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It's Tough for Women, and Here's the Grim Proof

By NEIL GENZLINGER

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Sometimes with nontraditional theater pieces, the most illuminating moment comes at the end, in that eye-blink after action has ceased, and before the cast returns for bows.

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That is the case with Romeo Castellucci's "Hey Girl!" at [Montclair State University](#): the snapshot just before the curtain call reveals a stage strewn with two disembodied heads, a couple of swords, lots of broken glass and an ominous goo reminiscent of the "Alien" movies. It's a devastating image that simultaneously shows you just how far Mr. Castellucci has taken you during this cryptic, jarring show, and the limits of his vision.

"Hey Girl!" is a series of stage tableaux devoted to women or, more precisely, the history of the oppression of women. Mr. Castellucci's troupe, Societas Raffaello Sanzio from Italy, the program tells us, is interested in using theater "to communicate directly to all senses," and it does so here.

The visual workout begins even before the play does, with fog filling up the Alexander Kasser Theater as the audience filters in, but before long the soundscape too is seizing your attention. It is loud and propulsive, so much so that at times you feel as if a jet were taking off right beside your ear. This is all the more disorienting because the occasional bits of dialogue in "Hey Girl!" are generally whispered.

Silvia Costa, one of two actresses at the core of the piece, rises nude from primordial slime in the opening birth scene, and from there her life goes from bad to worse.

Among the many startling images that Mr. Castellucci creates, perhaps the most searing is this: A mob of black-clad men (made up of students from the university and community volunteers) surrounds the woman and beats her mercilessly. They are using pillows, but somehow the intrusion of that usually comic device makes the scene all the more unsettling.

Mr. Castellucci doesn't always know when to rein himself in. A scene in which a black woman (Sonia Beltran Napoles), stripped and manacled, is auctioned off while dialogue from "Romeo and Juliet" flashes on a screen seems a bit much.

The main shortcoming of "Hey Girl!," though, is its unrelenting grimness, as captured in that final glimpse of the stage, evidence of violence all around. Yes, oppression is a big part of the story of women through history, but only a part.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/03/theater/03sell.html?_r=1&ref=theater&oref=slogin

A Director With a Bent for the Visceral

Columbus, Ohio

TO most people a bus stop might seem a mundane place. For Romeo Castellucci, the experimental Italian stage director, the sight of listless teenagers waiting for their ride was mind-altering.

Mr. Castellucci, 47, sat in his car while braked at a traffic light in his native city, Cesena. Adolescent girls clustered a few feet away. Studying their body language and facial expressions, and noting how they were positioned in relation to the surrounding physical space, Mr. Castellucci was inspired to create an original theater production evoking their states of mind.

The result is "Hey Girl!," now on a multicity North American tour and opening Thursday for four performances at [Montclair State University](#) in New Jersey. The presentation offers a rare opportunity for East Coast audiences to see Mr. Castellucci's work, which regularly gets top billing at leading international festivals and theaters but infrequent showings in the United States. His own productions have never been presented in New York City.

By Mr. Castellucci's standards "Hey Girl!" is a modest piece, using only two primary performers (as well as 40 extras) and lasting 70 minutes. It begins with a fog-enveloped auditorium and a young woman (played by the 23-year-old Silvia Costa) who emerges naked from pink primordial slime. In a series of abstract, mostly wordless scenes, "Hey Girl!" explores the girl's tumultuous inner life and perception of feminine power and oppression.

Since Mr. Castellucci founded his theater company, the Societas Raffaello Sanzio, in Cesena with his sister Claudia in 1981, he has steadily won acclaim — and generated debate — for provocative, hallucinatory imagery and often apocalyptic themes. His notable successes include "Giulio Cesare," a 1997 [Shakespeare](#) adaptation in which ancient Rome was inhabited by ghostly performers, some with anorexic bodies or laryngectomies. "Genesi," his 1999 fantasia, juxtaposed biblical themes, images of radiation and sequences with several of Mr. Castellucci's six children riding on toy trains. Indirectly but chillingly, "Genesi" evoked the horror of Auschwitz.

In 2001 he initiated an ambitious three-year project: a nine-production cycle called "Tragedia Endogonia" (or

“Endogonic Tragedy”), original performed spectacles, each commissioned for a different city whose landscape and past became part of the director’s subject. The cities included Berlin, Brussels, London and Rome. (After their premieres in the host cities the “Tragedia” works toured worldwide for additional presentations; “L.#09,” the London episode, was presented at Montclair State in 2005.) The cycle’s cryptic title refers to one of Mr. Castellucci’s overall goals: to express “a tragedy of the future,” partly by making visceral allusions to Europe’s violent history.

His compositions, along with his jarring and sometimes disturbing visuals, reflect his early training as a painter and set designer. His company’s name refers to the Renaissance artist Raphael and the many painterly perspectives Mr. Castellucci tries to incorporate into his stage compositions.

“It’s a completely different notion of how to present a theatrical idea onstage,” said Charles Helm, director of performing arts at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, a stop on the current tour. “The term ‘live art’ — which I’m usually not comfortable with — is actually very apt for Romeo’s work.”

For this project Mr. Castellucci wanted to try something new. He built visual sequences for “Hey Girl!” around various symbols of femininity. Scenes reel through time and space, traversing the young woman’s mind. One moment she appears in beatific bliss; the next she is deformed by eerily unreal acts of male aggression and violence.

Sitting in a theater lobby at [Ohio State University](#), he said that “there’s a series of images which are very precise,” including Joan of Arc, the Virgin and Shakespeare’s Juliet — all associated with radiant, divine female adolescence.

Mr. Castellucci was also drawn to a series of Renaissance pictures by Fra Angelico. “When he paints the annunciation,” Mr. Castellucci said, “where the angel speaks, there’s a subtle line that goes from the mouth of the angel into the ear of the Virgin. It’s a line that goes across the canvas in diagonal fashion.” This image, represented on stage by a dazzling beam of light and a sonic roar, became the zenith of “Hey Girl!” “It’s like the person’s head is exploding, it’s so violent,” he added.

Following “Hey Girl!,” which had its premiere in Paris in 2006, he plans to return to larger works. In July the Avignon festival in France is to feature three entirely new productions by Mr. Castellucci, each an adapted segment of Dante’s “Divine Comedy.” An American premiere of the Dante trilogy is scheduled for autumn 2009 at the University of California, Los Angeles. “It will be the biggest thing we have ever been involved with,” said David Sefton, executive and artistic director of UCLA Live. But he has no doubts. “This company is probably the most original performance group in the world right now,” Mr. Sefton said.

Though Mr. Castellucci has established himself as a visual pioneer, comparable perhaps to [Robert Wilson](#), he is not at all complacent. He longs to make a film. And he said he doesn’t think the “Tragedia” cycle completely satisfied his original desire to express tragedy in new ways.

“The Greeks used a very beautiful word, ‘aporia,’” Mr. Castellucci said, suggesting a philosophical puzzle. “Violence is a big, dense theme that belongs to the theater,” he added. “It’s a laboratory under glass, the only possible place for violence.”

<http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/onstage/15668187.html>

Silvia Costa in "Hey Girl!"

Steirischerherbst/ManningerImage

'Hey Girl!' both striking and disturbing

THEATER REVIEW: While sometimes obvious, Romeo Castellucci’s image-laden take on the history of oppression of women gives physical form to potent ideas.

By **ROHAN PRESTON**, Star Tribune

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Italian theater visionary Romeo Castellucci finally has landed in the Twin Cities, and his work lives up to the hype.

"Hey Girl!" -- which opened on Valentine's Day at Walker Art Center -- is a mostly wordless show of striking sculptural images married to Scott Gibbons' vivid sound score and flickering lights designed by Giacomo Gorini and Luciano Trebbi.

Watching it Thursday in the haze of the McGuire Theater was like being trapped in a slowly unfolding dream that gave up glimpses of a cruel past.

"Hey Girl!" limns the oppression of women in history. It starts, compellingly, with a woman emerging from placental material on a table (gelatinous glop that keeps dripping during the whole performance). She finds a mirror and a light, and begins to discover her image, her voice, her culture of oppression.

It's a bit earnest at times, particularly since Castellucci uses captions. Besides, women have done more than suffer for the world.

Castellucci's manipulation of the images of the two main performers -- white, nymph-like Silvia Costa and her full-bodied darker sister-in-chains Sonia Beltran Napoles -- is also a bit obvious. The two women, both brave and commanding, complement each other.

"Hey Girl!" has such an overwhelming, feedback-laden score and such compelling imagery, I found myself enveloped not just by Castellucci's fog, but also by his themes. The show gives physical form to ideas of the distorting male gaze, both ethnographic and pornographic. It uses simple gestures in an imaginative way. And it juxtaposes aggression and beauty to our discomfort.

