

PRESS REVIEWS- EXTRACTS



LA VANGUARDIA – Juan Carlos Olivares – 19/10/2020

With Pippo Delbono indifference is not allowed. It's an uncompromising theatrical universe - deeply impregnated by the phantasmagoria and the poetics of its creator. There is always a moment for paroxysm, contemplation, for steps on high heels, music vertigo and for the beauty of the imperfect.

Even for words - discreet and punctual. His works need to be decoded only by the stimulation of the senses and the emotions. Forget about applying logic to it.

You can find it all in *La gioia*, a show about acceptance that was created before Bobò's departure (one of the most symbolic members of Delbono's Company, since Delbono himself rescued him from a mental hospital in 1996) and has been transformed into a funeral hymn to his memory. The bench in his scene, now adorned like an altar to his absence, covered with flowers.

With age anger deflates and melancholy grows. His acting company increasingly doomed to be more appearances than characters. More and more silent. The confession is reserved to Delbono holding his mic. Visions appear in a parade that seems to illustrate the five phases of grief: denial, anger, frustration, depression and acceptance. A pain that goes beyond the recent loss of Bobò. Something more intimate perhaps related to a complex personal biography.

Theater as a pure cathartic ritual, like the Khachaturian's waltz which is the perfect beat for the drunkenness of the mind. Like Jennifer Jones in *Madame Bovary*.

The aesthetic suit is the circus. The place where magic is confused with sadness, beauty with horror. An unreality that is shown as an environmental hybrid between Tim Burton (*Big fish*) and Tod Browning (*Freaks*). The dominant emotion is the serenity you may reach by realizing that everything is temporary - both happiness and sadness. As perishable as the floral explosion that eventually covers the stage. Baroque compositions that also hide the cold iron of the depressed one's cage. A sequence of fragments without an excessively determined order that recalls in each scene those theatrical genres labelled as minor, which instead preserve better than others the magic of an unconventional reality. There, where only circus, the art of miming or variety shows can take you. All depends on the viewer's desire for travelling. Delbono's call is fleeting and enigmatic, like the white rabbit that Alice chases until she falls through a tree trunk into a land of incomprehensible wonders.

EL PUNT AVUI – Josep M. Fonalleras – 16/10/2020

We always leave the theatre houses with the urgency of having understood what we have seen, of having grasped the essence of the show. We read, value, analyse. Whether it is complicated, tortuous, ineffable, unconnected or dark, we always try to draw a lesson from it, a message perhaps, at least some kind of enlightenment. There are few shows that leave you stunned, in a state of shock, not knowing how to react, without the ability to define them or to face life after seeing them.

"La gioia" by Pippo Delbono - which was performed a few days ago at Temporada Alta - is one of these shows. Any rational approach to this "simple and essential story" would be a useless attempt, a futile effort. There are losses, there is sadness, a sadness which is so deep, so dense, that it is impossible to let go.

There are dry leaves and a slow and rhythmic floral burst, there are paper boats, there are songs that we won't ever hum again ("Che fretta c'era, maledetta primavera?") without thinking of Gianluca's gestures, the boy with Down's Syndrome who fills the stage with a "circus desolation", pathetic: pathos, pain and awakened emotions.

And, of course, in the show which "walks through pain" there is the space engendered by an evanescent joy that needs a pact, a shared breath because at some point we know it will return. Will it?

"Siamo contenti, siamo contenti ..." is the final, somber, weak litany that Delbono's tired and deep voice utters as a request, a wish, a prayer. Or a lie. I don't think I've ever been so touched, so helpless.

