

## **SIMULTANEOUS ACTION** *By Ezio Cuoghi*



The focus of this Intermedial Event is Time.

Physical, biological, phenomenal, metaphysical, conceptual Time.

The direct or indirect subject-matter of this work is that which the word Time evokes in the minds of each one of us, through visions of dance, of words, of technology.

While the metaphor of Time has always been by definition the image of events, phenomena and living things flowing by in an unlimited sequence of moments, nowadays it would be misleading to continue to depict Time and the way we experience it using a linear concept of priority order. We live in an era of explosions and implosions, of identity falling apart and reference points, of long-lasting moments and years frittered away in no time at all.

And we find it hard to recognize in ourselves and in our environment the rhythm which belongs to us, almost as if it fades away in the echo of the continuous going on of a chorus of rhythms which appear unsynchronised, each one predisposed to be wedged in or to be superimposed, and only rarely fitting in well together with another.

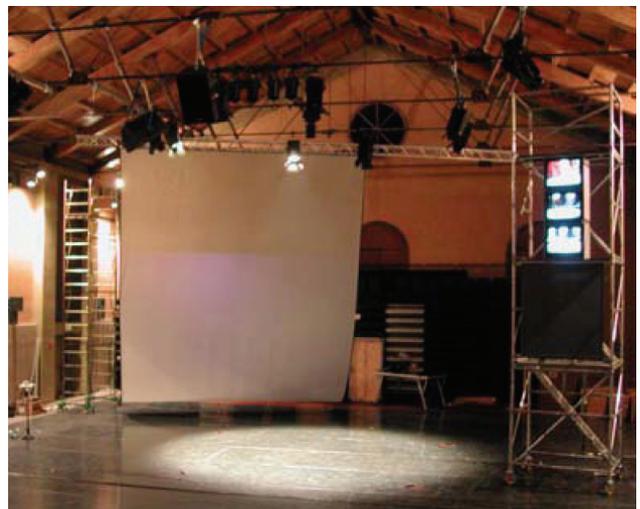
It is hard to imagine whether Time is the question or the answer which precedes or follows our almost imperceptible perplexity when we hazard trying to distinguish between what comes first and what comes after.

## SIMULTANEOUS ACTION

**Text taken from an article in the on-line magazine “THE SCENOGRAPHER”**

*by Daniele Paolin, scenographer of the event.*

Intermedial Event, the subtitle. What was performed on Saturday 20th December 2003 in the interesting Cavallerizza Theatre and strongly sought after by the Artistic Director of “I Teatri” of Reggio Emilia, Daniele Abbado, can only be described in these terms. This work, thought up and directed by Ezio Cuoghi, not by any means new to research on the relationship between art and science, is punctually defined in his own words in the presentation of the performance “The focus of this intermedial event is Time. Physical, biological, phenomenal, metaphysical, conceptual Time. The direct or indirect subject-matter of this work is that which the word Time evokes in each one of our minds, by means of visions of dance, of words, of technology...



It is hard to imagine whether Time is the question or the answer which precedes or follows our almost imperceptible perplexity when we hazard trying to distinguish between what comes first and what comes after.” The bid to define the scope

and the reasons which motivate this event is probably equally clearly brought into focus by Giorgio Celli's thoughts, who describes the overall project (NOOSPHERA PROJECT) of the research undertaken as follows : "... The complicity of the left side of our brain is not sufficient, the use of the right side is required too, so that reason is in harmony with emotion, visual perception with the practice of logic, seeing with thinking, pathos with cogitation. How best to obtain this result if not by means of a multimedia, interdisciplinary work, of interaction between science and art, by a technological collage, a total event, by the simulation of a great cosmological prophecy?" A performative evening with a mix of art and science on the theme of time, a brief and spare flowing of a series of scenes which throw light upon and look into the problematic aspects (reversibility - irreversibility),



paradoxical (Achilles and the tortoise), poetic (Calvino's stories), made the space of the Cavallerizza, already structurally suited to the event just as it is in its structural essence, a natural option.

