

tg STAN back at Bergman's side

With *Infidèles* tg STAN returns to film director Bergman's uncompromising script, sharing with us the torments of adultery and its consequences.

Tg STAN is back at the Théâtre de la Bastille, its Paris headquarters since the French première of *Les Antigones*, after Cocteau and Anouilh, in December 2001, so over fifteen years ago. A long-standing cooperation, a shared loyalty between a place and a company. And a staunch public. Because in their own way the tg STAN actors have become stars who can count on word-of-mouth publicity to such an extent that they never need fear empty seats. Whichever play they perform, the auditorium is full, for the very mention of the name STAN - which stands for 'Stop Thinking About Names' - brings in the punters. Their founding principle, their 'moral' is: no labels, no dogmatism, no idolatry of the script or sanctification of the performance. So the actors work as a collective, without a director, the actor being at the heart of the creation and the creator of his or her role in its entirety and also of the production as a whole. Egos are left at the stage door, roles are often interchangeable. What interests the actors is not the technique or virtuosity of the acting, but openness - openness, for example, to the reactions of the audience (the fourth wall is the least of their worries) and above all the greatest possible simplicity in the way they approach the text. They like authors of intimacy, authors who scrutinize the inner being, feelings, human relationships. We have seen them tackle the prose of Chekhov, Ibsen, Schnitzler, Gorki, Thomas Bernhard, Pinter, Marius Von Mayenburg and recently also the cult play 'Art' by Yasmina Reza, without confining themselves to the strict theatre repertoire. The direction is always to the point, straight to the essence, without frills and flounces. There are no costumes to speak of and little if any scenery.

This is not the first time tg STAN has adapted for the stage films by the Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman. After *Scènes de la vie conjugale* (Scenes from a Marriage) and *Après la répétition* (After the Rehearsal) the collective returns to his oeuvre, the oeuvre of the master of tense and heated dialogues, the inexhaustible scrutinizer of the human soul and of love, of couples and of betrayal. They use the *Infidèles* (Faithless) scenario (written in 1996), which gives the play its title, and also draw on Bergman's autobiography *Laterna Magica*, published in 1987. What makes the production novel is the idea of the director as a character in his own right, in a pertinent dialogue that enriches the fiction to the point of vertigo. On the stage are two of the collective's mainstay actors, Frank Vercruyssen and Jolente De Keersmaeker, accompanied by a new face, the formidable Ruth Becquart, and an old friend, Robby Cleiren (he has appeared in *Trahisons*, *Les Estivants*, etc.). His company, de Roovers, is the coproducer of the play.

The result is a triumph. The four actors are in top form, the casting works brilliantly. We are immediately swept up in what unfolds before our eyes, rooted to our seats by the powerful truth of theatre when it is presented this way, without artifice, stripped to the bone. Ruth Becquart, in the central role, leads the acting and takes us with her from beginning to end. We recognize Bergman's unparalleled sensitivity and lucidity in his meticulous portrayal of couples and human relationships, his

inimitable way of analyzing the human psyche, of weighing sincerity against bad faith, without our knowing which way it will go. We recognize the Bergmanian tragedy, but also the lightness which tg STAN systematically brings without ever hamming it up, and we are grateful to the actors for that. So *Infidèles* delivers its dramatic charge, its narrative and its dark realism with great flair, while always providing an escape valve through the humour, the roguishness and the collective's very special collusion with the audience which it has always managed to preserve and which is one of its nicest characteristics. So it is possible to be serious and profound without necessarily taking oneself seriously. Now isn't that good to know!

Marie Plantin