary circus troupe, Cirkus Cirkör, during some hectic rehearsal days before the premiere of their production "Wear it like a clown." A performing arts experience that would be hailed by audiences and critics alike throughout Europe. The production was directed by Tilde Björfors and the music was composed by Rebekka Karljord.

TEXT /// PER WRANGENBERG, JOHANNA BROMAN
TRANSLATION /// BEEP





5 SQM. Big Image sublimated print in the same motif as the background made from washable polyester fabric RollTex Display. Cirkus Cirkör then sewed stage costumes of this material.



The Misanthrope is considered by many to be Molière's best work. Written back in 1666, it has been a recurring production on the world's largest theater stages. At the Royal Dramatic Theatre's stage in Stockholm it was given new life in a minimalist interpretation where the text is in focus and a single image provides a simple, yet effective, set design.

TEXT /// PER WRANGENBERG TRANSLATION /// BEEP
PHOTO /// DRAMATEN

THE LAST PRODUCTION of The Misanthrope was performed at the Royal Dramatic Theatre i Stockholm in 1995. That was the period in which a certain director named Ingmar Bergman pulled the strings. In November 2011, Norwegian star director, Eirik Stubø, took the helm for the classic play on Sweden's national stage. He is known for the simplicity of the stage and sparse production design, but also sparsity for words. This is demonstrated again in this production where the characters and text are the focus on an almost empty stage. But it is not completely empty. The stage design consists of a single large monochrome image of a face. The face belongs to the character of Célimène who has a prominent role, not only behind the scenes but also on stage, where she is played by act-ress Livia Millhagen.

Project Manager for Big Image,

Anders Jorderud, talks about the image's creation.

"There was a very strong commitment from the production, larger than we are used to. An entire team from the Royal Dramatic Theatre was on site at Big Image when the image was produced."

Along with the set designer, lighting designer and project manager, they had to find the right feel for the image, to calculate glare, set the colors and contrast and try to envision how it would look on a 1:1 scale, lit before a full theater. Much time was also devoted to adjusting the image so that both the production team and the subject of the photo felt comfortable with the results.

The large image of Célimène was mounted on a large wall panel in the background. It is the primary focus of the stage area as well as the character Alceste. He is played by Andreas Rothlin Svensson, the misanthrope and soothsayer. He sees the world in black and white as opposed to Célimène, who is more like the colored confetti that rains down over the stage. He is serious and firm in character, while she is coquettish, colorful and unpredictable. Paradoxically, he falls in love with her, even though she

The production dissolves boundaries between the time it was written and the twenty-first century. The story is set in the present and the characters wear modern day clothing instead of wigs, and the play's caricatures are stripped down to represent more ordinary people. The set design allows the acting to take center stage. The Misanthrope played November 2011–April 2012 at the Royal Dramatic Theatre's small stage.

represents everything he despises.





THE ROYAL DRAMATIC THEATRE (DRAMATEN)

The Royal Dramatic Theatre is Sweden's national theater and was founded in 1788 by King Gustav III. The company presents about a thousand performances per year on its six stages. The main venue at Nybroplan in Stockholm was completed in 1908 and was inaugurated the same year with August Strindberg's breakthrough play. Master Olof.



A SIMPLE BACKDROP: Nine narrow, horizontally and diagonally cross-hatched columns are grouped in front of the large, striped view in the background. Everything is in black and white. Suddenly, light appears from above, as a projection introduces clever movement to the scene. Finally, the stage set collapses in on itself. What began very simply ends in the magic of the oracle that Bastian Balthasar Bux – the hero of "The Neverending Story" – had searched for so long.

The oracle scene is one of a total of 23 stage sets with which the Oldenburgische Staatstheater enchanted its audience at Christmastime.

