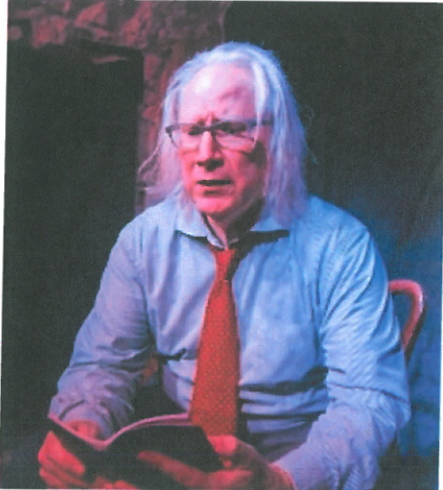


# 'THE FEVER' OPENS TO RAVE REVIEWS -- CATCH IT NOW!



Actors Repertory Theatre Luxembourg (Actors Rep) proudly opened its production of Wallace Shawn's **THE FEVER** Wednesday, October 12, at the iconic Konrad Café and Bar (7, rue du Nord, 2229 Luxembourg).

**Erik Abbott** and **Christine Probst** (above in photos by Laurent Blum) alternate in this one-person show, written for a man or woman, in a production directed by **Peter Zazzali** (below).

The reviews are in and **THE FEVER** definitely needs to be caught!

Natalie Gerhardstein writes in *The Luxembourg Wort* ([www.Wort.lu](http://www.Wort.lu)): 'Those lucky enough to catch **THE FEVER** premiere' were 'treated to a powerful performance in an intimate setting.'

In *Delano* Duncan Roberts describes Abbott's performance as 'fascinating and admirable', played with 'consummate ease', and predicts that Probst, who takes the stage Saturday night, October 15, will attack the role with 'equal success'.

**The Fever**, termed 'a ferocious meditation on the inequities of global capitalism', by *The Guardian*, is a provocative and intimate theatrical experience. Astonishingly relevant to our current era of profound global inequalities, mass migrations, refugee crises and seemingly

endless wars, it is also peppered with Shawn's trademark wit and humour.

A traveller from a privileged nation visits a poor country in the throes of war and unrest. The journey prompts a personal moral crisis, forcing the traveller to confront uncomfortable questions of wealth inequality between populations and societies.

Wealth disparity. Inequality. Poverty.

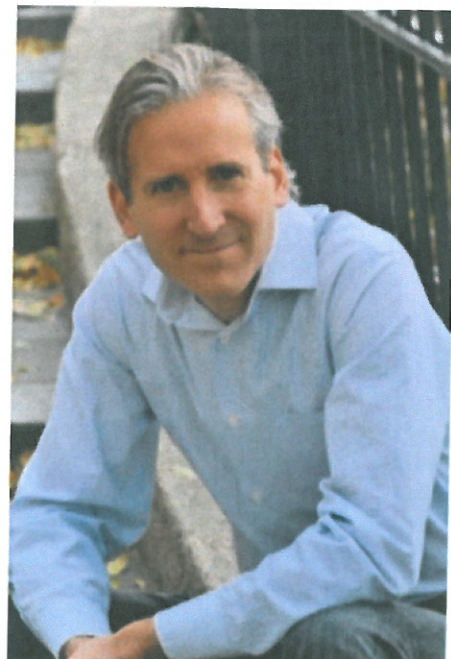
Actors Rep, the professional English-language theatre company, presents the piece at Konrad's for five additional performances: October 13 (Abbott), October 15 (Probst), October 19 and 20 (Probst), and October 22 (Abbott).

Konrad's is home to live music, stand-up comedy, open-mic events, quiz nights—and now professional theatre. Audiences will be able to purchase food and drinks before and after the show.

Shawn originally performed **THE FEVER** himself in private homes and apartments. With Probst and Abbott, who have combined professional theatre experience of more than sixty years, alternating performances, audiences have the rare opportunity to see two stage veterans bring to life two unique interpretations of the play and the character.

