

## *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: 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).





## Bibliography

- G. Celant, "Giulio Paolini et la cité de l'art", in *Art press* 76 (Paris), December, 1983, p. 30, not repr.
- *La Zattera di Babele. Boccascena*, edited by R. Fuchs and C. Quartucci (Venice: La Zattera di Babele, 1984), pp. 19 (text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini, in Italian and English), 20 (short text by C. Quartucci), repr. p. 19 (Genazzano 1983), brochure published on the occasion of the programme *Boccascena* presented by La Zattera di Babele in June 1984 at the Teatro Malibran as part of the *41st Venice Biennale*.
- A. Mammi, "Appunti sul lavoro teatrale di Giulio Paolini", in *Giulio Paolini. La Casa di Lucrezio*, exhibition catalogue, Spoleto, Palazzo Rosari Spada (Casalecchio di Reno: Grafis Edizioni, 1984), pp. 71-72 (entry with short description and text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini), repr. p. 72 (Genazzano 1983).
- *ROSENFEST Berlin 1984* (Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1984), repr. p. 136 (Genazzano 1983 and Venice 1984).
- *ROSENFEST Berlin Fragment XXX* (Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1984), repr. n. pag. (Genazzano 1983, detail).
- *L'intelligenza dell'effetto: la messa in scena dell'opera d'arte*, exhibition catalogue, Milan, Palazzo Dugnani (Florence: Alinea Editrice, 1985), n. pag. (text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini), ripr. s.p. (Genazzano 1983).
- *La Zattera di Babele. La favola dell'Usignolo*, edited by R. Fuchs (Rome: La Zattera di Babele, 1985), repr. n. pag. (Genazzano 1981, Genazzano 1983, and Venice 1984), catalogue published on the occasion of the eponymous project presented by La Zattera di Babele at the Teatro Olimpico in Rome from 13 February to 17 March 1985.
- *Giulio Paolini. "Tutto qui"*, exhibition catalogue, Ravenna, Pinacoteca Comunale, Loggetta Lombardesca (Ravenna: Agenzia Editoriale Essegi, 1985), n. pag. (text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini), repr. no. 38 (Venice 1984).
- *La Zattera di Babele* (Vienna: Wiener Festwochen, 1986), text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini, n. pag. (in German), repr. (Genazzano 1983 and Venice 1984), brochure with playbill for the three performances presented by La Zattera di Babele in Vienna from 22 to 26 May 1986.
- G. Paolini, *Suspense. Breve storia del vuoto in tredici stanze* (Florence: Hopeful Monster editore, 1988), p. 160 (text *Richiamo della bellezza...* by Paolini), repr. p. 161 (Venice 1984, with incorrect date "1983").
- *Primo amore. Beckett / Quartucci*, programme (Rome: La Zattera di Babele, 1989), repr. n. pag. (Venice 1984).
- *Giulio Paolini. Il "Teatro" dell'opera*, exhibition catalogue, Pesaro, Galleria Franca Mancini (Ravenna: Agenzia Editoriale Essegi, 1991), pp. 16 (reference in the essay by F. Poli, in English), 73 (text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini), 92-93 (entry with short description by A. Mammi), repr. pp. 74, 75 (Venice 1984 and Genazzano 1981, with incorrect date "1983").
- *La Zattera di Babele 1981-1991. 10 anni di parola, immagine, musica, teatro*, edited by La Zattera di Babele (Florence: Opera Universitaria dell'Università degli Studi di Palermo, 1991), pp. 80 (reference to the version of *Comédie Italienne* performed in Amsterdam in 1981 in a text by I. Cipriani and C. Quartucci; might be confused with *Il mito di Nora Helmer?*), 89 (mentioned in the programme *Boccascena* presented in Venice in 1984), 91 (text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini and short text by C. Quartucci), 100 (reference to the performance in Paris in 1985 in a short text by I. Cipriani and C. Quartucci), 106 (poetic reflections by C. Quartucci), 199 (mentioned in the chronology of performances), repr. pp. 76 (Genazzano 1983), 79 (Amsterdam 1981), 101 (Paris 1985).
- 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 (entry with text "Richiamo della bellezza..." by Paolini, in English), repr. (Venice 1984).



- B. Satre, *L'Arte Povera et les arts de la scène: Les expériences théâtrales de Jannis Kounellis, Giulio Paolini, Michelangelo Pistoletto et Mario Ceroli*, doctoral dissertation in History of Contemporary Art, Aix-Marseille Université, 2012, vol. 1, pp. 228-233, repr. vol. 3 nos. 30a-i pp. 73-76 (Genazzano 1981, Genazzano 1983, and Venice 1984, with incorrect captions), in French.
- S. Sette, *Teatro dell'opera. La produzione scenografica di Giulio Paolini*, thesis presented for a graduate degree in History of Arts and Conservation of Artistic Heritage, University Ca' Foscari, Venice, 2017-18, pp. 48, 57, 76-77, 103, 119, repr. no. 22 p. 130 (Venice 1984).
- D. Chiara, *Le scenografie teatrali e televisive di Giulio Paolini*, thesis presented for a graduate degree in History of Arts and Cultural Heritage, University of Catania, 2021-22, p. 70, repr. nos. 86-87.

Entry by Maddalena Disch