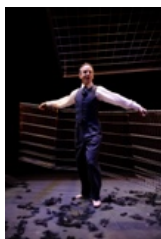


Kafka and son 14 may 2013 koninklijke schouwburg the hague



Kafka and Son adapted by Mark Cassidy and Alon Nashman.

Presented by STET, Richard Jordan Productions, Threshold Theatre and Assembly Edinburgh in Het Paradijs, the studio theatre in The Hague's Koninklijke Schouwberg on May 14 2013.

Performed by Alon Nashman

Directed by Mark Cassidy

Reviewed by Clair Richards

“Life is more than a Chinese puzzle

We were in close quarters with greatness in Het Paradijs last night. Tucked away in the attic of the Koninklijke Schouwberg Alon Nashman and his carefully selected collection of cages and feathers took us into the heart and the mind of the man credited with the invention of the modern psyche.

Kafka and Son starts awkwardly. Alon Nashman seated on a small cage using a larger feather covered cage as a desk as he begins writing a letter to his father, in an attempt to explain why he fears him. The arrestingly lit image of a man writing with a quill on imaginary paper as the black feathers fall through the cage gently to earth was doubled and made more resonant by the presence of the looming black shadow behind. The black feathers as a motif gathered force throughout the performance. Perhaps representing the soul, maybe foreshadowing Kafka's early death but like the fears, emotions and feelings so magnificently displayed by Alon Nashman they were difficult to contain and took on a life of their own.

At the first exchange between Kafka and Son the performance took on a striking new tone. Alon Nashman was transformed from the sickly, emotional Franz into the powerful, dominant Hermann bringing life to the imagined conversation. I can't watch the tortured exploration of the child parent relationship without recalling the succinct eloquence of the Philip Larkin poem This Be the Verse.

I found the sight of Alon Nashman removing his shoes and socks to portray a shocking yet everyday tale of poor parenting and bad behaviour deeply uncomfortable to watch, the sudden exposure of soles and soul. All props on the stage were used with precision and enormous impact, only the large white feather performing a single function. The lighting, darkness, shadows and music were impressive and terrifying in the hands of Vasilis Apostolatos, perfectly timed with the subtlety and lightness of touch that an emotional exploration of a man's tortured, disappointed soul demands. Kafka and Son is an intense study of the human condition and its limitations and deep connections.

After watching a performance so visceral and raw I remembered Slavoj Zizek's interpretation of Lacan and the letter that 'always arrives at its destination'. I noticed a solitary black feather on the floor of the bar after the performance, an escapee. Kafka's father Hermann did not receive the letter but for me, tonight, the letter reached its destination.

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Kafka and Son

adapted by Mark Cassidy and Alon Nashman



Reviewed by Pilar Perez 14 may 2013

"Dearest father"...The beginning of the letter, and moreover, the story that takes us through Kafka's most inner thoughts on his childhood and the relationship with his father.

A solo performance is always demanding, as much from the performer as from the audience. And Alon succeeds on captivating the attention of the public from this very first sentence the play opens with.

The fifty pages long letter that Kafka wrote to his father, Hermann, at the age of 36, serves as inspiration of his psychological journey, from a young boy to a troubled adult, who has been molded by the chisel of an emotionally abusive father.

Alon is alone on the stage, but he does not need anybody else. The choice of the set is more than enough to provide him with all the tools he needs to unravel the story. The spring mattress, the wire boxes and the black feathers, all have their part. The music builds the tension and the lights are perfectly directed, as they allow playing with the intensity of the expressions and the shadows.

The introduction -unexpected, or maybe not...- of the second character enriches the plot and creates empathy with the father. It would be too easy to paint in black and white. Alon is able to split into both roles and make use of a wider color palette.

Kafka and Son is a beautifully performed show, very powerful at times, a bit comical at others. Feels like a pretty clear psychological illustration. Makes you think of your father, your child, your own development into adulthood.

If you already know Kafka's work, you will appreciate it better; if you don't, you won't be able to wait to discover it.

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