



## Director of the Passion Play in Oberammergau is honored for his work against anti-Semitism

01.02.2020 | Abraham Geiger College

**Christian Stückl is awarded the Abraham Geiger Prize. Stückl renewed the Oberammergau Passion Play: away from Christian hatred of the Jews towards a balanced representation of inner-Jewish conflicts, the jury explained.**

Christian Stückl has been the director of the Passion Play in Oberammergau, which takes place every ten years, since 1990. And right from the start, he set about using the passion for inter-religious dialogue. And to get rid of the traditional Christian anti-Judaism. For this he is now awarded the Abraham Geiger Prize.

### **Away from Christian hatred of Jews**

"We think that you have given weight to an important message: that we have to fight racism and anti-Semitism in our country in order to secure a pluralistic society", the jury explained their decision. Stückl has renewed the internationally known passion play: away from Christian hatred of the Jews towards a balanced representation of inner-Jewish conflicts.

In the Nazi era, Adolf Hitler wanted to take over the Passion Play, he classified it as "important to the Reich". After the war, criticism of the text became all the louder. Jewish artists such as Billy Wilder or Leonard Bernstein denounced the anti-Semitic tones. Cardinal Julius Döpfner from Munich urged reforms: it could no longer claim „a fault or even a collective fault of the Jews" for the violent death of Jesus. But the Oberammergau population remained stubborn. Consequently, in 1970 Döpfner withdrew church recognition for the play.

When Christian Stückl, for whom the passion story also has a political message, became the youngest director in history in 1990, he tackled the old conflict. He traveled to the major Jewish organizations in the United States, whose representatives then came to Bavaria. Incriminated passages of text have been removed. Before the rehearsals begin Stückl and his actors travel to Israel to follow the traces of Jesus. The ensemble itself also was opened by Stückl: In 2020 Abdullah Kenan Karaca is the deputy director at Stückl's side - a Muslim who grew up in Oberammergau.

### **Memory of a liberal rabbi**

The Abraham Geiger Prize is awarded every two years by the Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam. The college is named after the liberal rabbi Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), who had already asked for a Jewish theological faculty at a German university in 1836. Previous winners were Hans Küng, Angela Merkel and Amos Oz.

The Abraham Geiger Prize is endowed with 10,000 euros and will be awarded on May 13 in Oberammergau. Charlotte Knobloch, President of the Jewish Community in Munich and Upper Bavaria, will give the laudatory speech.

Source: [Abraham Geiger College](#), Berlin, Germany.