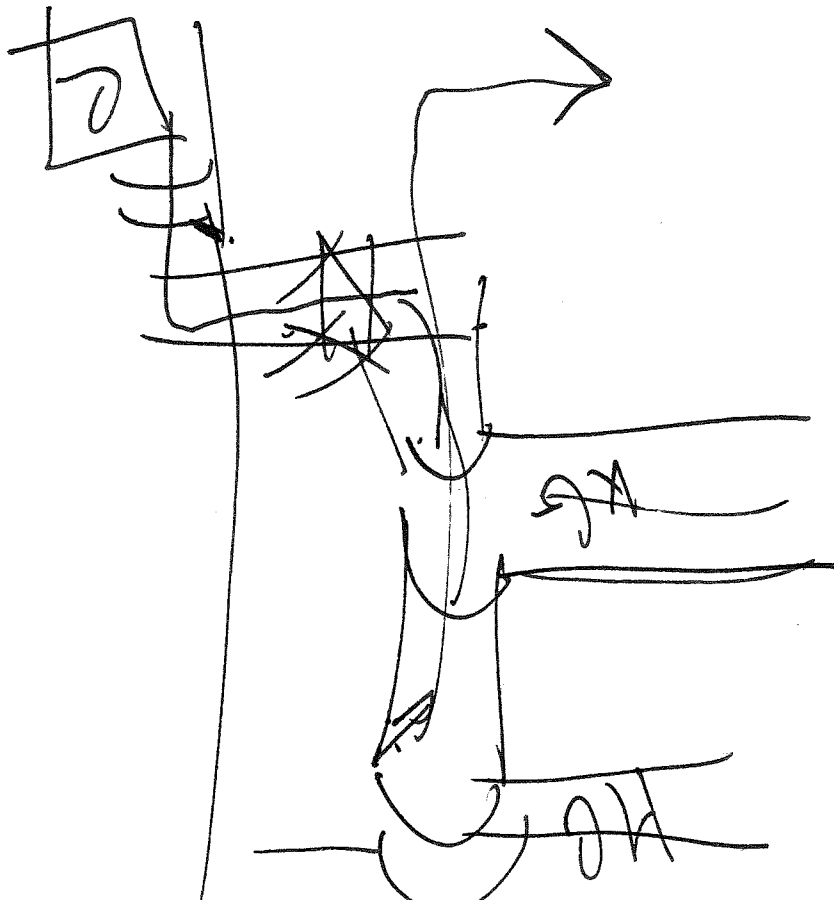




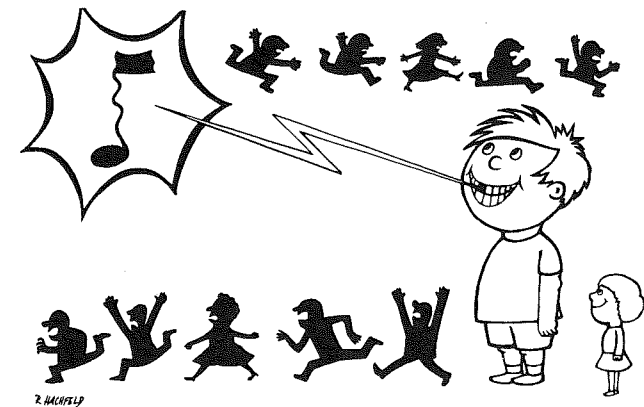
Publisher: GRIPS Theater
 Altonaer Straße 22 (Hansaplatz), 1000 Berlin 21
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 Administrator: Ingrid Pfeffer
 Dramaturg: Ulrike Haß



What is GRIPS?

The word GRIPS derives from the dialectal term *gripsen* which means roughly to understand, to catch on.

GRIPS, a North German expression has the meaning of having the ability to get a quick grasp of a situation using your common sense, reasoning and understanding. This short funny word is used widely and is particularly popular amongst children. GRIPS is understanding with pleasure, thinking which is combined with fun.