Dialogue from "Romeo and Juliet" is projected on a screen right after dozens of shadowy men beat Costa, with light flickering on and off, in an orgy of prehistoric and revolting aggression. (I closed my eyes during bits of it.)

In his essays in "Theatre and Its Double," French poet and playwright Antonin Artaud argued for a "theatre of cruelty" in which violence is necessary to strip away artifice.

As I watched "Hey Girl!" I thought of this school of performance not only as something one sees in theater, but as a part of life itself, a situation where the threat of sudden brutality envelopes a viewer, a condition where our serenity and ideals are mugged, a place where we absorb the blows of the world through our skin.

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- *Time Out New York / Issue 645 : February 6, 2008 - February 12, 2008*
- **Feminine product**
- **Director Romeo Castellucci explores the dark side of the female psyche.**
- *By Helen Shaw*

CHECK YOUR HEAD Silvia Costa uses her noggin in *Hey Girl!*

Photograph: Francesco Raffaelli

He is one of the big boys of international theater, cataloged alongside Ariane Mnouchkine and Peter Brook. He's Italian, but his nightmarish vignettes rarely use text—translation can't be the issue. So why have you never seen a Romeo Castellucci show? It may not be your fault: Castellucci's 27-year-old Societas Raffaello Sanzio (SRS) has never performed in New York.

Jed Wheeler has made it his mission to rectify that—or at least to get the director to New Jersey. Wheeler presented an episode from Castellucci's 11-part *Tragedia Endogonia* at Montclair State University's Kasser Theater (where Wheeler is executive director) three years ago, and he's still devoted. This week, he hosts *Hey Girl!*, a ghoulish 70-minute X-ray of femininity which has divided the critics. Wheeler, for one, sees

Castellucci as the next step along the Robert Wilson image-as-text path, terrifying audiences into an unprecedented level of engagement.

- Stanford Ph.D. candidate Daniel Sack, a rare stateside expert, studies Castellucci because he "tries to stage the beginnings of the world." It's a typically gob-smacked reaction to the work. Sack recalls wandering the streets of Dublin, stunned after seeing SRS's 1999 *Genesi: from the museum of sleep*. The piece riffled through horrifying images: an emaciated man forcing his way between screaming bars, defecating dogs ignoring a deformed Cain and Castellucci's own children in a hazy Wonderland-cum-Auschwitz. Flip through Castellucci's oeuvre and you'll find a black horse drenched in milk and orchestra seats full of six-foot velveteen rabbits. Such tableaux brook no analysis—they bypass critical faculties to burrow directly into the subconscious.

Castellucci originally trained as an artist, and his lush mise-en-scènes would fit comfortably in museums. But he and his regular collaborators (his sister Claudia and wife Chiara Guidi) don't simply frame pretty pictures. They are iconoclasts in the literal sense—displaying icons just to rip them from their niches. Describing his urge to create and destroy images, the director writes: "It is when a house is burning that one can see its structure." Castellucci's own expositions can be densely poetic—as helpful as talking to one of his soggy horses. But the work requires no explanation. "I've had nontheatergoing friends who liken SRS's work to Dalí, even Nine Inch Nails," Sack notes. Film buffs compare the director to David Lynch; fine-art fans think he is the neoplastic Neo Rauch.

Sack describes *Hey Girl!* as a departure. "Here he actually explored a character. I think he found that difficult," he says. Critics didn't find it much easier: *Hey Girl!* met with adulation after the Festival d'Automne in Paris last year, but American papers have been split. (The *Chicago Tribune* found it "compelling" but suffering from a "surfeit of victimhood"; *The Vancouver Sun* sniffed at its gender politics.) "There's something titillating in the scenario," Wheeler acknowledges. "Romeo launched the piece while watching girls going to school, but he uses the particular to talk about the general. He forces you to project onto it." Hey, audience! If you're having creepy thoughts, you have only yourselves to blame.

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/thearts/2004159233_girl02.html

Theater Review

With "Hey Girl," theater company evokes confusion of girlhood

By Misha Berson

Seattle Times theater critic

STEIRISCHERHERBST / MANNINGER

Silvia Costa in a mask in "Hey Girl!" by the Italian company Societas Raffaello Sanzio.

Repeat performances

"Hey Girl!" by Societas Raffaello Sanzio, 8 p.m. today-Sunday, On the Boards, 100 W. Roy St., Seattle; \$24 (206-217-9888 or www.ontheboards.org).

Young womanhood is a heroic quest and something of a horror movie, in the vivid, ear-rattling, unsettling performance piece "Hey Girl!"

Presented at On the Boards by Italy's celebrated experimental company Societas Raffaello Sanzio, this enveloping 80-minute work is a misty, inventive epic of sound and tableau.

It holds arresting moments, tedious ones, surprises and clichés. And it is very much a product of the postmodern European avant-garde, drawing on classical themes and iconography, and on the current zeitgeist, to evoke the landscape of growing up female now.

There are bits of English text. Names of doomed historic figures (Mary Stuart, Marie Antoinette). Verse from "Romeo and Juliet." Pleas ("Turn off the light!") and quandaries ("What must I do?"). And accelerating barrages of words, banal and loaded, seem to spew directly up from the unconscious onto projection screens.

But paramount in "Hey Girl" is the open-ended, dreamscape of more abstract images, clearly a specialty of chief auteur Romeo Castellucci and his collaborators, and more ambiguous than the play's predictable nods to girl power.

To a clanking, pounding, buzzing music track (composed by Scott Gibbons), a slender young woman (Silvia Costa) rises from a primeval bed of gelatinous ooze that keeps dripping in huge waxy ribbons through the piece. From this mucky chrysalis she wanders the foggy stage. Often a pathetic figure, she weeps, whimpers, is pummeled with pillows by a throng of men.

But she also commands the strength to wield a sword (à la Joan of Arc), and to "rescue" a partly nude, manacled young black slave (played by Sonia Beltran Napoles).

The imagery of racial oppression, so prevalent in American iconography, is rather hackneyed here. And liberation via an armor of silver coating and a pair of high heels is eye-popping but stilted.

"Hey Girl!" is more original in how it evokes the confusion and sensory bombardment of girlhood. A pencil-thin, diagonal strip of light appears to beam straight into Costa's skull, accompanied by a loud, brain-piercing buzz. (Note: Earplugs provided.)

And the final image, direct from Renaissance art, forcefully links the plight of a modern adolescent trying to claim her strength to centuries of artistic representations of women.

Few American performance artists work with such a broad historical canvas. The panoramic view is one of several good reasons to see "Hey Girl!," and to watch it with an open and critical mind.

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http://blog.dispatch.com/mgrossberg/2008/01/hey_girl_the_us_premiere_at_th.shtml

Hey Girl! -The dreamy U.S. premiere at the Wexner Center

Hey, central Ohio theatergoers! Want to see something you've never seen before - even at the adventurous Wexner Center for the Arts? Something visually striking? Something dreamy? Something almost impossible to describe or categorize? (But I'll try...) Then check out *Hey Girl!*

(PHOTO: An evocative moment from *Hey Girl!*)

But you'd better be quick: The U.S. premiere of the production by Italy's Societas Raffaello Sanzio has only two performances, which the Wexner Center for the Arts is presenting in Drake Center's Thurber Theatre. New concepts might be needed to describe this show and especially a visionary European director's distinctive painterly experimentalism.

RADIO

<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/wosu/arts.artsmain?action=viewArticle&sid=2&pid=210&id=1212546>

http://leisureblogs.chicagotribune.com/the_theater_loop/2008/01/hey-girl-review.html

Originally posted: January 19, 2008

'Hey Girl!' a tough lesson in growing up

THEATER REVIEW

We all enter this world accompanied by a lot of slimy goop. The goop gets promptly cleaned away. We continue on.

That goop—placenta, one supposes, as represented by some kind of rubberish, taffy-like substance—not only marks the beginning of "Hey Girl!," Romeo Castellucci's wholly arresting, if intellectually and emotionally troubling, performance piece at the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#), it remains on stage, slowly dripping like a wax candle marking the progression toward a girl's maturity.

Temporal matters are one of the several obsessions of this young Italian director, whose latest theatrical piece attracted a packed house Friday night. The theme, one supposes, is the paradox of girlhood and the dichotomy between self-actualization and vulnerability. But Castellucci's [Societas Raffaello Sanzio](#) has a formative

conception of theater. In other words, he's not much interested in linear narratives, words or ideological notions. This work—which draws heavily on contemporary notions of sculpture and other visual art—explores in strikingly explicit fashion the notion of the stage as a canvas shared by humans, masks, lasers, burning swords and the aforementioned goop.

