

"Pretty Women" Press Release (1160 words)

About "Pretty Women"

In "Pretty Women" two singer/actresses and a pianist on an empty stage create a moving account of the hopes, doubts, perceptions and insights that contribute to the development of a woman's self understanding. They ponder, rejoice, complain or comment in dramatized dialogues interspersed with a pertinent selection of 20th century theater songs by renowned musical composers and lyricists. The experiences of girlhood and love that unfold in the first act are followed in the second act by mixed feelings about the implications of married life and motherhood. In the course of events the occasional appearance of a fairy tale figure such as Cinderella or Red Riding Hood offers a surprising and illuminating perspective on the question at hand. The spoken scenes are adapted from fiction written primarily by women authors such as Dorothy Parker and Betty Smith. The figures portrayed range from a girl at a dance, two women on a shopping tour in front of a jeweler's window, an unexpected exchange between a passing stranger and a woman intent on committing suicide, or an intimate discussion between a schoolgirl and her mother while waiting for a doctor to arrive and assist the mother in a home birth. The selection of songs by i.e. Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II, Irving Berlin, or Stephen Sondheim document the musical from 1916 (Harry Tierney & Joseph McCarthy) till the present time, 2005 (Benj Pasek & Justin Paul). These musical monologues and dialogues were written specifically for female characters in musicals responding to a variety of everyday situations. Alternately contemplative, ironic, dramatic and witty "Pretty Women" gives a compelling voice to the everyday experiences of women in our times.

The Staging

The musical productions at municipal or national theaters or opera houses are conceived as spectacles. These are characterized by elaborate decor, orchestral accompaniment, and a large cast of soloists, chorus and dance ensemble. The innovative staging concept in "Pretty Women" takes an entirely different approach. Its focus on a woman's confrontation with the societal options of role and gender emphasizes the performing skills of three women on a bare stage who create an intimate rapport with the audience. In its striving for a performing context of absolute simplicity everything extraneous is pared away. The minimalistic performing concept thus renounces on changes of scene through elaborate décor, and frequent costume changes. There is neither a chorus, nor a dance ensemble backing up the soloists and a piano instead of an orchestra. The aesthetic aim of utter simplicity not only places dramaturgic and directorial demands on the staging in order to create a balance of form and content, it also requires performers who, above and beyond craftsmanship, are able to generate a high degree of personality projection. In this third production of Les Arts Scéniques an international ensemble consolidates the performing talent required with high professional competence. The combined theatrical experience of all involved contributes to an unusually moving performance.

The Ensemble

Actress and singer Martina Rick is a graduate of the Swiss Musical Academy, Bern and the Complete Vocal Institute, Copenhagen. California born performer Madeline Del Real trained at the American Music and Dramatic Academy in New York, and the London Academy of Theatre

Music. Concert pianist and prize-winner in several competitions, Brigitte Subkov, born in St. Petersburg, studied at the Royal College of Music in London, and finished her study on scholarship at the Hochschule für Musik, Basel. Director Cary Rick, a child actor and prize-winning teenage actor in his native Chicago, trained as a dancer at the Academy for Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna, and the Mary Wigman Studio Berlin, before embarking on an international career. He toured his critically celebrated one man show throughout Europe and the USA, assisted celebrated director, Erwin Piscator, at the Freie Volksbühne Berlin, trained the actors and dancers at the Helsinki Municipal theatre, directed productions in America, France, Germany and Italy and has been a visiting professor in the theatre arts divisions of universities in the USA and Germany.

Three performing versions

The innovative staging concept of this production responds to the reality of performing opportunities and venues in Switzerland. The bilingual ensemble of „Pretty Women“ has prepared three performing versions in order to assure flexibility in its capacity and wish to address a variety of different audience groups and performing venues. In a first theatrical version the songs and the dramatized scenes are performed in theatres as written originally in English. A second theatre version will intersperse the dramatized scenes acted in German with the songs sung with their original English lyrics. A third, concert version of the production presents the songs alone for presentations in special, smaller venues such as the showrooms of our co-producer Musik Hug throughout Switzerland, or in our co-production with the socio-psychiatric organization 'undxund' in mini concerts for special populations such as psychiatric patients or the disabled in clinical care, in residences for senior citizens. The concert version is also available for performances in schools, music schools, banquet halls, or hotels.

Les Arts Scéniques

Martina and Cary Rick founded the association, „Les Arts Scéniques“ in 2012 in Basel in order to promote a critical appreciation of theater craft and performing style among theatregoers or participants in acting courses for interested laymen, as well as training craftsmanship in aspiring theatrical talents. In pursuit of these goals the association stages theatrical productions, is building an acting ensemble, carries out a training program for aspiring actors and actresses and offers workshops for interested adult amateurs. Also, since 2017 Les Arts Scéniques Junior, a performing ensemble of children ages 8-13 trains and rehearses intensely between September and June and performs a production the children conceive themselves at the end of the year. Since intercultural exchange is an essential focus, courses are held in both English and German and productions as well. The first production of Les Arts Scéniques, „Relatively Speaking“, a British high comedy by English dramatist Alan Ayckbourn enabled the ensemble to in-depth work on precision in timing, rhythm. It was premiered 2013 in Basel, was revived in 2014 and toured in 2015/2016 in Bern and Winterthur. The second production, „Two Times Chekhov“, consisted of two one-act plays by Anton Chekhov, „The Marriage Proposal“ and „The Bear“. It demanded an in-depth reflection of the historical performing style of naturalistic characterization, as well as physical buffoonery. It was performed in 2014 in Basel. Les Arts Scéniques aims at building a professional working ensemble within the framework of a repertory theater, whose versatility in performing styles and genres strives simultaneously for a balanced aesthetic unity of entertainment and edification.

First performing dates

„Pretty Women“ will premiere both language performing versions at the Theater am Käfigturm in

Bern on 11-13 January, 2018. Both versions will be performed the following week from 18-21 January 2018 at Ackermannshof in Basel. The first concert version performance is being programmed for the first week in January in the Allschwil showroom of co-producer Musik Hug.

Basel, June 18, 2017