

Rossella Viti

Corals

Something attracts me to singing; it is perhaps the sadness, the difficulty. There is something that singing catches and takes away, that lump in the throat, those sad muscles burdened with tension which make our bodies rambling, expropriated from being body, mind and person.

I find in breath, in the binary rhythm of coming and going, the flow of life with the opposites or contraries that flee from one side to return from the other. Perhaps this is what gives breath its certainty: the fact of still being in the world, the possibility of registering our presence without having to say a word. Where is the voice then? Breath is a still, silent and profound song. It is like the song of a whale heard in the depths of the sea, belonging to another world; it is a sound landscape which envelops us, a song which is sharp, wailing, agonised and extended, yet full of life.

This is the kind of animal we are: an immense being that tries to dominate its sound protuberances, and while controlling them, rides them, moving through the world with a soft, airy resonance. It is the irony and lightness of a heavy body that bathes in fluid waves and plays hide and seek with forms, volumes and shadows. What if the body was mine? What if the fluid waves were theatre? And my happy cetacean voice was not just external, but that voice of bowels, blood and bones, resounding in autumn afternoons when I exercise at sunset?

I am not surprised by the trained voices of women theatre practitioners; I am not surprised by their splendid, shiny, soft and hoarse voices, carriers of song; but I am when I meet young girls' voices, the hidden smiles and the uncertain gentle steps of childhood, of fear and joy yet to be discovered. Then I surprise myself singing in a world flowing with song that belongs to everyone, which I join in gratitude for being able to take some steps immersed in this river of sound that nurtures us.

I would like to talk about the whispered, wobbly note on an actor's first day. I search for the right form, for the caress or the push of my own voice's whisper. I listen and react within hostile places, those of our daily wanderings, in search of a note with which to dialogue with others, at times without succeeding. I would like to talk about children's games, of the meetings in which I found myself in the voices of the others.

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Intervention by Cielo Pessione on a photo-textile composition by Rossella Viti.
Photo: Rossella Viti

catches and takes away, that lump in the throat, those sad muscles burdened with tension which make our bodies rambling, expropriated from being body, mind and person. When I see this landscape, already tired and dull, I search for the silent, untouchable voices, and I take them as sound prints which cannot but be there, and, with confusion and happiness, I start moving them in space. What once frightened me, now amuses me and makes me curious; thus, as an underwater explorer, I move towards the immense cetacean, so

huge that it cannot be seen all at once. The animal would be frightened of its own movement, paralysed and closed into an apnoea of the senses were it not for finally finding, again and again, the binary rhythm of a really deep breath: the joy of sailing through the world, the choice of a route to follow, the call of others, the wish to recognise itself in a sound that shifts and travels, a furtive and seductive sound that goes to steal corals and sea-stars in the deep waters.

But, as in any coming and going, the sound quickly regains the surface from the bottom, following the brave rise of a wave, a splash, an irritated and absolute tail, as if it were its last quiver of life. In this high-toned tinkling of voices, I listen and smile, and offer my own solitary voice in song.

Translated from Italian by Gabriella Sacco

ROSSELLA VITI (Italy) was born in 1957. Rossella is the director and a performer with Teatro Ippocampo, working with theatre, visual and textile arts. She has studied dance, sport, theatre and photography in Italy, Denmark and France and now researches the performer's creative process in theatre in education projects for young people and adults. For four years Rossella has worked on a project in schools and universities in Rome about child labour, culminating in performances for children. As a teacher she collaborates with ETI, Theatre Education Centre, in a hospital theatre project.