It is most compelling. Castellucci only works with two exquisitely detailed and frequently naked actors—Silvia Costa and Sonia Beltran Napoles. But he has a truly remarkable talent for manipulating your gaze, and thus things seem to hide from you on the stage in plain view.

The piece also uses some simply astonishing masks. Remarkably, these masks (which are mostly outsized exaggerations of the lead performer's face), don't so much draw your eye by themselves. They make you aware of what they do to the actual human body that remains.

Even though it draws from images associated with such famous girls as Joan of Arc and Shakespeare's Juliet, this piece has a strangely assaulting quality, which came to bother me more and more as the 75 minutes progressed.

That's partly due to Castellucci's use of intentionally abrasive sounds and invasive visuals like lasers hitting the girl's face. Those are fair enough. The girl cries a great deal, and that sound hasn't left my head as I write. Which was probably the point. And the piece is suffused with violent imagery: At one point the girl gets hit by a slew of men with pillows and at another, the supporting African-American performer finds herself in chains, which is a image that has lost none of its power to shock.

Oppression is one of the themes here, and Castellucci surely goes for the jugular. You'll have to be up for that.

You will see things here you've never before seen in the theater done quite like this. It is a very arresting aesthetic. Still, by the end of the night, I was left with the sense that this is a male conception of girlhood. There isn't much articulation of the power of the female spirit to push back. There isn't much of a sense of humor. There isn't a great deal of emotional truth flowing from the inside

http://blogs.citypages.com/ctg/2008/02/a_naked_crashin.php

A naked, crashing, crying kind of gravity
Filed under: [Theater](#)

The presidential aspirations of Hillary Clinton have forced an American conversation about gender. But where that conversation is loudest--among the talking heads on the major television news networks--it is also the most inane. And it is without gravity. Could such a

primal thing as the relationship between gender and power really be handled with any integrity on television, in short segments and interrupted by ads hawking beer, cereal and luxury vehicles?

Romeo Castellucci knows something of gravity--the naked, crashing, crying kind. And for three days last week he gave gravity to every person who bought a seat at the Walker's McGuire Theater.

Photo: Steirischerherbst/Manninger

The program for *Hey Girl!* warned of "nudity and simulated violence." On opening night, two women sat waiting for the show and wondering they were in for. "I don't know," one said to the other, "but it's going to be loud and awesome." *Hey Girl!*, Castellucci's portrayal of the grace and horrors of womanhood, was both of those things.
Photo: Steirischerherbst/Manninger

More significantly, with barely a word spoken, *Hey Girl!* was the conversation America is *not* having about gender and power. That conversation begins with a question: How do we define Woman?

Castellucci suggests an answer in the shaved pubic areas of *Hey Girl!*'s two lead performers. From the theater seats the women appear sexless below below their breasts. But nothing about *Hey Girl!* is sexless. And what might have seemed a Barbie-like gender ambiguity in any other context is something far more sinister here: it is the long echo of Aristotle's assertion that the "the female is, as it were, a mutilated male."

Is this what the pundits mean when, pulling from the bottomless bag of English adjectives, they pick "shrill" to describe Hillary Clinton? Is "shrill" what is left when the "male" qualities are stripped away and the female politician stands naked before her audience?

Photo: Steirischerherbst/Manninger

Castellucci, of course, did not intend a commentary on America's presidential competition. But his is a kind of theater where, in his words, "the viewer is confronted with questions that automatically feed a debate."

Hey Girl! is 80 minutes of visceral, hypnotic theater--where a woman emerges from flesh-colored goo, perfume boils on sword, and a laser bores into a woman's head. There is exploding glass, ear-splitting static, decapitation, and a naked woman painted silver. All of this in service of an abstract narrative that has a young woman alternately whispering, convulsing, and asserting her way through the sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrible, always powerful symbols of womanhood and women's experience in the world. "She will need to harden herself," Castellucci writes of the two nameless women in his piece. "Half Joan of Arc, half Juliet, she will be torn between the desire to fight

for her freedom and a powerlessness that condemns her to wait to be saved.”

Hey Girl! is a universe inhabited by two nameless women--one white and one black. The white woman is born naked from ethereal goo at the start of the performance. The black woman walks on stage a half-hour later, crying under a giant mask of the white woman's face. She is stripped naked--gently--by the white woman and placed in chains. Her birth is less graceful. It comes when the white woman releases her from her chains. There is an ancient arrogance here: the notion that some are born free and others are gifted their freedom. If you can call Castellucci a feminist, he succeeds in *Hey Girl!* where the early stages of feminism failed: he refuses to isolate the struggles of gender from the struggles of race--and our presidential contest comes tumbling onto Castellucci's stage once more.

But he intended something more than a meditation on what he calls the “slavery, violence and servitude that still too often afflict women.” Of his main character, he says: “This anonymous girl, so far from being an icon of feminism, represents all of mankind. She is just someone hidden behind the archeology of the feminine form.”

It is easy to forget that this world of enormous gravity--this meditation on the “slavery, violence and servitude,” of women's experience--is the construction of a man: a visual artist from Italy. But perhaps, as a man, he is uniquely qualified for the task. When Jack Holland, author of the seminal *Misogyny: The World's Oldest Prejudice*, was asked why a man should attempt a study of Misogyny, he shot back: “Why not? It was invented by men.”

Posted by [Jeff Severns Guntzel](#) at February 19, 2008 9:38 AM

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/thearts/2004143062_otb27.html

Italian art informs experimental theater in "Hey, Girl!"

By Mary Murfin Bayley

Special to The Seattle Times

FRANCESCO RAFFAELLI

Silvia Costa in "Hey Girl!" by Societas Raffaello Sanzio, directed by Romeo Castellucci.

Coming up

"**Hey Girl!**," Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Thursday-next Sunday, On the Boards, 100 W. Roy St.; \$12-\$24 (206-217-9888 or www.ontheboards.org).

CESENA, Italy — Romeo Castellucci may be the very definition of an international contemporary artist. When I

caught up with him here in his Northern Italian hometown, his theater piece "Hey Girl!" was being performed in France and Germany before heading to the U.S., where it will come to On the Boards this week. His work has been praised by critics in Europe, Asia and America. Yet everything about him, from his romantic name and brooding handsomeness, to his theatrical aesthetic, with its emphasis on beauty and art-historical references as well as innovation, is quintessentially Italian.

"Growing up in Italy, certain images of art are inescapable," Castellucci said. "The first naked body I ever saw was in church. Every Sunday I stared at it. It was tortured but beautiful. No one said anything about it. It was a given. This iconography is breathed like air and becomes part of one's work."

We were sitting across from each other at a tiny table in the middle of a big practice hall in the Comandini Theater. Once a Mussolini era auto-mechanics school, the high-ceilinged building is now home for Societas Raffaello Sanzio, the company Castellucci began with his wife, Chiara Guidi, and his sister Claudia Castellucci in 1981.

As a long-term dance and performance critic in Seattle, where experimental artists have to scramble for every penny, it is eye-opening to visit the Europeans on their own turf. Here the work of dancers, choreographers and directors is given positive support. It is not lavish, and only the hardest working and most talented can obtain it, but it provides time and space for European artists to continue to experiment for a lifetime. The performance-art scene here, as a result, even far from the big cities is taken seriously and is exciting and energized.

Castellucci did his bit earlier in his career to help insure that public funding not become a form of public editing. When the radical nature of his work garnered negative attention — pieces have included naked performers revealing their physical differences, such as an anorexic girl and a woman with a mastectomy — the Ministry of Culture and Arts of the Republic of Italy tried to exclude his theater from funding by switching it from the experimental or "research theater" category to that of a commercial theater. Castellucci responded by holding a conference on the nature of censorship which earned the theater the special Ubu Prize for Resistance in 1996 from Italian critics.

Yet, he says, typically, his work is not intentionally political or didactic. Castellucci creates stage images with the focus and intention of a visual artist, reflecting his training at the University of Bologna and Academy of Fine Art. "I came into directing almost by accident. It was not so much a choice as something that arrived." He said, with a smile, that he had started out in agricultural and animal husbandry. "In the beginning I wanted to work with animals, and I also loved cars and machines."

His feeling for animals and machines still informs his directing and the role of the performers in his work. In his first piece after the company moved into and reclaimed the dilapidated buildings that became the Comandini

Theater in 1992, Castellucci used 300 live animals, including ducks, donkeys, dogs and pigs, in a retelling of Aesop. In a film clip from his recent "Tragedia Endogonia," two full-sized cars were dropped to the ground behind a performer who looks straight ahead without flinching.

