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“Well-Staged Syllables”:
From Classical to Early Modern English Metres
in Drama

Edited by Silvia Bigliuzzi

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GHERARDO UGOLINI*

Orestes the Gunslinger and the Flying Bacchae. Ancient Theatre Festival - Syracuse 2021

Abstract

For the fifty-sixth season of the Ancient Theatre Festival at Syracuse (3 July-21 August 2021) three Greek tragedies were staged. In the first place, *The Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides* by Aeschylus (the second and third parts of the *Oresteia*) were played as a single performance of the translation by Walter Lapini, directed by Davide Livermore. The mythical history of the house of Atreus is projected into a twentieth-century context, with a sometimes disproportionate use of special effects which, although they have an undoubted emotional impact on the spectators, are often unnecessary and adopted simply for their own sake, with little reference to the sense of Aeschylus' plays. The stagecraft of the *Bacchae*, on the other hand, is very different and much more successful. This production of the translation by Guido Paduano, directed by the Catalan Carlos Padrissa with his company Fura Dels Baus, however 'extreme' its scenographic choices may seem (flying Bacchae supported by a crane, Dionysus played by a woman) they always appear to be well integrated into the dramaturgical structure and responding to an intelligent interpretation of Euripides' text.

KEYWORDS: Aeschylus; Euripides; Syracuse; Greek tragedy; Davide Livermore; Carlus Padrissa

After almost two years' interruption the Greek theatre at Syracuse opened its gates once more in July-August 2021 for the fifty-sixth season of performances of classical drama. Notwithstanding the difficulties and limitations imposed by the state of emergency (seating capacity of the cavea reduced by 50%, audience masks compulsory, social distancing on the terraces), the *Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico* (I.N.D.A.) managed to provide an excellent programme including a variety of plays among which were three Greek tragedies: *The Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides* by Aeschylus, the second and third parts of the *Oresteia*, played as a single performance directed by Davide Livermore (the first play in the trilogy, *Agamemnon*, will be part of the 2022 programme) and Euripides' *Bacchae* directed by Carlus Padrissa.

The choice of playing the *Libation Bearers* and the *Eumenides* together was not fortuitous but, indeed looks back at illustrious historical precedent. Exactly

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a hundred years ago, in 1921, the I.N.D.A. started up again after a long interval of seven years caused by the Great War and the ‘Spanish’ flu epidemic with the staging of these self-same plays by Aeschylus. A multimedia exhibition, entitled *Oresteia: The Second Act*, at the *Palazzo Greco*, the headquarters of the *Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico*, was one of the features of the season this year. Material from the archives, documents and photographs bore witness to the famous performance of 1921 which was directed by Ettore Romagnoli, with scenery and costumes by Duilio Cambellotti and music and choruses by Giuseppe Mulè.¹

A century after this, the spectators who took their places on the terraces of the Greek Theatre to watch Davide Livermore’s staging, based on Walter Lapini’s fluent translation, were to see a performance which was very different from that of 1921. Right from the beginning a glance at the scenography, before the play started, would show them that the production was anything but conventional. Scattered upon the great circular orchestra space were objects having little or nothing to do with the situation of ancient Greece: a couple of pianos, a harp, an armchair and a sofa, a side table with a bottle of champagne and two glasses on it, a gramophone, the wreckage of a cart beneath a broken-down bridge. These represent an “archive of memories”, a scenic device which had already been adopted by Livermore for his previous production of Euripides’ *Helen* in 2019 (Ugolini 2019). In that scenography the objects were floating in an enormous pool of water. Here they are covered in snow, as if to suggest a landscape which has been in hibernation for a long time.² A circular dais, the memorial stone of Agamemnon’s tomb, towers at centre stage. In the background can be seen the gate to the city of Argos, and next to it a large technological sphere is spinning, perhaps a symbol of the earth, or of the whole universe, or even of Zeus, to confirm the eternity of the myth.³

Needless to say, that the entire stage décor is easily discernible as being that

¹ The exhibition catalogue is edited by Marina Valensise (2021).

