

Was that just Cardboard?



As part of the German Festival, a play for school children titled *After all it's just Cardboard* was put up by Torsten Schutte and Kaul for the kids of the Wesley School and the KFI The School.

The fact that all the props, the backdrops and even the musical instruments were made of just everyday paperboard and packaging material made the whole piece amazing, plausible and very, very funny. And the way the actor used these very simple everyday props and interacted with them to create scenes of a chicken laying an egg and hatching it, to creating a storm at sea with just a roll of corrugated paper was nothing short of amazing!

He started the performance with a roll of newsprint that accidentally tore at intervals till he was so exasperated by it that he hid himself under piles of it to hide from his embarrassment — of course that was all part of his act. Or for instance taking a cardboard carrybag and making the audience believe that there was this huge scary monster just waiting to emerge from it. And what does emerge from it is a smaller cake carton that softly miaows, much to the relief of all present. In fact the transformation of the actors expression made the audience guffaw.

Thorsten's act could be called reactionary. He kept modifying it

all the while reacting to the children in the audience and adapting as he went along.

With eyes that pop-out rather like Marty Feldman, the comic silent actor who excelled in the now classic 'Silent Movie', Torsten's expressions with just his facial contortions were funny enough to give anyone a belly-ache!

The music was done by accomplice Kaul with a hacksaw on bits of cardboard and played with sticks on different sizes of cardboard boxes. And as with music that builds up the tension or reflects the joyful moments in any piece of theatre or film, he did that with aplomb.

The dialogues were brief and in German, but it didn't really matter, as the expressions on Torsten's face were eloquent enough, and crossed all barriers between the actor and his audience. The language of facial and body language came to the fore, where he was making a refrigerator carton spew paper shreds like a whale or using the same shreds to simulate a fussy hen laying an egg and then onto using a gathered bunch of the same shreds to denote a newly hatched chick.

Did someone say that we were heading for a paperless world. After seeing this performance, you would realise how boring the world could be without these simple but essential pleasures.

— RANJAN DE