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Go Down, Moses

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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Peak Performances

2015 | 2016 SEASON

Go down, Moses
by Romeo Castellucci



June 9–12, 2016
Alexander Kasser Theater



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

Photo by Guido Mencari

Dr. Susan A. Cole, President

Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts

Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

Go down, Moses

Direction, Set, Costumes, Lights **Romeo Castellucci**

Music **Scott Gibbons**

Texts by **Claudia Castellucci** and **Romeo Castellucci**

Performers **Rascia Darwish, Gloria Dorliguzzo, Luca Nava,
Stefano Questorio, Sergio Scarlatella**

Ensemble **David Alan Schmitt, Paula Taylor, Sonia Villani**

Set Design Collaboration **Massimiliano Scuto**

Assistant Lighting Designer **Fabiana Piccioli**

Set Construction Director **Massimiliano Peyrone**

Onstage Sculptures, Prosthesis, Machinery **Giovanna Amoroso,
Istvan Zimmermann**

Costume Realization **Laura Dondoli**

Sound Composition Assistant **Asa Horvitz**

Stage Technicians **Lorenzo Martinelli, Michele Loguercio,
Filippo Mancini**

Sound Technician **Matteo Braglia**

Lighting Technician **Danilo Quattrococchi**

Production **Benedetta Briglia, Cosetta Nicolini**

Promotion and Communication **Valentina Bertolino, Gilda Biasini**

Administration **Michela Medri, Elisa Bruno, Simona Barducci**

Economic Consultation **Massimiliano Coli**

Musical Selections

“O Heavenly King” composed by **Alexander Knaifel**, performed by **Oleg Malov** and **Tatiana Melentieva**, from the album *Alexander Knaifel: Shramy Marsha, Passacaglia, Postludia*, Megadisc, 1996

“Wade in the Water” composed by **John Wesley Work II** and **Frederick J. Work**, performed by **Empire Jubilee Quartet**, from the album *Take Me to the Water*, Dust-to-Digital, 2009

Executive Producer Societàs Raffaello Sanzio in coproduction with: Théâtre de la Ville with Festival d’Automne à Paris; Théâtre de Vidy-Lausanne; deSingel International Arts Campus/Antwerp; Teatro di Roma; La Comédie de Reims Maillon, Théâtre de Strasbourg/Scène Européenne; La Filature, Scène nationale-Mulhouse, Festival Printemps des Comédiens; Athens Festival 2015, Le Volcan, Scène nationale du Havre; Adelaide Festival 2016 Australia; Peak Performances at Montclair State University (NJ); with the participation of Festival TransAmérique-Montreal.

Thanks for the collaboration to: Comune di Senigallia-Assessorato alla Promozione dei Turismi, Manifestazioni/AMAT.

Duration: 75 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

Program Notes

This work transfigures the various moments of the life of Moses as they are narrated in the Book of Exodus. In the events of this man’s life there is something inherent in the substance of our time. As with Michelangelo’s Moses, described in the text that Freud dedicated to this work, the prophet of monotheism is presented here as a man, forced to react when faced with

the difficulties that this God—without name and without image—puts before him: the abandonment of his newborn body in the waters of the Nile, the mystery of the burning bush in which the blinding splendor of the glory of YHWH—in the *kabod*—manifests itself, and the 40 days passed on Mount Sinai where he receives the tablets of the law only to discover, on his return, the golden calf erected and venerated by his people.

The character Moses is dissolved across the scenes, disregarding biographical narration to extend itself over concepts, sentiments, and premonitions of a revelation that acts now, in our time. Moses is brought closer to the spectator's gaze, embodied in every element of the performance, which is conceived in tableaux and fragments; psychic vibrations that emerge like ripples across the space-time of life, at once routine and obscurely perceived as an exile.

The title evokes the famous spiritual sung by the slaves of America, who identified themselves with the Judaic people, a presage of their return to Africa. The Israelites, able to return from their exile in Babylonia and—thanks to Moses—from their slavery in Egypt, were the symbol of the American slaves' release. Additionally, it may mean the condition of our slavery incorporeal, exiled from *being*.

Two images, ultimately, channel and guide this long performance, like the two faces of the same coin: the burning bush, which represents the true image and negates any and all representation—"I am he who I am"—and the golden calf, which instead portrays the false image, the one that illustrates this same phrase. All that lies between is the object of this work.

