

Judgment. Possibility. Being.

*Exercises on
“The Death of Empedocle” by Friedrich Hölderlin, to be done in a gym.
by Romeo Castellucci*

Director Assistant Silvia Costa

Translation of “The Death of Empedocle” by Cesare Lievi

With: Silvia Costa, Laura Dondoli, Irene Petris, Alice Torriani
And ten Extras to be mentioned

I'm looking for a gym. A large room to rent for rehearsals. An unheated place a “wrong” place for a theatre. But no. A gym, now, as the exact place, as the achievement of Hölderlin's heresy and outdated beauty. Hölderlin's poetry will be uttered clandestinely in a gym, outside of the orthodox wiring of the institutional theatre. It is exercise, discipline and work on the present.

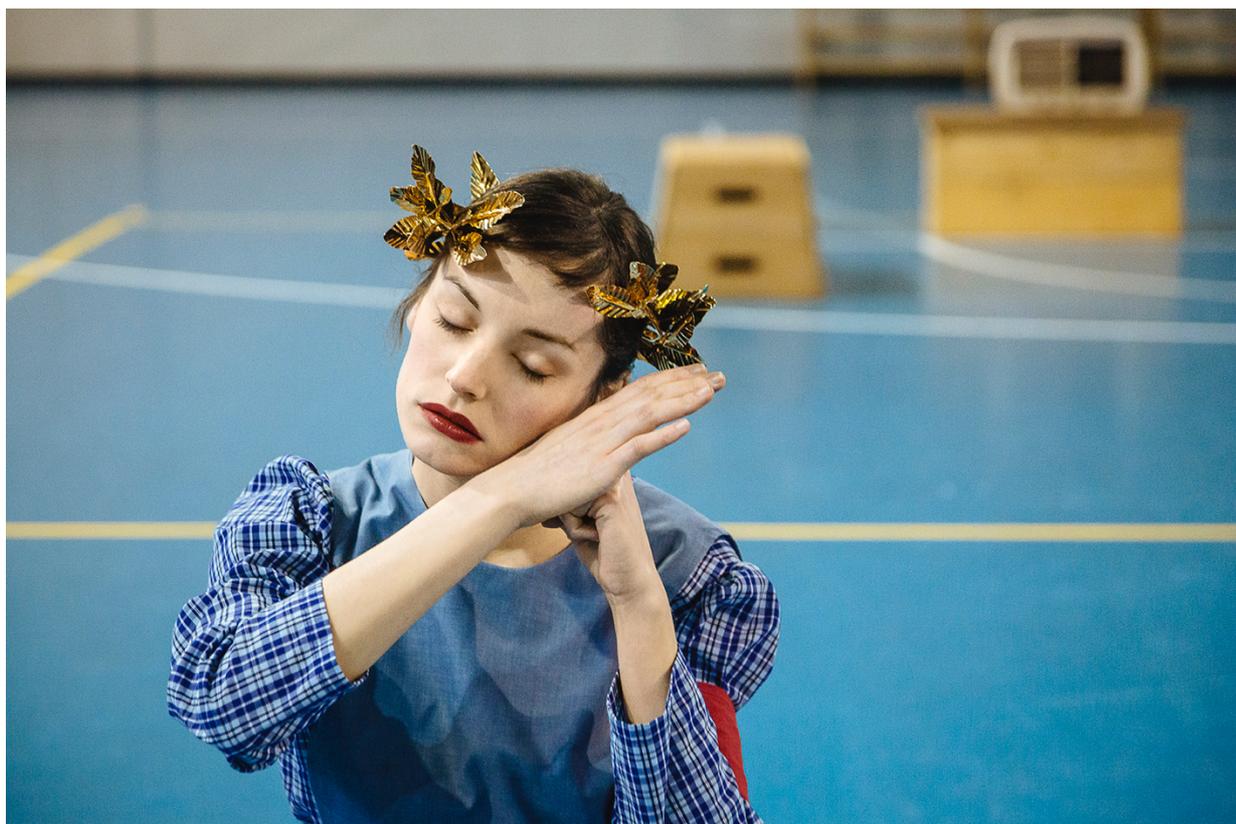


Photo by Guido Mencari. In photo Laura Dondoli

Participating in the abstract sequence of an exercise, in the elliptic of a silent gesture that cleaves the air, or listening to the articulation of a verse as an affirmation, means contemplating an empty space, create with things seen and heard; a space made *available* (like some disturbing highway billboards on white backgrounds advertise). Achieving a space without content like a place of revelation.

Renouncing conversation, the stereotypical consolation of denouncing, sermons on compassion and junk culture. Seeking absolute and buried elegance in form; seeking the glacial precision of an aesthetic that is

scrutinized to the bone, intended here as political radicalism. All this is necessary and must begin in an ugly, wrong place, far from theatres.

In the figurative light of the audience's view everything will be *judgment, possibility, and being*, according to the Poet's same words. In ancient Greece – to which Hölderlin referred his whole life – the Gymnasium was the place where young men prepared for track-and-field competitions. Only after Gymnasium did young men start their adult lives and were able to go to war. Hölderlin's prose constantly refers to youth, but not in terms of age. So then who is this adolescent, what does he want and what does he represent?

The young man is the *out-of-date* one, he who does not live in his time, he who on the contrary, is the contemporary and for whom everything is always new. He who will be assigned the task of speaking to this age from the deferred timeframe of a representation. It will be Empedocle, the heretic who abandons the city to climb the mountains and throw himself into the fire of being.

In the gym, temporarily sitting on the cushions of the high jump or gymnastics, one will be able to participate in a textual score – almost nothing more – closely linked to Hölderlin's "The Death of Empedocle". The group of characters in the tragedy will be interpreted by a company of young women. Are they students in a school? Or maybe members of some female community? Are they rehearsing a play behind closed doors?

It seems there is only one sure thing: they have left the theatre to find *their own* theatre.

R.C.

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Photo by Luca Del Pia. In photo Irene Petris