

PICCOLA COMPAGNIA DELLA MAGNOLIA

Bio_Graphics Project



1983 BUTTERFLY

1983

BUTTERFLY

Bio_Graphies Project

Dramaturgy | **Giorgia Cerruti**

with the collaboration of the protagonist Bernard Boursicot

Direction | **Giorgia Cerruti**

With | **Davide Giglio and Giorgia Cerruti**

Assistant director | **Cleonice Fecit**

Lights, video | **Lucio Diana**

Scenography | **Renato Ostorero, Lucio Diana**

Costumes | **Atelier Pcm, Gaia Paciello, sartoria Donato**

Wigs | **Mario Audello**

Created by | **Piccola Compagnia della Magnolia**

Coproduced by | **Festival delle Colline Torinesi – Creazione Contemporanea**

The work is played in Italian. English or French subtitles available.

The creation première was held on June 17th, 2016 at Festival delle Colline Torinesi. Bernard Boursicot was there.

a man who loved a woman created by a man

With this new work we carry on the Bio_Graphics Project, which started in 2015 with *Zelda / Life and Death of Zelda Fitzgerald* and ended in 2017 with *ADAGIO Nureyev*. With *1983 BUTTERFLY* began a journey that crosses real lives and imaginary destinies, linked by a deep, endless desire.

The play once again pursues a dear issue to the Company about the mortality of love, weaving matters of sexual identity and acceptance, borrowing a well-known story of the twentieth century and opening it towards universal horizons. The chronicle becomes here a sort of classical epic. Lie, dissimulation, belongs to this history, as if the background was a spy novel and not a love story.

The original subject is the incredible love story between the Breton diplomat-spy Bernard Boursicot (who is still alive and is living in a retirement home in Rennes and who has collaborated with the Company on dramaturgy by sharing memories from his past) and the Chinese opera singer Shi Pei Pu. The story, which interweaves love, politics, espionage, and sexual identity and at times is joining with Puccini's opera with a worrying fortuity, has crossed 20 years of history between East and West, ending up to a scandalous trial in 1983; a trial that has shocked the world, revealing the incredible fact of a man who "loved a woman created by a man".

[PHOTOS](#)

[PROMO \(sub fr\)](#)

[TEASER \(ita\)](#)

Theater is questioning on this story, wondering how can the "fiction" talk about these loves , at that time forbidden, without falling in pathos, in mere biographical story or in a naturalism of bad taste it was not the Puccini's opera to intrigue us, but the incompleteness and the ambiguous ingenuity of the human story of this couple, a story that we've tried to redeem from spacial and temporal limits of the sources. 1983 BUTTERFLY marks an important new phase of the Company's artistic life: now we want to talk about desire, so pure, because it is what make us alive.

With this creation, Magnolia once again seeks to investigate new frontiers of its own stage action, always tense to weave tradition and research into the contemporary horizon. Magnolia is willing to become an investigator of bodies and souls and of the ambiguity of the interaction. It achieves an inevitable stage work in which the two founders of the Company are alone together on stage, for the first time: Davide Giglio in the skin of Butterfly / Shi Pei Pu and Giorgia Cerruti in the skin of Pinkerton / Boursicot, in an absolute positions' turnover.

Giorgia Cerruti



about

In **1887** the French Pierre Loti wrote an autobiographical short novel, *Madame Chrysanthème* that tells about a navy officer who fell in love with a young geisha in Nagasaki.

In **1898** appears in America a telling by John Luther Long called *Madam Butterfly*. The protagonist, Pinkerton, officer of the United States Navy, once arrived in Nagasaki falls in love with a fifteen-year-old geisha, Cio-Cio-San, translated into English *Madama Butterfly*. The two fall in love and have a son but Pinkerton returns to America. After many years of abandonment, Cio-Cio-San decides to disappear from the world scene, in silence, without clamor, with a knife donated by her father, according to the ancient seppuku custom.

In **1900** David Belasco, based on the work of Long, writes a tragedy in one act set in Japan entitled *Madame Butterfly*.

