

Eat, Speak and Die

Salle de Faubourg Geneva Festival La Bâtie

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In a prison in Texas, you are living out your final moments and custom dictates that you can order a last meal. You will savour the food and celebrate your existence one final time. Or would you prefer a message of peace for humanity, to earthly foods?

This choice of what to leave or what to take before dying is one of the troubling thoughts roused by *The Last Supper*, an intriguing performance from La Bâtie festival, to be played out again this evening.

Conceived by Reckless Sleepers, a British company, this strange performance transforms spectators into guests seated opposite three hosts who distil the last words and dishes, not only of 13 Texans sentenced to death but also an infinite number of celebrities from the past and present. Beethoven, Che Guevara, Marie-Antoinette, Copernicus, Kafka.

For each celebrity there is a little piece of paper on which their last assumed words are written; the paper is read out and eaten by the actors in their impeccable evening dress. In the same way, the spectators are invited to eat the 13 convicts' last meals for added authenticity.

Much is revealed in this confrontation between the volatility of words, which remain for posterity, and the meals, which disappear as quickly as they are brought out- sometimes with difficulty. The art of quotation is risky though, and it can sometimes lead to fastidious and scholarly criticism.

Reckless Sleepers undermine this and cleverly alternate between a simple mention (Marilyn <<I need to speak to John>>) with a detailed reconstruction of an event. The assassination of the immortal Rasputin is thus replayed live and the stucco of the Salle de Faubourg is adorned with a flash of bright light like that at the palace of Youssopov.

The spectator takes on an air of a conspirator as he/she is almost party to capital punishment; in swallowing the hamburger ordered by a man who himself has not swallowed anything for a long time.

Gripping.