



Press kit



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Mr & Mrs Sommerflügel

A poetic circus for children 2+



Please come on in!

Ladies and gentlemen, dear boys and girls -
immerse yourself in the little fantastic world
of Mr & Mrs Sommerflügel!

A suitcase full of light,
a butterfly dressage without avail and
a delicate romance between a whale and a ship.
Come see the terrible pretty nice love story of a mouse desired
by a cat. A good half an hour show of a comically marvellous
jugglery.

PS.: Don't forget to feed the bird living under your hat!



Clear the ring for tricks!

The strange little world of animals that Mr and Mrs Sommerflügel are getting out of their magic suitcase is mainly interested in eating. And thus, the little stunts in this circus only serve the purpose of getting closer to something they want to have. Not every chase is successful. It can be beautifully in vain to try to catch something, like trying to hold the shadow of a butterfly in a handkerchief. With plenty of charming tricks the two show actors make use of their menagerie to seduce each other. Because that's what it's all about: to try to get something from the other one. Half an hour of tentative, ingenious and clumsy attempts to get closer to something desired.

Directed by: Werner Hennrich

Play, images, sound, concept: Michael Döhnert and
Melanie Florschütz

Live-Music: Michael Döhnert

Painting of the background: Wolf Dieckmann

Female Dress: Adelheid Wieser

Production: florschütz & döhnert

Coproduction: Theater o.N., Berlin

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Photos: Thomas Ernst

Première of the new version: 2.10.2010, T-Werk Potsdam

...and then the little child laughs (:)

Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert talking to Gabi dan Droste (extracts)

Gabi dan Droste: In your production "Rawums (:)" you can see how the audience can't stop laughing. How do you as actors experience the sense of humor of very young children? How does the humor develop in your play?

Michael Döhnert: Maybe there is something like a technique for "making the little child laugh". I am not interested in that. Our humor arises from certain situations, from the playing itself. But you cannot predict this kind of humor; whether something is really funny for the children or not, will only be clear on our meeting with them.

Melanie Florschütz: The work at the production of "Rawums (:)" stretched over a couple of versions of the play and a process of reflection that lasted almost two years. At the beginning there was the subject of "falling" of bodies and things. Then, the "flying" was added, as a sort of anti-movement to the falling. And during the last stage we were mainly concerned with the question of how to make poetry out of scientific contemplations. The falling of a bag or the flying of a feather isn't really a theatrical act by itself. We tried all kinds of things to make this action more interesting.

MD: For example: I let a feather float in the air

and accompanied its flight with music. We only got amazement in the sense of "what is this supposed to mean" by the kids. Also the bag that just falls by itself wasn't funny at all. Neither when I supported it musically or with sound effects. But both elements next to each other – the feather, dancing to the circus music while floating through the air, and shortly afterwards the bag that doesn't give me enough time to sing because it doesn't float pleasantly but quickly falls, as a bag happens to do – that does make the children laugh. And we are all not able to say for sure whether the bag is just being stubborn or whether it is really not able to float in the air. The feather, in contrast, is a promise to the ability to fly. That is a conflict that creates a certain tension.

MF: Yes, and you don't know exactly what the kids are laughing about - about the man who doesn't want to believe that the bag cannot float as easily as the feather; or about the bag, that happens to be unable to do so; or about the easiness with which the feather simply does it?



MF: Yes, and you don't know exactly what the kids are laughing about - about the man who doesn't want to believe that the bag cannot float as easily as the feather; or about the bag, that happens to be unable to do so; or about the easiness with which the feather simply does it?

MD: Sometimes we have no idea why the children are laughing.

MF: Do they laugh because they take pleasure in the difference? Or because they, philosophically speaking, recognize the being in the limits of its possibilities? The whole theater for little children has a lot to do with our preconceptions: how we as artists, as adults and as people see children and assess them. These viewers don't come towards us afterwards to verbalize their reception. And even neuroscientists recognize that their knowledge about development theories is also only a construction. An important factor in theater for very small children is marking the difference between "real" and "acted" incidents. How is a child supposed to know that it doesn't stay dark forever when I switch off the light in the theater? Or when I fall down in the theater, whether I really hurt myself or not? Making theater we deal with transforming reality, abstracting it and hyperbolizing it. That is an essential gesture of art. I communicate with children on a theatrical level, with theatrical signs. I don't tell them of the world exactly as it is. The children are able to read

these signs when they are clearly set. This is where I as an artist come in. This search for theatrical means is enriching to me as an artist.

GD: In theater for adults we often laugh about existing conditions that are taken for granted and then turned upside down. Deconstruction is also seen as a function of art. This certainly works in theater for adults, but does it work in theater for children? How and what do you want to deconstruct when a lot of the experience is totally new for the children?

MF: In theater for children at the age of two we can only deconstruct what we have established before. In "Rawums (:)" we show for example what works and what doesn't work, or better, what flies and what doesn't fly – that becomes the angle for the playful dialogue between the man and the woman. We make a game out of insisting on natural laws and abolishing them. Doing that, overcoming gravity is always connected to the previously introduced logics. That is, it is right that a man and a woman can't fly but a man and a woman made of paper can do so. And like this, physics suddenly becomes poetry. Both exist at the same time.

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Comment of the press

Children's Theatre – A Concert of Pure Emotion

Questembert — The 6th theatre festival Festi'Mômes took place under a daily drizzle (typical bretonian weather!). The numerous spectators were sitting densely packed in the small rooms of the „Pays de Questembert“, where many families could again experience some extraordinary theatre performances that go beyond the scope of theatre for the very young.

