

Born 22 March 1941 in Zurich. After a short sojourn in Paris, studied acting at the Bühnenstudio in Zurich (today's Schauspiel-Akademie). Began receiving roles in Swiss films in 1960; 1962 Junges Theater Göttingen; 1964 Theater am Goetheplatz, Bremen; 1967 first production directed by Peter Stein; 1970 West Berlin, heart of the ensemble of the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer; 1973 21 of 35 surveyed critics mention Bruno Ganz's name; 1975 starts working regularly as a screen actor; from 1976 turns exclusively to films; 1982 returns to the stage at the Theater am Leniner Platz in Berlin (Hamlet, directed by Klaus Michael Grüber); 1984 plays Oberon in Der Park, directed by Peter Stein; continues appearing in films as well, e.g. Wings of Desire, 1987 (Wim Wenders), Mia aioniotita kai mia mera, 1998 (Theo Angelopoulos) or the waiter and melancholy lover Fernando in Silvio Soldini's Bread and Tulips, 1999. His work in 2003 includes a role in Oliver Hirschbiegel's film Der Untergang.

FILMOGRAPHY

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| 1960 | Der Herr mit der schwarzen Melone , Director: Karl Suter |
| 1961 | Chikita , Director: Karl Suter |
| 1962 | Es Dach überem Chopf , Director: Kurt Früh |
| 1966 | Der sanfte Lauf , Director: Haro Senft |
| 1968 | Die Schlacht bei Lobositz (TV), Director: Franz Peter Wirth |
| 1969 | Eine grosse Famile (TV), Director: Peter Beauvais |
| 1975 | Sommergäste (TV), Director: Peter Stein
Die Marquise von O... , Director: Eric Rohmer
Lumière , Director: Jeanne Moreau |
| 1976 | Die Wildente , Director: Helmut W. Geissendörfer
Der amerikanische Freund , Director: Wim Wenders |
| 1977 | Die linkshändige Frau , Director: Peter Handke |
| 1978 | The Boys from Brazil , Director: Franklin J. Schaffner
Schwarz und weiss wie Tage und Nächte , Director: Wolfgang Petersen
Messer im Kopf , Director: Reinhard Hauff
Nosferatu – Phantom der Nacht , Director: Werner Herzog
Retour à la bien-aimé , Director: Jean-François Adam |

BRUNO GANZ



Stage Star as Screen Actor

Whether on the stage – in Peter Stein's celebrated production of *Faust*, for example – or in the cinema, Zurich-born Bruno Ganz is one of Switzerland's internationally best-known actors. He attracted attention early on in films by Wim Wenders and Eric Rohmer, has worked with numerous Swiss directors like Alain Tanner, Kurt Gloor and Claude Goretta, and has, in recent years, offered impressive portrayals of "more mature" characters in works by Theo Angelopoulos and Silvio Soldini.

Ask who has dominated the German-speaking stage over the past thirty years, and people will probably be quick to agree on Bruno Ganz. He is one of the very few to have concentrated on the language of the poets during this period, not only on stage, but in readings and on record. His young colleague Jens Harzer says: "I suspect that, through the spoken word, Bruno Ganz can confront the world with his own world of language, as if, by this means, words could linger on for seconds more. This is, in the last analysis, probably a profoundly poetic process on the part of the actor; he is actually recreating the work of the poet. It is the only way that speech, too, can become silence – when one searches inside oneself for breath, follows the melody of the words and finally, sung out, reaches an end." (*Theater heute*, 6/2001)

From this description one would hardly expect it, but: Bruno Ganz is also an outstanding film actor, who knows perfectly well that the artistic techniques needed in front of the camera must sometimes diverge from the ones he employs on the stage. He can trust nuances that don't "come across" to Row 20 in the theatre, and he can deploy a physicality that may relegate spoken language to no more than the decisive means of expression.

The difficult hero

Bruno Ganz was born in Zurich on 22 March 1941, but has acted almost exclusively on the German stage, in the most important, most innovative theatres: in the Sixties with Kurt Hübner in Bremen, from 1970 to 1975 and again in the Eighties at the Berliner Schaubühne. Since then he has not belonged to an ensemble. Ganz is one of the few actors in the present-day theatre capable of bringing credibility to pathos because of the touch of irony and distance he gives every role. He has played classical heroes throughout his career: Hamlet in Bremen as early as 1965 and then again in 1982 at the Schaubühne (director: Klaus Michael Grüber), Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* in

"O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown,
shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart
Absent thee from felicity awhile.
And in this harsh world draw thy
breath in pain,
To tell my story."

