

Luxemburger Wort

Schrödinger review, Grand Théâtre

Schrödinger's Cat, Reckless Sleepers and theatrical adventure

Published on Friday, 22 May, 2015 at 10:53



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A large box is onstage, one side completely open to the audience. Although it is all black, various doors and hatches can be discerned. On either side of the box is a row of small tables and chairs, looking rather like schoolroom desks. A briefcase sits on one desk, a bottle of water and a glass on another. Everything is neat and orderly. Contained.

For now.

Five performers enter, slowly, carefully. They explore the box. Over the next hour, they engage—tentatively at first, then with frenetic gusto—in an orderly disordering of the box and its surroundings. In an hour, the box will be a mess—dripping wet, with the flotsam of an hour's vigorous play soaked (and the actors too).

Re-envisioned vision of Schrödinger's box

The Reckless Sleepers have come to town (their first visit as a company to Luxembourg), to perform their provocative piece, Schrödinger. Appropriately, the craft in this enigmatic performance beliesthe troupe's name: nothing here is reckless or sleepy.

What transpires is a theatrical response to (explanation of?) quantum physics as theorised by Erwin Schrödinger. There is no actual cat in the box, alive or dead (or both), but simultaneous states of contradiction (truth and illusion, 'chaos and order') are created and moved in and out of the box with remarkable speed and astonishing displays of physical agility by the cast (Alex Covell, Leen Dewilde, Kevin Egan, Leentje Van de Cruys and Artistic Director Mole Wetherell).

Reckless Sleepers first created their experimental space, the box, in 1998. The work was widely praised for its originality and the company for its skill. In 2011, with mostly new company members, they decided to re-visit and re-envision the piece. They brought the box out of storage and began again exploring its mysteries.

Always interesting and a visual feast

The audience is challenged throughout to try to make sense of a work that is (maybe) trying to make sense of Schrödinger's extraordinary ideas. If understanding is required for knowledge, we may not be able to know what, precisely, is going on. There is a progression, but nothing like a traditional linear story narrative. The experience—the experiment—washes over us and bathes us in a turbulent and quirky theatrical not quite overload. The rapid juxtaposition of images is always interesting and not infrequently strangely beautiful.

Schrödinger is a visual feast. As things progress, the immediate swings between 'question and answer' and 'chaos and order' become increasingly vivid and, at times, frenzied. All the while a puzzling text is occasionally spoken or shouted. Commands are barked. Numbers and doodles are scribbled on the walls, the ceiling, the hatches and doors. Water is consumed (in extraordinary quantities and at mind boggling speed). Bodies are tossed and dropped and shoved through walls. Final struggles for communication dominance unfold as cast members frantically erase each others' graffiti and replace it with their own.

Dreamlike, audaciously theatrical

It is a dreamlike performance, fevered and yet somehow at the same time meditative to watch (another set of contradictory states). The programme states that Schrödinger is about 'thought experiments, cats, René Magritte, love, time, mathematics, observations, truth, lies and alcohol'. The result is endlessly surprising and audaciously theatrical. The company brings us through a journey that is unusual, but which delivers thought-provoking rewards.

What does it all mean? The answer must surely be as unique to each individual as the experience of watching it. Whatever conclusions are reached or whatever questions are raised, the experience of the journey into and out of the Reckless Sleepers' exceptional box is one to savour.