

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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Poetry ? Review

Written by David on May, 2 2010

Poets pack the Strand

It was standing room only Wednesday night at the Strand Theater as more than 20 poets shared their work, written and spoken, to and with a crowd overflowing the cabaret area of the historic venue.

Chairs ringed the podium and people sat on stairs and stood along walls like at a beatnik coffee house to hear the cadence visions featured poet, Dan Carpenter, recited from his new book ?More Than I Could See.?

His crisp, well?crafted and eloquently delivered readings opened an eventful night of verbal pyrotechniques and literary gymnastics as word smiths ranging in age from grade ?school girls to grandfathers shared emotions, sensations and often retrospective written musings. This inspired music of words spanning free-verse to sonnets to songs swinging from sentimental to sublime was sponsored by Three Sisters Books and Gifts.

?We hope poetry night makes poetry more accessible for people who never thought they would like or understand poetry, said Barbara Rogers. ?It?s refreshing to hear poetry from many perspectives and all ages.?

Carpenter, a columnist for the Indianapolis Star, opened the evening?s verbal festivity with a highly conversational, yet, alliterative poem about a painter. It was a spoken song that began as a collision of clashing words and then evolved into a word picture filled with nuance, texture, color and experience.

He followed this with several poems stolen like fire from the headlines of the past recited with a voice and cadence that reminds one of Carl Sandburg, another journalist turned poet. The thirteen poems he chose were eloquent and at times thoughtful alliterative excursions brimming with well-crafted emotion, like the one he wrote about his infant daughter.

? I am his poem

not because he has written me

because he found me

and sings me

and would know me by heart if he could.?

Another accomplished poet of the night was J.L Cato whose ?Beneath the Surface,? was also a finely sung lyrical ode based upon a real experience with a painter. This work focused on an artist residing in El Salvador and his struggles to live and create amid war, poverty and illiteracy; both literal and cultural.

A similarly serious approach to words and the emotions they can generate was explored by Omer Brewer, a grandfather who shared a heart-felt trauma involving his daughter?s life. The near-death event inspired him to write and his voice still cracked and broke 14-years later as he recalled his sensations.

In an unintended, yet rather poetic irony, Brewer was followed by an equally poignant work by a writer not yet born when tragedy inspired his voice.

With a rather brave face and clear voice, Danielle Eberhart, a 5th grader, with promise who shared a sentimental lament about grief and loss: ?I was once a dog.?

This tiny troubadour was followed in quick fashion by an eloquent exploration by local poet Gaye McKenney, who spoke of random friendliness and how it affects her daily existence.

Another of evening's gems was a Shakespearean sonnet, written in iambic pentameters, "The Birth of Poseidon" by Lee Sakellarides and read in a forthright resonant voice that flowed with poetic diction.

One rather exciting feature of the night was a group of budding student-poets taught by Jon Stevens of Shelbyville High School, who also shared some of their works. Two of the more thought-provoking pieces were composed and forcefully intoned by Arthur Garcia and Larry Brown. Garcia explored the macabre world of the lonely, twisted vision of the serial killer who inspired "The Silence of the Lambs." Brown's poem delved rather poignantly into identity, stereotypes and judgments: both perceived and pre-conceived.

A final poet worth mentioning in the lengthy, yet inspiring night of word pictures and soulscapes was the rather sublime personal narrative poems of Sara Chappella, who wrapped her crafted vocabulary around several big philosophical conundrums evolving about the ultimate meaning of existence. Her verbalized songs were emotions inspired by physical landscapes that magically coaxed her into a deep questioning and pondering about her soul and its terrain.

All in all, and throughout the night a plethora of people, local and regional, waxed poetic across the emotional, philosophical, sentimental and even the comic-maudlin in an entertaining spectacle that repeatedly re-proved an old-point: poetry is indeed a window on the soul and that songs exist in the minds of all.

Images on this post:



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This independent review does not express the opinion of the Strand Theatre.

Archive File: 2010-05-02_poetry-#8211;-review.pdf

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