

Myths of the Voice

2005 / 2006

A three-stages *Myth and Theatre Festival*

Malérargues, July 2 to 17, 2005

Aberystwyth, April 2006

Naples, fall of 2006

Editorial Presentation

by Enrique Pardo

Pantheatre's first Myth and Theatre Festival took place in 1985 at Château de Malérargues, the Roy Hart International Centre, in Southern France. It has since taken on themes ranging from Aphrodite, The Greed of Dionysus, to Alchemy, Jealousy, Gossip or Fury. After ten years at La Chartreuse de Villeneuve-lez-Avignon, it travelled to New Orleans, Ireland, Umbria (Italy) and Granada (Spain.) It returns to Château de Malérargues with "Myths of the Voice", a theme that would seem to have been an obvious choice from the very beginning, since Pantheatre, created in 1981, was the first independent company to emerge from the Roy Hart Theatre, world famous for its vocal work and philosophy of singing.

Yet it has taken over 20 years to arrive at a VOICES Festival. I would open the debates by suggesting that this delay has to do with the fact that the voice in general, and singing in particular, is lived and spoken of as a spiritual, even religious phenomena. "Inspired" practitioners tend to see ontological truths inside their voice and body experiences. This generates resistance to the cultural relativization that myth brings to such theories, a relativization that is the fundamental (and fundamentalist) problem of religions: a refusal to see themselves as mythologies.

The VOICES / Myths of the Voice festival will offer a forum of reflection and practice on the "theologies of the voice" in the broadest sense, that is on the myths that filter how the voice is conceived of, listened to and used - especially in the arts and in therapeutic practices. Classical mythology will be discussed, certainly, as will history of religions and especially the protestant traditions of singing, but we will also study (and practice) contemporary theatre and music performances whose images and aspirations seek mythological dimensions.

3 source references. The timing of the Festival has three main source references

1. The *Roy Hart International Centre*, in Southern France, celebrated the 30th anniversary of its founding (1974) followed shortly by the accidental death of its director founder, Roy Hart, in 1975.
2. The Camisards uprising in 1704. These were the Protestants who resisted Louis the 14th in the Cevennes mountains, where Château de Malérargues is situated. The Camisard Calvinist cults, especially their 'inspired' voice and body 'performances' had a significant impact on the perception, use and status of the voice and singing in Protestant Europe, in the United States, and, later in large parts of the world thanks to the Protestant missionary zeal.
3. A book published in 2000 by Professor Steven Connor, which opens extraordinary historical and mythological perspectives on the voice, and which bears the unlikely title of: "Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism." Connor reviews and analyses the conceptions of the voice's ownership and inspiration in Western history through the notion of ventriloquism, asking the fundamental questions of "who is speaking?" and "where does the voice come from?"...
In Connor's analysis the crucial mutation in the mythologies of the voice is caused by the impact and impositions of the voice of Judeo-Christianity on Paganism. "Shut down the oracular voices" was possibly the first priority the Fathers of the Church gave themselves, and the emblematic enemy in this crusade was the Sybil of Cumae with the legendary echoes of her vocal 'performances'.

3 stages in 3 locations.

1. Château de Malérargues, the *Roy Hart International Centre*, in the Cevennes foothills of Southern France - a secluded, austere, sturdy, protestant manor house in a pastoral setting of massive trees and green underbrush. The outbuildings have been converted into voice and theatre studios. Something of a mythical place for voice research and teaching. The Malérargues festival will take place July 2 to 17, 2005.
2. Aberystwyth, Wales in conjunction with CPR (Centre for Performance Research) and University of Aberystwyth, and as part of CPR's longstanding series of "Giving Voice" meetings - possibly the world's most

comprehensive gatherings in contemporary voice research and practice. The Aberystwyth Festival will take place in April 2006.

3. Naples. Why Naples? Because it is the capital of *bel canto*, the capital of Mediterranean catholic paganism, and, most important, the home of the Sybil of Cumae. Pantheatre has a large following in Italy where it has collaborated with different artists, created performances and organized the Umbria "On Scandal" symposiums. The Naples Festival should take place in fall of 2006.

3 main activities. The festival brings together theory and practice through 3 main activities:

1. workshops – artists are invited to share their work and their views on the festival theme through practical workshops which usually take place in the mornings and early afternoons.
2. lectures and discussions – keynote lectures, panel talks, open forums of discussion.
3. performances – from the odd exceptional invited performance (for instance Romeo Castellucci was invited for the first time to France to the "Dyonisos" Festival, with his incredible "Gilgamesh") to Pantheatre's *Impensemble* experimental pieces, to work-in-progress presentations.

Pantheatre / Myth and Theatre Festival

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