² The director’s intention was to reconstruct “a power system where Agamemnon’s shade permeates the scene with clearly discernible devastation” thus creating “a cold, frozen world, covered by snow and ice” (Livermore 2021, 20).

³ *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides* by Aeschylus, director Davide Livermore, Italian translation Walter Lapini, scenic project Davide Livermore, costumes Gianluca Falaschi, music Andrea Chenna, lighting Antonio Castro, assistant director Sax Nicosia, stage director Alberto Giolitti, Video design: D-Wok. Cast: Giuseppe Sartori (Orestes), Spyros Chamilos (Pylades), Anna Della Rosa (Electra), Gaia Aprea, Alice Girolдини, Valentina Virando, Chiara Osella, Graziana Palazzo, Silvia Piccollo (libation bearers), Sax Nicosia (ghost of Agamemnon), Laura Marinoni (Clytemnestra), Maria Grazia Solano (Cylissa), Stefano Santospago (Aegystus), Maria Laila Fernandez, Marcello Gravina, Turi Moricca (Furies), Gabriele Crisafulli, Manfredi Gimigliano, Lorenzo Iacuzio, Roberto Marra, Francesca Piccolo (watchmen); Maria Grazia Solano (Pythia), Giancarlo Giudica Cordiglia (Apollo), Laila Maria Fernandez, Marcello Gravina, Turi Moricca (Eumenides), Laura Marinoni (ghost of Clytemnestra), Federica Cinque (statue of Athena), Olivia Manescalchi (Athena). First performance: Syracuse, Greek Theatre, July 3th 2021.

of Davide Livermore, the distinguished opera director, who has always been known as an advocate and proponent of genre mixing and futuristic experimenting. Clearly, if the production of a Greek tragedy is entrusted to the originality of an artist of this calibre, in his hands the play will become a tragedy by Livermore, with all the recodifying of language and meaning that this entails. In any case, this is the itinerary followed persistently and courageously – especially in the last few years – by the I.N.D.A.: the production of shows that combine philological faithfulness (whatever this may mean) with the need to render Greek tragedy pertinent to contemporary society. As this is a production by Livermore, his unique stylistic signature cannot be neglected: that is, of course, the use of images projected on the backcloth which interact with the action on stage. Here the images are those which appear one by one on the spinning globe: images of sea, fire, earth, blood, solar explosions, arid, snow-covered landscapes, phantasms of the past demanding revenge and rousing terror.

Even before the play begins, a recorded voice utters lines in ancient Greek and in Italian that capture the ear of the spectator in the manner of a refrain. For example, “Outrage calls to outrage” and similar aphorisms, to suggest the legendary interpretation of Aeschylus’ trilogy as an endless sequence of vengeance. In the polis of Argos, motionless under a mantle of snow for years, soldiers in uniform and armed with rifles swagger about: they are the guards posted by the “double tyranny” of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (cf. *Choeph.* 973: τὴν διπλὴν τυραννίδα) who have usurped power. Orestes (Giuseppe Sartori) and Pylades (Spyros Chamilos), revolvers in hand, manage to get to Agamemnon’s



Fig. 1: Electra (Anna Della Rosa) and Orestes (Giuseppe Sartori) with the libation bearers in front of Agamemnon’s tomb. Photo Ballarino/AFI Siracusa.

tomb without being seen. Here a modification on the part of the direction – to tell the truth, not a very convincing one – sees Orestes lay on his father's tomb as a votive offering not a lock of his blond hair but a gilded bullet, symbol of death and vengeance, and it will be because of this that the brother and sister will recognise one another (Fig. 1).

The ritual of the libation bearers, the women who pour their offerings on to the tomb, is carried out under the watchful and threatening vigilance of the guards of Aegisthus. While they are placing flowers on the grave, the funeral lament is chanted, or rather, perhaps, howled or wailed, with too little moderation. Much more successful is the prayer that Electra (Anna Della Rosa) addresses to Zeus, which is accompanied by sacred music. The *coup de théâtre* is the apparition inside the immense spinning sphere of Agamemnon's effigy, a mask disfigured by suffering, a ghost demanding revenge and justice for the assassination he had endured.