Once again we have seen the German group florschütz & döhnert with Mr & Mrs Sommerflügel (summer wings), a wonderful performance for children between two and four, with elements of shadow theatre and object theatre. As in their earlier productions there is no „real“ story, no big words, but rather an amazing and affectionate complicity between the two actors (Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert) who succeed in establishing that hesitant relationship between themselves and the boys and girls of that tender age. That is all due to the way of playing but also to an indetermined territory that leaves a lot of room for awkwardness as well as bragging and mutual outsmarting. During the show the children - and especially the youngest ones - were roaring with laughter. A very beautiful discovery... just as beautiful as the production Rawums(:) by the same group that had already seduced everyone in the audience a week ago at the opening of the festival.

(translation of the french)

Michel Bélair 13 novembre 2010 Théâtre

LE DEVOIR.com

Libre de penser

Mr and Mrs Sommerflügel

Florschütz and Döhnert Theatre
at the Druid Lane Theatre Galway

Mrs Sommerflügel arrives in the foyer to greet about 50 excited and expectant children. She informs the adults that it's okay to leave the theatre, if need be, and re-enter when their child is ready. In between each word she blows into a harmonica. This little intervention allays any fears the children might have had about entering

the dark theatre space.

The 30 minute performance appears to be so simple. There is no 'behind the scenes' trickery, the mechanics of the performance are visible for all to see. The simplicity of the performance is probably the biggest illusion of all, Mr and Mrs Sommerflügel is packed with sequences that are the result of rigorous and complex preparation. Its apparent simplicity makes the performance so engaging for children, and adults, in the audience.

The performance opens with a closed suitcase centre stage. Mr Sommerflügel sits on one side of the suitcase behind various percussion instruments (drum, triangle, finger organ, cymbal), Mrs Sommerflügel on the other. The suitcase 'magically' opens to reveal a glow of golden light promising all sorts of revelations. The case snaps shut. It re-opens and then snaps shut again to the rhythm of Mr Sommerflügel's instruments, children giggle. There is no high tech work at play, the performance combines joke shop trickery with precise and playful theatre.

First a simple paper butterfly flutters out of the suitcase. A single spot light draws attention to the shadow it casts on Mr Sommerflügel's handkerchief, the shadow is captured and folded inside the handkerchief, the butterfly shadow then escapes to the spontaneous applause of the children. The illusions work beautifully, Mr and Mrs Sommerflügel's timing is perfect.

The butterfly is followed by other, seemingly random, objects/puppets: a small boat, a big fish, a bread roll, a mouse, a cat and a robin. Through discreet, but not hidden, trickery Mr and Mrs Sommerflügel transform the objects into characters within a 'cat and mouse' story: Mrs Sommerflügel hides the bread roll from Mr Sommerflügel under her hat, the big fish hopes to eat the little boat, the clever robin outwits the showoff cat.

The duo present a wonderful miniature circus for the assembled children.

*Richard Tomlinson, the Lead Creative Practitioner
on Take Art's Little Big Bang project in october 2011*

Curriculum

Melanie Florschütz

puppet player, actress, author, director

Melanie Florschütz is born 1967 in Kiel. 1989 - 1994 she has studied the art of playing puppets at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Fachbereich Figurentheater Stuttgart. Since 1996 - 2008 she was member of the Association of artists Theatre o.N/Zinnober, Berlin. In addition to ensemble productions (for adults and for children) mainly of literature adaptations this theatre is known for its collective development of plays. Since 2004 she has worked as director for free groups and was engaged in the pedagogical theatre work with children and youth.

Michael Döhnert

musician, composer, actor, author

Michael Döhnert is born 1965 in Berlin. He is guitarist and singer. Since 1987, he has created Music for his own live band projects (Meathearts, Warnen, Bitte Candy, Doppelhaushälfte). 1991 -1996, he took part in the programme of the variety „Chamäleon“ Berlin. Since 1995, CD productions with Bert Wrede and Ulrich Zieger. He creates the theatre music for several theatres in Germany „Fundus Theater“, Hamburg, „Thalia Theater“, Halle und Theater o.N, Berlin (musical director - composer -live musik on stage). He composes Musik for documentary films and art videos and was part in life actings of performing artists.

florschütz & döhnert

Theatre company is based in Berlin, Germany, and tours around the world. Artists Melanie Florschütz and Michael Döhnert have been working together since 1996. At the centre of their productions is the idea of the actor as author. Florschütz and Döhnert conceptualise and write their plays in a process that also includes the perspective of different directors. In their numerous productions for children they always seek a synthesis of the music, the various means of expression of puppet theatre, and human acting. The subject of the play determines the theatrical form it will take, always aiming for poetry and diversity.

Since 2004 they are dealing especially with the development for plays for young children 2+:

„Hase Hase Mond Hase Nacht“ 2004

„Rawums(:)“ 2007

Award IKARUS 2008 Berlin for the extraordinary play for young audience in Berlin.

„Mr & Mrs Sommerflügel“ 2010



Mr & Mrs Sommerflügel on international festivals:

Première Rencontre April 2012 in Villiers-le-Bel/ Paris, France
Meli`Môme April 2012 in Reims, France
Baboró International Arts Festival for Children Oktober 2011 in Gallway, Ireland
Festival „Szene Bunte Wähne“ September 2011 Horn, Austria
Festi Môme 2010 im Pays de Questembert, France
Scène d`europe 2010 in Reims, France
„Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro“ 2010 im Theater La Barracca in Bologna, Italy
Hellwach 2010 im Helios Theater Hamm, Germany
Penguin Days Februar 2011 im Schloßparktheater Moers, Germany
Anfänge(r) - Figurentheaterfestival für Kinder von 2 bis 6 Jahren
17.-21. März 2011 im Puppentheatermuseum München, Germany
Starke Stücke April 2011, Frankfurt a.Main, Germany

florschütz & döhnert

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