SUD OUEST – Céline Musseau– 07/10/2020

One could not imagine a better reunion with at Théâtre National de Bordeaux en Aquitaine, after the Hall Vitez stage being closed to the public since March 14th. Catherine Marnas - Theatre Director - underlined it before the curtain rose in front of this magnificent and so generous ceremony that is "La gioia" together with Pippo Delbono's artistic family where everyone comes with his/her own truth, bring his/her touch of humanity. What a joy to hear simple and meaningful words embodied to taste the delicacy of a language that allows us to rediscover our humanity, our emotions when, for months, all that we have heard is just disembodied terms drowning in their own fatuity. Everything here is simple and poetic. A poetry written through dances, wobbly bodies, memories. First of all Bobo's memory; this dumb, deaf little fellow who, from a psychiatric hospital, one day took the stage alongside Pippo Delbono for 22 years. He died last year, aged 82, and this play is both his funeral and his birthday. With his deep, singing Italian voice Pippo Delbono celebrates him. It comes like a balm to soothe the pains, to rest on sadness and to move towards joy. "La gioia" celebrates all our dear dead ones as well as all the dead ones that we do not know, those who are at the bottom of the sea, those who have never found peace. This requiem for life, which is also political, offers the leading position to the excluded, the mad, the "abnormal", the sick ones. Let's be happy, this is the path. Through the artists' voice.

ARTE Y SOCIEDAD – Azucena Ester Joffre – 3/2/2020

(...) Lights spreads the spell among the audience with different effects, sometimes more cinematic, sometimes more theatrical. A peculiar circus company with colourful costumes along with other characters, as if they are coming out of a silent surrealist film, they give an interesting dynamism to the show. Some convincing, strong, images alternate with dead times "without apparent logic". Perhaps just like memories and dreams, they explode without a rational order.

(...) The editing is a mixture sometimes chaotic and messy, between screams and silence, quiet and movement, absence and presence, dry flowers and leaves... The spaces change, modified by real events, intimate stories, quotes from Buddha, references to Godot... This is the way the Company remembers Bobò in every performance, because he "brought with him a pain and at the same time a joyful folly" that made him irreplaceable.

MATEO Asociación Argentina de Investigación y Crítica Teatral – Olga Penelas – 3/2/2020

La Gioia, the show presented at the Coliseo Theatre during the festival FIBA 2020 is a poetic work.

(...) The protagonist will begin a journey that will meet anguish, pain and loneliness and he will try to find the unattainable joy at the end of the path. These feelings, so typical of the human being, along with the feeling of loss, will manifest themselves through the poetic language, with sound and visual elements that will drive us to identify ourselves in each moment of this journey.

(...) The whole show is shaped as a prayer that moves the audience. The scene changes constantly, following the moods that torment the protagonist. A lonely bench, the boats that flood the scene, the clothes of the castaways scattered on the coast, the dry leaves that cover the stage like a tapestry and the flowers hanging from the sky accompany this tortuous road to Joy.

What is joy? The protagonist ask himself at the end of the monologue. He will try to reach this utopian goal along with the company in that dance that will bring them together with the show to the climax of the journey.

It is surprising the originality of this work, a real homage to Theatre.

EL MERCURIO Agustin Letelier 26/01/2020

(...) *Joy* by the Italian actor and director Pippo Delbono, seems the most appropriate for this historic moment in Chile: there is sadness and pain, but they will pass and joy will come back. It will go away again, but it will be back.

(...) It is a deeply Italian work for its predominance of the word and formal beauty. From the first scene, as if by magic, flowers appear. Pippo's speech is direct and simple, like the pop music that he uses "Don't worry, be happy" and "Maledetta Primavera". It is a tribute to Bobò, illiterate, deaf and dumb, member of the company for decades: there is the pain for his death, but at the same time the joy of the memory of his special being. It is a sequence of artistic installations with music, lights and above all flowers that flood the scene in the end. Maybe it is not Theatre, but it's something we need to see and hear.

CULTURIZARTE – Ana Catalina Castillo 25/1/2020

(...) Unadorned of all unnecessary artifice, the Italian director's theatre is a true human work, where the stage is full of the presence of this unique company, composed by characters as familiar as ethereal, inhabitants of a dimension that goes beyond the ordinary. Thus, they create an immersive experience that goes through reality and dreamlike dimension.

