



<http://teatro.persinsala.it/tonight-lights-out-danae-festival/21088>

On its worldwide tour, a brilliant performance written and staged by David Weber-Krebs made a stop at Teatro Litta in Milan for the DANAE festival.

In the small sala Cavalleriza of teatro Litta with its visible beams and its unplastered brick walls, David Weber-Krebs welcomes his public, quietly sitting and surrounded by a tremendous installation consisting of light bulbs pending on the roof.

In this warm and informal atmosphere he begins telling a story in English (with Italian subtitles) which he tries to link with an actual happening in Germany, i.e. the initiative of the German newspaper Bildzeitung suggesting to switch off all the lights (all over Germany) during five minutes in the evening of 8 December 2007.

We quickly understand that the subject of the evening will be darkness and the sharing of it. During his tale, the actor prepares his public for the second part of the performance, convincing them that by doing individually something simple they can as a community achieve something great. From the start, the evening has thus the colour of idealism and confidence. When leaving his splendid apparel of a storyteller, Weber-Krebs becomes a tactful and accommodating moderator who playfully explains to a group of friends the second part of the event, i.e. the actual performance.

The aim would be to maintain the darkness by commanding the pending bulbs with a switch that is placed under the seat of every spectator. You think that nothing is easier than that, but to obtain that all the bulbs are switched off at the same time appears to be almost impossible.

The public comes in and quite from the beginning is invited to become a community. With all lights on, they sit down, observe each other, smile, try to understand the various stages of the performance. Once the explanations given, the performer himself sits down and, with the help of his switch, sort of leaves the community behind. In the long history of performative art the idea of giving the public the power to actively participate in the game, even to influence it, was often crucial. In this context, Weber-Krebs efficiently and strikingly manages to make every spectator an actor, without ever losing the control of the situation. The action that everybody can achieve is simple, his freedom of action is secured by anonymity; only the owner of a particular switch knows which bulb he controls.

The ways in which creative power is conferred to every spectator are various and unforeseeable; they change as everybody gains confidence in the instrument that has been given to him (the light switch). In line with his candour and coherent with his own idea of performative liberty, Weber-Krebs doesn't give any rules or limits for the action of the spectators, but observes them quietly, abandoning **Tonight Lights Out** to its unpredictable flow.

In search of his own role, everybody soon is no more satisfied with just switching on or switching off his own bulb, but tries to influence the others with comments, rebukes, real or fictive actions, until the point where he feels fit to raise and to leave the room whenever appropriate.

The experience is interesting. If its scope had been to just see what happens when spectators become actual players, and how a team of strangers interact in a performative environment, the experience would have fully succeeded. But you cannot ignore that from the start the atmosphere is built-up to create in the spectator a longing for the dark, as if the switching off of all the bulbs was the real scope of the performance.

A certain climate of community and trust has found its peak at the end of the first part of the performance, and has melted as time went by. With the lights again logged in, a risk of frustration creeps up and becomes a wish to find the responsible for the failure of the experiment. Thereby emerges the doubt on the real destiny of this structurally irrepeatable performance.