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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Die Rechnung

Wiener FestWochen, 18.06.2024 [ENA]

"DIE RECHNUNG" by Tim Etchells is a masterful exploration of power and humor. In the realm of contemporary theater, Tim Etchells has carved a niche for himself as a creator of thought-provoking and innovative performances. "DIE RECHNUNG," based on "L'Addition" by Etchells, Bertrand Lesca, and Nasi Voutsas, is a perfect testament to his unique ability to blend humor with incisive social commentary.

This production, which marks the beginning of the Volksstück / Pièce Commune series, co-produced by the Freie Republik Wien and the Festival d'Avignon, travels across all 23 districts of Vienna, bringing high-caliber theater to community centers, football fields, and open-air stages. It is a delightful and intellectually stimulating exploration of power dynamics, rendered through the deceptively simple setup of a table, a chair, a bottle, and a glass of wine.

The genius of "DIE RECHNUNG" lies in its simplicity. The starting point is unassuming: a waiter serves a glass of wine to a guest. This minimalistic scene quickly evolves into a complex exploration of power and control, as the roles of server and served, dominant and submissive, shift in myriad ways. The brilliance of Etchells, Lesca, and Voutsas shines through as they play out numerous variations of this scenario, each one peeling back another layer of human interaction and societal structures.

The sparse setting—a table, a chair, a bottle, and a glass—acts as a blank canvas for the actors to paint a rich tapestry of comedic and dramatic moments. This minimalist approach forces the audience to focus on the subtleties of the performances and the nuances of the dialogue. The lack of elaborate props or scenery directs attention to the essential elements of the narrative, making the shifts in power dynamics all the more impactful.

With a cast of just two actors, the production relies heavily on the chemistry and skill of its performers. Their ability to convey a wide range of emotions and scenarios with minimal physical and verbal cues is nothing short of remarkable. The actors' performances are both hilarious and poignant, as they navigate the ever-changing landscape of their relationship. Each variation of the scene offers a new perspective on the characters' interactions, highlighting the fluidity of power and the often arbitrary nature of social hierarchies.

Their physicality and timing are impeccable, bringing a slapstick quality to the performance that evokes

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laughter while simultaneously prompting reflection on deeper issues. The comedic elements are well-balanced with moments of tension and seriousness, creating a dynamic and engaging theatrical experience. The audience is kept on their toes, never quite sure what will happen next, as the actors deftly switch between different modes of interaction.

"DIE RECHNUNG" is, at its core, a study of power in its many forms. Etchells and his collaborators explore how power can be both overt and subtle, how it shifts and morphs in response to various stimuli, and how it can be both a source of comedy and a cause for concern. The performance delves into the intricacies of dominance and submission, examining how these dynamics play out in everyday interactions.

The brilliance of the piece lies in its ability to make the audience question their own assumptions about power. Who really holds the power in any given situation? Is it the person who appears to be in control, or is there a more subtle form of influence at play? By presenting these questions through a series of seemingly trivial interactions, the production encourages viewers to reflect on their own experiences and the power structures that shape their lives.

One of the most admirable aspects of "DIE RECHNUNG" is its accessibility. The production's minimalist approach and small cast make it easy to stage in a variety of settings, from community centers to football fields. This flexibility is a key component of the Volksstück / Pièce Commune series, which aims to bring world-class theater to diverse audiences in non-traditional venues. By removing the barriers of elaborate sets and large casts, Etchells and his team ensure that the performance can reach a wide audience, regardless of location or resources.

The universal themes of power, control, and human interaction resonate with viewers from all walks of life. The decision to perform in all 23 districts of Vienna underscores the commitment to making theater accessible to everyone, reflecting the inclusive ethos of the Freie Republik Wien and the Festival d'Avignon. This democratization of theater is a powerful statement in itself, reinforcing the idea that art and culture are for everyone, not just a privileged few.

"DIE RECHNUNG" is a masterful blend of humor, drama, and social commentary. Tim Etchells, along with Bertrand Lesca and Nasi Voutsas, has created a performance that is both entertaining and intellectually stimulating. The simplicity of the setup belies the complexity of the themes explored, making for a rich and rewarding theatrical experience. The dynamic performances of the actors, combined with the thoughtful direction and innovative staging, ensure that this production leaves a lasting impression on all who see it.

As the inaugural performance of "DIE RECHNUNG" sets a high standard for what is to come. It exemplifies the power of theater to provoke thought, evoke emotion, and foster a sense of community.

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Whether performed in a traditional theater or an unconventional venue, "DIE RECHNUNG" is a testament to the enduring relevance of live performance and its ability to illuminate the complexities of the human condition.

Bericht online lesen: https://culture.en-a.eu/kunst_kultur_und_musik/die_rechnung-89264/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:

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