

## **Introduction**

My interest in Casanova as a potential Suspect Culture project began over two years ago. The company had just held its first annual symposium entitled Theatre and the Sciences of the Mind, in which a speaker mentioned the historical Casanova in one of the lectures. He described the process by which Casanova invented different characters which he 'performed' in order to ingratiate himself into whichever European court he was visiting at the time. Casanova's fictitious creations usually succeeded in either extracting money from or sleeping with the various courtiers he encountered. This self-conscious creation and presentation of character seemed to connect with the ideas the company was exploring at the time for the show *Mainstream*.

Even a reasonably superficial look at the copious twelve volumes of memoirs Casanova produced towards the end of his life leads the reader to a couple of interesting conclusions. Firstly, even allowing for all the usual embellishments of autobiography, his life was a very glamorous, trans-European adventure. Secondly, according to the author, there was a very different attitude behind Casanova's relationships with women (and interestingly in a couple of instances, men) than a modern view of a casanova figure might suggest. Casanova presents his promiscuity as part of a coherent philosophical position, which involves the celebration of pleasure and life lived for the moment. However, this is not simply a selfish pursuit of pleasure and Casanova claims to be as interested in his partners' happiness as his own.

I think both these elements of glamour and moral complexity were key factors when I started to think about contemporary spheres for our modern Casanova. The international art scene, albeit in an exaggerated form, seemed to me an appropriate context for some of the ideas suggested by the memoirs, and the gallery an interesting setting for seduction.

The project went through two key workshop phases. The first was in Prague with a group of Czech performers during the *Mainstream* tour and the second was in Glasgow with a group of nine female performers. Both workshops explored different seduction strategies and the different levels of complicity involved with these seductions. The Prague workshop was particularly interesting in that the city has many connections with the original Casanova. There is a story that he was in Prague around the time of the premiere of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* and even helped Da Ponte the librettist finish a couple of scenes. These coincidences were for me, too strong to ignore and is why *Don Giovanni* has as important an influence on the structure of our piece as anything in Casanova's memoirs. A personal interest in operatic styles in general has also influenced the ways in which the different moral positions contained within the piece are presented I think.

As with any Suspect Culture show it has been this slow process of influence and coincidence, individual preferences and collaboration that has resulted in what

you will see tonight. All these factors have combined into a modern Casanova in a very rich historical and literary tradition.

I hope he lives up to his reputation.

**Graham Eatough**