

## Opera Chess Story by Cristóbal Halffter

Information by Elke Rehder

### Schachnovelle (Chess Story) Opera to the Royal Game by Stefan Zweig

Pictures and information about the world premiere of the opera **Schachnovelle** by the famous Spanish composer Cristóbal Halffter at the opera house in the German city of Kiel



second scene from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story photo © Olaf Struck

Opera second scene: Dr. Leo Berger is arrested in Vienna by the Gestapo on the road. The two Gestapo men bring Dr. B. to the Hotel Metropol, where he is already expected by the Gestapo officer.



second scene from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story photo © Olaf Struck

Opera second scene: Dr. Berger in the office of the Gestapo at the Hotel Metropol. The Gestapo officer gives himself affable and ironic. Christopher Woo (first Gestapo man), Michael Hofmeister (Gestapo officer), Jörg Sabrowski (Dr. Leo Berger)

The premiere took place on 18 May at the Kiel Opera House in 2013. The opera was commissioned by the *Theater Kiel* and by support of the *Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation*. For the one-act opera Wolfgang Haendeler wrote the libretto

based on the chess story by Stefan Zweig. The performance is in German language and with German surtitles.



*Scene from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story photo © Olaf Struck*

Opera fourth scene: Dr. Berger (Jörg Sabrowski) has stolen a book about chess games and created of white and brown pieces of sugar candy an alternativ chessboard. The cruel nothingness in his solitary confinement has found an end.

**Chess Story - the Opera** - A cultural world event, the world premiere not in Paris, not London. Instead: Premiere of the total work of art at the Kiel Opera House. The libretto by Wolfgang Haendeler is worth reading from the first to the last letter. Cristóbal Halffter, one of the most important composers of our time, once again created a masterpiece of modern music, which has been skilfully realised by the music director Georg Fritzsich and by the general director Daniel Karasek.

Conductor	Georg Fritzsich
Director	Daniel Karasek
Stage set	Norbert Ziermann
Costumes	Claudia Spielmann
Chorus director	Barbara Kler
Video	Konrad Kästner
Dramaturgy	Cordula Engelbert



*fourth scene from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story photo © Olaf Struck*

Opera fourth scene: Dr. Berger (Jörg Sabrowski) does not need the book of chess games and his impromptu chessboard no longer in sight and is now playing against himself

Dr. Leo Berger	Jörg Sabrowski
The Gestapo officer	Michael Hofmeister
Mirko Czentovic, world chess champion	Tomohiro Takada / Marco Vassalli
Nurse	Heike Wittlieb
1st lady, a female passenger / chessman	Anna Petrova
2nd lady, a female passenger / chessman	Susan Gouthro
3rd lady, a female passenger / chessman	Juliane Harberg
Koller, an agent / chessman / reporter	Fred Hoffmann
1st Gestapo man / Mario Lotto, a passenger	Christoph Woo
1st reporter / Ingmar Soderström, a passenger	Thomas Scheler
Scott McConnor, a passenger	Michael Müller
Pastor	Mikko Järviluoto
Count Simczik / guard / captain / waiter	Andreas Winther
2nd Gestapo man / Josè Burgos, a passenger	Ulrich Burdack

Paul Teller, a passenger / chessman	Salomon Zulic del Canto
Boris, a host from the village / chessman / 3rd reporter	Marek Wojciechowski
1st kibitzer, a passenger	Rahel Brede
2nd kibitzer, a passenger	Bogna Bernagiewicz
Mirko Czentovic as a kid	Willem Klemmer / Clemens Marcic
Opera Chorus of the Theater Kiel	
Kiel Philharmonic Orchestra	
Supernumeraries of the Theater Kiel	



fourth scene *from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story* photo © Olaf Struck

Opera fourth scene: Dr. Berger suffers through the game against himself and gets a kind of chess poisoning. Scene with Jörg Sabrowski (Dr. Leo Berger), Michael Hofmeister (Gestapo officer)



fourth scene from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story photo © Olaf Struck



seventh scene from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story photo © Olaf Struck

Opera seventh scene: Anna Petrova (1st Lady), Tomohiro Takada (Mirko Czentovic), Juliane Harberg (3rd Lady), Michael Müller (Scott McConner), Thomas Scheler (1st reporter), Jörg Sabrowski (Dr. Leo Berger) in the smoking room on board of the steamer from New York to Buenos Aires. Dr. Berger fights in this game of chess for the first time against a human being, the world chess champion Czentovic.



seventh scene from the Opera to Stefan Zweig chess story photo © Olaf Struck

Opera seventh scene: Tomohiro Takada (Mirko Czentovic), Jörg Sabrowski (Dr. Leo Berger), Michael Müller (Scott McConner). Czentovic (patronizingly): For a dilettante this man was unusually gifted.



*woodcut with embossing to the topic isolation, solitary confinement and torture.  
Unique artwork on mould paper by the artist Elke Rehder*

**Cristóbal Halffter** is a Spanish composer, born 1930 in Madrid. His music often covers topics such as oppression and violence. On behalf of the United Nations in 1968, he wrote the cantata *Yes, speak out, Yes* to the 20th Anniversary of the promulgation of human rights. In 1995 he wrote for the Dresden Philharmonic in remembrance of the victims of the bomb attack the *Memento a Dresden*. Halffter is a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts in Paris and holds Honorary Doctorate degrees from the universities Leon and Madrid. Halffter 1976 conducted for the first time in Kiel. In 2006 came his opera *Don Quixote* for the German premiere at Kiel. With this production Halffter was completely satisfied and on occasion of the 100th Birthday of the Kiel Opera House in 2008 the premiere of his next opera *Lazarus* was held there. Halffter's current opera *Schachnovelle* is a tribute to Stefan Zweig. This opera is an honoring of the grandiose Austrian writer. Halffter has given his best.

The librettist **Wolfgang Haendeler**, born in 1968, studied at the university in Erlangen, German philology, dramatics and philosophy. He was chief dramaturg in Kiel until 2008. Since 2011 Haendeler is senior dramaturg at the Musiktheater Linz in Austria.

**theaterZeit** is a supplement of the newspaper *Kieler Nachrichten*. In the May 2013 issue the woodcut *Schachnovelle 2013* by the artist Elke Rehder was published for the first time. The woodcut is a reminder of the death of Stefan Zweig on 23 Februar 1942 in his exile in Brazil. Stefan Zweig is best known for his novella *The Royal Game* (*Schachnovelle*), his last work before he committed suicide.

*Schachnovelle 2013* - my new woodcut has an image size of 22.7 x 11.7 cm, printed on a sheet size of 31 x 20 cm. The total edition of the black and white woodcut is 350 signed copies. The hand-colored woodcut is in an edition of 100 numbered, titled and signed copies.



*Schachnovelle 2013* - woodcut by Elke Rehder in memoriam of Stefan Zweig,  
against isolation and solitary confinement and torture

special offer at Büchergilde Gallery in Frankfurt [Link to Büchergilde-Gallery](#)



Schachnovelle 2012 - Fischer Verlag - cover illustration by the artist Elke Rehder





Schachnovelle 2004 - editor: Erber Bader, with six woodcuts signed by the artist  
Elke Rehder

Elke Rehder

[www.elke-rehder.de](http://www.elke-rehder.de)