

Susanne Bach, Albert-Reiner Glaap (Eds.)

Frayn in Germany
Plays and Novels

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Edited by Susanne Bach, Albert-Reiner Glaap.

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Susanne Bach/Albert-Reiner Glaap

Introduction

Michael Frayn has been writing plays and novels since the 1970s. From the outset, he was concerned to distinguish his work from the political drama which dominated the London stage at that time. When Frayn deals with political topics, his emphasis is always on the personal. His plays and novels, comedies and farces have also proved highly attractive to theatregoers and readers all over Germany. And it is an open secret that Frayn's interest in Germany is mutual. His novels sell, and his plays have been performed in our *Staatstheater* as well as on smaller stages – *Copenhagen*, *Democracy*, *Donkeys' Years*, and – the most successful – *Noises Off*.

The latter takes place on the front stage in the first act, whereas in the second act, we are taken backstage, so that we can see what is going on there. Similarly, in this book, the novels and plays from the pen of Michael Frayn are 'onstage,' while, 'behind the scenes,' words are provided by those who are instrumental in fostering his works in Germany, mirroring the response to, and the admiration for, this playwright's work over here. All the contributors pay tribute to Michael's openness, his insatiable curiosity for other people's opinions and experiences, and his real interest in exchanging ideas and opinions with them. Their individual and, partly, very personal views amount to a 'German Mosaic' of 'Fraynism.'

Frayn is fascinated with Germany, as he has pointed out on several occasions. But Germany is also fascinated with Frayn. On October 4th, 2004, Michael Frayn was awarded the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* for his detailed and insightful assessment of events in Germany's recent history. While there are many foreigners in the arts whose image of Germany is still shaped by the Nazi past, Michael Frayn has taken not just one step, but very many, steps forward.

Quite a few people in this country have become real Fraynists. Germany, and in particular German culture, owes him a great deal – a recognition that many will share on this very special day.

September 8th, 2008

Susanne Bach/Albert-Reiner Glaap

Zum Geleit

Seit den 1970er Jahren schreibt Michael Frayn Bühnenstücke und Romane. Von Anfang an hat er sich mit seinen Werken vom damals populären politischen Drama abgesetzt. Wenn er sich mit politischen Themen beschäftigt, dann steht immer das Persönliche im Vordergrund. Seine Bühnenstücke und Romane, Komödien und Farcen haben insbesondere auch bei deutschen Theaterbesuchern und Lesern große Aufmerksamkeit gefunden. Frayns Interesse an Deutschland beruht aber unverkennbar auf Gegenseitigkeit. Seine Romane verkaufen sich hierzulande gut, seine Stücke sind in Staatstheatern und auf kleineren Bühnen zu sehen – *Kopenhagen*, *Demokratie*, *Verdammt lange her* und der überaus erfolgreiche *Nackte Wahnsinn*.

Dessen erster Akt zeigt ein ‚normales‘ Theaterstück auf der Bühne, während die Zuschauer im zweiten Akt hinter die Kulissen geführt werden, sodass sie Einblicke in das gewinnen, was sich dort tut. In diesem Buch geschieht Ähnliches. Frayns Dramen und Romane stehen sozusagen auf der Bühne, während hinter den Kulissen die Stimmen derer zu vernehmen sind, die entscheidend zu Frayns Erfolgen in Deutschland beitragen und die von der Resonanz und Bewunderung künden, die des Autors Werk hierzulande erfährt. Alle, die zu diesem Band beigetragen haben, schätzen Michaels Offenheit, seine unstillbare Neugier auf Meinungen und Erfahrungen anderer und sein echtes Interesse am Austausch von Ideen und Gedanken. Ihre individuellen, zum Teil auch sehr persönlichen Sichtweisen setzen sich zu einem ‚Deutschen Mosaik des Fraynismus‘ zusammen.

Frayn ist von Deutschland begeistert, was er bei etlichen Anlässen betont hat. Aber Deutschland ist ebenso von Frayn begeistert. Am 04. Oktober 2004 wurde Michael Frayn für seine differenzierte Auseinandersetzung mit wichtigen Ereignissen der deutschen Zeitgeschichte mit dem Bundesverdienstkreuz ausgezeichnet. Während es immer noch einige ausländische Kunstschaffende gibt, die an einem durch die Nazi-Vergangenheit geprägten Deutschlandbild festhalten, hat Michael Frayn nicht einen Schritt, sondern sehr viele Schritte nach vorne getan.

So mancher in unserem Land ist zu einem wahren Fraynisten geworden. Deutschland, und insbesondere die deutsche Kulturlandschaft, haben ihm einiges zu verdanken, und diese Erkenntnis vereint viele an diesem ganz besonderen Tag.

8. September 2008

Susanne Bach/Albert-Reiner Glaap

From Sir Peter Torry

Thanks to his highly popular farce *Noises Off* (*Der nackte Wahnsinn*), Michael Frayn is one of the UK's most frequently performed playwrights on German theatre stages. He also has a deep knowledge of recent German politics and history. Having spent some time in Berlin in the seventies – among other things writing for *The Observer* – Michael Frayn was fascinated by the city of Berlin, its emptiness, its gaps and scars caused by World War II, which inspired his imagination and writing, and finally led to *Democracy*, his most recent, immediately famous, and very well-researched play on Willy Brandt and the Guillaume spy affair.

Democracy first premiered in London in 2003. It was first produced in German at the Renaissance-Theater in Berlin in September 2004. It has been praised by the media as a poignant contemporary version of a Shakespearian history play dealing with the rise and fall of Germany's first ever Social Democrat Chancellor. The Berlin premiere of *Democracy*, panel discussion and reception in honour of Michael Frayn at the British Embassy, attended by Egon Bahr, Horst Ehmke, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Arnulf Baring and other political heavies of Willy Brandt's time, was a fascinating moment for me as British Ambassador in Germany. It provided a unique opportunity to understand better the history of the then still young Federal Republic of Germany and the charisma of its leading political figure.

Sir Peter Torry is former British Ambassador to Germany (May 2003 to September 2007).