**Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker / Rosas**

**Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke**

In the autumn of 1899, it takes the then twenty-three-year-old Rainer Maria Rilke one single night to write *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke* (The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke). In the years that followed, Rilke continued to work on this peculiar ‘short song in prose’ or ‘poetic narrative’ – polishing and refining its delicate phrasing.

The result is a sensuous ‘fever dream’: It is 1664 and the young Christoph Rilke (a distant ancestor of the poet, Rainer Maria Rilke) travels as standard-bearer or ‘cornet’ with a small company of soldiers to the fortress of an Austrian count. The fair-haired cornet loses himself in a night of passion with the countess, and gallops towards a heroic death in a battle against the Turkish army.

Rilke’s text inhabits, in every respect, an intermediary space: its prose sings; women have male traits, men, female traits; women are all at once mistress, mother, Virgin Mary and sensual ‘angel of death’.

For Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Rilke’s *Cornet* is an old love. Its musicality forms a starting point for her on-going research into the counterpoint between dance and text, movement and speech: ‘For quite some time I’ve been investigating the sources in our body from which movement can spring. Even more so than walking, breathing is one of the most elementary, life-giving patterns of movement. Breathing can become sound, sound can turn into speech, speech into song. The voice cannot lie: it brings out the most intimate core of a human being. There are billions of people, and yet we are able to recognise a single voice blindly. That is why I want to give breath and voice, so to speak, to Rilke’s text by approaching it as a musical score.

‘How can you embody language? Dance a story? What happens when you confront the logic of a text with an autonomous logic of movement? Take for example Noh-theatre: movement underlines, accentuates or illustrates a story, and yet it maintains its own logic, its own beauty – independent of text or story. I want to explore this intermediary space that Rilke’s text opens, the subtle nuances between breathing, speaking and singing, between the male and the female, the lyrical and the prosaic.’