

Ortrud Beginnen (1938 – 1999) was one of the great soloists of German cabaret history: an "improvisational genius with chaos as her method" (Theater heute, 1999). An actress, a singer, and a cabaret performer, she complemented theatrical roles for Claus Peymann with about twenty cabaret programs from 1973 on. Her trademark was the double-edged, ironic interpretation of classical texts as well as her "trivial theater" style as developed in programs such as "I Want to Be Your Comrade" ("Ich will deine Kameradin sein") and "Front Theater." Already from 1969 to 1975, when she performed in the ensemble of Berlin's Imperial Cabaret (Reichskabarett), she was celebrated as the "Duse of the Ludwigkirchplatz" and a "Diva in Aspic" (Friedrich Luft). She specialized in bizarre, flitting female character portraits located between madness and suffering. Her programs, "drawn from the suitcase of catastrophes," portrayed a grotesque collection of images of the German mentality.

Ortrud Beginnen

"A silent-movie prima donna with the sweet sinfulness of old-school sentimentalists...a comedienne who provokes more laughter the more seriously she behaves. A would-be vamp and would-be untouchable virgin—and both of them at the same time." (Klaus Gietel, 1992)

