

Lauritzen Prize.

Travel Bursary 2009 to actor Hans Holtegaard.

Award speech by Rikke Rottensten, editor, cultural journalist and critic, Kr. Dagblad.

The "arbiters of taste" went to Hjørring, the county town of Vendsyssel. There they saw a stage performance of "Helvede over and himlen under Tom Waits Teaterkoncert", and probably did so because they had been pressed to, which is what you have to do to get them out, and partly because Niels Hausgaard had helped write the show. But it was not him that they took home from their visit to the north of Jutland. A revelation - that was how they sounded, how they looked when talking about him: the actor Hans Holtegaard. They had not really known him before then because it is a very long way from Copenhagen to Hjørring. And now they will probably not forget him just like that. It sounded fantastic, think that such a force, such a man was living up there and had not made an attempt for a major career in Copenhagen.

I can now reveal that you do not need to have been in Hjørring long before the name of Hans Holtegaard gets fixed in your memory. Up north, he has played an absolutely crucial, central and unmissable part in the theatre life in the town where he has set his own visible marker on the local culture and stage since he stopped being an electrician and concentrated more on his career as an actor and musician. He started as a fold-out man and took his place as a rock musician in the Slåbrok Band and he still plays an important part at and for Vendsyssel Theatre in minor but important secondary roles in such Danish films as "The Substitute " and "The Gift" just to mention the most recent.

Hans Holtegaard is a rare actor on the Danish stage. He is utterly and definitely unglamorous, he is not rumbustuous. He is characterised by where he comes from and his local area, he clearly and specifically speaks the local Vendelbo dialect, which practically says it all: For if you do not have a special natural energy, do not have a talent and the power to make an impact, then all the characteristics amount to an acting career at the amateur level. But Hans Holtegaard has not avoided other acting genres and types: He has played a fantastic number of children's shows, he is a dead ringer for Elvis when he sings, he can play marital dramas, comedies and revues, because when you sign up to a career in a regional theatre in a theatrical town such as Hjørring, you need to be able to throw yourself into everything and anything. Which he has done to such effect that nowadays you never know what to expect from him. It surprised many people last autumn when he played one of the best known roles in Danish theatre, that of old Levin in "Indenfor murene" (Inside the Walls) with entirely novel facets not just to his own talent but also for the role, that Poul Reumert, John Price or Jørgen Reenberg had not touched on, and nobody who saw the excellent "Princesses" could forget his dangerous, drunken, appalling patriarch.

Hans Holtegaard has made his nature into his strength. By staying true to himself, he gives us others a special, absolutely grand theatrical experience. His humour is so understated that one sits in breathless excitement and expectation as to whether there is a point to what he is in the process of saying - or what? With his geographical origins, he evinces calm and gravitas and constant secrecy. What goes on behind that smooth facade, behind that face that says that masses is happening inside but it is definitely not certain that we others will get to share in everything. People from Vendelbo do not blurt out everything and nothing. They are folk that do not say more than is absolutely essential but a single well chosen word said in the right way with confidence certainly makes people, including those who are not local, understand just what Hans Holtegaard means.

For an actor, it is absolutely essential to have secrets. But when you are really good, there is no reason to keep yourself a secret. Which is why we are pleased to be able to award Hans Holtegaard a JL-Fondet travel bursary.