

STAATSTHEATER  
NÜRNBERG

# ORBIT – HISTORY OF A BAND

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by Philipp Löhle, Christian Brey and Thomas Esser

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Based on what are probably true events

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This synopsis is a summary of the content of the production. It serves to create a bridge of understanding for non-German-speaking audiences. It is not a complete translation of the play text, but is to be understood as a supplement to and in overall view of the production.

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## ACTORS

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Ottmar Fittich: Justus Pfankuch  
Rolf Pfuhlhaag: Amadeus Köhli  
Burkhardt „Bucki“ Lobmann: Nicolas Frederick Djuren  
Isi (Isolde) Firn (1972–1974), Biggi Gipfel (eigentlich: Brigitte  
Hoschberg) (ab 1974): Pola Jane O'Mara  
Thomas Schmauchl: Sascha Tuxhorn  
Gustl, Hermann Glaser, Rio Reiser, Taxifahrer, Herr Aumüller u. a.:  
Thorsten Danner  
Hasso Krüger: Ksch. Pius Maria Cüppers  
Sprecherin Video: Julia Bartolome, Janning Kahnert

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## TEAM

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Director: Christian Brey  
Musical direction: Thomas Esser  
Sound conception, musical Collaboration: Justus Pfankuch  
Stage & Costume Design: Anette Hachmann  
Video: Karolina Serafin  
Light: Paul Grilj  
Dramaturgy: Sabrina Bohl

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Premiere: Mai 23rd, 2023, Schauspielhaus Nuremberg

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Duration: 2 h, 15 minutes, one intermission

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## THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN

*Video: People are asked on the street about the band Orbit. Nobody knows them.*

*Text overlay: In the early 70s, the band ORBIT was formed in the Nuremberg area. Although their influence on music history is not to be underestimated, they almost fell into oblivion. The following scenes are based on interviews with the former members of ORBIT.*

1972

*Video: A series of random and irrelevant events of 1973 are presented. The enumeration ends with: And teenagers in Nuremberg at that time looked something like this:*

Rolf: But it wasn't like this.

Bucki: If we say it was like that, then it was like that.

## WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE

*Rolf tells about Gustl's pub, where he met Thomas and Isi and where Ottmar always sat in the corner and played the guitar. Thomas says that Ottmar knew Sonny Hennig, the founder of the Nuremberg band „Ihre Kinder“ and suggested to him to make rock music with German lyrics.*

Thomas: Sonny said that was nonsense, because then you would need good lyrics. And he never talked to him again. But later Sonny Hennig founded the band „Ihre Kinder“ together with Ernst Schultz. And they made rock music with German lyrics.

*Video: Ernst Schultz confirms this story.*

*Ottmar plays „Leere Hände“ by „Ihre Kinder“*

*Thomas complains about the music from 1972 that Ottmar always played. He says it is boring. Isi finds „Peace and Love“ inappropriate in times of war in Vietnam and Ireland. She wants to sing about injustice. Thomas wants to make music that sounds like when he's in his workshop and sticks his head under the hood of his car while the engine is running.*

## WE WILL ROCK YOU

*Isi presents a series of events from June 1972 and tells that Gustl let them use his garage for rehearsals. Gustl speaks incomprehensible Bavarian. Bucki translates.*

Bucki: Gustl says we can play a gig at his pub next Saturday.  
Thomas: We are not even a band yet!

*Rolf comes from Fürth and is not there yet. Thomas thinks that it would be great to have small devices that fit in your pocket and that you can use to let the others know when you're going to be late. They decide that Thomas will play bass and Isi trumpet. Bucki and Ottmar play organ and guitar. Rolf is to play drums. Thomas and Ottmar argue about who is in charge in the band. They notice that none of them knows who Bucki is. Bucki introduces himself. Rolf appears. He doesn't want to play the drums but the others convince him. However, he is missing the drums.*

Ottmar: And how are you gonna rock without drums?  
Rolf: I'll show you!

*They're playing „We will Rock You“*

Thomas: Of course, we didn't invent „We will rock you“ back then. But, quite honestly, when I heard it for the first time later, I immediately had to think of Gustl's garage.

