

If there is a post post-modernism, this is it. A self-consciously, determinately low-tech performance, from start to finish. It's like the last 250 years of industrial revolution and technological development never even existed. A small round tent, set up on the lawn of the Moscow Gorky Park, that seats at most three dozen on lilliputian folding chairs. The performers sell tickets at the entrance half an hour before the curtain, answering questions in accented Russian and arguing among themselves in Italian. Then they pack the ticket-holders into the tent and tie the folds behind them, apparently to make sure no one falls out. When the kids settle down, for about an hour they juggle brooms, carrots, dustpans and assorted household items, do summersaults and kick each other in the butt. You'd think that today's kids, used as they are to the fast-paced world of cartoon TV and computer games, get bored. But they don't. It's refreshing to see them laughing nonstop at the oldest gag there is, the kick in the pants. They get pantomime, they dig it when a person on stage can't find his partner hiding behind his back. They totally buy into the convention of actors changing costumes and valseing with a couple of dolls to create a cast of characters crowding the stage. Parents laugh too, because they have more baggage, both cultural - it all comes from the Comedia del Arte, the country fair, the Punch & Judy show, by way of Fellini and the Piccolo Teatro of Milan - but also visceral. It is, after all, the oldest art form and the oldest artistic lifestyle, traveling from country fair to country fair with a few pieces of equipment to entertain "the esteemed public".

Alexej Bayer