A director, actor, theatre scholar and actor trainer, Zazzali has directed at theatres including The Actor's Playhouse and Manhattan Repertory Theatre in New York and the Texas Shakespeare Festival. In the past year he has directed in Perth, Australia, as well as directing a sold-out production of *Waiting for Godot* in Brisbane (Australia).

In addition his international career as a director, he is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of Kansas. His book, *Acting in the Academy: The History of Professional Actor Training in US Higher Education*, was just published by Routledge.

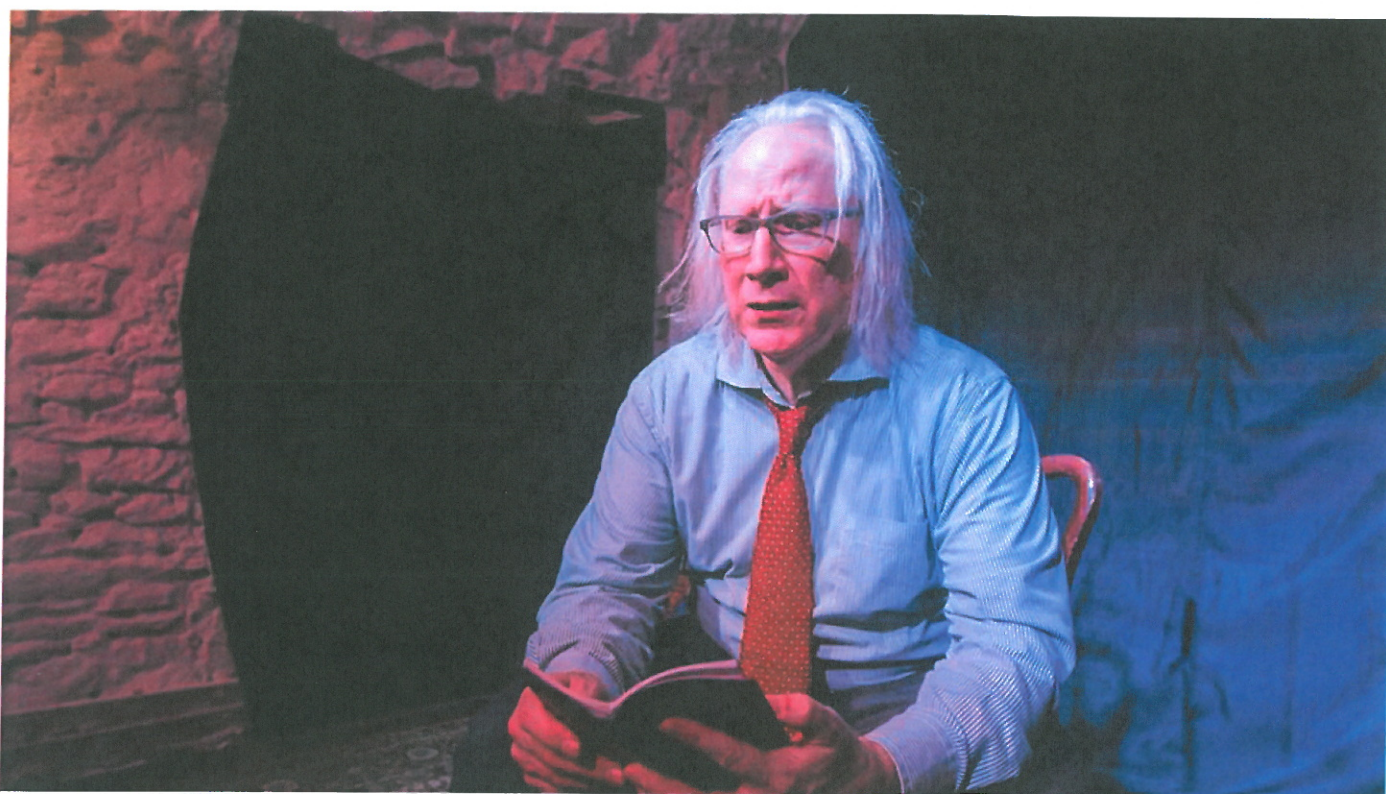


**THE FEVER**

# Luxemburger Wort

## 'The Fever' review

### Exploring First World privilege in an intimate setting



*Erik Abbott performs in "The Fever" at Konrad's for three of the performances, while Christine Probst will take on the role the remaining nights.*

*Photo: Laurent Blum*

(#)

Published on Thursday, 13 October, 2016 at 11:12

(NG) Those lucky enough to catch "The Fever" premiere at Konrad's on Wednesday night were treated to a powerful one-man performance in an intimate setting.

