

# HAMLET

SILENCE IN SHAKESPEARE



Atelier for the creation of theater led by Alessandro Serra  
Teatropersona theater Company

*It happens  
that the affinities of the soul do not turn  
to gestures and words but remain  
effused like a magnetism. It is rare  
but it happens.*  
Eugenio Montale

## PREMISE

*What need speak I?*

Asks Gower before beginning the pantomime which, according to Shakespeare, the audience will have to *play with your fancies, and in them behold.*

The actuation of the tale of the pantomime is in silence – the *dumb show* which Shakespeare will use several times, as in the case of the famous mouse trap Claudio falls into. The tale of the king's death at the hand of his own brother and of the succession to the throne and Gertrude's bed are written in shorthand with very few silent gestures which unmask the two true protagonists sitting among the audience. This stage device is the successful completion of the famous advice which Hamlet gives his actors before the play.

Pantomimes draw the plot of the play, and as such they must be used in a narrative sense. At the same time though there are unspeakable moments which only the body can express, exempting the audience from having to decode their meaning.

The body can tell a story, but most importantly it can dance its deepest feeling.

In Elizabethan theater the image barges onto the stage, the actors die before the audience.

Everything is exposed, without any modesty or rules.

Shakespeare reinvents theater.

The word pantomime is misleading, as they actually are miming actions: when Decroux embodies the carpenter he does not mime any gesture but draws a vibrant figure in which all lines converge in a vertical vortex, abstract and illegible.

It is not about representing a gesture but rather drawing the outer shell of a generating energy.

The actor acts and tells with the physical body, dances with the subtle body, becomes pure energy with the spiritual body. When the stage is permeated with such a prodigy words fall.

Only a few dialogues are left, necessary to convey contextual clues.

Few words, connected to the character's sensitivity.

Few voices which can thus become music.

Scripts are not cut to shorten the length of a performance but to eliminate the transitory and let the essential emerge.

Starting from actions, starting from images: what happens, what you can see.

We will work on Hamlet starting from the body of the actor as a source from which to bring forth the work.

If something happens it is not necessary to tell it in a dialogue.

If an emotion is rooted in a sound or in a gesture you need no comment and the more touching will an actor's vocal or physical action be the more annoying any verbal notation will come off as.

We start from the narrative level: the word that tells and the body that acts.

We cross the musical level: the word that sings and the body that dances.

We access at last the deepest level, where the spiritual body meets the vocal mantra.

In these days of research Hamlet will only be a pretext.

The most beautiful pretext of dramatic art.

## PREPARATORY PHASE

Each actor will have to read Shakespeare's Hamlet in Agostino Lombardo's translation and memorize an extract from a character of their choosing. Furthermore, they will have to learn the dialogue between Gertrude and Hamlet in Act III Scene IV (Hamlet for men, Gertrude for women). The following are required:

- Comfortable training clothes
- A notebook
- A set of elegant clothing – complete with accessories and shoes – to dress the chosen character
- An object mentioned in the text.

## THE ATELIER

### BODY

- Physical training
- Relationship between the pelvis and the spine: managing and directing energy
- Managing weight and balance
- Writing with the body, composition exercises
- Physical body – subtle body – spiritual body

### VOICE

- Listening
- Singing and polyphony
- The choir
- Word - song - mantra

### CREATION

- Study of form and time in relation to space
- Analysis of the text
- The funeral mime
- Actor - figure - character
- Soliloquy - monologue - dialogue
- Relationship between actor, object and stage space.
- Dramaturgy of the image: composing and building the scene