*Gustl wants to know how far they have come.*

Rolf: We need a second song.

Ottmar: I have an idea!

*He (almost) plays „Smoke on the Water“.*

*Isi suggests dealing with topics about feminism, but the boys don't listen to her. Gustl asks if there is already a name.*

## WHERE THE STREETS BANDS HAVE NO NAMES

*They go through a lot of different names.*

*They discuss for so long that Gustl finally cancels their gig.*

Bucki: Gustl says we are the most stupid band in the world. He asks if we've ever heard of the law of band names? He wants to know our names.

*Gustl names the band after Ottmar, Rolf, Bucki, Isi and Thomas: O.R.B.I.T..*

## 1973

*Video: A series of random and irrelevant events of 1973 are presented.*

## THE JOKER (Hermann Glaser)

*Herrmann Glaser makes an appearance. He is the cultural officer of Nuremberg. Rolf tells him about Orbit.*

Rolf: I have an idea. The Künstlerhaus at the main station is to be torn down. And wouldn't it be cheaper to leave it standing and give it to young people like us and we can rehearse there?

Glaser: Do you think that would work?

Rolf: If it doesn't work, we leave it again. If it works... it can be a success story until the 90s, which will only be ended by the CSU (Conservative Party of Bavaria).

*Actress Adeline Schebesch, cultural mayor Julia Lehner and musician Ernst Schultz talk about „KOMM“, the cultural center founded by Hermann Glaser in 1973.*

Ernst Schultz: A free space. There were artists who could exhibit paintings and make photo exhibitions and films, and there were also practice rooms where the drummer of „Ihre Kinder“ played in another band.

Julia Lehner: And there was also this band, Orbit....

*Orbit play „Daddy Cool,“ „Do you think I‘m sexy?“ and „You Sexy Thing.“ Or at least songs that sound suspiciously similar.*

Thomas: Actually, it started there. Isi left. Because we did not allow her to play the trumpet.

Isi: No! I left because all of rock music is, and always has been, male dominated. I don‘t want to be a decorative accessory.

*Anyway, Isi left. And did not come back. Isi may have invented rock music with trumpet. In an all-female band.*

*The legendary German musician Rio Reiser is eager to join Orbit. Ottmar declines, but gives him the idea for the famous song „Macht kaputt, was euch kaputt macht“ („Break what breaks you“).*

Ottmar: We always have the door open. We always let everyone in. We need to focus more on us. Just the four of us.

Biggi: Five!

Rolf: And who are you?

Biggi: I‘m Biggi. Hi!

*Thomas proposes a vow against dirty ears. They are to lock themselves in and listen to no music but their own.*

Rolf: That‘s terrible.

Thomas: Exactly. And only when it‘s no longer, we‘ve made it.

Biggi: This isn‘t the „Creating with clay“ course here at all, is it?

*Video: Ernst Schultz, Julia Lehner and actor Michael Hochstrasser talk about how Orbit used to make music locked in the basement of KOMM after taking their vows.*

## IS THIS THE REAL LIFE?

*Bucki presents his song idea. A song that would later become known as „Bohemian Rhapsody“ with English lyrics. Ottmar thinks Bucki's song sounds like Bob Dylan, the others suspect him of having broken the vow. Thomas thinks Bucki's song is an outing.*

Thomas: Someone is killed in the beginning, right? And I think that means a part of you killed another part of you to finally stand by your homosexuality. I think that's great.

Biggi: Me too. You should grow a moustache and wear fine rib vests.

*Ottmar finds Bucki's song much too soft and apolitical. He plays a song that sounds very similar to „God save the Queen“ which later made the Sex Pistols famous.*

Ottmar: This is directed against our state. Because half of the people in public office are still old Nazis.

Thomas: Can't you sing that?

Bucki (singing): Half of the people in public office are still old Nazis.

*Thomas sings a song about Nuremberg. The singer-songwriter Herbert Grönemeyer will later sing that song in German. Only it's about Bochum.*

Ottmar: The question is: What do we want? Do we want quick success? Lots of money? Beautiful women? Or do we really want to make a difference? Socially. Politically. And move music forward?

Rolf: The first option is not uninteresting.

