

Draw Me a Bird at the Israel Festival for Children

Peut-être Theatre's first international touring experience

Getting on a plane with a giant inflatable cloud was always going to be interesting. We were doing really well with all the El Al security questions until the fatal question, 'Is there anything electrical in the bag'. 'Oh yes,' I blithely replied, 'there's a fan inside to blow it up.' I felt everyone around me wince. However, remarkably, they let us on the plane - and we unfurled our wings and took off towards Israel.

The festival had kindly allowed us to take flights in advance of our performances and so the advance party (the girls) had some sight-seeing / relaxing on the beach time. We flew around Jerusalem like city sparrows, bobbed around on the Dead Sea like rubber ducks, soared like eagles around Masada and dipped our pigeon toes into the river Jordan. A wonderful opportunity to find new inspiration from an incredible country.

After a few days we were joined by the boys - and special kudos to Igor Urzelai for crossing two continents and two oceans to be with us following Bloom's (his company) successful tour of North America.

A rehearsal in 'The Egg' (not the one in Bath but a dedicated children's theatre space shaped inside and out like a giant egg - our birds felt right at home!) to introduce our new boy Andrew Hawkins to the company and the role. This was followed by a television interview for the Israeli national news. Hatching out at regular intervals into the blistering sun, our beautiful Isabelle Cressy muttering Shalmon Zipurim Ktanot (hello little birds) as she learnt a couple of lines of text in a Hebrew translation.



Workshops supported by BiArts (a British Council initiative) for university students went well - the participants were enthusiastic, energetic and completely willing to work in both Hebrew and English to experience some of our methods of creating work. (On a personal note I thoroughly enjoyed our own Maya Politaki's astonishingly limber portrayal of a cigarette-smoking blood-thirsty zombie!) In the afternoon we held a workshop for a group of children and parents who had tickets to see the show on the next day. Daphna led the workshop in Hebrew as the children were quite tiny (and, of course, adorable) - although the universal language of dance made it

pretty easy for the rest of us to follow and support the children as they dived for fish, pecked for worms and glided on the wind!

The get in the next day started painfully early but for good reason; a larger space than we're used to, and having to build seating onto the stage for the audience to make the space intimate. A few hiccups along the way but a team of willingly helpful and good natured technicians and a lighting designer saw us just about ready to go up on time with our set looking as beautiful and Parisian as ever. The festival had built our chimneys for us and provided a dance floor and were happy to make adjustments as needed for our magically appearing springtime flower and retractable washing line.

And then, quite suddenly, we found ourselves performing two packed out shows to very appreciative audiences. Isabelle's Hebrew was perfectly understood and she found herself surrounded by a flock of children clamouring to feed the birds. The applause at the end of both shows was warm, proving our conviction that our show really could work for an international audience.



The festival looked after us so attentively, providing flights, accommodation, generous per-diems, on the ground support, a large amount of gaffa tape, a huge technical team, they rebuilt the large parts of our set for us to our designer Amy Jackson's specifications, and ferried us to and from our hotel as we needed. At times it was hard to be in a country with a completely different language, and a very different culture but working towards the same goal, which when we achieved felt like a milestone has been passed for us as a company, reminded us that one of the joys of working in theatre is that wherever you go in the world, as soon as you walk into a theatre - you're home.

So. Where's next?

Peut-être Theatre performed **Draw me a Bird** at the Israel Festival for Children at the Mediateque in Hulon, Tel Aviv, on May 28th 2012. We are grateful for the support of TYA-UK.

For more information about the company see www.peutetretheatre.co.uk

