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PROMOTIONSPROGRAMM
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VERANSTALTUNGSORT

IBZ= Internationales Begegnungszentrum
der Wissenschaft München e.V.
Amalienstraße 38
80799 München

VERANSTALTUNGSZEIT

4. August 2012, 18.00 Uhr
mit anschließendem Umtrunk

MODERATION

Prof. Dr. Christopher Balme,
Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, LMU München

Veranstaltet im Rahmen der ProArt-Summer-School
„The Arts and the Future“.
In Kooperation mit dem Promotionsprogramm ProArt
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

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FROM ['frʌm] GESTURES ['dʒɛstʃɜ:z] TO ['tu:] NERVES ['nɜ:vz]

PERCY SHELLEY, GEORG BÜCHNER, AND
THE BIRTH OF MODERN THEATER

4. August 2012
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A Lecture by
Prof. Matthew Wilson Smith



„FROM GESTURES TO NERVES“

Percy Shelley, Georg Büchner, and the Birth of Modern Theater

A LECTURE BY PROF. MATTHEW WILSON SMITH

Cornell University, Ithaca NY, USA

This talk charts a fundamental transformation in European culture, a transformation marked by two visionary dramas. By the late eighteenth century, gesture had become more than merely an important element of theatrical practice; it had become a way of preserving a classical unity of beauty and truth, of fixing an elusive correspondence between language and inner life, and of grounding universal sympathy in a supposedly universal language. But gestural theories of language proved increasingly unpersuasive, in part due to the challenges posed to such theories by the rapidly developing science of neurology, a science that was steadily displacing the study of gesture as a key to thought and feeling.

Two dramatic works, both unstaged until decades later, embody this epistemic change from gesture to nerves: Percy Shelley's *The Cenci* and Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*. These two plays herald not only the shape of the modern stage but also the shape of modern structures of knowledge and power.