



Courtesy

This watercolor, titled "People With Stretchers," was painting by Helga Weisssova-Hoskova during her childhood internment at Terezin. It's part of the exhibit, "Draw What You See," now on display at Tulsa's Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art.

Stolen youth

Film describes Nazi horrors at camp for children

By DENNIS KING
World Scene Writer

Holocaust accounts by survivors of the Nazi death camps are now so numerous and so un-faillingly heartbreaking that it's hard to imagine finding voices that can shed any new light on this most horrific of history's atrocities.

But in "Voices of the Children," a poignant account of young prisoners of the "show-place" Nazi concentration camp at Terezin, the survivors muster up powerful words, artwork and memories that recall the pain of their stolen youth with an aching innocence and stoical eloquence.

Terezin, a village in the current Czech Republic that was transformed into a concentration camp, was established by the Third Reich as a model used for propaganda purposes to stave off outrage from the outside world over the Nazis' treatment of Jewish prisoners.

Some 15,000 Jewish children were eventually housed there, and in propaganda films the Germans portrayed the young inmates as being free to keep diaries, produce paintings and even to stage productions of Hans Drasa's children's opera, "Brundibar."

But beyond the camera eye, the children lived in wretched conditions and experienced great hunger, loss and deprivation. Once Terezin fulfilled its propaganda purposes, the Nazis deported thousands of the children



Weisssova-Hoskova

movie
"VOICES OF THE CHILDREN"

Theaters
Circle 2 (12 S. Lewis Ave. — Tuesday and April 30 only, call 592-FILM for more information)

Studio
The Cinema Guild

Running Time
80 minutes

Rated
Not rated (adult themes)

Quality
★★★★ (on a scale of zero to 4 stars)

to concentration camps at Auschwitz, Frieberg, Mauthausen and other death-dealing locations.

Ultimately, only about 100 former Terezin children survived the extermination camps to be liberated by the Allies in May 1945.

Winner of a 1999 Emmy Award, "Voices of the Children," directed by Zuzana Justman, herself a Terezin survivor, compiles excerpts from diaries, child-like paintings and interviews with a few now-elderly survivors and their families to present a significant, unsentimental narrative of this little-known Holocaust story.

Justman's film also records a reunion of three Terezin survivors who gathered at the site of the former camp to witness a special performance of "Brundibar," a tale of children overthrowing an evil tyrant, more than 50 years after they'd staged

it there themselves.

Two of those survivors, Helga Weisssova-Hoskova and Ela Stein Weissberger, speak out simply and dispassionately about the significance and symbolism of the opera and what it meant to them and other children imprisoned at Terezin. And "Voices of the Children" achieves its powerful emotional force not so much from teary testimonial as from the simple tragedy of these women's memories and the grace, strength and determination with which they relate them.

The two women will be present at the Circle Cinema at 7 p.m. Tuesday to discuss their experiences and to answer questions from the audience. Also, a special selection of books about children of the Holocaust will be available at the theater.

In conjunction with the Circle 2 screenings of "Voices of the Children," Tulsa's Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art will host a special exhibition of Helga Weisssova-Hoskova's profound and child-like artwork from Terezin, titled "Draw What You See." Also on exhibit will be "Where Have All the Children Gone? Jewish Refugee Children During the Holocaust." Both exhibits open Sunday and run through June 4.

"Voices of the Children" is being presented as part of the Council for Holocaust Education's 2006 Interfaith Commemoration, "Children of the Holocaust: Their Lives — Their Legacy."

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'TYPO':

In the show Adkins shows off his juggling and acrobatic skills.

FROM H-1

writer, and a whole lot of paper. The only thing he doesn't have, it seems, is an idea.

"This was the first time I had tried writing a show by myself," Adkins said. "I believe the best comedy comes from honesty, and I have to be honest — what Typo goes through is what I went through. I was trying to come up with an idea, and I kept wadding up every piece of paper, thinking none of these ideas would work."

"After about a year of this, I suddenly realized that this was the show," he said, laughing. "Once I took that first step, and determined this was what the show would be, the story progressed pretty naturally."

One of those tossed balls of paper, for example, bounces back, which leads into a wild juggling routine. The character of Typo is soon wrestling with a ladder that separates into two pieces at the most inopportune times, or trying to maintain his balance while walking along a slack wire strung across the stage.

"I wanted to expand on some of the things I had been doing in the past," Adkins said. "I took my base knowledge of things like juggling and slack-wire walking, which I'm sort of known for,

event
"TYPO"

one-man show by Jamie Adkins

When
2 and 7 p.m. Sunday

Where
Williams Theater, Tulsa Performing Arts Center, Second Street and Cincinnati Avenue

Tickets
\$20, available at the PAC Ticket office, 596-7111, and www.MyTicketOffice.com

and wrote whole new routines for the show.

"But it's all very organic," he said. "I'm doing circus-style routines and tricks, but they are woven into the story. They really all most tell the story instead of the show stopping for juggling or whatever."

Adkins shares the stage with musician and comedian Anne-Marie Levasseur, who plays keyboards and accordion and on occasion serves as Typo's tormenter as much as accompanist.

"Having Anne-Marie with me opens the show up for more improvisation," Adkins said. "We're always working on this show, coming up with new ideas, new ways to make things better or funnier. And on those occasions when things don't go quite the way we've planned, she's able to work with me to get through it."

