

For 'Live Performance'/Natalie Jim, Cub Magazine

Theatre de Complicite at The Queen's Theatre perform 'The Street of Crocodiles'
Based on stories by Polish writer Bruno Schulz
19 Jan - 20 Feb 1999

(Picture of man reading book from performance)

INCLUDED (dark picture)

How much can you tell about a performance from a single picture? Apparently a picture tells a thousand words if one is to believe the common saying but images can be misleading. Add to this the preliminary information by teachers, advertising and the knowledge that half the cast is Lecoq-trained (but not necessarily in that order), one still may not be as ready as one would wish to receive a Complicite performance. 'Dynamic' could be the word, as story or conventional narrative will not provide a logical explanation or an easy way out to a happy theatrical ending.

Poland, during the Nazi occupation. A young man, Cesar Sarachu, is caught in his recollections of his childhood town and family. As the German troops come marching in, the surreal nature of the events of invasion merges with the absurd reality of his unusual father of his past.

We are presented with a variety of potential story beginnings interwoven as if to discuss with one and other in the play. There is the love-interest, looking for the 'other half' of her broken Plate in Cesar...or is this just illusory? There are reversals of characters - playing each other's ages, gender and power positions in a children's classroom. And, a person walking down the back wall.

The performance itself was masterly followed through down to the last detail. The company's Actors speak in different languages, play instruments - including themselves - and embody the most versatile of characters. It is hard to find a bad thing to say.

All that is left is the audience. And this, to my pleasure, was the most honest, loud and responsive of all audiences - a bunch of noisy school kids.

Dmitry Tolonen

The production is at the Queen's Theatre at Shaftesbury Ave, until Feb 20th.