

MD



A comedy written by  
Don Zolidis

presented by  
The Gay Beggars Drama Group



A little background to begin. This production of “The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon” begins at a kitchen table somewhere in Basel, as a group of Beggars sits together to talk about fairy tale themed plays. Someone at the table introduces us to “The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon” but it takes a couple of months until we realise that this play is a great match for us and just about as mad as what we’re about to attempt.

Being newbies ourselves, we agree that a workshop would be a great way to find our directing feet and offer other newcomers an easy gateway drug into Beggardom. We plan six sessions that cover, among other things, improv acting, character work and voice and movement sessions that include a trip to Augusta Raurica. With a little help from our friends, five successful sessions pass. After cutting the roles of the play down to just under 40, we choose the members of our cast and everyone gets to read their lines for the first time during the sixth and final session.

With scripts and cast ready, three intense months of rehearsals pass. The result is what you see on stage now, an amalgam of experimental experience, friendly friends, laugh-out-loud laughter and weeks of work.

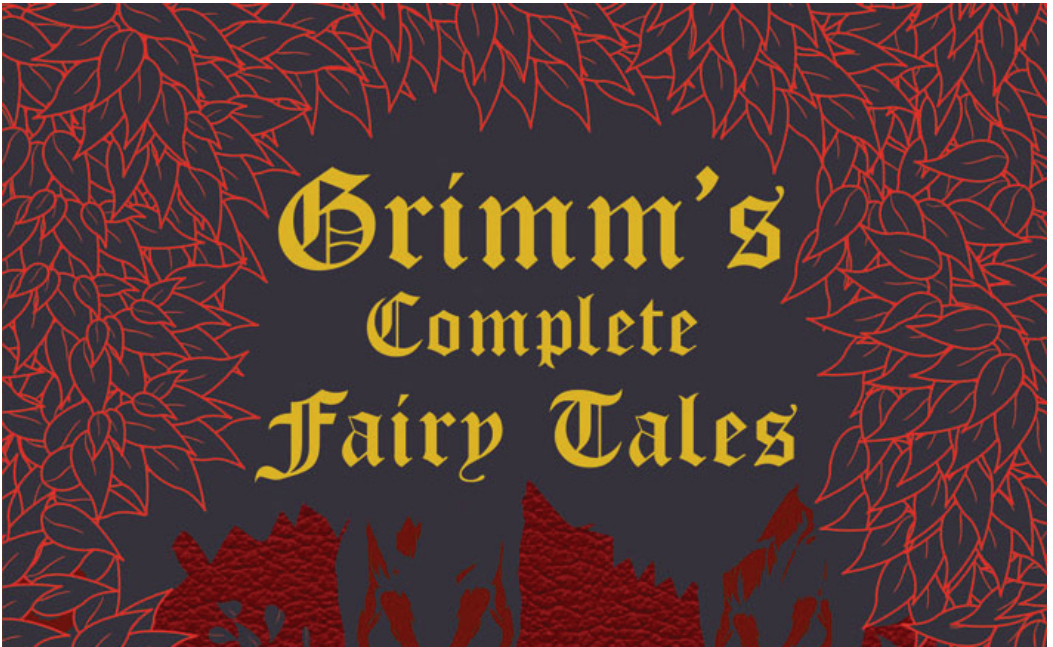
Back when we sat in that kitchen, we played with the idea of a project with friends. What we ended up doing was a project with friends and even more friends. We are grateful to our cast, friends and all the people we can rely on in and out of Beggardom, on and off stage. This is for you. May we all laugh happily ever after.

**Jessica Meier:** Selina and I started our project in May 2018. During a seven month process of workshops, castings, rehearsals and organisational matters I never got tired of working with our cast. I was most interested in learning about interpersonal dynamics: how they work on stage and backstage and how to channel the different energies in our cast into a play that weaves them all together. My experiences of these past few months taught me a lot more than I could have ever wished for and I am forever grateful.