Hamlet to Horatio (William Shakespeare, HAMLET)

- 1979 **5% de risque**,
Director: Jean Pourtalé
Oggetti smaritti,
Director: Giuseppe Bertolucci
- 1980 **Polenta**, Director: Maya Simon
La Provinciale,
Director: Claude Goretta
La dame aux camelias,
Director: Mauro Bolognini
Der Erfinder,
Director: Kurt Gloor
Fermata Etna,
Director: Klaus Michael Grüber
Etwas wird sichtbar,
Director: Harun Farocki
- 1981 **Die Fälschung**,
Director: Volker Schlöndorff
Logik des Gefühls,
Director: Ingo Kratisch
Gedächtnis. Ein Film für Curt Bois und Bernhard Minetti,
Directors: Bruno Ganz, Otto Sander
- 1982 **Krieg und Frieden**,
Directors: Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff, Stefan Aust, Axel Engstfeld
Dans la ville blanche,
Director: Alain Tanner
System ohne Schatten,
Director: Rudolf Thome
- 1983 **Killer aus Florida**,
Director: Klaus Schaffhauser
Der Riss durch die Welt – "Anton Reiser" (TV),
Director: Peter Laemmle
- 1984 **D'Issalon**,
Director: Dymitjr Franka Frank
Väter und Söhne (TV),
Director: Bernhard Sinkel
- 1985 **Der Pendler**,
Director: Bernhard Giger
Peter Pan,
Director: Jaime Chavarri
- 1987 **Der Himmel über Berlin**,
Director: Wim Wenders
- 1989 **Strapless**, Director: David Hare
Noch ein Wunsch
Director: Thomas Koerfer
- 1990 **Bankomatt**,
Director: Villi Hermann
Erfolg, Director: Franz Seitz
Die Wette (TV),
Director: Martin Walz
- 1991 **Tassilo – Ein Fall für sich (TV)**,
Director: Hajo Gies
Börn náttúrunnar,
Director: Fridrik Por Fridriksson
La Domenica speciale,
Directors: Francesco Barilli, Giuseppe Bertolucci
- 1992 **Prague**, Director: Jan Sellar
The Last Days of Chez Nous,
Director: Gillian Armstrong
Brandnacht,
Director: Markus Fischer
- 1993 **L'Absence**,
Director: Peter Handke
In weiter Ferne, so nah!,
Director: Wim Wenders
Le Quator des possibles,
Director: Edna Politi

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Bremen in 1969, Kleist's **Prince of Homburg** in 1972 at the Schaubühne (Peter Stein) and Hölderlin's **Empedocles** (1975) at the Schaubühne (Grüber). In 1986 he played Prometheus in Handke's adaptation of Aeschylus' **Prometheus Bound** (Grüber), in 1996 Odysseus in the premiere of Botho Strauss's **Ithaca** at the Münchner Kammerspiele (Dieter Dorn). And in 2000/2001 he was the protagonist in Peter Stein's uncut version of **Faust**.

Testing boundaries

And then there is the other Bruno Ganz, the one who can be discovered in films and on television. But even on screen, there is always an element of theatrical pathos, which, when employed consciously, can be very exciting. In **The Marquise of O...** (1976), directed with masterful restraint by Eric Rohmer, Ganz's demeanour is stern and serious; he speaks Kleist's well-turned phrases so beautifully that the individual behind the rhetorical form becomes palpable. His physical acting, from the way he looks at his beloved (Edith Clever) to the way he throws himself down before her, though pathos-ridden, is never clumsy. This is the place for anyone who wants an idea of what Bruno Ganz was like at the Schaubühne to gain an authentic impression.

In Wim Wenders' **Wings of Desire** (1987), Ganz manages to deliver Handke's somewhat tortuous lyricisms as if they were genuine poetry. But the opposite has happened, too: in Wenders' next Berlin film, **Faraway, So Close** (1993), even Ganz is mired down by the murky profundities of co-writer Ulrich Ziege.

