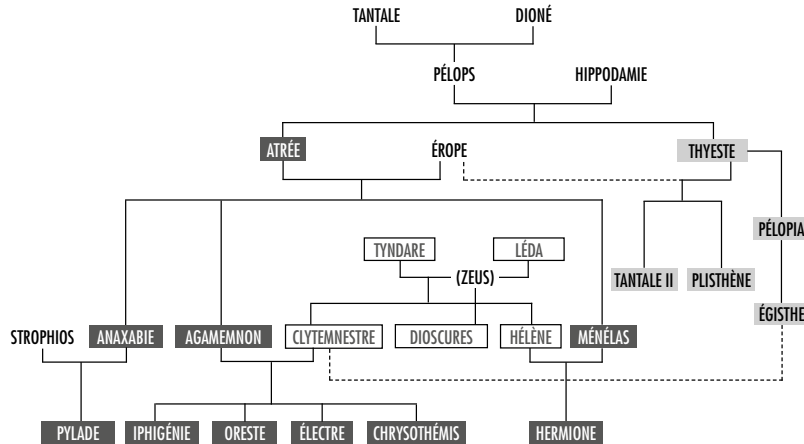


TOUR DATES AFTER THE FESTIVAL

17-27 mai 2018, Piccolo Teatro, Milan (Italy)

GENEALOGY OF THE CHARACTERS



OTHERS PRESENT CHARACTERS :

Chœur, Coryphée, Achille, Vieil homme, Hécube, Cassandre, Astyanax, Vieille femme, Teucros, Théonoé, Théoclymène, Messager, Gardien, Héraut, Méchant, Maître, Phrygiens, la Pythie, les Érinyes, Apollon, Athéna, les Moires, Thoas, Berger

- HOUSE OF ATRÉE
- HOUSE OF THYESTE
- HOUSE OF TYNDARE

SANTA ESTASI – ATRIDI : OTTO RITRATTI DI FAMIGLIA

The story of the Atrides is the story of a line cursed by the original sin of a father—Tantalus, mortal son of Zeus—who decided to feed his son to the gods. Personally condemned to eternal torture, he saw his descendants irreversibly punished as well. For four generations, and until the judgement of Orestes, took place a succession of murders, parricides, infanticides, rapes, and incestuous relationships... And every name in that violence-ridden family—Iphigenia, Helen, Agamemnon, Electra, etc.—has become, thanks to the genius of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides, a tragic, mythical, and classic hero. Antonio Latella's incredible project was to offer eight of those stories to seven young writers so that they could revisit them for a new generation of actors to perform. Within what became *Santa Estasi*, an epic spectacle lasting sixteen hours and split into two parts, the Italian director admits having established two basic guidelines. An intellectual equation: to talk about family within a society that makes rules impossible; coupled with the reality he experiences with these young artists: to work on the figure of the father and on the concrete reality of tradition, heritage, and transmission. A project which, according to the new director of the Venice Biennale theatre, says "clearly that we have to free ourselves from our elders' responsibility to find ours and exist."

ANTONIO LATELLA

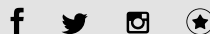
Antonio Latella was born in the region of Naples in 1967 to a family of workers exiled to Turin. He left college at 17 and trained at the Teatro Stabile before joining the Bottega Teatrale school, founded in Florence by Vittorio Gassman. At the age of 22 he started playing for the most prestigious Italian directors of the 1980s, such as Pippo Di Marca, Luca Ronconi, Massimo Castri, or Tito Piscitelli. In 1997, he directed his first show, Marguerite Duras's *Agatha*. From then on he focused exclusively on his own projects, all marked by a meticulous exploration of the worlds of the authors whose work he adapted: Jean Genet, Christopher Marlowe, Samuel Beckett... In 2001, he won the Ubu Prize for *Shakespeare and Beyond*, a series of reinterpretations of *Othello* (1999), *Macbeth* (2000), *Romeo and Juliet* (2000), and *Hamlet* (2001). His shows are physical, almost carnal, and focus particularly on family, revisiting the great verbal tradition of Italian theatre. A key figure in the resurgence of Italian theatre, he was recently appointed director of the Venice Theatre Festival.

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INTERVIEW WITH ANTONIO LATELLA

Family is a theme you are partial to. Through it, your theatre questions our society. How did you come up with the idea of creating a show based on the Atreides, this cursed mythological family?

Antonio Latella: If we go back to the beginning, what I ended up calling Santa Estasi wasn't originally a show but a training session the Emilia Romagna Teatro had asked me to organise with young actors and playwrights under thirty, all recent graduates from various Italian conservatories. I wanted to continue the work I'd begun with *Œdipus and Pinocchio*. The goal was to work on the figure on the father, and on the questions of heredity, legacy, and tradition. With my collaborators, we brought together a group made up of sixteen young actors and seven young writers and presented our project: to re-read the classic tragedies written about the members of the Atreides family, namely, Iphigenia, Agamemnon, Electra, and Orestes, but also about the Eumenides. The idea was to focus on family as the origins of tragedy. I also tasked playwright Linda Dalisi with writing a final text about the little known character of Chrysothemis. For two months, those young writers translated, re-translated, or rewrote those myths, while we trained the actors to our approach to the body and to the story. At the end of this first period, we were able to cast roles and start rehearsing. Then, and only then, did this adventure become a show. A play that works a little like a family portrait in eight episodes.