**Selina Wolfisberg:** My initial doubts about “The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon” dissipated once the workshops started and people breathed life into the characters. To see theatre younglings, and those with more experience, grow into Jedi of the stage, to see them navigate it with ease and joy and turn the play into the good kind of silly was truly a privilege. I cannot say enough how inspired I am by the talent and range our cast showed us. Their kindness and generosity will be a happy memory for the Ever After.





“Once upon a time...” - The beginning of every Grimm fairy tale is an invitation into a world that is not our own. The collected stories of the Brothers Grimm take their audience into a land of fantasy and dreams, the wonderful and the cruel, the evil, the mysterious and the beautiful. Their setting in time and space remains unknown.

Where animals talk and behave like humans, where dwarves, ghosts and witches are as much at home as princ\*esses and evil stepmothers, the audience is confronted with several fundamentally human experiences. The protagonists of these stories become gatekeepers to the human soul as they go through some of our deepest emotions, be it love, hate, fear, loneliness, greed or pride.

This room of the fantastic can be a refuge and a counterworld to our reality. In a narra-

tive of good versus evil, fairy tales are often used to create a fiction of a world in order. Their message: everything can be different from how it is.

The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon lends itself well to breaking with such clichées. The fairy tale parody, written by US author Don Zolidis in 2007, is full of characters who question traditional gender roles, xenophobia or capitalism and problematize popular relationship concepts such as feelings of entitlement or the idea(l) of love at first sight.

The Brothers Grimm’s “Kinder- und Hausmärchen” is one of the most frequently translated works of literature of the German language. They are part of our past and contemporary cultural history and a classic of world literature. It’s time to have a look at them from a new angle.



### **GAY BEGGARS**

The Gay Beggars are an independent and non-professional theatre company which has specialised in the production of plays (etc.) written in English. Founded by stu-

dents of the Department of English at the University of Basel in the early 40s, the Gay Beggars have in recent years managed to stage one to two plays per year.

Our group functions mainly project-based and people with an insatiable interest in theatre and a reasonably good command of the English language are very welcome to look in and join at any time. Though quite demanding and time-consuming, theatre work with the Gay Beggars offers you a brilliant opportunity

to get involved in a rewarding activity and get to know other students.

We don't know yet what our next project is going to be or who is going to produce and/or direct it. If you want to stay informed or if you want to share your own idea, please drop us a line at [info@gaybeggars.ch](mailto:info@gaybeggars.ch).

More information on past and upcoming productions, many pictures and witty posts can be found through the following channels:

[www.gaybeggars.ch](http://www.gaybeggars.ch)

[www.facebook.com/gaybeggars](https://www.facebook.com/gaybeggars)

Twitter and Instagram: [@thegaybeggars](https://twitter.com/thegaybeggars)

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## The Cast



Since joining the Gay Beggars 5 years ago this veteran is on his 5th play. **Andy Gabriel** always finds a reason to come back, whether it's friends or the script or just having his arm twisted. After a silent first foray into theatre, he is relishing the new challenge in physical comedy. Studying Medical Informatics at the FHNW takes up most of his time, but when he's not number-crunching, he can be found searching the world for Pokémon. His life goal is to be the very best, like no-one ever was... (Stuart about Andy)



Always leading at least 4 lives at the same time, **Adrian Oettli** is busy as a bee. This explains why he rides his scooter around Basel at lightning speed. Some might say this is how he time-travels to actually be able to combine said lives. The lives vary, but include being a nurse (i.e. looking at weird genital things pretty much all day long), acting, playing various instruments, studying History and German, and maintaining his astonishing stock of costumes for any occasion. He can seem shy at first, but once you get to know him, you'll find he has a very dark and shady soul. (Andy about Adrian)



Calm but vivacious, **Silja Keller** is the friend everyone wants and needs. She has been around the globe, most recently in Israel, and always has a good story to tell. Her acting chops span from primary to highschool, and she has also directed two children's musicals. She has an amazing fashion sense and holds the unofficial award for best braids of the cast. Silja is also a Dungeons & Dragons champion and is able to take on any monster you throw at her. (Shannon about Silja)