"But what a scene!" says a delighted Rolf-Dieter Grote, head

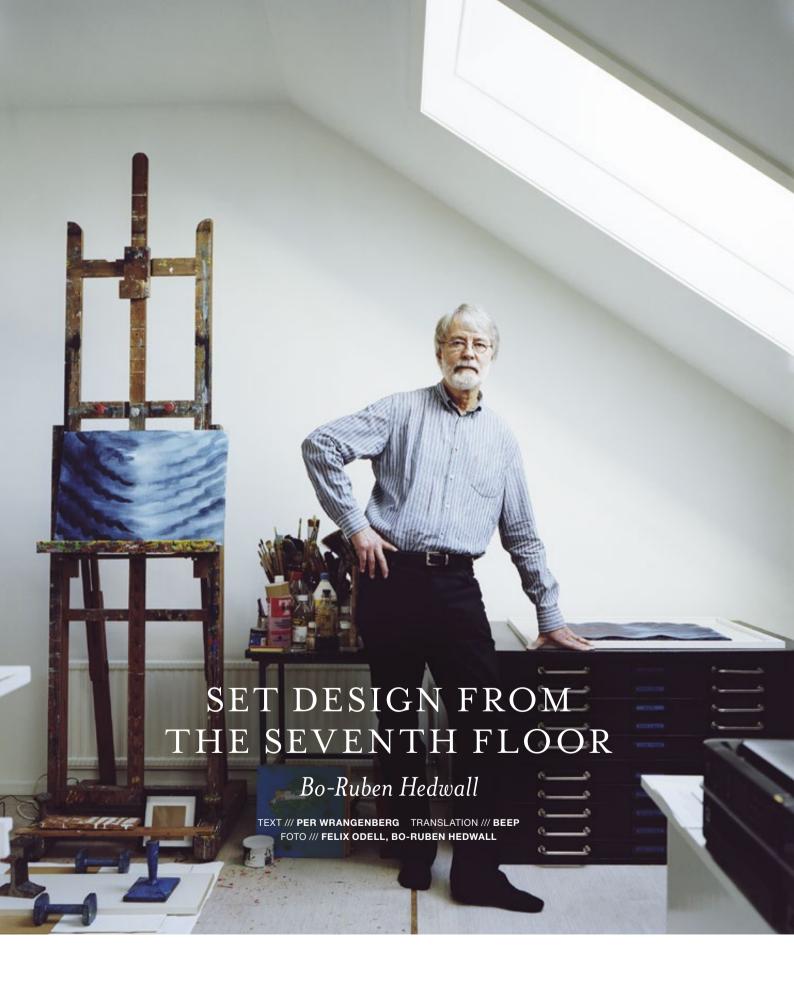
of the decoration department. Grote learned to appreciate precisely these kinds of scenes by Big Image many years ago at the Showtech in Berlin – and since then he has commissioned the company. Each scene is a new challenge.

A NEW KIND OF CHALLENGE

The difficulty this time: flag material, a light and thin polyester textile, must not ripple or stretch, particularly on a graphic pattern, explains Big Image project manager Bernd Neuenburg. Neuenburg relied on the skills of the in-house designers, who affixed the material metre for metre, straight as a thread, with a felled seam. Perfect.

Whereas theatres generally prefer airbrush printing with its strong and deep colours, this time thermosublimation printing was required. The colours penetrate deeply into the textile by means of heat, are absolutely sharp and abrasion-proof, the material can withstand almost every torture without incurring damage. And it needs to. In the forthcoming Christmas period "The Neverending Story" will once again be performed at the Staatstheater.

Two weeks after patching it all together, Big Image delivered the goods. Grote: "No theatre painter can complete that pattern so quickly and accurately," Time, space and costs that the Oldenburgers can invest elsewhere. For example, for the staging of the opera "The Magic Flute", again in cooperation with Big Image.



To fill a void, to capture an emotion, to convey an atmosphere; set design comes in many shapes and descriptions. Bo-Ruben Hedwall thinks of it as a life-long escape from reality. A flight from reality that has taken him to theaters, opera houses and national stages around the world, and that has also made him one of most frequently used set designers at Swedish Television's drama department. His track record is as overwhelming as his modesty. For just as his work, he loves best to stay in the background. Today, he makes a unique exception and talks about his journey through various eras of stage design, the value of luck and talent, and how and why he early on became a regular customer of Big Image.

THE SEPTEMBER SUN gazes sleepily over the roof on the seventh floor. Stage designer, Bo-Ruben Hedwall, has just invited me out on the terrace of his Stockholm apartment to admire the view. It is indeed magical, but soon something else catches my attention. That's when I discover the garden. It is literally a garden, a slice of forest that Bo-Ruben has erected high up in the blue sky. A burning rowanberry tree, and a birch that is holding on harder to its leaves, intermingle with all sorts of flowers. It forms a surreal oasis exploding into a world of stone and concrete. The terrace garden is just one of countless examples of scenography that Bo-Ruben has created to escape everyday life.

We go inside and relax in that part of the apartment that doubles as a studio for Bo-Ruben and two other cultural workers; production designer John Virke and photographer Mats Lindgren. When I ask him about his entry into the world of art, it proves to be just as much an exit.

