

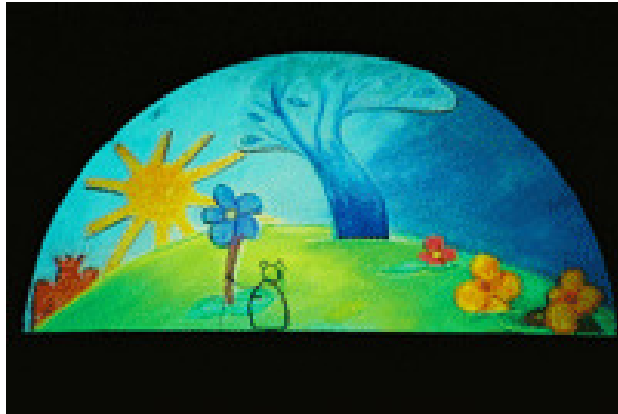
## Inventive presentation adds to play's considerable charm

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By Kevin Prokosh

WINNIPEG kids are treated to substantially more international theatre than their parents.

Each season the Manitoba Theatre for Young People welcome troupes from all over the world -- in recent years, its lineup has included performers from Vietnam, Japan, Switzerland and Denmark. Before companies from England and Australia drop by, MTYP kicks off its season with a first visit from Erfreuliches Theatre Erfurt in Germany.



The award-winning touring company, like many who turn up on this stage, arrives with an inventive method of storytelling that greatly enhances the theatre-going experience, no matter your age. Jutta Bauer's *Queen of Colours* is sweet, but how Erfreuliches Theatre Erfurt presents it is the real story.

On a half-moon screen hanging over the stage, the tale of a bossy queen is actually created anew for every performance. The three- to eight-year-old target audience watch a live cartoon brought to life by an onstage court painter, who provides the colour with her brush, and a seated court musician, who serenades the queen's adventure with his accordion.

Eva Noell stands at an overhead projector on one side of the stage, doing the bidding of the queen, who is unhappy with her drab surroundings. As the court painter, Noell manipulates and layers transparencies (à la Winnipeg performance artist Daniel Barrow) to create movement and bring life and colour to the tale. Offstage, Paul Olbrich works with video and shadow puppetry in a seamless marriage of the simple and the smart.

The queen is tired of her black-and-white world and demands colour, which starts with her castle and flower being painted red before everything is covered. The children giggle when the brush pursues the queen, splattering her with paint, as well as dotting the nose and forehead of the musician. Painting outside the lines is allowed, even encouraged, by the audience during a school show seen earlier this week.

After ordering that the world be made red, then blue and yellow, the queen is left, much to her consternation, with a grey mess. She learns that asking for everything can keep you from what you really want.

Noell interacts with the queen with an accent that is only part of the decidedly European flavour of the 50-minute production. The sound of Alexander Voynov's accordion is soothingly Old World, as is the technical artistry. The company is also trilingual, allowing MTYP for the first time to offer performances in German, French and English. In any language, their work is impressive.

kevin.prokosh@freepress.mb.ca