—*Romeo Castellucci*
Translated by Brent Waterhouse

In *Go down, Moses*, we are offered the spectacle of the descent of man into the dark cavern, where the human hand forms the first hand-print, the image-matrix in the history of mankind, and conceives the original staging of the world.

The Mother constitutes the central figure of the performance. In contrast to the patriarchal viewpoint of the Old Testament, according to which Moses represents the Father, Romeo Castellucci proposes a reverse, feminine reading of the Biblical *Exodus*, highlighting the primeval primary bond between mother and body, a body born or a body decomposed. He connects this indissoluble relation with the quintessence of artistic creation, as femininity surrounds human life from birth to burial, from the mystery of gestation up to the dead man's wake. The feminine principle is meant as a pure receptive matter, as a reservoir of creation. It is the place from which man emerges through childbirth and where he returns after death, a place that remains stable even after the destruction of biological life.

The forced exit of a baby from the body of a woman in a public toilet evokes the Exodus of the Jewish people and the idea of liberation from slavery: "Oppressed so hard, they could not stand—let my people go." The slavery of the Jews, the slavery of the blacks in America resound in unison with our own—invisible—submission to the spectacle of the modern world. But the people "don't know yet that they are a people, because they don't know yet that they are slaves," the mother claims. We are spectators, and at the same time viewing objects of a permanent voyeuristic spectacle, slaves of a streaming of endlessly repeated, univocal images, which invade our consciousness and usurp our existence.

The question arises, then, what does it mean "to see"? The theater of Romeo Castellucci attempts to activate the ability of seeing through its functioning as a cut-off switch of this endless stream of images. It awakens the spectator and brings to the level of consciousness the platonic idea of an exit from the cave. Naked and frightened, man will grope his way out to an unknown and unpredictable world. He will be exposed to the light, and to the constant threat of the gaze, just like the baby when it is forced to abandon the protective darkness of the womb. In his painful Exodus, who will be his guide? Who will smash the golden calf? Who will help him to free himself from the bondage of fake idols?

—Dr. Eleni Papalexioiu
*Lecturer, Dept. of Theatre Studies, School of Fine Arts,
University of the Peloponnese*

About the Artist

Romeo Castellucci (Direction, Set, Costumes, Lights, Text) was born in 1960 in Cesena, Italy. He graduated with a degree in painting and scenography from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. In 1981, with Claudia Castellucci and Chiara Guidi, he founded Societas Raffaello Sanzio. Since then he has produced numerous performances, working as writer and director as well as designing the sets, lights, sound, and costumes. He is internationally recognized—his works having been staged in over fifty countries—for his theater based on a synthesis of the arts aimed at creating an integrated perception. He has also written various theoretical essays that reflect the development of his conception of theater. His directing style is marked by dramatic lines not subject to the primacy of literature, making of theater a plastic art, complex and richly visionary. Since 2006 he has been working individually. His stagings are regularly invited to the world's most prestigious theaters, opera houses, and festivals.

In 2010, Castellucci started the project that led to *On the Concept of the Face, Regarding the Son of God* and *The Minster's Black Veil*. In 2012 he completed this project with *The Four Seasons Restaurant*, presented in July 2012 at Festival d'Avignon.

In 2011 Castellucci produced Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*, his first opera, at Théâtre La Monnaie–De Munt in Brussels. That year he was also selected by the Tokyo Festival to present *The phenomenon called I*. In 2013 he was invited by Thomas Ostermeier, director of Schaubühne in Berlin, to produce a new creation, *Hyperion* by Frederic Hölderlin. In July of the same year, he presented *Schwanengesang D744* at the Festival d'Avignon. This new opera, coproduced by La Monnaie–De Munt, was based on a selection of Schubert Lieder sung by Kerstin Avemo, with the participation of Valérie Dréville and Alain Franco.

In 2014 the city of Bologna's Assessorato alla Cultura dedicated that year's special project, titled *and the fox said to the crow*, to Castellucci.

