

The politics of paranoia

Actors Repertory Theatre has chosen an historical look at a topical theme for its next production, a staging of Daniel Pinkerton's *Do You Want to Know a Secret?*



Audiences attending the upcoming Actors Rep production of Daniel Pinkerton's *Do You Want to Know a Secret?* will not only come away with memories of a fascinating evening of theatre, they will also be impressed at the way the play resonates with current concerns over government surveillance and homeland security, as well as touching on notions of patriotism and moral fortitude.

Set in Berlin between 1988 and 1993, the play focuses on the Berger family--Walter (played by Timothy Lone), Karin (Rhona Richards), daughter Erika (Sarah Lamesch), Karin's father Wolf (Gilbert K. Johnston), and her best friend Anja (Christine Probst). Allowed access to their Stasi files after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the family unveils a secret that will have a devastating impact. Indeed, there are suggestions that nearly one in ten, and maybe as many as one in eight, East Germans colluded with the Stasi,

the state secret police, by informing on friends, co-workers and even family members.

In a review of a Minneapolis production, Quinton Skinner in *Variety* wrote that Pinkerton "manages to wrest drama from the intractable circumstances of a particular chapter of history." Director Erik Abbott says that when he encountered a very early draft of the play some years ago, he was immediately taken with the story and the characters. "The way Daniel Pinkerton builds a drama around a fascinating era of European and world history by focusing on the impact the politics and fear and paranoia of the time had on one family is quite moving and extremely theatrical. I was also intrigued by how the piece reveals bits of the story by juxtaposing short pieces of video with live action."

Abbott admits that he normally doesn't like video on stage, and, having never before been on the other side of the

camera, it presented a big challenge. "But Pinkerton is brilliant in the way he weaves it into the play and actually uses it to heighten the theatricality." The video segments are flashbacks that involve characters speaking directly to camera, which some critics say can be interpreted as interrogation tapes or very intimate, voluntarily made confessions.

"Getting the right cast and design team is also always a challenge and we've been --again--very fortunate in this regard," says Abbott. Lone, Richards and Probst are stalwarts of the company's productions, but the addition of London-based actor Sarah Lamesch, a graduate of the Luxembourg Waldorf School and former student at the city Conservatoire, is something of a coup. The creative team, too, is packed with talent and experience, from John Brigg designing the set and lighting to Natalia Sanchez for costumes, hair and make-up and Veronica Badea in charge of props.

The choice of play once again underlines the ambitions of Actors Rep's mission to deliver passionate, thought provoking, professional English-language theatre in Luxembourg. In the words of critic Lydia Howell: "A chilly invasiveness permeates this character-driven play that leaves one haunted with the intimate implications of state intrusion of our privacy." <

Where: Mierscher Kulturhaus, Mersch, www.kulturhaus.lu

When: 9-13 March at 8 p.m.
(extra show 13 March at 5 p.m.)

Tickets: www.luxembourgticket.lu