



# Swiss Theatre Awards 2017 Winners

# Schweizer Kleinkunstpreis 2017 Nominees

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## Swiss Theatre Award 2017: Margrit Gysin

### Grande dame of puppet theatre

Margrit Gysin was born in Liestal in 1949 and attended the Ecole Jacques Lecoq theatre school in Paris from 1967 and kindergarten teacher training college in Bern from 1970. After training part-time as a special needs teacher she began using puppetry as a therapeutic aid before specialising in puppet therapy. Since 1976, she has devoted herself entirely to puppet theatre, founding what is now the Figurentheater Margrit Gysin together with Michael Huber under the name Fahrendi Bühni. In addition to working as a freelance puppeteer, since 1980 she has lectured on theatre education, puppetry and creativity at various schools of art and sciences in Switzerland and abroad, at locations including Berlin, Stuttgart and Prague. She is also the artistic director of the two-year training course in puppetry run by Weiterbildung Figurentheater.

Her best-known creations include a reworking of the novel “Momo” (1979), “Die Wurzelkinder” (1982), “Die Sterntaler” (1988) and “Mimi und Brumm” (from 2000). For Margrit Gysin, theatre is about telling stories. Her audiences are both children and adults, and she performs works mostly based on fairy tales that nevertheless deal with universal human issues – otherness, meaning and solidarity. After her first stage show as actor and storyteller in 1988’s “Dona”, she continued in the same vein. When she moves figures and objects around on herself, she becomes at once player and playing surface, infusing the material with life through her voice and emotions and thus adding her own very personal expressive power to the performances. With more than thirty productions to its credit, Margrit Gysin’s puppet theatre has been invited to appear at numerous puppetry festivals around the world, in countries as far afield as India, Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tanzania, and has also received awards for its work from international puppetry festivals in Zagreb, Mexico and Vienna.

“Margrit Gysin is the grande dame of puppetry and a pioneer in the field. She has been working away at her unique artistic cosmos for almost five decades. She tells existential stories about life’s trials and tribulations, conjuring consolation from coat pockets and from between book covers. In her theatre, even the smallest thing has a great and magical effect. She invites children into her world, and helps us rediscover a sense of wonderment we thought lost for ever.”

*Kaa Linder, jury member*

[www.figurentheater-margrit-gysin.ch](http://www.figurentheater-margrit-gysin.ch)



## Swiss Theatre Award 2017: Marielle Pinsard

### An individualist storyteller of multidisciplinary talents

Born in Nanterre, France, in 1968 and with Creole roots, Marielle Pinsard came to Switzerland at the age of 12. She studied modern languages in Neuchâtel before attending sitcom writing lessons in New York thanks to a grant from the Canton of Vaud. Back in Switzerland, she studied drama at the Ecole d'art dramatique (now La Manufacture) in Lausanne from 1989 to 1992. She continued her studies in Berlin and Dessau before performing under the auspices of various Swiss directors. After a few years with the group Cabaret Voyage, she set up her own Cie Marielle Pinsard in 2000. She writes and stages performances, with titles such as "Comme des cou-teaux" (2001), "Les Parieurs" (2002) and "Pyrrhus Hilton" (2006). In 2004 she created "Genève, je me souviens", in which migrants tell of their first experiences in their new homeland. That same year she received the Prix jeunes créateurs from the culture foundation of the Canton of Vaud.

In a career spanning more than 20 years, Marielle Pinsard has created a multifaceted and idiosyncratic reading of social roles and stereotypes. She employs a variety of genres, weaving music, dance and drama together on stage, often spicing things up with humour that is not always quite politically correct. In 2008 she worked for the Avignon Festival alongside performer Massimo Furlan. Her event partners in French-speaking Switzerland include the Théâtre de Saint-Gervais in Geneva, Arsenic and Théâtre Vidy in Lausanne. A selection of her texts was published in 2009 by Bernard Campiche. Since 2009 Pinsard has been travelling through southern, western and central Africa, putting on workshops for theatre and dance practitioners and taking advantage of writing residencies. Her latest production, "On va tout dallasser Pamela!" (2016), tackles "drague à l'africaine". Through the medium of Franco-African chat-up techniques, Pinsard presents a sociological yet entertaining study of our society.

"Everything seems colourful, lilting, familiar, almost commonplace. And yet, on stage as in the street, her discoveries have the surprising vigour of encounters with the complexity and fragility of being. We cannot conceal our anguishes, cynicism, cruelty or thoughtlessness. She takes everything from the guilty conscience of the parvenu and the absurdity of advertising speak to African chat-up lines, and uses them to dissect the conventions that govern our existence. With unwavering ambition, she deploys a language that denounces the absurdities of our society. For that society can come at her out of the blue, and she meets it with the same finesse she uses to describe it."