**Maria Ionescu** likes all kinds of animals, from birds that flit to and fro over sled dogs to wish-granting fish. She also enjoys being an actress, having decided that she wants to be an actress after the first time she took part in a school play. These days she studies English and Media Studies and has set her sights more on writing for film than taking on the stage herself but the Beggars did pull her in for one more play. She also rocks amazing silver shoes. (Mark about Maria)



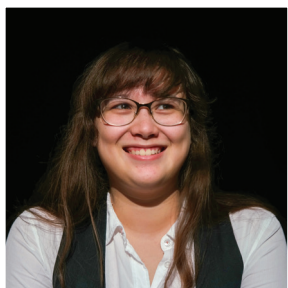
**Laura Billingham** may be performing with the Beggars for the first time but is certainly no stranger to the stage. Having performed in several English style Christmas panto productions here in Basel, she joined the Beggars hoping to act in a drama. Well, that may not have worked out as planned, but Laura has enjoyed her time with like-minded crazy actors. When not on stage, Laura loves to channel different characters when playing video games or cosplaying. She is also a skilled artist and her very own fashion icon, which makes sense given her impeccable and unique style. She also sings, plays the guitar and is an engineer. You know, just your average loveable geek. (Heidi about Laura)



There are many ways that could describe **Shannon Hughes**, like describing her likes and dislikes or that she is kind and gentle although she may not describe herself as such. The roles she portrays on stage are not who she is. Though if you unleash her wrath, she probably can call on the power of Hades... Ssshhh... You didn't read a thing. (Laura about Shannon)



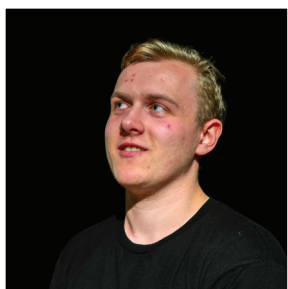
## The Cast



Most importantly, **Charis Billingham** loves her little nephew and her cat Cinder (fittingly named after Cinderella) very much. And apart from enjoying reading comic books in her free time, she is also a passionate writer, having written many stories and also two plays, one of which was performed by the Basel English Pantomime Group. She has also regularly been on the theatre stage since she was 10 years old, her narrator role in this production is, however, her first main role. (Maria about Charis)



**Heidi Haas**, a long-time fan and first-time performer of the Gay Beggars, is a bright teacher with a devil-may-care attitude. She has a love for mystery and adventure and has overcome many obstacles in her life, including but not limited to her inability to currently not tapdance and her phobia of clowns. Her favourite Grimm tales are the Wishing-Table, the Gold-Ass and the Cudgel in the Sack, but let's not talk about Heidi. Let's talk about her adorable doggy Picket instead! He's the cutest and he wears bowties and he loves everyone and literally everyone loves him and he's probably a better person than you too and have you seen his photo? Melts my heart every time. #picketthepup #4life (Charis about Heidi)



You might say, this good-looking aspiring writer, actor and singer is the Beggar's very own Hugh Jackman. Not only does he originate from Australia, but he was also recently to be seen in his first musical. Only 19 years old (although you can say his mind is older), **Léon Othenin-Girard** is still in school and busy studying for the matura whenever he's not flying around on a broomstick for the local Quidditch team. (Adrian about Léon)



If you compare **Michelle Steinmetz** to her characters, you probably won't find much that they have in common. She really likes the water, and many things related to it, which is why it's no surprise that her favourite Disney movie is *Treasure Planet*, with its flying boats. She likes puzzles, food, climbing, and knitting, as well as reading really bad novels because she knows exactly what to expect. (Léon about Michelle)



**Mark Zeman**, while unfortunately not being royalty outside of theater, wears the title of nerd king proudly: from roleplaying to conventions to his recently obtained Master of Computer Science (IT), he does it all. Outside of that, you can count on Mark to give really good hugs and look fabulous in his civil protection gear! (Michelle about Mark)



