

Encounter with

EVELIN FACCHINI

Choreographer of the W.A. Mozart Requiem staged by Romeo Castellucci with the Ensemble Pygmalion (direction Raphaël Pichon).
Festival d'Aix-en-Provence 2019 creation

Evelin Facchini is a Dancer, Performer, Choreographer who worked with numerous great artists and companies such as Romeo Castellucci, Rome Opera House, Micha Van Hoecke, Larrio Hekson.... She founded the company « Metalouda », creating performances, installations and videos. As well as being a dance and pilates pedagogue, she directed and is now artistic supervisor of the dance studio « Theatre Dance Division ». Placed in Rome, this particular studio proposes trainings for amateurs and professional dancers who aim for a very high level in their development. She is today based in Berlin.

This summer 2019 at Aix-en-Provence, the Ensemble Pygmalion conducted by Raphaël Pichon, was offering a transcendental experience of Mozart Requiem, singing and dancing in the same time, in a staged version of the piece, directed by Romeo Castellucci and choreographed by Evelin Facchini. The artist is as deep in her reflection as generous and enlighten when sharing her visions and creative wishes for the future of opera choreographed. Inspiration...

**Bar Campa,
Festival d'Aix-en-Provence,
15th June 2019**

First of all, what is your background as a Dancer?

I started with Ballet at the Rome Opera House, got my degree there and then went to Canada for almost three years, where I continued my studies and worked as a classical and contemporary dancer. Back in Italy, I've been working within the contemporary scene, as a choreographer and dancer.

You are working on the Requiem as a Choreographer and Romeo Castellucci is directing. How is the work shared between you?

There has been a phase of preparation before coming here, where we made a selection of traditional dances on which relying as a steps vocabulary. Once we arrived in Aix-en-Provence, we started working on the scenes, alternating moments of work on the dances and others on the theatrical scenes.



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“It is an encounter between delicate and precious balances.”

What was the necessity to choreograph the Requiem?

Romeo Castellucci is interested in investigating the theme of the "end", celebrating it and transforming it in a fest, where all the presences will be extinguished through the dances. This Requiem celebrates the forces of life. At the center is the community that expresses itself with the chorality of folk dances.

How was the dancing work with the singers go?

The Pygmalion Ensemble is fantastic! Since the first day of rehearsals, all the members of the choir have generously offered themselves to this new experience. It was an interesting process: we started with the simplest dances, with small jumps, walks in circle, and gradually continued with the most difficult ones, learning sequences with more steps moving through the space or for example integrating the use of objects during the dance. They have welcomed all our requests with participation and curiosity.

Odéon de Périclès



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On the first rehearsal with the Ensemble, what did you tell them?

First of all, I told them that we would also do a physical preparation work. Indeed, each rehearsal starts with a warm up in order to help them supporting this effort of dancing and singing at the same time. We started almost right away with movements, immediately looking for an understanding of the nature of the dances itself.

Were they all open to the movement?

Yes, everyone! They are incredible. It was nice to observe the dynamics of each of them: some of them immediately abandoned to the dances, others preferred to assimilate the informations with time. But no one resisted! They are all trustful and generous with me.

Had you already worked with singers before?

Yes, but it was the first time with opera singers.

“You reach another level when is the singer himself dancing.”

Did they tell you when a movement is not comfortable?

It happened. In the dances, there are some moments when the steps, intentionally, are not on “tempo”. It's a complex rhythmic dramaturgy that aligns or contrasts with the *Requiem* score. The phase shift is sometimes imperceptible and sometimes more declared: it's a way to explore the relationship between the music and the steps, adding a bigger complexity. It takes a lot of concentration to sing and dance at the same time, even more when the steps are in a different “tempo”.

I think this was the biggest challenge ➡

and the Ensemble Pygmalion, led by the great Raphaël Pichon, has faced it and overcome it in an exceptional way.

And what did Romeo Castellucci talk about with them?

Romeo Castellucci is a very sensitive and kind director, with crystalline ideas. He worked with them building the theatre scenes that alternate and sometimes intertwine with the dances, giving precise indications and explaining the reasons for the choices aimed at creating a certain image.



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Is there an improvised part from the singers?