The texts of Cuoghi himself and Giorgio Celli ,therefore, guide us through a non-linear course, almost a non-account relation. Four telecameras become the same number of hidden eyes which nourish a distant, electronic, digital retina and a "brain" elaborates, fits together, intercepts and finally projects, in real time, on a large transparent wing suspended between the iron tie-beams in this interesting room, which is simple in its perfectly rectangular shape. The stage therefore is a deliberately clear open space, lacking in anything which might even remotely correspond to the component-part of a possible décor. Nothing is "hidden". Rather than from an out and out projected scene, we started from precise dramaturgical

and communicative needs, in an attempt to “help”, with as little interference as possible, the surroundings, already naturally suited to be turned into a practical place for the event. In

Cuoghi's mind everything was clear and defined, but not so much so in my own mind, which has always gravitated around traditional theatrical circles, such as melodrama : an optical housing for more or less magic or



decorative artifices. The unusually close proximity of the public, almost inside of the performance, given the lack of a proscenium, lead to a perception, at times intense, at times fragmentary, in such a vast visual relation. All of this is under the banner of a new anti-naturalism, if such an inappropriately generic term is allowed. Two side-postings, exactly inserted in the regularity of the pilaster strips that hold up the architecture, but differing greatly chromatically, house, one opposite the other, the two actors, Gigi dall'Aglio and Roberto Abbati, performing voices, who appear and disappear, filmed at short range by two cameras, in their prompt intervention. Behind, in the background, situated in diagonal, a large screen descends from the iron trusses and before reaching the floor, goes backup behind, like a slackened sail, curving the projection line to the extent that it gradually becomes blurred towards the lower part, suspending it in its more properly ponderous significance. The choice of the position for the large retro-projecting screen, necessarily at the centre of attention along with the

choreographic action, was almost obligatory due to a series of shooting and projection practices but what we actually wanted to avoid was a very static and taken for granted configuration of a normal “screen” canonically standing, taut and positioned frontally. In contraposition to this element, it was necessary, for contrast, to position an “object” which could capture the fixed images of the



shots, the three monitors and the two images of the actors- performing voices, positioned very much to the side and therefore hardly visible from the front pit-stalls facing the two corresponding positions. Right when we were making an on the spot inspection, trying to identify the best solution for this visual totem, almost by chance we came across a light, empty aluminium structure, while a

previous staging was being taken down : a column reaching up to the height of the trusses. We had found the functional machina for our visual deus.

## **SIMULTANEOUS ACTION: Summary of the Action**

Prologue

The vision of the “Tartaciechi”

1. scene - The Dance of Diverging Time – Dance
2. scene - Measuring Time
3. scene - Videoshells in Increasing Time – (video)
4. scene - Controversial Metamorphosis – Dance

5. scene - Dialogue between Cronos and his twenty-fourth son – by Giorgio Celli
6. scene - The Evolving Instant – (video)
7. scene - Oscillation vs Refraction – Dance
8. scene - Dialogue between Zeno and Achilles
9. scene - Uncertain Continuity – Dance
10. scene - Dialogue between Einstein and the Sphinx
11. scene - DNA (poem)
12. scene - Elliptical Visions (video)
13. scene - « Marcondirondirondello » - Dance
14. scene - Dance from 1 to 2 and to 3 – Dance
15. scene - The Arrow of Time

In a Finished Time

The Dance of the Eternal Return.

## **SIMULTANEOUS ACTION**

Pliny – I have heard that south of Antiochia there are half a dozen devout blind people, who are able to see both into the future and into the past but when it comes to the present : they interpret everything that happens to them today as if it had happened to them at the same time on the previous day. Then they eat and digestion turns them into seers, and they become witnesses of what will occur tomorrow.

Jairo – This episode brings other blind people to mind, the so-called ‘Tartaciechi’ (like those who stammer when speaking), who do not have a fluid vision of the world. For them the world is like cinema : they see a frame, then lose their sight for a fraction of a second and when it comes back they find themselves in a world which differs very slightly from the world they have just finished seeing. All these slight differences put together lead to an illusion of continuity, which induces them to think that the world is in motion, whereas really, between one obscurity and another, they are the ones who move from one world to another. They do not live either in the present, or in the past, or in the future. They live in various worlds simultaneously.

Raul Ruiz, “ Il video Trascendente “, from ‘Teatro in Europa’, and Ass. Cult. Teatro in Europa, Rome, 1992

1. scene – The Dance of Diverging Time – Dance

2. scene – Measuring Time

1st actor: - Time – from the latin tempus, of debatable etymology: from the same indo-european root-word which means to cut, with the original meaning of division

2nd actor: - Time – indefinite period in which the inexorable flow of events, phenomena and life, occurs in an unlimited sequence of instants

Projected: - Time – notion which organizes the mobile continuity of the states in which human and natural events identify themselves with regard to succession or evolution

1st Actor: - overall duration of the flow of events, considered in absolute – ‘the conscience of time’, ‘time never passes by’

2nd Actor: - limited lapse of time in which it is necessary, it is expected or decided that for an action to be carried out, that a phenomenon or event takes place -‘calculate the time needed’, ‘cooking time’, ‘ionization time’

