

## *PÚPÄTKO*

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Seen on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, at the Wrocławski Teatr Lalek as a part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Review of New Theatre for Children Festival. *PÚPÄTKO* is directed by Alicja Morawska-Rubczak for the Ján Palárika Theatre from Trnava in Slovakia.

*PÚPÄTKO* is a beautiful show where sensory play meets nature. The show, aimed at children of 6 months through 3 years, provides a safe space to explore the different stimuli of nature. The play lets small children explore different sensations, such as wind, rain and the sun. It uses soft music and songs (composed by Iwona Skv) throughout to mimic different sounds of nature. The show centres around the growth of plants and flowers and how different elements are needed to let nature grow.

The moment the auditorium opened we were greeted by the actors (Silvia Soldanová, Petra Dobiš Blesáková and Matúš Beniak), holding chimes. The children were welcomed by the calm sound from the chimes and the performers let them play a bit with the instruments. There was a calmness and comfort during the whole performance, which was healing for me, especially in a world surrounded by noise and bustle. The sounds were soft, harmonious and low-stimulation. When we walked in, the small kids were invited to sit (accompanied by their parents) at the edge of the stage. During the performance, the toddlers were allowed to wander the grass stage a little bit. There were moments of sensory play. For example, the performers were giving wooden leaves to the children which could be used to make noises or to play.

The show was built on a few parts, which each represented an element of nature. The stage (designed by Barbara Małecka) was designed as a grass field with a pedestal. There were big raindrops hanging from the ceiling. And at the back of the stage there were leaves, which were used during the performance to build a flower of the pedestal, emphasizing the growth happening in nature using elements. These elements were represented in a few ways. Firstly, there was wind, which was explored through the chimes. The actors also exaggerated the different tones and sounds in words to imitate the sound of the wind and rain. Secondly, the rain was explored through a rainy soundscape, the flickering of the performers hands and the raindrops hanging from the ceiling. The sun was part of the end, where they used wooden leaves with mirrors so the children could see and play with their reflection. These moments of the actors interacting with the children were the most important part of the show. When the children were crying, the performers tried to comfort them using the playful elements (like the small wooden leaves for sensory play, the mirror leaves, or the chimes). The show was tied together through two songs about growth and nature. At the beginning of the show, the actors sung a song about the different elements of nature, using the exaggeration of the sound of words to mimic the sounds of nature. The second song was sung at the end of the performance, this song was about how all the different elements are needed to let things grow.

*PÚPÄTKO* is a show made for little children, where they can explore nature in a comfortable and safe environment. While using sensory play and soft sounds, it is a very calming show which is a great escape from the noisy world that we live in.