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La faticosa messinscena dell'Amleto di William Shakespeare (1967)

cineteatrical spectacle of Leo de Berardinis e Perla Peragallo

film operators Alberto Grifi, Mario Masini, Leo de Berardinis, Perla Peragallo

editing Leo de Berardinis e Perla Peragallo

with Leo de Berardinis e Perla Peragallo

premiere Roma, Teatro alla Ringhiera, 21 aprile 1967

main replies Ivrea, Centro Olivetti di Palazzo Canavese, 12 giugno 1967

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by Pierpaolo Cesarano

The debut of the pair De Berardinis-Peragallo took place at the Ringhiera on April 21, 1967, in Rome's Santa Maria in Trastevere district. On the stage were three screens, each with its projector, amplifier, two speakers and a turntable, which played the most disparate music, from Verdi to Gianni Morandi, a Farfisa synthesizer, an iron crown and two painted veils. Leo de Berardinis, 27 years old, had returned from a long acting apprenticeship with Carlo Quartucci. Perla Peragallo, a few years younger, had attended Alessandro Fersen's theater school and possessed a natural dramatic talent, mixed with a deep-rooted musical culture. Two actors from different backgrounds but having reached "the same point of putrefaction."¹

In the play Hamlet pursues his solitude, isolated by the ghosts of the court of Elsinore; in that solitude Leo and Perla reflected their own solitude as marginalized artists in pursuit of something, whatever it might be.

The *laborious staging* was therefore a theater of necessity, the reflection of an existential condition, a narration of themselves and a theater of themselves, reflecting and digressing on the theatrical theme par excellence in a continuous play of hints and cross-references between Shakespeare's world and our own, with neon signs, the projections of the Ministry and the White House, where Polonius is invited to a banquet of worms.

On the screens we see Ophelia and Laertes playing tennis at the edge of a pool to the cloying notes of Riz Ortolani's *Mondo Cane*; Polonius smashing himself to death in a highway motorcycle accident; Rosencratz and Guildenstern sailing on an animated cartoon ocean and, impersonated by Leo and Perla, we see them hunting down ministerial funds.

The idea of doing a cinema-theatrical play had occurred to the two of them a year earlier when they met Alberto Grifi, an avant-garde film-maker, initially involved in the work but later replaced by Mario Masini and lastly by Leo and Perla themselves, who also undertook the final film editing.

The live dubbing of the characters made it possible to use the film sequences as dramatic material, to correlate the power of images with the use of microphones. Of particular interest was their work on the stage lighting, to better achieve the idea of a Shakespeare bombarded by the sounds and images of the contemporary world. The actors moved shafts of light over themselves, the stage and the spectators while the projections flooded Leo's and Perla's bodies. The rest of the "troupe" consisted of bright, alienating shadows, acted on by an ironic, realistic, dissonant impromptu dubbing².

The projected images were reduced to relics and the film light was itself a scenic space. The acting was thus fragmented, bludgeoned by screams. Leo-Hamlet and Ophelia-Perla roved over the stage in front of or behind the screens, "evading or overlapping the images, commenting on the film inserts or even dubbing them live out of sync, so that Hamlet reached the spectators in a Doppler effect, fragmented among the shreds of other texts."³

The camera was used not as an expressive means but rather as a way to "freeze, stop, kill a sound, a light or a silence."⁴

At the Ringhiera that evening, besides theatrical colleagues, there were avant-garde habitués. Among them was Rodolfo Wilcock, who appreciated the novelty and inventiveness of the actors. The reactions were confused and embarrassed, and got small mention in Rome's daily news chronicles.

A couple of months later in Ivrea *La faticosa messinscena* had to face a qualified audience, and became one of the banner shows of the season, in what proved an opportunity to establish a new Italian theater. The fateful Conference held from June 10th to 12th was in fact an invitation "to promote, gather and defend the new forces and trends of the theater."⁵

La faticosa messinscena was the start of an itinerary that led Leo De Berardinis and Perla Peragallo to become champions of research and renewal, heroes of an entire era of Italian theater, ever faithful to a poetic in which art and life are one, experiencing theater as a form of knowledge.

¹ G. Manzella, *La bellezza amara. Il teatro di Leo De Berardinis*, Pratiche Editrice, Parma 1993, p. 12.

² Cfr. L. Borgia, *L'evento e l'ombra, fenomenologia del nuovo teatro italiano, 1959-1967*, Maria Pacini Fazzi Editore, Lucca 2006, p. 194.

³ G. Manzella, *La bellezza amara. Il teatro di Leo De Berardinis*, cit., p. 11.

⁴ L. De Berardinis, Perla Peragallo, *Amleto, Macbeth, Wyatt*, in «Teatro», n. 2, giugno 1969, p. 56.

⁵ G. Boursier, *A convegno il teatro di domani*, in «Sipario», n. 255, 1967, pp. 6-31.