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Tootsie at Bühne Baden A Comedy of Transformation

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With Tootsie, Bühne Baden has brought a musical to its 2026 season that knows precisely what it wants to be: funny, exuberant and very entertaining. Based on the 1982 film starring Dustin Hoffman, the musical features music and lyrics by David Yazbek and a book by Robert Horn. In Baden, Felix Seiler directs a production that embraces the work's comic energy while allowing its more thoughtful themes to emerge naturally.

At the centre of the story is Michael Dorsey, an immensely talented but notoriously difficult actor who cannot find work. His solution is as outrageous as it is ingenious: he creates Dorothy Michaels, disguises himself as a woman and suddenly lands the role that could revive his career. What begins as an elaborate deception quickly becomes much more complicated when Dorothy becomes a success and Michael develops feelings for his co-star Julie Nichols.

Tootsie demands impeccable timing, physical comedy and performers who are willing to throw themselves completely into the absurdity of the situation. Simon Stockinger takes on the demanding dual role of Michael and Dorothy brilliantly, while Clara Mills-Karzel brings warmth to Julie. Around them, the ensemble creates a wonderfully colourful theatrical world, with Missy May, Sebastian Brummer, Franz Frickel, Marika Lichter and Martin Berger among the featured cast.

Musically, the production is equally assured. Under the direction of Victor Petrov, Bühne Baden's orchestra, chorus and dance ensemble give Yazbek's score the energy it needs, while Danny Costello's choreography keeps the stage in almost constant motion. The production design by Darko Petrovic and costumes by Aleš Valášek complete the polished theatrical package. Yet Tootsie is more than a succession of jokes. Beneath the farce lies a pointed examination of gender, ambition and the way women are treated in the entertainment industry.

Michael's experience as Dorothy forces him to confront attitudes he previously failed to recognise. The result is a comedy in which the protagonist does not only learn how to maintain a disguise, but also learns to see other people differently. Bühne Baden's Tootsie is a success because it never forgets the fundamental pleasure of musical comedy. It is lively, beautifully performed and packed with theatrical wit, while still leaving its audience with something to think about. For anyone looking for an evening of sophisticated escapism with plenty of laughter, this Tootsie is an irresistible invitation.

Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

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Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
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