(...) In *La gioia*, Theatre connects to its ritual origins and is made for others, giving all of itself. He brings us closer to catharsis, while he brings us along on a journey towards ourselves, guided by a master of ceremony who becomes a shaman, Delbono himself, who comes and goes with his imposing figure and his grave voice, with his notes in his hand and his torch, and he interacts with the audience honestly and free of prejudices. He leads us to our weaknesses, even to our attempts to mask human frailty in order to forget it.

(...) In less than two hours we witnessed the ceremony of the human being who questions himself, who lives (and dies) between sadness and joy, who plays with death, but also with life. Therefore, in the work of the Italian artist there is a circus show, there is colour, movement, memories of ancient theatrical events, musical environments of pop culture, ancestral poetic references, legends and an extraordinary presence of the body as a support of an urgent speech, Political, social and artistic.

LE MONDE – Brigitte Salino – 06/10/2019

When Pippo Delbono comes to Paris, he brings some news to us. His productions are like open letters in which he reveals himself surrounded by the ones he loves, the ones who has been accompanying him for years. Live hasn't been nice to most of them: some were forgotten in the streets after living a chaotic life, others were excluded since they were unordinary people. Pippo Delbono took them just as they were since he himself is as he is: a man who knows what a glance, a word, a gesture is worth; the mirror of a shaky humanity who does not fear to show its fear, its sadness, its sickness and who is constantly looking for light.

You can find this light, giving off beauty and full tenderness in *La Gioia (Joy)* Pippo Delbono's first production after Bobò's death who passed away at the age of 82 last winter. Bobò, for the ones who saw him on stage, is unforgettable: a born actor who was unable either to read or write or speak. A prodigious presence on stage who was able to comprehend everything and - most of all - everyone. While sitting in the auditorium facing him, you would have the feeling that he was acting just for you and that he was talking directly into your eyes what you would normally whisper in one's ear. (...) His voice had a bird tone. You can hear it in "La gioia": through his voice life itself sings its farewell and its rebirth. Since everything gathers together at the Théâtre du Rond-Point in Paris, where "La gioia" begins with a few flowers on a grave and it ends up with joyful flower lianas falling from the grid towards the ground.

Between this two moments – *mamma mia!* – you can see and hear a plenty of living paintings, of dances and songs that make you live life itself when, dazzling, it is reborn from any black hole. Pippo Delbono is there, together with his company members and companions. Dressed with a jean trouser and a white shirt; with paper sheets in his hand, he *conducts* "La gioia" for he is the acting one. His voice reminds us of Carmelo Bene's when he talks us about his childhood, madness, innocence, pain and dreams. Buddha together with Pirandello and with Sophie Calle; some memories go by like autumn veils, others are dressed with light, all gathered together in the very instant of theatre.

(...) Bobò didn't know his exact birthday. So, Pippo Delbono tells us: every now and then the Company would let him have a birthday party. "La gioia", which wants to be "the world's most beautiful performance", is – in fact – that party.

LE FIGARO – Ariane Bavelier – 08/10/2019

(...) “La gioia” is the story of a man who is not able to feel anything anymore except his own pain, explains the artist. He puts his signature on this production and he is sure that people will not completely die if you recall them, still. He exposes his firm stand: Joy - despite mourning - can purge terror. He dances, spins, recites in his French – revealing a tender Italian inflection - a sort of song of the hallucinated world mixed with Buddhism philosophy, visions and moral lessons. His words flow, Pippo tries to proceed like a furious mad in a loquaciousness where poetry springs to mind, genial striking flashes before you get back into the flow again. In this flow you meet silence, every now and then, momentary salvation instants on an island surrounded by pain and loneliness. On the other hand, the images dazzle. Tango, a man in a cage, an autumn tempest raising in an upheaval of leaves, little paper boats released on stage with no anchorage but loneliness, downpouring splendid flowers and costumes... For Bobò the stage turns into a venue full of offerings. And “La gioia” reaches the magnificence of madness.

