

POST-MEMORIES OF THE HOLOCAUST IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRIAN  
THEATRE: PROJECTS AGAINST FORGETTING

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines contemporary responses by Austrian theatre makers from the free theatre sector, that is, those working outside of the state theatre establishment, to the outcome of what came to be known as ‘the big lie’ on which Austrian national identity was built following liberation from German rule by the Allied forces in 1945. The ensuing problem for the post-war generations of having to claim a past that was buried under the carefully constructed official version of history but mediated through the silence of their parents and grandparents – shaping their (inner) lives – and possibilities for representing such experience through the medium of theatre are core issues explored in this study. The main focus of the dissertation is analysis of a selection of three pieces of theatre produced by two free theatre companies in Austria, *Auf der Suche nach Jakob / Searching for Jacob / Szukajac Jakuba*, and *Pola*, both by the Projekttheater Studio based in Vienna, and *Speaking Stones: images, voices... fragments... from that which comes after* by Theater Asou in Graz, Styria. Apart from contextualization of the central thematic concerns of the selected pieces of theatre within the historical events of 20<sup>th</sup> century Austria, and discussion of the theoretical framework within which the pieces are analysed, this study also offers a consideration of the phenomenon of the free theatre sector in contemporary Austria as a complement and an alternative to the state theatre sector, its roots and development since the post WWII period through to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Interviews with theatre artists, arts administrators and a Holocaust eye witness are also drawn upon to investigate how free theatre can provide a medium through which memory-work, the subtleties of damage and the inexpressible, and the difficult task of claiming the past can be explored.

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### DVDs:

*Speaking Stones: images, voices, fragments ... “from that which comes after”*  
(Theater Asou, Graz)

*Auf der Suche nach Jakob / Searching for Jacob / Szukajac Jacuba* (Projekt Theater Studio, Vienna)

*Pola* (Projekt Theater Studio, Vienna)

INCLUSION OF PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED PAPER:

Chapter Four of this dissertation includes material that has been adapted from a previously published article in the journal *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume 18, Issue 2, May 2008, entitled:

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