Romeo Castellucci is also the author, together with Claudia Castellucci and Chiara Guidi, of various dramaturgical works, including *Il teatro della Società Raffaello Sanzio* (Ubulibri, Milano, 1992), *Epopea della Polvere* (Ubulibri, Milano, 2001), *Les Pèlerins de la matière* (Les Solitaires Intempestifs, Besançon, 2001), *Epitaph* (Ubulibri, Milano, 2005), *The Theatre of Società Raffaello Sanzio* (Routledge, London and New York, 2007), and *Itinera* (Trajectoires de la forme, *Tragedia Endogonidia*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2008).

Awards and Honors

- 1995 UBU special prize for resistance, following the exclusion of Società Raffaello Sanzio from public participation in contemporary theater by the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment of the Republic of Italy.
- 1996 Masque d'Or Prize, *Orestea, una commedia organica?* for best foreign play of the year, Festival Théâtre des Amériques, Montréal, Quebec.
- 1996 Europe Prize for Nuova Realtà Teatrale.
- 1997 Ubu prize for best play of the year for *Giulio Cesare*.
- 1998 European Prize for New Theatre to Società Raffaello Sanzio, Taormina.
- 1999 Grand Prix de la Critique-Paris for the scenography of *Genesi, from the museum of sleep*.
- 2000 Prize for Best International Production to *Genesi, from the museum of sleep* at the Dublin Theatre Festival.
- 2002 Awarded the title of “Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres” from the French Ministry of Culture.
- 2004 Special UBU Prize to Castellucci for his work in developing *Tragedia Endogonidia*.
- 2005 Nominated Director of the Theater section of the Venice Biennale.
- 2006 Special UBU Prize for directing the theater section of the Venice Biennale, with his program *Pompeii: The Novel of Ashes*.
- 2006 Special “Interdisciplinary” prize assigned June 9th by the University of Bologna to Società Raffaello Sanzio.

- 2007 Nominated “Artiste Associé ” by the Artistic Direction of the Festival d’Avignon for the 62nd edition in 2008.
- 2010 *Le Monde* named Castellucci’s trilogy *Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso*, inspired by Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the best play and one of the ten most influential cultural events in the world for the decade 2000–2010.
- 2010 Butaca Prize, Barcelona, Spain, best international play for the cycle of the *Divine Comedy*.
- 2011 Prix Europe Francophone by the Syndicat de la critique Théâtre, Musique et Danse for Richard Wagner’s *Parsifal* produced at the Théâtre La Monnaie–De Munt in Brussels.
- 2013 Curator of *Idiom*, a special program for Malta Festival Poznan in Poland. The title of Castellucci’s program is *Oh man, oh machine*.
- 2013 Awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement by the Venice Biennale Theatre Festival.
- 2014 The Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna awarded Castellucci an honorary degree in the Performing Arts.

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Office of Arts & Cultural Programming (ACP) presents and produces remarkable works of dance, music, theater, and opera at the Alexander Kasser Theater under the banner Peak Performances. Specific to its mission is a willingness to offer work by artists whose ideas are singular and worthy examples of creative innovation. Notable past productions include Richard Schechner's *Imagining O*; Robert Woodruff's *Dog Days* by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek; Robert Wilson's *Zinnias: The Life of Clementine Hunter* by Bernice Johnson Reagon, Toshi Reagon, and Jacqueline Woodson; David Gordon's *Shlemiel the First* by Robert Brustein, Arnold Weinstein, and Hankus Netsky; Ridge Theater's *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* by David Lang; and The Builders Association's *Elements of Oz*. ACP has commissioned works by Vijay Iyer, Liz Gerring, Bill T. Jones, Susan Marshall, Jan Fabre, Richard Alston, Liz Lerman, Wayne McGregor,

Laurie Anderson (for the Kronos Quartet), Romeo Castellucci, Pat Graney, Fred Hersch, and Nora Chipaumire. ACP has fostered several unique initiatives, such as the Creative Thinking course, which takes the artistic process as impetus for problem solving in all academic disciplines, and Dance for Film on Location at MSU, a multiyear project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

ACP is the proud recipient of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance/New Jersey State Council on the Arts Cultural Access Network Innovator Award and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts Citation of Excellence and Designation of Major Impact.

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Holly and Robert Gregory

I. Michael Kasser

The Honorable Mary Mochary



To view our complete season and for more information, visit **peakperfs.org**.