*Anne Fournier, jury member*

[www.cie-mpinsard.ch](http://www.cie-mpinsard.ch)



## Swiss Theatre Award 2017: Valérie Poirier

### A scribe for the theatre

Valérie Poirier was born in Rouen in 1961 and grew up in La-Chaux-de-Fonds. She now lives in Geneva. She trained as an actor in Geneva and initially worked as a director, dramaturge and educator before turning her hand to writing plays and, most recently, other kinds of texts. Her first volume of prose, “Ivre avec les escargots”, containing 24 humorous stories from the 1970s and 1980s about her childhood and youth in La-Chaux-de-Fonds, was published in 2013. Her desire to write for the stage first manifested itself during rehearsals in which the actors developed the scripts themselves. Of the ten or so plays she has written to date, most have been performed in Geneva; most recently “Un conte cruel” (2016), which deals with domestic violence, was produced by the Comédie de Genève at the theatre POCHE/GVE. Some have been published by Bernard Campiche under the title “Loin du bal et autres pièces”. “Les Bouches”, which received the Prix de la Société des Auteurs in 2004, was produced in 2006 by the Théâtre du Grütli. Valérie Poirier’s very first work, “Quand la vie bégaie”, earned her an Antennes théâtrales award.

She spends time on her works, often mulling them over for a considerable period. But it is always a disconcerting moment when her plays break out from the intimacy of the page and reveal themselves on stage. In 2007 she wrote a new version of “Quand la vie bégaie”, which was staged at the Théâtre du Galpon in Geneva in 2008. She also authored “Objets trouvés” (2008) for students on the drama course at the Geneva Conservatoire, and “Pièces détachées” (2012) for the Marionettes de Genève. Working in a range of genres, she composes tragicomic stories that blend poetry and irony and deal with fundamental issues – such as ageing in “Loin du bal”, which she wrote as winner of a 2006 Textes-en-scènes award. Playwrights are rare in Switzerland, and especially in the French-speaking part of the country. So Valérie Poirier’s dedication to the task over nearly a quarter of a century is especially important and valuable.

“From Geneva, with Franco-Algerian roots and a trace of a La-Chaux-de-Fonds accent, Valérie Poirier is a captivating, wise and modest person. Having started out as an actor, director and educator, she turned to writing in order to ‘cease being dependent on others’ whims’. Her work crosses genres and contexts; from everyday theatre to puppetry, from the institution to the classes of schools and colleges. Valérie Poirier offers an acute yet nuanced perspective on our world, boldly bringing to the stage topics that tradition has overlooked, or offering a novel take on universal motifs. Her sensitivity and freedom restore our faith in the power of words and the theatre.”

*Mathieu Menghini, jury member*

[www.valeriepoirier.ch](http://www.valeriepoirier.ch)



## Swiss Theatre Award 2017: Dominik Flaschka & Roman Riklin

### Musicals that are entertaining and intelligent

Dominik Flaschka was born in St. Gallen in 1971. He initially trained as a dancer, before attending the Zurich drama academy (now part of the Zurich University of the Arts) from 1989 to 1993. After working at the Stadttheater in Lucerne, the Sommertheater Winterthur and the Theater am Hechtplatz in Zurich, he moved into directing in the mid-1990s. He has been director of the Theater am Hechtplatz since 2002. Opened in 1959 and subsidised by the City of Zurich, the small nostalgic theatre is one of the leading small stages in Switzerland. Roman Riklin, who was born in the same year as Flaschka and also comes from St. Gallen, first came to public attention in the early 1990s as the songwriter for the dialect rock band Mumpitz. He has composed countless music scores for the theatre, writes songs and texts for various Swiss cabaret artists, and is part of the cabaret pop trio Heinz de Specht, which was nominated for the Schweizer Kleinkunstpreis in 2016.

Roman Riklin and Dominik Flaschka achieved their greatest joint success to date with the dialect musical "Ewigi Liebi" (2007), which received the Prix Walo for Best Theatre Production that same year and by 2012 had been seen by 650,000 people. Switzerland's most successful musical featuring the nation's greatest hits is being revived in 2017 for its tenth anniversary. It was followed by "Avenue Q" (2011) at the Theater St. Gallen and a year later at the Nationaltheater Mannheim; "Monty Python's Spamalot" (2013) and "Ost Side Story" (2015), both at the Theater am Hechtplatz, the last of which was nominated nine times for the German Musical Theater Award and garnered a Best Director award for Flaschka; and "Mein Name ist Eugen" (2016) which received seven nominations for the German Musical Theater Award. The duo are not afraid to serve up slapstick to a wide audience, bringing the delights of musical theatre to stages large and small, and combining content that appeals to young and old in a multidisciplinary display of musical pyrotechnics.

