

A masterful double act

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W/hole combines visual spectacle with the sight of two new-circus artists in a class of their own.

We hear an ominous rumbling sound in the darkness. But as soon as the spotlight reveals the small, compact –not chubby– figure of Petter, and the tall, slender Samuel, then it's clear that that we are not in danger. These two are jugglers but also more than that. They are a masterful double act who, purposefully and with a steady hand, manipulate buckets, shovels and philosophical profundities on the subject of holes. It is, of course, no accident that the piece is called W/hole and Petter and Samuel go at it with due seriousness. No holes are too small or large, too tricky or dangerous to awake their curiosity, and they draw us into their fascinating world with an uncontrollable energy and a touching comedic sense. Another great comedian, Dirch Passer once sang "Theres a hoooolle in the bucket", and in this piece more and more holes and more and more buckets are used to greater and greater comic effect. All the while, these two performers display their extraordinary skill at communicating wordlessly with each other and the audience. Petter and Samuel do not dance as such, yet there is a dancing lightness to their bodies and in all of their wild movements which is impressively well-timed and communicative. Neither do they work with classic ball or club juggling. Instead they give us our money's worth in other ways, performing balancing numbers with large heavy shovels and trickling sand. They even give us a beautifully set-up showstopper when one is suddenly perched on the scoop of the other's shovel.

Deeply serious comedy

But first we see a film, depicting the drilling of the deepest hole in the world. This begins in Murmansk, on the Kola peninsula back in 1970. To the stirring sounds of a Russian male-voice choir, the depth is counted off, meter by meter, before our admiring gaze. Drilling stopped in 1992 at 12,262 meters. Naturally this achievement attracts the interest of a pair of hole-nerds such as Samuel and Petter. They must go to Murmansk. For a while we believe that they will dig a very deep hole, a tunnel all the way to the Kola peninsula, for behind a wooden panel they seem to be digging furiously. But no. The pair begin to build a formidable wooden construction which, apart from one beautiful interruption, stands onstage for the rest of the show, and which illustrates the interface between Rapid Eye's work and that of the wonderful Swedish Cirkus Cirkör. With ingenuity and deep concentration they work on. Their comically deadpan visages leave us in no doubt of the seriousness of this enterprise.

Could this oversized construction be some kind of madcap transportation to Murmansk? Wrong. The end result of their combined efforts seems to be a drilling platform with a nice long plank on which they can sit side by side, to eventually sink down and disappear into the Russian's deep borehole. Or are they about to explore – ulp! – one of the greatest mysteries of the universe, the black, all-consuming holes. Who knows?

And so we complete the circle – and W/hole-in 2019, with a scene which outstandingly combines visual spectacle with the sight of two new-circus artists in a class of their own. Their originality, humour and expansive physicality comes with the strongest recommendation, and they are more than a match for almost anything that can be watched on a screen.

By: Randi K. Pedersen