

## Age of Wolves...

By Gigi Cristoforetti

*Age of axes, age of swords  
The shields split  
Age of winds, age of wolves  
Before the world falls to pieces*

*The wolf feeds on life  
Bloodies the house of the gods  
The sun's light fades  
Nature is all enemy...*

*And you, are you listening, or what?*

**A white *chapiteau* in the garden of an eighteenth-century villa, just off an avenue still exhibiting the rubble of recent transformation. Inside, in the rehearsal halls, piles of ordinary objects and pieces of clothing scattered along the walls that drip with condensation from the freezing weather. The main hall, enormous but comforting and welcoming as only a *chapiteau* can be. The dressing rooms, construction site bungalows less impersonal every day, are filled with the energy of twenty youths whose origins and languages are lost among all the different histories. In other words, a theatre, rather particular, but a theatre none the less.**

*The fire advances with branches crackling  
It shines on the swords of battling gods  
Mountains precipitate,  
Men beat the path of death  
The heavens fall...*

**There's a story told in this *chapiteau*, and it is *Il colore bianco*, a text that Edoardo Albinati has taken from ancient Nordic myths, archaic and so distant from us...  
But according to Giorgio Barberio Corsetti, they are not so difficult to approach.**

G.B.C.: "Myths in themselves are stories. Sometimes elementary stories, originating because they narrate something else within the story. And it is the material from which our way of deciphering the world, both external and internal, is formed.

Gods and goddesses have to do with us, with the birth of our culture and language. We should approach this symbolic world in a very simple way, as though it were part of our daily life.

'Symbolic' does not mean that it hides an indecipherable meaning. Rather, it expresses the possibility of uniting a world hidden within us with another world which is unreal. These stories are windows on the unconscious, the sacred, the unknown. They are myths, at the same time dark and full of life, joyous, even comic, and also violent, extremely violent. The theme involves immensities, with a disturbed equilibrium, anomalous stories and characters.

There is no standard, nor that balanced relationship with nature typical of the Greek world. Here the balance is precarious and requires continuous effort and enterprise. Maintaining harmony is a struggle, and in the end the forces of disorder and chaos win and the gods are defeated”.

**It is impossible not to ask oneself to what extent this show, with the “immensity” of themes, with its dwarves and gods, giants and heroes, is able to relate to these dramatic times in our society. The theatre does not hide from this situation, but takes an active role in trying to clarify continuously redefined scenarios on a social, economic and even artistic level.**

**The most important point is simple: it makes less and less sense to talk about theatre, dance or performance as pure languages or as languages linked to a national character. Audiences aren’t interested in it as it doesn’t express real cultural boundaries. And there is no sense in imagining the show as an autonomous niche, when a pressing need is to bring out “alternative” kinds of social thought, freedom and comparison that go beyond a winning but unconvincing logic. *Il colore bianco* completes the three-year program of Torinodanza in different styles and languages, and it does so by bringing together a company of six dancers, five actors, eight acrobats and two musicians, all coming from different countries and continents. They are directed by an Italian director and Belgian choreographer of African origins.**

G.B.C.: “As far as I’m concerned, the theatre does not have the job of affirming what is right or wrong. Or at least, that’s not what I know how to do. I work within the society, a bit like a Renaissance painter at court. In my work, I am a filter, a sponge. I fill myself with a series of stories and images of what I and the people I work with feel. And I give back something distilled. I try to discover in this material the dreams, if you will, in opposition to a world tending to sleep. I look for a reawakening, a space for the hidden components that are perhaps asleep in us.

In *Argonautiche*, my previous show, there was a very precise image, that golden glow of the sacrificed ram, a sort of small light found in the dark depths of the earth, or in us. And then there was the return to an exhausted land, like our Europe today, in which the sense of sacrifice is lost. As though the only answer, as Jason tells Orpheus, is the poet’s lyric. In a certain sense, it’s true: not the lyric itself, but the tempo, the tempo freed from other dimensions that imprison us. Thus, even the tempo of a show, which is a window on another world belonging to us”.

*The wolf has slipped from its bonds  
And gallops over the world!*

*And you, are you still listening to me?*

Fatou Traoré: “With this show, we find ourselves cast in a type of micro-society, with the coming together of different people, different styles and extremely strong characters. Something which is very contemporary, representing the society around us. At the same time, we must identify ourselves with something precise. An actor is an actor, and the same goes for a dancer or circus performer, but there must be the ability to open up in order to form a precise world and not just confusion.