A brief history of the GRIPS Theatre

1966

The Berlin *Reichskabarett* set up the *Theater für Kinder* which was the first all-year-round Children's Theatre in Berlin. At this time Christmas fairytales practically monopolized Children's Theatre.

From the very start the ensemble wrote the plays themselves. The productions were very much influenced by the style, the tempo and music of cabaret performances, which allowed for a new kind of enjoyment and perfection in Children's Theatre.

1969

The play *Stokkerlok und Millipilli* marks the real beginning of the history of GRIPS. *Maximilian Pfeiferling*, *Mugnog Kinder*, *Balle, Malle, Hupe und Artur* and *Trummi kaputt* are realistic orientated, but always amusing plays about everyday life influenced by the student movement (1968) and its antiauthoritarian attempts. The focus of the plays is the pushed around loudmouthed children, who have to come to terms with an environment, which is hostile to them. The children are portrayed as having to fight for their own place in society by means of fun and fantasy and at the same time to learn about social circumstances and the background causes to their parents' problems.

1971

In June the *Reichskabarett* discontinued so that the group could concentrate their work solely on what they felt was more important the *Theater für Kinder*. A year later they moved into the Berlin Forum Theatre, a theatre-in-the-round and at the same time gave themselves a new name GRIPS, indicative of their policy. The anti-authoritarian plays were being acknowledged and performed more and more by state theatres in West Germany, as a refreshment to their outdated Christmas time pantomimes, yet later they were performed all the year round.

1972

After working six months on a Swedish participation play a break-away group was formed at GRIPS Theatre, which in 1973 established itself as the independent Children's Theatre group *Rote Grütze*. In the same year the play *Mannomann!*, which questions the woman's role in the family and society, was produced.

1973

This was a very productive year with the plays *Doof bleibt doof*, *Ruhe im Karton!* and *Ein Fest bei Papadakis* being produced, the last play dealt with racial prejudices towards foreign workers.

1974

GRIPS Theatre moved into its new theatre at Hansaplatz which was originally a cinema but had been redesigned according to its own plans into its present day arena type stage.

1975

Parts of the largest political party CDU (Christian Democratic Union) began a campaign against the GRIPS Theatre accusing the group of inciting rebellion amongst children against their own parents and secondly of communist indoctrination. The CDU aimed at eliminating the Senat's subsidy for the theatre and at preventing school classes attending performances. In all CDU controlled areas, the GRIPS performances were forbidden.

In this year the play about emancipation, for young people from five years upwards *Mensch Mädchen!* and the first youth play *Das hältste ja im Kopf nicht aus* were produced. The youth play expresses the desolate situation of the young people in a world of unemployment faced with pointless slogans. For the first time a rockband accompanied the performance. The play ran for three years and caused an overwhelming flow of secondary school pupils heading for GRIPS, most of them attending a theatre for the first time in their lives. GRIPS was awarded the Brüder-Grimm-Preis for this play and was selected at the Berlin Theatertreffen in 1976.

1976

GRIPS made its first attempt at a sort of *Lehrtheater* (didactical theatre) with the play *Banana*, which concerns problems in the Third World. In the following year there was the premiere of *Wasser im Eimer*, the first play which deals with the problems of pollution. This play works towards the illustration of the theme by applying totally new forms and images. Karl-Ernst Herrmann from the *Schaubühne* designed the set.

1978

The second youth play *Die schönste Zeit im Leben*, which examines

the results of youth unemployment in society, was produced. In particular the play focuses on the difficult situation of the working class girls, who face a labour market, which has no prospects, and are part of youth cliques, which are dominated by the male members. Soon afterwards, the play *Max und Milli* was produced, a particularly successful play for people from five years upwards. GRIPS went on tournee with this play through six countries.

1980

Stärker als Superman the play about handicapped people was written. A paraplegic boy is the focal point of the play. Besides this, *Eine linke Geschichte* was produced, this play shows partly ironically the development of the student movement which is also a part of GRIPS own history. Even today this play is still on the GRIPS repertoire.

