

LAURITZEN PRIZE 2008. TRAVEL BURSARY TO ACTOR HENRIK BIRCH.
AWARD SPEECH.

Henrik Birch is above all the personification of sharpness but is very often also touching in his hair-fine interpretations of a role. An actor who very much understands how to defend himself; but also lovingly performs the role he is playing. "In interpreting his roles, Henrik is as sharp as a razor but he can also be as soft as a feather. An ability and depth of character I really envy for he is the personification of what I would call a clever actor. It would otherwise be so easy for him to crush his audience since he always seems to have them in the hollow of his hand." So said one of Henrik Birch's colleagues to this year's Prize Committee when we asked for a statement.

And if viewing this characteristic in the light of the fine reviews that always follow in Henrik Birch's wake, it is true.

Sensitive, ambiguous but also very clear, Henrik Birch manages again and again to astonish his audience. Not by way of a commanding style of acting but more by playing on the fact that on stage and on screen, he plays the final trump where the audience are mentally confronted with themselves, at a point that we choose for ourselves.

This is where Henrik Birch is an almost legendary innovator, especially on the boards. Because he leaves it up to individuals in the audience to make a final choice. Often a very painful but sometimes also an amusing process. On the other hand, this kind of acting demands great technical ability and iron discipline but that is precisely what he has.

His most recent venture was in the play "Klumpfisken", but film and TV have also benefited from his multifaceted talents.

Something that is revealed in all his performances is how much of himself he has left over. It is as if he indirectly plays on the fact that if it suited the audience and himself, he could easily do twice as much.

On the other hand, one could say that this elegant underperformance helps create the many levels at which Henrik Birch acts.

Which the Prize Committee would like to thank you for.

This travel bursary should not be seen as encouragement to seek out new ways, rather the opposite. Use it to share your skills with the world. With talents such as yours, you have almost a duty to share your great knowledge and abilities. The only condition is that you come back to Denmark again. We can definitely not do without an actor such as you.

Lars Wredstrøm, theatre critic, Børsen