

Main speech for Ulf Pilgaard, winner of the Lauritzen Prize 2011.

Speaker: Rikke Rottensten:

In the topical book of "Barndomsvenner" (Childhood Friends), the publisher Jakob Kvist reproached Ulf Pilgaard because he had never played at the Royal Theatre. Ulf Pilgaard could not see the problem. Was it so great about performing at the Royal Theatre?

And especially for Ulf Pilgaard - incontrovertibly the most 'royal' actor in Denmark! He is so "by royal appointment" that I had to blink when I saw a TV clip of Ulf Pilgaard and Queen Margrethe dancing the Lancers together. It was almost supernatural....But of course, there is no escaping the fact that if Ulf Pilgaard had not so wedded his life to humour, he would have undoubtedly been awarded prizes such as this many years ago. Nobody has ever questioned his format.

But now he has wedded his career to the revue which has actually become one of the most decisive reasons for its eventually having become good taste to watch one. Nowadays, not even the Politiken Plus segment needs to put on wig and sunglasses to visit the tent at Bakken. They even talk about it openly now.

Ulf Pilgaard was selected from and chosen to act with the greatest Danish revue stars. Names that should really have scared off a young actor. On the other hand, they could see with unswerving certainty unique talent when they saw it. They saw the talent in Ulf Pilgaard and so they made him Dirch Passer's first most regular partner after Kjeld Petersen. Since then, he has proved it himself to all of us.

Today, *he* is unconditionally one of our greatest actors - not just because of his height - and he has become a cult figure amongst the diverse generation of comics who can otherwise do everything themselves. In Ulf Pilgaard, they can naturally recognize something extraordinary; they can admire and learn from what it is that makes him a real star. He has the absolutely extraordinary ability for something so vital in theatre: timing. He has complete control of the audience and their reactions; we do what he wants us to do without realizing why.

Vase/Fuglsang wrote a fantastic revue text with their Perlemor (*mother of pearl*) number but the fact that it became a new classic, something we talk about and refer to, is solely down to Ulf Pilgaard. He was so buttoned up, with such incredible control of nonsense, his precision here was so eminent that it demanded someone out of the ordinary.

What Jakob Kvist was trying to get at with the Royal Theatre was of course whether Ulf Pilgaard would like to have more serious roles - play *real* theatre... Film and TV have given him these roles. His most famous is naturally the role as the murderer in Ole Bornedal's Nattevagten (*Night Watch*). Just as you have to make more of the artistic effects when facing a tent with more than 1000 people hungry for laughter, Ulf Pilgaard can turn things down and with small almost discreet artistic effects, especially create men with power. An almost perfect, elegant appearance, the self-assured presentation and great authority make one

slightly uncertain. Friend or foe? In any case, someone not to be ignored and who knows his worth, both in the role and as an actor. Could anyone else have entered a scene for just a few minutes and have played Denmark's most powerful man in Borgen? When he appeared in his well-fitting dark suit, you understood if the prime minister's heart beat harder and hands started sweating on the other side of the desk. Here was a man who demanded the ultimate of those around him, and of himself. Which is what Ulf Pilgaard also does on stage, also of his fellow actors. And they love it. I have seen even experienced colleagues, young and old, who had been completely overwhelmed when working with Ulf Pilgaard. It was like continuity training, giving insight into the fact that the theatre demands the best from your presence. Repartee must be absolutely on time, not a nanosecond later. Comedies are serious, nothing to be taken lightly when you are on stage. The audience should demand and get the very best, every evening.

Which is what they do when Ulf Pilgaard himself is appearing.