"I grew up in one of the most awful orphanages in Sweden," says Bo-Ruben as he serves coffee. "But I was fortunate enough to end up with some very good adoptive parents when I was six. At the time, we did not attend the theater, except possibly for vaudeville shows. But my father had by chance obtained three tickets from a colleague to the Malmö Stadsteater. I went along and I was so amazed!"

THE STRONG PULL OF IMAGINATION

When Bo-Ruben got home he began taking his first steps as a set designer. He built, using simple means, a model of what he had seen on stage at the theater in Malmö. When his parents realized the extent of his interest they took him to all kinds of stage productions. Then he renounced most of his schooling in favor of playing at creating a truly advanced theater.

"It was nothing more than an escape from reality. It was a way for me to retreat from those nasty early years. The question is how far I've come," says Bo-Ruben, and admits that there is a therapeutic element to his artistic endeavors. "I have worked with director Lars Norén on ten plays, and was then able to take advantage of my experiences from the orphanage. Some sets had windows and tile walls identical to the ones I grew up with."



ABOVE Bo-Ruben works with both painting and modeling as he creates his sets.

Looking back, cooperation with celebrities like Lars Norén lies a bit further on in time. Before that, Bo-Ruben studied art extensively in Paris, Stockholm and Copenhagen before he got a break in stage design when the fledgling Swedish television broadcaster, SVT, decided to hire and train him as one of a handful of television set designers.

"It was a very different time than it is today. We used large black and white photo backgrounds that were pasted up as wallpaper, walls on wheels and photo enlargements which had very poor resolution and were difficult to manage."

In the late 1960s he was called to see his boss at SVT, and was appointed the country's first set designer for color television. Along with producer and director Ingemar Leijonborg he created the first TV program in color. It was also Ingemar Leijonborg who introduced Bo-Ruben to Big Image founder, Werner Schaefer, and his first print machines in Täby in the late 1980s.

"It was something of a revolution.
Suddenly you could get pictures on the
wall, roll them up and put them away
in a storage room instead of working
with large bulky walls."

Bo-Ruben immediately understood the potential of the new technology and utilized it more and more in his work. Often it was about convincing co-workers that what they thought was impossible is indeed possible.

"The first few years when I suggested Big Image for theaters, background painters were very skeptical of the new technology. Partly because they misjudged the quality and partly because they were fearful of becoming dispensable as professionals. That concern is misplaced. Both techniques have continued to

in complementary ways. On a few occasions I have used traditional painting alongside Big Image prints on stage with excellent results."

TURANDO IN BEJING IS A DREAM

In early 2011, Bo-Ruben went to Kristiansund in Norway to create the set design for Puccini's opera, Suor Angelica. Since the city's historic opera house was under renovation the production was instead performed in a more modern church. "Circumstances led us to have to order the sets from Big Image on very short notice. The results were striking."

He shows me a clip from Norwegian television that documented the assembly of the set design in the church. It shows how the church was transformed into a magical opera stage in no time when three light weight large images were put together and hoisted up towards the ceiling. The church pastor looked as if he had just witnessed a miracle.

I look down at my notes documenting Bo-Ruben's long list of past projects. The list never seems to reach the end. Apart from the hundreds of dramas he's done for SVT, he has also created countless set designs at every major theater and opera venue around Scandinavia, as well as collaborations with a number of recognized ballet choreographers and directors. I ask him if he still has some dream projects left to realize.

"Dream projects? Of course there are. Although they may not always remain end up as dream projects. I have traveled extensively in China and the Orient, and it would actually be fun to do Puccini's Turandot set in Beijing."

On the way out we stop at Bo-Ruben's library that is beautifully decorated in Chinese style. Before I leave he picks up an old wooden toy from the library's ornament cabinet.

"It's the only thing I took with me from the orphanage," says Bo-Ruben and holds it up in front of me. That, and a whole world within, I think to myself, before we part ways at the stairwell.

ON HIS NEXT

journey, Bo-Ruben, along with choreographer Pär Isberg, will travel to the Tbilisi Opera House in Georgia to meet Nina Ananiashvili. Nina had her farewell performance as a ballerina at the Met in New York two years ago and is now the ballet director at the opera house. Together, the three of them will discuss an upcoming full-length ballet.

thrive, and they lift each other







TOP The church in Kristiansund in Norway was transformed into a full-fledged theater with the help of Bo-Rubens set design.