"When you venture into the Swiss musical scene, you inevitably come up against director Dominik Flaschka. A man who makes great theatre in a small space, and a master of intelligent boulevard, the NZZ called him. His works have been nominated several times for the German Musical Theater Award. That success is also partly down to the author, songwriter and composer Roman Riklin. For years now, the creative partnership that is Flaschka & Riklin has brought us surprising productions of high artistic quality and exciting content that take local themes and characteristics and transform them into witty, intelligent and entertaining musical theatre. So this award actually goes to the duo of Flaschka & Riklin."

*Heinz Gubler, jury member*

[www.theateramhechtplatz.ch](http://www.theateramhechtplatz.ch)  
[www.dominikflaschka.ch](http://www.dominikflaschka.ch)  
[www.romanriklin.com](http://www.romanriklin.com)



## Swiss Theatre Award 2017: Trickster<sup>P</sup>

### Immersive scenic landscapes

Trickster<sup>P</sup> are a Ticino-based artist duo consisting of Cristina Galbiati, who was born in Italy in 1973, and Ilija Luginbühl, who was born in Schaffhausen in 1977 and grew up in Graubünden. The two met at the Accademia Teatro Dimitri. In 2002 they founded the casa del tabacco in Novazzano, near the Italian border, as a space and residence for research and experimentation. Since then they have tirelessly researched and honed their own unique form of theatre, a blend of installation, audio landscapes and scenic experiences. In 2009 they ceased 'acting' in the narrow theatrical sense and now orchestrate their settings so that viewers can experience things for themselves. In "Sights" (2014), for example, the audience make their way individually to various sound spots, armed with a city map and tokens. At the spots, blind people specially chosen for each new venue tell their stories.

Trickster<sup>P</sup> tour widely both nationally and internationally. With their innovative projects, they are today among Switzerland's most exciting theatre practitioners, receiving support at home and abroad from Pro Helvetia. Their most recent project, "Twilight" (2016), has been performed all over the country as well as in Italy, Liechtenstein, Denmark and Iran. Subtitled "A choreography for the dying light", "Twilight" is set to make a guest performance at the Swiss Theatre Encounter 2017. It is a spatial symphony in which the audience create their own reality on the boundaries between inner vision and outer sight. "B" (2012), a room-by-room audio journey based on the tale of Snow White, and before it "h.g." (2009), a reading of Hansel and Gretel that has been performed over 200 times in a wide range of languages in Europe, Australia and the US, build on collective pictorial memories as the audience, equipped with headphones, move through various spaces. The duo's creations, with their mixture of performance, theatre and fine art, are almost impossible to describe – you really have to experience them in your own mind!

"Precise and detailed narrative spaces, three-dimensional sound landscapes and a multi-layered, non-linear narrative technique – attending a performance by Trickster<sup>P</sup> is an intense and immersive experience. Driven by insatiable curiosity and uncompromising aesthetic perfectionism, Cristina Galbiati and Ilija Luginbühl have together developed an art form that is entirely their own. In their mysterious installations that combine fine art with theatre, the audience's imagination interacts with carefully orchestrated spaces and sounds in a suspended, in-between world. At the interface of object theatre, scenography and performance, they work tirelessly to create their own unmistakable scenic signature."

*Anja Dirks, jury member*

[www.trickster-p.ch](http://www.trickster-p.ch)



## **Nominated for the «Schweizer Kleinkunstpreis» 2017: Les Batteurs de Pavés**

### **Classics as street art**

Emmanuel “Manu” Moser founded the street theatre group Les Batteurs de Pavés in 1999. Shortly after graduating from drama school at the conservatory in Lausanne that same year, he discovered the Plage des Six Pompes street theatre festival in La Chaux-de-Fonds and is now its artistic director. Manu Moser was excited by the idea of bringing theatre to audiences in the street. The company’s street art primarily consists of adaptations of French literary classics. Inspired by Bertolt Brecht and others, Les Batteurs de Pavés make theatre that is popular but also respectful of great texts and authors. The group tours not only in Switzerland but also in other French-speaking countries. In addition to Manu Moser, who also directs, the regular line-up consists of Perrine Delers, Elima Hérítier, Mathieu Béguelin, Laurent Baier, Enrique Medrano and Dimitri Lovis.

