

## Sets for *Laborintus II* by Luciano Berio, 1971

Directed by Carlo Quartucci, text by Edoardo Sanguineti, music by Luciano Berio, film clips by Giorgio Bergami, produced by the Teatro Comunale dell'Opera, Genoa.

Performances: Genoa, Teatro Margherita, 30 March, 1 and 4 April 1971 (conductor Marcello Panni).

“It is the performance of a concert by Berio. The orchestra is on stage, the backdrop is a film screen on which the film of a theatre piece, shot by Quartucci in the country, is projected.<sup>1</sup> A plaster rectangle on the grass marks off a virtual space, typical of Paolini’s work and reminiscent of his first squaring off of a canvas (*Disegno geometrico*, 1960). The rectangle is none other than the artist’s sheet of drawing paper, the page of the score for the musician.

‘Moreover, many things coincide: the fortuitous nature of the presences (the actors who will not repeat themselves); the theatrical action that is performed (exists) on an artistic level only as pure intentionality (attempt is the only acceptable ‘form’ here); the place of isolation marked by the white perimeter, like the theatre (place) of a possible linguistic path, the total absence of a relationship and of an interlocutor, which only the photographic shot tends to recreate; the purely conceptual dimension of the entire operation’.<sup>2</sup>

Theatre, cinema, music and art merge into a comprehensive performance. Paolini arranges the trunks of costumes on stage so that they are visible. The public finds it difficult to distinguish the actor from the musician both of whom, dressed in everyday clothes, roam about like a crowd mixed into the all-encompassing nature of the stage. They dress and apply their make-up on stage instead of in their dressing rooms. The set design in this case shatters the divisions between preordained places. At the same time the artist analyses the elements of the performance in the same way that he has investigated the basic elements of painting: canvas, stretcher, paint. All of Paolini’s theatrical interventions during this period tend to expose the mechanisms of staging in a sort of transparency-operation. It is the revelation of what goes on backstage that is analogous to the presentation of the overturned canvas in so many of his works” (L. Cherubini, in *Sipario. Balla, De Chirico, Savinio, Picasso, Paolini, Cucchi*, exhibition catalogue, Rivoli, Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea [Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1997], p. 259, revised translation).



<sup>1</sup> In some of the scenes we can see the face of Marcello Panni, conductor and orchestra director of the performance.

<sup>2</sup> E. Fadini, C. Quartucci, *Viaggio nel Camion dentro l'avanguardia* (Turin: 1976), pp. 182-183.



## Bibliography

- *Stagione lirica 1971* (Genoa: Teatro Comunale dell'Opera, 1971), programme with documentation for various performances, for *Laborintus II* introduction by E. Frassoni, playbill for the performance, repr.
- *Identité italienne. L'art en Italie depuis 1959*, edited by G. Celant, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne Centre Georges Pompidou (Florence: Centro Di, 1981), p. 352 (mentioned in the chronology), repr.
- A. Mammi, "Appunti sul lavoro teatrale di Giulio Paolini", in *Giulio Paolini. La Casa di Lucrezio*, exhibition catalogue, Spoleto, Palazzo Rosari Spada (Casalecchio di Reno: Grafis Edizioni, 1984), p. 70 (entry with description), repr.
- *Giulio Paolini. Il "Teatro" dell'opera*, exhibition catalogue, Pesaro, Galleria Franca Mancini (Ravenna: Agenzia Editoriale Essegi, 1991), pp. 91-92 (entry with description by A. Mammi), repr. p. 64.
- *La Zattera di Babele 1981-1991. 10 anni di parola, immagine, musica, teatro*, edited by La Zattera di Babele (Florence: Opera Universitaria dell'Università degli Studi di Palermo, 1991), p. 197 (mentioned in the chronology of performances), repr. pp. 25, 26.
- L. Cherubini, "Giulio Paolini / Spettacoli teatrali", in *Sipario. Balla, De Chirico, Savinio, Picasso, Paolini, Cucchi*, exhibition catalogue, Rivoli, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1997), p. 259 (entry with description, in English), repr.
- H.U. Obrist, "Giulio Paolini in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist", in *Giulio Paolini. Eiserner Vorhang, 2002/2003* (Vienna: museum in progress, 2002), brochure published on the occasion of the presentation of the *Eiserner Vorhang* (stage curtain) designed by Paolini for the 2002-03 season of the Wiener Staatsoper, n. pag. (reference to the first performance of the play in Genoa), not repr., German and English editions. Interview republished in *Curtain – Vorhang* (Vienna: museum in progress and Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2017), p. 143.
- *Giulio Paolini 1960-1972*, edited by G. Celant, exhibition catalogue, Milan, Fondazione Prada, 2003, repr. p. 348.
- M.T. Roberto, "Arte Povera e scrittura scenica", in *Arte povera 2011*, edited by G. Celant, exhibition catalogue, Milan, Mondadori Electa, 2011, p. 634, not repr.
- B. Satre, *L'Arte Povera et les arts de la scène: Les expériences théâtrales de Jannis Kounellis, Giulio Paolini, Michelangelo Pistoletto et Mario Ceroli*, doctoral dissertation in History of Contemporary Art, Aix-Marseille Université, 2012, vol. 1, p. 244, repr. vol. 3 nos. 23a-e pp. 61, 62, in French.
- S. Sette, *Teatro dell'opera. La produzione scenografica di Giulio Paolini*, thesis presented for a graduate degree in History of Arts and Conservation of Artistic Heritage, University Ca' Foscari, Venice, 2017-18, pp. 45, 57, 70, 98, 103, 118, repr. no. 13 p. 127.
- *Entrare nell'opera. Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera*, exhibition catalogue, Vaduz, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2019), p. 464, not repr., in English.
- D. Orecchia, *Stravedere la scena. Carlo Quartucci. Il viaggio nei primi venti anni 1959-1979* (Milan - Udine: Mimesis Edizioni, 2020), pp. 226, 275, 277, 346, repr. pp. 244, 245.
- D. Chiara, *Le scenografie teatrali e televisive di Giulio Paolini*, thesis presented for a graduate degree in History of Arts and Cultural Heritage, University of Catania, 2021-22, pp. 66-67, repr. no. 76.

Entry by Maddalena Disch