1981

The third youth play *Alles Plastik* followed. This play reflects the young people's no future mentality as well as life in the squatters' and flatting environment.

1982

GRIPS produced its second play about environmental problems, *Dicke Luft*, but this time not only realistically stressing the threats to the environment but also giving practical incentives to overcome the pollution. The play *Friede Freude Pustekuchen* was an experiment dealing with the theme of education towards peace. The set was an imaginary circus world which revolved around tricks, magic and fantasy.

1984

Leonie Ossowski's youth play *Voll auf der Rolle* had its premiere. The critics received it very favourable, regarding it as a successful play which covered the themes of neofascism and hostility towards foreigners, topics which usually disinterest young people.

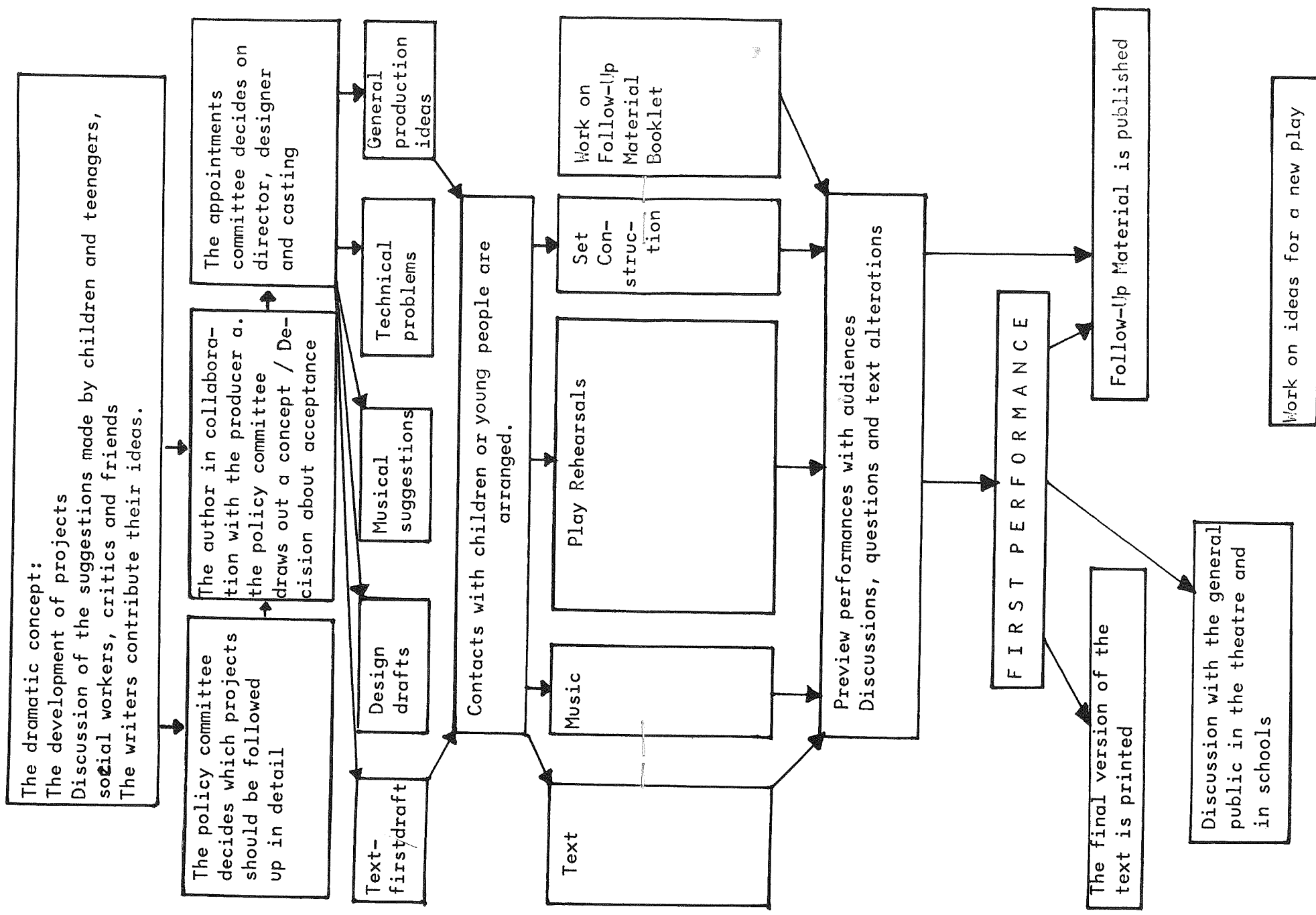
From 1969 to 1984 29 plays have been performed for the first time ever at GRIPS Theatre. Besides this, 7 of these plays have been produced for a second time there.

