

Comédie Italienne by Giulio Paolini and Carlo Quartucci, 1981

Text by Roberto Lerici based on passages from the works of Homer, Virgil, Sappho, Archilochus, and Poliphilo, tape recording by Carlo Quartucci, music by Massimo Coen, Giovanna Marini, and Giancarlo Schiaffini, produced by La Zattera di Babele.

First performance: Genazzano, Castello Colonna, Sala Martino V, 17 October 1981 (as part of the programme *Prologo*). Other performances: Amsterdam, Mickery, 28 November 1981 (as part of the programme *Opera Suite*); Genazzano, Ninfeo del Bramante, 10 September 1983; Eindhoven, Stedelijk Theater, 7 and 8 February 1984; Venice, Teatro Malibran, 6-8 June 1984 (on the occasion of the *41st Venice Biennale*); Rome, Teatro Olimpico, 15-17 March 1985; Paris, Grande Halle de la Villette, 29 and 31 March 1985 (on the occasion of the *Nouvelle Biennale de Paris, Sound Section*); Rivoli, Castello di Rivoli, 21 and 27 September 1985 (video version); Vienna, Messepalast, 25 and 26 May 1986 (on the occasion of the *Wiener Festwochen 1986*).

“The mise-en-scène is inspired by a painting by Watteau, and it evokes the myth of the eternal journey of Italian actors. By exploiting the form of the nymphaeum, attributed to Bramante, the scene is divided into three distinct parts. To either side are musicians and dancers, while at the centre the same female figure recurs – previously viewed in *Platea* – shrouded in her immense cloak” (A. Mammì, in *Giulio Paolini. La Casa di Lucrezio*, exhibition catalogue, Spoleto, Palazzo Rosari Spada [Casalecchio di Reno: Grafis Edizioni, 1984], p. 71).



“Recall of beauty (vision of deception?), exclusive (impracticable?) is the path that seems to lead us to the *Embarquement pour Cythère*.

Painting that describes the indescribable (for this reason it is difficult to recall), celebrates the splendours of painting without delighting in them. Ecstatic glance and critical memory, it models the figure of the void in full relief. Masterpiece that supersedes itself (in the two existing versions), image that unites revolution and discretion. Superior synthesis of the implicit (observation of the gaze) it steals space away from the interpretation. Compatible illusion, or better still, illustration of what is true.

Thus the dancing figures and supine bodies, exhausted characters, whose only role is to enjoy the absurd privilege of the reflector, indifferent even to the most genuine echoes, abandoned to adorn (to close?) the stage-frame of *Comédie Italienne*, are the conscious consideration of a limit. Thus I will not be an observer of an intention (an image?) for which I will never have been an actor” (G. Paolini, “Richiamo della bellezza...”, 1983, revised version of the English translation published in L. Cherubini, “Giulio Paolini / Spettacoli teatrali”, in *Sipario. Balla, De Chirico, Savinio, Picasso, Paolini, Cucchi*, exhibition catalogue, Rivoli, Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea [Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1997], p. 263).





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