

Gold Rush. NyAveny

By Monna Dithmer

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Pure slapstick and a good laugh. Reality theatre is sent out on a cheerful camping trip with Chaplin-spaz, turbo dwarf and other 'poor wretches'. It is not easy to be a gold digger when you can barely hold a shovel. It has an unmistakable air of loser theatre. Precisely. We need losers. And they are showing us just that at Ny Aveny at the moment in a blizzard of popcorn and silent film melodrama. Multi-disabled, dyslexic, disability allowance recipient and Muslim second-generation immigrant. It does not get much better than that.



Photo: Søren Meisner

Amir Becerovic, installed as the Chaplin vagabond in *The Gold Rush* and actually resembles him with his rocking, lopsided gait, is “the minority of minorities”. So say directors Tue Biering and Jeppe Kristensen, and they should know. Over the past five years, they have confronted audiences with one group of outsiders after another in various forms of reality theatre.

“This is not an actor, but a real wretch”, says Daniel Norbak’s pale-faced director, an indomitable know-it-all with wildly growing whiskers and a home organ. He strums away in the manner of silent

films while he narrates and directs Wretch & Co. sent out into Alaska's 'icy storm'. Of course, the gold-digging fool has to be a wretch, otherwise he cannot eventually get to the top of the American dream, just like in Chaplin's 1925 classic. So he gets beaten with his own cane. "That is how they treat poor wretches in Buenos Aires".

We are indeed dealing with authentic 'reality theatre'. No cheating here. We can see for ourselves how the sound technician in his booth is capable of delivering various storm forces, duck cries and gunshots, while the equally noble gentleman across the stage, supports the story on the big screen with weather maps, dollar signs and famous film clips of the gold digger's cabin perilously balancing on the top of the mountain. In every way, the engine room of the theatre is in full swing. It is subtitled and acted for the hearing and visually impaired and all of us brain-damaged people of all kinds. In short: fun and games.

HAPPY DAYS in the starved out gold digger's cabin, which rolls in complete with the berserk Big Jim. Søren Poppel stumbles around in his inflated fatsuit-costume like an Obelix gone wild and tries to stuff those famous shoes that have to be eaten down the Poor Wretch's throat. Particularly eager is the cowboy villain, a sharp-as-a-dog dwarf who does not want to know about any wretches here (including herself).

Hell no! At the height of a five-year-old, Sigrid Kandal Husjord is capable of shooting and disco-dancing anyone out of the way. Just look at how, as a polar bear without a head, she can cross the wasteland of the floor on her belly in no time at all. Or, like Marilyn Monroe with her own storm under her skirts, make the poor wretch weak at the knees.

But the perpetual passive loser finally gets hold of the long end of the shovel and gets his hands on the gold, the girl and the microphone: "I've done the best I could". Quite touching, really. He is the only one who is not supposed to be funny. But not someone to be pitied either. The performance keeps its balance like the cabin balancing on the cliff. Ultimately, of course, it is the director who is the real wretch. He needs the Wretch to be able to be on top of things. And how exactly can he squeeze himself into the performance as a superhero? In this way, Tue Biering and Jeppe Kristensen criticise their own mission of bringing the outsiders onto the stage. But it seems more like a joke, just like the performance in general. It is a bit of a shame that the two's "final embrace of 'reality'" at the end of their radical reality projects is probably the performance with the least edge.

But fun it is.

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Concept and staging: Tue Biering and Jeppe Kristensen.

Scenography: Sigurdur Oli Palmason.