

Invitation to 'Die letzten Tage der Menschheit' ('The Last Days of Mankind')
by Philippe Manoury after Karl Kraus
World premiere on 27 June 2025

Written between 1915 and 1919 by Viennese satirist and polemicist Karl Kraus (1874-1936), *'Die letzten Tage der Menschheit'* is an extremely extensive tragedy that describes a world plunged into a devastating war in which it loses its humanity and is doomed to destruction.

Composed of five acts (one for each of the five years of First World War) with a prologue and epilogue, the work runs to over 700 pages, is sometimes described as megalomaniacal and pushes the boundaries of theatre.

The adaptation of this work was commissioned by Oper Köln and written by **composer Philippe Manoury** together with **director Nicolas Stemann** and **dramaturge Patrick Hahn**. The resulting 'Thinkspiel' consists of two large parts for vocal soloists, actors, choir, orchestra and live electronics.

Frenchman **Philippe Manoury** (*1952) is not only one of the most important living French composers, but also an influential researcher and pioneer in the field of music with live electronics. He has long been associated with the renowned studio **IRCAM** (Institut de recherche et coordination acoustique/musique); alongside the Cologne Studio for Electronic Music, IRCAM, co-founded by Pierre Boulez in the late 1970s, is the world's leading institution for research into electronic music. The software for the live electronics and all factors relating to sound are managed here by co-production partner IRCAM. The multimedia production is in the hands of the Berlin 'Institute for Experimental Affairs', **IXA** for short.

According to Kraus, his book provides a great deal of documentary material: sentences he heard on the street in Vienna, dialects, slang, comic, tragic and surrealistic scenes are intermingled. Under the overall musical direction of **Peter Rundel**, spoken language and song, video and stage machinery, drama and opera, symphonic orchestra and electronic sounds are all on an equal footing. This 'Thinkspiel' is a parable for today's situation: the endless war and the threat of destruction on a grand scale that Karl Kraus already heralded are part of the world today, accelerated by the progress of communication media.

As in Kraus' original, the numerous performers will not play specific characters, but will embody a variety of different figures. Only the character 'Angelus Novus', named after a painting by Paul Klee that is currently on display in Berlin's Bode Museum, helplessly witnesses the downfall of humanity: This role was written especially for famous Swedish mezzo-soprano **Anne Sofie von Otter**. Other singers on stage include Emily Hindrichs and KS Miljenko Turk from the opera ensemble, who are particularly enthusiastic about the contemporary repertoire. Sebastian Blomberg, known from numerous TV productions, and Patrycia Ziolkowska, who has appeared at the Burgtheater and Schauspielhaus Zürich to name a few, have been engaged for the speaking roles.

We cordially invite you to this world premiere – which marks the last new production of the 2024/25 opera season – of 'Die letzten Tage der Menschheit' on **27 June 2025 at 6 pm** in Saal I of the Staatenhaus. Kindly confirm your participation **by 15 June 2025** by e-mail to presse@oper.koeln.

Please also note the 'Dialogue series on democracy' (information on page 3).

CAST AND DATES 'DIE LETZTEN TAGE DER MENSCHHEIT'

Thinkspiel in two parts for singers, actors, choir, orchestra, and live electronics
Libretto based on Karl Kraus by Patrick Hahn, Philippe Manoury, and Nicolas Stemann
Co-production with IRCAM Centre Pompidou

Musical direction **Peter Rundel** // Director **Nicolas Stemann** // Stage design **Katrin Nottrodt** // Costumes **Tina Kloempken** // Media design **IXA** (Claudia Lehmann, Konrad Hempel) // Light design **Elana Siberski** // Sound engineering, live electronics, software development, sound design **IRCAM** (please visit www.oper.koeln/en/productions/die-letzten-tage-der-menschheit/1018) // IRCAM Sound mixing **Philippe Manoury** // Choir direction **Rustam Samedov** // Dramaturgue **Stephan Steinmetz**

Angelus Novus **Anne Sofie von Otter** // Soprano A **Emily Hindrichs** // Soprano B **Tamara Bounazou** // Soprano C **Constanze Rottler** // Soprano D **Simge Çiftci** // Mezzo soprano A **Johanna Thomsen** // Mezzo soprano B **Christina Daletska** // Mezzo soprano C **Barbara Ochs** // Tenor A **Dmitry Ivanchey** // Tenor B **John Heuzenroeder** // Tenor C **Armando Elizondo** // Baritone A **KS Miljenko Turk** // Baritone B / Bass **Lucas Singer** // Actor **Sebastian Blomberg** // Actress **Patrycia Ziolkowska** // **Choir of the Cologne Opera** // **Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne**

OPEN REHEARSAL AND PRE-TALK Friday, 20 June 2025 › 18-20:30 h

WORLD PREMIERE Friday, 27 Juni 2025 › 18 h

FURTHER PERFORMANCES Sunday, 29 June › 16 h // Friday, 04 July › 18 h // Sunday, 06 July › 18 h // Wednesday, 09 July › 18 h [last performance in this season]

PERFORMANCE LOCATION Staatenhaus, Saal 1

DURATION ca. 3:15 hours incl. interval

DIALOGUE SERIES ON DEMOCRACY AT THE COLOGNE OPERA

- Sunday, 22 June › 11 h “Karl Kraus – Poet, critic and eyewitness”
Panel discussion with Maria Piok, Kai Hinrich Müller
(free admission)
- Sunday, 22 June › 19 h “Composer’s portrait - Philippe Manoury”
Panel discussion with Philippe Manoury, Patrick Hahn
(free admission)
- Thursday, 26 June › 18 h “Power in transition: Germany’s role in a world out of
joint” – Panel discussion with Nicole Deitelhoff,
Wolfram Eilenberger und Herfried Münkler
Cooperation phil.COLOGNE and Cologne Opera
(Tickets via philcologne.de)
- Thursday, 26 June › 19:30 h “Herfried Münkler: Der große Krieg”
Panel discussion with Herfried Münkler,
Kai Hinrich Müller
Cooperation phil.COLOGNE and Cologne Opera
(Tickets via philcologne.de)