

DER LETZTE SANDER VON OBERRIED

FREILICHTSPIEL RIEDERALP 11. JULI – 18. AUGUST 2018



Scene description

derletztesander.ch

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Drama in five acts and 24 pictures, with a prologue and a short epilogue.

«Der letzte Sander von Oberried» (The Last Water Guardian of Oberried)

is an archaic story. This play, in the new version by Arnold Steiner, must not forfeit this characteristic type, this particular style. We should have the courage to let this story play out in «other times». Taking the given setting – Alpine museum, audience seating and the surrounding archaic landscape – we should create a timeless cosmos for ourselves that exerts a strong, sensual effect on today's »modern digital people". If the story is presented in a fast-paced, clear and authentic way, with the necessary psychological understanding of each individual player and with the basic development in the rehearsal processes, then we will be successful with this concept. Non-professional actors come across as »real" if they have a personal connection to the play..."

Prologue: Sound of bells ringing. End of the Late Middle Ages.

As humans and animals settle and cultivate the Alpine region, the rushing and gurgling element «water» is essential for survival. Small water wheels are sometimes used to monitor the water flow. They drive a hammer hitting a piece of wood. The blows of the hammer can be heard from far away and confirm that water is flowing. Panta rhei: «Everything moves on and nothing remains.»

A short leap in time to the present: today, the Alps are home to all kinds of cultivation and exploitation of the land, all the way up to high altitudes. Water, the elixir of life, has sustained and refreshed generations of people. It has served us, but it has also threatened us time and again.

Act 1

A simple burst pipe really throws people for a loop. And the phone is ringing off the hook at the water engineer's family home.

Flashback to the year 1928. Little Georg, an orphan, is told by his grandfather that his father, whose job as the water guardian was to repair the channels that carry water across the rock faces, fell to his death not long after Georg was born. His mother died of the plague. People are suffering and lamenting. There's no water coming through yet again. Jenno, who is now the water guardian, is attempting to fix it, and he is on the steep rock face, high above us. Hilar, Jenno's foster father, has a dark premonition, and Anna Zumstein fears for him. Is it more than mere affection?

Their bleak, arduous life continues and yet there is still room for a bit of fun, a humorous story and of course the admonishing words of the priest: «Have

faith in God.» However, he's given more of a headache by «crazy Olga», even if she does exert a cautionary influence.

The water is once again flowing in Oberried. Jenno was successful and the people are happy. Now Anna and Jenno also have a little more time for each other. But there's also a dark side to the placid Jenno: his violent temper. And an enemy is lurking somewhere up there in the rocks. One who steals water and smashes the water channels (bisses), and perhaps even wants to kill him. Anna is afraid. An exuberant feast with wild dancing is just what's needed. The cheerful mood comes to an abrupt halt. Josi Anderhalden and his drinking buddies from Greich disrupt the party and harass the women. A quarrel ensues. But is there more to it than meets the eye? An even greater danger comes from Mörel, where the mayor (judge and bailiff) rules with an iron fist and collects the taxes.

Jörg Berchtold, lime burner, hunter and clown who enjoys wearing different hats, shocks the villagers; he reveals himself to be a political agitator and contemplates using a mazze. (The mazze was a tree trunk carved with a human face and grotesque features. It was questioned to hear the voice of the people. It was a way of fighting despots and launching a punitive expedition, but was not without danger.)

Disaster runs its course. Unstoppable, like the way water flows: from a trickle to a raging torrent. And when Lena, Anna's best friend, falls in love with the good-looking Josi Anderhalden, there is a sense of foreboding. This creates a breeding ground for intrigue and enmity. Music.

Act 2

The village square. Once again there's no water coming through. The situation is coming to a head. Could an outsider have had a hand in this, diverting or stealing the water? And Jörg is performing his dangerous ritual with the mazze. The revolt against the powers that be takes its course. The villagers rebel. Like a bolt from the blue: there's been a murder. Suspicion falls on Jenno the water guardian; he is captured by the mayor's henchmen and thrown into the dungeon in Mörel. Was this young man's violent temper ultimately his downfall?

Act 3

Mörel. In court. The mayor, also the public prosecutor, presents his case. Assiduous judges are also manipulated by the powerful man. The people of Mörel want a culprit. For them, Jenno is guilty as charged. Neither the priest nor the people of Greich can do anything: they are too weak. What's more, Anton Zen Rossen, the sleazy son of the mayor, has his eye on Anna. It won't be long before his rival is hanged. Still, Anna remains staunch and rejects him. She fights for her Jenno. Only a higher authority can overturn the death sentence, in this case the prince-bishop, Bishop Wilhelm in Sion.

Act 4

And if it that weren't enough. The water in Oberried runs dry again. The water hammer suddenly falls silent and the people of Oberried become desperate. Now other men have to go that are less experienced and less courageous, as Jenno has gone and his fate looks sealed. «Crazy Olga» also has her premonitions. The quasi-religious procession along the ridge, a sign from the hereafter, shows everyone's worst fears. Two crosses are carried at the end of the procession. Two brave men have paid with their lives. And the hammer begins striking again. Joy is mixed with sorrow and Jenno waits for his death sentence in Mörel. Triumph is within the mayor's grasp.

Act 5

Will Jenno now end up on the gallows? It looks as though the verdict has already been reached and the mayor has achieved his goal. The bishop's captain appears on horseback and announces the arrival of the bishop-prince, Bishop Wilhelm. From now on, death sentences must be approved by the bishop. Is a new political power struggle looming? Who will win? The unscrupulous, narcissistic mayor with his depraved son, or will the battle-hardened bishop come out on top? Will they decide to sacrifice a pawn after all? The concentration of power, status and money is full of foreboding. Like water in a meandering stream bed, the story takes an unexpected turn...

Epilogue: sound of bells ringing. Today:

The water is still flowing: Panta rhei «Everything moves on and nothing remains.»

Willy-Franz Kurth, Director

«WASSER ISCH LÄBU, KEIS LAT STÄRBU. WASSER GIT BROT, KEIS BRINGT NOT.»



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