

There where books breathe...

by Dimitris Haliotis, Proto Thema, 19/4/2019

An at once thrilling and mystical journey in the world of literature and poetry, where words reign. This could summarize “Ex Libris”, a promenade performance which focuses on books and has been inspired and directed by Olga Pozeli and “Noiti Grammi” Theatre Group.

An absolutely immersive and liberating experience which, to be honest, is difficult to describe. Only by engaging in it can you understand...

It was a while ago, on a Friday evening at the Law Faculty Library. Labyrinthine corridors, doors that open up to other doors and lead to imposing halls with towering bookcases full of books. Silence everywhere.

On a table lie innumerable cards printed with phrases that signal the beginning or the end of various books. These cards seem to be the key that unlocks the enchanted world of books and gets you walking through their own dimension. You can read as many as you want. Each one arouses a different feeling. The journey begins...

The first stop is an encounter with the precious words of Wistawa Szymborska, the Polish poet. You are blindfolded. You just listen. This is what matters. The musician, Vicky Sahpazi, accompanies the poems creating an audio universe that allows you to actually sense them deep down inside. The words turn into images, into a weird fluttering in the heart and the mind. You have already forgotten the hustle and bustle of the city. You are ready to go on...

In the interior of the library, hidden behind “walls” of books, the actors are waiting for you – like characters that emerged from book pages. They are ready to tell you stories about other books. Seven contemporary writers (Andreas Staikos, Andreas Flourakis, Akis Dimou, Glykeria Basdeki, Sophia Kapsourou, Maria Gouli, Theoni Dede) engage in creative conversations with classic literary works, such as “In search of lost time” by Marcel Proust, “Nana” by Émile Zola, and “The Clown” by Heinrich Böll, as well as more modern novels, such as “The farce” by Ersi Sotiropoulou. Seven short monologues. So direct, so real! You watch them from close-up. You are part of them. The actors address their each and every word to you. They share their worries with you...

“I count my life in pages. The years? In pages. Lovers? Them in pages, too. Loved ones? In pages. Words speak to me. Printed words. Those on the pages. That turn into sentences. That turn into heroes. That turn into stories. That fill books.” confesses Isabella Kyriazi.

“What would you do if you found a book that had the ability to bring the most unimaginable creatures, even the dead right here, in front of you?” asks Konstantis Mizaras following the traces of the story that Andreas Flourakis wrote, drawing inspiration from Abdul Alhazred’s ‘Necronomicon’.

“Who wrote it, who wrote it off, who read it, who destroyed it, who left it halfway, who held it from the spine, who finished it, who sold it, who lent it, who took it, who thought of it and

finally, who does it belong to?" wonders a charmingly flustered Stevi Fortoma, holding Émile Zola's 'Nana' in her hands.

And then, a unusual 'clown' (Marios Souyoutzoglou) reveals that *"people cannot understand how the secret of terrorism is hidden in the details. It is easy to forgive when you have seen only the big picture, but who can forgive when they have seen the details."*

Then, more stories, more encounters... The actors (Goni Louka, Isabella Kyriazi, Stevi Fortoma, Grigoris Poimenidis, Konstantis Mizaras, Marios Souyoutzoglou) 'outperform' each other. They are so unaffectedly natural, so engrossed in the ambience!

The direction, the environment, the quietness that allows you to hear your steps as you move across the halls, everything fits together harmoniously.

"Ex Libris" does not simply talk about books. It has something of their magic. A dance of words and feelings, a space and time where books breathe. All you have to do is let yourself go and dance along...