Mechanical effects also play their part in Castellucci's startling, sometimes disturbing, images. In "Hey Girl!," a heated sword is used to burn the mark of a cross into a mantle. Mirrors seem to explode into thousands of pieces. A beam of vibrating light penetrates an actress's ear like a lightning bolt, making it look as if her silver-coated body were being electrified.

This last image is art-historical, a reference to the "Annunciation." The folk tradition of the annunciation scene is that the virgin's pregnancy was caused by the spirit entering the orifice of her ear, often depicted by Renaissance artists as rays of light or a banner of words. Here Castellucci says part of this particular "Annunciation" sequence is a long recitation of spoken, forbidden, words, enhanced with sound effects by American composer Scott Gibbons.

Castellucci has been using Gibbons sound scores for his works of theater for more than 10 years. The music includes the cries of animals, rattling bones, recorded machine and computer sounds. "The sound score brings to the stage a very specific quality. It is like a body with its own weight and presence," Castellucci said.

"Hey Girl!" follows actresses Silvia Costa and Sonia Beltran Napoles through a day which includes, among many other events, waking out of a bed of thick flesh-pink ooze and being coated in a silver substance that makes the naked body look armored. The conception and the title for "Hey Girl!" came to Castellucci when he happened to observe girls waiting for a bus, not speaking or looking at each other. The sight was like a door or "portal" that opened into the work, Castellucci said. He hopes that his theater functions as a series of such portals that the spectators enter, each audience member, in effect creating his or her own work of theater.

"The play watches the audience as much as the audience watches the play," Castellucci said, ascending into metaphysics and riffing on the fact that "play" in Italian is the same word as spectacle. "Each spectator needs to be as active as the performers and enter their own mental streets and palaces through the images on the stage."

For his next project Castellucci is moving into the complex world of Dante with a take on the "Divine Comedy." He apologizes that he will be deeply involved in that work and will not be able to be in Seattle when "Hey Girl!" comes to On the Boards.

Afternoon is setting in, and it's time for me to catch my train back to Florence, where I'm staying. Castellucci walks me through the theater. Lights are being set in the

simple stage-space with its wooden risers. In the office several administrators lean into computers. I can't help but think of the boys learning mechanics here so many years ago, of the animals rounded up by the young Castellucci for his first work here in his attempt to save the derelict building. It is Italy, after all, where images of the past inform the present. In Castellucci's case, this linking of innovation to a sense of history has created results that are making a stir in the most contemporary circles of international theater.

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<http://www.voir.ca/publishing/article.aspx?zone=1§ion=8&article=51653>

Romeo Castellucci

L'éternel féminin

ARTICLE - 31 mai 2007

Christian Saint-Pierre

Romeo Castellucci s'amène avec Hey Girl!, une oeuvre qui risque d'en surprendre plus d'un.

Dans le théâtre de l'inconscient que pratique **Romeo Castellucci**, le féminin a toujours joué un rôle primordial. Avec *Hey Girl!*, sa plus récente création, le metteur en scène italien entre dans le vif du sujet. "C'est vrai que j'ai beaucoup travaillé sur ce thème, mais pas vraiment d'un point de vue social ou symbolique. Cette fois, j'aborde le féminin comme une métaphore."

Selon le directeur de la Societas Raffaello Sanzio, la femme a le pouvoir de donner accès à la matière. "Où il y a une femme, il y a un corps. Alors que le masculin est traditionnellement associé à l'auteur, au verbe, donc au texte, le féminin est associé à la matière, au corps, donc au théâtre. Voilà pourquoi je préfère le féminin au masculin, la maternité à la paternité."

Ne parlez surtout pas de *mimesis* à Romeo Castellucci. Selon lui, le théâtre est, par définition, une porte vers l'inconnu. "Le théâtre est une forme d'art qui est capable de dépasser la réalité, de la suspendre, c'est une autre réalité, avec des lois différentes, des langages différents. Chaque fois, sur scène, il y a une naissance du langage, une découverte de celui-ci."

Dans *Hey Girl!*, **Silvia Costa** est la femme blanche, jeune et ingénue, du moins en apparence. **Sonia Beltran Napoles** incarne quant à elle la femme noire, la plus mature des deux. Selon le metteur en scène, il s'agit d'une seule et même personne. "Je crois qu'il s'agit des deux côtés d'un même personnage. Comme la lune, qui a une face visible et une face cachée. C'est une manière d'illustrer la division, la fracture et la grande solitude qu'il y

a dans le personnage, comme si elle arrivait à se regarder elle-même avec une distance."

POURFENDRE LES SYMBOLES

Après s'être extirpée d'une chrysalide visqueuse, cette femme, une nouvelle Ève, se réinvente et se redéfinit. Sous nos yeux, elle entre en lutte avec le langage et les symboles. Jeanne d'Arc, Juliette, la Vierge... les plus contraignants archétypes féminins sont évoqués, puis rejetés: "Bien sûr, il s'agit d'un travail avec les symboles, mais j'ajouterais aussi contre les symboles. Le symbole même est vécu comme un ennemi."

C'est dans la rue, en observant une bande de jeunes filles à un arrêt de bus, que Romeo Castellucci a trouvé l'inspiration pour son spectacle. Le metteur en scène a été heurté par le silence et la solitude, choqué par le mutisme et l'anonymat qui régnaient entre les fillettes qui s'interpellaient en criant "Hey Girl!". "Il y a actuellement dans nos villes un anonymat, une solitude et une mélancolie essentiellement féminins. Le sujet principal de *Hey Girl!*, c'est la solitude, l'impossibilité d'avoir un rapport positif avec les autres, la cité, la communauté."

Le metteur en scène nous prévient que ce nouveau spectacle est très différent de ceux qu'il a présentés précédemment. "*Oresteia* et *Genesi* étaient de grandes machines, *Hey Girl!* est une toute petite forme, un spectacle où il n'y a rien d'épique, où il n'y a pas la grandeur de la tragédie. Il a donc fallu retrouver une certaine gloire dans les gestes de chaque jour. Faire en sorte que des gestes banals deviennent une forme de prière, qu'ils deviennent historiques ou mythologiques."

À un moment charnière du spectacle, des hommes (des figurants engagés là où le spectacle est présenté) débarquent en meute pour se livrer à une bastonnade. Romeo Castellucci insiste pour dire qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une dénonciation des gestes posés par certains hommes contre la femme. "Ce sont des ombres, des silhouettes noires, une présence anonyme, un chœur qui symbolise la cité. Jusqu'à leur arrivée, le spectacle se déroule dans l'intimité du personnage. Quand il y a cette foule qui débarque, tout change radicalement."

Les 8 juin à 20h et 9 juin à 16 h
Au Grand Théâtre
Voir calendrier Théâtre

ooo

C.V.

Dans l'espace théâtral européen, la démarche de Romeo Castellucci est franchement incomparable. En 1981, à Cesena en Italie, Claudia et Romeo Castellucci, frère et soeur, et Chiara et Paolo Guidi, aussi frère et soeur, fondent la Societas Raffaello Sanzio. Depuis, le rayonnement de la compagnie n'a cessé de croître; les spectacles, créations et relectures, presque toujours controversés, trouvent des échos aux quatre coins du monde. Les Québécois peuvent d'ailleurs se targuer

d'avoir reconnu le talent de Romeo Castellucci avant les Français. En effet, en 1997, quand *Oresteia* a été invité au FTA, le créateur italien était encore inconnu dans l'Hexagone. Le théâtre de la Societas Raffaello Sanzio en est un des extrêmes, de la marge, de la mise à l'épreuve. Presque chaque fois, toutes les expressions artistiques y sont conviées, tous les sens y sont sollicités. Flirtant sérieusement avec les arts visuels et la performance, il magnifie le visuel et le sonore autant qu'il récuse l'hégémonie de la littérature. (C.S.-P.)

<http://chicago.metromix.com/home/review/hey-girl-needs-to/290330/content>

'Hey Girl!' needs to better justify its slime

By Chris Jones

Tribune
January

21,

critic
2008

We all enter this world accompanied by a lot of goop. The goop gets promptly cleaned away. We continue on through other kinds of slime.

That goop -- placenta, one supposes, as represented by a rubber-ish, taffylike substance -- not only marks the beginning of "Hey Girl!" -- Romeo Castellucci's arresting, if ultimately troubling, performance piece at the Museum of Contemporary Art. It also remains onstage, slowly dripping like a wax candle marking the progression toward a girl's maturity.

