

The Chaos of Probabilities, July 2009

By Sofia Anastasopoulou

Jasmin Vardimon's works belong to this hybrid kind of performance in which the genres lose their importance. Theatre, dance, text and new media make up a colorful mosaic. Justitia epitomizes all the elements which persistently return in Vardimon's works, supreme above them the body, which exposes and at the same time celebrates. A body of athletic endurance and performance, which seems not to be subject to physical limitations and to ignore "common obstacles", such as bones, joints and tendons. Also evident is an explosive mix of choreography and theatrical elements, her ironic gaze, the undiminished intensity with which she pushes the action ahead, her highlighting of social stereotypes, the crude representation of sexuality and aggression and, finally, a female gender in a position of supremacy, strong, seducing and dangerous.

Yet, what inspired Jasmin Vardimon to compose this extravagant psychological thriller and incorporate in it all sorts of references, from Pompeii to Ruth Ellis, who killed her lover and became the last woman to be executed by hanging in England, in 1955? "I usually start with a location, such as the hospital in Lullaby and the court of justice in Justitia".¹ There is something strangely fascinating about the courtroom. It is a peculiarly theatrical place, with its own stage (the judge bench) and seating area (the public gallery), and it hosts the trial "performance", in which there are well defined roles, operations, movements, often even costumes for the participants. It is a key institution, with meticulously specified and strict procedures and irrevocable judgment. In the courtroom of Justitia, the defense attorney places us into the extreme position of the jury and invites us on a struggle to reconstruct the truth. Throughout this journey, we are confronted with the fragile fluidity of life: different versions of the facts, the secrecy of private moments, the sensitivity of personal confessions and a Cassandra who, with the full weight of her name, transcribes by shorthand an inescapable destiny.

Given the impossible task of finding the truth, questions arise over the nature and substance of guilt and justice, as the individual comes up against social mechanisms on an impressive rotating stage, which is more than just a stage device: The rotation establishes a convention that allows Vardimon to weave into an invisible web the events and the questions, the structures and the souls, the places and the bodies. It enables the locations to turn from communicating vessels into inaccessible constructions and the characters to retract what they had revealed. It enables objects, movement and language to enter and exit, to communicate and to be separated, to register and to delete (as in the fun rewind scenes) endlessly and inexorably. In this open network of a closed stage, Vardimon's performers seem to be suspended between height and depth, between the delineated area of the stage and the uncertain area that extends beyond its limits.

In the chaos of probabilities, the body is revealed as physically strong but fragile in context. And if, in contemporary dance, the dancers are not dancing "from the ground up" but "with the ground", for Justitia the ground is always a sought-after connection. And so is the truth.

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* Interview of Jasmin Vardimon to Christos Polymenakos, Highlights Magazine 37, November-December 2008, p. 108