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## Motus. Biographical note

by Renata Savo

Motus was founded in Rimini in 1991 by Enrico Casagrande and Daniela Francesconi Nicolò. They both were studying in Urbino, where they met while taking part in the university theatre group “Atarassia” and E.A.S.T. (European Associations of Students of Theatre). Following the graduation of their studies (in History of Economics and Sociology), they moved to Rimini, where the idea of creating an independent theatre group was born. Initially it was called “Opere dell’Ingegno” (“Works of the mind”).

The same year, they created *Stati d’assedio*, inspired to Albert Camus play *L’état de siège*. The play won “First Prize Coordination Young Italian Artists”, Spazio Proposta and was noticed by Santarcangelo Festival ’91. This project defined the “diverse” nature of the artistic group, as it involved not only actors, but also musicians, graphic artists and sculptors.

In 1992 the group changed its name to Motus. This was a start of a series of productions and small events curated and directed by both Enrico and Daniela, who were interested in directing, which evolved into the dramaturgical process and writing, in addition to often acting in the shows themselves.

In the same year, they produced *Strada Principale* and *Strade Secondarie*, dedicated to Paul Klee and Samuel Beckett, which was presented at the Festival Off in Avignon and at the Edinburgh Fringe. In 1993, for the Scenario Award, the group created AID. *Zona ad alta tensione*. With this show Daniela and Enrico traveled to Morocco, where they began collaborating with Moroccan students and workers, setting up a series of activities aimed at exchanges with the Islamic culture. This developed into the project *Maghreb e Senegal, fra letteratura ed oralità. I teatri della differenza* for DAMS of Bologna (Teatro la Soffitta).

In 1994 Santarcangelo Festival for Sarajevo, Motus created *Cassandra Interrogazioni sulla necessità dello sguardo*, a show inspired by Christa Wolf’s *Cassandra*. The show was entirely set in their home. The video *Sulla necessità dello sguardo, which was a part of the performance*, was presented at Riccione TTV Festival and marked Motus’ first encounter with video in the art they create.

*L’occhio belva* (1995), a show dedicated to Samuel Beckett and premiered at Interzona’s refrigerating room in Verona, initiated the way to a fine season of theatre events during which the company was recognized as one of the leaders of *Romagna Felix*, the group of experimental theatre companies of the Emilia Romagna region in Italy. In 1995 for Santarcangelo Festival, *L’occhio belva* was reinstalled on the four floors of Rimini former children’s hospital, now called Gallery of Contemporary Art. It was a dynamic show involving actors, sculptors, musicians and cameramen. In the same period Motus, under the title “Rudimentary Systems”, shot numerous Super 8 micro-films and installations.

In 1966 with the explosive show *Catrame* (inspired by J. G. Ballard’s *The Atrocity Exhibition and Crash*), which premiered at the Teatro Petrella in Longiano, Motus achieved recognition not only nationally, but also internationally.

In 1998 *O.F. ovvero Orlando Furioso impunemente eseguito da Motus* opened at the Rotonda della Besana for Milan’s Festival Teatri 90. The videos used in the show, directed by Enrico Casagrande, Daniela Nicolò and David Zamagni, won the “Production Prize” at the TTV Festival Riccione ’99. With this show Motus toured in Italy and Eastern Europe.

In November 1999 Motus was awarded the “Special Ubu Prize” «for the stubborn and creative coherency of a visionary research intent on redesigning spaces and filtering myths.» The same year, Motus was awarded a Young Talent Prize by the magazine “Lo straniero”. The magazine stated: «After interesting and provocative rehearsals, the group put on *Orlando Furioso*. The show, through brilliant visual and sound aesthetics, reminiscent of their Romagna origins (from Fellini to Casadei) but also a part of a post-modern imaginary running from comics to photography, from painting to fashion, tackled an ironic interpretation of the “crisis of the male”, particularly nourished by Deleuze and other analysts of our bizarre and troubled contemporaneity.»

In 2000 Motus began a new research into the universe of Rainer Maria Rilke and Jean Cocteau around Orpheus’s mythical figure. A twenty-day workshop was held in Sarajevo at the Biennale of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean. The workshop grew into a performance called *Overhead Orpheus* – later shown at the Rome Youth Biennale in collaboration with the RomaEuropa Foundation.

The same year, the research led into the opening of *Orpheus Glance* at the Kismet Theatre in Bari, a show which toured around and was voted “the best play” by the audience in Bergen, Norway.

In November 2000, the company was awarded the “Ubu Special Prize” by the Ubu jury in Milan, for “the planning and implementation of a profitable experience of collaboration of young theatre companies in an extraordinary space”.

The same year, the show *Visio gloriosa*, which opened at the Teatro Argentina in Rome managed by Mario Martone, won the competition “Seven shows for a new Italian theatre for 2000”.

Later, the new theatre project *Rooms* came to life, it looked into the notion of hotel rooms. The Venice Theatre Biennale and the International Network Temps d’Image of Paris joined the project and created the performance – *Twin Rooms*. For this performance the stage became a space where theatre and film narratives developed side by side.