No, the work has been structured. I have references, when possible on the music, sometimes on the text, in other cases respecting the dramaturgical needs. Even in the moments in which we looked for solutions, proposing actions, or new dances, there has been always a strong idea and precise indications.

Is this your usual way of working or could you use a different approach for another project?

In some projects it might be useful to apply another strategy. For example, I worked with groups ↓



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of non-professionals for creations involving locals or children. In these creations, sometimes I give the performer the chance to experiment, go through a phase in which improvisation can find its space. In other projects it cannot happen. I would say that it depends on the type of work and on the required creation's process.

Is there also the question of time in these modalities?

The time plays an important role, but in the case of *Requiem*, I would have used the same strategy even with more time available.

Would you like to choreograph more operas?

The idea excites me. It's a thought I've always had. I like working with big number of persons. I grew up in the Rome opera house and during those years I was lucky to perform in many productions, dance with the orchestra, work with choirs and great directors. ↓

It's something I've experienced since I was a child. It is a present and strong practice in my education and my carrier. Working with great artists like the Ensemble Pygmalion has allowed me to deepen this experience. To find the balance between the music and choreographic necessity, ↗

to find solutions to the difficulties of a body that sings and dances at the same time. All this, has stimulated my imagination very much.

Is the necessity that movement and singing come from a same emotion/impulse important in your work?

Yes, it is a big number of persons on stage at the same time. This common breath must be perceived by both the observer and the performer. The steps, the jumps, must not overwhelm the voice: the dance cannot hinder the singing and the singing cannot make a step fragile. It is an encounter between delicate and precious balances.

In your opinion, why is there a will to create towards opera choreographed today?

I think it depends on the desire to move away from the stereotyped idea of the operas. Giving the performer-singer the chance to have another level of expression, not only the voice and its virtuosity. It's an aesthetic necessity. To tell a story in a different way, adding something more.

For instance, do you think it would be interesting to propose Così fan tutte, with dancing singers?

Why not? Actually, during my years at the Rome Opera House, I remember many choreographic moments in the operas. The substantial innovation introduced by Romeo Castellucci is that in his *Requiem*, the singers are dancing.

The presence of dance has to be justified?

Yes, there must be a need that gives strength to the aesthetic choices. If dance is not well integrated in the dramaturgical construction, the risk is to end up in a simple "ballet" moment.

Do you believe that it is always important to work in collaboration with a director for opera? Or could it only be staged by a choreographer?

I think it depends a lot on the type of work you want to create. On which role the dance has in the creation. The collaboration between director and choreographer is very important for the staging of a piece that also includes a choreographic writing.

Do you think this opera choreographed research, in relationship with contemporary opera creation, could lead to a new opera form?

In my opinion, yes, from many points of view. So many changes are happening: stage designs, dramaturgical needs, choreographies

We are finding ourselves on a very interesting point of opera history...

Yes, I agree. There is still repertoire brought on the stage exactly as it used to be, but at the same time, a different aesthetic and dramaturgical approach is gaining ground, with innovative installations well received by the public.



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Do you sing?

I really like to sing, I sing every day! In the past I've been in amateur choirs, but I'm not a professional singer.

Have you ever made dancers singing?

Yes, but never in the operatic style. It was more modern singing. But, the technic and sonority of an opera singer is fantastic to me.

It would be great to work with dancers who are also opera singers. Like you, Océane, for example!

For you, as a Choreographer, is there a dreamt singer?

Opera singers with their ability to reach such high or low notes are very interesting to me. ➔

Listening to that kind of sound coming from a body, generates a strong response in me. When a dancer inhabits a space, something happens. When music or singing is combined, something else happens. You reach another level when is the dancer himself singing.

Would you like that dance took a bigger place into the opera singer training?

Yes, I think that education in dance can be useful for opera singers. Because it is more and more expected from them. The expectations towards them is changing. So it could be important for new generations to have it in their education path.



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How is the exchange with Romeo Castellucci?

Working with him is an enriching experience. The dynamics of the work is characterized by a continuous exchange, enhanced by the principle of doubt and contradiction. His creative generosity and his sharp mind allow us to work with serenity and lucidity in every situation.