Temporal matters represent one of the several obsessions of this young Italian director, whose latest internationally touring theatrical piece attracted packed houses to the MCA this weekend. Themes include the paradox of girlhood and the dichotomy between self-actualization and vulnerability. But Castellucci's Societas Raffaello Sanzio has a formative conception of theater. In other words, he's not interested in linear narratives, words or ideological notions. This work -- which draws heavily on contemporary notions of sculpture and other visual art -- explores in strikingly explicit fashion the notion of the stage as a canvas shared by humans, masks, lasers, burning swords and the aforementioned goop.

As such, it is compelling. Castellucci only works with two exquisitely detailed and frequently naked actors -- Silvia Costa and Sonia Beltran Napoles. But he has a truly remarkable talent for manipulating your gaze, and thus things seem to hide from you on the stage in plain view. The piece also uses simply astonishing masks. These masks (mostly outside exaggerations of the lead performer's face), don't so much draw your eye by themselves. Rather, they make you aware of what they do to the rest of the body. It's as if the brain has exploded.

But even though it draws from images associated with such famous girls as Joan of Arc and Shakespeare's Juliet, this piece has an assaulting quality, which bothered me more and more over 75 minutes.

That's partly due to Castellucci's use of abrasive, ear-popping sounds and invasive visuals such as lasers hitting the girl's face. Fair enough. But the girl also sobs a great deal, and that sound hasn't left my head as I write. That was probably the point, but it still creates a surfeit of victimhood

<http://www.straight.com/article-130244/elegant-girl-gets-victimized?#>

Silvia Costa helps conjure a breathtaking, unsettling vision of vulnerability in Romeo Castellucci's ambitious Hey Girl!

January 31, 2008

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Elegant Girl gets victimized

By Colin Thomas

HEY GIRL!

By Romeo Castellucci. A Societas Raffaello Sanzio production. Presented in association with Theatre at UBC as part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival. At the Frederic Wood Theatre on Wednesday, January 23. No remaining performances

Italian theatre maker Romeo Castellucci delivers the imagery of dreams. Unfortunately, he wraps them in a lecture.

In Hey Girl! Castellucci muses on female experience. When his explorations feel the most intuitive, the visuals he creates are unforgettable.

The first thing you see is a large mass of some putty-like substance heaped on a long metal table and oozing to the ground. A female form starts to emerge. There's an exquisite vulnerability to her slight shape. Watching her struggle to free herself is like watching a birth—or glimpsing the most fragile part of yourself during a crisis.

With lighting technicians Giacomo Gorini and Luciano Trebbi, Castellucci sculpts space. The woman (played by Silvia Costa) holds up a mirror and a beam of light bounces off it. Other beams slice through the playing area, creating an elegant minimalist web.

And some of the repeated symbols, including portals, are resonant. The woman gazes at the audience through her mirror and through circles of glass that descend. For me, this was all about cultural framing. When Costa, who is white, looks at another performer, Sonia Beltran Napoles, who is black, through a series of these windows, is she viewing her through lenses such as race, place, time, and class? One of the most exciting moments comes when the lenses suddenly shatter, and separate viewpoints fuse in the instant of surprise.

Too often, though, Castellucci's symbolism is deliberate, even pretentious. Costa's character succumbs to the lures of lipstick and perfume—she draws the latter across her throat as if slitting it—then raises a huge sword, presumably the blade of her impotent anger. She bangs out her futile rage on a large drum. And she whines and whimpers all the bloody time. I got sick of Castellucci presenting his representatives of femaleness as victims. And the males—a slave owner, and a phalanx of men who beat the frail Costa—are all thugs. Just in case we missed the point that we're all culpable, she and Napoles level accusing fingers at us.

Stunning moments. Stale analysis.

http://www.realtimemarts.net/feature/RealTime_@_PuSH/8832



hey girl!: ache and awe

alex ferguson

Alex Lazaridis Ferguson is a theatre artist based in Vancouver. He writes plays, acts, and occasionally directs. He's also a founding member of the performing poetry ensembles, AWOL Love-Vibe and VERBOMOTORHEAD. His writings on theatre have appeared in publications such as Canadian Theatre Review, The Boards, Transmissions.

I don't want to see this. About twenty-five men in street clothes stand together at the back of the stage. A small, blonde, white woman — she could pass as an adolescent — walks toward them. Not long ago they had beaten her. Someone is crying, I don't know who. It's coming from behind the men. The woman walks toward them. I don't want her to go near them, but she does, passing through them untouched. She re-emerges leading another woman, a black woman. But the black woman has the white woman's head. Her jaw, her eyes, her nose, her short-cropped hair. This head, though, is five times the size. It's a huge, very life-like replica.

The white woman undresses the black woman, and my anxiety rises. The men leave the stage. All except one white man who, unlike the others, is in 19th century costume, including top hat. He holds out a hand toward the black woman, exhibiting her, offering her. My anxiety increases. The white woman whispers to the black woman, "I'm so sorry." She then leaves her with the man, who fetches a pile of hay, and leads the black woman to it. He chains her. This, more than anything, is what I don't want to see. I don't want to see a female slave auctioned off like a mule on a pile of straw. The man holds out his inverted top hat. The white woman observes the slave woman through four discs—like windows—hanging one behind the other. The windows are streaked and dirty. What image of the slave is the white woman seeing through these glass veils?

Above, the lines from Romeo and Juliet's balcony scene are projected on a large screen: "How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?...the place death, considering who thou art, if any of my kinsmen find thee here." "With love's wings did I o'erperch these walls; For stony limits cannot hold love out." Where is love in this triangle? And to whom do I attribute the lines? Is the black woman Juliet, the white woman Romeo? Or is the man with top hat either? All of them, none of them? The white woman now digs into her low-rider jeans and produces some coins. She walks to the auctioneer and pays the fee. Is this simple complicity or is she paying for the slave's freedom? I feel my heart may be breaking. It's been coming for some time, this sense of grief welling up. Then something shatters. I think I feel a membrane burst in my chest. But it's the four windows, which all at once have exploded in mid-air, showering the stage with glass.

I'm crying. It's been coming since the beginning, when the white girl-woman first emerged, chrysalis-like, from the slime of a latex cocoon, when she first crawled like a new-born calf across the strange fluorescent landscape, which is also a soundscape where distant melodies arrive as if through a ventilation shaft. The images from the misty landscape are dense and shifting: a massive broad-sword out of the middle ages next to a bottle of perfume and a tube of lipstick; the girl-woman kneeling, like Joan of Arc, pledging allegiance—but to what? God, king, church, capitalism? Whatever it is, it isn't hers; it's an imposition that's going to use and betray her—as Joan was betrayed. "Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay'; And I will take thy word." The girl-woman holds up a sheet, which has just had an 'x' burned into it by the giant sword. She stands at the center of that 'x', perhaps unconsciously making herself a target.

What's this about, this heaving in my chest, this performance? I think it's about one woman's experience of being a woman. And me, a man sitting in the auditorium? It's about one man's imagining of that woman's experience. It's about the betrayal of this woman —of women, of innocence, of trust and of love. And it's about making contact with those things momentarily, making and losing it at the same time. It's also about sitting in awe at the work of art unfolding before me, at the restless shifting of symbols: first a big bass marching drum, then that drum being held by a naked woman, then the woman weeping over it, then the woman pounding it with the mallets while weeping. Meanings accumulate, line up side by side without cancelling each other out. The black woman is a slave. The black woman is painted silver by the white woman and given a sword. The silver-painted, armoured black woman puts on high heels. What is feminine, what is masculine, what is submission, what is rebellion? Hey Girl! doesn't collapse these things to a single point. It enfolds meanings then distributes them liberally. There is plenty of room in this world for my personal ache and wonder.

Hey Girl! gets a hold of me and doesn't let go for 75 minutes. It ended at 8:45 last night. It's now almost noon

and I've barely slept. I keep turning the images over in my head, the ones I drank in and the ones I couldn't look away from. Director Romeo Castellucci, his designers, and the two women, Silvia Costa and Sonia Beltran Napoles, did that rare thing: they dislodged my thinking, allowing the images to bypass my mind and go directly to my body. They fed me, and they made me see what I didn't want to see. "Therefore pardon me, And not impute this yielding to light love, Which the dark night hath so discovered."

