

Cold fusion at Bryggen

By Henrik Friis, Jyllands Posten, 24 February 2007

Performance: Hotel Pro Forma once more with convincing total theatre

Mogens Dahl Institutet, Copenhagen: THE SAND CHILD. Performance/art installation by Hotel Pro Forma . Concept, installation and direction: Kirsten Dehlholm and Ralf Richard Strøbech. Music: T.S. Høeg. Until 17 March.
*****Five stars.

Hotel Pro Forma connoisseurs have tried this before – a performance where the audience walks around various rooms at random, where each member imbibes a cocktail of music, theatre, video and visual art. Or rather: Sound, text, image and space – for all the ingredients are discovered at the outer edges of traditional art forms.

Several things take place at the same time – so no one can see everything. There is not one single performance but all those possible. There is not any edge to the stage, since the main female character reaches out to the audience. This is modern performance art, which risks becoming high-brow, but manages to keep itself anchored.

Impressive. sensual and dramatic.

Nine cold images

Broadly speaking, the Hotel Pro Forma performance comprises nine stage images, each lasting 10–15 minutes. The inspiration – and part of the text – comes from the Moroccan author Tahar Ben Jelloun's books, where a child is born as a girl but is forced to grow up as a boy. Which is where the name 'The Sand Child' comes from – a child that is the same inside but that changes form and transforms itself to suit its surroundings.

As usual, a 'logical' progression of events – as in all of Kerstin Dehlholm's projects – is blown to smithereens.

Instead, the changes that take place to the child during the nine images – hung up for the

audience like some sort of timetable – form a sort of time-line. And, cutting across this school timetable there comes a whole series of cool, not particularly comfortable impressions: shame, guilt, submission, coercion, fear – and anger.

A major strength of 'The Sand Child' lies in the incredibly unerring and strong visual expressive power. The stage as such resembles a newly designed interior at a museum of modern art, i.e. with a number of installations that could just as well cope on their own – without any dramatics and music.

T.S Høeg's music – which both fills the acoustic space from beginning to end and also plays an important role in the textual background – is both surprising and satisfying. Dane TS HAWK, as Høeg also calls himself, has, during the many years he has been part of the experimental Danish music scene, composed fusions between jazz, pop, classical and the avant-garde.

This often gives rise to a certain confusion or indignation as far as the listener is concerned, but in 'The Sand Child' these blends are highly successful.