

POTSDAMER NEUSTE NACHRICHTEN, 01.10.2022

KULTUR IN POTSDAM

Inspired world theatre

By Astrid Priebs-Tröger

For three decades they have trod the boards that represent the world. But the mimes of the international traveling theatre company Ton & Kirschen don't usually even have any under their feet. For they perform in the open air, on squares or in meadows. They guested in Potsdam on the field behind Treffpunkt Freizeit with their anniversary piece, *The Open Door*.

And there they richly rewarded both themselves and the audience. *The Open Door* once again showed their great versatility, their wonderful poetry and profound philosophy and, of course, their inspired theatrical skills in such varied genres as spoken theatre, song, dance, circus performance, magic, puppet theatre and fairground wildness.

They have been pulling off this grandiose melange since 1992, and the founders Margarete Biereye and David Johnston, both in their 70s, are still fully involved. *The Open Door* begins with a locked door, at which comes a violent knocking. David Johnston, wearing a black bowler hat and a thick brown jacket and a wooden club on his back, rushes to open it and in jumps a knight from *Macbeth*.

Shortly thereafter, an old rubber-tired flat wagon, on which a sleeping figure is lying, is driven around the corner. It is Josef K. from Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial*. And the scenes from it, in which more and more doors keep closing for the protagonist, fit in terrifyingly well with our present day.

Then birdsong, piano music and even a whole orchestra appear on the field and it is as if the oppressive scenery has been blown away. But the following scene from *The Children of the Exiles* by Joseph Roth, which takes place in the waiting room of a government agency, brings the terror of escape and the Holocaust to the fore.

And the main character, a little girl with a very pale face, is a life-size wooden puppet. Five more follow this first puppet, including in the scene from *Bluebeard*, in which a young woman opens a forbidden door.

It's amazing how different they all are, and how, when we see a young woman running, the whole ensemble is involved in moving her in her high-flying dash. For Ton & Kirschen, love and suffering, life and death are incredibly close together and the way in which those elements are merged in their theatrical art is of a complementary genius to the works they put on. So texts by Rilke, Brecht, Lewis Carroll and Garcia Marquez fit right in.

Their particular flair is also accentuated by their multilingualism and musicality, which are showcased in this production by songs in English, Italian and Basque, among other languages. It's also marvellous how the two young actresses – one of whom is Margarete's granddaughter Zina Méziat – have now been integrated into the ensemble, so we can hope for many more Ton & Kirschen performances to come.

