

THEATRE

VAMPIRE'S MOUNTAIN

PHILIPPE QUESNE



FREE
REPUBLIC OF
VIENNA
FESTIVAL

31 May – 3 June
Volkstheater Wien

At times when the outlook is bleak, vampire stories are in high demand. Indeed, there is no people in the world that does not have stories of the living dead, of bloodsuckers and bloodless bodies. With *Vampire's Mountain*, the artist, scenographer and director Philippe Quesne uses this myth to tackle an urgent issue: the relationship between humans and nature, that of rule and exploitation. Quesne is a master of bizarre and fantastical pictorial theatre and one of the most successful European theatre-makers. With his most recent piece, he creates a panorama of our time that is both melancholy and hilarious. Quesne's eccentricity meets acting excellence in the face of the end of the world. Prepare for theatrical mist, fangs and howling when the temporary community of vampires emerges from the ground as the play begins: 'Oh how cheating, oh how fleeting is our earthly being!'

Language
German

Surtitles
English

Duration
2 hrs


barrier-free access

Q & A
1 June, following the
performance



Concept, Direction, Stage design, Costume design Philippe Quesne **With** Jean-Charles Dumay, Sachiko Hara, Sébastien Jacobs, Sasha Rau, Bettina Stucky, Samuel Weiss, Martin Zamorano **Artistic collaboration stage design** Elodie Dauguet **Technical collaboration stage design** François Boulet **Collaboration costume design** Marie-Luise Otto **Light design** Annette ter Meulen **Dramaturgy** Judith Gerstenberg **Assistance direction** Jamie Trautmann **Assistance stage design** Patrick Coyne **Assistance costume design** Anna Michaelis **Translation** Corinna Popp **Stage management** Annette Endmann **Internship costume** Jule Köster **Internship direction** Adam Lusena **Ash Technical direction** Hajo Krause **Production management** Jens Schmidt **Technical coordination** Thilo Jeß **Technical direction stage** Mario Muranka **Stage inspection** Matthias Morys **Technical stage managers** Jens Krüger, Susanne Zimmer **Stage machinery** Holger Lehmann **Lighting** Tobias Bettin, Swaantje Hoffmann, Tim Stellwag **Sound and video management** Kai Altmann **Sound** Kai Altmann, Shorty Gerriets, Christian Jahncke **Make-up and hair management** Susan Kutzner **Make-up** Wiltrud Jüchter, Julia Christine Christiani, Nicola Wüstefeld **Costume management** Geseke Brandis, Susanne Günther-Müller **Wardrobe** Pia Reifenrath-Sacher, Anne Scheerer **Costume art** Catja Schilling **Props management** Jörn Woisin **Props** Kerstin Feuerhelm, Pauline Heinrichs, Ibrahim Kurt, Jule Pischel **Workshop management** Thorsten Großer **Project management construction** Marcel Franken, Lennart Hohenschurz, Jan Sauer **Painting workshop** Raphael Schierling **Decorations department** Elisabeth Schultz **Carpentry** Johanna Nölker **Locksmith** Mattis Speck **Sculptures** Sabine Kanzler **Translation surtitles** Stephen Grynwasser **Surtitles** Simona Weber

Production Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg in cooperation with Vivarium Studio

executed by the team of the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna

World Premiere October 2025, Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg

VAMPIRES ARE BETTER HUMANS

The master of ironic shindigs and bosom buddy of bizarre communities has assembled a new gang. This time it's neither the moles nor the cowboys, neither the rockers nor the scarecrows that astounded the audience in his recent productions. For his new show he has chosen a creature that may be the perfect quintessence of all his previous loners: vampires.

In *Vampire's Mountain*, the French stage romanticist sends seven of the undead from their dark forest to the alpine heights of the mountains. Usually so lonesome, the bloodsuckers adapt to this group trip into absurd terrain with surprising ease, becoming a jolly community of apocalyptic philosophers. The fanged bat-humans appear dramatically straight from the coffin, dance with skeletons in Metallica T-shirts in an abandoned ski lift station and yearn for dread. But even when the stark mountains melt away due

to human-made climate change – the rocks, not the snow! – they are not afraid. The monster human infected with eternal life serves as the wan metaphor for those pandemic two-legged parasites, those ecological bloodsuckers who are killing the host that sustains them. For humans, under threat from themselves. This friendly dance of the undead does a better job than all the statistics, horrifying news stories and reasonable addresses at raising awareness that our species can ultimately only be saved by behavioural change. These vampires aren't greedy or egomaniac, they are neither inconsiderate nor jealous, neither possessive nor constantly malcontent. Maybe that is the very thing that renders them immortal.