Les Batteurs de Pavés have created over a dozen works, more than half of which are still in their repertoire; they include “Germinal” (2016) based on the novel by Emile Zola, “The Three Musketeers” (2014) after Alexandre Dumas, and a street version of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” (2010). Their aims are ambitious, with a combination of difficult texts and light entertainment designed to attract audiences who might not otherwise venture inside the theatre. The success of their programmes is down to the exceptional quality of their text adaptations and their ability to reach out to their audience. Leavened with perceptive humour, their productions are meticulously planned and rhythmical, while their acting is not shallow but challenging and vibrant. They also employ a minimum of production aids and simple urban backdrops to offer committed entertainment.

[www.batteursdepaves.com](http://www.batteursdepaves.com)



## **Nominated for the «Schweizer Kleinkunstpreis» 2017: schön&gut**

### **Finely tuned cabaret**

schön&gut are Anna-Katharina Rickert and Ralf Schlatter. The duo have been presenting their poetic and political cabaret on small stages in German-speaking Switzerland since 2003. Actor and cabaret artist Anna Katharina-Rickert was born in 1973 and lives in Birmensdorf. After leaving school she attended the “comart” school of theatre, music and dance in Zurich. Before schön&gut she worked as a circus clown and performed street and forum theatre. Writer and cabaret artist Ralf Schlatter was born in 1971 and lives in Zurich. He studied history and German and also writes books, short stories and radio plays. His début novel “Federseele” has been performed as a monologue at the Schauspielhaus Zurich. The duo received the Salzburger Stier, the most important award for German-language cabaret, in 2004, followed in 2014 by the Swiss Cornichon cabaret prize. Since 2008 they have been prominent figures in the annual satirical review “Bundesordner” at the Casinotheater Winterthur.

Finely tuned cabaret of consistent quality is the hallmark of their productions: playful poetry, carefully chosen language, deft role-swapping and convoluted storylines combine into an exquisite dissection of German-Swiss provincial stuffiness and social sensitivities. In “Eine Liebesgeschichte” (2004–2006), “Das Kamel im Kreisel” (2006–2009), “Der Fisch, die Kuh und das Meer” (2009–2012), “Schön matt” (2013–2016) and “Mary” (2016), Ms Good (“gut”) and Mr Handsome (“schön”) engage in literary duels at their chosen venue of Grosshöchstetten in Emmental and create enduring entertainment with their reinterpretations. Directed since their inception by Roland Suter, schön&gut are a unique phenomenon in the Swiss cabaret and variety scene, remarkable for their virtuoso cascades of wordplay interspersed with musical interludes that offer humour for connoisseurs but without losing touch with their audience.

[www.schoenundgut.ch](http://www.schoenundgut.ch)



## **Nominated for the «Schweizer Kleinkunstpreis» 2017: Karim Slama**

### **Slapstick that transcends language barriers**

Ebullient comedian Karim Slama's hilarious one-man shows delight audiences on both sides of Switzerland's French/German divide. Born in Lausanne in 1976 to a Tunisian father and a mother from German-speaking Switzerland, he discovered improvisational theatre in school at the tender age of 13. But it is not until 2001, after training as an engineer, that he takes the plunge into the world of humour as part of the legendary satirical radio programme "La Soupe". His first solo programme, "Le Film 1" is created that same year, and is followed by numerous appearances on radio and TV in French-speaking Switzerland. Improvisation becomes a fixture in his stage work: Slama has taken part in the world improvisational theatre competition in Montreal three times, in 2001, 2002 and 2005. He received the "Prix des Arts de la scène" from the Fondation Vaudoise pour la Culture in 2011.

His wryly humorous take on the absurdities of everyday life is also to the fore in his other solo programmes "Karim Slama cherche un peu d'attention" (2005), "Karim Slama cherche encore un titre pour son spectacle" (2009) and "à part ça, globalement, ça va plutôt bien". Starting in 2008 he enjoys equal success in German-speaking Switzerland with the German version "Karim Slama bittet um etwas Aufmerksamkeit". This is followed by "Welsch ein Slamassel" (2014) and "Knacknuss" (2016), also in German, making him one of the few artists from the cabaret scene to have national impact. His performances are accompanied by taped music and a specially created soundscape. Slama is always seeking out new challenges, performing in collectives such as the "Le Caméléon" theatre forum, with Zirkus Knie and in the spectacle "Fabrikk" by Karl's Kühne Gassenschau. Most recently, he has adapted French-speaking Swiss comic book artist's Zep's "Titeuf" for the stage.

[www.karimslama.ch](http://www.karimslama.ch)