LES INROCKUPTIBLES - Hervé Pons – 25/9/20109

Pippo Delbono sits in a cage, he dances and he says: “I’m going to tell you a story...”. Both on stage and in life pictures intersect all over the place as ordinary daily events which seem not to be connected to each other. And yet they become part of a general movement which let them regain their specific aspect and get consistent with the same plural feature. (...) *La Gioia* is the *latest* Pippo Delbono, just like “the latest Godard” or “the latest Honoré”. The awaited return, the new piece which becomes part of a work Pippo has been creating in all these years: through *La gioia* his whole work becomes clearer and yet more complex at the same time. (...) The production *La gioia* - staged in 2018 – means re-connecting to Delbono’s earliest works. Like “Murders’ time” or, more specifically, “Rage”. Together with these, *La gioia* can be seen as a diptych tribute to Pier Paolo Pasolini.

LA TERRASSE – Manuel Piolat Soleymat – 9/2019

Pippo Delbono is one of the unique artists in European contemporary theatre. In January 2017 he presented his *Vangelo* (Gospel) at the Théâtre du Rond-Point in Paris: a shocking theatre production celebrating a stunning secular Eucharist. This fall, in the same theatre, the Italian artist faces again some thrilling matter concerning our world: he explores the very nature of *Joy*. (...) A paper boat sea, downpouring flowers, a carpet made of dead leaves, an artist dancing in a cage, abandoned costume *remains* on the ground... (...). *La gioia*’s actors and dancers are “refugees, disabled persons, rejected ones”. For them Pippo wrote this new piece - in a shape of a joyful parade - but also for Bobò, iconic character of all his previous theatre productions, who passed away last winter. An ode to life which aims to “break bad spells, anguish, pain and inner demons”.

RUE DU THÉÂTRE – Noel Tinazzi – 2/10/2019

(...) “This work has been re-born from Bobò’s death.” says Pippo Delbono on the stage of Théâtre du Rond-Point in Paris - his Parisian home - before the performance begins. It’s all about this “re-”: to underline how much the death of his iconic actor – the deaf-and-dumb microcephalic man who passed away last winter at the age of 82 - affected him. “The latest back hole” of Bobò’s death which swallowed him up is now over. Nevertheless, the performance is neither a funeral oration neither an ode to the memory of the *road* they had been going along since they met in 1995 – after which Delbono put Bobò in the center of all his theatre productions. (...) Joy is a theatre saraband made of words, music, dance, pictures and paintings full of quite dominated emotions, all of them amazingly beautiful.

More than in earlier works by Delbono you can perceive Pina Bausch’s influence with whom he worked in the past. “We are happy” repeats Pippo incessantly. A prayer, a spell to banish evil. The audience is part of this “we”. And they feel happy - in fact - for this performance including and involving them.

DEL TEATRO.IT- Maria Grazia Gregori – 13/6/2019

Joy, Pippo Delbono’s latest creation, is a safe shore for deep sorrows, such as the disappearance of the unforgettable Bobò, as much as it is the unexpected outcome of an act of sharing, of “making” in the sense of being well within the wholesomeness we all belong to and which belongs to each of us. Too easily said... Joy. This word, chosen by Pippo Delbono as the title of his new, deeply moving creation presented at the Piccolo Teatro Strehler in Milano, takes on a peculiar meaning: it isn’t a feeling of happiness, of satisfaction; it is rather brought forth by a feeling of longing and loneliness we never looked for but feel upon ourselves, leaden, hard, bound by all we’ve had to live through (...). Pepe, with his coming and going in silence, building imaginary worlds, seems to exemplify

what I think is the *fil rouge* of the whole work: we must make, build something, never stop, keep going. There's a prize at the end: not only the joy of making but also the joy of touching, or even living, beauty itself. Isn't it so, Pippo?

Great success and a standing ovation at the end.