That there is another way was proven by the wily Clemens Klopfenstein in his literary road-movie **WerAngstWolf** (2000): Bruno Ganz and Tina Engel shine in their episode, in Handke, of all things, with excerpts from his adaptation of **Prometheus Bound**. Unbridled nature and a bar provide settings for acting that is relaxed and free. Mention of the word "liver" prompts Ganz to do a marvellously ironic turn about and for alcoholics.

"How shall I describe how I played Hamlet? I can't do it. I'm incapable of describing my acting."

Bruno Ganz (pressbook BEHIND ME)

An uncommon lightness of touch

Bruno Ganz's film career began in the Seventies, and he showed a sure instinct for the cinema from the start. In **The American Friend** (1977) (based on Patricia Highsmith's Ripley's Game), he played a Swiss picture-frame maker living in Hamburg. Under Wenders' tight direction, Ganz's acting is restrained: he commits his first contract murder with almost ghostly composure, but gradually starts to become unhinged. He begins losing his grip, feels haunted, is terminally ill and, in the final sequence, dies. In its simplicity, this is perhaps the most moving scene Ganz has ever done on screen. After his argument with the Mafiosi, he is driving back to Hamburg in his red VW when

- 1994 **Heller Tag**,
Director: André Nitschke
- 1995 **Il Grande Fausto** (TV),
Director: Alberto Siloni
Diario senza date
Director: Roberto Andó
- 1996 **Anwalt Abel – Ein Richter in Angst** (TV), Director: Josef Rödli
Tatort – Schattenwelt (TV),
Director: Josef Rödli
Tödliches Schweigen (TV),
Director: Bernd Böhlich
- 1997 **Saint-Ex**,
Director: Anand Tucker
- 1998 **Gegen Ende der Nacht** (TV),
Director: Oliver Storz
Mia aioniotita kai mia mera,
Director: Theo Angelopoulos
You can't go home again,
Director: Bart van Etsch
- 2000 **WerAngstWolf**,
Director: Clemens Klopfenstein
Pane e tulipani,
Director: Silvio Soldini
- 2001 **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**
(TV), Directors: Thomas Grimm
and Peter Schönhofer
Epsteins Nacht,
Director: Urs Egger
- 2002 **La Forza del passato**,
Director: Piergiorgio Gay
- 2003 **Luther**, Director: Eric Till
- 2004 **Der Untergang**,
Director: Oliver Hirschbiegel

TRANSLATION

Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart,
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he suddenly loses control of the car. He laughs and tells his wife: "It's getting dark", and says it in Swiss German, although, except with a compatriot, he has always spoken High German up to that point.

Many films with prominent directors followed, among them **Nosferatu** (Herzog, 1978), **La Provinciale** (Goretta, 1980), **Circle of Deceit** (Schlöndorff, 1981) and **In the White City** (Tanner, 1982). At the time he said in an interview that he enjoyed acting in front of the camera, because in the theatre it was often hard to overcome the restlessness and inattentiveness of the audience. And one recognises his fascination with the film medium.

In Reinhard Hauff's **Knife in the Head** (1978), he plays a scientist who, mistaken for a terrorist, is shot in the head by a policeman and has to spend months relearning how to talk and move – a virtuoso piece of acting. In Switzerland Kurt Gloor gave him one of the few (tragi-)comic roles of his career in **Der Erfinder** (1980), about an inveterate tinkerer and dreamer who invents something that already exists.

In his latest films Ganz demonstrates what a brilliant screen actor he is, even in a comparatively theatrical piece like Urs Egger's **Epstein's Night** (2002): shoulders hunched, feet dragging, Ganz delivers an eloquently subdued portrayal of a victim of humiliation.

In Theo Angelopoulos' **Eternity and a Day** (1998), he injects a note of defiant energy into the autumnal mood of the dying poet; and in **Bread and Tulips** (2000), he gently conveys the melancholy and yearning of waiter Fernando with the finest of brushstrokes – two very different roles played with quiet restraint.

The big roles of advanced age, like **King Lear**, lie ahead of Bruno Ganz, but it would be wonderful if, on screen, he continued to pursue Fernando's low-key humour and became a comedian.

Wilhelm Roth