Could you tell us how those young writers made theirs those great tragedies?

Through those classics, we aimed to question not so much the meaning of each of those tragedies as tragedy itself as well as its main pillar, the hero. In *Iphigenia in Aulis*, adapted by Francesca Merli, we study the origins of the curse and the guilt that wracks the Atreides. Atonement, in that family, is a woman's responsibility. The only heroic act is that of a girl whose quest for identity turns into self-sacrifice. Camilla Mattiuzzo's version of *Helen* returns to the story of the most beautiful woman of Antiquity: she was in Egypt when the Greeks attacked Troy to get her back. Truth, or reality, stands side by side with a paradox. For Riccardo Baudino, who wrote *Agamemnon*, that tragedy is the testimony of a man whose dreams, set to music, are of new forms of violence, of a new world view. In *Electra*, written by Matteo Luoni, we wonder if Orestes would have killed his mother if it had not been for Electra. It's his very aggressive quest for love that triggers a new wave of divine retribution. In Aeschylus's *The Eumenides*, adapted here by Martina Folena, Orestes is condemned to kill his mother, and we imagine him entering the kingdom of dreams, the only place where he can face his own ghosts. It's a journey through a maze, in search of his identity. With Silvia Rigon, who rewrote Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the characters wonder where knowledge will lead them, what its limits are, and what the relationship between science and ethics is... Finally, *Chrysothemis*, sister of Iphigenia, Electra, and Orestes, isn't a well-known figure. Her story was written here by playwright Linda Dalisi and completes the cycle written by those young authors. Immobile, she watches as the tragedy that decimates her family unfolds. Here, in a way, we say that there can be no happy ending for heroes.

Can you tell us more about your work with those young actors and playwrights?

During the two months we spent putting the group together, I was able to watch the actors. When it came time to create this show with them, I was able to work

with what I'd seen, with the way they are onstage. I thought it was important to use teaching methods appropriate to the needs of the actors, so that they could grasp all the nuances of the texts. The great difficulty of the play—and at the same time its great *maestria*—was to make them play the vastness of this corpus. At first, it was like a mountain they had to climb, as they had to learn to remain onstage for almost sixteen hours, since they all have a role in each of the plays. That allowed me to make them understand what I expected of them: to forget about recitation and experience the saint ecstasy of the actor. I'm talking about that moment where the actor ceases to think about what he has to say or do, but only thinks about being the character. That moment, I call it the soul of the word. I also tried to make them understand what kind of relationship I expect them to have with the audience. My theatre is a theatre of seduction that encourages reflection. All my directions are born from a deep study of the text and its author; the author always suggests a method. My theatre is a theatre of words. It all starts with language. I can't imagine words without a body.

What was the through line of this direction?

The through line was the relationship of children to the figure of the father. In Italy, when politics fails to accomplish its missions, when it no longer helps us build a society, we still have family. My reading of those mythological plays is political in the sense that they delve deeply into the meaning of family, this "communion of human beings" within society. Sometimes having a son isn't synonymous with loving him, but having a son is taking the responsibility to accompany him in the early stages of his life, if nothing else. What kind of fathers are Pelops, Thyestes, or Agamemnon? How do they accompany their children? Murder, rape, abandonment, lies... How can their heirs build a life for themselves from those acts of indescribable violence? How can they break those cycles some like to call fate or destiny? Those huge questions provide me with material as a man, but also as a director. I feel that I have a responsibility: to think about the future, to think about youth, especially in a country like Italy. There are great directors who created great works but who only ever worked on their own present. Few directors have thought about the question of legacy. It's created great cultural and generational voids.

Speaking of legacy, the scenography and costumes of this show have a very particular status...

Indeed. I usually work for almost a year with my team to create costumes and sets. Here, I decided to re-use elements from my past work, but also from other directors. The actors are performing in the ruins of the theatre and in its dust, and that creates in a way a real dramatic tension. We followed the same principle when working on the music; the actors came with musical choices of their own, which I then tried to understand. From there, we created an original score with Franco Visioli. Sound is a living material, it's not background music. It's present just like an actor would. Like the show, I think that this music touches something deep and echoes something primitive within us. It was important to us—and that's also the contradiction that attracted me and became a choice we made—for our limited means to be at the service of a long and complex adventure in which the succession of tragedies would create a unique temporality and a great tension. The setting is therefore extremely simple (a dining table) and the part closest to the audience is almost bare (with only a lawn), and it comes down to the bodies and the words of the young actors to rise and say the story. Their work is in a way to find the power of origins.

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Interview conducted by Francis Cossu and translated by Gaël Schmidt-Cléach