

International Theatre Institute ITI

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Luchini Visconti 1973

It seems to me that henceforth, in the theatre, from a profound process of evolution is born a demand for truth and Absolute that can uplift it to the values of witness at a level comparable with that of the great ages. If I think, indeed, of the history of the theatre in this century and in the whole world, I find that beside the theories, the poetics, the technological development, what has happened to the theatre is this: at the outset it seemed to be in the background and almost disappear before the massive attack of the mass media; then, having questioned itself on its reality and truth, it finished by finding itself again. It emerged from its eclipse to rediscover its real identity which is to be the place where human values and relationships confront each other.

The very weaknesses of the theatre, its fragility, its irreversibility, that particularity of a theatrical performance of never being equal to itself, the risk of deterioration to which it is exposed from the first night, and which infuriates me and gives me such anguish and, by contrast, makes me think with relief of the final and immutable version of the film, all these weaknesses, precisely, have finished by reconfirming the theatre (in this I agree with Camus) as a mean that is human by definition.

For if it records and expresses the changes in man and provisional aspect in his daily life and behavior, the theatre, at the same time, stimulates man's aspiration to surpass himself.

On the one hand, it shows our life at its deepest, its most dangerous, tragic and mysterious; on the other, it distills its essence and gives of the myth and legend of man an ever-new representation in an ever-new effort, through participation, to seize hold of the meaning of existence.

Today, the other mass media with which the theatre used, wrongly, to think it had to compete, have to a considerable extent taken over all that is entertainment, diversion, escape. The theatre has remained devoid of all this and has seemed impoverished. On the contrary, it has been enriched; it has drawn strength from it. Relieved of its lesser tasks, the theatre has, as I have always thought it should, begun to tackle great subjects of vital importance again.

For if the discovery and the description of things exotic, marvelous multiple or sociological belong henceforth to other arts and to other techniques, here is what belongs to the theatre: everything that means being alive together today, meeting and awaiting an essential event or an expectation, a therapeutic one, salvation perhaps, certitude in any case, of an essential and unshakable relationship between men awaiting, too, a mysterious transcendances.

It is for this reason that in the theatre (which has become, as someone has said, a catacomb), man descends to the meeting with himself and with his own destiny by putting his beliefs and his emotions to the test in a game, which has the double power of reality and imagination.

The theatre, which seemed pushed aside to the fringe, has now come back to the center of the collective experience. That is why entering a theatre today has become a "different" act, it signifies a choice, pre-supposes the rational expectation of clarity and Absolute. And this return to the collective source of emotions and truth constitutes an act of humility and of love.