

Tu non mi perderai mai Raffaella Giordano

Gazes of Andrea Nanni and Massimo Marino

“In Absentia”

by Andrea Nanni

“Thinking gathers language into simple saying. In this way language is the language of Being, as clouds are the clouds of the sky. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language. They are still more inconspicuous than the furrows that the farmer, slow of step, draws through the field.”

Martin Heidegger, Letter on humanism, p.265

“We cannot create what we already know; we can only create what is not yet known,” claims Heiner Müller, in his scorn for the dictatorship of labels, which we submit to daily to avoid renouncing the cosy reassurance of recognizing. Behind Müller’s words lies the humility of those who do not forget that “*theatre must continually rediscover its starting point, and find it in pre-verbal terrain.*” And so we entrust ourselves to the body, exalted as a prime source, in order to escape the net of a thought system that is increasingly an instrument of control and less and less a tool for interpreting the world. We ask the body, the depository of a time-resistant infancy, to trace a line of escape out of the “*prison of meaning*” towards the open space of significance, where we can allow something to exist in its original form, without deciding beforehand what is comprehensible and what must be rejected as incomprehensible. This type of ‘creating’ - possible only when we are prepared to release our e-motions, or in other words, liberate ourselves from our usual, entrenched habits of perceiving and interpreting - is what Raffaella Giordano’s entire artistic journey has silently testified.

The return, after two chorally structured works, to a solo performance accompanied by “voices of the living and the dead” in *Tu non mi perderai mai*, reinstates the body’s indecipherable transparency in an alchemic synthesis that combines modesty with radicalism. From the first moment - when a female figure crosses the space occupied by the audience, thus indicating belonging, or at least a place of origin, then proceeds to the deserted stage, defined a moment before as a square of ground evoking a miniature Zen garden - one becomes aware that the slender body is substantially a possibility within a force field, the incarnation of secret, invisible lines, a cavity offering itself to the passage of air, to those voices so far and yet so near that form the geographical area in which the ‘you’ of the title is vaguely refracted. Faces, outlines, but also memories of touch and smell fill the mind during a ceremony ‘in absentia’ in which the body is purely a means, a vibrating membrane capable of making the ‘simply said’ resonate - the ‘simply said’ that Heidegger claims is more suited to the language of these times. As in a monodic song, the choreographic score unwinds in one breath - “*this solitude is born in the breath*” - modulated according to an unbroken rhythm, like a single slow sequence in which the trajectory the eyes follow seems dictated by the action itself. The dance generates a time frame where there are no longer any divisions: for an unquantifiable period of time, thought finally seems to have found its element in (to quote Heidegger again): “*that power whose true essence is to let a thing or a person into your heart.*”

As often happens when we visit sacred ground, the scene of this reunion also seems to be the scene of a crime - committed, naturally, for love and against reason, as Antigone’s was when she let a handful of earth trickle over her brother Polynice’s body, despite Creon’s prohibition imposed by the state. But what the spectator (and writer) sees is this: the choreography, declaredly (and freely) inspired by the *Canticle of Canticles*, presents no puzzles to be solved, but instead asks us to listen to echoes that go unheard,

while trusting the intuition that “*experiencing something*” as Müller says, “*does not mean making an event your own by giving it the linearity of a concept.*”

In the secret names of love

by Massimo Marino

Raffaella Giordano appears out of the gloom that envelops the audience and into the light that permeates a bare space. Both her dress and expression are severe. She puts an ordinary bag down on the floor. In the background there is some kind of echoing sound: sirens, cicadas perhaps, a distant barking of dogs. Her body begins to write in the empty space. Physical hieroglyphics there is no sense in interpreting. I try to transcribe them directly into my notebook, freeing my eye, my mind, my hand and pen to the movement of a silent, essential dance, swift and austere.

The tension in the arms held high, to the side, circling. The body bends. It curls up on its knees then stretches out horizontally, widening, supported by the legs. It searches for a light above. It looks. It bends until it is stretched out on the floor. It rolls, crawls, strokes a line of earth. It caresses itself with soil.

The actions continue. There is a gentle struggle to carve neutral signs in space that vanish as soon as they are made. Prayer comes to mind, I don't know why. Or perhaps I do, because the inspiration for *You Will Never Lose Me* - or rather, the *inspiration*, - to inhale air, as the author herself writes - comes from *The Canticle of Canticles*. Which is actually a love poem. But isn't love a prayer? Isn't it, etymologically speaking, the *precarious*? Something one obtains through supplication and not by law? Something that exposes itself to the will of another, that makes us as weak as reeds in the wind and as obstinate as initiates of desire?

Prayer is something read, spoken, shouted to the heavens, which is what Raffaella Giordano does under the low theatre ceiling, to impress prayer into the world, to write it like a magic formula into things, like a lullaby or litany that penetrates and impregnates the atmosphere. So that it is listened to, so that it is granted. So that it returns to the body under another form, to make the body move with a universal breath, to make it germinate. If denied, prayer turns into an *imprecation*.

The dancer gets up slowly from the floor, like an old, uncertain warrior. She traces a line with her hand. A hiss whispers in reply. Geometry and counter-tension of gesture. Transparency and weight, sculptural and everyday posture, a caress to the emptiness. The slender body suspended, held up by air. The crossing of impalpable matter that fills the stage. Presence and distance. Dogs far off.

A mystical tightrope walker, she moves backwards arching her knees as if to raise herself on their tips. She draws abstract signs that perhaps call some orient to mind.

We see the weight and counterweight of the air that pushes, that supports, that lets itself be penetrated from the side. Is dance a disposition, an attraction, an attitude, a contrast to the world and its elements? Is it matter rather than willpower? The dancer seems to disappear as she gives a physical consistency to the atmosphere around her. She presses it, she moves it, she rules and directs it. She seems to meditate: moving backwards, looking sideways, retreating, coy, disdainful, timid? A spiral movement has her seated in a square of light. She measures the ground like a devotional act while intoned sounds play. She prostrates herself, she displays herself. She defends herself. She listens.

She achieves what seems to be ecstasy, like love, like the sacred, like absence, this Bernini-style, minimalist St. Theresa, a Magdalen in the desert who questions in a slow, winding movement, in the desire for sleep, for forgetting, for stasis, for a threshold, drowsily in search of the light of desire.

She flings a shoe. She retrieves it with one hand. Hand in shoe, she measures the borders on a puff of breath.

She protects herself on the floor with her hand in order to thwart the menacing power of creation or of an absent creature, then folds herself up, folding her hand on her heart. Always close to letting herself slip from her vigilant state, to dissolve, to lose herself. Meanwhile, with her back to us, she makes a sound that seems to be her voice re-echoing inside her and towards us like an invocation, like another meditation left hanging. Slowly, towards the light.

Like tension, the sound evaporates and fades. Movement appears to be immobilized, and with infinite slowness begins to move once more. Her gaze, the stuff of silent, unanswered invocations, moves towards the wall where it stops. Light now on the audience. A deep breath.

The darkness swallows up any stray, distant, yearned for, cheated or burning emotion. The tense concentration of the spectators implodes. Revealed to them by subtraction and the magical work of a physical and interior chisel, in the emptiness of a teeming space, and with no words, have been the names of something so sweet and so terrible it cannot be spoken. Who has seen and recognised them applauds.

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