

Found Without Words

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We are used to getting a quality production from Malom Film Theatre. They are inviting increasingly impressive theatre groups to our town to a place called the Phoenix Nest Workshop to satisfy the needs of those who enjoy contemporary productions. Last Sunday's performer, like the characters in the folk tales, came from far, far away.



You may have read in our newspaper or on our online page about Ashlee Male, the English girl who is currently a guest in our town. She arrived in September when Varszegi Tibor invited her together with the Spanish Clara Ruiz Guerrero to teach drama to our junior school pupils. We interviewed her before Christmas, when she mentioned that she would introduce her art to the Malom's audience; and that time has just arrived. Her debut performance *Lost and Found* took place in front of a small audience.

"Movement belongs to everyone, so physical theatre is capable of addressing an international audience" wrote the widely travelled Ashlee on her website. Her performance in Jaszbereny has clearly proved this point, where despite using virtually no words, the audience could easily follow the production. We might even say that what we have witnessed, in comparison with the usual Phoenix productions, was a performance more digestible and more easily accessible to a wider audience. One of the reasons for this could have been the rich symbolism of the contemporary dance supplemented by pantomime and the straight style of the commedia dell' arte. She sprinkled all of this with spectacular elements from the new circus like scintillating glitter. So, in spite of the fact that she excluded all verbal forms of communication, she used different "languages" for expressing herself. The piece used an appropriate visual art's metaphor: collage. However, the composition did not become chaotic at all, because her juxtaposing different artistic materials was highly methodical. Their connection was natural and you could see Ashlee's technical knowledge and experience shining through in the performance. To support the visual expression, she used musical elements and her own sound effects from time to time.



It is not only the visualisation that makes the play very accessible (for a Sunday show) for a wider audience. There are parts in the story everyone has some experience of or is able to relate to; meaning the audience can identify with the performance. We have all gone through the pain of loss, the nightmare of searching for the way, a depressing, alienating role given to us by society and the pointless attempts of filling the empty space in our heart. Still, *Lost and Found* is not a sad play. The possibility for completeness lies in all of our lives, we just need to look for it in the right places. Vanity, consumerism, the delirium of addiction or admiration by others may bring instant gratification, however, the final peace of mind and fulfilment can only be reached if we find our true selves. How this almost clichéd expression could be put into practice, is up to the viewer's interpretation. The closing scene of the play is the richest in symbolism and may well be the most beautiful too. So in the end the viewer can get up from their seat feeling relieved and smiling, although a mild side effect from the play may be that they are rendered momentarily speechless.

After this momentary silence the audience rewarded the young lady with a rapturous applause, leaving her slightly overwhelmed. The premier was a great success and there are plans to show the play again in Jaszbereny. For those who have missed out on it this time, it is definitely a show worth catching.