

A theatre of tormented souls

It begins with a magic lantern and a puppet theatre. It begins with images, with faces. This is what Ingmar Bergman tells us in his moving autobiography *Laterna Magica*, and also as he recounted later in his magnificent film *Fanny and Alexander*. It begins with a small projector, trips to the cinema with his grandmother and an extraordinarily vivid imagination. He studies literature but he is already under the spell of the theatre. He acts very occasionally. Directs. He continues to do so throughout his life. Nobody is surprised when in the mid-1980s he announces that he is giving up the cinema to concentrate on the theatre. Even if he did get behind the camera again.

In the course of his long life he wrote plays, ran prestigious theatres, staged a whole range of authors including Shakespeare, Molière, Schiller, Büchner, Chekhov, Ibsen, Strindberg of course, Enquist and Gombrowicz. His entire film output is haunted by the theatre. Moreover, he claimed that his films are essentially theatrical. And on film sets he always worked in the company of a growing core of actors.

Even when the centenary of his birth is not being celebrated, Ingmar Bergman is never off the stage. The greatest directors have made productions inspired by his plays or his scenarios. Ivo van Hove, for example, shone his bright light on *After the Rehearsal* and *Persona*. In Paris the company tg STAN is currently staging two plays as part of the Festival d'automne, which are also inspired by Ingmar Bergman. They are performed in French at the Théâtre de la Bastille, where the Belgian company is very much at home.

Part of the repertoire

First of all there is *Infidèles* (Faithless) after the scenario of the same name and with passages from *Laterna Magica*. It is a collective work made by four actors from the magnificent tg STAN: Ruth Becquart, Robby Cleiren, Jolente De Keersmaecker and Frank Verduyssen. *Infidèles* is both a Bergman scenario and a film by Liv Ullmann – *Infidèle* in the singular. Here it is almost as if the writer, the artist Bergman is standing next to his own characters.

In this *Après la répétition* (After the Rehearsal) there are just two characters – there are normally three -, Frank Verduyssen and Georgia Scalliet. The young member [*sociétaire*] of the Comédie-Française is Anna, an actress who is going to perform Strindberg's *A Dream Play*. The director of the play, Henrik Vogler, once directed her mother in the same role.

In 2019 Bergman will become part of the Comédie-Française repertoire with an adaptation of *Fanny and Alexander*, directed by Julie Deliquet, which was a novel before it became a film, first for television and then for the big screen. As Bergman's great translator, the sadly-missed Vincent Fournier, knew only too well: it's an 'affaire d'âme' – a matter of the soul.

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