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La Gaia Scienza. Biographical note

by *Stefano Scipioni*

One of the most interesting theatre companies of the late Seventies - early Eighties is La Gaia Scienza, born on a train to Venice, where Giorgio Barberio Corsetti, Alessandra Vanzi and Marco Solari formed the nucleus of the company. The name 'La Gaia Scienza' came from Nietzsche's book, an author the tree components loved particularly, and from the title of Corsetti's essay for his diploma at the Accademia d'Arte Drammatica Silvio D'Amico.

In 1976, the director Simone Carella offered the company the opportunity to realize their first theatre performance. At Beat '72, off-off theater in Rome, La Gaia Scienza staged *La rivolta degli oggetti*, by Vladimir Majakovskij, with the purpose to recover the transgressive character of this great poet's work. A new work of the company with Carella was the staging of *Luci della città*, at the first meeting on "Postavanguardia/intervento didattico", in Cosenza in 1976. The actors took part in this project and reversed the subjection that traditionally binds the actors to the director. In 1977, from Simone Carella and Ulisse Benedetti's project *La nascita del teatro*, La Gaia Scienza staged their third performance, *Cronache Marziane*, still at the Beat '72. Taken from a science fiction novel by Ray Bradbury, it presented the predominant theme of their research: destructing the stage machinery and all its elements: the space, the performers' actions, the objects, the musics. And it had also the same discomfort inherent in *La rivolta degli oggetti*, a genuine rage through the entire performance, a haunting trip full of anxiety and violence.

The *Akademie der Kunst* of Berlin officially invited the Beat '72 to present its production, from the 19th to the 24th of May; on the 20th La Gaia Scienza presented their new performances *Sogni proibiti* and *Blu oltremare*. During the rehearsals of *Sogni proibiti*, a few hours before the beginning of the spectacle, the actors accidentally caused a fire, dropping a match on the petrol on the floor, for some particular moment of the action. The fire completely destroyed room B of the Kunsterhaus Bethaniene, stopping La Gaia Scienza, and also the following company, from performing their shows.

At the end of summer 1979, La Gaia Scienza staged *Ensemble*, a route of memory in which quotations and references to previous shows came out, recovered mainly through objects and materials. On the 9th of January 1981, the company won the prize Mondello 81 with *Così va il mondo*.

On the 22nd of May 1982, inside the Pavilion of Villa Borghese, the company then formed of five elements, presented *Gli insetti preferiscono le ortiche*, from the novel by the Japanese writer Junichiro Tanizaki. The performance was presented for three weeks on end, from July 27 1982, at the Seymour Centre in Sydney. And after that in London and in Florence.

La Gaia Scienza then went through a long period -almost nine months- of rehearsals, preparing their new production *Cuori strappati*, realized in May 1983 at the Pavilion of Villa Borghese. The company was once more formed of new elements: with the 'three' protagonists of all the shows, Barberio Corsetti, Solari and Vanzi, there was Guidarello Pontani and, for the first time, Irene Grazioli.

In 1984, the neo-director of the Biennale Teatro di Venezia Franco Quadri proposed La Gaia Scienza to realize a performance for its renewed edition. At this stage, substantial differences emerged among the actors. Summer 1984 marked La Gaia Scienza's internal division: its social name lives on, but they no longer have the identity of an only company.