*Rolf needs money fast, because his wife is pregnant again. He is completely broke. Ottmar thinks he should sing about that. Rolf sings a sad song about money, money, money.*

## THE PASSENGER

*The band members talk about their manager Hasso Krüger.*

*Video: Julia Lehner and Ernst Schultz tell how Bob Dylan was smuggled into KOMM by Hasso Krüger through a toilet window.*

*Orbit rehearsal. Rolf, who comes from Fürth, is late again. They sing a song about it. And a song about „Billigjeans“, cheap jeans.*

*Hasso Krüger and Bob Dylan. Hasso speaks English, but so badly that we prefer to explain it here: He wants to convince Dylan that Orbit would be the ideal opening band for his gig at the Zeppelin Field on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds.*

*Orbit sing a song called „Klopf an die Himmelstür“ in German. Dylan is thrilled.*

## THE TIMES ARE A-CHANGING

*It's just before the gig at Zeppelin Field and Ottmar isn't there.*

*Hasso: That's the biggest dumbass I know, oh, that exists at all! If he doesn't come soon... This is your breakthrough! With Bob Dylan. A real Jew. On the Zeppelin field! That's the highlight of my managerial career.*

*They discuss whether they could play without Ottmar but he shows up. He is of the opinion that they should not perform.*

*Ottmar: Let's say we perform there and it goes great and we're the talk of the town afterwards and we do records and go on a world tour. All my life I would think: Do I have*



Bob Dylan to thank for all this? I would always want to know if I could do it myself.

*Ottmar manages to convince the others. Thomas has stage fright. Biggi would rather not perform until she can create a great show. She imagines something floating from the ceiling but she can't describe it exactly. Rolf tries to guess it. Bucki thinks there are too many people on the Zeppelin field. Hasso goes crazy.*

## INTERMISSION

1981

*Video: A series of random and irrelevant events of 1973 are presented.*

*In KOMM, the various associations and departments discuss whether it is right for Orbit to close themselves off. It is one of those typical discussions in grassroots democratic associations in which everyone has their say, things get heated, but in the end, nothing comes out.*

Info Office/Coordination: Please report in order. Yes. Elmar from the Actionpainting group.

Actionpainting: Yes, thank you. This has already been said a few times and I don't want to repeat it again, but I would just like to know what you think about why not everyone is allowed to join you?

Infobüro/Koordination: Yes. Thank you Elmar. Ramona has already mentioned that. Yes?

Ceramics: Yes. I... well, I can only say that I think it sucks.

Infobüro/Koordination: Thank you for your contribution. It would be nice if you would justify your respective opinion, then there would not be such an aggression in the room.

*The police burst into the middle of the discussion.*

## DON'T STOP THE MUSIC

*The band members tell about the mass arrests in KOMM. 141 people in KOMM, some of them minors, are arrested without a real reason. Among them are the members of Orbit. Most of them are released after one night. But Rolf is charged as ringleader and stays in jail. The band's instruments are all destroyed. They regularly meet with Hasso in Rolf's cell. He gets them children's keyboards.*

Hasso: The most important thing is that you stick to your vows. Do not listen to any other music except your own. I've recorded a lot of your songs. There's some good stuff there.

Ottmar: Are you not angry anymore?

Hasso: You are looking for your style. Your brand. Your unique selling point. That's okay. Take your time. Try things out. But always show me when you have something new. So I can record it.

*Rolf actually likes it quite well in prison. He asks himself musically whether he should stay or he should go. Isi feels inspired by the keyboards to a new music genre, she wants to turn the mechanical of the modern big city everyday life into music. Hasso has heard this somewhere before.*

Hasso: Is it possible to invent something twice?

## I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR FREEDOM

*Orbit got synthesizer and samplers from Hasso. This enables completely new possibilities. They sing about Rolf's wife "Agathe Bauer". And Rolf sings „I've been looking for freedom“ much more beautifully than David Hasselhoff will years later. Hasso is thrilled by everything.*

1985

*Video: A series of random and irrelevant events of 1973 are presented.*

*Biggi talks about Live Aid, the big charity concert at Wembley, and how she happened to walk past a store where the radio broadcast was on. And there she heard Queen singing Buckki's opera.*

Buckki: And you're really sure?

