



EMILIA ROMAGNA
TEATRO FONDAZIONE

Holy Ecstasy Atreides: eight family portraits

(Santa Estasi – Atridi: otto ritratti di famiglia)

a special project directed by ANTONIO LATELLA

actors Alessandro Bay Rossi, Barbara Chichiarelli, Marta Cortellazzo Wiel, Ludovico Fededegni, Mariasilvia Greco, Christian La Rosa, Leonardo Lidi, Alexis Aliosha Massine, Barbara Mattavelli, Gianpaolo Pasqualino, Federica Rosellini, Andrea Sorrentino, Emanuele Turetta, Isacco Venturini, Ilaria Matilde Vigna, Giuliana Vigogna
playwrights Riccardo Baudino, Martina Folena, Matteo Luoni, Camilla Mattiuzzo, Francesca Merli, Silvia Rigon, Pablo Solari

project playwrights Federico Bellini and Linda Dalisi

set and costumes Graziella Pepe

music Franco Visioli

lights Tommaso Checucci

duels, movements and choreography Francesco Manetti

videos Lucio Fiorentino

assistant to the project Brunella Giolivo

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with the support of FONDAZIONE CASSA DI RISPARMIO DI MODENA

A theatre case

Revelation of latest Italian theatre season, *Santa Estasi* is an atypical project witnessing both the past and the future of stage arts.

Originally conceived as the inspiration subject for the Acting and Playwriting Professional Course dedicated to Greek tragedy, it has overcome all expectations proving to be a complete work, rich in ideas, research cues, and wisely managed energy. This is how audience and critics widely and unanimously appreciated it.

Among the most active artists of the contemporary theatre scene – he was asked by ERT Foundation to direct the Professional Course for 2016 – Antonio Latella worked as a pedagogue, showing absolute commitment and inspiration, coherent with his own approach when bluntly coming to production. He investigated the myth in its most gloomy shades, by developing a new language at ease in acting and dramaturgy, concerted and illuminated, tracing some new possible physical forms.

The artist and long-time collaborating authors – Federico Bellini and Linda Dalisi – were faced with a subject which soon became urgent for them as well as for the actors' bodies and the playwrights' scripts. This revealed the still existing connection with an ancient world, which endures the centuries to be repeatedly discovered.

Standing as a complete stage work, *Santa Estasi*, in the version of theatre marathon, is actually much more than that. It is a real theatre experience, where actors and audience can share in a very special way the world of imagination, by standing in the act for a long time, by going in and out of that, experiencing a different perception of rhythm and its original language.

Working method and language

In a powerful and lively, deep and amused effort, an attempt was made to discover and recognize, unveil and *listen* in a new way to the saga of the House of Atreus; it originates with Tantalus sacrificing his son Pelops to Gods as a defy. This marks the curse for the whole ancestry who will experience power disputes, revenge, guilt and announced catastrophe. For the solid crew, investigating these subjects was like wading through stormy waters and the result is eight different but connected plays. Each one focuses on a different mythical figure, mainly drawn from Euripides, with some visits to Aeschylus and Seneca, a quick look at Sophocles but also to Pasolini, Beckett, Simone Weil and Angelopoulos - especially for the finale. Everything was reinterpreted and reinvented; acting, words, figures, narration, all elements flow one into each other, for an unprecedented correspondence of form and content. Indeed, everything returns, tangles are recognizable, emerging in the original forms of archetypes, in this carousel of men and Gods. *Santa Estasi* retraces the history of Atreidæ while filtering the narrative tension through introspection, though avoiding psychologism. The delicate tact, the easy approach to performing, the desire for an interactive play with the audience allow words to flow without uncontrolled passion thus setting the rhythm and creating a sort of intimacy with the myth. Far from any attempt of mystification, myth is everywhere, it surprisingly objectifies gestures but it is also investigated by it.

The perception soon arises that it is something concerning everyone there. Throughout the eight movements composing the long marathon, actors and actresses are always on stage, as a unique body – from which all relations originate – standing for a different entity beyond characters, words, audience, days. It stands in the myth, in that magma of bowels and instincts, of fate and guilt, of attempts to defy the limits and the unavoidable untold soul-shaking desires.

