

Andrea Molino

- there is no why here -



multimedia music theatre (2014)

Texts and dramaturgy: Giorgio Van Straten, Andrea Molino

Vocal and Instrumental Soloists
Performers
Symphony Orchestra
Live electronics
Live video

Duration: 1h45 ca.

(stand: June 2013)

Driven by thirst, I eyed a fine icicle outside the window, within hand's reach. I opened the window and broke off the icicle but at once a large, heavy guard prowling outside brutally snatched it away from me. - Warum? - I asked him in my poor German. - Hier ist kein warum, - (there is no why here), he replied, pushing me inside with a shove.

Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*

"Why me?"

"That is a very earthling question to ask, Mr. Pilgrim. Why you? Why us for that matter? Why anything? Because this moment simply is. Have you ever seen bugs trapped in amber?"

"Yes." Billy, in fact, had a paperweight in his office which was a blob of polished amber with three ladybugs embedded in it.

"Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of this moment. There is no why."

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5*

"Stop, don't fight, I'm the fool! God does exist, God does not exist, what's the point? Stop! Did you ever ask yourself if man does exist?... "God created man in his own image"... it's beautiful! Shlomo in God's image... But who wrote this sentence in the Torah? Man, not God. Man! He wrote it without modesty, comparing himself with God. God maybe has created man, but man, man, the son of God, he created God only to become himself. Man has written the Bible out of fear of being forgotten, without caring about God. We don't love and we don't pray to God, but we implore Him, we implore Him to keep going. What do we care about God for what is He? We care only about ourselves. So the question is not only whether God exists, but also whether we exist."

Monologue of Shlomo the Fool, in the movie "Train de Vie" by Radu Mihaileanu

Can a man be good who is afraid? The pain, that makes him afraid, becomes immeasurable through the pain that he himself has created out of fear, and through which he again creates fear. Fear is what makes evil and evil is what makes fear. And so the circle closes between nothing and destruction and gives birth to itself eternally. Death is spread out of fear of death. Terror and horror are spread out of our own terror and horror.

Eugen Drewermann: *Structures of Evil*

There remains, however, one fundamental problem, which was implicitly present in all those postwar trials and which must be mentioned here because it touches upon one of the central moral questions of all time, namely upon the nature and function of human judgement. [...] Those few who were still able to tell right from wrong went really only by their own judgements, and they did so freely; there were no rules to be abided by, under which the particular cases with which they were confronted could be subsumed. They had to decide each instance as it arose, because no rules existed for the unprecedented.

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the Banality of Evil*

Social morality is contingent upon the individual's capacity to take responsible decisions, to make the fundamental choice between right and wrong; this capacity comes from this mysterious core - the very essence of the human person. This essence, however, cannot come into being or exist in a vacuum. It is deeply vulnerable and profoundly dependent on a climate of life; on freedom in the deepest sense; not license, but freedom to grow: within family, within community, within nations, and within human society as a whole. The fact of its existence therefore - the very fact of our existence as valid individuals - is evidence of our interdependence and of our responsibility for each other.

Gitta Sereny, *In That Darkness*

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is a multimedia music theatre project conceived and composed by Andrea Molino, in collaboration with Giorgio Van Straten for the text choice and the dramaturgy.

The title is taken from "If This Is A Man" by Primo Levi: it is the answer he received from a guard in Auschwitz who snatched an icicle from him that he wanted to melt to quench his thirst. The basis of the project's dramaturgy is, following Hannah Arendt, „the fundamental problem of the nature and function of human judgement“: the critical point where the traditional ways of distinguishing between right and wrong, between good and evil, fail; the *solitude* of man in this condition, the ultimate necessity to assume *responsibility*. This failure takes place precisely in the situation where this ability to distinguish would be most useful: when the very definition of the essence of the human condition is at stake.

- **there is no why here** - is the final chapter of a trilogy which started with two previous multimedia projects by Andrea Molino: *CREDO*, 2003-2004, on ethnic and religious conflicts, and *WINNERS*, 2005-2006, on "winners and losers". Different important constituents of these two projects are also present in this one:

- the theme is non-literary and has strong social connotations;
- the choice of a non-narrative dramaturgy;
- the use of textual and audiovisual contributions from different sources, organically inserted into the texture of the musical and multimedia composition;
- the presence on stage of a symphony orchestra – a major theatrical character – together with the vocal and instrumental soloists;
- an integrated and dramaturgical use of new communication technologies.

The different elements of the musical, theatrical and multimedial vocabulary (music, texts, multimedia, interactivity, sound, stage, light) are conceived together and converge into an organic language, through the instrumental use of technology.

As in the above mentioned past works, the project chooses to follow a non-narrative and non-metaphoric path. The Austrian philosopher Jean Améry, a survivor of Auschwitz, writes:

"It would be totally senseless to try and describe here the pain that was inflicted on me. Was it 'like a red-hot iron in my shoulders', and was another 'like a dull wooden stake that had been driven into the back of my head'? One comparison would only stand for the other, and in the end we would be hoaxed by the hopeless merry-go-round of figurative speech. The pain was what it was. Beyond that there is nothing to say. If someone wanted to impart his physical pain, he would be forced to inflict it and thereby become a torturer himself."

Also in this case the metaphoric language fails exactly where it would be most useful: in those situations which ultimately define the very essence of the human condition.

The flow of the performance is thus created through a continuous sequence of musical-theatrical *moments*, each one approaching one or more aspects of the theme, connected through a non-narrative but linear dramaturgy. Different materials – texts from different sources, audiovisuals contributions, live connections with other locations - closely linked to the main theme, will be worked out in the dramaturgy and inserted into the theatrical language.

A specific and innovative approach to the possibilities of multimedia is a particularly important element. Different synchronized video sources, projecting for example the live images from video cameras on stage and external webcams, will create an organic counterpoint to the music, the text and the theatrical performance.

Particularly important will be the theatrical characterization of external locations, chosen according to their relevance to the main theme of the project. (Wim Wenders: “*The sense of the place*”). Audiovisual contributions of different types, live and pre-recorded, will reach the venue from those locations, and will be inserted into the musical and theatrical composition. The video contributions will be physically *played* by the performers. A specific multimedia software (MeRit), developed at the ZKM in Karlsruhe, will allow the musicians to *musically* interact with the audiovisual material: the video becomes an *instrument*.

– ***there is no why here*** - is an international project in co-production between the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Muziektheater Transparant Antwerp and deSingel in Antwerp, in collaboration with GRAME, Centre National de Création Musicale in Lyon, France, Operadagen Rotterdam and Vlaamse Opera. The music score is published by Rai Trade, Rome.

The project will be premiered at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna in April 2014, under the music direction of the composer and the stage direction of Wouter van Looy with scenes and video by the collective WerkTank, Leuven. In 2015 it will be performed at deSingel, Antwerp (Opera XXI Festival, Vlaamse Opera) and at Operadagen Rotterdam, with the Brussels Philharmonic. The vocal cast will be created in collaboration with the Institute for Living Voice (Artistic Director: David Moss); the instrumental solo parts will be performed by BL!NDMAN [sax] and BL!NDMAN [drums], Brussels.