The success and spreading influence of GRIPS

Theater heute described GRIPS as having completely changed the repertoire of West German theatres. GRIPS has been awarded the Berlin Brüder-Grimm-Preis four times. The production *Das hältste ja im Kopf nicht aus* was selected in 1976 for the Berlin Theatre Festival. In 1977 GRIPS Theatre received the German Trade Union Cultural Prize. In 1982 the German Critics Union presented Volker Ludwig and the GRIPS Theatre with its theatre award. GRIPS has given guest performances all over Europe, from Rome to Helsinki, London to Zurich, Paris to Copenhagen at the Dutch Festival and at the Vienna Festival. Meanwhile GRIPS plays have been performed over 500 times in 29 different languages. Productions have taken place among others in the following cities: Helsinki, Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Reykjavik, Amsterdam, The Haag, Antwerp, Brussels, Paris, London, Liverpool, Basel, Zurich, Vienna, Graz, Milan, Lisbon, Athens, Ankara, Tel Aviv, Milwaukee, Boston, Vancouver, Montreal, Carachi, Colombo, New Delhi, Haiderabad, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Curitiba, Porto Alegre etc., as well as in over sixty West German towns.

In conjunction with the Goethe Institute Volker Ludwig has given seminars about the work of GRIPS Theatre in Holland, England, Ireland, Greece, Turkey, India, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Canada and Brasil. Wolfgang Kolneder has directed GRIPS plays in Norway, Canada, Brasil, Hong Kong and Ireland; Reiner Lückner in Canada and Jörg Friedrich in Indonesia.

GRIPS PRODUCTION PLAN



The Effect of GRIPS

GRIPS takes the side of the children and young people by observing adults and the environment from their position, taking on their view of everyday life in a particularly authoritarian environment, which is hostile to children.

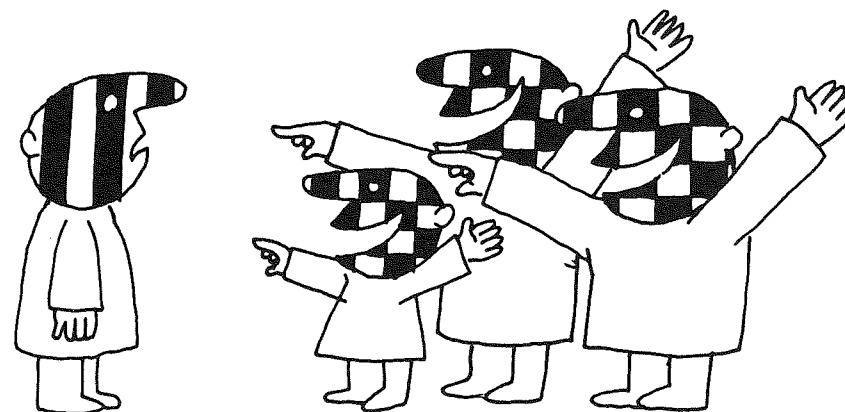
Instead of presenting the children and teenagers with a holy world GRIPS regards its job as encouraging them to develop their self consciousness to help them come to terms with their reality, to see that conditions are changeable, to understand criticism as their undeniable right, to produce enjoyment in creative thinking and in finding alternatives and likewise to stimulate their social imagination. This is achieved through the use of realistic subjects written in a language which the audience accepts as their own, and catchy songs, which are easy to remember so that they can be repeated, thus supporting the basic principle that the audience should sense enjoyment in rational realisation and in its consequent feeling of liberation.