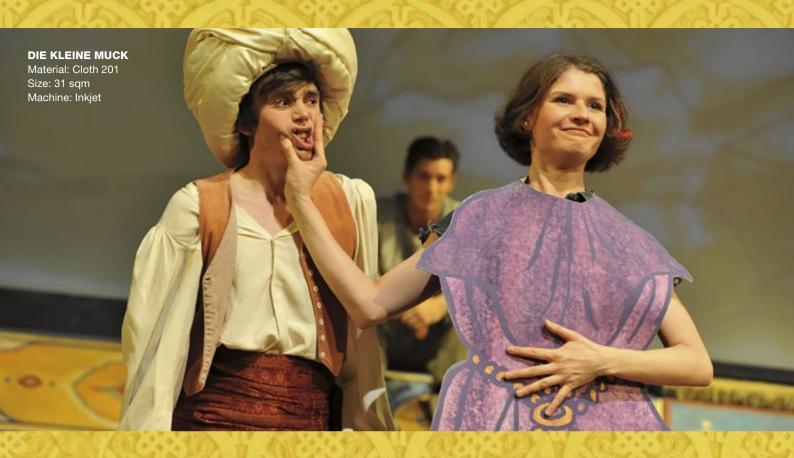
ABOVE & RIGHT The hand-painted motifs were scanned and printed at about 250 times their original size.

BELOW The set design for the Nordic Museum's exhibition *Modebilder* (Fashion Photos) in Stockholm.









Big Little Muck

Are children still interested in fairytales? Of course, if they are performed in a contemporary manner. The Junge Staatstheater Karlsruhe broke visitor records with its staging of Wilhelm Hauff's tale.

TEXT /// BIRGIT HIEMANN TRANSLATION /// BIG IMAGE PHOTO /// JOCHEN KLENK

"MORE TOWERS ON THE CASTLE!" Quick as a flash, Silvio Beck draws sketches on the reverse of the projection screen as fitting backdrops, like magic. Sometimes the sultan's palace, sometimes the desert, sometimes the house of the cat lady. "And now play the princess, please!" growls the little Muck to a

co-performer later. The actress quickly changes the cardboard costume that is lying on the oriental carpet.

What follows on the stage of the Junge Staatstheater Karlsruhe are one and a half hours of rapid, modern staged images and stories from "One Thousand and One Nights".

Some squirts forget themselves and get ready to jump on stage. What a spectacle!

TRADITION MEETS MODERNITY

The coup has been achieved. Director Holger Schober catapulted the Oriental adventure "The Story of the Little Muck" from the year 1826 into the present and thus celebrated the most successful show of the year. His recipe: away with the old wigs. Teen slang instead of Hauff-like language, projection instead of painted fairytale backdrops, cardboard costumes instead of satin.

The inspiration for the cardboard costume was provided by something that is familiar to everyone from their childhood – clothes made from paper for dolls made from paper. Costume designer Christian Etsch Elgner adopted the idea: wooden frames are stuck with printed material, cut out and hung on the actors – that's it. "It wasn't all that easy, however," tells costume assistant Kim Lotz. "We had to find material that was light, durable and easy to print. Material with which the actors could perform." Such as Deusith. The thermoplastic material can be shaped, sewn, stuck simply wonderfully.

DEUSITH MEETS CLOTH 201

The material for the Deusith costumes was provided by Big Image. "Because it all had to be done so quickly and professionally," says Klotz. The participants know and appreciate each other. Within one week, around 30 square metres of Cloth 201, with eighteen printed costume stickers, arrived at the theatre workshop. Simply routine for Big Image, but a premiere in this form for the Karlsruhers. The initial scepticism that the colours would appear more brilliantly on satin than on cotton soon made way for enthusiasm.

Almost 70 performances later, the costumes moved into storage. Undamaged and still with the magic of the East. More than 22,500 theatregoers celebrated the Little Muck. A visitor record! Don't tell me that children are not interested in fairytales!

