



Le Devoir
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nebbia
Written and Directed by DANIELE FINZI PASCA

CHRISTIAN RIOUX

World premiere – When clouds descend on earth
Cirque Éloize launches Nebbia in Geneva before opening the TNM season

Geneva — It's not circus. Possibly it's acrobatics, a carnival, dance or a major public festival. But deep down it's theatre. Nebbia, the major show created yesterday in Geneva by Cirque Éloize and Teatro Sunil will open TNM's next season in Montreal. The 1200 viewers who had an opportunity to attend this world premiere in the Grand Casino theatre on the shores of Lac Léman held nothing back when applauding this accomplished work by the astounding director Daniele Finzi Pasca.

Somewhere between Fellini's delirium and the handicapped characters of Romeo Castellucci, Daniele Finzi Pasca weaves his own poetry, impregnated with humanity and an amused look about beings. Far from the Hollywood productions in which the Cirque du Soleil occasionally founders, far from purely technical and acrobatic performances, Pasca creates veritable beings and makes us part of their major and minor miseries. Watching the activities of this colorful troupe, the spectator completely forgets that he is watching trapeze, juggling and contortion numbers. He is, above all, watching theatre.

This is not the first time the Ticinese director, born in Lugano, Switzerland, has worked with Quebec's Cirque Éloize. Nebbia is the last component of a trilogy that includes Nomade and Rain, both of which were produced by Cirque Éloize, starting in 2002.

With Nebbia, the director transports us to his grandmother's village. When he was little, Daniele Finzi Pasca would watch the fog-covered Pô plain from her house. He would see camels and passenger ships, despite the fact that the sea was more than 300 km away. In the fog, everything becomes possible. An angel makes music by striking bottles. Under pig quarters, a butcher juggles his knives and keeps his balance on a butcher's block. Couples chase one another through a forest of bamboo sticks topped with spinning plates. A fool wearing a tutu stretches out his arms to catch the sun.

Scene follows scene, interspersed with short skits in the tradition of Italian popular theatre. The artists perform to the omnipresent and indispensable music of Maria Bonzanigo recorded by the Lugano symphony orchestra. The entire work is handled by a troupe of 12 joyful performers/acrobats, including a Brazilian gold medal winner in gymnastics, guided by the masterful hand of the truculent Gonzalo Munoz Ferrer. The show, possibly a bit too polished, is filled with tiny wonders that never overwhelm the humanity of the characters. Pasca has created a magnificent popular show that provides a balm for weary humanity.

In Geneva yesterday, TNM Director Lorraine Pintal announced that Nebbia will open her company's 2008-09 season. The show, partially produced by TNM, will run from September 9 to October 14, with the possibility of being held over for an additional two weeks. This is the first time that the Ste Catherine St. Theatre has opened its doors to what Pasca refers to as acrobatic theatre. "Our audience may be surprised," said Lorraine Pintal. Nebbia will arrive in Montreal after touring Switzerland, Slovenia, Italy, Colombia and Korea. It will then be performed in a dozen Quebec cities.

It should be noted that this is not Daniele Finzi Pasca's first experience. He was also as at ease with the gigantic opening ceremony of the Torino Olympic Games, which he directed, as with the Icaro show, which he has been presenting on his own for more than 15 years. In 2005, he worked with the Cirque du Soleil and directed Corteo.

Unlike his Quebec friends, Daniele Finzi Pasca does not claim to represent the circus arts which he describes as "a tradition that is too modern, dating back only 150 years". He prefers to speak of acrobatic theatre, which dates back to Antiquity and even to the very first rites of initiation. Pasca defines his work as the invention of tactile theatre. Teatro Sunil, which he founded in 1983, is named after a child he saw die while travelling in India.

In 2004, Nomade drew 25,000 viewers to Lausanne. After witnessing the ovation the performers received yesterday, we can expect Nebbia to enjoy the same favors. Born in the Gare Dalhousie, in Vieux Montréal, Nebbia was launched in Geneva because of Swiss producer Vincent Sager. This "strangely nostalgic" show, as its creator refers to it, should be even more perfected by the time it comes to Montreal, in exactly nine months.