Societas Raffaello Sanzio, Hey Girl!, director, design, lights, costumes Romeo Castellucci, performers Silvia Costa, Sonia Beltran Napoles, original music Scott Gibbons, statics and dynamics Stephan Duve, lighting technique Giacomo Gorini, Luciano Trebbi, sculptures Plastikart, Istvan Zimmerman; Frederic Wood Theatre, University of British Columbia, Jan 23-26; PuSh International Festival of Performing Arts, Jan 16-Feb 3

Alex Lazaridis Ferguson is a theatre artist based in Vancouver. He writes plays, acts, and occasionally directs. He's also a founding member of the performing poetry ensembles, AWOL Love-Vibe and VERBOMOTORHEAD. His writings on theatre have appeared in publications such as Canadian Theatre Review, The Boards, Transmissions.

RealTime issue #83 Feb-March 2008 pg. 8

<http://www.peakperfs.blogspot.com/>

Monday, February 11, 2008

Turning a Corner

I was flattered that the New York Times sent a theater critic to review *Hey Girl!* by the Italian stage auteur Romeo Castellucci. Although Peak Performances has offered numerous other theater events, none has ever received a critique from the cultural paper of record. The Star Ledger on the other hand has been a loyal follower of our work, providing insightful remarks about the varied artists on the Kasser stage. Hard to imagine writing about a stage work that is essentially visual theater – meaning that there is little conventional text or statements by performers to guide a patron into the world unfolding before one's eyes – without at least one illustration. No pictures in that New York Times' review. While, on the other hand, the Star Ledger not only produced a penetrating summary with some keen insight but also offered a picture! The Times writer – apparently a gentle soul with considerable theater chops delved into *Hey Girl!* in search of a story, perhaps even a plot and, in fact found one. One can't say whether the analysis had much to do with Romeo's intentions, but then "post dramatic" theater is not about playwrights anyway. The power of the word to guide an audience and create catharsis has no place in 21st century Theater – at least not in Romeo's mind. Having done what the 20th

century critic often does – describes what he sees, the Times writer lamented that Romeo's vision of womanhood was bleak and unredeemable. Womanhood isn't always about oppression, he said, they have done more and aren't merely victims. I can't say whether Romeo feels that way, but I wonder about Tennessee Williams' character Blanche DuBois and would the Times have said the same thing about *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Hey, Tennessee, couldn't you find a better way of ending your tragedy??

Audiences for *Hey Girl!* were outstanding – yes, we think about marketing and audience development daily. A cross section of folks turned up. Three buses from Manhattan on Saturday. Two on Sunday. Practically every seat in house taken packed to the rafters with adventuresome New Jerseyans from all over the state! And then the conosci: Matthew Barney, Chuck Mee, Marianne Weems, Susan Marshall and staggering assortment of New York theater Workshopers and the venerable stage director Robert Woodruff – who hugged me and said: "I don't often hug producers!"

Peak Performance is Turning a Corner
Friday night included a woman and her daughter. For reasons that remain mysterious, the mom was sitting in the balcony and the daughter in the orchestra near the stage. At the conclusion of a faux bludgeoning scene with pillows involving 35 men and one girl, the mom decided her daughter should not stay for the rest of the "show". The mom drafted our house manager to rescue the girl and to creep into the theater ('cause the house manager was wearing black) and spirit her daughter away!!! Once confronted with mom's edict, the girl refused to leave and sent her older friend seated next to her to pass the new to her mom – "No way!" What was that helicopter mom seeing that she thought might frighten her daughter? Or was it the other way around, what frightened the mom into thinking her girl would be traumatized. Nothing that Romeo created, I can assure you...hey girl!

Cheaps seats do the trick – the way of the future for the performing arts. What is it about the \$15 that frees the mind? Lowers those defenses? Provides a person with strength of character to learn to fly? Paying three or four times that amount just possibly closes out the senses. Speaking of which, much has been made of Romeo's Visual theatre. I've even described his work as post-Wilson. Yet, the more I watch, I find that his theater is best left free of labels or, if one must categorize, let's call his work 'Theatre of the Subconscious'.

<http://www.canada.com/cityguides/vancouver/story.html?id=43388646-2e9e-49de-b1bc-dd8b3c48f446&k=21825>

Hey Girl! Enough already!

Must-see Italian cultural creation pretentiously poignant

Stuart Derdeyn , The Province

ART REVIEW

Hey Girl!

When and where: Tonight/tomorrow, 7:30 p.m. at Frederic Wood Theatre, UBC

The birth scene in Italian avant-gardist Romeo Castellucci's performance-art installation Hey Girl! is all goo-shedding awesomeness. As for the rest of the meditation on womaness, it's powerful but often over the top.

Don't go see Hey Girl! if dry-ice fog, strong perfume and a smoky atmosphere affects you. There are plenty of all three in Italian avant-gardist Romeo Castellucci's hyper-stylized performance-art meditation on being and womaness.

Don't miss it if you seek contemporary Italian cultural creation bound to contort your senses.

Expect the majority of this city's arts scenesters to wax on about the brilliance of the creator, the depth and scope of the thematic statement about Western society's antagonistic adoration of the feminine and on and on. It's all there. But underneath, they may also be scared to admit that this 70-minute living installation often veers perilously close to emperor's new clothes' pretentiousness.

The longer the viewer is separated from the initial impact of seeing the show on stage, the more powerful its core arguments.

The opening "birth" -- where one actor emerges out of primordial goo, shedding layers along the way until only the suit she arrived in remains -- is awesome.

The near-ceremonial adoption of medieval images of Joan of Arc or the Virgin Mary are slyly toppled with a single line: "I hate symbolism. This medieval stuff is shit!" There is no question that one-time visual artist Castellucci knows his space/time continuum. Every sequence develops on its own terms.

When these are clearly noted, it's brilliantly effective. Elsewhere, it's too busy.

I was particularly moved by the assault upon the "female" character by a giant gang of pillow-wielding thugs. In one very long, repetitive bashing of sobs and shadows, sexual

subjugation of women by men via the bedroom-bludgeon metaphor is potently defined.

When the silver body-painted African "slave" was forced to dance redundantly in the dark while a word montage ("America," etc.) ran by on screens and multiple "windows of perception" shattered across the stage, it was impossible not to declare: "Enough!"

Part of the blame goes to Scott Gibbons' pedantic original music. Using industrial drones at excruciating volume for an attempt at grand analysis of society being deaf to women's issues is woefully tired. In a production of such mesmerizing technical prowess, even sloppy.

None of which takes away from Hey Girl! being one of those all-too-rare examples of art that you may truly need to see. Even if you aren't sure whether you loved or despised it.

sderdeyn@png.canwest.com

Catch Stu's New Music Tuesdays on Global's Morning News at 8:45 a.m., Tuesdays, and Stu's Weekend Fun File on Global's Weekend Morning and Noon News.

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http://www.festival-avignon.com/fichiers/document/117993132046/file_Entretien_avec_Romeo_Castellucci.pdf
 entretien avec Romeo Castellucci
 Comment est né le projet Hey girl ! ?
 Romeo Castellucci : L'idée du titre est antérieure au projet. Elle m'est venue un jour où, assis dans ma voiture, je mesuis arrêté à un feu rouge. J'ai vu sur le trottoir un groupe de jeunes filles attendre pour traverser. Ce fut un déclic, comme une lueur, et le titre du spectacle est arrivé très simplement. Je n'ai eu qu'à suivre cette indication dans le travail qui s'est organisé à partir de là. Un travail nouveau pour moi puisque pour la première fois, je n'avais pas de projet pré-établi. J'avais un titre... c'était tout. Ce titre peut être interprété de multiples façons: un cri d'admiration, un appel à la rencontre... Pour vous, qu'en est-il? C'est absolument les deux, avec une part de vulgarité assumée. Mais ce "Hey" peut être aussi une sorte d'équivalent du mot "Ave" dans la formulation "Ave Maria". Toutes les interprétations, de la plus sombre à la plus lumineuse, de la plus noire à la plus heureuse, sont possibles. Ce qui est le plus constant sur le plateau, c'est la polarité des êtres, des sensations et des objets. Certains symboles sont envisagés de plusieurs points de vue différents, positifs ou négatifs, ce qui permet de se libérer d'une symbolique, d'une mythologie, univoque, lourde et devenue sans intérêt. Il faut traverser les symboles, les percer de part en part pour obtenir cet anéantissement. C'est ce qui justifie la présence d'une épée dans les mains de l'héroïne ? Oui mais c'est une épée qui brûle les mains de la femme qui l'utilise. L'épée