And mistakes have been made, Adkins acknowledged. A ball gets dropped, a move doesn't end up where it should. But those are occasions for improvisation rather than disasters, Adkins said.

"I sometimes joke with people

who tell me they've seen the show more than once that they got to see all the new mistakes," he said, laughing.

Adkins said he first became interested in performing when, as a youngster living in San Diego, he went one day to that city's Balboa Park and saw a fellow putting on a show.

"He started his show, and suddenly all these people stopped what they were doing and gathered around," he said. "One minute they were all going about their own business, then they were all connected, breathing and laughing together at the same spectacle. And I thought that was magical. The show was there, and then it wasn't there, but it would be back again."

Adkins would soon be one of those people in Balboa Park performing for the passers-by.

"I made a living doing that for seven years," he said. "It's a great place to start, but not a great place to stay. You get tired of rain canceling your shows."

"But later I realized I was in a rare place," Adkins said. "Every-one working that park treated what they did like professionals. They really worked on their material, on their presentations and audiences appreciated that. There was a certain level of quality they responded to. A number of the people I saw there have gone on to work in Vegas or doing their own shows around the country."

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Defanged satire can only gum viewers into giggling

By DENNIS KING
World Scene Writer

Would the world really be any worse off if George Bush and Simon Cowell traded places?

Not the world posited in "American Dreamz," a cartoonish stab at satire on the preeminence of pop culture in a nation of people amusing themselves to death. In this world, TV's "American Idol" and the U.S. presidency occupy equal spots on the stage and give themselves up for a sort of sophomore mockery that comes much closer to caricature than to true, scathing satire.

The film was written and directed by Paul Weitz, who with his brother Chris debuted in the gross-out comedy with heart, "American Pie," and followed with the fuzzy, wise "About a Boy," before setting off on his own with the bent generation-gap comedy "In Good Company."

So hopes were high for "American Dreamz," in which the solo Paul Weitz set himself a sweepingly ambitious agenda of flinging darts at TV's juggernaut talent show, at a clueless prez who proudly refuses to read newspapers, at a vapid culture of mindless celebrity worship and at the vagaries of international terrorism.

But it appears that Weitz's ambitions far exceed his grasp in this meandering, unfocused farce in which a few of the parts are much funnier than the whole.

"American Dreamz" might have succeeded sharply as a pointed poke at "American Idol" and its manufactured glitz and watering-down of musical tastes. Or it might have had something prickly to say about a president for whom folksy homilies pass for statesmanship and who today might garner fewer votes on the national stage than a talent-contest warbler.

But taking on both, it spreads itself far too thin.

It's tricky to mock something as ridiculously over-the-top as "American Idol." And our esteemed president from Crawford has already been more keenly and satisfyingly lampooned on "Saturday Night Live," on the 2001 TV series "That's My Bush!" and in John Sayles' sly 2004 comedy "Silver City."



GLEN WILSON / Associated Press

Hugh Grant and Mandy Moore in a scene from "American Dreamz."

movie
"AMERICAN DREAMZ"

Stars
Hugh Grant, Dennis Quaid and Mandy Moore

Theaters
Palace 12, Tulsa and Starworld 20

Studio
Universal Pictures

Running Time
111 minutes

Rated
PG-13 (brief strong language, some sexual references)

Quality
★★ (on a scale of zero to 4 stars)

So Weitz's efforts feel oddly toothless and shopworn, and instead of delivering a biting commentary, his film settles for gumming us into giggly submission.

"American Dreamz" largely takes place on the set of a widely popular network TV talent show presided over by Martin Tweed (Hugh Grant, doing a droll, low-key Simon Cowell), a preening, snarky Brit impresario with a viper's tongue.

Contestants include a Hasidic boy-band wannabe, an Iraqi immigrant named Omer (Sam Gorkari) with a fetish for Broadway tunes and secret ties to a Middle Eastern terrorist cell, and hyper-perky blonde Sally Ken-doo (Mandy Moore), a trashy, small-town gal willing to do anything to achieve her glam, show-biz dreams.

The far-out plot conspires to bring U.S. President Staton (Dennis Quaid) into the TV

spotlight as a guest judge on the "American Dreamz's" grand finale episode. It seems that since his re-election, Staton has had a nervous epiphany by picking up a newspaper (against the stern advice of his Karl Rove-like puppetmaster — devilishly played by Willem Dafoe) and actually thinking about world events and his sagging poll numbers.

So in an effort to bolster his Nielsen ratings and polish his image among couch potatoes, Staton agrees to appear on "American Dreamz." Meanwhile, the star-struck Omer is ordered by his terrorist handlers to smuggle in a bomb and blow the prez to smithereens on national TV.

All of this, of course, is played with an air of twinkly mischievousness, and that's part of the problem. It's never as mean or angry as it should be to qualify as true satire (see the current "Thank You for Smoking" for a satire with sting). Without that killer instinct, the film's barbs feel blunted and its targets escape largely unscathed.

Truth is, "American Dreamz" could have used a bracing dose of Simon Cowell's cruel, sharp-tongued venom. Instead, in an apparent effort to be liked, it pulls its punches in the end and delivers instead an unconvincingly broad denouement that's more in keeping with the numbingly bland optimism of Paula Abdul.

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