

Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2001

D y b u k

Directed by Zofia Kalinska

(2 x Fringe First, 1 x Total Theatre Award)

Choreographer: Ronit Land

Music: Reinhard Gagel

performed by

Theatre Iment 20

an international ensemble of 16 Polish, German and British actors



6th until 19th of August (except 12th)
Royal College of Surgeons, Symposium Hall
(Demarco / Rocketproduction)

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R e v i e w s

The Scotsman

13th of August 2001



A moving version of a Jewish legend
Dance around death
Dybuk ★★★★★

TRUST Richard Demarco. Bumping from pillar to post around the venues of Edinburgh – as he has been ever since he lost his last „permanent” home at York Lane - he has stumbled across one of the loveliest new spaces to enter the Fringe catalogue for years, the Royal College of Surgeons’ great 17th century hall off Hill Square.

In this space, Demarco’s great Polish friend Zofia Kalinska is presenting a fascinating production of the traditional Jewish tale of the *Dybuk*, the story of a young bride possessed by the soul of her fiancé, an intense young student of the kabbala, after his sudden death. Created in Germany with a company of 16 Polish actors, and German students, the show is a beautiful and sometimes spectacular meditation on a Jewish community in central Europe stalked by the idea, the memory, the premonition of death. There are three brides in tattered white lace, three grooms in stiff black suite, a community of grandmothers, neighbours and parents and a rake-thin figure in red, dancing around them, dragging them out of the circle of life.

What is most memorable about this almost wordless show – apart from the haunting music and the stunning quality of the visual images created by Kalinska in the great raw stone space - is the deep sense of ritual on which it draws. Like many shows about the experience of the Jewish community in central Europe, it seems able to recreate a lost sense of human community as a tableau or a dance, a series of shared efforts to create shape and beauty.

In this production the sense of ritual gains added weight from the cathartic effect, for German actors, of entering so deeply into the Jewish experience, the destroyed and suppressed part of their cultural inheritance. The idea of the Holocaust haunts this show powerfully, from the opening image of bodies piled in death to the bitter, lyrical end – not as an overt theme, but as a backbeat of fear and horror trapped in a great old Jewish tale and is all the more powerful for that.

Joyce McMillan

The Jewish Chronicle



London, 10th of August 2001

Dybbuk

Lee Levitt rounds up the best of the fest in the Scottish capital

It is a remarkable feat that a play with as few words as Zofia Kalinska's "Dybbuk" can create such a powerful and moving impression.

A unique German-Polish-Israeli collaboration, "Dybbuk" grafts the Holocaust onto the traditional story of a young Chasidic Jew whose soul possesses his beloved after they are murdered in a Cossack pogrom during their wedding ceremony.

Israeli Ilil Land-Boss's bride and her devoted groom, played by Polish klezmer musician Tilo Erlenbusch, are thrown into sharp relief by the sinister figure of Barbara Lins's dancing dybbuk.

"Dybbuk," superbly paced by Kalinska and choreographed with haunting beauty by Israeli-born German Ronit Land - Land-Boss's mother - is psycho-drama par excellence.

Lee Levitt

BBC Online



11th of August 2001

Dybuk by Iment 20 International Theatre at Rocket Venues

...is another show that the audience will surely regard as a once in a lifetime experience. Directed by Zofia Kalinska, a former performer with Polish artist Tadeusz Kantor, this is a beautiful piece of 'picture theatre', and with 20 talented actors of all ages from Germany, Poland and Israel, the possibilities are endless. The show begins with the characters all dying, and they then begin to recreate scenes from the lives that have just been lost. Wedding veils and costumes are used imaginatively, and everything takes on more than one meaning. The music is performed live, and the musician is part of the action with his accordion, violin, and simple wooden sticks. There is very little dialogue in the show, and when it comes it is poetry spoken in Hebrew. This beautiful piece of theatre is based on a play by An-Ski and inspired by the Jewish legend of the dybbuk, in which a young woman is possessed by the soul of her dead beloved.

Edinburgh Festival Guide

August 2001



Dybuk

The Hebrew word "dybbuk" means a wandering, disembodied soul which possesses another person's body. Director Zofia Kalinska uses An-Ski's play, about a dead young chassidic Jew whose soul possesses his bride, to show the fate of Jewish nation in the Holocaust. Powerful images parade before us: mass graves, a macabre dance of a ghost nation, the sense of loss felt by the survivors, a renewed hope in future as a loaf of bread is passed around. On the edges of this monochrome world lurks the Death in a red dress, feeding on people's blood and fear.

This is theatre as it should be - passionate, deeply moving and impeccably laid before its audience. The use of traditional Jewish music, recorded and live, enhances the show's cathartic spirit.

Note Zofia Kalinska is a familiar name to the Fringe audience. In 1998, she directed Ariel Theatre's winning show *A Little Requiem for Kantor*. She worked with Kantor for some twenty years before founding AKNE(1984), Poland's only all-women theatre. She often collaborates with international artists, using different languages in her productions.

Go and see this show, it is bound to be a winner!

Ksenija Horvat