permet donc de vaincre l'ennemi, mais elle se retourne aussi contre son utilisatrice. Cette ambiguïté, née de la polarisation, est au centre de mon travail. Dans ce spectacle, comme dans les épisodes de la Tragedia Endogonia, les objets, les accessoires présents et utilisés par les actrices peuvent-ils donner lieu à des interprétations multiples ? Le théâtre doit offrir à chaque spectateur la possibilité de rêver, d'imaginer et de fantasmer à partir de ce qui est présent sur le plateau. Le spectateur doit composer son propre spectacle, c'est sa responsabilité entière. Il ne faut pas la lui retirer. C'est la constellation de tous ces rêves, de tous ces fantasmes qui fait la force du théâtre. Dans l'époque actuelle, nous devons repartir de ce rôle du spectateur pour reconstruire politiquement le théâtre. Tout au long de la journée, nous sommes des spectateurs souvent impuissants alors qu'au théâtre, le spectateur est actif et responsable. Je ne suis pas pédagogue, mais je dois redéfinir ce qu'est le regard au théâtre. Ce n'est pas un regard de voyeur mais un regard qui traverse tout le corps. Un regard qui peut toucher, bouleverser. Une fois le titre trouvé, comment avez-vous procédé ? J'ai demandé à une actrice de travailler avec moi à partir d'exercices que je lui ai proposés. Je me suis aussi servie de ses propositions, et les répétitions ont duré deux mois, ce qui est exceptionnel pour moi puisque je préfère des répétitions très concentrées. Il ne reste d'ailleurs qu'une infime partie de ce travail dans le résultat final qui est présenté au public parce qu'il a fallu trouver une structure capable de soutenir le regard et de toucher le spectateur. Kafka disait qu'après un incendie, on voyait la structure de la maison brûlée et c'est en ce sens que j'emploie le mot structure. Il faut trouver l'élégance de cette structure, sa dynamique, faite de plein et de vide, et le rythme qui l'impulse, fait d'accélération et de ralentissements. Au final, il y a une forme que l'on peut appeler le corps du spectacle, celui qui doit embrasser le corps des spectateurs. Mais dans le spectacle que vous présentez, il y a deux actrices ? Oui, la seconde actrice est arrivée plus tard dans le processus de création. Je voulais qu'il y ait une sorte de double du personnage principal, une sorte d'alter ego amplifié. Il s'agit du même personnage, mais il se multiplie, se fragmente, c'est le résultat d'une dynamique de croissance. Ces deux actrices incarnent plusieurs personnages appartenant tous à la mythologie de la femme ou de la jeune fille : Jeanne d'Arc, Juliette, Ophélie, Iphigénie, la Vierge Marie... Lorsque vous parlez d'ambiguïté des personnages et des objets présents sur le plateau, ne pensez-vous pas qu'il y ait aussi une ambiguïté sur ce que raconte ce spectacle ? Est-ce la journée d'une femme de son réveil à son coucher où un voyage dans l'univers de la féminité, vue par un homme ? Les deux sont intimement liés, comme les deux faces d'une même réalité qu'on verrait à travers un objet transparent. La banalité du quotidien trouve une certaine grandeur sur le plateau du théâtre. Il faut la penser à travers une forme paradoxale de la mythologie qui pourrait être: "le rien", "le vide", "la solitude". Vous retrouvez-vous dans cette femme que vous mettez en scène ?

Oui car le spectacle n'est pas sexiste. Je me sens comme Flaubert qui disait "Madame Bovary, c'est moi". Ce n'est pas un spectacle parlant d'une femme aux autres femmes.

On reconnaît des images de femmes combattantes, de femmes séductrices, de femmes esclaves... mais y a-t-il une image de la femme amoureuse ?

Elle est présente par les extraits de Roméo et Juliette de Shakespeare qui défilent sur des écrans. Ces textes sont en décalage avec ce qui se passe sur scène, mais ils dégagent une force incroyable. Ils témoignent de la distance qui existe entre le langage et l'expérience vécue. Le langage est vécu comme une forme possible de "l'ordure" puisque Shakespeare lui-même, dans son texte, critique radicalement le langage, la politique du langage. Juliette, en parlant du pouvoir de la parole, dit clairement que le langage, et les mots qui le composent, empêchent la vie et l'amour ; les mots sont des projectiles dangereux qui percent la tête à grande vitesse. Elle dit à Roméo "c'est ton nom qui est mon ennemi, pas ton corps". L'amour est donc présent dans le spectacle, c'est même le noyau central, mais sous la forme du manque d'amour qui entraîne une grande solitude.

Quel statut donnez-vous au texte dans votre travail en général ?

C'est un des éléments indispensables à la représentation, mais il ne faut jamais oublier que le texte, qu'il soit de Molière ou de Shakespeare, était lié à une représentation sur la scène, à une écriture de la scène. Aujourd'hui, il ne reste que les mots sur le papier qui ne peuvent pas être la mémoire complète de ce qu'était la représentation. Il y a une déformation, un manque que l'on ne doit jamais oublier. Avec ces textes, il y avait des choses à voir et pas seulement des mots à entendre.

Vos spectacles ne sont-ils pas des appels à venir rencontrer des inconnus qui nous deviennent familiers et qui nous soumettent des énigmes, sans apporter forcément de réponses ?

Oui mais parfois la rencontre peut ne pas se faire... Je travaille cependant volontairement sur des images universelles et radicalement simples qui appartiennent à tout le monde mais qui sont aussi des images à pervertir, à détourner.

Les objets peuvent avoir une valeur qu'ils n'ont pas dans la vie, ce qui peut être perturbant. Comme disait Antonin Artaud, il faut "brûler les questions", et j'ajouterai qu'il ne faut pas apporter de réponses parce qu'il n'y a pas de réponses possibles. Ce n'est pas, pour moi, le rôle du théâtre.

Après Hey girl !, envisagez-vous un Hey boy ! ?

En créant Hey girl !, je cherchais un théâtre plus intime après l'expérience de l'énorme machine infernale que fût la Tragedia Endogonia. À l'avenir, j'aimerais faire un Hey boy ! comme dans un tableau de la Renaissance, de Piero de la Francesca par exemple, où il y a deux portraits côte à côte, celui de la femme et celui de l'homme.

Votre compagnie s'appelle Societas Raffaello Sanzio. Qu'y a-t-il de "raphaëlesque" dans Hey girl ! ?

La même chose que dans les autres... Raphaël était tourmenté dans ses tableaux par la perfection de la

forme, des lumières, des volumes, des équilibres et en même temps, il avait le sentiment du doute et la perception de l'abîme.

Cette ambivalence explique que nous l'ayons choisi comme figure tutélaire de notre travail.

Propos recueillis par Jean-François Perrier en février 2007

<http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/onstage/15411076.html>

Italy's 'archaeologist of the spirit'

European theater legend Romeo Castellucci debuts in the Twin Cities with "Hey Girl!," a show about gender.

By **ROHAN PRESTON**, Star Tribune

Advance word has it that "Hey Girl!" by Italian auteur Romeo Castellucci and his Societas Raffaello Sanzio is a stunner: "Hypnotically beautiful with a visual resonance that you find all too rarely onstage," said the Financial Times of London in a November 2006 review.

You may be at a loss for words if you see "Hey Girl!" during its brief run starting Thursday at Walker Art Center. You may love it or hate it.

Castellucci's wordless creations, which often overwhelm and flummox viewers, have cleaved audiences into those who quicken to his sometimes sexually taboo images or those who are repelled by his stage violence, including the sight of two naked women being beaten by up to 40 men.

"No moderate reaction is possible," wrote one critic in the (London) Independent eight years ago. "He is there either to be hailed as a theatrical visionary or to be denounced as a tailor -- not merely of the Emperor's New Clothes -- but of an entire new regal fashion-chain."

Count Philip Bither, curator of performing arts at the Walker, as one of those who was knocked out by Castellucci's vision. "This is one of those shows that you appreciate by its wonder, by the power of its theatrical visuals," he said. "It defies the simple measurement of something that you like or don't like. This is the kind of show that moves you viscerally."

Intro to America

"Hey Girl!" is a tragedy about the archetypal beauty, strength and oppression of women. It begins with an Eve-like figure rising from primeval glop. She then goes on a growth journey, with allusions to such figures as Joan of Arc and historical queens who have been beheaded.

"Hey Girl!" may be Castellucci's break-out in America -- it is his first work to play Minnesota and one of the few to be

presented in this country. But he is well-known in other parts of the world for his violent mixture of imagery, science fiction, history and abrasive sounds -- he draws aesthetic inspiration from Antonin Artaud's "theatre of cruelty."

Castellucci's "Genesi," which premiered in 1999, fused biblical stories of creation and destruction with human history, including the Holocaust. (The Sydney Morning Herald called the show "a cataclysmic dream" of "potent symbols, painterly composition and extraordinary soundscape.")

Castellucci, 47, and his company also created a shocking "Giulio Cesare" in 1997, a production in which an actor inserted an endoscope with a tiny camera attached so that we could see projected images of his vocal cords as he spoke.

