

## Theater and its Public Sphere. Institutional and Artistic Conflicts and Controversies on German Stages in the 2010s

The 2010s have been a time of widespread discourse on the crisis and loss of legitimacy of German *Stadttheater*, a model in which theatres concentrate production and performance activities in-house, thanks to the presence of a permanent troupe of performers and repertory-based programming. In newspapers, specialized magazines and on Internet sites, attempts at diagnosis and proposals for solutions are proliferating, while numerous local crises receive almost systematic media coverage. The present study examines what makes this kind of crisis discourse possible. It formulates the hypothesis that this long-standing theatre landscape owes much to the development of a certain form of theatrical public sphere, i.e. to the idea that theater is grounded in an indeterminate address and that its fate potentially regards everyone. This publicity of theatrical life is as much to be found in the performances themselves as in the mediatic arenas of criticism, or in the way establishments address their audiences. Using the “*Stadttheater* crisis” as a case study, and a methodological framework inspired by pragmatic sociology, this thesis examines conflicting aspects of this public artistic space. After reviewing the history of German troupe theaters, I examine tribunes on the future of the *Stadttheater* published from 2009 to 2021 on the website *nachtkritik*, before conducting a cross-study of two recent crises, namely the conflicts at the Berlin's Volksbühne between 2015 and 2018 and at the Münchner Kammerspiele between 2017 and 2020.