The play starts off with a question: "I'm travelling—and I wake up suddenly in the silence before dawn in a strange hotel room, in a poor country where my language isn't spoken, and I'm shaking and shivering. Why?"

The play attempts to answer the question as the narrator, played on Wednesday evening by Erik Abbott, explores the principles of Karl Marx and his own need to justify this notion of First World privilege.

The constant celebration. Life should be celebrated. Life is a gift."

The narrator takes us down his own conscious meanderings in 90 minutes of monologue, which range from thought-provoking commentary to sheer poetry in some cases: "The city with its lights, theatres, coffee shops, newsstands, books. The constant celebration. Life should be celebrated. Life is a gift."

Abbott's performance last night indeed physically celebrated the highs of the narrator's memories. But he equally captivated the audience through the lows as well, with a natural demeanor that felt like an intimate conversation, even more so because of the cosy setting at Konrad's.



*Christine Probst will take on the role the evenings of October 15, 19 and 20.*

*Photo: Laurent Blum*

(#)

What's more, Abbott's acting through movement is exceptional, from slumping in a chair to a beautiful scene where he is meant to be floating in space. It's possible that Director Peter Zazzali had a hand in that too: the internationally-recognised scholar has been in Luxembourg the last three weeks and also held a recent workshop on psychophysical approaches to acting.

Abbott pointed out after the show that he has taken more than a tip or two from Christine Probst, who will be performing the piece on three of the six nights, given that the role can be played by either gender. While the two rehearsed together at the start, at a certain point they had to begin rehearsing separately, which also will provide unique approaches to the role.

The only drawback was a slightly stumbling beginning, which should be tweaked out by the next performance; this was likely due to the noise from the cafe upstairs. Konrad's affords other advantages, however, such as simplicity in setting and stage, which lends itself quite nicely to this play. The use of red and blue lighting, along with musical prompts, also give the feeling of changing settings quite effectively despite the minimal space.

Wallace Shawn ("My Dinner with Andre", "Clueless", also known for his voice acting) wrote "The Fever" in 1991 in response to issues in Central America at the time, although the piece is still bound to resonate with audiences today.

## Where and when

Erik Abbott will perform "The Fever" again on October 13 and 22. Christine Probst will perform on October 15, 19 and 20.

Showtimes on October 19-20 are 9pm. Performances on October 15 and 22 will be at 8pm.

Get the latest news by signing up to our **newsletter** (<http://wort.lu//www.wort.lu/en/newsletter>), following us on **Facebook** (<https://www.facebook.com/wort.lu.en>) or **Twitter** ([https://twitter.com/Wort\\_EN](https://twitter.com/Wort_EN)).

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LUXEMBOURG IN ENGLISH

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**Erik Abbott gives a mesmerising performance in the Actors Rep**

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## Physicality

In the Actors Rep production currently on at Konrad Café (<https://www.facebook.com/Konradcafe/?fref=ts>), Erik Abbott plays the role of narrator with consummate ease. The text is at times wonderfully descriptive, and Abbott's natural delivery allows the audience to conjure up vivid images--an encounter at a bus stop with "someone with a very nice smile" and a t-shirt bearing the name of a revolutionary country, bug-ridden hotel rooms and the cramped, shiny-pink walled apartments of people who work menial jobs.

Shawn apparently performed the original show in his apartment to small audiences, simply reading while seated in a chair. But Abbott, directed with some skill by Peter Zazzali (<http://theatre.ku.edu/peter-zazzali>), lends the role great physicality. On a sparse stage he vomits in the bathroom of that bug-ridden hotel room, conducts Beethoven, gets beaten up and tortured, hangs from an iron bar floating in space...It is a fascinating and admirable solo performance, and one that I am confident alternate actor Christine Probst will pull off with equal success.