In **1903** Giacomo Puccini wrote his *Madama Butterfly*, on a opera libretto by Luigi Illica, inspired by the work of Belasco.



about

In **1964**, just 20 years old, Bernard Boursicot, a young French diplomat, still alive was assigned to the French embassy in Beijing. Only few months later, he falls into the trap of Kang Sheng, king of Chinese espionage and a member of the secret services. Shortly after arriving in China, Boursicot remains fatally fascinated by Shi Pei Pu, twenty-six-year-old singer of the Beijing Opera known during a performance of M. Butterfly. Their passionate meetings are meticulously planned, taking place in the dark and fast, thus avoiding being noticed by the agents of counterintelligence in Beijing. When Boursicot knows Shi Pei Pu, he believes he is a man. After six months of friendship, in a Beijing hostile to foreigners in the mid-1960s, the actor reveals to the diplomat that he is a woman raised as a boy by his mother, who felt ashamed in not having yet a son.

The love story between the French and the Chinese begins at this point. In **1983** Boursicot and Shi Pei Pu get arrested in France for espionage; in prison Boursicot discovers that Shi Pei Pu is a man. He tries to commit a suicide. In **1986** they both were sentenced to six years imprisonment with a trial that made history; during the interrogation Boursicot says: "His hands were very thin, his face, his voice could be those of a woman". Sex? I was not very experienced, rather I was a virgin and everything seemed normal to me ". The sentence was later reduced to one year for Shi Pei Pu, who received a pardon from President Mitterand.

In **2015-16**, Piccola Compagnia della Magnolia began path of study around the character of Butterfly and finds itself wrapped in the incredible human story of Bernard Boursicot and Shi Pei Pu.

How do these events relate to each other, revealing incredible unions between reality and fiction? Before killing herself, the Butterfly of Puccini blindfold her little son to avoid him the terrible vision and puts in his hand a small American flag. Also Boursicot wants to die after having discovered the virility of his eastern love.

He tries to commit a suicide with a shaver but he saves; He now lives in Paris in a retirement home. Shi Pei Pu died in 2009, after having declared his eternal love. They are histories that talk about desire, burning and alive.

Somehow the relationship among these facts challenges us and it is metaphor of more wider distances, contemporary, geographical but not only: distances between theater and performance, life and representation, between systems of thought that are antithetical to the sense of guilt, to honor, to love. It is the absorption of the East by the West, by the Feminine by the Masculine, by the Loved by the Lover.

reviews

MARIA DOLORES PESCE - DRAMMA.IT

We can see how the audience was drawn, rationally but especially emotionally and passionately, and was involved by this beautiful work, which doesn't forget the ironic detachment, and which, through the same irony, defends us from the power and the harshness of feelings, as it defends Buoursicot from his fall, providing each one with a unique key of knowledge.

GIULIA MURONI - PAC PANEACQUACULTURE

An excellent acting test, ambitious and successful: Cerruti is able to turn her explosive femininity in the masculine energy and presence of the Western male, who perceives himself as dominant, whereas Giglio is disturbing and uncanny together, characterized by ambiguous traits. (...) A rich performance, sometimes overload and redundant in its growing proliferation of signs but able to return multiple perspectives and semantic nuances and biographical rigor, taking the responsibility to suggest something.

ASSUNTA MATASSA - PERSINSALA

An exciting work, which leaves incredulous and upset. The actors, Giorgia Cerruti (Bernard Boursicot) and Davide Giglio (Shi Pei Pu), create on the stage a masterful chiasmic crossing of roles, entrusting the feminine character to a man and the masculine character to a woman.



on tour

FESTIVAL DELLE COLLINE TORINESI
Torino (IT) - June 2016

FESTIVAL ORIZZONTI VERTICALI
San Gimignano (IT) - July 2016

GALLERIA TOLEDO
Napoli (IT) - March 2017

FESTIVAL DELLE ORESTIADI
Gibellina (IT) - July 2017

LE MANÈGE
Scène Nationale - Maubeuge (FR) - March 2018



Piccola Compagnia della Magnolia

Piccola Compagnia della Magnolia is a troupe, an independent Company directed by Giorgia Cerruti. Since 2004 the ensemble has carried out a rigorous and passionate investigation in between theatrical codes and research with a contemporary perspective of their own way of doing theatre, turning to the classic work or experimenting with original writing, pursuing a synthesis between formal research and emotional density, preserving a sacred time inhabited by poetic figures. Magnolia creates its own works through a research that has its fulcrum in the actor and in the composition of the image, focusing on an anti-naturalistic approach to acting, combining physical and vocal scores.