Projected: - Time – limited part of a comprehensive length of time, period –‘some time after’, ‘we don’t know where he has been all this time’

1st Actor: - Time – rhythmical measure in which a beat is divided, ‘beat time’, ‘keep time’

2nd Actor: - Tempo – misura che corrisponde al valore di una vocale breve – ‘in una sillaba lunga i tempi sono due’

Projected: - Tempo – ogni movimento di cui si compone un’azione dallo svolgimento complesso – ‘passo di danza in tre tempi’

1st Actor: - Tempo – ciascuno delle fasi il cui insieme costituisce il ciclo di funzionamento di un motore a scoppio – ‘motore a due/quattro tempi’

2nd Actor: - Time – in a chronological sequence of events, a point which is traceable and distinguishable with respect to a before and an after – ‘from that

time we started talking to each other', 'in that time there was a disastrous flood', 'quella persona ha fatto il suo tempo'

Projected: - Tempo – età dell'uomo o di un animale – 'quanto tempo ha questo ragazzo?', 'quel cucciolo non ha molto tempo'

1st Actor: - Time – period in the year of a certain length having its own characteristics or in which recurring natural events take place – 'Springtime', 'il tempo delle fragole è molto breve'

2nd Actor: – Time – part of the day or of a longer period in which a person devotes time to work or to an activity. 'study time', 'can I steal a bit of your time?', 'I'll try and kill time as best I can'

Projected: - Time – moment in which the speaker places the action expressed by the verb – past, present, future tense

1st Actor: - Time – period which can even be very brief, established or opportune moment for the realization or fulfilment of a task – 'you will receive a reply within the agreed time', 'it will be sent to you at the appropriate time'

2nd Actor: - Time – personification of the years, the centuries going by and of the continual change of things – 'I guasti del tempo', 'time flies'

Projected:- Tempo – insieme degli elementi meteorologici che caratterizzano lo stato dell'atmosfera su un luogo o una regione in un determinato momento – 'che tempo fa?', 'usciremo con qualsiasi tempo', 'rosso di sera bel tempo si spera'

1st Actor: - 'time is money', 'there's no time like the present', 'il tempo viene per chi lo sa aspettare'

2nd Actor: - Time – parameter which assumes a value in the real field and of which mechanical and physical variables are functions

Projected: - Time – quantity which follows the direct ratio of the space covered and the inverse of the speed with which it has been covered

1st Actor: - Time – succession of irreversible instants and of unlimited length of time, but viewed as a dimension which can be measured and divided – 'the measurement of time'

3. scene – Videoshells in Increasing Time – (video)

4. scene – Controversial Metamorphosis – Dance

5. scene – Dialogue between Cronos and his twenty-fourth son – by Giorgio Celli

Son: Father, where are my brothers and sisters?

Cronos: There are certain things that it is best not to know. True knowledge is the awareness of our lack of knowledge. Not knowing that we know and knowing that we do not know is knowledge. Ignorance is a high crystal tower which we climb up in order not to see the landscape during moonless nights.

F.: I heard the eldest of my brothers, the twenty-third, crying out in the darkest rooms of that tower.

C.: We are born crying, assuming we are born alive. And we depart this life with that same cry when we die. Life and death are two sides of the same coin.

F.: Father, why do my brothers and sisters disappear and yet I am unable to find their bodies?

C.: Time eats up the flesh, reduces bones to tiny fragments, gives back to the earth what once belonged to the earth. Because, in the end, everything comes from stone and returns to stone. Everything disappears, only I disappear continually without disappearing.

F.: Somebody told me that, day by day, you have eaten up all of my brothers and sisters.

C.: Was I not the one who had them? Were they not of my own flesh and blood? Was it not by any chance licit that the flesh of my own flesh became my flesh once again?

F.: You frighten me. Because, at birth, each one of us enters into a time which becomes his time. My flesh has grown up in a time which is no longer yours. Everybody lives in their own time. The Time of time does not exist. You want to be the time of time and in order to become that, you devour, with their flesh, the time which belongs to others. Even if they are your own children.

C.: In the beginning I was a motionless monad who continually returned into himself. My first child broke the spell of that return with no return. And time started passing by, taking me elsewhere, in the sidereal mystery of the universe. Into the flux which flows towards entropy.

F.: Did you think that by eating your children up you would be able to stop time passing by?

C.: Yes, first one, then the other, then the next one...