In another show, the Italian theater-maker had three cars dropped from the ceiling of a Parisian theater to violently disorient the audience.

The sculptural vision of Castellucci -- he trained in visual arts and his company is partly named for the artist Raphael -- is all for a greater cause, said the Walker's Bither.

"When you look at the kinds of things that he has done, how he is able to cut through the artifice of performance and excavate things deep in the human psyche, he is really an archaeologist of the spirit," he said.

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http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/theater/349052_heygirl29.html

A fierce twist on waiting for a bus Italian company performs 'Hey Girl!'

By **REGINA HACKETT**
P-I ART CRITIC

Romeo Castellucci, director of the Italian theater company Societas Raffaello Sanzio, saw the structure of "Hey Girl!" in his head as he watched a group of young women at a bus stop.

He was thinking about their mornings, how they rouse themselves, stretch and dress, prepare a face for what will face them.

Women might have stood at that bus stop for decades, and no one else would have seen them in the way Castellucci did, as emblems of feminine experience from primal ooze to the present.

Theater mirrors reality. If that mirror cracked and its splinters fell into wells made of laser light, the metaphor might work for "Hey Girl!" It takes place somewhere in the deep structure of the ordinary, not its superego but

its id. Of course that could describe a theatrical hell on earth, pretentious claptrap meets special effects. What saves Castellucci are his gifts for economy and his ability to express primary information through visuals, and emotions through raw, even abrasive music.

"Hey Girl!" opens on a stage shrouded in fog. The first notes heard are slow, as if the music itself is waking up. Light gradually reveals a gelatinous goo sliding from a table to the floor. From that goo, a woman emerges, naked as a newborn, followed by another. The two central characters in the production (Silvia Costa and Sonia Beltran Napoles) sometimes wade through muck, but the audience doesn't have to. "Hey Girl!" rolls hypnotically along, each woman a history of women, from Catherine the Great and Joan of Arc to Coco Chanel and Juliet without her Romeo.

Never are they abstractions. Fierce or broken, they are always rooted in the reality of the body, even when their faces become masks of their faces and their bodies are hard and blank, shining like stones in a stream.

Founded in 1981 and famous in Europe, Castellucci's company has never performed in the Northwest. Its range extends from classics of Western theater to original productions of ancient texts, such as Genesis. In the 1990s, the company won an Ubu Prize for resistance, after the Italian Ministry of Art and Culture sought to ban its productions. Public support caused the government to reconsider. In 2005, Castellucci was festival director for the theater arts division of the Venice Biennale.

"I believe that art is a danger and a risk," Castellucci said in an interview that can be downloaded from On the Boards' Web site, ontheboards.org. (Previews on YouTube for "Hey Girl!" can be found at goto.seattlepi.com/r1237.)

"It's important to put ourselves into that risk, to protect the strangeness of theater."

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<http://www.montheatre.qc.ca/dossiers/carrefour/2007/heygirl.html#critique>

par Magali Paquin
Exit le prêt-à-avaler des messages et des significations; «Hey girl!» est au contraire une pièce que le spectateur doit s'approprier. Bien qu'ayant un fil conducteur défini, cette production de l'Italien Romeo Castellucci évoque plutôt qu'elle n'affirme, expose sans expliquer. Avec cette expérience hybride entre théâtre et performance, l'événement Théâtres d'Ailleurs propose un spectacle inaccoutumé, qui risque toutefois de ne pas faire l'unanimité.

Par de multiples tableaux s'arrimant autour de la femme, sont évoqués la violence et les drames subis par elles par-delà les lieux et le temps. Sombre et tragique est la destinée féminine ici tracée; femmes violentées, femmes victimes, femmes esclaves, femmes en pleurs, femmes dont la nudité accentue la vulnérabilité. Entre les lignes de ce grave portrait se dessine pourtant une force tranquille, l'acharnement de vivre. Mais qu'on oublie la sérénité, le dynamisme ou la confiance en soi, la femme représentée l'est uniquement sous l'angle de la victimisation, un choix qui n'est d'ailleurs pas sans conséquences sur l'image qu'on en projette. Le sexe faible, dit-on?... Cette expression prend malheureusement ici tout son sens.

Si les scènes se succèdent sans lien apparent et si leur signification demeure souvent abstraite, une profonde émotion, elle, s'impose. Aux murmures et aux sanglots des actrices (Silvia Costa, Sonia Beltran Napoles) s'oppose la brutalité des hommes. Quarante figurants masculins, tous âges et tous gabarits confondus, s'acharnent à grands coups sur la femme. Et celle-ci de bredouiller des excuses, en se frayant ensuite un chemin parmi eux. Certes, certaines scènes sont intenses. Dans un espace relativement dépouillé, objets et matières se combinent à l'humain pour susciter de puissantes images, souvent marquées d'une symbolique plus ou moins évidente. Cette substance visqueuse est peut-être la source originelle de la vie, ce parfum est appliqué comme si l'on tranchait la gorge, ce L et ce R tonitruants évoquent un tiraillement idéologique. Tissu roussi, verre brisé, têtes enflées, épée ardente, tambour battant... En définitive, le spectateur est lui-même acteur, contraint qu'il est d'appliquer sa propre lecture aux scènes qui se déroulent sous ses yeux. Cependant, à en juger les applaudissements modérés du public, « Hey girl! » en a laissé plusieurs interloqués.

À mi-chemin entre l'expérience visuelle et le théâtre, «Hey girl!» est une dénonciation soutenue et implacable des préjudices subis par les femmes. Il s'agit aussi d'un hommage à leur force, bien que l'accent soit mis sur leur vulnérabilité. Malgré ses images choc qui peuvent marquer les esprits, la réussite de cette pièce est incertaine; le péripète intérieur illustré sur les planches demeure somme toute peu accessible au public dans son abstraction, et relativement stéréotypé dans sa représentation.

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<http://www.mcachicago.org/pdfs/performances/3b5a7Sanzio%20Program%20Notes.pdf>

Hey Girl! is language as gesture. A bit of language that can only do its work with the participation of the hand and the eye. Perhaps it's a nod, a finger pointed and an eyebrow raised. Hey Girl. A laconic greeting, a moment of recognition. Or perhaps, more fiercely, a call and a summons to appear. Hey Girl. Several times, however, on the lips of Italian friends, it has sounded like the name of a famous philosopher of history. Hegel. We might think of the practice of theatre as a kind of archaeology of gesture, and the theatre itself as an archive of gestures

retrieved, reanimated, and displayed in public. Such practice is not without its perils. To retrieve and reanimate is to restore something of lived historical experience, but also, potentially, in that restoration, to crown it with a kind of inevitability that is stubbornly ahistorical: to produce it not as contingent historical artefact, but as manifest destiny. You were always going to hear voices, take up arms against the English, and die at the stake, weren't you, Jeanne? Might this be what is going on with our everyday girl? Does destiny for her lie in the flicking back of her hair from her face, or in a precisely executed tug at the hem of a T-shirt? Or perhaps in the instantly codified terminology of her MySpace profile? Might not these tics and tremors of adolescence coerce as powerfully as the mythical seizure of a sword, or an act of dedication to doomed romance? Jeanne? Juliet? The theatre, after all, is the place where, night upon night, the reproduction of gesture—first intentional, and soon almost involuntary—shapes a physiology, works through the body to make someone else appear. So we might be inclined to think that all this perfecting of movement and expression for stage presentation is just an intensification of the way in which we move about and make ourselves in what passes for the real world. The theatre imitates our constant self-imitation, until we have got ourselves down, just perfectly, but for someone else. Because we sit and attend to the production of these gestures, we can hardly avoid feeling that they are being made for us. They are intended for us, for us alone; they are the response to our gesture of recognition, to our call, and our summons. Hey Girl, we said, waving our hands, and now look. Look what happens when you start calling the shots. Now the theatre is not so much about the girl and her gestures, but about whatever gesture of ours it was that made her that way. Romeo Castellucci has been saying for a while that the central figure of the contemporary theatre is the spectator. In the London episode of *Tragedia Endogonia*, for example, a woman appeared on stage who was identified in the dramatis personae as "Yourself." In *Hey Girl!* you seem to have moved back from the stage to the auditorium where you belong, but it's still all about you. Hey Girl.—Nicholas Ridout, Queen Mary University of London. Nicholas Ridout is coauthor of *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio* with Claudia Castellucci, Romeo Castellucci, Chiara Guidi, and Joe Kelleher (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). His essays about the company's *Tragedia Endogonia* appear in a series of publications produced by the company under the title *Idioma, Clima, Crono*, which has been translated to English and French.