

Good evening,

First of all, I'd like to thank the board of the Clásicos Alcalá Festival for giving me this opportunity to devote a few words to someone who is for many a role model and the standard against which they're measured, for his way of conceiving the art of the theatre, Declan Donnellan.

Season after season, the CDN has welcomed this director's productions, to such a degree that his approaches, which have so enriched us as both audience and professionals, have established a poetics of the stage that is already a part of our contemporary repertoire. (*Twelfth Night; Three Sisters; Measure for Measure; Ubu Rey; The Winter's Tale; Pericles, Prince of Tyre; The Knight of the Burning Pestle; The Revenger's Tragedy...*) On behalf of all of us: thank you, Declan.

Now, leaving to one side my institutional role and, as a humble creator, I'd like to share with all of you some considerations about Declan's theatre. I suppose that many of you have experienced the sensation of emerging, mesmerized, from one of his productions and finding yourselves unable to express in words such an intense experience. Needless to say, this always happens to me. I can't stop asking myself: What does Declan's theatre have to provoke such a "stimulating" turmoil (in the best sense of that word)?... Well then, I've told myself, what better occasion is there than this to try and set it down in writing and, along the way, as I've said, recognize in public the great artistic debt owed to the maestro here before us.

Let's take a look.

In the same way that the best theatre is able to awaken in us a hidden truth that emerges unexpectedly to awareness and makes us hear an enigmatic inner voice that tells us: "that's it", "that's exactly how it is"... I've always thought/felt this thing which now awakens in me; an awakening that the Greeks identified with the truth, a truth that slumbered in our spirit... and which they called *aletheia*... (Etymologically, emerging from the dream), well now, this happens when we attend one of Declan's productions; his theatre manages, precisely, to rekindle those hidden truths made of emotion, thought, and yes, also humor, that humor which as the philosopher Wittgenstein reminds us, is a vision of the world more than a state of mind.

And yes, Declan's theatre manages to awaken in us buried certainties that are always betrayed when we wish to formulate them, the same as happens with silence, which inevitably disappears when we try to describe it. And it is because the suspicion that we're to attain the key to



the mystery pulses in his theatre, as happens in the Shakespearean universe, in which he has so often and so deftly entered.

The mystery of life that bubbles so joyously and effusively in the theater. An exaltation that reconciles us with our fragile condition and which nourishes a comforting communal feeling. Therefore, one of the main characteristics of his theater is his radical vindication of the collective nature of the theatrical event, the brilliance of an actor or an actress lies in their ability to surrender themselves to an expression that transcends their own subjectivity, placing it in the service of a choral voice inherent to the civic-theatrical event since its origins.

Declan's theater is universal in the strictest sense, in that we recognize in it characters from multiple cultural traditions in a single common sentiment. With Declan, we never feel alone, his cosmopolitanism comforts us undoing small identitarian attachments. The Latin motto *Ubi bene, ibi patria* ("Where I feel well/Where life is good, that is my homeland") might easily appear on his coat of arms. A homeland, that of the art of the theatre, which as the maestro shows us, suffers devious threats by those who can't bear the idea that the stage is, above all, a space to put into play (yes, in play) the unsuspected potentiality of human beings, that which we've been given to call our inalienable freedom.

Declan, kind, down-to-earth, open, hungry for wonder, with a radical predisposition toward the unpredictability of life, which he preaches to the actors by his example, "don't think that you're the creators of life, life is out there, you must just abandon yourselves to it, that's what your art consists of," he reminds us. Perhaps the goal of theatre is none other than convincing all of ourselves of this abandonment, of that confidence; a surrender that contradicts the ideological corsets, the pre-established structures, that dogmatism which, according to our director, is nothing more than a sentimental posture behind which hides the fear of accepting what truly happens, fears that do nothing more than generate legions of stereotypes which wind up de-valuing art and life. Declan knows how to fight these resistances that are nothing more than insidious mental traps; he is a master in that, as well.

And he is also a warrior fighting whole bodied to free us from self-absorption. The inner searching doesn't cease to be resources inspired by that spurious Muse named Vanity; the theater is the fundamental art of communication, and he has consecrated body and soul to that refined communication, and never stops testing with some exhaustive approaches that stem from the relationship of the actor with the space,



one of the primary concerns of his stage poetics; that "outside" that's real for the actor, "imaginary" for the character, which determines all of the action in the staging. An exploration which he shares in an exhaustive fashion with that other great talent of the theatrical art: Nick Ormerod.

In Declan's theatre, as in all the great classics, idea and form find themselves indivisibly linked, Declan never concedes to the scene the subsidiary role of mere transmitter of ideas, no, the scene is the idea itself made material: that "practical concept" of which our dramaturges of the Golden Age speak, a break-neck sensorial machinery charged with meaning that inevitably emits a certain vision of reality.

Declan knows that above all, the theatre is an art of the time that plays with time; and in that sense, he invites us to a unique experience, he ensnares us in multiple illusions... Declan, that illusionist of temporality...

And also, of course, Declan, expert archer of words, is aware that on the boards these don't serve as well to describe emotions as to transform realities. And thus, through fictive realities, he transforms the no-less-fictitious reality of our time. And we all emerge open-mouthed from his theatre, with the same sensation as those characters who have just suffered the enchantments of the magician Prospero; magic, like life, is at our disposal at all moments thanks to his art.

What can be said except for thank you, maestro... friend, Declan.

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