F.: Until you came to me, but the final hour is always the most difficult to cancel out. Because at that same instant in which you eat me up, your first child will come back to life, then the second, followed by the third.... and in the end I will appear before you once again, you who wish to devour me to prevent time flowing by. But the time you devour continually comes back, and you cannot stop it because it is part of you....

C.: I am eating myself up, bit by bit. And I eat myself up if I eat you up.

F.: I, too consume myself with you. Time is the cannibal of all our lives. From one generation to the next we become more and more suited to live merely to be eaten. And time, which devours everything, continues devouring its children, who are my children and my children's children. At the end of time, should there be an end, you would devour yourself, making your very own tomb out of yourself. You would live on the edge of infinity, on a bed benumbed by the total entropy of the universe.

6. scene – The Evolving Instant (video)

7. scene – Oscillation vs Refraction – Dance

8. scene – Dialogue between Zeno and Achilles

First Actor – Historically speaking it is to the theory of relativity that we owe the critical attitude from which we have come to examine the operations of measuring time, and their spatial implications. The relation between Local time- the observer's time – and the time indicated on a clock situated in a different place depends on the difference and the relative rapidity observer – clock. Moreover, the existing gravitational field can interfere with the working of the clock so much that it stops, like a hypothetical fall into a black hole. But even before that, the physical operations at the basis of measuring time require the presence of a good standard measure. That applies to a periodic mutation to which it is reasonable to attribute a constancy of time within time. Obviously periodic phenomena of ever increasing frequency, and thus at decreasingly shorter intervals, enable the measurement to become more and more precise.

The accuracy of current atomic clocks can be up to one second every million years; but research already authorizes us to predict even more accurate

measurements. Is there a limit to this research? From a theoretical point of view there isn't...provided that time is continuous.

2nd Actor – Achilles runs ten times faster than the tortoise and gives it a head start of ten metres. Achilles covers those ten metres, the tortoise covers a metre; Achilles covers that metre, the tortoise a decimetre ; Achilles covers that decimetre, the tortoise a centimetre ; Achilles covers that centimetre, the tortoise a millimetre ; Achilles quickly covers that millimetre, the tortoise a tenth of a millimetre and so on infinitely, without him ever catching the tortoise up.

Dialogue between Zeno and Achilles  
Giorgio Celli

Zeno – Achilles lives in the time of myth, a time which grows within itself, and remains itself.

Achilles – The tortoise lives in the time of geological eras, a slow time, which runs towards the sea of fossils or living museums of change. The mythical era and the era of evolution meet up in history : where ideas become matter and man splinters stone.

Zeno – Achilles moves quickly because he is slow, the tortoise goes more slowly, but is quicker . The compromise is a paradox which calls for hyperbole and silence. Achilles and the tortoise run in the arena, but they run along two parallel straight lines, the race is not genuine. The tortoise is leading by a millimetre, which mathematical ratio expands to infinity. Each millimetre generates a fraction of a millimetre. Each fraction of a millimetre generates an even smaller fraction. Because space is infinite.

Achilles – Because space is infinite. David's hand cannot reach the pebble. Goliath's spear is unable to strike David in the heart. David and Goliath are two perfectly motionless statues under the sidereal fire of the Pleiades.

Zeno – Achilles and the tortoise run in motionlessness. There is an infinite sea of numbers and their fractions between Achilles and the tortoise. There are no winners, or losers in races regarding time. The defeat of reason is the only thing evident in the face of the concreteness of events. Because David picks up the pebble and Goliath's spear just misses his cheek. Achilles beats the tortoise by miles.

Achilles – Paradoxes are labyrinths of our mind in which we face the minotaur of madness. Man is a being who can think about infinity but not live it. The clarity of logic is overshadowed by the opaqueness of the plinted stone: doing comes first and then thinking. The era of myth and the era of evolution are not times to live through.

Zeno – Achilles, surpassed in his thoughts, is always victorious in life. What is ordinary is the time belonging to history, and history has its thousands of clocks. The clocks of history measure the time to live and the time to die.

9. scene – Uncertain Continuity – Dance

10. scene – Dialogue between Einstein and the Sphinx – by Giorgio Celli

Einstein : My father's clock said a different time than mine.

The Sphinx : The father's clock indicates everybody's time. Its hands move round in the direction of history. In all the squares around the world the clock says the same time as the father's clock.

E.: My clock is the compass which guides me through the oceans of time. But not through life : if the father arranges to meet me, I join him the previous evening, while he is expecting me on the same day the following month. If I get on a train, he gets on that same train an hour later when it has already left. We never manage to talk because I answer him before he has had time to ask me any question. I demand his answers, and he smiles at me in a tomorrow that reflects the day before yesterday.

