

HET LAATSTE VUUR

KVS & RO Theater

5.03 > 14.03.2009 @ KVS (Brussels)

31.03 > 7.04.2009 @ RO Theater (Rotterdam)

>> info & tickets (Brussels)

-There's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in... (Leonard Cohen)

- the deserted universe of Dea Loher -

A child that's been run over, a grandmother suffering from dementia, a traumatized soldier... the universe of the German authoress, Dea Loher, is hardly something to cheer you up. And yet she reaps success with her plays worldwide. Her poetic and image-laden texts make the souls of people tangible who, in their cheerless situation, search for happiness and meaning. After *Onschuld* in 2007, *Het laatste vuur* marks the second time that director Alize Zandwijk and actor Willy Thomas have worked with Loher. They talk about how much the text affected them under six headwords.

(Liet Lenshoek, dramaturgist *Het laatste vuur*)

Compassion

Alize: I really want to direct this text because Dea Loher's pieces give me the opportunity to work with compassion. Compassion with people that appear far removed from us and yet are easily identifiable, such as Ludwig, the office clerk whose child comes to grief. As far as I'm concerned, Loher's pieces are about my own father. He represents the people who actually don't have a voice, the wordless and powerless of this earth. The men that Willy plays in *Onschuld* and in *Het laatste vuur* belong in this category; they cannot handle emotion, they are the 'mouth dead' of this society. That's what is so nice in this piece: no one can really speak. And yet there's talking all the time.

Guilt

Willy: Dea Loher opens doors of rooms that we often keep shut in our world. You could look at our world as a house with many, many rooms, yet the inhabitants choose not to visit some of the rooms, nor to go in them. However, Dea Loher allows us to see what is hidden in all these closed-up rooms, things that we don't want to talk about, feelings that we try to shut out. The characters in her pieces live with a question of guilt. It nearly seems as if guilt is a sort of gunge that only proliferates in the world of forgotten city districts, as if well-off people are hardly bothered with it at all.

Alize: of course, the piece asks the question as to how far we all are accessories to what is happening in the world. It's not about an individual question of guilt.

Willy: It's also about not being able to live with or handle certain things, such as the death of a child or wartime experiences. The characters deal with this sometimes somewhat clumsily and yet with love, which has a greater quality than people who are able to turn a blind eye to everything.

Solace

Alize: *Het Laatste Vuur* starts with the death of a child and then everything falls apart. It's all over when your child is there no more, there is no solace.

Willy: If she would offer solace, then there could be a message, a sort of moral. Loher intentionally doesn't do this. The death of the child opens the doors of all the people involved. Loher drags you into their world, a world you normally wouldn't enter. Where usually the shutters are closed after a funeral, Loher leaves them all slightly ajar.

Alize: The whole piece is also about coincidence or fate. You hear about the foreigner who had a child die in his arms during the war. And while trying to escape from this trauma, he arrives in this district just at the very moment when a child is run over right in front of his eyes. Is that coincidence or is that fate?

Commitment

Willy: The districts with streets broken up, people who are unseen, who are not important for politics or for the media, who live in what for us are unseen districts... I feel it's vitally important to continue talking about that. Can reality be a reason for us to consider what we can do with art and theatre? Those are the sort of questions Dea Loher puts on the table. It's wonderful the way she brings poetry into the dark side of existence. If there was more commitment then the world might be a somewhat better place now. It's important to reflect on how we should go further. Dea Loher opens the doors to that awareness.

Alize: And she does that in the right place at the right time. It's all about trying to understand one another and to look for a compassion that has been lost.

The Word

Alize: Loher's language is highly impassioned, the pain seeps through the words. Although her texts are often very dark and fierce, the way she writes allows the narrator the freedom to work, thus creating a distance. Sometimes she leaves it open as to who puts into words which text, which gives me a lot of freedom. Loher creates a kaleidoscope of stories. In this sense, her theatre language is not only theatrical but also cinematic. In her cinematic images, she uses language in such a strong way that that real images cannot compete.

Structure

Alize: We will reveal the structure of the play to an even greater extent than we did with *Onschuld*, so that you won't simply be in the story all the time but you will also be conscious of the form. We break through the fourth wall right away. We will be working with different forms and realities: the piece allows you to do that, even forces you to do it. You really have to consider carefully how best to tell something. Dea is a political writer, she points her spotlights on the underbelly of our society. Through the way she tells things, alternating dialogue with narration and songs, not only is a compassion with the characters created, there is also alienation, through which a greater insight into our society is brought about.

Willy: The fact that Lea abandons certain paths in her writing means we shall also have to abandon certain paths. The piece is a narrative that for a part is acted out. On the one hand, you have an existence that comes to life rather like an Ikea D.I.Y packet complete with assembly instructions: you grow up, go to school, go to work... You follow a logical line, clearly outlined, and yet Dea Loher pulls the pin out time and again. You follow the assembly instructions but realise that there's a screw missing which means that the whole thing doesn't function at all. What then? Well, we've arrived at the heart of the matter. It isn't about unpacking and assembling your wonderful purchase, because what is this in fact? This is dead. Because the assembly instructions are useless now that a screw is missing: that's what it's all about, that is where life is.