

“All animals are equal but some are more equal than others.”

~ George Orwell (1903-1950)

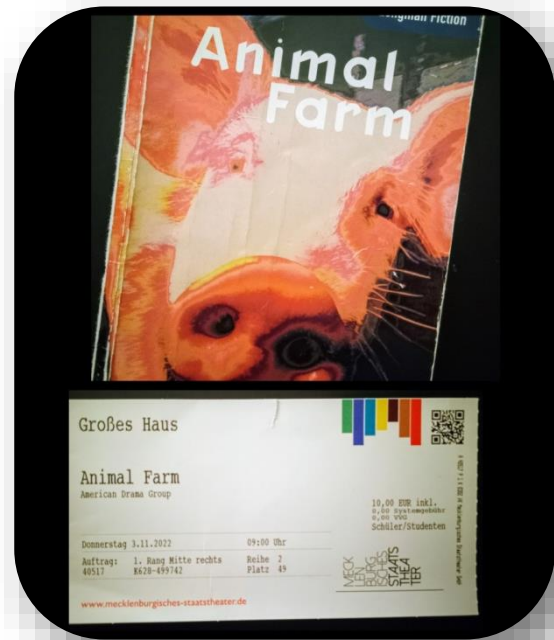
On Thursday, November 3rd, 2022 at about 9 o'clock in the morning the English advanced course from Mrs. Maly met in front of the Mecklenburg State Theater. The overall mood was a mixture of yawning tiredness because of the early hour and plenty of hand rubbing in the coolness of the November breeze. However, this did not in the least dampen the slight hints of joyful expectation some of us carried in their hearts. We had been looking forward to seeing George Orwell's famous fable

“Animal Farm” brought to stage for quite some time, even though we did not have the merest clue what was awaiting us.

Finally the doors were opened and dozens of students from different schools in Schwerin streamed into the elegant entrance hall of the theater and further up the spiral staircases to search for their seats. When at last everyone had found a place in the delicately arranged rows of red velvet chairs and the dimmed lights went out completely, a wave of pure excitement overwhelmed me. As it was my first time ever to be confronted with the classic beauty of this room and the sight of the wide black planked stage, which was lighted by several spotlights, I was more than a little nervous. The low whispers that filled the room assured me that my reaction to the ambience was not somewhat unusual.

Soon the audience was thoroughly captured by the actors of the American Drama Group, which showed by the fact that often not a sound was to be heard from the room full of 16 to 18 year-old teenagers, what – you may will agree – is an almost uncommon state of behavior. Yet after one hour, that had gone by in no time, a burst of applause shook the ancient walls of the theater. When we left the building shortly after and enjoyed some free minutes before we had to go back to school, we rarely found words to express what we had just witnessed.

On the next day in the English lesson, after we all had had some time to think and sleep about our experience, Mrs. Maly asked each of us to shortly summarize our impressions in one or two sentences. What has been said there complemented the thoughts which went through my mind during the play quite well, although I had nothing more than a few memories of Grimm's Fairytales stage plays, which we used to visit in elementary school, to compare them to. Nonetheless, the impressing acting skills, how easily the actors switched between playing animals and men, and were able to transfer emotions to everyone in the audience, paired with their astonishing performance of the song “Beasts of England” spoke for themselves. Everything had been felt between the extremes of laughter and the need to cry. We further agreed that the stage design in its simplicity had been vastly inventive and that the smooth transitions from one set up to another, which were done entirely by the actors



themselves, had amazed us. Some referred to the play as having left a feeling of embarrassment and cruelty, what I can totally understand as well. To see grown men begging on their knees for mercy, not daring to openly complain about the lack of food, is nothing to be processed easily, especially when you are as sunken into the story as some of us, myself without a doubt, were.

For when “The 7 Commandments of Animalism” slowly began to change, one after the other, and the whole well-intended revolution went astray, I was sure: I will *never-ever* in my life trust a pig again!

To get back to serious, it would have definitely been less confusing if I had known the novel from 1945 and the historical background before, but this day was the best example for how mighty theater plays in general, and especially the story of “Animal Farm”, are, and that you can understand the message of it without already knowing it in detail.

Of course, I immediately afterwards began reading, or rather rushing through, the fable from George Orwell, also in order to be able to compare novel and play for myself, and it only solidified what I had presumed:

“Animal Farm”, for it is now nearly 80 years old and the historical background of the Russian revolution even further in the past, has lost nothing of its actuality and, for sure, will not lose any of it as long as the humankind is living on this earth. Even without analyzing the problematic society of “Animal Farm” in detail, you will see remarkable similarities to today’s society and to the inevitable development of every group, if no one has a close look towards the handling of human rights and the law. “Animal Farm” proves once more how difficult it is to hold up a stable democracy besides the daily struggles of life and that freedom is one of the basic needs of every living thing.

In conclusion I would say that, even though this theater play had something of a disturbing and serious touch, I would unquestionably recommend it also as an entertaining and memorable event that should not be missed if you get the chance to visit it. Maybe it is the appeal of dystopian novels in general or “Animal Farm” in particular but I would not hesitate for a second if I got to see it again someday.

Rieke Jelinek, 11th class, November 13th 2022