Clytemnestra (Laura Marinoni) is a *femme fatale*, heavily made-up and sexy, sheathed in a ball-gown covered in sequins and spangles, wearing a blonde wig and sunglasses. She gets out of a car from the forties (to be exact, a 1949 Lancia Aprilia), pouring herself large and frequent glasses of wine, and, sitting on the sofa (almost as if she were a patient of Dr Freud's), she recounts her dream of the serpent, a traditional theme in the saga of the House of Atreus from Stesichorus onwards. When he is in front of his mother Orestes loses most of his gun-slinging bravado: when he tells her about his feigned death he often stumbles over his words, stammering and becoming tongue-tied (Fig. 2). Giuseppe Sartori is really skilful in his portrayal of this postmodern Orestes, full of tics and frustrations, neurotic and insecure, weak and ailing even before the Erinyes get hold of him. The matricide is committed in a way which is very different from the mythical tradition and the Classical tragic imaginary. Here the son does not plunge his sword into his mother's breast, but the execution is at first carried out in a sort of parody of a duel of the Far West: the first to fire is Clytemnestra who, however, misses the target (her son, Orestes), because the pistol misfires. At this point Orestes murders her by convincing her to drink a glass of champagne containing a capsule of poison, something that Clytemnestra accepts without much opposition so that the matricide could almost seem a suicide. Once his mother is dead, Orestes cannot contain his tears. Here we witness an example of another of Livermore's distinctive traits: the mixing of genres, when he passes from tragedy to melodrama, from musical to operetta in the twinkling of an eye. Again, Pylades is much less silent than he is in Aeschylus' text. It is he after all who shoots down Aegisthus (Stefano Santospago), portrayed as an underworld boss, a predatory macho accompanied by a half-naked lover. He soon gets rid of her with no remorse, spraying her with bullets, and then goes on to shamelessly grope the handmaidens in the palace of Argos.



Fig. 2: Orestes (Giuseppe Sartori) and Clytemnestra (Laura Marinoni). Photo Carnera/AFI Siracusa.

There are only three Erinyes, dressed, contrary to all expectation, in garish robes of glittering gold lame (clearly linking them with Clytemnestra's gown): androgynous vamps armed with knives waiting to avenge Clytemnestra's death by cutting her son's throat. But Orestes flees to Delphi (Orestes' flight is staged by means of a *tapis roulant* which emerges from Agamemnon's tomb). And at this point the performance of the *Libation Bearers* merges with that of the *Eumenides*. This play too undergoes a typically 'Livermorean' revision. The political dimension of the play is completely excluded. It is the struggle on the plane of the emotions that interests Livermore. Apollo (Giancarlo Judica Cordiglia) in a white tuxedo and bowtie and a vague, absent-minded air, reroutes his protégé towards Athens. Here he is received by the goddess Athene, on this occasion doubled into two separate characters: one (Federica Cinque) who interprets the statue embraced by the suppliant Orestes, and the other (Olivia Manescalchi) the actual goddess who, seated at a huge wooden writing-desk, oversees the procedure of the trial and pronounces the sentence of absolution.

While the staging of the *Libation Bearers* may be considered admirable from many points of view (apart from the insistence on the Far West gun-slinging which is done to death and ends up as appearing more grotesque than anything else), the *Eumenides* seemed less successful. There remains little or nothing of Aeschylus' intensity in celebrating the problematic passage from the logic of vengeance to the justice of the tribunal. And the devices adopted by Livermore in this case lack the necessary "abrasiveness". The "shock" factor is simply not

there, or at least not sufficiently. Just to take one example, the idea of portraying the judges of the Areopagus as cardboard dummies which are set on fire straight after the votes are cast remains a total mystery (perhaps leading back to Luca Ronconi's 1972 *Oresteia* where the Areopagus judges were faceless puppets). Or perhaps the director wanted to underline with this idea the essential uselessness of human judges, seeing that in Aeschylus' play all the procedures – the founding of the Areopagus, the choice of judges, the establishment of voting rules, the reading of the verdict and the proclamation of absolution – are really the work of the goddess Athene. This would in fact appear to be the interpretative key to the whole production, bearing in mind what the director himself has written:

Today, in a post-pandemic world, we bear the responsibility of soundly denouncing the limitations and the painful shortcomings of a democratic system. In the *Eumenides* we can comprehend its whole nature since the act upon which it is based is the absolution of an assassin by a judge, Athene, and an advocate, Apollo, who by their very divine nature, signify a disparity in justice which is virtually criminal (Livermore 2021, 20).⁴

The conclusion, too, of this production of the *Eumenides* is overly – and pointlessly – hyperbolic, to little effect. Orestes goes up into a pulpit and harangues a vast imaginary crowd. And while the notes of David Bowie's *Heroes* are resounding through the theatre, all the protagonists of the play, dead and alive, come back on to the stage and join in a cheerful song. In this rhetorically overwhelming final scene, which seems very like a musical, artificial polystyrene snow is sprayed on the stage and the huge sphere displays a series of images of recent Italian news from the past thirty years or so. Among these are the wreck of the Costa Concordia, which sank off the Isola del Giglio, Moro's dead body in the boot of the Renault 4, the Capaci massacre, Peppino Impastato, the violence at the Genoa G8 and the collapse of the Ponte Morandi. So many events in Italian – and not only Italian – history that still call for vengeance and/or justice. But is this really the way to bring Aeschylean tragedy up to date?

The production of Euripides' *Bacchae* was much more successful. The director, Carlus Padrissa, founder and life-force of the Catalan theatre company La Fura dels Baus, is already renowned for his shows which take their inspiration from circus acrobatic techniques. The staging of this production was instinctual and thrilling, aiming as it did to totally involve and alarm the spectators, starting

⁴ “Oggi, in un mondo, quello post-pandemico, abbiamo la responsabilità di denunciare sempre a grande forza i limiti e la dolorosa imperfezione di un sistema democratico; in *Eumenidi* ne comprendiamo tutta la natura, poiché l'atto fondativo di essa è l'assoluzione di un assassino da parte di un giudice, Atena, e di un avvocato, Apollo, che per la loro stessa natura divina determinano una disparità di giudizio al limite dell'iniquo”.

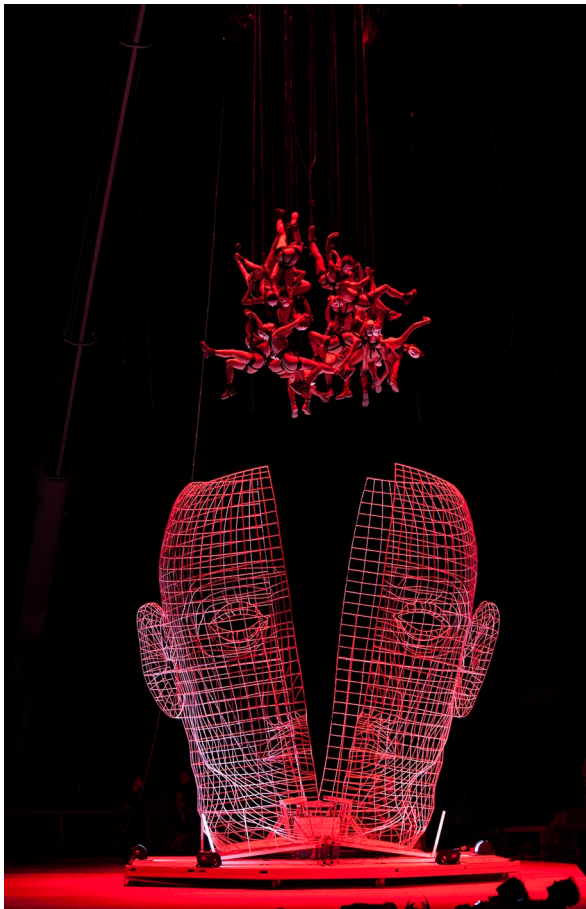
with the metropolitan scenography constructed from metal and concrete scattered with detritus from industrial manufacture.⁵ Since this was the basic concept upon which the dramaturgical work was founded, there can be no doubt that Euripides' *Bacchae* was the very tragedy to work on. And the result is indeed exceptional: a real spectacle, a show that enfolds and enthralls the spectator from first to last and, not least, never betrays its obligation to Euripides' text (thanks, too, to Guido Paduano's crystalline translation) but adapts it to the context of a scenography which is to the highest degree modern and technologised.

