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The New Theater Made in Italy project: a book and a website

by *Cristina Grazioli; Donatella Orecchia; Valentina Valentini; Stefano Scipioni*¹

The New Theater Made in Italy project got under way in 2011 from Valentina Valentini's idea to do a historical-critical-documentary study of the New Italian Theater between 1963 and 2013, to be published in a dual Italian/English version. The project came out in book form (V. Valentini, *Nuovo Teatro Made in Italy*, with contributions by A. Barsotti, C. Grazioli, D. Orecchia, Bulzoni, Rome 2015, which has been followed by the English version entitled *New Theater in Italy*, Routledge 2018) and dialogically with the book, on the website we present here.

The <https://nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com/> website collects and makes available to the readers a judicious selection of documents and reflections on some of the most outstanding figures and spectacles of the New Italian Theater between 1963 and 2013. As a place for studying the materials in the book, the website (partially available also in English) creates its own personality as a space for comparison, an ongoing activity of group research, an interval of reflection open to fruitful additions or subsequent clarifications.

Who we are

The *New Theater in Italy* website was conceived, designed and coordinated by a Scientific Committee (Valentina Valentini, Cristina Grazioli and Donatella Orecchia) and by Stefano Scipioni, webmaster and central planning wizard for the entire job of the past few years. The project has involved a large number of collaborators: in addition to scholars of the performing arts, young researchers, doctoral students, at times students in the last stage of their training careers. It is therefore a group initiative, whose scientific coordinators have tried to make it as consistent as possible, though without leveling out the differences in the individual contributions. In this sense each individual authorial focus is always distinct and recognizable.

Structure

The website has a two-part structure: a section devoted to artists and theatrical companies, with a selection of plays that varies in number and time taken into consideration with respect to a company's production history, and a section of context, broken down into decades, in which we've collected documents useful for understanding their more general artistic and cultural dynamics.

The choice of the plays to focus on has followed historical-critical criteria, according to the thoughts, analyses and premises developed in the book. We've also carried on a dialogue with the authors-artists-directors, in some cases, without considering their indications necessarily binding, convinced, upon substantiated findings, that the criteria of a scholar do not always coincide with the criteria of the artist-author.

Each focus of the first part identifies an artist or a theatrical company and is in turn subdivided into sections:

- a general presentation section of the author (artist/company), with a brief biographical note, a reference bibliography, a complete theatragraphy, and any other material the researcher deems useful for an overall comprehension of the artist's or company's artistic career. The biographical notes, which in no instance claim to be exhaustive, are intended as a means for gaining preliminary knowledge of the artist or company, especially where almost no such means already exist, and must nevertheless be interpreted, in their different slants, as "notes" to be integrated with the other materials (theatragraphy and bibliography);

- a section for each of the spectacles chosen in the company's or artist's career – a container with a consistent but flexible structure that houses the documents useful for a critical-historical reconstruction of the work in question: sources closely linked to the spectacle (posters, debut contexts, artists' writings, reviews, critical essays of the period and subsequent historiography, drawings, sketches, scripts, photos, multimedia) and other documents that, at the researcher's discretion, can be useful for understanding that specific creation (context materials). In some cases the "Note to the documents" set down by the researcher enables readers to understand the focus of the construction process and the methodological and critical reasons for the choices made.

In the five context focuses (the 1960's, 1970's, 1980's, 1990's and 2000's) various types of documents have been included referring to an interdisciplinary context, useful for understanding the dynamics of the related decade.

The web project

The web project came into being from Stefano Scipioni's Masters dissertation "*NUOVO TEATRO MADE IN ITALY un percorso on-line di un archivio teatrale*" ("New Theater Made in Italy, an online trajectory of a theatrical archive") (Sapienza, University of Rome, 2013-2014 academic year, mentor Prof. V. Valentini). After this study phase, we proceeded to design and create a web

¹ Catherine Anne MC Gilvray, *Analisi del processo costruttivo e dello spettacolo Descrizione di una battaglia di G. Barberio Corsetti*. Undergraduate thesis, Sapienza University of Rome, academic year 1989/1990. Supervisors: L. Mariti and V. Valentini

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space to both dialogue with the book and continue on its own independent path. The design was guided by the idea of using web-specific tools for disseminating theatrical documentation. Already during the study phase we found a lack of ad-hoc online tools and procedures for the performing arts sector. So we decided to use a “hybrid” strategy that combined expertise deriving from multiple sectors, from archiving to information technology, communication to coding, cultural heritage to jurisprudence. These strategies helped the project achieve the right balance between the practices and features typical of the Internet (use, sharing, ease of use, ease of retrieval, optimization for multiple platforms, group construction) and the need for scientific research (precision, depth, validation of documents, etc.). Not all the problems have been solved (for example, we haven’t been able to create contractual instruments that take into account new forms of protection such as Creative Commons and necessary authorial protections), seeing in this the need for new projects that start up from the results of this first experiment, to bridge the gap created between the theater sector and the internet, especially in the fields of research, study and analysis, considering the web as a resource.

A work in progress

The New Theater in Italy website is a work in progress as regards both content, which will continue to be implemented with the inclusion of Focuses devoted to other artists and plays, and the issues it will address, which will have to take account of the rapid changes that the Web environment is subject to.