

**Castellucci, Claudia, Romeo Castellucci, Chiara Guidi, Joe Kelleher, and Nicholas Ridout, eds. *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio*. Photographs by Luca del Pia. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. 274 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0415354301.**

You love them or you hate them. The *Societas Raffaello Sanzio* is a unique phenomenon in contemporary Italian and European theater. What they have staged the last decades (the company was founded in 1981) is enigmatic, radical, grandiose, provocative, always difficult to discuss and interpret. Their presence, all over Europe, and always as invited guests at important theater festivals, is an experience one never forgets, “shockingly beautiful and seductively repellent” in their own words. Their style has been called “iconoclastic” and “super-iconic”; it is situated on the edge of the unmentionable and has been interpreted in terms of old violent rituals and the style of Antonin Artaud. Between January 2002 and December 2004, the company travelled around Europe with *Tragedia Endogonia*, a research project on the future of tragedy, consisting of eleven episodes staged in ten different cities (beginning and ending in Cesena), constantly growing, evolving and changing like a living organism. It is on this main topic that Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout, joint editors of *Contemporary Theatres in Europe* (2006), together with Claudia and Romeo Castellucci and Chiara Guidi, published an interesting and accessible book. The first section presents some discussions of the eleven performances already published in a more elaborated form in *Idioma Clima Crono* (2004), some e-mail conversations between the sound designer Scott Gibbons (in Chicago) and the Italian members, and between the Italian collaborators themselves. As such, a privileged insight is offered not only into the conception and growth of a remarkable production, but also into the way a theatrical practice has evolved over a long period. This section, called “Makers and spectators” (21-200), by far the largest part of the book, offers production notes and detailed conversations between all concerned parties and presents a patchwork of theoretical and practical notes, illustrated by amazing pictures out of the eleven productions. Part two, “Conversations” (201-59), continues the easy going atmosphere of conversations between the five authors of the book and illustrates the process of making theater in contemporary Europe. Part three (“Disjecta membra”) adds some more private remarks from Romeo Castellucci’s notebooks (261-69).

This is the first book in English to document the work of the company and it certainly has a lot to offer: detailed analyses of the eleven perform-

ances written in an accessible style, pictures, commentaries and thoughts of the makers themselves, theory and practice interwoven in an original way. Therefore this book clearly has to be recommended to all readers and students who want to be informed and introduced into the labyrinths created by Europe's most audacious theater company. On the other hand, too much self-promotion of the academics smells a bit pedantic and one wonders whether all the quoted e-mails really are worth mentioning. Comparing this book to *Idioma Clima Crono*, the commentaries published in *itinere* (*Quaderni dell "itinerario," 2002-2004*), one also misses the philosophical depth of the interpretations of Céline Astrié who was much more in line with current European thought and offered a far more comprehensive overview than the descriptive analyses presented here. This absence, however, will mainly be deplored by those students and practitioners who study theater on a more advanced and theoretical level.

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