The coming together is also terrible – the *métissage* can lead to the loss of meaning. I believe in the strength of every culture, art and expression, and it isn’t only because they meet that a common ground must be found. The theme is extremely important because we find ourselves at the height of a tendency for forced encounters that we can’t avoid. Still, we must continue to ask ourselves what these encounters do to us. What do they give us and what do they take away? In this way our work is a perfect metaphor for social problems”.

## **Well then, what is the projection at an artistic level of this social metaphor?**

F.T.: “We shouldn’t be afraid of each other. At the beginning, even an interpreter like Filippo Timi was terrified by the dimension of dance, and he felt frustrated by the feeling of lacking the expressive language. We are faced with our limits here. I want everyone to hold on to their own strength and technique, but be able to relate to each other – a way of meeting that enriches, and that counts as much on a social level as on an artistic or personal level. I’m not interested in camouflage, on the basis of which everyone dances, but the ability to fit in and work together in different directions each time.

The encounter with Giorgio is equally intense, and requires the ability to combine two levels of expression: his, which is extremely concrete, and mine, more impressionistic”.

## **We have mentioned the ability to narrate, which is particular to theatre. Now let’s talk about dance in that open, “impure” sense that we find in this show.**

G.B.C.: “I have to reason, like the interpreters too, with choreography in mind. In certain moments, without losing the wealth of the narrative meaning, everything must lead towards a world of movement, organized according to musical, and not psychological, tempos. The space must be conceived for bodies and movement.

We know, however, that what’s important is that there mustn’t be ‘the’ choreographic or acrobatic moment, but an integration that brings the essence of dance or acrobatics to the whole story”.

F.T.: “In this case, I’m not interested in expressing the style of Fatou Traoré and making the interpreters equal in order to find a precise feature, as in traditional choreography. Instead, it’s a question of organizing the expressive possibilities of each person within the three dimensions: acting, dancing and acrobatics. If I had had to design a choreography, I would have chosen a corps de ballet. Our aim was different, and now I can’t do without the intrinsic characteristics of these interpreters. Lets take Runge Kiluangi and look at his history. He comes from East Germany, which no longer exists, and he doesn’t know who his mother and father are, although he is clearly half European and half African. It’s as though he emerged from nothing, and he only approached art when he was twenty years old. Ben Haji is Moroccan, and comes from the hip-hop scene. Claire Laureau is French, and has a great cultural background, while Peter Jasko and Andrej Petrovic are Slovaks, and studied traditional dance, both classical and contemporary. But it creates a feeling of vertigo to work on diversity, on the possibility that each person finds his expressive space, on the necessity for everyone to give his body and history to such enormous characters and particular stories as those in *Il colore bianco*”.

*Can you engrave?*

*Can you interpret?*

*Can you paint?*

*Can you rehearse?*

*Can you pray?*

**From the substance of these talks, we can easily identify the artistic core of such an unusual and radical operation, carried out with a real need to confront strong themes of modernity, but also to talk about the sense of bringing different styles and languages together today.**

**And it’s the body, that body charged with personal and collective history, able to narrate infinite dimensions with the hyper-realistic virtuosity of the circus, or with the abstract immediacy of dance. A body that is not standardized and not necessarily beautiful, but**

**charged with an emotion and a personality that must cross the limits of proper language in order to have the truth. A truth, one of many.**

G.B.C. “Everyone carries with him a way of seeing the body. In one way, we know that there’s a rather generalized culture of movement in which many different codes are mixed, from street dancing to classical dance. However, there are also elements that are specific. It depends on how you have breathed and lived, on what you see in your eyes, on the way people who have surrounded you move, on everything you have learnt, if you have lived in the country or the mountains or the city. And then if it was cold or hot...There’s a memory of the body that is extremely rich, an imagination of the body, and also of movement. To these elements, partly cultural and partly genetic, something more specific is combined – the particular quality of movement of each of us, as inimitable as the colour of one’s eyes or the tone of one’s voice. All of this is richness: the range of colours and tones in a group of interpreters enriches the show in an incredible way. The job of Fatou and myself is also to understand the essence of each person and to compose, starting with this”.

*The sky will be burnt  
And so the earth and all the world  
And all the gods will be dead  
Only then will a new world  
Emerge from the sea...*

(The five quotations in italics have been taken from the script, dated January 6, 2006, of *Il colore bianco*, edited by Edoardo Albinati.)