

S'Brent

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

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Translated by Dr. Henrik Eger, USA

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