

Gmünder Tagespost 16 July 2011

Three weeks of the power of music - opening of the European Church Music Festival with service and open-air theatre (Kuno Staudenmaier)

... Night-time above Schwäbisch Gmünd, time for the action theatre ensemble Panoptikum with their performance of "TRANSITION - Le soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face". Guests at the Cathedral Square experienced a spectacular performance, multimedia technology set between iron objects of practically gigantic proportions, backed by pyrotechnical special effects. An appropriate setting to explain the myth of the abduction of Europa, her father's personal vendetta and the founding of the city of Thebes ...

Gmünder Tagespost 18 July 2011 (Schwäbische Post 17 July 2011)

Action Theatre Ensemble "Panoptikum" Opens European Church Music Festival with Elaborate Spectacle

The European Church Music Festival was opened with a grand-scale action theatre performance on Friday evening: "TRANSITION" is the name of the "Panoptikum" production in which mythological characters of Antiquity hold up a mirror to modern-age soldiers of fortune. Spectacular stage technology and pyrotechnics awaited the audience. For some, the event offered too many effects.

Modern existences contort themselves to achieve dubious, ephemeral happiness. Blue islands make their way through a sea of people; this is how it appears to the audience during the opening of the European Church Music in front of the Gmünder Cathedral at night with the performance of the "Panoptikum" action theatre ensemble. Impassioned end of the performance: the interplay of fire, light and shadow.

Schwäbisch Gmünd. A gigantic spectacle awaited the audience of approximately 1000 people at the Cathedral Square by night. Towards the cathedral fountain, a stage measuring a good ten metres with white dreamscapes as the backdrop; in the opposite direction, large iron objects, arches, pendulums and platforms. In the middle of the crowd, several mobile stages and masts to climb. The blind prophet Teiresias stands on one of these blue islands, traversing a sea of people. He leads the audience to a blood-red episode of ancient mythology, the abduction of the King's daughter Europa. With the father's quest for vengeance, he also sacrifices his sons. The only one to survive is Kadmos, the King of Thebes. He wants to pacify the city, but he, too, is pulled up by the reality of a constant alternation between war and peace. "People always search for happiness and end in blood," says Teiresias, seeing through the futility of all effort. Mankind may have lofty dreams, but it will not be spared.

The ancient theme is brought to the present-day with back-breaking existences. They contort themselves to climb up the career ladder, are driven to their knees under mountains of files and pursue short-lived happiness at parties and sex orgies - greedy beings who want more and more. In this drive towards loss of self, the prophet asks: "What's looking at us?" Worldly happiness is short-lived, the stage collapses at some point, people die. A spark of eternity flares up when Teiresias reports on the lofty night in which man wakes up and is conscious of his own being and existence.

There is then a transition to another state: the players reach a beyond, under a burning arch, in which they move weightlessly. This final scene, a symbol of heavenly harmony which man reaches at the end of his days, is a technical masterpiece. The performers soar through space and eternity on metre-long iron poles. The interplay of fire, light and shadow reinforces the perfect state, which culminates in a magnificent firework display.

Rems-Zeitung 16 July 2011

Taste of Divine Beauty - European Church Music Festival: service in the Augustinerkirche and night-time action theatre at the Cathedral Square

Schwäbisch Gmünd (rw) ... "New and unprecedented every year," Mayor Richard Arnold praised the Gmünder cultural flagship before the action theatre spectacle, "a festival with wonderful dynamics." A view which about 1000 spectators at the fenced-in Cathedral Square were able to confirm at the performance of the action theatre ensemble "Panoptikum". Some of the audience viewed the event from high above - from the gallery of the Cathedral.

The troupe, who put on a performance at the Cathedral Square eight years ago and tours worldwide, pulled all the registers of their expertise with the multimedia work "TRANSITION" and, using sound and light, acrobatic stunts, walls of fire and booming sounds, created an aesthetically overwhelming drama. The trove of effects was right on target: It was a source of astonishment and dreams. Leading perhaps away from the storm of steel to a better world.

Rems-Zeitung 19 July 2011

Perfect Invocation - EKM: Action theatre at the Cathedral Square (-ry).

In 2003, the action theatre ensemble Panoptikum made a guest appearance with a multimedia performance. Eight years later, what EKM visitors experienced was anything but a poor reproduction of past performances. Much too accomplished were the concept, performance and technical implementation of this year's project, "TRANSITION", based on the work of Lebanese writer Wajdi Mouawad, "Le soleil ni la mort ne peuvent se regarder en face".

On the one hand, there was the mythological reception of the old prophet Teiresias, who - similar to Cassandra - must look on powerlessly as in the light of a history of violence and its victims, the seemingly eternal cycle of all human evil, forgiveness stands on feet of clay. Thebes then, our world now, an admonishment to take responsibility. Is Teiresias' hope just as futile as his warning against violence?

This is the "stuff" the art of Panoptikum and the Efimer ensemble, with its large-scale Catalan open-air performance, is made of. In this cooperation, a true spectacle of acrobatic art opens up, which renders the audience rather dizzy. A huge scaffolding and mobile, blue transparent islands or oversized swings, on which Teiresias or the symbolically laden actor types perform: spoken or sung as an invocation and circus-calibre acrobatics.

Add to this music of Pergolesi quotes and - originally - from Tobias Schwab, perfect like never before. Outstanding light effects and pyrotechnics contribute to an unparalleled performance. In 50 minutes of extremely concentrated treatment of all human emotions in the context of conscience and decision motivation, the audience is similarly captivated. The music is always appropriate and serves as the second pole to visual perception. Contemporaries, too, must see how they measure up to the moral impulse of the myth. The audience applauded enthusiastically.