



A Winning Dance Show from the World Champions

Is it possible to stage a contemporary dance show without the use of multicoloured costumes and backdrops and yet sustain excitement and maintain interest to the end? Is it possible today, when audiences expect increasingly greater visual attractions? Yes, it seems, and with considerable success too, provided the work is in good hands.

„CHESS“: the full night production of the Botafogo Dance Ensemble performed to packed houses at the Thalia Theatre is a truly exciting and unusual show indeed. The story is played out on no more than the bare squares of a chessboard and starts in a „simple“ way. After all, who does not know what chess is: a game based on fighting a battle with white and dark pieces until one of the players checkmates their opponent.

Here however, chess is life itself. Through the black-and-white world of chess *Tibor Dalotti*, director-choreographer shows us, that nothing in life is only black or only white. Standing above the losing party we experience the mercy blossoming from the vulnerability of the opponent. Invisible threads of attraction run between opponents, with the potential of fusing into a true friendship, even, if only the circumstances were different. In vain are the two opposing groups strong and well organised, when any unexpected event – such as an emerging love affair – has the power to fundamentally alter everything, to the point of total collapse. Because, in the play, a romance between the Black King and the White Queen turns all customary rules of play upside down. We witness lovesick jealousy and the tossing away of an unfailing partner in the hope of a new relationship, we see desperate female practices in pursuit of charming back a husband, we see revenge, duel and showdown. All this is brought to life by novel choreography and unusual selection of music. Yet the final development in the story, danced to world music created by the infusion of stirring classical pieces, blood-boiling Latin rhythms, samba, Argentinean tango and several electronic genres is unexpected. When in the closing act of the play the White Queen, having switched colours for the sake of love and thus wrapped into the stolen cape of the dead Dark Queen meets her chosen man in the heat of an Apocalyptic battle, instead of fulfilment

descending, the air snaps frozen. The Black King had, in the meantime, changed his cape for the one of his conquered opponent. Apparently all was for nothing; the colours still do not match; the antagonisms are still not resolvable. Or are they? The two chess players who frame the story and keep resurfacing during the production hold in their possession the chance not only for mixing up the threads and finishing the game but also the possibility of starting it anew.

The success of the quality production lies in the well thought-through scenario, lively spectacle, novel musical background and in the palpable harmony and professional work of the choreographer and his dancers. The artists who give life to the chess pieces are among the very best Hungarian ballroom dancers. *Attila Katus* and *Andrea Molnar* are known to us from the TV show: Saturday Night Fever. Their unique acrobatic showmanship and media-savvyness contribute to the well deserved success of the entire team of the Botafogo ensemble: World Champions of Show-dance and Europe Champions of Stage-dance.

Article by Eموke Kolos, for the community and cultural weekly *SZENTENDRE ES KORNYEKE*, issue 18 vol 23, 15 May 2009.

The basic premise is the essence of chess: the battle of white and dark. According to the rules of chess, their antagonism is rigid and cannot be resolved. Even if they revolt against the rules, even if their personal ambitions thrive for peace, the figures must fall without mercy, because the rules are forced upon them by higher powers: the two chess players. No matter that the pieces have their own various emotions, they are nothing for the players but empty figures to push around, mere tools in the hands of power.

Attila Katus and Andrea Molnar are “playing chess”, too.

„Nothing is impossible for the members of the Botafogo Dance Ensemble, where dance is concerned. The World Champions of Show dance and Europe Champions of Stage-dance embarked on the impossible: to dance a game of chess.” Winners of the Saturday Night Fever , Attila Katus and Andrea Molnar joined the extraordinary venture. They are going to challenge the world for a game on a chessboard. The audience is going to participate in a special travel, through dance. They can steal a glance into the world of pawns and officers, where the unique language of the dance as a form creates common space for the formations of humans. Where the tiny breadth dividing war and peace will be revealed and where life itself is a game of chess: war, struggle, love... and play, of course.

The soloists of the performance are the very best current and former top show-dancers of Hungary, who have already proven their unmatched talents in the ensemble’s previous stage productions.