

ANTOINE GINDT

# THE STRENGTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL CONFRONTED WITH THE SYSTEM

**T**&M is again making it possible for one of today's composers to create his first opera. Where does this production fit in with the history of T&M and what is the origin

of the project?

This production is a part of the essential aim of T&M: to commission new works from composers and, above all, to accompany them in their first lyric or musical theater experience. For the past several years, I have been paying attention to Francesco Filidei's music. In 2012, he talked to me about his project of writing an opera on Giordano Bruno. We started thinking together about how to get the project off the ground, particularly with which musical forces. The vocal ensemble of twelve singers (six men and six women), for example, was not thought of in Francesco's original project.

WHAT INTERESTED ME WAS QUESTIONING THE WAY ALL COLLECTIVES TRY TO MAINTAIN ORDER

So the writing was collaborative from the start of the project, between the composer, the librettist, and the director as is often the case in T&M productions?

I think there was a good flow. It was two years of exchanges with Francesco and Stefano Busellato, without always knowing when the exchange was producing decisions. There are a certain number of questions that we raised together with Francesco, for which he found musical solutions that will be accompanied by the staging. The location of the orchestra, for example. But we respected each other's positions: the libretto is, of course, written by Stefano, the music by Francesco, and the decisions about the space and the staging were not imposed by

the authors.

*The score imposes complex scenic constraints: a choir of twelve singers that alternately represent different points of view, little action but the expression of philosophical thought, a dilated space-time... How did you address the scenic issues and can you talk to us about the scenography?*

The scenography includes a half-sphere that hangs over the stage referring to the idea of a heavenly body, of philosophical questions that disturbed the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and notably the most important: is the Earth the center of the universe?

But in the end, the major focus for me—what I always want—is to empower the musical discourse and the music itself; in this case, to create a system where the marvelous and strange could find their place. I did not want to create a didactic performance on Giordano Bruno, Francesco Filidei's music isn't appropriate for that at all.

*The philosophy of Giordano Bruno is opposed to religious dogma. Does his thinking and story still speak to us today?*

We can consider Giordano Bruno as a martyr of the Catholic Church. Or, we can give him a more universal significance. His story is connected to a very precise moment in history. For me, it was a complex question: Do we transpose? Historicize? We chose to "transfigure", attaching impor-

tance to the magic dimension of Giordano Bruno's thinking.

He incarnates a sort of universal figure of free thought—in contradiction with the established order—be it religious or political. What interested me was questioning the way all collectives try to maintain order or establish an arbitrary order against individuals. It is the power of the individual—in his uniqueness, with his personal strength—to resist the system. And this system is unfortunately not only the established order, but is also public opinion, for example. We have to understand that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the thinking of Giordano Bruno was little known and didn't reach the people, who had neither education nor the capacity to judge his thinking.

The challenge is therefore twofold: how the established order, in this case the Roman Catholic Church, judges an iconoclastic thinking considered blasphemous, and at the same time, what is the position of public opinion with this? We see how difficult it is to fight against dominant thought.

But I don't want to take a short cut, I staged an opera, I didn't write a manifest! All the better if Giordano Bruno makes us reflect on a certain number of questions that our societies are currently addressing.

*Interview by Dominique Bouchot, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015*

