

Today, a very sad day.

MOEDER di Peeping Tom al Festival Aperto

Teatro Ariosto di Reggio Emilia, 15 ottobre 2016

We are at a funeral, someone hangs family paintings, a Virgin Mary hangs on the right side of the set design. A cleaning lady freezes at the center of the room, watching us. "Today is a very sad day." You hear the sound of water put into effect by the gestures of a performer. While a woman is about to give birth, the operating room (a central window room, located in the middle of the scene) is transformed into a recording studio in which, while a little girl is born, her grandfather begins to play the tuba, the grandmother follows the rhythm by tearing firmly a piece of cloth and the screams of the parturient become *Cry Baby* by Janis Joplin. The midwife with bloody gloves remains alone on stage: she touches the pubis, bleeds between the legs, it seems that the small outgrowth of her belly wants to come out with all his force, a force that bends, breaks her, and her arms appear heavy, lifeless, hanging from the body and surrendered to gravity until almost touching the ground. The performer twists the desperate face, melnacolic, sad, painful, and confused as the one of the spectator, that is immersed in a disambiguating environment, which acquires new meanings regarding the words and gestures of the performers. We are in a museum, in a waiting room of the maternity ward of a hospital, in a bourgeois boudoir full of family pictures on the wall ...

And I could go on for hours, because to tell Moeder (mother) of Peeping Tom, the Italian Premiere at the Teatro Ariosto in Reggio Emilia, a simple review is not enough. Where are we? We are in a grotesque world, ominous, oppressive, rending. But the complexity and strength of this work is not only the result of the union of various artistic languages (music, theater, dance, set design), typical for the shows of the Belgian company, is especially the expressive power of the performers: the audience laughs with them, cry with them, despairs with them, takes possession of their pain. Because, somehow, talking about family and deepening into parental figures, means wanting to dig deep inside each one of us, touching empathic strings, that are very intimate and common to all of us. If you have a family or not doesn't make a difference, we'll still be forged from a show like that, because even the absence transforms us, shapes us, because we are the result of an embrace, shaped by limits, taboos, and social mechanisms .

Gabriela Carrizo (choreographer and director) and Franck Chartier (in this case the artistic assistant) continue a trilogy that began in 2014 with Vader (father) and that should be completed in 2018 with Kinderen (children), focusing on the family and dwelling in this second stage, the mother figure. We are faced with the tragic consequences of pregnancies, of involuntary r voluntary abortions, single men widowed twice, human images which are trying to get out of a frame, seven year old girls locked into a stuffy incubator, girls with wrinkles and with long gray hair laying in a drawer / refrigerator.

The sound of the water is recurrent and reminds us of the tears of a child, a mother, a father, the amniotic fluid in which a half-naked performer slips actively on stage, the liquid in which we grow untouched, immune to the daily ugliness, protected by the warmth of the maternal womb. Water is a metaphor for percolation, of letting go, of alienation, of abandonment, of loss. As if to say that the fugacity of life prevails in the daily relations? That pregnancy has a dual connotation? That a woman frees herself from pain only through death? And is it in this fluid scenario that the loss is ironically emphasized by a shabby coffee machine, that before breaking and before unnecessarily receiving a cardiac massage, gives birth to a woman, connected to a tube / umbilical cord, that instead of crying sings "I'm a Fool to Want You" by Billie Holiday.

I looked at those deformed, clumsy, compulsive, disjointed, bouncing, funny, broken, funeral, destitute bodies, and tried to patch up the randomness of a plot that twists in the concreteness of the scenic architecture. Moeder is an extreme performance, devastating, full of hyper-realism, of deconstruction, construction, that wants to tell a story about the mother figure, the nightmares and desires of society, of the individual, the weight that the life can have and the weight that death can have; it wants to show mothers, that are exposed as in a museum, mothers torn by indecision, mothers that are frightened from being mothers, mothers who sing (scream) up to scratch the throat, human mothers, mothers who do not have peace. Peeping Tom makes our darkness "shine", makes our eyes hurt, makes you think that "today is a very sad day", sheds light on the fragility of a framed human heart, wounded, bleeding, patched and nailed onto a wall.

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