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Marinella Senatore

Modica Street Musical – The Present, the Past and the Possible

curated by Matteo Lucchetti

Opening Saturday, 6 August 2016, 6.30 p.m.

06.08.16 – 13.10.16

Galleria Laveronica is proud to present the new public work by Marinella Senatore, *Modica Street Musical – The Present, the Past and the Possible*, a musical travelling around the city of Modica, with two acts and an intermezzo, curated by Matteo Lucchetti. The musical is entirely composed and interpreted with the collaboration of over a hundred inhabitants of Modica and the surrounding area.

Modica Street Musical ambitiously weaves together some of the formats used by Senatore in the past – from the cinema set to theatre production, going through the school of narrative dance for amateurs – in order to reflect on the political nature of collective formations and their impact on the social history of places and communities. Forms of protest by oppressed minorities re-emerge from the past of Sicily in the guise of music, choreographies and storytelling, to merge with the repertoires of bands, groups and other collective creation troupes composed of younger generations. The exchange between the legacy and the present is built through a new popular vocabulary that brings the musical back to its origins: a 19th-century North American society show genre for lower classes. Migrants, coming from the most diverse origins, found that this genre offered the chance to lend form to a theatre of rebellion that could speak emphatically to the biggest number of people, creating inclusion, avoiding higher cultural codes, and articulating ideas of emancipation and common good among working-class people. In the same way, the *Modica Street Musical* seamlessly juxtaposes classical music pieces and pop songs, engaged theatre and entertainment, mass movements and ballet choreographies.

Modica Street Musical is also inspired by public ceremonies, the civil and religious rituals of the Italian tradition, and festivals and mass events, interweaving this intangible heritage with the format of the street musical. The choice of this kind of performance lends itself to reflections on the system of Western musical notation and its political implications, but it also gives space to the stories and leading players of the various artistic communities that animate Modica and it yields an image of the historical complexity of the area's associations, composed of workers' circles, bands, choruses and new social groups. The musical is used as a vessel for the aspirations, desires and transformations of a social body fragmented into its various components, which in the space of an evening begin to dialogue with each other through music and shared theatre to draw in an entire city.

Divided into three parts, the work devotes Act I to the Present, catalyzing the action around the church of San Giovanni in Modica Alta, where dozens of formations will create a multifaceted performance with the intent of offering a sounding board to those who locally turn their energies to forming the new generations through music, dance and other activities. It is a great fresco of the city's cultural liveliness, paying special attention to what brings people together and spawns a transitory community composed of people from very different walks of life.

Following a crier, a typical figure of popular theatre, the crowd of performers and spectators will descend towards the church of San Giorgio for the Intermezzo dedicated to the Past. At this juncture, the past is evoked with a specific and limited function: not as a cumbersome and inhibiting legacy of alternative scenarios to the present, but in its capacity to bear witness to the evolutions of the social fabric through the historical transformations of such a unique territory in the Sicilian ecosystem: what was once known as the County of Modica. As Italian writer Leonardo Sciascia explains, this is a territory where the penetration of the Mafia came to a halt due to the area's difficult orography and the presence of a proto-bourgeoisie that mitigated the class conflicts and differences that were so powerful throughout the rest of the island. A choice of stories, anecdotes and significant local historical events will be recited in the gardens under the church – by direct and indirect witnesses (storytellers, sign language interpreter, anarchists, among others) of those episodes – while on the parvis there will be a *tableau vivant* representing Modica's social body, as if those movements were a direct consequence of the overlap of the stories being told.

Act II is the final act and focuses on the Possible, chosen as an alternative category to the future, underscoring the need for tangible actions that will stem from recognition of the existent and informed by the careful reading of what has been. Senatore thus invited the Italian composer Emiliano Branda to write a soundtrack about Modica, starting with materials collected through a request made to residents in June to send in all the sounds, memories and citations that, in their minds, form the sonorous backdrop of the city. The result is an original suite that illustrates the city and its potential, which will be performed for the first time in the final section heading to the staircase of the church of San Pietro in Modica Bassa, while cinematic artificial snow will create a Fellini-like end to the show. The linchpin and grand finale of Act II, the Modica soundtrack is the legacy that Marinella Senatore's public work is leaving to the population that so generously chose to participate in a musical about them and that would project to the outside the complexity of being together and forming a community today.

