

TEATRO.IT

*A servant is a servant... and a whore is a whore!*

English translation

*Lorenzo Montanini adapts Strindberg's Miss Julie with a profound respect for the author's spirit and intention.*

*"The theme of social ascent and decline, of who's above and who's below, who's better and who's worsen, of man and woman, is, was and will always continue to be of great interest", wrote Strindberg in Miss Julie's preface in 1888. Somewhere, in the politically apathetic abyss that can be the internet, in that anarchic, unpunished tank of intellectual gratuities born out of the ootheca of hundreds of theatre columns we can easily find amusing comments that, unexpectedly and against the will of the poor defunct writer, see in Julie's character a creature fighting against the power of men to decide women's fate. Some sort of feminist heroine, in line with the positivist model of a woman like the ones in Zola or Ibsen.*

This kind of interpretation, beside being unfitting for Strindberg's play, is also simplistic and misleading if applied to Lorenzo Montanini's staging: the *Miss Julia* that was staged at Galleria Toledo for the Napoli Teatro Festival. Montanini's work seems to be built, in fact, on a profound respect for the intention of the Swedish playwright; to be more clear: built on that irreducible dialectic between what is left of a putrescent declining nobility and a champion of the new "big brains and nervous system nobility". And it shouldn't be underestimated that the socially necrotic element corresponds to the feminine and the one that is cynically strong and healthy with the masculine: we should be aware that August Strindberg was going through the last, stormy days of his relationship with Siri while writing Miss Julie. The break up determines, in the writer's philosophy, an aggravation in his anti-feminist controversy and consequently a more pessimistic view of the relation between the opposite sexes. Thus social and genre conflict interweave inseparably in Julie's story and therefore in Julia's.

Some of the scenic elements and some of the dramaturgic solutions in Montanini's work often spring from the director's will to make clear the author's intentions or to capsize them. Using actors of different nationalities thus basing the conflict between man and woman, servant and master on language - the noble-woman speaks English and the servant Spanish - is inspired (and it amplifies in a very suggestive way its effect) by a moment in the original play when Julie and Jean speak french: the language that was considered "noble" at the time. On a scenic level, the decision to nestle the dramatic action in between the audience, some sitting on the stage, responds to the urgency to make the play more absolute in order to underline its mimetic component in opposition to what Strindberg asked in his preface to the play, where, seeking a more naturalistic approach to theatre, he asked to eliminate the tromp l'oeil and use real objects instead of props on stage. We have to point something out when talking about Strindberg's naturalism: besides his requests of being more truthful and realistic, beside the, even too clear, cause-effect relation of every action of his characters, we cannot help but feeling some sort of paradoxicality for the gratuity with which, sometimes, the action proceeds and we feel discomfort and dismay. This side of the play is perfectly embodied by Montanini's actors and their choral and acrobatic performance. On top of their postage-stamp of stage, with a table on wheels and a few wooden chairs they majestically design the perimeter of an eternal, unsolvable metaphysical conflict.

(by Dario Migliardi)