In the past, the *Bacchae* has enjoyed several memorable editions at the Greek Theatre of Syracuse, which have since become the object of study and research. The 1922 *Bacchae*, translated and staged by Ettore Romagnoli; Guido Salvini's 1950 production with Vittorio Gassman playing Dionysus; the presentation by Giancarlo Sbragia where Michele Placido was the protagonist. And then again, the *Bacchae* by Walter Pagliaro (1998), by Luca Ronconi in 2002, in Maria Grazia Ciani's translation, and the one by Antonio Calenda, translated by Giorgio Ieranò (2012). Padrissa's version is certainly as good as these and in many ways better.

The real, big surprise that the Catalan director has for us is that of literally making the Bacchae fly. Not all of them, however. As we know, in Euripides' play there are, on the one hand, the eastern Bacchae, the chorus, who have followed Dionysus from Lydia and who are devotees of his doctrines and his mystic rituals, and on the other there are the Theban women who become possessed by the god himself with the aim of causing chaos in the city of Thebes and setting in motion his plan of bloody revenge against those who deny his divine

⁵ *Bacchae* by Euripides, director Carlus Padrissa (La Fura dels Baus), Italian translation Guido Paduano, Choreography and assistant director Mireia Romero Miralles, scenic project and music Carlus Padrissa, costumes and assistant stage designer Tamara Joksimovic, assistant director Emiliano Bronzino, choir direction Simonetta Cartia, assistant director Maria Josè Revert, lighting Carlus Padrissa. Cast: Lucia Lavia (Dionysus); Stefano Santospago (Cadmus); Antonello Fassari (Tiresias); Ivan Graziano (Pentheus); Spyros Chamilos, Francesca Piccolo (first messenger); Antonio Bandiera (second messenger); Linda Gennari (Agave); Simonetta Cartia, Elena Polic Greco (conductors of chorus); Rosy Bonfiglio, Ilaria Genatiempo, Lorenzo Grilli, Cecilia Guzzardi, Dorian La Fauci, Viola Marietti, Katia Mirabella, Giulia Valentini (chorus of bacchae); Lorenzo Grilli, Viola Marietti, Giulia Valentini (flying chorus of bacchae); Giulia Acquasana, Livia Allegri, Virginia Bianco, Guido Bison, Victoria Blondeau, Vanda Bovo, Valentina Brancale, Spyros Chamilos, Serena Chiavetta, Valentina Corrao, Gabriele Crisafulli, Rosario D'Aniello, Simona De Sarno, Matteo Dicannavo, Tancredi Di Marco, Gabriele Enrico, Carolina Eusebiotti, Manuel Fichera, Caterina Fontana, Manfredi Gimigliano, Althea Maria Luana Iorio, Matteo Magatti, Alessandro Mannini, Roberto Marra, Francesca Piccolo, Edoardo Pipitone, Rosaria Salvatico, Jacopo Sarotti, Francesca Trianni, Gloria Trinci, Damiano Venuto, Gaia Viscuso (flying chorus); Eleonora Bernazza, Sebastiano Caruso. Gaia Cozzolino, Enrica Graziano, Domenico Lamparelli, Federica Leuci, Emilio Lumastro, Carlotta Maria Messina, Maria Chiara Signorello, Flavia Testa (chorus of citizens). First performance: Syracuse, Greek Theatre, July 4 2021.