Extract from an article by Till Briegleb,
published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (24 October
2025).

DRACULA'S DIET OR HOW EVOLUTION TURNED BATS INTO VAMPIRES

Desmodus rotundus flies through the night, its wing span up to 40 centimetres wide. Its ears are outstretched; highly specialised nerve cells lie within. They are made to hear the breath of the sleeping prey in order to locate them in the Central and South American darkness of night. The common vampire bat's hunting method sounds like a horror story. Once it has found a cow or a horse, it lands a few metres away on the ground to approach its victim on all fours under cover of darkness. The vampire scales the animal along its legs. It finds footing in the fur with its sharp claws. Specialised facial nerves help it locate suitable blood vessels on its host animals. Sharp, delicate teeth easily pierce the skin and open the veins. The vampire bat laps up the blood that is flowing from the wound with its long tongue, mixing the blood with its own saliva in the process. That saliva contains a protein that prevents clotting. It is called Draculin – seriously!

The victim usually doesn't even notice the parasite and simply stays asleep. Once the vampire bat has successfully hunted down blood, it's likely to return the following night.¹

This is not a horror film. This is the nocturnal reality of countless mammals, birds and sometimes humans. Three bat species who have chosen blood as their food source abound from Mexico to Chile. These winged mammals with their particular preferences include the common vampire bat (*Desmodus rotundus*), which lives almost exclusively off the blood of cattle, horses and sometimes humans. They are joined by the hairy-legged vampire bat (*Diphylla ecaudata*) and the white-winged vampire bat (*Diaemus youngi*), which both prefer the blood of birds.

Bats quite literally like hanging out together. The common vampire bat's

social behaviour is particularly advanced. They live in colonies of just under ten to a hundred animals. They groom each other and individual bats will feed hungry fellows by retching up blood that they have eaten. This kind of supportive connection is particularly strong among family members but also occurs among animals who are not related.

Community is also important during their night-time hunting sprees. Individuals who are close often enjoy the blood of chosen victims together. The animals appear to be using dedicated noises to find each other, for example on a field of cattle. For researchers who have investigated this behaviour, the communal hunt underlines the complexity of the vampire bat's social relationships.

Climate change is allowing the adaptable mammals to expand their habitats and advance into regions that had hitherto not been suitable to them. As masters of evolutionary adaptation, the vampire bats profit from all of these developments. The thirsty nightshades therefore continue to happily roam the darkness. Vampires are truly hard to kill.²

¹Fritz Habekuß: Vampirfledermäuse: Draculas Diät, in *Die Zeit* No. 10, 2018

²Marlene Erhart: Wie die Evolution Fledermäuse zu Vampiren machte, in *Der Standard*, 3 October 2025

BIOGRAPHY

Philippe Quesne, born 1970, is a French director, scenographer, and playwright. After studying fine arts, graphic design, and stage design, he founded Vivarium Studio in 2003, a performance collective of artists from various disciplines. From 2013 to 2019, he was director of the Centre dramatique national Nanterre-Amandiers, and since 2022 he has been director of La Ménagerie de Verre in Paris.

Quesne's works are characterised by impressive stage spaces designed like landscapes or ecosystems. The focus is on small communities and often exaggerated or alienated everyday rituals, natural spectacles, and fantasy. The stage functions as a laboratory in which reality and fiction can flow into each other with delicately placed comedy and precise observation.

Philippe Quesne has already staged six productions at the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) | Free Republic of Vienna, including *Das Lied von der Erde* (2021) in cooperation with Klangforum Wien and *Szöamp Club* (2013). He regularly tours internationally with his productions and was longlisted for this year's Berlin Theatertreffen with *Vampire's Mountain*.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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