In order that the young people come to terms with their reality, knowledge and awareness of its conditions are a prerequisite. Yet this knowledge can only be grasped through confrontation, which includes both experiences of opposition and solidarity. Thus plays, which deal with female emancipation (*Mannomann!*, *Mensch Mädchen!*), pollution of the environment and the consequent threat to life, in particular that of the child (*Wasser im Eimer*, *Dicke Luft*) prejudices towards foreigners and problems in the Third World (*Ein Fest bei Papadakis*, *Banana*) were written. Besides these plays, there are several children's plays, which concern the everyday events in the family and school (*Trummi kaputt*, *Doof bleibt doof*, *Ruhe im Karton!*) and children's fears (*Heile heile Segen*, *Max und Milli*). In these plays children trick their authoritarian fathers and set them on the right way, nervous and impatient parents and teachers are presented on the stage and the reasons for their behaviour under the alienated working conditions and the unnatural living circumstances are portrayed clearly but in an amusing way.

Since the play *Doof bleibt doof* (1973) GRIPS has published books of materials accompanying each of its plays. The books are written by pedagogues in collaboration with those GRIPS people, who are involved in that particular production and they contain material,

suggestions and stimuli, which will assist in the discussion and further examination of the thematic problems and conflicts presented in the play.

Children's and young people's needs are the basis of the GRIPS' plays. Numerous contacts to social workers, school classes and youth groups help in the preparatory stage of writing the play. Their success can be judged in regards to how much they influenced, extended or changed the audience thoughts, conversations games and actions. The actual visit to the theatre in itself achieves very little. The impressions, which are often very deep, need further productive work. Children and young people want to talk about the play, contribute their own experiences and consider alternatives. In this respect GRIPS is dependent on the cooperation of teachers, social workers and friends. Only in this way the experience in the theatre can increase the social imagination of children and young people and help them come to a better understanding of the problems in their environment.



Financial Aid

Since autumn 1971, after five years of no financial aid, the GRIPS Theatre, earlier known as the *Theater für Kinder im Reichskabarett*, has been subsidised by the Berlin Senate. Until 1974 the financial grant was for 130,000 – 150,000 DM per year, which allowed the ensemble to dedicate themselves solely to the work of children's theatre.

With the support of the Senator for Cultural Affairs, the Berlin Tiergarten Local Authority and especially the German Klassenlotterie, which financed the alterations, the GRIPS Ensemble was able to move into its own theatre on Hansaplatz, which costs annually 130,000 DM in rent.

Meanwhile GRIPS Theatre receives just over one million mark direct annual subsidy. Why does one of the most successful and most economical German theatres giving 380 performances a year to an average 95 % capacity audience need so "much" financial support?

GRIPS plays, which give the theatre such a special status and an international reputation, are not readymade plays. In comparison to the normal play, they demand much more time, expense and detailed work.

The work at GRIPS is enjoyable, but on the other hand it is more grinding than elsewhere. The plays are performed by professional actors, who have foregone the rewards of larger theatres, television and synchronization work.

The qualitative and physical demands on the actors usually extend those in other theatres. But the price of tickets to a performance is the reverse situation. If GRIPS could demand the same price for a ticket as a state theatre, it could forgo completely its financial subsidy. This comparison shows best of all how successful and how economical this theatre works. It is understandable that GRIPS cannot afford to have high prices. The majority of GRIPS audience consists of teenagers and children, who experience for the first time what theatre is all about, thanks to GRIPS and yet they are often financially underprivileged. And it is this group, that GRIPS above all wants to reach.