LA REPUBBLICA.IT – Anna Bandettini – 8/06/2019

Joy has no story to tell, no strict editing either, yet it is a chaste and courageous work, whose resonance reaches well beyond what can actually be seen on stage, as when Pepe Robledo lines up little paper boats upstage while we hear Erri De Luca's *Mare Nostrum*, or the "flower prison" caging Pippo in the sweetness of the *finale*. The fragments that make up this work blend in an intense emotion, as in a ceremonial path, not towards death nor towards joy either, rather towards hope in the hard joy we all are waiting for. This emotion binds all the fine performers on stage.

CORRIERE DELLA SERA – Franco Cordelli – 30/5/2019

"And now Bobò, with his little bird's voice, has flown away". It's Pippo Delbono who's telling his story. Gracefully, with ineffable tenderness, he has woven it into his mercurial, whirling creation, *Joy*. Pippo walks up the bare stage and says, "After Bobò, the show's been born again. It's quite the same and it's completely different."

I went back the following night. I wanted to make sure I'd gotten it right. Bobò could be heard breathing through every word, in every single gesture on stage: the same as when he was alive, and yet so different. There was a wholeness to them, they were lighter now (...)

IL SOLE 24 ORE – Renato Palazzi – 30/6/2019

Precursor of many anti-interpretation currents, Pippo Delbono persists in de-stabilizing us with his quest for shadows that grow long, even well after death.

(...) In this new chapter of his long theatrical history, *Joy*, produced by Emilia Romagna Teatro, the sumptuous images he creates are quite alluring. A triumph of beautiful colours, flowers and balloons. Alluring as well is the playfully histrionic tone he uses to address the audience directly, as he introduces one by one his work companions. These are misleading impressions, though, because he'll never renounce his disrupting anomaly. Pippo remains, in the European panorama, a unique figure. The only one, we could say, who makes theatre by not so much with characters with a personal physiognomy, but rather with pure moods and interior emotional states. What are they, in fact, if not materialized emotions, those sad clowns, those surreal spouses, those vampire widows, those masks whose inner being is crudely laid bare, revealed, nay, screamed out aloud, because past the rousing music, the strobe lights, the overflowing visual images, dominating Delbono's theatre we find first and foremost an existential howl. (...) Then he is once again as we know him, an artist completely exposing himself, exhibiting an exasperated, nearly violent subjectivity, expressing a truth that clings to the skin, that one can refuse but that still touches, and hurts.

SIPARIO - Nicola Arrigoni – 13/06/2019

Pippo Delbono tells his woes, Bobò's absence and the stories of his actors, of his family/company where marginality, pain, and an obstination to walk on the verge of the abyss accompany each of the artist's creations, each poetical tale made of visual images, heart-wrenching music, and a quality of truth even in their simply standing there that can only and always move us to tears. All of this is *Joy*. One follows *Joy* with a choking heart, expecting the upheavals and the iconic, musical upsettings that Delbono's theatre is capable of, and ends up facing a languid, melancholic, intimate ritual instead. (...) Delbono and his poetical figures never desist, never stop looking for a joy that may appease their sorrows. And we, the audience, can only be with Pippo and his company and melt in a moved, grateful applause.

AMADEUS – Emilio Sala – 9/6/19

This work uses music as "closed numbers", in all respects opera material. The most extraordinary of these is the waltz from Khachaturian's *Masquerade*: with strobe lights flashing, and at rock-concert volume, this "number" is enacted by completely "mad" characters, shaking as though possessed as they roam about the stage and then pour onto the audience floor, swerved by the whirling waltz, with a hint of tawdriness, even, and greeted at the end by moved and liberatory applause. (...) This aesthetics of diversity that Delbono employs also uses sound as a mercurial element, apt to open multi-dimensional dramaturgical spaces. (...) Those who've experienced in depth the paroxysmal emotions of opera, its "joy", the diversity of voice, its phantasmatic nature, know that Delbono's theatre is also, itself, "opera".