The Company performs its own shows in Italy and abroad (France, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Russia,...) acting in Italian and in French, or with subtitles. Currently, alongside the creation work, the Company also deals with theatrical pedagogy, leading high-level training courses for young actors in Italy and abroad and organizing high-profile seminars for actors, hosting international masters of the contemporary theatrical scene, including Oskaras Koršūovas, Declan Donnellan and Jean-Jacques Lemêtre.



"Our research, which is long and difficult but fascinating, seeks to deny some cinematographic approaches that do not belong to the theatre, recovering what it should have for convention: the artificiality of a ritual moment that is stranger to daily routine; a different time, in which the audience and actors meet to search for real in fiction".

Giorgia Cerruti

reviews

BRUNO BIANCHINI - KLP ...between Baroque and Kabuki, in a stylistic code strongly oriented towards the Oriental tradition, where Shakespeare meets Nekrosius. MARIA DOLORES PESCE - DRAMMA.IT ... An intensive show, rich in suggestions and emotions that takes one to the bottom due to the developing acting techniques of Giorgia Cerruti. LA MARSEILLAISE - AVIGNON OFF ... A superb theatrical work of Giorgia Cerruti and a remarkable acting play of Davide Giglio in the role of Hamlet. EMILIO NIGRO - TAMBURO DI KATTRIN...Grotowski with Nouvelle Vague contaminations. Artaud in a straight jacket, he can express himself so freely. Giglio is a "party animal". Shockwave. So dermal. RENZO FRANCABANDERA - KLP ...Piccola Compagnia della Magnolia is already a well-established theatrical group that finds its place between the most fecund and interesting companies in North-West of Italy. OSVALDO GUERRIERI - LA STAMPA ... Interpreted with a deep understanding by Davide Giglio, who is a bit of a father and a bit of a clown, a bit an executioner and a bit a victim. ALFONSO CIPOLLA - LA REPUBBLICA ... high calibre of acting ability; a rhythmical researchable to segment and harmonize to tiny words and gestures; the absolute rigour never ending in itself; the sensibility for tragedy transformed into grotesque; the essential scene that lives thanks to actors and director's touch



our creations

THE BALCONY directed by Giorgia Cerruti

THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA directed by Antonio Díaz-Florián - co-produced by Théâtre de l' Epée de Bois/Cartoucherie de Vincennes

THE ARCHITECT AND THE EMPEROR OF ASSYRIA directed by Antonio Díaz-Florián - co-produced by Théâtre de l' Epée de Bois/Cartoucherie de Vincennes

QUIJOTE/CERVANTES directed by Giorgia Cerruti

MONTSERRAT directed by Giorgia Cerruti

MOLIÈRE or The Imaginary Invalid directed by Antonio Díaz-Florián - co-produced by Théâtre de l' Epée de Bois/Cartoucherie de Vincennes, Teatro Stabile di Torino

HAMM-LET / Study on Voracity Trilogy of Individual - directed by Giorgia Cerruti - co-produced by Théâtre Durance /Scène conventionnée, Corte Ospitale di Rubiera, Sistema Teatro Torino e Provincia

OTELLO / Study on the Corruption of the Angel Trilogy of Individual - directed by Giorgia Cerruti , Corte Ospitale di Rubiera, Sistema Teatro Torino e Provincia, Festival delle Colline Torinesi

TITUS / Study on Roots Trilogy of Individual - directed by Giorgia Cerruti

ATRIDES / Metamorphoses of a Rite directed by Giorgia Cerruti - co-produced by Festival Printemps d' Europe/Lyon, Festival Benevento Città Spettacolo, Sistema Teatro Torino e Provincia.

ZELDA / Life and Death of Zelda Fitzgerald Bio-graphies Project - directed by Giorgia Cerruti

1983 BUTTERFLY Bio-graphies Project - directed by Giorgia Cerruti - co-produced by Festival delle Colline Torinesi

ADAGIO NUREYEV / Portrait of an artist Bio-graphies Project - directed by Giorgia Cerruti - produced in collaboration with Sala Ichos and Residenza Dracma

MATER DEI 2018/19 creation - with the sustain of Armunia Residence and of IDRA Residence and Teatro Akropolis within the CURA Project # Residenze Interregionali 2018. In collaboration with Festival delle Colline Torinesi—Torino Creazione Contemporanea. French translation by Frédéric Sicamois.

POINGS mise en espace 2019 - by Pauline Peyrade | Selected by Fabulamundi / Playwriting Europe

HERETIC FAIRY TALE | The Utopia Rooms creation 2022 with Fondazione Antonio Presti Fiumara d'Arte

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