**Stuart Brown** literally lives above the train station, but his true home is Hong Kong. There he has taken care of students with special talents, teaching them how to become productive members of society. When not working as a sound and light engineer or a teacher, Stuart collects records, fills his library with 50s pulp science fiction, plays bass (especially 60s rock), works as a 70s and 80s amateur DJ and watches 90s action movies. Apart from that he provides the Beggars with delicious food, so that they do not have to subsist wholly on Snickers bars. (Silja about Stuart)



# Credits & Acknowledgements

## Cast (in order of appearance):

Narrator 1	Charis Billingham
Narrator 2	Laura Billingham
Actor 1 / Rumpelstiltskin	Andrew Gabriel
Another Actor / Talking Fish / Cinderella	Silja Keller
Girl / Gretel / Prince 3	Maria Ionescu
Dirt Merchant / Prince 2 / King / Little Red	Mark Zeman
Enchantress / Witch 1 / Fishergirl / Snow White	Heidi Haas
Devil 1 / Witch 2 / Devil 2	Shannon Hughes
Prince 1 / Hansel / Grandma / Actor 2	Léon Othenin-Girard
Rapunzel / Princess / The Devil's Grandmother	Michelle Steinmetz
Frog Prince / Dwarf 1 / Walt / Woodcutter	Stuart Brown
Dwarf 2 / Doctor / Wolf	Adrian Oettli

**Direction, Costumes and Stage Design** Jessica Meier and Selina Wolfisberg

**Make-up** Jessica Meier and Alina Meyer

**Lights** Jessica Meier, Selina Wolfisberg and Nicolas Hunziker

**Poster and Flyer Design** Mario Grossert

**Programme Editing** Roman Bischof

**PR and Social Media** Julia Brosi

**Sponsoring** Soraya Streib

A special thank you goes to **Alex Van Lierde** for his support of this production and the Gay Beggars in general.

**Céline Meyer** deserves our thanks for the movement session she lead during the workshop and her advice beyond that. **Livia Grossenbacher** helped shape our cast's voices and we're grateful for all her work from the workshop to the stage.

We would also like to thank **Nicolas Hunziker** and **Matt Billingham**, who helped install the lights, our friends/test audience for their feedback and the various members of our cast who helped out behind the scenes.

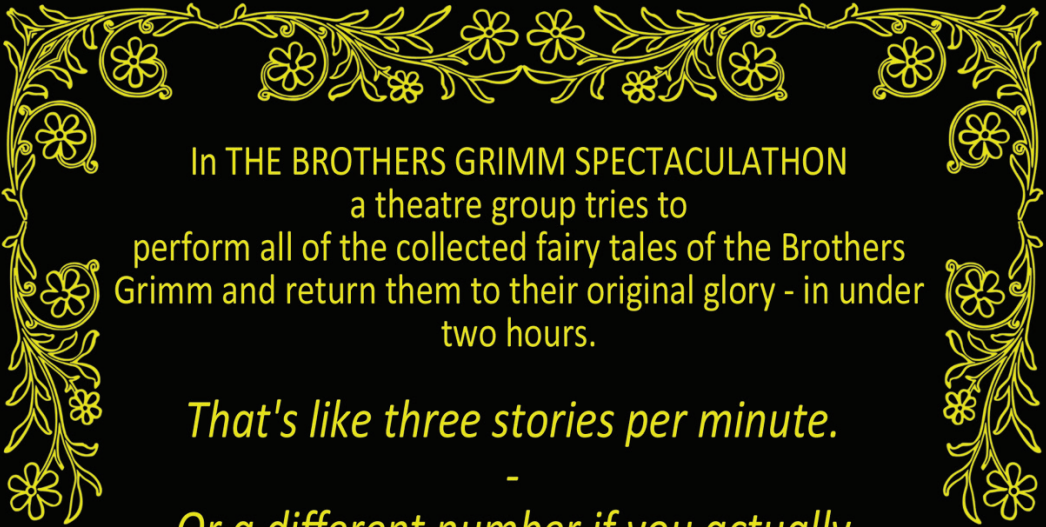
Finally, we want to thank the people who so generously offered their help for bar and box office and **Michelle**, **Nicolas** and **Heidi** who helped with the organisation and logistical matters.

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