origins. In Padrissa's staging, too, there are two separate choruses of Bacchae, played by the students of the Accademia d'Arte del Dramma Antico (the Academy of the Art of Ancient Drama). The first do not fly but leap about in a frenzy all over the theatre. To start with they appear at the top of the terraces, then gradually come down the corridors, continuing their frantic dance among the spectators. The group is composed of both men and women (the transversality of both gender and social class is a decisive feature of Dionysiac religion), wearing leather shorts, biker boots and LED spotlights hanging round their necks, all pounding wildly on drums and tambourines of various dimensions and swaying and writhing to the infernal rhythms of a musical ambience made up of imprecations and laments, groans of pain and whimpers of pleasure. Strangely they do not wave thyrsi. In conclusion they exhibit posters and banners (on the largest we can see "*Todos somos Baco*", "We all are Bacchus"; on others are slogans such as "*Si violan mujeres violamos sus leyes*", "If they rape women, we violate their laws" or also, in English, "My body, my choice"): the impression of the whole is that of a political demo, a huge protest rally. This chorus performs its frenetic



movements on half of the orchestra which has been blackened and upon which Dionysus' genealogical tree gradually appears.

Instead, the other chorus of Bacchae, the possessed, raving Theban women who in Euripides' play do not appear on-stage but whose exploits are recounted indirectly by means of long descriptions on the part of messengers (Eur. *Bacch.* 676-774 and 1044-152), on this occasion fly acrobatically through the air thus becoming a "suspended chorus" (Fig. 3). And this is not simply a metaphor, but actual fact. Padrissa's stage machine is a crane

Fig. 3: Flying chorus of Bacchae.
Photo Ballarino/AFI Siracusa.

from whose jib ropes and pulleys of different sizes are hanging. Dionysus' devotees, wearing suitable safety harnesses, are lifted and suspended in the air where they perform a series of suggestive and truly spectacular dance moves: an orgiastic ritual carried out in the air and that leaves the audience open-mouthed. The sensation of weightlessness and liberation fully corresponds to the fulfilling of that prodigious 'miracle' that the Dionysian religion contemplated in its cults and rites. The 'flying' performance also allows itself the possibility of visualizing what in Euripides' play is evoked many times but only in words: the mystery of Dionysus' birth, the foetus expelled from Semele's womb at the moment of her copulation with Zeus, and its consequent fulmination and regeneration by the same father of the gods of Olympus. At centre-stage loom two colossal metal constructions. One is a human figure with two bull horns on its head, an evident portrayal of Dionysus who was able to take on animal shapes, especially to transform himself into a bull. The other is an enormous male head, possibly a reference to Pentheus and his rationalism. The head proves to be the royal palace of Thebes, but at the same time it is a cage, a prison, that opens and closes when necessary. With these objects the staging emphasizes right from the beginning the contrast between Pentheus and Dionysus, the two protagonists of the play, two cousins who are vying for power over the city of Thebes.

In the role of Dionysus, we have a female actor, the excellent Lucia Lavia (Fig.4). Needless to say, the choice is perfectly compatible with the transgender and androgynous dimension the god possesses in the myth. This is indeed not the first time during the history of the play's staging that the director goes for such an option. A famous precedent is that of Ingmar Bergman with his direction of *Backanterna* by the composer Daniel Boertz (Stockholm 1991). With her blonde curls and her seductive appearance, and with an extra-large metal thyrsus in her hand, this female Dionysus prowls around the orchestra space sometimes rolling on the floor, sometimes hopping and skipping; she alternates speech with a sort of rhythmic speech-chanting. Her persona is ambiguously seductive and pitiless at the same time, dominated by an irrepressible animal ferocity. It vividly sums up in the best way possible the very polarity that scholars have recognised from time immemorial as typical of the 'hybrid' god Dionysus: male/female, human/divine, civilised/wild (Fusillo 2006). While the Dionysus of Euripides evinces for the whole of the dramatic action a detached and ironic gentleness deriving from his awareness of his divine superiority, Parrissa's Dionysus is constantly a disturbed and disturbing troublemaker, who seems to correspond to the delirious image that in Euripides' text is Pentheus' idea of the god. (cf. Matelli 2021).



