



LA FURA DELS BAUS

THE SETTING HAS TO BE AN URBAN ONE AND THE STAGE CAN JUST AS WELL BE A GARAGE AS A BUILDING UNDER CONSTRUCTION. IDEAL ELEMENTS ARE CEMENT BLOCKS, CONCRETE WALLS AND METAL STRUCTURES...

ANTONI BARTOMEUS THEATRE CRITIC





Who knows if, all in all, the result of their work was no more than the subversion of their earlier light entertainment? Underlying it, we find unexpected happenings, plastic effects, live sound and fireworks: nothing new, perhaps. The difference is that, now, the passivity of the spectator is broken down by new pressures: fear, aggression and confusion.

The setting has to be an urban one and the stage can just as well be a garage as a building under construction. The best elements are cement blocks, concrete walls and metal structures. The action transforms the plastic element. The materials can be the waste from any industrial production chain; all that is necessary is that they suit the desired plastic effects. There are no costumes as such and music need not mean melody. The instruments should have a sufficiently rough quality to produce a general atmosphere of metallic and electronic incivility. The repetition and progression create distressing, urban acoustics. The fireworks divide up the space and both the lighting and the lack of lighting will define, neutralize or emphasize an area or a performance.

Once the first step had been taken and the plot had been established, perseverance was imperative. A second onslaught was needed before too long. They tried to analyse what had happened; their intuition told them that with a more rigid framework the phenomenon could be rounded off and there would be no stopping them, at least for the moment. There was good reason to feel this way, and not only from a marketing point of view. They realised that their first appearance had caused more than one ideological tangle. The second step would be more difficult because they needed to define themselves more clearly. But having attracted attention in fields bordering on the philosophy of behaviour, it was unlikely that students and questioners would abandon their criticism, analysis or curiosity. And, more than a risk, this could guarantee a project which aims at universality. *Suz/o/Suz*, which saw the light in 1985, was especially satisfying for the company. The transgression was calculated. The power of the sensations made it difficult to breathe. Sounds, images and actions imprisoned the spectator so that escape was impossible. The music, available on record, was intended as an element of power: the sound exerted a certain control over the listener, "like the magic created by the music in a procession", as



By now, photographs like the ones shown on these pages are perfectly familiar to the theatre-going public in Catalonia, Spain and many parts of the rest of Europe. Since 1983, when they burst onto the scene (in the broadest sense of the word) with what they call "impact theatre", it has been impossible to speak of the most daring forms of action theatre to be seen in the south of Europe, without speaking of **La Fura dels Baus**. As an attraction at the international festivals, they are increasingly in demand.

However, at first, **La Fura dels Baus** was what we could call a light entertainment group. Probably, no-one in Catalonia today would associate the company with that group of youngsters who travelled the country in the summer of 1979 with a mule pulling a cart that was their workshop and theatre in one. Perhaps it was necessary to make contact with the rural world so as to be able to shake the urban world. Soon they were to turn to music, band music first of all, and then they looked for unconventional settings, which were to include the street itself. Itinerance, tightrope walking and circus acts were all elements of their work at the beginning of the decade, left behind when they brought this period to a close, took a fresh look at their philosophy and reappeared in 1983 under the bridge of an old level crossing, in a performance that was part of the International Theatre Festival of Sitges. The show was called simply *Accions*, not an immodest title. However, it marked the end of their tentative period, the consolidation of their style and the beginning of their direct-theatre approach.

has been said on occasions. The dialogue between the drama and the percussion goes on alongside the howls of hunger or the war-cries of men perched on bizarre vehicles that bear down on the audience, all mingled with the sound of strange missiles that break up in dusty explosions. For example. Or with the grim, confused rituals of mud, fire and hanging men.

The trilogy ended with *Tier Mon* (1988), a production which lost nothing of the style of earlier work. Having achieved success, they felt they could face the risk of preparing a new show. They decided to decodify the signs that come between the performance and the argument and fall back more on events and phenomena. The actor is a performing part of an imitation of the real world. Movement is a consequence of mechanical contraptions that are programmed in co-ordination with the light and the mobile mechanical elements. Everything seems to obey some kind of precise law of contrasts. A boxing instructor, a karate instructor, a computer expert, a robotics expert and four drums from Calanda were all necessary in the preparation of the show.

Convinced they are inventing a new language, they demand acknowledgement of their place in the Catalan culture of this decade, universal version. In fact, **La Fura dels Baus** have already made themselves felt in the theatrical nerve centres of half the world. Probably no-one today can boast such a crowded appointment book. Their greatest satisfaction in the last two years has been their inclusion in what is questioned, followed or rejected on the international scene. ●