This is how curse is reiterated and inherited by those too human families, where Iphigenia, as an innocent child, is the only one able to act as an heroin; Helen embodies perfection as made up of opposite aspects; Agamemnon is repaid of his own violence in front of a chorus unable to prevail; Electra becomes the knife destined to rust; Orestes acknowledges the inevitable course of history as well as his own fears; Erinyes find the solution in the world of dreams; Tauris Iphigenia opens the chasm existing between science and ethics; Chrysothemis appears as the symbol of absence and listening, which is theatre in its most ancient and contemporary sense.

A modular play

The eight movements (*Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Helen*, *Agamemnon*, *Electra*, *Orestes*, *Eumenides*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Chrysothemis*) – are set in the same space by moving objects drawn from shows of the Italian repertory – and can be performed individually – on different nights – or as a marathon: four movements performing on two days, or consecutively for a long theatre adventure into tragedy.

The sixteen young actors (Alessandro Bay Rossi, Barbara Chichiarelli, Marta Cortellazzo Wiel, Ludovico Fededegni, Mariasilvia Greco, Christian La Rosa, Leonardo Lidi, Alexis Aliosha Massine, Barbara Mattavelli, Gianpaolo Pasqualino, Federica Rosellini, Andrea Sorrentino, Emanuele Turetta, Isacco Venturini, Ilaria Matilde Vigna, Giuliana Vigogna) and the seven playwrights (Riccardo Baudino, Martina Folena, Matteo Luoni, Camilla Mattiuzzo, Francesca Merli, Silvia Rigon, Pablo Solari) from different Italian academies show exemplar efforts and professionalism allow for creating a suspended theatre dimension where it is possible to join the audience in an “ecstatic” experience.

The ecstasy suggested by the title stands for the act of going outside, going beyond oneself. It refers to the experience of God Dionysus, to theatre, to mysterious rituals, all of which implies a transformation. Theatre plays its role of catharsis, of purification obtained by going inside and outside oneself, which is an impossible practice in everyday life. With reference to Dionysus - the God who experienced death and draws regenerating forces by plunging into the indescribable, into the limitless, into the dark – *Santa Estasi* pushes theatre over its limits, outside the borders to find that original connection with an elsewhere.

Latella gradually focuses and materializes his own idea of politically-oriented style collaborating with a number of authors and largely accepting playwrights’ suggestions. He helps actors acknowledging the creative process and offers the artists and the audience the opportunity to experience an idea of connection between theatre and the city, allowing citizens to feel part of it on an ancestral level.

Press review (excerpts)

After Ronconi’s passing, Latella is the only Italian, or even European, director to be able to combine a strongly accurate pedagogy with a lavish creative talent, which drove him to realize 8 independent sets, each one featuring its own mood and style. (...) The eight portraits of the gloomy ancestry focus on eight different characters, from Iphigenia to Helen and the neglected Chrysothemis – Agamemnon’s youngest daughter - who have never been protagonists before. These "family portraits" investigate characters’ private life and secret instincts: tragedy is narrated from the family perspective and distortions are highlighted by tragic events. The different approaches have in common the choice of removing from protagonists any heroic stature, any grandeur, to focus on their hesitations and bewilderments.

Renato Palazzi, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 5 June 2016

Santa Estasi is a crucial step in Latella’s creative universe. This time, more than ever, the director has stripped his style obtaining such a remarkable result in terms of balance between the rigorous

style and the narrative process. Very few stage elements (though very meaningful as they are “second-hand” materials taken from previous plays), no emotional atmospheres, Latella focused on actors, on their ability to clearly enounce the script, to truly manifest their psychological intentions while finding a communicative language that is contagiously powerful. These eight shows to be seen consecutively (...) probably announce director’s maturity due to the rich contribution in terms of thought and theatre knowledge. (...) Five months were necessary for the project (...) to trace the whole story of Atreus family and describe heroes, fathers, sons and daughters with the breadth of epic deeds and the fascination of Greek tragedy. The most peculiar aspect of his dramaturgy is the parallel way in which text and images are created: it is not a various eclectic blend but rather a one single vocabulary.

