

The Barbican presents the UK premiere of Olga Neuwirth's score to recently restored film *Die Stadt ohne Juden* (1924)

[Die Stadt ohne Juden \(The City Without Jews\):](#)

A Dystopian Prophecy of Intolerance

Thu 15 Nov 2018, Milton Court, 7.00pm and 9.30pm

Commissioned by Barbican Centre, Wiener Konzerthaus, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Sinfonieorchester Basel and ZDF/ARTE

Commemorating the 80th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, the Barbican presents the **UK premiere** performances of a new score by **Olga Neuwirth** to the film *Die Stadt ohne Juden / The City Without Jews (1924)*. The new score will be performed live by Austrian contemporary music ensemble **PHACE** and conductor **Nacho de Paz** alongside a screening of the silent film. There will be two performances on 15 November, at 7pm and 9.30pm, in Milton Court Concert Hall.

The 1924 silent film, directed by Austrian Hans Karl Breslauer, is based on a novel of the same name by fellow Austrian writer Hugo Bettauer. This satirical dystopia is regarded as one of the most important productions of the interwar period and shows the cultural and economic impoverishment of a city that succumbs to intolerance and expels its Jewish population. The city initially celebrates the expulsion, but the jubilation is momentary, once the city's cultural establishments become bankrupt, foreign countries cut off trade links and the population bears witness to social and moral degradation.

The Expressionist film was disturbingly prescient in its depiction of anti-Semitism in Vienna in the wake of the First World War, serving as an allegorical vision of the near future. The film infuriated the National Socialists when first screened in 1924, and the author Bettauer, born into a Jewish family and a campaigner against anti-Semitism, was shot dead by a Nazi in 1925. The original version of the film vanished and was believed lost for more than 90 years, but in 2015 was found by chance in a Parisian flea market. Following a major crowdfunding campaign from Austria's national film archive, the film has now been digitally restored and newly edited.

Austrian composer Olga Neuwirth—renowned for her musical innovations, as well as for taking a political stance in her work and uniquely expanding the musical spectrum beyond classical categories with the hybridity of her compositions—has composed a new soundtrack for amplified ensemble and electronics. The score delves into different sound worlds, fusing the ensemble with layers of samples on which the audience hears grating noises and low rumbles, fragments of Jewish melodies, the sound of Austrian yodelers, and extracts from traditional Viennese wine tavern songs, while archival audio material from Nazi rallies drifts in and out.

"This film is not just an old silent movie but a politically engaged masterpiece", says Neuwirth. "The parallels to current hate campaigns and resentments are terrifying. I'm appalled by the fact that populism, racism, hatred against foreigners and anti-Semitism are again prevalent today." The score is a very personal and particular take on the film material, one which Neuwirth hopes will mirror the bitterly satirical substance of the film itself.

These performances form part of the Barbican's 2018 season, [The Art of Change](#), which explores how the arts respond to, reflect and potentially effect change in the social and political landscape. The performances are also part of the UK Jewish Film Festival.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

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About the Barbican

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