

## A review of the play 'I have Spoken' - performed by the Persephone Players

### William Bento

A group of Psychophonetics students found themselves caught in a web of past-life experiences involving the Holocaust and the German Trauma. This play attempts, through dramatic poetry and action, to express something of what happened.

Review by William Bento: I make no pretension to be an art critic however I do stake a claim of being a well versed clinical psychologist and a devoted student and researcher of spiritual science. It is from these two vantage points that I would like to offer a brief commentary on the performance of the 'Persephone Players'. The rehearsed reading of the play written by Peter Oswald, "I Have Spoken" was given in Berlin within the context of a conference commemorating the centennial anniversary of Rudolf Steiner's lectures on an innovative approach to soul wisdom. It was not a mere artistic presentation meant to satisfy the hygienic needs of the conference, nor did it have any of the usual theatrical fanfare. The performance was an extraordinary explication of soul matters that addressed the past, the present and the possibilities of a future in the making. It was in every aspect an integral part of the conference.

The content of the play was for all intents and purposes a mystery of the highest order. It dared to examine the excruciating experiences of those who endured the holocaust. What struck me most about the treatment of this deeply unresolved atrocity of humankind was the tender intimacy in which the story was told and re-enacted. In the recall of those who were currently incarnated and intrinsically bound by a common collective memory the soul agony of everyman was made visible, audible and in an uncanny way, somatically accessible. One person's gospel concerning the events of the holocaust became witnessed by two compassionate souls who sought to help free this bearer of the holocaust from the ongoing suffering. Yet, in the process of entering more deeply into the soul of this bearer of searing painful memories, these two aids found their previous lives inextricably bound up with his.

Although the actors read their parts skillfully, it was evident to me that their power came from lived experiences. It was this exceptional offering of soul substance on the part of the actors that transcended the dimensions of ordinary time and psychological dynamics.

For me, as an audience member, the whole play resonated with a sense of timelessness and nuances of super-sensible consciousness. The words spoken were continual pleas to see more deeply, and to hear more earnestly. This was augmented by a sparse set with a few potent visuals and atmospheric music that was simple and singularly sustaining the inner tones of what was spoken. The silent intervals between word, tone and gesture were richly filled with the sense of a spiritual presence.

A cathartic transformation within each player unfolded before the audience. As the conversations went on their hidden bonds one to another became ever more transparent. The substance of their common wound - the holocaust - gradually became recognized and the misbegotten deed seemed to be relieved of its gnawing death grip on their souls. The shattering beholding of previous lives became a draught of remembrance that unleashed healing and liberating powers in the soul.

The conclusion of the play did not resolve any theological, moral or philosophical dilemma in which the holocaust is firmly embedded within. It did, however, confirm the triumph of the human spirit to transform trauma and stand upon the resilience that comes when souls take genuine interest in each other's journey through lives. The experience of this modern mystery play was for me an invitation to participate in a sacrament of Holy Communion. This invitation to partake in a sacrament, I felt was embraced by the entire audience, for in the last moments of the play there were no boundaries to be felt between actors and audience. I believe this outcome is what Rudolf Steiner hoped to achieve with his Mystery Dramas.

The *Persephone Players* guided by Peter Oswald's writing and direction has achieved something that is worthy of emulation. For the seeker upon the path to greater self-knowledge this is an experience not to be missed.

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