

Bash Street Theatre

THE BASH STREET SUMMER - 2006

2006 has been the most successful year ever for Bash Street Theatre Co. We feel now, after several years of trying, that we have finally made an impact in the European street theatre festival scene.

Although we created our silent-movie show “CLIFFHANGER!” in 2002 and have toured it extensively in the UK, we knew it had potential to succeed abroad. However, the French and German market is so competitive that word-of-mouth recommendation is no longer enough to get bookings. You have to be seen by festival promoters.

The key for us was a visit to Rouen in France for a showcase festival in 2005. We were aided by the Department of Trade and Industry which has a scheme to help businesses export their work. It was logistically very difficult because we were in the middle of touring our “Frankenstein” show.

The impact was immediate. From that one festival we landed 24 days’ work in France, Belgium, Germany, and Spain, and attracted theatre agents to find us work in Germany and Holland for 2007.

We re-rehearsed “CLIFFHANGER!” early this year, adding new scenes and new music (and musician), and premiered the show over four days at Easter at Trevarno Gardens, near Helston. We then hastily translated the signs that we use in the show into French, German and Spanish and set off for our first visit to Germany.

The response was fantastic. The appeal of the black-and-white movies is still very strong, and we found, more than ever, that our audiences were a great mixture of young and old. We played at three different festivals in Germany, where the audiences start gathering one hour before show is due to start.

In France we played in 38 degrees centigrade in Paris and Bordeaux (lots of mineral water was provided) and also had a seven-date tour of Normandy and the west coast near La Rochelle. We soon realised that the French still revere Buster Keaton (on whose films our show is based) and the show was enthusiastically received wherever we went.

What made the summer quite so exhausting, however, was that we still had lots of bookings in the UK and Cornwall during this time. We performed at the Ayr Field Community Day in St. Ives (a fantastic local event), we had a capacity audience at Penlee Park, Penzance, and also travelled as far field as Northern Ireland, the Lake District, Norwich and (three times) at the National Theatre in London. In all, we crossed The Channel 12 times (from Plymouth, Portsmouth and Dover), had several 14-hour van journeys and drove an estimated 20,000 miles.

Oh yes, and we even won an award! At the fantastic Tàrrega Theatre Festival near Barcelona, in September, we played before our largest-ever audience (some 3,000 people we were told). On our return journey we were informed (by mobile phone as we drove over the Pyrenees Mountains) that we had won a €3,000 (euros) prize for the “best street theatre show” at the festival. This was an amazing end to the season, and we have been invited back to Tàrrega to receive the award in March.

end

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