An overall view of GRIPS Plays

- 1969 *Stokkerlok und Millipilli* (Uraufführung: 17. 5. 1969) von Rainer Hachfeld und Volker Ludwig
Maximilian Pfeiferling (Uraufführung: 5. 11. 1969) von Carsten Krüger und Volker Ludwig
- 1970 *Mugnog-Kinder* (Uraufführung: 2. 5. 1970) von Rainer Hachfeld
- 1971 *Balle, Malle, Hupe und Artur* (Uraufführung: 14. 3. 1971) von Dagmar Dorsten, Uli Gressieker, Volker Ludwig, Stefan Ostertag, Carsten Krüger und Ensemble
Trummi kaputt (Uraufführung: 18. 11. 1971) von Volker Ludwig
- 1972 *Mannomann!* (Uraufführung: 31. 5. 1972) von Volker Ludwig, Reiner Lückner und Ensemble
- 1973 „*Doof bleibt doof*“ (Uraufführung: 16. 2. 1973) von Uli Gressieker, Volker Ludwig und Reiner Lückner
Ruhe im Karton! (Uraufführung: 23. 10. 1973) von Stefan Reisner
Ein Fest bei Papadakis (Uraufführung: 10. 12. 1973) von Volker Ludwig, Christian Sorge und Ensemble
- 1974 *Die Ruckzuckmaschine* (Uraufführung: 10. 6. 1974) von Reiner Lückner und Stefan Reisner
Nashörner schießen nicht (Uraufführung: 6. 10. 1974) von Volker Ludwig und Jörg Friedrich
- 1975 *Mensch Mädchen!* (Uraufführung: 28. 2. 1975) von Stefan Reisner
Das hältste ja im Kopf nicht aus (Uraufführung: 18. 9. 1975) von Volker Ludwig und Detlef Michel
- 1976 *Kannst du zaubern, Opa?* (Uraufführung: 20. 2. 1976) von Stefan Reisner und Rainer Hachfeld
Banana (Uraufführung: 10. 9. 1976) von Rainer Hachfeld und Reiner Lückner
- 1977 *Vatermutterkind* (Uraufführung: 4. 3. 1977) von Volker Ludwig und Reiner Lückner
... und raus bist du! (Uraufführung: 7. 6. 1977) von Christian Veit, Wolfgang Kolneder und Ensemble
Wasser im Eimer (Uraufführung: 16. 12. 1977) von Reiner Lückner und Stefan Reisner

- 1978 *Die schönste Zeit im Leben* (Uraufführung: 24. 5. 1978) von Volker Ludwig und Detlef Michel
Max und Milli (Uraufführung: 3. 11. 1978) von Volker Ludwig
- 1979 *Spaghetti mit Ketchup* (Uraufführung: 14. 12. 1979) von Rainer Hachfeld unter Mitarbeit von Dietrich Lehmann
- 1980 *Stärker als Superman* (Uraufführung: 7. 3. 1980) von Roy Kift (aus dem Englischen von Volker Ludwig)
Eine linke Geschichte (Uraufführung: 23. 5. 1980) von Volker Ludwig und Detlef Michel
Heile heile Segen (Uraufführung: 5. 12. 1980) von Volker Ludwig und Christian Veit
- 1981 *Alles Plastik* (Uraufführung: 26. 9. 1981) von Volker Ludwig und Detlef Michel
- 1982 *Dicke Luft* (Uraufführung: 23. 4. 1982) von Volker Ludwig und Reiner Lücker
Friede Freude Pustekuchen (Uraufführung: 27. 11. 1982) von Reiner Lücker und Stefan Reisner
- 1983 *Der Spinner* (Uraufführung: 16. 12. 1983) von Volker Ludwig und Henning Spangenberg
- 1984 *Voll auf der Rolle* (Uraufführung: 19. 4. 1984) von Leonie Ossowski