CULTWEEK – Alessandra Moscheri - 7/6/2019

Remembering with a smile and with joy becomes the fil rouge to celebrate and to try to rouse and elicit in the audience the desire for a primary emotion, that could not exist if not in contrast with life's woes (...).

Pippo Delbono's staging has cages, lights, an empty stage, little paper boats, coloured clothes and rags, flower sculptures (by Thierry Boutemy), and we see it turn into a sort of ritual (and what is theatre if not a rite born religious and grown political, in its deeper Greek meaning of polis?).

A cathartic journey, with irony here and there, in which the anecdotes and stories of the performers Delbono has met, chosen and saved mix with a tribute to the world of circus, vaudeville and film through the figure of none other than Totò.

IL FATTO QUOTIDIANO – Camilla Tagliabue – 15/03/2019

Partly revised after Bobò's death, the work is a poetical tribute to the flow of life.

How beautiful, how great is Pippo Delbono's *Joy*: finally, here's a touching, heartening work, that is moving and interesting to us because the first to be touched, heartened, moved and interested is the performer, author and director of the work. (...) The well-devised script elegantly weaves together parts of the performers' real lives; literature and film, from Erri De Luca to Totò; monstrous parades and circus moments; madhouse nightmares and jail bars from Bacon's paintings; Rimbaud's "blue summer evenings", love and flesh, exiles and entrancements, private hallucinations and collective flights across "Our Father Sea who are not in Heaven", cemetery of shipwrecks, its bottom strewn with tattered rags.

LA REPUBBLICA – Robinson - Rodolfo di Giammarco – 10/03/2019

There's a suspension, like the one Fernando Pessoa expresses when he writes: "Dying is simply not being seen anymore." We feel it when, with participated emotion, we see the partial re-staging and the narrative of memories that Pippo Delbono has breathed into his *Joy*. In this new creation, Bobò, a historical member of the company who died last February, still makes his presence quite distinctly felt. He is evoked, spoken to, made the object of jokes and tributes, and more than once we hear his voice, and his sweet elementary way of expressing himself. It is exceptional, and completely human, that a work on stage may change so radically in such a short time, and how it can maintain the radiating soberness of the title while becoming at the same time a sort of actorial *pietas*, the elaboration of loss, and a tribute to who's no longer with us.

IL CORRIERE DELLA SERA – CORRIERE DI BOLOGNA – Massimo Marino – 11/03/2018

The circus is there, and so are the flowers. Metaphysical clowns, dances, and a hundred paper boats. There is a cage, like the one that encloses sometimes bodies and brains, and there is the memory of a Shaman who frees souls through folly. Fellinian parades flash by, and the melancholy of tango; stifled cries from the audience ("Where's joy? Where is it? ") and unforgettable moments of theatre, as when the protagonist, Pippo Delbono, after filling the stage with his words and with his actors, who seem to be projections of himself, goes backstage to introduce the little deaf and silent man. Bobò stumbles in, infirm, and Mr. Delbono leads him to sit onstage, among the paper boats. "Bobò has been with us 21 years. He was 47 years in an asylum, where he had been locked in at 16. Now he's 81," says the demiurge. Then the two, with simple, effective, sculpted gestures, double a dialogue from Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*. As suspended, in an infinite intimate time of emotion.

Joy, Pippo Delbono's new work, moves the audience, deeply. He and his diverse company, of "tramps", refugees, exceptions, actors, pulsate with the energy of humanity re-inventing itself. (...)

This work was born of a black hole, of a mental prison cell. Delbono conquers the evening leading us straight to our imagination, our feelings, in an era of shutting close, of letting Narcissus out alone. It opens space for listening, frees our vision, whispers we can let go of fear. It tells us that joy can exist, even in the darkest pits. How badly we need, through all our shipwrecks, to turn our leaden prison bars into flowery festoons. To colour stage and mind with Pierrot's sadness, and with his joy, also; with the juices of the world, its cruelties notwithstanding; with Bobò's speeches, all groans and gulps, verses of pure sound, saying more than all surrounding rhetoric. To be. Here. Now. In sorrow for joy. With a stage that slowly turns into spring, thanks to the floral compositions by Thiéry Boutémi, from Belgium, and the unfathomable presence of all the Pippo Delbono's Company actors.