The text can be a bit wearisome and unnecessarily repetitive--some lines are simply redundant and a couple of scenes perfunctory or awkwardly framed (why Shawn felt it necessary that a man spouting revolutionary diatribe should do so on a nudist beach without making further use of this image is beyond me). But it raises plenty of themes that are supremely relevant some 25 years after it was first performed--at one stage the narrator talks about a neighbour who "boasts about fucking colleagues at the office on the boardroom table". Only one person comes to mind when that line is delivered.

The play ends with the narrator asking: "Forgive me. Forgive me. I know you forgive me. I'm still falling." It is evocative of the despair of Captain Kurtz's final words--"the horror! The horror!"--in Joseph Conrad's "Heart Of Darkness" (or, for those of a cinematic bent, Marlon Brando's in "Apocalypse Now"). But "I know you forgive me" also conjures up images of Sally Field's famously derided Oscar acceptance speech. White privilege demanding the comfort of recognition from their peers.

## Next shows

In a change to the previously published schedule, Erik Abbott will perform "The Fever" on 13 and 22 October while Christine Probst will perform on 15, 19 and 20 October. The show starts at 8 p.m. and lasts around 90 minutes with no interval. Food and drinks can be ordered at Konrad before and after the show.



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# 14 shows you must see

Luxembourg's culture venues kick off their new season with an eclectic programme including a popular musical, acclaimed classical orchestras, cool pop acts and challenging English-language theatre productions.



## THE FEVER

Sly One hander

English-language theatre company Actors Rep brings its production of Wallace Shawn's acclaimed play *The Fever* to Konrad over six nights. Written for one performer, the play mercilessly, and at times hilariously, examines comfortable liberal privilege in the modern world. Peter Zazzali directs Erik Abbott and Christine Probst in alternating performances.

📅 12, 13, 15, 19, 20 & 22 October  
📍 Konrad Café,  
Luxembourg-Centre  
🌐 [www.actorsrep.lu](http://www.actorsrep.lu)



## THE EMPEROR

Actress showcase

Adapted by Colin Teevan from the book by journalist Ryszard Kapuściński about the decline and fall of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia, *The Emperor* gives award-winning actress Kathryn Hunter a chance to showcase her technical versatility in a one-woman show. Walter Meierjohann directs what *The Guardian* called "a resonant and troubling metaphor for the great melancholy of power."

📅 12-14 October  
📍 Grand Théâtre  
🌐 [www.theatres.lu](http://www.theatres.lu)



## KISS ME, KATE

Porter's bard musical

In the year celebrating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, this musical based on *The Taming Of The Shrew* is highly appropriate. Cole Porter provided the music and lyrics to Samuel and Bella Spewack's show, which ran for more than 1,000 performances on Broadway. It has enjoyed several Broadway and London revivals and in 1953 was made into a film.

📅 15 & 16, 18-20 October  
📍 Grand Théâtre  
🌐 [www.theatres.lu](http://www.theatres.lu)



## ROTTERDAM PHIL

With Hélène Grimaud

The Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin is joined by star pianist Hélène Grimaud for a concert featuring Béla Bartók's *3rd Concerto for piano and orchestra*, written during the final days of the composer's life in 1945. The programme also features the overture to Haydn's opera *The Desert Island* and Mahler's *1st Symphony*.

📅 17 October  
📍 Philharmonie,  
Luxembourg-Kirchberg  
🌐 [www.philharmonie.lu](http://www.philharmonie.lu)



## PJ HARVEY

Icon

The only two-time Mercury Prize winner, and an MBE to boot, PJ Harvey made two excellent albums before garnering wider attention with 1995's *To Bring You My Love*. More recent albums include 2011 Mercury winner *Let England Shake*, which she performed at neimënster courtesy of den Atelier, who brings her back with new album *The Hope Six Demolition Project*.