Anna Bandettini, Repubblica.it, 16 June 2016

I think Latella was inspired by the desire to investigate the relation still existing with Greek tragedy and the meaning behind that. This results in a real journey through mind, art, emotions, language, history and personal life. (...) *Santa Estasi* opens with a dinner and ends with a dinner. The dinner at the origin of Atreidæ saga is the cannibalistic table prepared by Atreus for the unaware brother, Thyestes, who will be eating his sons’ flesh. The final dinner sees Chrysothemis reunite around the set table the ghosts of the protagonists of a marathon which gathered such a various audience for a very unique experience. Spectators did not feel “pity nor terror” but rather the sense of a community relating to theatre and its language.

Maria Grazia Gregori, L’Unità, 23 May 2016

I wonder why Antonio Latella has chosen *Santa Estasi* as the title for this demanding but indeed very successful project dedicated to Greek tragedy. More precisely, to the tragic Atreidæ ancestry. (...) “Ecstasy” literally means *standing outside*. It pertains to an individual unconsciousness, to an emotional state occurring when experiencing the divine. Rather than being a reference to S. Teresa d’Avila, this ecstasy recalls the participation to a secret ritual so similar to the mysterious worships of those unknowable ancient times. Of course, both actors and audience – witness to that - are taking part.

Gianni Manzella, Il manifesto, 28 May 2016

With a very acute but also fluent strategy, the director choses a different style and set for each of the eight plays of the project, while sticking to the main subjects identifying the single episodes of the saga. (...) While Iphigenia is showing her animal-like excitement as Artemis is about to turn her into a deer, the remaining actors, lined up on the proscenium, sneer at the audience: this is, of course, a way to debunk their role and the story they are playing but is also, and most of all, charging the audience for not being up to the narrated events. Briefly, the impossibility of tragedy, already witnessed in consequence of the crisis of the middle-class (starting from Ibsen and Pirandello) is now described by Latella as a straight result of life’s difficulties.

Enrico Fiore, Controscena.net, 16 May 2016

Classical tragedy becomes a family history; the difficult and exciting development of Atreidæ saga enhances (...) this feeling of belonging to another world, of being the chorus of a history of mothers and fathers, of sacrificed sons and killed parents, of incest and violence, of neglected celibacy and blood which is spilled for impossible peace, for a lost happiness or, indeed, in its pursuit. *Santa*

Estasi affirms the “standing outside” condition the whole project focuses on; a condition of separation of both actors and audience, sharing time and spaces lost in an eternal present, in the here and now of theatre exploring the eternity of myth. This is the sensation evoked by this long marathon signed by Latella, an immersion in another and high dimension the director shares with unlimited effort and great intelligence. This is *Santa Estasi*; the attempt to imagine theatre on a large scale, the political act of returning theatre to its community value, to reaffirm the separation of theatre and – at the same time – its symbolic power to be a mirror of reality in its multiple forms. Nicola Arrigoni, Sipario.it, 16 June 2016

In addition to the marathon, the eight beautiful chapters performed for 60 nights (staging, among others, the Brechtian subject of science and knowledge) (...). Revolution involves everyone: «You, as a spectator, become the actor, you feel the effort, you share it, and actors themselves realize we are mutually exchanging something», adds Latella. «It’s beautiful to see how, once you overcome tiredness, something amazing happens which changes the parameters, the defenses, the prejudices: you are part of the ritual and you are not judging, you are offered it and then you return it to the actor. I like to break the conventional concept of Time through risks and dangers. When you succeed, the audience is in front of a mirror». Afraid of idle time? Afraid to be bored? «Proust wrote beautiful chapters about the importance of boredom, which turns creative if you deeply accept it». In the Atreidæ night, Latella manages the musicality of time, to end with up a miraculous finale: «When you understand that history repeats and concerns anyone else than you, a crack is produced and you find yourself inside it».

Maurizio Porro, La lettura, 26 June 2016

Different theatre styles are combined in both classical and contemporary ways, between irony and recitation, ancient chorus and cried-out modern songs, drama and narration, subtle and sensational gestures, for a twelve-hour performance. Seven intermissions allow reconsidering the perceived suggestions, restless, persuaded to experience something unique, where theatre really becomes an ecstatic ritual.

Mario Bianchi, Klpteatro.it, 15 June 2016