

Emanuele Tirelli (ed.), *Voglio fare l'attore. Vita e teatro di Roberto Herlitzka*, Bologna-Napoli, Caracò Editore, 2018, ISBN: 978-88-99904-18-0.

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With *Voglio fare l'attore*, published by Caracò Editore, scholar, journalist and writer Emanuele Tirelli continues his investigation on contemporary Italian theatre. Specifically, Tirelli works on portraits-interviews of artists – in this case prominent theatre and film actor Roberto Herlitzka – that has seminal importance in Italian performing arts, but that the academic literature has not deeply researched yet, especially in monographic volume.

This is a path that Tirelli has already started in his previous work *La misura dell'errore. Vita e teatro di Antonio Latella* (2016) dedicated to the figure of director Antonio Latella, probably one of the great “master” of European Theatre still in activity, surely the greatest from Italy together with Romeo Castellucci of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio. In order to understand the idea and the concept behind *Voglio fare l'attore* it is important to spend some words on *La misura dell'errore*. In that case, the first big merit of Tirelli's book was almost implicit, the one of being the first monographic work ever about Latella, one of the key figures – in terms of directing – in Europe in the last decades. This absence of Latella – to whom many University thesis has been dedicated – from the academic publishing with a book-interview is mainly due to the strong privacy that the artist has always wanted to keep; a privacy that Latella opened in his conversation with Tirelli, analyzing his path as an artist and intellectual, and reflecting on his creative path. The volume is, from this perspective the first organic study on Latella, a starting point for the ones who want to investigate more his works and career. Tirelli focuses on Latella's internationalism and the European horizon that has always characterized his theatre: first actor for Luca Ronconi, Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, Massimo Castri and Vittorio Gassman; then director of some of the most interesting staging of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Jean Genet, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Eduardo De Filippo – such as the outstanding and revolutionary production of *Natale in casa Cupiello* –, and Samuel Beckett. Latella is a conflictual personality and this is clear from the conversations where the accuracy of reflection of the professional career goes together with elements of the private life of the artist. This is an important point because the private life – kept always very private – influences and intersects with the artistic career, starting exactly from Latella's relation with Neapolitan culture – and Naples has



a strong theatrical tradition, however Latella says that he was born only by chance in Castellammare di Stabia (in Naples Province). Born in Castellammare but emigrated when he was a child in Turin, Latella has always had to confront Naples and its cultural legacy, living a specific conflict: confronting a city which he does not belong to, but at the same time dealing with a language – Neapolitan – he was close to because was the language used in the family.

Tirelli starts from this (unresolved) conflict to move to the international trajectory of the artist - currently based in Berlin – who found his great consecration first abroad and then in Italy, where he will become the Director of Biennale Teatro in Venice. An example is his production of *Porcile* by Pier Paolo Pasolini, staged at the Salzburg Festival in 2003.

La misura dell'errore is important to understand the approach of Tirelli also for *Voglio fare l'attore*, first of all in the very selection of the artist to focus on: Roberto Herlitzka. Born in Turin in 1937, Herlitzka represents one of the most prolific actors – both in theatre and in film – within the Italian panorama, surely one of the most important in terms of acting quality. However, his profile has been underrated by scholars and academics and, as for Latella, the book-conversation by Tirelli is a first monographic attempt to address his long and important career.

It is interesting to notice how *Voglio fare l'attore* is, in many ways, a kind of counter-altar of *La misura dell'errore*. In the previous work, Tirelli faced an artist that started from acting and then moved to international directing (and also artist directorship), becoming one of the great poliedric figures of European theatre. With *Voglio fare l'attore* and Roberto Herlitzka, the author works on an artist who wanted only to be an actor and became an actor, and cannot see anything else than an actor.

Acting – acting as a work, acting as a dream, acting as passion, acting as an obsession – is the keynote and the general leitmotiv of the book, where, also here, elements from the private life of Herlitzka goes together with his development as an artist, described, discussed and analyzed in a non-chronological way.

One point is common with the previous work on Latella: the relation between the artist and his Masters. In Latella, this relation was also part of the inner conflict to consider himself as part of the intelligentsia. In the case of Herlitzka, the relation with the Masters is about his training, education, and working. Absolutely impressive is the number of names he trained or worked with and that are considered in the volume: Mario Missiroli, Antonio Calenda, Lina Wertmüller, Peter Stein, Luca Ronconi, Luigi Squarzina, Walter Pagliaro, Sergio Tofano, Ruggero Cappuccio, Gabriele Lavia, Teresa Pedroni, Giorgio Pressburger, Roberto Andò, Marco Bellocchio, Nadia Baldi, Paolo Virzi, Paolo Sorrentino, Luigi Comencini. And of course Orazio Costa and Carmelo Bene. Costa is one of the first names that appears: the “grande Maestro” – the great Mentor –, the “incontro assoluto” – the “ultimate meeting” – that completely opened Herlitzka’s mind showing to him “il lavoro necessario per praticare quest’arte, l’impegno totale, l’essenza del teatro. Durante il primo anno insegnava la sua teoria



mimica, che non ha niente a che vedere con il mimo, ma è una riflessione secondo cui, raggiunta l'età della sensibilità, vediamo un qualcosa, ne siamo attratti e tendiamo a diventarlo” (p. 13). And about Carmelo Bene, that Hrlitzka met at the Accademia Nazionale d'Arte Drammatica “Silvio D'Amico”, Herlitzka remembers: “Eravamo nello stesso corso, due persone caratterialmente molto distanti che però si avvicinarono subito. Ognuno riconobbe nell'altro l'esistenza di qualcosa in più o di caratteristiche che, semplicemente, considerava interessanti. Avevamo in comune la passione di dire i versi, passione che avrebbe accompagnato le nostre vite” (p. 12).

Apart from the stories related to the works and relations with the above-mentioned directors, there is a very important element in *Voglio fare l'attore*, that many times is not considered when we talk about theatre: how practitioners consider themselves. In many points, Tirelli discusses with Herlitzka how he can define himself: does he consider himself as an artist, for example? And is it appropriate to “label” or “recognize” themselves as artists? On this point, Herlitzka's opinion is very interesting: an artist is someone who creates; also an actor, even if is interpreting something already there and under a director, is creating an “art” and it must be addressed with the same commitment of the people that create *ex-novo*. Then, he adds that calling themselves “artists” is not a synonym of arrogance, but exactly the opposite: it is proof of humbleness and it is the open declaration of dedicating and committing completely to something very difficult. In the case there is a successful result, this result is simply called “art”.

This “terminology” discussion introduces also the conceptual one about the idea of “Maestro”. In particular, being called Maestro – so mentor or master – and the relation between making art and teaching art (Herlitzka, apart from a sporadic case, has never taught by his choice).

Voglio fare l'attore is a work for a vast audience – academic, performers, general readers – with a specific utility for artists and performers in training, because it is also full of technical consideration about the craft of acting. A clear example is the section dedicated to the musicality of words and how to use this musicality on stage. Despite its brevity, the book is very multi-layered that ultimately proceeds by experiences and reflections that are never an auto-celebration, but honest consideration of a craft that is art and real professionalism.

REFERENCES

TIRELLI, Emanuele (ed.), 2016. *La misura dell'errore. Vita e teatro di Antonio Latella*. Caracò. ISBN 978-88-99904-00-5.