CONTROSCENA - Enrico Fiore - 12/11/2018

Pippo Delbono's *La Gioia* bears scandal, because it dares to portray on stage a quality of joy that is the exact opposite of the lie shown in advertisements and promoted by consumerism, that joy -- as Pippo writes in a note to the text -- made of "happy families, happy children, happy landscapes. All dead, all fake." It is then easy to understand why this piece is built on contrasts and opposites, from the very beginning sequence (...) Starting from Luigi Pirandello's lines, Delbono tells us

of the desperate attempt, forever in vain, of man to constrict life, this flow of unrelated instants of dis-aggregation, into a unique Formula, set and determined, once and forever. Pippo Delbono throughout this work tells us that joy comes first of all from freeing oneself from formulas and, more to the point, from forms. (...)

(...) What is joy, then, to Pippo Delbono? More specifically, what kind of joy is Pippo Delbono describing in this piece? First of all, the joy Pippo Delbono describes in this piece is the one he himself feels as he carries on his journey with the extraordinary companions he once again introduces to us one by one: Nelson Lariccia, with his past as a medicine-ridden homeless man; Ilaria Distante who adores tango; Gianluca Ballaré, a young man with Down syndrome in his flawless imitation of Loretta Goggi, singing *Maledetta Primavera* ... and then Bobò of course, the deaf-and-dumb microcephalic man whom Pippo met in a Neapolitan madhouse and is today the piercing icon not only of Delbono's poetics but, in general, of theatre as a whole, and it has been so for the past two decades at least.

(...) Ten minutes of quivering and affected applause at the end of the show, with all the performers called repeatedly back on stage; besides Pippo Delbono, Bobò, Gianluca Ballaré, Nelson Lariccia and Ilaria Distante there are Dolly Albertin, Margherita Clemente, Simone Goggiano, Mario Intruglio, Gianni Parenti, Pepe Robledo, Zakira Safi e Grazia Spinella.

IL MANIFESTO – Gianni Manzella – 10/03/2018

There are still a few black holes, Pippo Delbono tells us as he calls the audience to tread with him and his company a path toward *Joy*, the title to his latest creation. (...) It all begins with a telling theme, *Don't Worry, Be Happy*, and the off-and-on presence of an actor watering an ever-growing garden. This foreshadows the floral explosion that will overtake the stage in the finale, orchestrated by Thiéry Boutémy, a Norman-born Belgian resident who calls himself a "fleuriste", but has been an all-around flower artist for the likes of Sofia Coppola and Lady Gaga. And here he tells us of his madness as the iron bars of a prison cell fall around him from above. It is Pirandello's *Henry IV* that tries to rationalize his madness, but it slips into John Dowland's "Let me live forlorn". Madness as an escape from reality, with the awareness that healing is to realize that one is crazy, and the trouble is with those who do not even recognize their madness. (...) There are stories Delbono tells us, picked up here and there around the world: the old actor in Bali who has played the monkey on the street, masterfully, for seventy years; the childish desire to become a trapeze artist, as a lightbulb swings across the stage; the lumberjack leaving his job because his destiny is to become a shaman. When stage is strewn with paper boats other images flow from memory and at one point rags and tattered clothes form a wide sea: "Our Father Sea who art not in the Heavens" in Erri De Luca's secular prayer. Then it's Totò, and another prayer, the clown's, from *The Most Comical Show On Earth*: "Never leave us without bread or applause..." Then it will be only flowers filling the stage. And even prison bars are made of flowers now, as they encircle Delbono's final cry. This path has reached its temporary conclusion, with a very personal emotional touch. Whichever flower you may be, when the time comes, you shall blossom.