In May 2002, the project *Rooms* evolved into the performance called *Splendid’s that* premiered at the Grand Hotel Plaza in Rome. The show was drawn upon a short text by Jean Genet, translated into Italian by Franco Quadri. Motus shot its first

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medium-length video, co-produced by the Riccione TTV Festival 2004, based on the original piece. The video was performed in hotels across Europe.

In December 2002, culminating the two years of intense work, Motus was awarded its third “Special Ubu Prize” «for the game of split images and narrative in the evolution of the Rooms Project». The show *Splendid’s* was a finalist in the most prestigious category “show of the year”. In February 2003 *Twin rooms* was performed and won the prize for “The Best Foreign Show” in Montreal, Canada. The show was also presented in Spain, France, Belgium, Germany and Croatia.

In 2003 Motus went on a new artistic journey across Pier Paolo Pasolini’s writings and images. This led to the special event *Come un cane senza padrone*, presented in the context of the project *Petrolio*, curated by Mario Martone in Naples. Later in the year Motus moved to France and worked at the Théâtre National de Bretagne for two months. In April 2004 they presented the show *L’Ospite*, inspired by Pasolini’s novel *Teorema*, which had a great success and toured around France, Spain and Belgium.

The following year the publishing house “UBU Libri” of Milan published *Io vivo nelle cose. Appunti di viaggio da Rooms a Pasolini*, by Enrico Casagrande and Daniela Nicolò, in the series of “I libri quadrati”.

In 2005, Motus began researching on Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and came up with the idea for the documentary-project *Piccoli Episodi di Fascismo Quotidiano*, inspired by *Pre-Paradise Sorry Now*. Furthermore in 2006 Motus created a show *Rumore Rosa*, inspired by *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant*. Both plays were first staged at the Teatro Dimora-L’Arboreto in Mondaino. Later they were taken on tour to France and Belgium as well as in 2008 appearing at the Festival Santiago Mil in Santiago, Chile. In 2006 Enrico Casagrande joined the artistic commission of the Rimini Province for the “Argo Navis Project.”

In spring 2007 Motus began an exploration of the notion of adolescence. The project came to life under the name of the *X(ics)Racconti crudeli della giovinezza*, which consisted of four shows, a film and eclectic happenings. The outlook of the project focused on the city outskirts and today’s disoriented youth, dispersed in the metropolitan scenario. It tries to capture the anomalous resistance among youths in the French, German and Italian suburbia and to give voice to those forms of rebellion. *X.01 movimento primo* premiered at the Venice Dance Biennale in June 2007, *X.02 movimento secondo* was presented at the Théâtre de la Ville di Valence in France, *X.03 Halle Neustadt* at the prestigious Theater Festival “Der Welt” in Halle, Germany in June 2008 and finally, *X.04 Napoli* in April 2009 at the Teatro San Ferdinando in Naples.

In 2009 the *Syrma Antigónes* project was developed in a relation to continuity of the previous production *Ics (X) Racconti crudeli della giovinezza*: the idea of this work was to focus on the analysis of the relationship/conflict between generations, taking the tragic figure of Antigone as an archetype of struggle and resistance. Three acts developed from the project – *Let The sunshine In, Too Late and Iovadovia*. The journey however was completed in autumn 2010 with the opening of *Alexis. A greek tragedy* at the Festival Vie di Modena. The performance led to a very long and successful tour around France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Eastern Europe and then even further, Brasil, Argentina, New York and Montreal. In Montreal, *Alexis* received a great success as the show was awarded the prize for the Best Foreign Performance of the season 2011-12 by the Jury of the Association of Theatre Critics of Quebec (A.Q.C.T.) in November 2013.

During the summer of 2011, Motus started working on the new project called *2011>2068 AnimalePolitico*. It sought to recognise the worries of the “Tomorrow that makes all tremble” by diving into an intricate landscape of revolutionary artists, writers, philosophers, comics writers and architects who have imagined (and still try to imagine) the Upcoming Near Future. The first *Public Act*, called *The Plot is the Revolution*, was a touching scenic encounter between “two Antigones”, Silvia Calderoni and the mythical figure of contemporary theatre, Judith Malina (Living Theatre). This experiment – a dialogue between different generations, experiences and physicalities – was presented at the Teatro Petrella in Longiano as part of the Santarcangelo Festival 2011.

Judith was the first guest in Motus research path of exploration which was articulated with a help of public actions, workshops and residencies. The performance *When* was presented at Les Subsistances in Lyon in March 2012, as part of the “Ça tremble !” Project. In July 2012, following a creative residency at the Centrale Fies, the work has been further elaborated and grown into three different acts, happening at three different time frames during the day. *W.3 Public Acts [Where, When, Who]* Was presented at the XXIII edition of the Festival di Dro in July 2012. This trilogy draws inspiration from *A Scanner Darkly*, a novel by Philip K. Dick investigating themes like surveillance, viral proliferation of ever growing sci-fi-like systems, “obsessive digitalization” of public (and private) spaces. For almost two years, Motus has navigated across the conflicts of today and hallucinated visions of tomorrow, between utopias of ages, reading Huxley, DeLillo, Ballard, Dick, London, Thoreau. During the journey the focus was finally found : Shakespeare’s *The Tempest, play-within-the-play*. Motus’s directors decided to distort the play and delve deeper into the desire of freedom. The show *NELLA TEMPESTA* premiered at Festival TransAmériques in Montréal (Canada) on May 24th through 27th 2013.

