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Amsterdam School of the Arts

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Column by Loek Zonneveld, 15 October 2013, de Theaterschool

a theatre performance can be successful.
the performers have success.
the production is a success.
for the public.
and at the box-office.
success.

a theatre performance can also have meaning, make sense,
have significance, consequence, assume an ever growing
importance. a theatre performance can have a second life
under your skin, in your head. significance.

success
and
significance
are not the same thing.

in the german language one speaks of erfolg wenn it concerns
success and wirkung wenn it concerns significance.

german is a very clear language. wenn I write an article in my
paper to remember an artist who just died, we call that in a
dutch paper an in memoriam - which is by the way
the latin expression for what in english is called an obituary.
in german one speaks of nachruf which literally means: you can call
after to someone, all kinds of dear and lovely words, directly spoken
to the beloved person who is gone or going away forever.
nachruf.
beautiful word.

back to the main subject: success and significance.

let's take the musical-production soldaat van oranje - a title which
sounds in english a little bit weird, something like: soldier from
orange or soldier of orange or soldier in orange or
soldier sent by her or his royal majesty of orange - whatever ...
soldaat van oranje is the dutch title of the longest running musical in
the netherlands, impressive like the first cinemascopefilm with
noises everywhere around you in the fifties. this musical is seen by
one million people now. so you can say that this theatre production
has lots of success.
among the public. at the box office.

if there is any significance in it, I don't know.
I haven't seen it.



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the makers of soldaat van oranje have now thought of something new.
not something completely different. something new.
in two-thousand-and-forteen they are going to produce a new
theatreplay, based on the diary of anne frank.
to make a long story very short: anne frank was a jewish girl,
who wrote a diary during her life into
hiding, so to say in the underground on the attic of a house at
the prinsengracht during the german occupation. the diary was found
after the war and published. anne frank and most of her family died
in the nazi-concentration-camp bergen-belsen in the winter of 1945.
there is already a theatreversion of the diary, a rather good,
perhaps a little sentimental play, written in 1955 for broadway
by the american jewish writerscouple francis goodrich and
albert hackett, with the permission of anne franks father otto,
who survived the camp.

the new version will be written by the dutch jewish writerscouple
jessica durlacher and leon de winter. they have never written
a text for theatre before. the premiere of the new play will take
place in april 2014, in a new amsterdam theatre which will be
build especially for this performance. the producers are dreaming of
a long run production meant to be seen not only by the inhabitants
of amsterdam but by people from all over the country. for years
and years. they hope. there will also be an english version.
and there will be a lot of succes. they hope.

we know all this
for more than one week now.
and I thought about it over and over again.
and I still don't know what to think about it.

at first I thought: don't do this.
but why not?
then I thought: this must be forbidden.
but I am not the forbidding type.
then the writers said on television:
we must do this because anne frank must never be forgotten.
but we were not forgetting anne frank.
and if we were forgetting anne frank, will this huge production
- the production-set will be sixty or seventy meters deep -
help us remembering anne frank better then
we did, or dit not?

suddenly my daydream was about a young couple in leeuwarden,
bolsward, or franeker, or one of the other eleven frysian cities
which take part in the elf-steden-tocht, the eleven-cities-ice-
skating-tour. in the winter of 2015 this big event will not
take place, for the sixty-ninth year after the second world
war there will be no elf-steden-tocht. the young couple in



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leeuwardem, bolsward or franeker in the winter of 2015, will have one comfort in their deep mourning and grief.

there will be a bustour to amsterdam. there they will enjoy a jewish meal first. then they will see the diary of anne frank with a spectacular set of sixty of seventy meters deep, and at the end, when the theatre-door opens slowly, the watch-towers of bergen-belsen will be seen at the horizon outside ...

and they will cry.

that at least was what the paper wrote.

(five stars in the volkskrant.)

something like that.

a very bad daydream.

I got the shivers.

the shivers had a name: success.

the most beautiful performance about anne frank I ever saw was anne frank - the exhibition, directed by one of our greatest dutch theatredirectors and writers, gerardjan rijnders, within the theatre-festival touch time, the long good-bye from the mickery theatre of ritsaert ten cate, who, dressed like a swan, flies somewhere above us in this hall.

but that is another story, some other time, some other place.

this production

anne frank the exhibition

was indeed more like an exhibition, followed

by a silent performance.

after that, gerardjan rijnders made

two more productions more or less about anne frank.

the first one, was count your blessings where anne frank tried to hide her diary again in a house full of strangers and fugitives.

the second one was in berlin, the title was

moffenblues where anne frank wandered around on a berlin building site at potsdammerplatz,

in search for one german, only one german, to tell her story, to read out of her diary, so that she could finally die in peace, afterwards.

this were clear, unspectacular performances.

could the producers of the new diary of anne frank ever come near such clearness?

I doubt it.

last week, in paris the great french en european theatre- en film-director patrice chereau died. whenever he had a great succes, he immediately began with something completely new and unknown. repeating a former succes, was unthinkable for him.



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his theatre was, as the french call it, of a great clarté.
which means clearness and brightness as well as transparent,
precize, of great spiritual severity and honesty.
patrice chereau's father learned him to draw and to sketch,
which, for the young boy, in the very first place meant:
to look, to see.
directing theatre for him was: find back the pure memories of
childhood, to look within himself, to be precize in that,
so that, in working with actors and opera-singers,
he could be precize too.
clarté.

I wish the creative team of the new diary of anne frank in the
coming weeks and months a lot of that, of lot of clarté.

after that, I hope they will withdraw this stupid and insane project.

loek zonneveld