

# Which theatre's the most persistent in all the land?

by Anne Middelboe Christensen, Information

## **Kirsten Dehlholm's Goethe-web out of a thousand fold strands of word and body and fire and mirror**

Word-body-fire-mirror: Kirsten Dehlholm masters her four elements with persistence, manipulating with them in the performance *Calling Clavigo* in a masterful fusion: The word becomes visual, the body two-dimensional, the fire linear and the mirror hair-splitting.

Dehlholm and the Hotel Pro Forma concept-makers have chosen the highly undramatic concept of 'Bildung' as their scenically impossible assignment. Out of this, a tremendous, challenging performance for adults has emerged that breaks with habitual dramaturgical principles for a theatrical performance: Here there is not a building-up of tension and clarification; here there is a breaking-down of tension and contemplation. Thank goodness.

## **Mischievous illusion**

*Clavigo* is the anti-hero in a play by Goethe from 1774, and as its point of departure *Calling Clavigo* takes the word as the prerequisite for the European's pride and concept of 'Bildung'. The professor of literature Per Øhrgaard sits in his own jacket and cone of light and talks about 'Goethe's great second in the midst of European history' in a self-role as the researcher in the chair: The words glide by in precise sentences, the overview slaps the shirt-collars, and curiosity twists the tie. This is Goethe '(web)spin' anno 2002.

The lecture is no stage genre, but it could well be for that very reason that Dehlholm insists on presenting the lecture as a 'monologue with notes' – in a sophisticated architecture of light. The lighting designer Jester Kongshaug plays mischievously with optical illusions on the basis of a loosely meshed network where beams of light are suddenly transformed into bodies that are irrigated with waves that are swept back into a word-tunnel – beautiful, ingratiating, made-up... After this, two conversational partners respond to Per Øhrgaard's thoughts about 'Bildung' directly on stage. At the premiere, the words danced subtly between the media-researcher Kirsten Drotner and the cultural editor of Danmarks Radio, Michael Thouber, with the media being declared the new factor in 'Bildung'... But the words were also met by bodies, namely those of the speakers themselves, that were UV-magnified and thrown onto the back wall as Goethe-quivering phantom-silhouettes. Until these streams of words also left the stage, and the bodies pulled the spectators with them out into a pause in the foyer...

At this point, the actual performance is over. Despite this, it has not even begun. For precisely that reason, Goethe's drama of disintegration is then able to unfold among dancers in front of flaming fire and falling mirrors – with heroic Michael Preisler and cunning Bo Madvig as the men around the slender lace-elegance of Nana Susanne Hviid, who love-light is extinguished.

## **Ankle socks and lace**

The artistic genres meet in resolute unity. Thilde Jensen's costumes loosen the severity of the

scenography with ankle socks and pigtails along a spleen-filled 18th century tangent, and Christine Meldal's choreography precisely strikes Dehlholm's aesthetic distance: The movements project the emotions away from the body out towards the mirrors, which then magnify them a thousand fold. Even the mirrors emit sound. The singers Agnethe Christensen and Bente Vist peek out of tone-fragile cracks between the edges of the mirrors and, with their eye-black mourning veil and full operatic voices they bring the Clavigo story to its knees and the mirrors to the floor. Only now is the performance over – and finally projected over onto the audience.

Hotel Pro Forma, with Calling Clavigo, has given word, body, fire and mirror to a new story of the meaning of life to modern humanity. Or to a new story about the meaning of art. Perhaps also the meaning of the theatre.

Calling Clavigo. Concept: Kirsten Dehlholm, Christine Meldal, Jesper Kongshaug.

Production and scenography: Kirsten Dehlholm.

Choreography: Christine Meldal. Lighting design: Jesper Kongshaug. Dramaturgy: Claus Lynge.

Text of lecture: Per Øhrgaard. Costumes: Thilde Jensen. Hotel Pro Forma at Dansescenen until 7 December. Every evening new conversation partners, this evening Kirsten Hasberg and Georg Metz. Also for history-sceptical cultural politicians.