📅 18 October  
📍 Rockhal, Esch-Belval  
🌐 [www.atelier.lu](http://www.atelier.lu)



## DUCK DUCK GREY DUCK

From Geneva with love

Swiss trio Duck Duck Grey Duck make music that the band describes as "doo-wop, Lake Geneva soul-surf-garage". It is most appealing on debut album *Here Come...*, which includes laid back tracks 'Mexico' and 'Double Monk Strap' but also surf-psyche rock outs 'Like A Bee' and 'Ice Cream'.

📅 19 October  
📍 De Gudde Wëllen,  
Luxembourg-Centre  
🌐 [www.deguddewellen.lu](http://www.deguddewellen.lu)



## THE WEDDING PRESENT

Indie pioneers

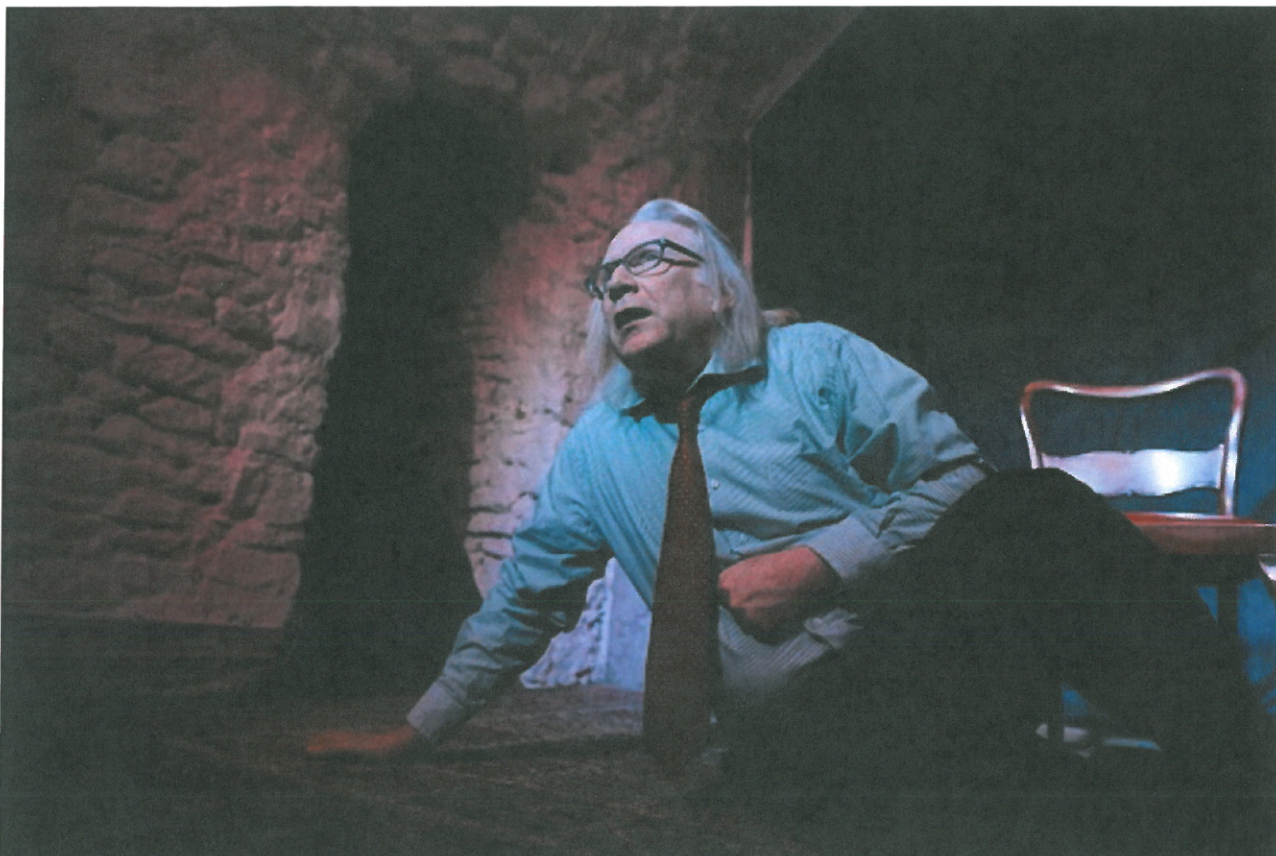
Still going strong some 30 years after forming, jangly guitar pioneers The Wedding Present, fronted by David Gedge, return to Luxembourg to promote new album *Going, Going...*. An experiment in multimedia formatting, the album is a collection of 20 linked songs each accompanied by a film. Support comes from one of the best new local bands around, Autumn Sweater.

