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Luca Ronconi. *Orlando furioso* (1969)

From Ludovico Ariosto

Scenic reduction of the text by Edoardo Sanguineti

Directed by Luca Ronconi

Scenes by Umberto Bertacca

Costumes by Elena Mannini

Music by Salvatore Sciarrino

Production by Cooperativa: Teatro Libero

First performance: Spoleto, Festival of the Two Worlds, Church of San Niccolò, 4 July 1969

With (in alphabetical order) : Edmonda Aldini (*Bradamante*), Dorotea Aslanidis (*Isabella*), Rodolfo Baldini (*Arbante*, *Guidon Selvaggio*, *Pastore*, *Lo sdegno*), Marco Bereneck (*Bireno*, *Agramante*), Nino Bignamini (*Folletto messaggero*, *Armato di Cimosco*, *Orrilo*, *Soldato saracino*, *Folletto*), Paolo Bonetti (*Armato di cimosco*, *Dardinello*, *Il greco*), Emilio Bonucci (*Oste*, *Popolo del Cairo*, *Soldato saracino*, *Fausto Latini*), Liù Bosisio (*Alcina*, *Gabrina*, *Balia di Argia*), Pierangelo Civera (*Pirabello*, *Il signore del nappo*), Enzo Consoli (*Zerbino*), Ambra Danon (*Donzella di Ebuda*, *Parigina*, *Moglie di Iocondo*), Duilio Del Prete (*Astolfo*), Luca Demata (*Nano di Gradasso*, *Nano di Doralice*, *Nano saracino*, *Nano della Regiana*), Luigi Diberti (*Ruggiero*), Alberto Donatelli (*Grifone*, *Soldato saracino*), Antonio Fattorini (*Rinaldo*), Massimo Foschi (*Orlando*), Marco Galletti (*Gradasso*, *Caligorante*, *Adonio*), Cesare Gelli (*Ferraù*, *Cimosco re frisone*, *Mandricardo*), Graziano Giusti (*Mago Atlante*, *Carlo Magno*, *Anselmo giudice*), Maria Grazia Grassini (*Marfisa*), Pino Manzari (*Ladrone*, *Soldato saracino*, *Eremita*), Marzio Margine (*Medoro*), Mariangela Melato (*Olimpia*, *Fiordispina*), Maurizio Merli (*Oberto*, *Parigino*, *Ricciardetto*), Aldo Miranda (*Cittadino di Ebuda*, *Aquilante*, *Soldato saracino*, *Servo di Anselmo*), Carlo Montagna (*Sacripante*, *Rodomonte*), Sergio Nicolai (*Corsaro di Ebuda*, *Soldato saracino*, *Iocondo*), Daria Nicolodi (*Figlia di Cimosco*, *Doralice*, *Fiammetta*), Anna Niccora (*Femmina omicida*, *Violante*), Ottavia Piccolo (*Angelica*), Michele Placido (*Figlio dell'oste*, *Popolo del Cairo*, *Soldato saracino*, *Garzone di Iocondo*), Giancarlo Prati (*Messaggero a cavallo*, *Pastorello fatato*, *Popolo del Cairo*, *Parigino*, *Astrologo*), Armando Pugliese (*Vecchio olandese in barca*, *Frate parigino*, *Malagigi*), Aldo Puglisi (*L'eremita*, *Corsaro di Ebuda*, *Etiopo sozzo*), Anna Rossini (*Regina omicida*, *Parigina*, *Argia*), Rosabianca Scerrino (*Fata Melissa*, *Donna serpente*), Paola Tanzani (*Donzella di Pinabello*, *Parigina*, *Signora del nappo*), Gabriele Tozzi (*Armato di Cimosco*, *Capitano di Doralice*, *Cloridano*, *Astolfo re dei Longobardi*), Renata Zamegno (*Femmina omicida*, *Regina longobarda*).

Luca Ronconi, *Orlando furioso* (1986) - presentation

by Mauro Sabatini

The origin of *Orlando Furioso*, one of the most famous and celebrated plays of late twentieth century Italian theater, lies in Luca Ronconi's fascination with Edoardo Sanguineti's novel *Il Giuoco dell'Oca*, published in 1967, the year of the Ivrea Conference. "He liked the idea of a non-sequential, disorganized story, but with a somehow open, random editing, and the issue had been raised of how an analogous effect might be achieved in a theater context, if one took account of all the specific questions that theater raises."¹

The initial intention was to trace a "game of the goose" on the theater scene, by adopting a dramatic mazelike structure and a montage that would achieve a dual involvement and disorientation of spectators through a deliberately "popular" composition. The idea was to use a dramatic text that could – evidently according to Sanguineti and Ronconi's cultural standards – sound familiar or recognizable to spectators, striving not to betray the guiding principles contained in the text and yet imposing a radical transformation of them: "I don't even know if at the start there was already an intention to do *Orlando Furioso*. There was rather the idea of a generic text that would be fairly familiar to the public. I think that *Orlando* wasn't necessarily the text we immediately had in mind."²

The adaptation of Ariosto's text by Sanguineti and Ronconi³ aimed at maintaining the salient features of *Orlando Furioso*, though re-elaborated in space-time according by the constructive device of simultaneity, already detectable in the intrinsic structure of this poem about chivalry – a thousand stories and parallel subplots that unravel around the main plot. The adventures of the story are isolated, selected, addressed in four macro-themes, so that "the spectators, divided into groups, will follow, from among the strands we present, those they prefer"⁴: a grotesque one, an erotic one, an epic one, a fantastic one, etc. If already in Sanguineti and Ronconi's adaptation of the text they broke up its wholeness into a constellation of visual pictures that aimed at an effective autonomy, the construction of the performing space pursued the idea of a complex

¹ From C. Longhi's conversation with E. Sanguineti, in C. Longhi (ed.), *Orlando Furioso: un travestimento ariostesco di Edoardo Sanguineti*, ed. Il Nove, 1996.

² From C. Longhi's conversation with E. Sanguineti, in C. Longhi (a cura di), *Orlando Furioso: un travestimento ariostesco di Edoardo Sanguineti*, ed. Il Nove, 1996.

³ The script was published in a critical edition edited by C. Longhi, Il Nove, in 1996, under the title *Orlando Furioso, Un travestimento Ariostesco*, reconstructing the text, though with several gaps, starting with M. Foschi's script.

⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

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environment in which different narrative paths operated at once, forcing the spectators to choose and to get an almost inevitably partial vision of the work.

The play does not follow the conventional audience-stage duality, developing instead by way of *another* scenic space, in which there is no audience but a rectangular space set off by two identical stages on the two short sides, and two American ones with projectors on the two long sides; in the middle, mobile floats in constant movement and reformulation in space, maneuvered at sight by the technicians and actors, where all the events that have no place on two main stages follow each other. Among the forest of outfitted floats in the shape of horses, pyramids, sea monsters, mazes and hippogriffs, they often move in direct contact with the audience – who are standing, encouraged to constantly mill around the more than 50 actors.

The play, staged for the first time on July 4, 1969 at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, in the inner space of the former church of San Nicolò, soon circulated widely in the piazzas of the major Italian cities – with mixed public success⁵ - until it went abroad, spreading Luca Ronconi's fame definitively on the international theater scene.

In the wake of the furor raised by the show, a televised version was done in 1975 for Italian public TV (RAI), though it was inevitably something *else* due to the loss of the main device of simultaneity.

⁵ In this focus: G. Tumiatì, *Orlando in piazza i milanesi al bar*, «La Stampa», July 23, 1969.