

Huesca - Theatre on Sale

A Report by Ms Yvette Buhagiar

In the beginning of October 2010, I had the opportunity to be part of the Feria Internacional de Teatro y Danza representing the Malta Drama Centre, where I witnessed the latest and the most avant-garde techniques of theatre. I could see where theatre is going. Being in Huesca at that moment in time I had the opportunity to do a lot of reflection on what is happening in the field of performing arts in Malta. Luckily I felt inspiration instead of intimidation.

Unconsciously, I kept Malta in perspective, and I believe that we Maltese actors, directors and producers have the means to put it all together. We have the energy, the dedication, the human resources, the talent, the ability. We have what it takes. Then the question comes forth. Why is it not happening on this Island? Certainly, actors are poorly paid. We do not believe in performing arts as a resource of finance. We think that performing arts is a waste of time. We believe that performing arts is a luxury. We believe that performing arts is a hobby!

The ritual of theatre brings us closer to humanity

One of the successful teams I met in Huesca, was Los Titiriterios. These actors have created their own company and operate in the Pyrenees Region. Thousands of people pay a visit to the mountains to find this theatre company. Apparently they work with folk music and folk tales. Bringing the tradition of the Pyrenees to the people, foreigners and natives alike. By means of these traditional elements they generate a lot of income to support the team of 12 persons and their theatre building. Los Titiriterios have opened the feria in Huesca this year.

Theatre - a mirror of society

Theatre speaks to society, theatre speaks with society, theatre speaks about society. The issues that were treated in the performances were various. Everything involved as little expenses as possible. Most performances were acted out by a single actor, while few had 3 or more actors participating. The themes that were dealt with in the performances were emotional abuse, illegal immigration, obsessions, domestic violence, love, solitude, chatting on the net, religion and its influence, programming humans and capitalism.

All of the above are realities that we live and touch every day. Words were also used to the minimum, although there was a lot of poetry in the majority of the work. In no circumstance did the performers resort to vulgar language or swear words, even though some performances took the audience to situations

I have noticed that this is becoming increasingly popular in Malta. Does the audience need to go to the theatre to listen to swear words? What is the idea behind being vulgar? To shock? Is this what we conceive of in-yer-face theatre? Words, words, and more words right? Or is this a new form of entertainment?

Dance or theatre

Is it necessary for the actor to dance, while performing? What is dance after all? It was evident that each and every movement I saw in these performances, was choreographed. Every single muscle moved with precision, and with a purpose. I believe that once the actors reaches the stage, their body and consequently their movement take a theatrical form (i.e. actors start attributing their techniques). The technique was impeccable. Every actor economized on movement. They were conscious of each and every muscle. I could notice total command and control of the actors' instrument the Body.

It seemed that I was witnessing a mixture of ballet, contemporary dance and martial arts. I believe that Maltese actors lack the opportunities of fine tuning their bodies, thinking that by simply attending to drama schools one can become a professional actor. Most people think that acting is about uttering lines and transmitting emotions. Although these are both important one must not exclude the most important element in theatre, the body – the actor's instrument. Thus it is of utmost importance that actors train themselves in physically demanding disciplines, such as the martial arts, as these involve a lot flexibility, thinking, confidence, alertness, energy, stability, smartness and fine tuning of the body. All these elements were visible in each and every actor in FITD.

Our future

There is a lot happening in Malta. This year (2010-11) the Malta Drama Centre alone has 510 students registered on a regular basis. However there is a lack of resources and organization. I often meet actors and artist who walk out of a project because they are not paid, while others work for free, on voluntary basis for the sake of being involved or promotion of self. Is there an institution / a club / a site to which performers can belong to, subscribe and become a member?

Performers in Malta are currently dispersed, working and financing their own projects, abused and used. What about treating the performer professionally? What about Teatru Irjal? What about having a national theatre company? Why can't we advertise Malta as a theatre-going location? Why not reopen the theatres in Strada Stretta? When will drama be introduced as a compulsory subject in our schools? When will this country promote the culture as an economic asset? When will the village festas, Notte Bianca and Carnival be used as platforms of the performing arts?

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