

Poetry and Spoken Words

Friday, 27 August, 2010

Hearing secret harmonies

London – Seven Dials Club – 26 Aug 10 – 19:30 (2:30)

The mics don't work. The Seven Dials Club is bustling so microphones would help. Brenda Brown and Kathrin Kirmann leap into action, assisted by a flood of eager poets. A wall is created seemingly from thin air, separating the general bar populated with a curious but not invested public from the Poetry and Spoken Words event of the evening. The room is mixture of poets, fans, reviewers, artists and those who encompass all of the above. The camaraderie and excitement is tangible. The performers soldier on; some still hold the dysfunctional mic like a familiar blanket, some eschew it entirely and, in a memorable final act, one builds a poem around the technical difficulties.

First to grace the stage is a rag tag class of poets, led by the indomitable Emile Sercombe. Though their delivery is often hesitant and hushed the genuine enthusiasm for poetry and how it expresses the everyday in carefully crafted language radiates. Gary Stephens' 'Panic Attack' co-opts the familiar rhythm of 'The Night Before Christmas,' but usurps its magical subject, replacing it with a medical lament. Charles Brown's poetry also stands out in its simplicity of language and the powerful images it creates, particularly in 'Looking Through.' Their fearless leader, Emile Sercombe, sets the room alight with gasps and riotous laughter, as he dons various costumes over his Where's Wally top, rainbow suspenders and checked trousers and leads us through the world of vengeful worms and meticulous werewolves.

The second half of the show is devoted to a series of more professional poets, who are quick to note their books for sale in the back. The poetry and delivery is more polished, but happily the enthusiasm remains. A particular highlight of the evening is the Perunika Trio, whose aching and pure voices blend into stunning harmonies and dissonance. The spirit of the songs translates, even though the words do not. That Bulgaria lies on the great divide of East and West shines through the music, as Eugenia Georgieva's voice rises in what feels like a call to prayer. A quick succession of brilliant and energetic poets follows. Elizabeth Darcy Jones unleashes her vendetta against St Ives, painting her as a seductress and witch, though her BP poem is slightly out of touch following the recent disasters. Julie Mullen, accompanied by Cathy Flower, captures the rhythm of sex and the waves of climax in She/She. The evening comes to a close with Alan Wolfson, a man with an astonishingly fabulous moustache and a wit to compete with the best. Immediately he launches into a poem about the evening's technical difficulties, calling out the broken mics, the strangely off-centred paintings and even the wall-colour. He then parades mischievously through a series of poems with dazzling wordplay, particularly in 'Cat Slam Rhyme Off,' about a battle of rhymes with his cat, Otis. The evening ends on a high and the now sated audience dashes off into the wet streets.

Cast Credits: William Ball – poet, Brenda Brown – emcee, Charles Brown – poet, Sasha Dee – poet, Dónall Dempsey – poet, Elizabeth Darcy Jones – poet, Paul Eccentric – poet, Cathy Flower – poet, Lizzie Grayling – poet, Kathrin Kirmann – emcee, Julie Mullen – poet/emcee, Perunika Trio (Eugenia Georgieva, Dessislava Vasileva, Jasmina Stosic) – a cappella music, Emile Sercombe – poet, Gary Stephens – poet, Jan Windle – poet, Alan Wolfson – poet.

Company Credits: Director and Events Coordinator – Brenda Brown, Company – Cooltan Arts (www.cooltanarts.org). Organising Company – Creekside Artists (www.creeksideartists.co.uk)

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