



in coproduction with
Théâtre National de Chaillot
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video promo

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POP UP Garden



“Pop Up Garden”

in co-production with Théâtre National de Chaillot, Paris

artistic direction: Davide Venturini, Francesco Gandi

choreography Stefano Questorio, Valentina Consoli

visual design: Elsa Mersi

engineering: Rossano Monti, Martin Von Günten

sound design: Spartaco Cortesi

costume design: Sonja Bäeumel

interactive sets: Livia Cortesi, Francesco Taddei, Massimiliano Fierli, Saulo D'Isita

with the collaboration of: Luca Farulli, Maurizio Montalti, Enzo Santiccioli, Susanna Musztrai

tour manager: Valentina Martini



Pop-Up Garden is a show devoted to Gilles Clement (botanist, poet and gardener) and to all those unsung heroes who create gardens in the most unexpected places. It is an invitation to observe plants and their way of dancing in the wind, their being both generous and mischievous all at the same time.

At the beginning our garden is empty, except for Mr. Bu.

Bu loves empty, abandoned spaces like the courtyards of old factories. He gives them a thorough cleaning up and then...POP! A lizard arrives and asks him, “Why don’t you put in some ivy instead of asphalt?” And so it happens that, from nothing, Bu creates miniature flowerbeds; as soon as he adds some earth the paved yard begins to change. Bu dances with the plants, he plays at being a gardener, he feels the water, earth, leaves and then... POP! Suddenly she enters onstage: Milady is an agile ballerina, light as a blade of grass. The sight of her kindles Bu’s heart even as she flees among the clouds but then POP!... He is never alone in the garden: other characters appear, some outgoing and some mysterious. The garden has become an independent microcosm living in freedom and movement. POP!

In the TPO company’s work, the stage space – with its images, sounds, and design – is the true protagonist. Thanks to the use of sensors and digital technologies, every production is transformed into an interactive environment where the audience can explore the boundaries between art and play. Dancers, performers and the audience itself interact to try out new expressive forms that aim to surpass all linguistic and cultural barriers.

Duration: 60’ (the show is divided into two parts: a choreographed segment and an interactive workshop with children)

For ages 5 and up.



The Planetary Garden some notes taken from Gilles Clément's writings

According to the paradigm established by Gilles Clément, landscape and plants' various habitats can be considered one extended garden that spreads beyond the confines of private property; a true planetary garden in which human beings are not considered the owners but rather the caretakers. In this context the garden assumes both real and imaginary forms: a vast garden, a small planet, where the great visions of the world collide. The "planetary garden" derives from a combination of the nomadic nature of plants and a series of hypotheses. Can the earth be considered one single garden? Can the gardener's attitude and approach be transposed to the life of the urban dweller in his daily environment? Is it legitimate to think of the earth in the same terms as a garden? These questions have given rise to an artistic project for an audience of children: the performance investigates the garden as a paradigm for the plant world on the move, escaping the barriers man attempts to impose and creating new spaces for happiness.

The garden

"It hosts the plants, animals, man and his dreams. It is travel, a walk. Landscapes gather there and the path widens, going from one universe to another. Transitions abound as we move from an orchard to a vegetable garden, from a flower garden to a field, from the labyrinth to the woodland, from the enclosed area of plants to the panoramic viewpoint, from the courtyard to the street. None of these places can be called boundless and no pathway will be made without passages and doors. Tradition wants to exclude from the garden all living things, which – be they animal or vegetable – elude the gardener's control. The advent of ecology has subverted this view. It is based on the principle that nature has to be considered in its entirety, not just the garden. In any case, gardens are made up of nature. Birds, ants, mushrooms, insects and seeds do not recognise boundaries that separate wild land from terrain that undergoes almost police-like control. For them all spaces are inhabitable."

Some notes for the production



Relations

Taking care of a space or of a garden is like adopting an imaginary friend, creating a relationship that can be shared with others (humans or animals). In this relationship the seasons' changes, moods and cadence can be observed as well as the flux of weather – one must become a listener.

Humbleness

This has to do with a behaviour, with gestures. The word humbleness shares the root with humus, implying to be on the earth and to take care of it. The humble man's gesture is the sowing of seeds; it starts with the idea of giving and implies a way of organising space. The gesture is related to time, it knows how to explore and how to wait.

Intermixing

The planetary gardener's work is created in no-man's-land spaces that are uncontrolled and it is here that a cross-fertilisation takes place. In these uncultivated areas, seeds carried by the wind create a natural zone that is wild and bursting with life. Here different modalities of shared living areas are created with respect to conventional habitation spaces. Zones of great freedom, of unordered relations; the wind starts speaking once more, it passes over things, creates an area of transit.

Dance

The paradigm proposed through the garden theme goes in the direction of dance rather than ballet, towards forms that are exuberant and not formal. So just as the garden is tied to migration, the theme of chance implies the play of combinations, of intersections, of relations: dance is the place to investigate the relations between body and space and the relations between bodies. Dance is a stratification; it is the relation between the human form and materials; it is the body that takes on infinite forms.

A “planetary garden” conceived as an interactive environment of the senses



Propelled by wind or other accidental factors, plants don't just go from one point to another; their movement is more stratified, similar to the aerial movement of clouds. This passage is not told in a linear way but rather in random terms. Vegetation migrates and, achieves new encounters and, if uninhibited, it creates a “moving garden”. Its language recalls the realm of expanding sound, accumulating and interweaving with the environment; rather than talk about linearity we should refer to plants' movement as a dance.