Biggi: Buckki! Mama, uuhuuuuuu. He even sag the Uh.

Buckki: In German?

Biggi: The Uh, yes, the rest was in English.

*Ottmar accuses Biggi of breaking the vow but Biggi thinks they need to clarify what is happening first and foremost. They want to clarify the theft legally. But how should they prove that they wrote the song? Fortunately there is Hasso, who has recorded all their songs.*

## A FEW HOURS EARLIER

*In his very bad English Hasso Krüger calls Freddy Mercury and offers him a special price for a certain song.*

*Video: At 13:25 all 4 band members of Queen give an interview in which they are asked about the song selection for their performance. You can tell from the answers that they talked to Hasso. (Fortunately, the members of Queen speak English very well.)*

*Hasso stands behind Biggi as she listens to Bohemian Rhapsody on the radio. He tries to get to the airport quickly to get away. He gets on a plane bound for Turkey.*

*Thomas rings Hasso's doorbell. But he is not there.*

*A few days later, the members of Orbit decide to dissolve their vows and listen to the radio. They realize that many more of their songs have been stolen. They wrap up their emotions in a song about a song that is stolen. Unfortunately, this song was later stolen by the German band „Die Prinzen“.*

## KILLED BY DEATH

*A policeman appears and informs the band that Hasso Krüger's car has been found with a charred body inside. In the trunk the burnt recordings of the Orbit songs. Since that day the band ORBIT no longer exists. It is even questionable whether it ever existed at all. How do you want to prove something that you can't prove?*

## EPILOGUE

*Ottmar became a banker and later opened an ostrich farm in East Germany. He set out for China on foot with his favorite ostrich, Woodie, but only made it as far as Zwickau, where he has worked as a janitor ever since.*

*Rolf developed phobias of enclosed spaces, drum sticks and applause. When he heard David Hasselhoff singing „I've been looking for freedom“ on the Berlin Wall, he suffered a nervous breakdown. He lives in an assisted living facility in Poppenreuth.*

*Bucki moved to Hamburg and continued to make music. His song „Am Strand ist nicht gut Kirschen essen“ even made it into the local radio charts. Today he runs Café Mathilde in Reinbek with his spouse Lasse Osiecko.*

*Biggi studied product design and developed the Biggi-Shelf as an intern at a Swedish furniture store. Due to a transcription error, it became one of IKEA's best-selling products under the name Billy-Shelf.*

*After the bands break up Thomas wanted to be the first person in the world to pot smoke himself to death. But he failed because he kept falling asleep. He never gave up his job in the car workshop. He still likes to hold his head under the hood when the engine is running.*

*Hasso Krüger lived abroad for some time under different names before returning to Nuremberg and starting a career as a character actor at the Nuremberg State Theater under the name „Pius Maria Cüppers“.*

*Video: Theatre director Jan Philipp Gloger and actors Thomas Nummer, Adeline Schebesch and Michael Hochstrasser talk about their colleague Pius Maria Cüppers and are shocked by his true identity.*

## ANOTHER EPILOGUE

Pius Maria Cüppers: Yes, I was Hasso Krüger. I confess it. And: Je ne regrette rien. I was just as much Hasso Krüger as I was many other roles later. I played him. I admit that. But I was also exactly the one this band needed. A band that out of itself, in absolute isolation created masterpieces for eternity.

Unfortunately I didn't manage to get all five of them together live here tonight. But! Ottmar had a proposal, which we then sold to Abba to finance this idea. Here they are for the first time, exclusively, as holograms of themselves, with their world's first live performance.

Here are: ORBIT!

Synopsis for „Orbit – History of a band“ at Schauspielhaus Nuremberg / Publisher: Staatstheater Nürnberg / Director of Staatstheater Nürnberg: Jens-Daniel Herzog / Director of Drama: Jan Philipp Gloger / Editing: Fabian Schmidlein / Design: Julia Elberskirch, Jenny Hobrecht / Corporate Design: Bureau Johannes Erler / The Staatstheater Nürnberg is a foundation under public law under the joint sponsorship of the Free State of Bavaria and the City of Nuremberg.

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