Throughout the work on the musical, the space of the gallery was transformed into a workshop open to participants and anyone who wanted to use it to make proposals and intervene in the dramaturgy of the work. The resulting exhibition is thus a space in which the artist's previous works and new productions appear as documents and reference materials for the planning of the *Modica Street Musical*, as well as representing a space for reflection on the musical as a *mise-en-scène* of the relationship between spectacle and life, based on the continuity existing between music and the everyday lives of the local protagonists. A series of wallpapers, hanging in the gallery, portray movement in public space as an act of individual and collective affirmation: a political gesture that embodies protest, joy, discontent and social claims. The thousands of people who participated in Senatore's works over the past ten years are celebrated here as the human matter from which the artist took inspiration in developing her graphic, pictorial and photographic work installed in the gallery. Emancipation and equality are the common trajectories towards which every form of activism aims, and every work on show highlights several cases and causes – like Black Lives Matter, feminist movements and marching bands on strike – in which communities shaped through music, dance, spectacle or protest are able to generate a potential for social change.

The *Modica Street Musical* has been possible thanks to the collaboration of hundreds of participants and the following associations and institutions: Ars Musica Ensemble, ASD Tersicore, Associazione Culturale Gli Armonici Di Elvira Mazza, Associazione Portatori di San Giorgio Modica, A.S.D. Twirling Club Scicli, Banda Musicale Città di Modica, Civica filarmonica di Modica (conductor: Francesco Di Pietro), Comune di Modica, Coro Monti Iblei, Coro

Polifonico "Claudio Monteverdi" of Modica (conductor: Orazio Baglieri), Ente Nazionale Sordi Sezione provinciale di Ragusa, Gomez Crew, GSD Medea Siracusa, Liceo Musicale G. Verga di Modica, Op3ra, "Quelli" della Banca del Tempo Iblea, SAVA&SAVA Comunicazione, Sicilia Libertaria, Vitality di Modica.

Marinella Senatore (Italy, 1977). Her practice is characterized by public participation. The idea is to foster the creative power of a crowd, initiating a dialogue between history, culture and social structures. Senatore's work is to be experienced by everyone, inviting us to create a participative work in which everybody can play a role and where the role of the artist as author and public as recipient can be rewritten. She works with a wide range of media from video to drawing, performance, installation, photography, sound, painting and sculpture. In some cases the projects are open workshops where the participants take on the roles of amateur actors, scriptwriters, costume designers, camera operators, set designers, dancers and so on. Creating new possibilities for public involvement, the local communities are involved in different ways: residents share their skills and expertise or achieve new ones, negotiating with the artist to determine the part each person will play in the project. *Rosas* (2012), a work for the screen, involved 20,000 citizens in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. In 2013 the artist founded *The School of Narrative Dance*, a nomadic school – free of charge – focusing on storytelling, based on educational systems fostering the emancipation of the student and activating processes of self-cultivation. In 2014, at Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen she launched *Estman Radio*, an ongoing free podcast radio. Her work has been exhibited widely throughout the Italy and abroad, including: Queens Museum, NY; High Line, NY; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, CA; Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen; MAXXI Museum, Rome; 54th Venice Biennial, ILLUMINATIONS; 13th Biennale de Lyon; Liverpool Biennial, UK; Thessaloniki Biennale 5 of Contemporary Art; Biennial of Moving Image, Mechelen; Göteborg Biennial, Sweden; 30th Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana; Athens Biennial; Whitechapel, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation, Turin; Palazzo Grassi, Venice; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Bozar, Brussels; Matadero, Madrid; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Macro Museum, Rome; Madre Museum, Naples; Kunstverein Ar/Ge Kunst, Bolzano; Centre of Contemporary Art, Torun; Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Tel Aviv; Istanbul Modern; Visible Award, Serpentine Gallery, London; ISCP, New York; Magasin Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble; Quad, Derby; ViaFarini, Milan; Para/Site, Hong Kong.