📅 24 October  
📍 Bar National,  
Luxembourg-Merl  
🌐 [www.tnl.lu](http://www.tnl.lu)



Monday, 07 November 2016 11:28

## The Fever: Drama Review



It has been a few weeks since Actors Repertory Theatre brought Wallace Shawn's 'The Fever' to Luxembourg, so why review it now? Because if you saw the performance, there is a very good chance it is still playing in your mind, poking at your conscious, interrogating you about your beliefs, knocking you off your high horse.

The play is a fevered self-examination of ourselves and our society – a study of inequalities – and it takes us on a rollercoaster ride along with the one and only character in the play who teeters between making excuses for our indifference and our sense of entitlement and feeling gut-wrenching disgust and horror at the unfairness of it all. Who couldn't help but sometimes think back to Eric Abbott and Christine Probst's performances when they hear the news about the dismantling of the Calais Jungle or walks past the increasingly numerous beggars right here in Luxembourg?

Both Abbott and Probst were roundly praised for stunning and very different performances. They took to the stage at Konrad's on alternating evenings, bringing their own rich experience and undeniable talent with them. But on reflection, and yes, this play gets under your skin and makes you reflect a lot, they both got the praise they deserved while others went unsung. Isn't that also inequality? Isn't that also a wrong that might be righted?

That's the real reason for this review. To give a little credit where credit is due, and that is to the play's director, Peter Zazzali, who flew over from the USA, on leave from his professorial post at the University of Kansas, help shape and guide this memorable performance. Why did Actors Rep want to bring Zazzali in on this, after all, when the play only has one actor, was performed on a very tiny stage, and had originally been performed by its writer just sitting in an

armchair in friends' apartments? Not much direction needed there, surely?

Think again - as *The Fever* pushes us to do. If you think about it, Zazzalli was directing two very different shows. Same character, same setting, same play. But very different interpretations, and that was not just due to the differences in Abbott's and Probst's styles and their differences in gender, build, appearance... but was in large part due to what Zazzalli brought out in these actors.

They are both well known in Luxembourg but, in *The Fever*, they were somehow not their selves, and not just because they are actors and that is what they do, morph into different people. Zazzalli had challenged them to reach into places they might not have explored before, asked them to get out of the comfort zone, asked them to try things they might not have known they could pull off.

Erik Abbott, naturally rather reserved like an intellectual pondering their views on Emmanuel Kant, gave a rapid-fire and wild-eye delivery. He had a Redbull-and-vodka energy and, like someone who may have knocked back 3 or 4 of those mixes, he lurched between laughter and tears. Zazzalli helped him to find these extremes – the lightness in the bleak text, the physicality of the performance, the moving tears of genuine sorrow.

Probst, on the other hand, naturally emits a similar amount of energy as the sun. Even off stage, she seems bigger than life, a cross between Mother Earth and Marilyn Monroe. And what did Zazzalli have her do? Reign it in. What? Why bottle a tornado? Well, if you have ever twisted a pencil around in a rubber band ... you know the power of building up tension and the thrill of letting it rip. Although she held more of her emotions in than we've seen before, she was by no means playing it even-keel and steady. She was standing up on chairs and down on all fours on the floor, exhilarated by beautifully-clothed memories and nauseated by bare-naked realities.

Both actors excelled and could bask in the glory of their achievement. But internationally recognised theatre director, actor and scholar Peter Zazzali went back to Kansas with few people even knowing he had even been here. While we cannot narrow the divide between the haves and the have-nots by writing a theatre review, we can help give something to someone who deserves it – credit and a belated round of applause to director Peter Zazzali.

Photos by Carole Reckinger