Temporary performative docking of the *AnimalePolitico* project is *Caliban Cannibal (October 2013)*, with Silvia Calderoni and Mohamed Ali Ltaief (Dali), tunisian philosopher and activist, which premiered in Santarcangelo 14. For this project Motus chose a *light emergency tent, which can quickly be installed in empty areas of public and private spaces: from squares to parks, to shopping centers, to theatres. A suspended and transitory non-place inhabited by unlikely figures: A +*

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C. “A” could be Ariel after *The Tempest*, aphasic and narcoleptic; “C” could be Caliban after the island explosion, after the attack on Prospero. After the fireworks. After Tunisian revolution.

The last two productions are presented at Santarcangelo 14 where *Call me x – Derive e approdi temporanei*, a photographic exhibition and videoinstallation, is presented for the first time. It is a gash on the creation process of *Nella Tempesta, offering to the visitors video and photo documents, splinters from travels and encounters occurred following one of the many possible migrants' routes*.

Motus approaches opera for the first time, working on the baroque semi-opera *King Arthur* (text by John Dryden, music by Henry Purcell). The musical part is curated by the Sezione Aurea Ensemble directed by Luca Giardini. A Motus and Sagra Musicale Malatestiana 2014 production, in collaboration with Romaeuropa Festival, AMAT/Comune di Pesaro and Rossini Opera Festival. It premiered in Rimini on 16 September 2014 and presented at Teatro Argentina in Rome the next October.

In 2015 the long journey of *AnimalePolitico does not yet feel exhausted. With the production MDLSX (première at Santarcangelo Festival 2015), a “solo” celebrating ten years of work with Silvia Calderoni, the company starts a new project exploring the theme of border/conflict*. The dramaturgy framework of this new path is composed of some reflections and cardinal figures from the Oresteia, or rather, from the *Appunti per un'Orestiade africana* and from *Pilade* by Pier Paolo Pasolini.

On September 2015 Silvia Calderoni wins the Virginia Reiter prize “Il lavoro dell’attrice”, which every year aims at identifying and promoting the best theatre actresses under 35, conceived by Giuseppe Bertolucci.

All of Enrico Casagrande and Daniela Nicolò’s artistic work goes hand in hand with an intense program of public meetings, lectures and masterclasses at various Italian and foreign universities, precisely in connection with the company’s complex theatrical and video projects.

In particular in 2014: *LAND GUAGE – A Workshop on Documentary Theatre* held at La MaMa Umbria International in Spoleto, as part of the 15th Annual International Symposium Theatre and the Atelier d’instruction “Poétique de la scène” held at La Manufacture – Haute école de théâtre de la Suisse Romande (HETSR) in Lausanne. The work there contrived a performance *LIWYĀTĀN*, based on *Leviathan* by Paul Auster. This work started a fruitful collaboration with the Swiss school, continuing in the season 2015/16 with the master in theatre direction entitled «*Qui était Pylade?* ».

In 2016 Motus celebrates 25 years of activity with HELLO STRANGER, special project dedicated to the company by the city of Bologna. An itinerary in its poetics with performances, instalations, films, meetings towards unexplored directions, opening to any possible “other”.

After exposing the “scandal” of the body and sexuality in *MDLSX*, with the extraordinary Silvia Calderoni, Motus decided to undertake a new production of *Splendid’s* by Jean Genet, fourteen years after the “historic” interpretation by an all-female cast. But international copyright rules require that the gender of the characters remain as they are indicated in the script, even in the case of an author who throughout his entire life advocated the need for metamorphosis, betrayal and ambiguity. This surprising rejection sparked a burning desire to work on the theme of identity and rebellion, on the refusal to accept a bias that submits to the division of reality into male and female. Thus RAFFICHE was born on an original text by Magdalena Barile and Luca Scarlini, starting with the same narrative situation (a group of male/female rebels besieged in a hotel, the only element to retain its name as a tribute to the French author) to talk about changing and subversive identities, creatures who have forever suspended their will to define themselves. The show premieres on 18 October 2016 at VIE Festival in Bologna as a part of HELLO STRANGER, special project that the city of Bologna dedicates to the company for its 25 years of activity. An itinerary in its poetics with performances, instalations, films, meetings towards unexplored directions, opening to any possible “other”. Motus dedicates HELLO STRANGER to the ever present adventure companion and irreplaceable collaborator Sandra Angelini, who contributed with immense joy to the birth of this project and who suddenly passed away leaving the company at immense loss in January 2016.