Fig. 4: Dionysus (Lucia Lavia). Photo Ballarino/AFI Siracusa.

Carlus Padrissa, in a note published in the programme of the show, affirms that he wanted to pay homage to the Mexican women who between the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 took to the streets in protest against macho power, sexual abuse and the increase of femicide, burning flags, dancing half-naked and smashing shopwindows (Padrissa 2021, 20). But his production goes beyond a simple feminist reading and it is indeed possible to say that the show “becomes an ikon of a wider-ranging example of freedom as it breaks through gender distinctions” (Barone 2021).⁶ The Theban women fleeing to the slopes of Mount Cithaeron in the throes of divine possession, who first cause honey, milk and wine to flow from the earth and then throw themselves savagely upon the animals, hack them to death and devour their raw flesh, are women of today rebelling against male domination and patriarchal laws. As Tamara Jocsimovic, assistant scenographer and costume manager, writes:

Our Bacchae are therefore all those people who are still fighting today to affirm their personal freedom, in every aspect of life. To give status to liberty of expression and cultivate that degree of Dionysus that each of us has within themselves (Jocsimovic 2021, 32).⁷

Old Cadmus (Stefano Santospago) is a symbol of the attachment to the family traditions and the royal dynasty. Pentheus’ grandfather is full of nostalgic feeling, mourning his dead wife Harmonia as he sings *La stagione dell’amore*

⁶ “Si fa icona di un’istanza allargata di libertà infrangendo le distinzioni di genere”.

⁷ “Le nostre Baccanti sono perciò tutte quelle persone che ancora oggi combattono per affermare le proprie libertà, in tutti gli aspetti della vita. Per dare statuto alla libertà di espressione e coltivare quel tanto di Dioniso che ognuno di noi ha dentro di sé”.

(*The Season of Love*) by the singer and songwriter Franco Battiato (in homage to the Sicilian artist who died in May 2021). Tiresias (Antonella Fassari), the blind prophet who, using rationalistic arguments, explains to Pentheus and to the audience the importance of Dionysus and the necessity of receiving him in the city, moves about the stage on a strange contraption in the shape of a metal mask (a Silenus, so a Dionysian figure) which swerves all over the place. The Bacchic costume of both the elderly Theban characters, with the consequent sense of rejuvenation they experience and the tragicomic effect that is the result of this is not adequately exploited, whereas it could have constituted a valuable expedient of the show.

And then of course there is King Pentheus (Ivan Graziano), clad in a long robe, almost like that of a Renaissance prince, his long hair gathered into a plait (here too there is a nod to androgyny). Padrissa's Pentheus does not bear arms and is not at all fearsome. Right from the start we understand that he is a weakling, a neurotic, destined to succumb. Dionysus seduces him and manipulates him just as he pleases, until the final catastrophe of the *sparagmòs* on Mount Cithaeron, recounted by the messenger (Antonio Bandiera). The scene of Agave (Linda Gennari), at the end of the play, has no recourse to special effects, but the formality of its traditionalism makes the anguish convincing.

Padrissa's direction, physical, contagious, manages to rewrite the *Bacchae* of Euripides in an original key, without in any way betraying the 5th century BCE Greek original. Faithful to his own dramaturgical approach and to his own theatrical language he has made of it a 'furero' tragedy, that sweeps from heaven to earth, from men to gods and back again, that brings together ancient disquiet and modern technology, engaging the audience and reviving the surprise, the amazement that the citizens of Athens certainly felt when they saw the first performance of the play at the end of the 5th century.

Translation by Susan Payne

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