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[Author](#) || Mauro Petruzzello

[Translation from Italian](#) || Valentina Ajmone Marsan

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Magazzini Criminali - biographical notes

by *Mauro Petruzzello*

Sandro Lombardi, Lorian Nappini (aka Marion D'Amburgo) and Federico Tiezzi have known each other since their school time in Arezzo at the Liceo classico "Francesco Petrarca". They did not go through a regular artistic training in theatre schools, but they attended instead, all along the Seventies, several workshops with Jerzy Grotowski, Living Theatre and Odin Teatret, while at the same time studying history of art at university. Their first performances, put on between 1968 and 1970 as Compagnia dei Tre, were very much in that tradition - Living Theatre, Jerzy Grotowski - and originated from texts by Jacopone da Todì, Peter Weiss, Anna Frank, Allen Ginsberg, Federico Garcia Lorca, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Thomas S. Eliot, Bertolt Brecht.

In 1970 they moved to Florence, where they founded Il Carrozzone, and up to 1979 their performances were all given with that name. Their debut was with *Morte di Francesco (Francis' death)* (1971) followed by *La donna stanca incontra il sole (A tired woman meets the sun)* (1972). The performances took place in art galleries, in order to encourage the usage of alternative locations to the regular theatre circuit. Giuseppe Bartolucci, labelled these performances, alongside those by Ricci, Vasilicò, Cecchi and Perlini, "theatre of images", that is a theatre where a powerful pictorial strain substituted for the dramatic text, addressing primarily the spectator's sight.

But since 1976, with *Il giardino dei sentieri che si biforcano (The Garden where paths divide)*, the group explored novel approaches to the scene, in search of a "degree zero" of theatricality to be attained through a deconstruction of languages. A specific performance at the Festival delle Nuove Tendenze (New trends Festival) in Salerno, marked - once again according to Bartolucci - a breach with "theatre of images" and the birth of a many-sided movement that he called "post-avantgarde". *Presagi del vampiro (A Vampire's Forebodings)* (1976) and *Vedute di Porto Said (Views of Port Said)* (1978) were samples of "analytical-pathological-existential theatre", a typical aesthetics mode of Il Carrozzone: the work was no longer a closed system, rather a way of exploring the relationship - different in any performance - of the actor's body with space and time, considered as intrinsic foundation entities in the making of theatre.

The change of name into Magazzini Criminali in 1979 complied with the will to rethink the nature of the group, - not any more a mere theatrical company but a proper factory realizing performances, installations, concerts, a magazine, videos and discs. *Punto di rottura (Breaking Point)* (1979) marked the transformation, thus including Magazzini Criminali in the trend to be then called "Nuova spettacolarità". This trend was deeply linked to post-modern languages, thanks to which urban landscapes, pop and video art broke out in the theatre domain. *Crollo nervoso (Nervous Break down)* (1980) became the emblematic performance of this new aesthetics. In 1984 Magazzini Criminali became Magazzini and in that summer was at the centre of mediatic attention when they staged *Genet in Tangier* in the slaughter-house in Riccione, while the appointed butcher, following his regular daily routine, killed a horse.

In 1983 the Tuscan group had staged *Sulla strada (On the Road)*, freely inspired by Jack Kerouac's novel. Federico Tiezzi had labelled this performance "poetry theatre", showing the will to start on a new mode through which a scenic script would be a visual equivalent to poetry and its structural manners. The first works of this type were later assembled in a trilogy, *Perdita della memoria (Loss of Memory)*, comprising the above mentioned *Genet in Tangier*, plus *Ritratto dell'attore da giovane (A Portrait of the Actor as a Young man)* and *Vita immaginaria di Paolo Uccello (An Imaginary Life of Paolo Uccello)*, both staged in 1985. They were in the tradition of an updating of the notion of tragedy and of its sense in today's world as it had been explored by some of the important names in the dramaturgy of the twentieth century, as exemplified by Beckett's *Com'è (How it is)* (1987) and Muller's *Hamletmachine* (1988).

The next decade saw the project of re-writing Dante's *Divina Commedia* by some great Italian authors: Sanguineti's *Commedia dell'Inferno* (1989), Luzi's *Il Purgatorio-La notte lava la mente* (1999) and Giudici's *Il Paradiso-Perché mi vinse il nome d'esta stella* (1991). Another author on whom the company focused their attention was Testori and his performances *Edipus* (1994), *Cleopatràs* (1996), *Due Lai* (1998) and *L'Ambleto* (2001).

Meanwhile Federico Tiezzi made his debut as stage director of operas with *Norma* (1991) at Teatro Petruzzelli in Bari.

In 2000 the company changed their name again, and as Compagnia Lombardi-Tiezzi went on exploring both contemporary and classic dramaturgy, producing performances as well as poetry reading and site-specific projects spotlighting the poetic language, often accompanied by music.