Such a notion suggests another fundamental principle of this narration: the story has neither beginning nor end but rather a continual flux of events, an intermingling that is constantly generating new life. The philosophical implications arising from this consideration of plant life has led TPO to imagine a theatrical transposition, using interactive technologies to represent the flux produced by vegetation on the move. The planetary garden is conceived of as an environment sensitive to man's intervention; it is, therefore, an interactive space where images and sounds overlap, subject to the happenstance of atmospheric events. So the tale narrated through dance flows and is cadenced by such natural events as wind, drifting clouds, rain, fire As it is represented here the garden is a dynamic space, entirely created by images projected on the floor so that viewers are immersed in the environment. Moreover the staging is enriched by pop-up paper objects which evoke the plants' movement. The interactions produced by sensors generate dynamics in keeping with Gilles Clément's “intermixture”: that is to say, the continual migration of one situation into another in a process that is, at times, intentional and, at others, chance.

Notes for staging

In June 2014 the company conducted a series of studies and rehearsals open to children as a way to prepare the show. During this period, with the collaboration of actor-dancer Stefano Questorio, the company explored several lines of research:

The stage space with a central plan calls for:

- a long dance mat, measuring 11 x 4 metri, with the audience seated on the two long sides.
- an audio system comprised of at least six independent speakers, thus allowing acoustic localization.
- a three-projector system that casts single images (uninterrupted by frame lines) onto the dance mat.
- a set design with pop-up objects that evoke plants and interact with the projected images.
- a camera system that creates an interactive relation between images/sound/movement.

A small story as a point of departure

In this initial exploratory phase we worked with one dancer inventing a story which could serve as a basis for the final project:

An everyman lives near a factory's abandoned courtyard. Tired of seeing that space dirty and uncared for, he takes it upon himself to groom it and, even though he is not a gardener, he manages to create a green space there. Through his various attempts the site begins, little by little, to revive. The presence of a few trees attracts the first insects; some neighbors, who have noticed the man's silent labor, decide to give him some new plants. In this way a microcosm of relations begins to take form and the garden, born out of nothing, starts to change into a place where things large and small occur. The protagonist begins to realize that the transformations going in his small courtyard might be the first steps to changing the world; in this way, he goes from being a simple citizen to becoming, in Gilles Clement's words, a "planetary gardener."

The choreographic project and the interactive space:

On stage there are two dancers in action and, as is usual for TPO's shows, everything happens on a large dance mat onto which images are projected from above. The dancers' begin their action in an empty space which, over time, becomes populated by plants, thanks to the use of pop-up objects hidden under the mat or in other nearby spaces. Images and sounds have been designed with particular care: for instance in this production the company has tested a system of acoustic localization that relies on various speakers spread out around the theater space. In this way the audience hears sounds coming from several independent sources.

The dancers create Bu's imaginary garden via a choreography inspired by the flows of energy produced by the site's events, such as the gardener's contact with the plants and the weather's aleatory cycles.

Only at the end of the show are the audience members (children and parents) invited to enter the dancers' garden; they can spend as much time as they like there, free to experience their individual relationship to the space. Precisely because this sensitive space has been conceived so that the audience feels comfortable playing there, there is no predetermined running time.



features:

2 dancers on stage

2 techniciens

Stage size 10 Mt X 4 Mt

capacity (approximately 150 seats befrontal)

minimum hight 5,5 M

100%
100%
100%



The TPO Company and Interactive Theatre

Visual, moving, immersive theatre: in the TPO's shows the stage space -- with its images, sounds and colours -- is always the key player. Thanks to the use of interactive technologies each production is transformed into a "sensitive" environment where the thin line between art and play can be fully explored. Dancers, performers and even the audience itself interact and create new forms of expression that go beyond linguistic or cultural barriers. TPO productions feature large visual set designs that are transformed into interactive theatrical environments via the use of sensors and digital technologies, thus making them accessible to a vast international audience.



The TPO's shows are conceived by a multifaceted team of creators who make expert use of various disciplines (theatre, dance, visual arts). Their work is characterised by the use of large-scale projections of images and, especially, by their set of interactive technologies. The stage space is conceived as a dynamic and reactive environment that allows dancers to modulate sounds or interact with images through movement or voice. These technologies create "sensitive" theatrical environments where the audience can explore the stage space, discovering that it responds to their actions in a certain way. Thus an active relationship ensues between the viewers and their environment, a kind of dialogue -- with space, forms, and sounds -- which becomes artistic experience.

Awards:

XXI Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Teatrów Lalek SPOTKANIA Torun (PL), 2014

World Congress Assitej Warsaw (PL), Award for Artistic Excellence- 2014

Gjon (ES), Feten 2010, premio especial del jurado a las nuevas propuestas escénicas (special prize for new stage proposals)

New England Foundation for the Arts, National Dance Project / US Tour, 2010 Boston, MA (USA)

Premio Teatri di Vita (premio della giuria dei ragazzi) a Porto Sant'Elpidio 2007 (IT), (prize of children's jury)

Premo ADE (Art Digital Era 2004),

Premio ETI Stregagatto (1999 and 1983)

La compagnia TPO opera con il sostegno di: "Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e del Turismo - Direzione Generale per lo spettacolo dal vivo" e "Regione Toscana - Settore Spettacolo e progetti speciali per la cultura".

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