

KRAPP'S LAST POST

BY SIMONA CAPPELLINI, 30 DICEMER 2019

TEMPI DI REAZIONE: A SPAM! IMPROVISING

"Underneath a subtext" by Company Blu



(photo: Simona Cappellini)

A review of the new edition of "Tempi di Reazione", intuition between music, speech and dance, characterized the beginning of December in the province of Lucca, at Spam!, home of the Aldes company led by Roberto Castello.

Outside of some artistic fields (such as in jazz), little space is given today to improvisation, and above all to a reflection on improvisation: this is what we are trying to do at Spam!, with evenings organized in a format not only made of on stage practices, but also of theory.

What does "improvising" really mean? And where does the line lie between pure improvisation and a repetition - more or less conscious - of codified knowledge that is part of an artist's baggage? It is impossible to think that everything that a particular artist has learned and practiced during his journey does not influence a single improvisational act, but this does not mean that it must be repetitive or "organized" a priori, if its improvisation.

The real difference in improvisation certainly lies in the freedom of the performative act. But the mistake that is often made is also to think that any artistic form is driven by something cerebral, decided by the will of the performer. In improvisation, on the contrary, the true subject is not the artist, but the performative act itself, which acts as if it had a life of its own, regardless of the will of the performer, which becomes a mere tool. Starting from this assumption, it is interesting to observe the differences between the various artists, and it will also be easier to perceive where the improvisational process is truly free or where instead the action is more limited by intrinsic conditionings. Moreover, as Spinoza said, "man, by his very nature of being limited, can never aspire to the fullness of freedom".

The artists present at "Tempi di Reazione" are a reference in the field of improvisation, a rich program not only for the scope of the individual artists, but for the artistic multidisciplinary (mainly dance and live music, and not only), seen for the dance of Cristina Kristal Rizzo, Alessandra Cristiani (with percussionist Ivan Macera), Alessandro Certini and Charlotte Zerbey, and an artist of the caliber of Katie Duck (accompanied on this occasion by percussionist Maria

Luisa Pizzighella), dancer and choreographer active since the early seventies, who has come to a research path of unique connection between body, mind and sound.

From the music field at Spam!, were percussionist Antonio Caggiano with Elio Martusciello, a prominent name in electronic music, Zam Moustapha Dembelé (percussionist) and Dimitri Grechi Espinoza (saxophonist).

The festival was inaugurated by one of the most famous and unpredictable artists on the Italian theater scene: the actor, songwriter and comedian Paolo Rossi. In some evenings the meetings were preceded by theoretical introductions by the philosophers Alessandro Bertinetto and Antonio Pellicori, an opportunity for further study and reflection on the theme.

While the last evening of the festival featured Alessandro Certini and Charlotte Zerbey from Company Blu, accompanied for the occasion by the electronic music duo Instant Places - Laura Kavanaugh and Ian Birse -, who presented a new project: "Underneath a subtext".

Certini and Zerbey have always been masters of contact improvisation, to which they have dedicated not only a large part of their artistic research, but also performance series, with as many important international names.

The understanding of the couple is immediately evident on the scene, which generates a free flow of gestures that seem to move according to a single agreement, while at other times it is so free it gives rise to an almost tribal and wilder dance. In the case of Certini and Zerbey, improvisation is a fluid and loose language that circulates through the whole body, from head to toe, from word to sound. The body welcomes and refuses, expands and withdraws like a wave, freezes in syncopated movements or frees itself in a run; each chases the other and then is chased, as in all the salient stages of a relationship.

If improvising means discovering and being surprised by your own gestures, in the path you can stumble in a spasm while walking, or find an object to interact with, such as the yellow wire of the microphone that transforms into figures on the ground, or the wall of the backdrop which becomes a magnet for bodies. Even the noise of the train of the adjacent railway finds its place in this universe. Everything is possible, and everything is in the making.

To make the performance even richer and doubly interesting from the point of view of improvisation is the participation of the Canadian duo Instant Places, musicians who create interactive audiovisual performances on the spot using hardware and software systems in continuous evolution, which they integrate with consoles and instruments made by hand, sensitive to touch.

Laura Kavanaugh and Ian Birse are two anomalous DJs behind a console (placed on one side of the scene) made up of dozens of instruments of various kinds: tiny mixers, microphones, music boxes, bells, a viola bow played on a guitar, drumsticks and consoles connected together by countless cables.

More than sound, the one reproduced is a manipulation of sound, which leads to unique acoustic experiments, which at one point are cold and strident industrial sounds, while in another they seem to reproduce the sounds of nature, such as the singing of birds or the blowing of the wind. And it is impressive how they manage to lead to acoustic variations only by playing on impulses and vibrations at the touch of a console, a real sound architecture that gives rise to sudden imaginary places, sensations to which has given the name of their ensemble ("Instant Places").

It is a sound that could also disturb, rather than accompany, which rewinds the body like a tape played backwards, but which together with the two dance authors leads us into totally new worlds, in which irony and dream world merge in a Lynchian atmosphere that reaches its climax in the gruesome sounds of Charlotte Zerbey on the microphone, or in a still image of the artist frozen in an alienating expression, which fascinates and repulses at the same time. It is a narration that is enough in itself, without having to add anything else, and that hypnotizes the viewer by catapulting it into an unrepeatable and elusive creative process, precisely because it represents the essence of improvisation.

Link to original review.

<http://www.klpteatro.it/tempi-di-reazione-2019-spam-lucca?fbclid=IwAR3axpM0TqMLeYmapDudkr8egNhIVNBbDV-JDCQeZj2nOxpiNk9yzAQzfGI>