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Hannibal Drama Plays Out on Alpen Ice

Asami Novak [✉](#)
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[A Vegas Spectacle on Ice](#)

You might say Hubert Lepka has a gift for overstatement. A former dancer, Lepka now choreographs the movements of planes, trains and automobiles in one-off performances that combine a postmodern perspective with Las Vegas spectacle. Lepka's group, Lawine Torren, performed *Hannibal* on top of the Rettenbach glacier in the Austrian Alps earlier this month. With massive, snow-covered mountains and elaborate snow architecture as a backdrop, roughly 300 performers and 43 machines dramatized the story of Hannibal and his men against the Romans in the battle of Zama.

Lepka finds the snowy setting of the Alps to be the perfect place for nature and technology to harmonize.

"At 3,000 meters (10,000 feet) above sea level, this is the last point of civilization before outer space," he says. "At an altitude like that you have to expect changes in weather every minute."

During a previous performance, the fog got so bad the visibility was only 10 feet. Lepka and his crew refused to give up, insisting that the struggle added to the show and he said the audience loved it.

So just how much money does it cost to put on such an extravagant program? Not

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as much as you'd think, Lepka explains. Because the glacier is a hot tourist spot, he receives plenty of funding from local industries, including major sport supporters like Red Bull. In total, they had to pull together a little more than \$400,000 to put on the show.

Lepka's next project, a smaller-scale show called *Knight Club*, is scheduled to debut in Linz 2009, the year the city is celebrated as European capital of culture.

Story by Asami Novak

Left: The War Against Hannibal

With bright costumes and plenty of flashy displays, Lepka gives the historic narrative of Hannibal and the Second Punic War a modern twist. Hannibal led an army of men and war elephants from Iberia through the Alps into Northern Italy.

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