

# S'Brent

Review of a performance by the Yiddish Theater of  
Strasbourg in Tuebingen, Germany

Schwaebisches Tagblatt (Swabian  
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As if it were a whole Shtetl:

Rafael Goldwaser presents a whole theater cosmos in a chamber theater

[DHE, the reviewer of this "sold-out performance," provides a brief summary of the monologues by Sholem Aleichem, as performed by Rafael Goldwaser, an actor from Strasbourg. The reviewer also lists Karl Menrad, an actor at the Chamber Theater, for having provided commentary and an alternating reading of Aleichem's monologues in German translation.

The reviewer refers to Goldwaser's "furious interpretation" with "a whole life pouring out of him. That may be because of the energetic explosive nature which Goldwaser exudes as a barrel-round old woman that dominates the entire sparse theater hall. . . . The reviewer then describes what Goldwaser wore, and explains the content of the various stories and cites an example of the effectiveness of the art of both Aleichem and Goldwaser, "When he says, "he died of death, of death," such lines were understood immediately even by those theater-goers who never took a course in "Yiddish as a foreign language."

Goldwaser, born in Buenos Aires in 1947, impressed not only as one of the rare Yiddish performers of Europe, but--with just half a sentence here, just one gesture there--he conjures up many more figures as if he were a complete Shtetl in one person.

With that, he shows his deep spiritual connections and shared heritage to Aleichem, the writer, who imbued his characters with constantly new manners and habits of speaking,

It is remarkable how Goldwaser can change his movements and facial expressions in extraordinary ways. For example, he shows the harmless, well-intended smile of a simple old man and, at the same time, something typical, something artificial, like a mask in Japanese Theater, a subject that Goldwaser has studied in Tel Aviv and Paris, in addition to Acting, the History of Drama, and Pantomime.

Even his second protagonist, "the Burnout," moves into a strange irreality through his face which resembles a mask: one half bathed in light, the other shrouded in darkness.

Goldwasser was guest performing at the Chamber Theater, co-sponsored by organizers of the Reading Circle ("Jewish Literature in East Central Europe"), the Hoelderlin Society, and the Slavic Seminar.

In 1992, Goldwasser founded the "LufTeater of Strasbourg" with the goal of presenting Yiddish European Culture after the Shoah.

Reflections on  
seeing Yiddish Theatre, rising from the ashes & coming alive again

My dear friend  
Rafael Goldwasser,

What a pleasure  
hearing from you. It was the first mail  
since the conference of the Association of Jewish Theatre (AJT) in Vienna. I have talked about you and am deeply moved  
by your art of letting Yiddish theatre live on in a way that made me both cry  
and laugh.

I LAUGHED because  
you managed to revive Yiddish theatre with much wit and charm and an  
unbelievable artistic skill as an actor and director, taking it to the highest  
level of theatre art. And I CRIED  
because several times during your performance in Vienna I had to think of the  
many human beings who perished in Hitler's concentration camps and whose  
disappearance almost triggered the loss of the Yiddish language and of Yiddish  
culture.

Mercifully, you  
and your colleagues in Strasbourg and in other cities of the world where  
citizens of the world like Rafael Goldwasser not only let the old culture live  
on, but also, with much energy and perseverance, give the world the gift of a  
new Yiddish theatre.

I do not know how  
I can tell you and your friends who are sitting in the Yiddish theatre boat how  
much I value your work, how much I hope that you, through your language courses  
and theatre performances will continue to sail along toward islands of new  
recognition and of life.

I am embracing  
you across the Atlantic and hope that many young people will learn Yiddish and  
get to know Yiddish culture and will pass on the innermost kernel of Yiddish  
theatre to the next generation, namely, to be a MENSCH, a real MENSCH, a  
real human being.

Herzlich (as in  
Theodor Herzl = from the heart),

Yours Henrik

Professor Dr.  
Henrik Eger