

The Last Supper Reckless Sleepers

Hoxton Hall, London Lyn Gardner
Friday November 19, 2004



In Hoxton Hall are three long tables covered with tablecloths. Wine glasses receive red wine. There are 13 guests at each table.

Welcome to the latest piece from Reckless Sleepers, which comes with visual echoes of Leonardo Da Vinci and the dying echo of the words of those who came before us. Once we are settled at our allocated places, the three performers offer up the last words of the famous (Humphrey Bogart: "I should never have switched from Scotch to martinis") to the infamous (Rasputin: "It is the devil revived"). And once the words have been spoken, the performers swallow them, literally - they're written on rice paper.

Interspersed are the last meal requests of 13 death row prisoners. These dishes are served up to members of the audience. If you are lucky, you get a chocolate birthday cake with candles; if you are unlucky, it is liver and onions with cottage cheese. Although it doesn't make you as unlucky as Larry White, whose last meal request this was: he was executed on May 22 1997. The smell of liver taints the air like death itself.

There is something about the simplicity of this show that is unbearably moving. While it plays on celebrity (Princess Diana: "What happened?"; Andy Warhol: "Eh, yeh, you know, eh") it also gives voice to the voiceless. It is the disappeared, the obliterated, the wiped-out who walk among us, particularly in the last fragmented utterances - imagined, of course - of those snuffed out by the Hiroshima bomb. In fact, one of the themes of the piece is the unreliability of history, the way last words are manipulated to suit history's victors or to consolidate myths.

It is a strange yet strangely compelling little piece. While you might wonder why it's worth doing, I am inclined towards the view of Timothy Leary who, staring death in the face in 1996, reportedly declared: "Why not?"