S.: Fathers and sons do not understand each other because they live but they do not live together. One returns home in the evening of the day after the other. They speak to one another and it is as if their words are the echo of the words of somebody who lives beyond time. I am an expert in enigmas and you, Einstein, being a scientist, should be best suited for resolving them. Even though the solution is always deferred to infinity.

A.: Time is based on space and he who races along on his bicycle cycles on a different track on different days from he who speeds along in a car, though neither of them is aware of it. The cyclist ages more than the driver. My father raced after me on his bicycle, but I went up in a rocket and looked down pitifully at him from some crater on the moon, while he precipitated into a more and more

miserable old age, stooping under the weight of many days which hadn't been mine.

S.: The enigma is not time, time is only the director of life. The unknown author of the play is another. Who writes, listen carefully to me, a play in four parts, then in two, and finally in three parts. And then he stops writing, and somebody else, who seems like his living image , his son perhaps?, starts writing again for him.

E.: The curtains are raised and from the back of the stage I see a man arrive.

S.: Man : child, adult, old man. The man again : the child, the adult, the old man. The enigma of man is that he is never himself, the enigma of time is that man is always himself.

A.: The force of gravity bends the arrow of the sunlight. Energy is the sleeping beauty of matter, which wakes up at the poisonous kiss of war.

S.: Somebody kissed it : why?

E.: Nobody knows why. Somebody knows how. There are even people who do not want to know, because they think they already know, but do not. My father's clock reads a certain time that I do not want to know, in the square of Thebes, a time which only my mother is able to read. The children must not read that time with her. If they were to do so, time would come to a halt and start going backwards until everything had returned to its origins.

S.: The real enigma is that there is no enigma and I only exist as a figment of your imagination, my dear, stubborn Albert.

11. scene – DNA – poem
12. scene – Elliptical Visions (video)
13. scene – Marcondirondirondello – Dance
14. scene – Dance from 1 to 2 and to 3 – Dance
15. scene – The Arrow of Time

(First actor) - The fundamental equations in physics are symmetrical in Time. Mechanics, electromagnetism, quantum physics, relativity all allow for the inversion of time. When observing the reproduction of the motion of a body it is not possible to define the real course of events. But, generally speaking, spontaneous natural phenomena involve very complex systems for which the direction of the development of time is quite evident : the arrow of Time.

All the changes which occur spontaneously in nature comply with the second principle of thermodynamics, that is to say they help increase the entropy in the universe, or according to Boltzmann's interpretation, they lead the universe towards ever-increasing disordered states.  $S = K \log W$ : where S stands for entropy, K is a universal constant and W is a measure of disorder. In statistical terms, however, there exists a remote probability of orderly situations like those existing five billion years ago which generated life on earth.

In any case, the development in time of the universe tends towards chaos, but new concepts such as fractals, half-whole dimensions, attractors, seem to limit the absolute certainty of these assertions. Is chaos truly chaotic?

'Implosion' by I. Calvino

(2nd Actor) Explode or implode, that is the question : whether it is of more noble intent to extend one's energy into space without restraint, or to crush it internally into a thick concentration and preserve it by swallowing it up.

Escape, disappear; nothing more ; keep any glare, any ray, any outburst inside and by suffocating the conflicts which cause agitation in an unseemly way in the depths of our soul put them to rest ; hide oneself, cancel oneself out: maybe wake up in a different place. Different....what do you mean by different? Would the problem of exploding or imploding reappear?

Absorbed by the vortex of this galaxy, would it reappear in other times and other skies? Here, giving way to a cold silence, there expressing itself in fiery shrieks belonging to another language. Here absorbing bad and good like a sponge in the background, there spurting out like a dazzling jet, spreading out, losing its way, getting lost? For what purpose would the cycle repeat itself again? I know nothing, I do not want to know, I prefer not to think about it : here, now, I have made my decision : I'm going to implode, as if plunging down

centripetal would safeguard me from my doubts and errors, from the time of ephemeral mutations, from the slippery slope of before and after, in order to accede to a stable time, still, smoothed, and reach the only definitive, compact, homogeneous state. Explode, if that suits you, radiate in infinite arrows, do everything possible, squander all you have, throw yourselves away : I'm going to implode, collapse inside the abyss of myself, towards my buried centre, infinitely.

In a Finished Time

## Dance of the Eternal Return

It is hard to imagine whether time is the question or the answer that precedes or follows our almost imperceptible perplexity when we hazard trying to distinguish between what comes first and what follows.