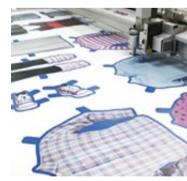


The film as template

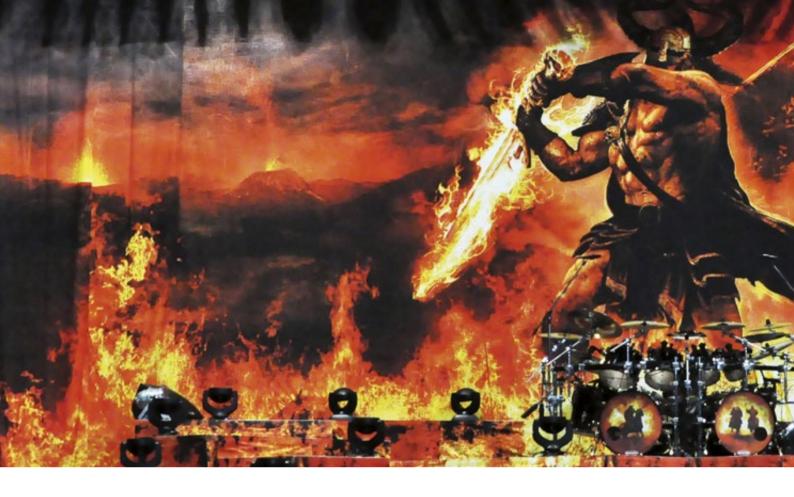
Wilhelm Hauff's "The Story of Little Muck" is familiar to many from the Defa film of 1953. With an audience of over eleven million, the production, directed by Wolfgang Staudte, is considered to be the most successful in GDR history. Enough reason for the theatre makers in Karlsruhe to base the play on the screenplay.

Our tip: Cinema fans can explore the Oriental film set from a height, with its water feature, buildings and sultan's throne, in Babelsberg Film Park (www.filmpark-babelsberg.de).





THE TECHNIQUE: Printing, cutting, sticking.



READY TO ROCK

Heavy Metal fans want a spectacle, a gigantic show. So the backdrops have to measure up...

TEXT /// BIRGIT HIEMANN TRANSLATION /// BIG IMAGE PHOTO /// BIG IMAGE

They call themselves Betontod, Amon Amarth or Morgoth. Their music is as loud and noisy as their stage shows. On the backdrops fires rage against a threateningly dark black. Bloody battles, hefty swords, chrome-coloured runes. Welcome to the world of Heavy Metal.

At the latest print of a Heavy Metal backdrop, the music enthusiasts of Big Image emerge: a light nodding of the head, tapping feet. Hubertus Hesse, client and owner of the agency AllYourBandNeeds, grins and knows that not only metal fans, but also above all printing professionals work at Big Image. "Off-the-peg backdrops – many firms can do that. Only a few can provide a tailored solution."

INDIVIDUAL OFFER

For large stages Big Image therefore recommends airbrush prints. They show the depth of colour and very little seam, with a printing width of twelve metres. Polyester canvas is popular at smaller events and is extremely "rockable". The advantage here: By means of heat the paint penetrates deeply into the robust, wrinkle-free, three-metre material. "Tattooing in material," as project manager Andreas Paul describes thermosublimation printing (see box). Everyone who knows what takes place on stage and behind the scenes of concerts appreciates the fact that polyester canvas is thus washable and abrasion-resistant. "The image is stuffed quickly into the box after the show,



THERMOSUBLIMATION

The secret of the brilliant print: the colours are heated so extremely by an integrated infrared heater that they penetrate the material directly in the form of gas. The results are luminous, durable tones, sharp focus, realistic pictures, and clear contours. The sublimation printer Jeti Aqua¬Jet is environmentally friendly and works with six water-based paints, 24 print heads, at a maximum width of 3.20 metres and a resolution of 400 dpi.

LEFT Large: Airbrush pictures like that of Amon Amarth impress with their bright colours and few seams.

BELOW Modular: Depending on the size of the stage, the backdrop for the band Morgoth can be varied with two further motifs.

thrown into the trailer, and taken out again the next day. And all of that at least one hundred times in the life of a print," says Hesse.

The tailored production also includes the module backdrop. The large background motif "grows" to the left and right with two further motifs with the help of Velcro. On small stages the Velcro attaches the side pictures to the frame, which can then be pushed over and back at will. And the multifunctional picture is finished.

COMMON LANGUAGE

Hesse knows what the bands want and Paul knows what Hesse means. Details of colour values? Wrong. "Please give us bright, shocking colours. And make the blood a bit darker." Professionals among themselves, that's sure to work. But blood on the backdrops? "It's all just image," assures Hesse, the insider. The hard men are very tame, and many of them are even vegans, vegetarians, and animal welfare supporters.

By now Big Image delivers 25 such pictures to the Heavy Metal scene in only one year. The last backdrop, measuring 72 square metres and including stair covering, was inspected by Paul and his son Joël recently.



In Huxley's in Berlin the Swedish metal kings Amon Amarth rocked in front of the backdrop: A Viking, swinging a sword, ploughs through an enormous sea of fire, all set for battle. As we said: it's all for show.

