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Fanny & Alexander. Biographical note

by *Alice Fadda*

Chiara Lagani and Luigi De Angelis founded the company 'Fanny&Alexander' in 1992, in the corridors of the Classical Lycée Dante Alighieri, in Ravenna. Chiara recalls: «Luigi attended Emma Montanari's theatre workshops in the lycée we both went to. One day I told Luigi I wanted him to read a text I had written. After some time he came and said: "Come on, let's do it". So it all started, like a game, I never thought I'd do theatre in my life»¹.

Lagani and De Angelis have always preferred to define their group an Art Studio rather than a theatre group, «in the sense that was given to the term in the Renaissance, when persons of all origins gathered in the studio, helping the growth and exchange of ideas»². The name Fanny&Alexander was inspired by Ingmar Bergman's famous film, for the many themes present in the Swedish director's work: childhood against the world of adults, life and death, life and art, theatre, and also for Bergman's definition of his film: «a huge tapestry where each one can see what he likes to see»³.

F&A conducted an experimental research theatre, that went from Bergman to Shakespeare, Chekhov, Carroll, Collodi, Gozzano, Nabokov, and to Marina Cvetaeva, Giorgio Manganelli, Carmelo Bene, Guido Ceronetti, Baum and Lawrence. The first performances were deeply connected to the world of children: games and childhood became basic archetypes of their artistic production. The first Fanny & Alexander aesthetic was a macabre one: anatomical toy theatres and cases full of golden insects (*Ponti in Core*), of bleeding organs (*Con Mano devota*, 1996), graveyard tales (*Il Ginepro*, 1995), which portrayed a devastated, feelingless world, where the audience was never at ease, forced to watch disturbed visions of black veils or of walls (*Romeo e Giulietta - et ultra*, 2000) or, at the most, was left out of the scene, which could only be seen from behind a mirror (*Alice vietato > 18 anni*, 2003). In the course of time the art studio settled down still more, keeping open and willing to embrace new experience, thanks to the many productions: performances, installations, workshops, public meetings, publishing, audiovisual and radio projects. The world of childhood was then partly put aside, in spite of the various reference to children's literature upon which they often drew, in order to analyze today's world. In 2002 F&A put up a complex project, *Ada. Cronaca familiare*, centred on Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada o Ardore*, for which they were engaged with the production of seven audio and video performances until 2005. Later on, in 2007, they started working at the project *O-Z*, inspired by the World of Oz, and in 2011 at the project *Discorsi*, on the relationship between the individual and the community.

¹ G. Santini, *Il teatro di Fanny & Alexander, un gioco tra vita e morte* in *Lo spettatore appassionato*, Edizioni ETS, Pisa 2004, page 83.

² F. Gàbici, in *Fanny & Alexander come una Bottega d'arte*, «Il Resto del Carlino» Ravenna, December 19 2010.

³ Ingmar Bergman, «Il Giorno», October 16, 1982.