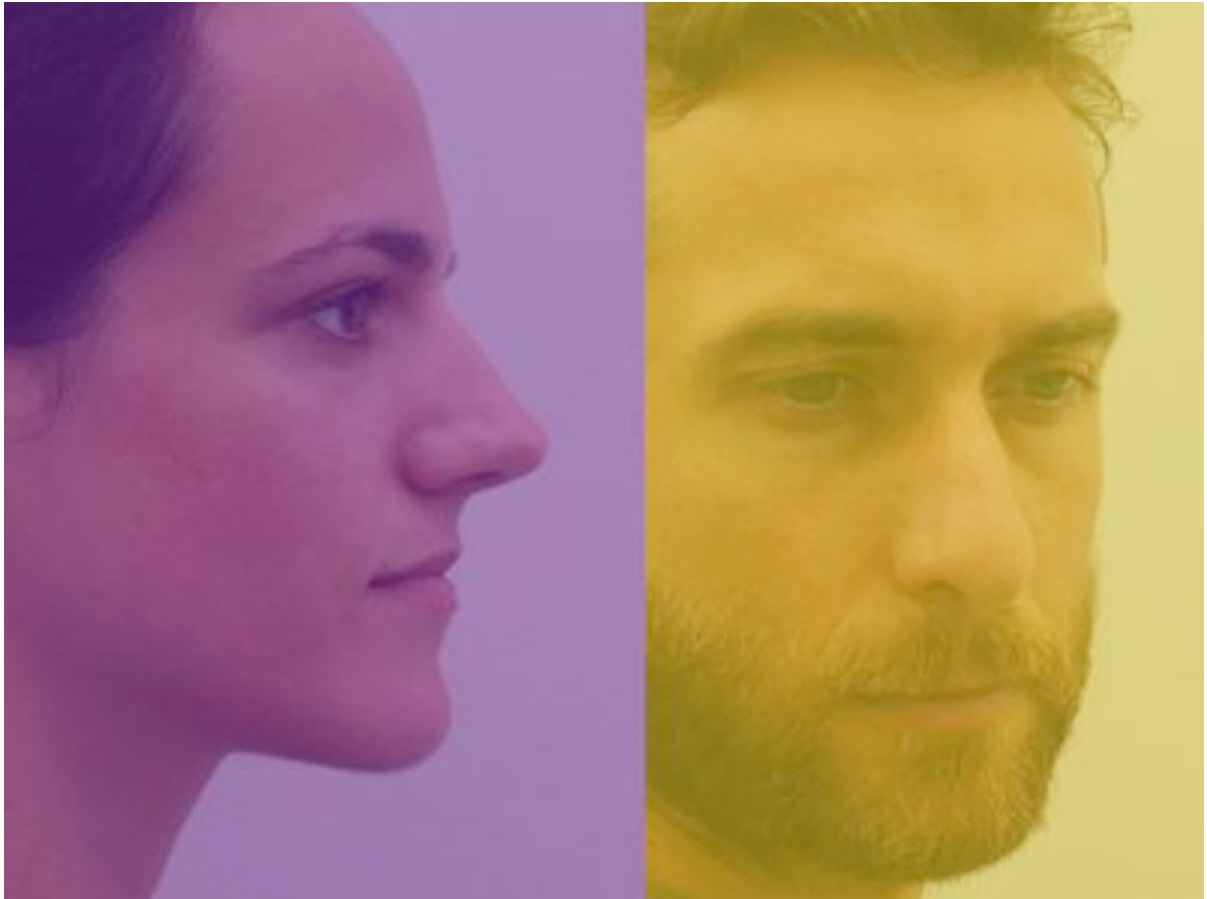


# **ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA**

by **Tiago Rodrigues / Mundo Perfeito**

with **Sofia Dias** and **Vítor Roriz**



Opening 4 to 8 December 2014

Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, Portugal

## SYNOPSIS

If we say one of the names, the other follows it. Our memory cannot evoke one without the other. Plutarch wrote that, from then on, love became the ability to see the world through the sensibility of someone else's soul.

They mixed love and politics and came up with a politics of love. They are a historical love story. They are a romance based on real events often romanticized about. Shakespeare built them a verbal monument that turned into the truest of truths what never happened to them. In Mankiewicz's film that led 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox to bankruptcy, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were the celluloid and real couple they never – and always – were.

In this show written and directed by Tiago Rodrigues, Sofia Dias and Vítor Roriz are the here-and-now duo of what they were there-and-then. They are and are not Antony and Cleopatra. They are Antony seeing the world through Cleopatra's eyes. And vice-versa. Always vice-versa. Vice-versa as a rule of love. Vice-versa as a rule of theatre. This show is seeing the world vicariously, through the sensibility of the souls of Antony and Cleopatra.

## A COLLABORATION OF LOVE

"But the fortune of the day was still undecided, and the battle equal, when on a sudden Cleopatra's sixty ships were seen hoisting sail and making out to sea in full flight, right through the ships that were engaged. For they were placed behind the great ships, which, in breaking through, they put into disorder. The enemy was astonished to see them sailing off with a fair wind towards Peloponnesus. Here it was Antony showed to all the world that he was no longer actuated by the thoughts and motives of a commander or a man, or indeed by his own judgement at all, and what was once said as a jest, that a soul of a lover lives in some one else's body, he proved to be a serious truth. For, as if he had been born part of her, and must move with her wherever she went, as soon as he saw her ship sailing away, he abandoned all that were fighting and spending their lives for him, and put himself aboard a gallery of five ranks of oars, taking with him only Alexander of Syria and Scellias, to follow her that had so well begun his ruin and would hereafter accomplish it."

Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*

This *Antony and Cleopatra* is not William Shakespeare's play. It is an original play that we built based on the memory of Shakespeare's tragedy, which in turn had its foundations in the biographical portrait that Plutarch makes of Mark Antony in *Parallel Lives*, he himself the heir of several writings and live accounts (Plutarch even cites his own great grandfather in the chapter about Mark Antony). We take on these and other heritages, less ancient but just as monumental, such as the 1963 marathon-film directed by Mankiewicz with the Taylor-Burton couple (from which we use fragments of music) and also the paraphernalia resulting from the dazzling aura that Antony and Cleopatra's romance still casts over historians, fictionists and audiences.

In that blurry line between plagiarism and quotation that would please Shakespeare so (we use different sentences from the tragedy, drawn from Rui Carvalho Homem's remarkable translation for the edition by Campo das Letras), we also accept that this phenomenon of the transmission of an historical and literary episode is marked by erosion. The erosion of time and language that doom memory to incompleteness and that, for that very reason, allow for our own contribution. If we knew everything, we would know too much and we wouldn't feel the urge to make this show.

Shakespeare wrote (probably in 1606) an *Antony and Cleopatra* that, throughout time, has been having difficulties in standing on the podium of his tragic works, occupied by *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* or *Macbeth*. To this has contributed the reputation of imperfect work or canon transgression, which is due to the multiplicity and dispersion of times and settings, in clear disobedience of the “Aristotelian” parameters, combined with what John Drakakis has called a “deconstruction *avant la lettre*” originated by a language that appears to come from a “stream of consciousness”. In the readings we did of Shakespeare, right in the first rehearsals of this project, it was precisely this transgressive spirit in the play’s structure that pushed us to the necessary space of freedom (and almost irresponsibility) in order to dare to create our own *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Shakespeare’s tragedy is an inventory of dichotomies: east and west; reason and feeling; masculine and feminine; politics and sex; war and love; work and leisure; tragedy and comedy. Face to face, side by side, in complementarity or symbiosis, each ingredient in this play always finds its match or its reverse. Much like the titular pair of this work.

Fascinated by this idea of the pair, we downsized Shakespeare’s pharaonic cast to two performers: Sofia Dias and Vítor Roriz. Who are Sofia and Vítor a lot more than they are a representation of a Cleopatra and an Antony. Or perhaps I should say of an Antony and a Cleopatra. Because in this show Sofia talks obsessively of an Antony and Vítor talks with equal thoroughness about a Cleopatra. Sofia is always describing what an Antony who lives in an imaginary staging does and says. And vice-versa. “Always vice-versa”, we say in the synopsis of the show. Vice-versa could have been, indeed, a title for this piece.

So we tried to invent a pair who speaks of another pair, continually reciting and evoking some invisible Antony and Cleopatra, to the point of merging momentarily with these names, giving them a visible form. We feed the identity confusion between Antony and Cleopatra, but also between performers and characters. We propose the confusion that a pair is always about. That’s the idea that Plutarch himself proposes when, in the passage where he describes the way Antony flees the battle to pursue Cleopatra, he writes in a jocular but understanding tone that “the soul of a lover always lives in someone else’s body”.

This line by Plutarch, that speaks of an Antony that disconnects himself from his identity, destroying his reputation and honour to see the world through Cleopatra’s eyes, is as much a love thesis as a theatrical paradox. It is that soul in someone else’s body that we aim for when the pair Sofia and Vítor try to see the world through Antony and Cleopatra’s eyes, but also through each other’s eyes. It is of that soul in someone else’s body that we speak of when we invent a play for a pair of choreographers.

Much like the confusion of the pairs who switch bodies, we wanted to create a show where the theatrical writing and staging would understand the world vicariously: through the mathematical, playful and strictly poetic language of Sofia Dias and Vitor Roriz's choreographic universe. This *Antony and Cleopatra* was written imagining theatre through their eyes. In the same way their performances are committed to being on stage, using a body of text and theatre that is foreign to them, though familiar. Because it is important to say that "foreign" does not imply distance. On the contrary. This collaboration is born out of the recognition that there is an artistic affinity with that foreign body. That although it is somebody else's we could picture it our own. And when switching bodies, we don't hopelessly lose ours. We lend it temporarily. So that those lent bodies can be translated literally into a collaboration, into working together.

Ângela Rocha's set and the lighting by Nuno Meira, governed by an idea of instability and perpetual movement, shape the apparent rule-free game field where this artistic collaboration takes place, inspired by an idea of a collaboration of love. We also collaborate with history, with Plutarch, with Shakespeare. And finally we collaborate with the audience, that indispensable and ultimate collaborator. That foreign body we want our lover's soul to inhabit.

**Tiago Rodrigues**

November 2014

## CREDITS

Text by **Tiago Rodrigues** with quotes from William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (translated by Rui Carvalho Homem)

Directed by **Tiago Rodrigues**

Performers: **Sofia Dias** and **Vítor Roriz**

Set design: **Ângela Rocha**

Costumes: **Ângela Rocha** and **Magda Bizarro**

Music: excerpts from the soundtrack of the movie "Cleopatra" (1963), composed by Alex North

Light Design: **Nuno Meira**

Sound: **Miguel Lima** and **Sérgio Milhano**

Artistic Collaboration: **Maria João Serrão** and **Thomas Walgrave**

Technical Support: **Amarílis Felizes**

Mobile Construction: **Decor Galamba**

Production Manager and Photographer: **Magda Bizarro**

Executive Producer: **Rita Mendes**

Production: **Mundo Perfeito**

Artistic residence: **Teatro do Campo Alegre, Teatro Nacional de São João** and **alkantara**

Support: **Museu de Marinha**

Co-production: **Centro Cultural de Belém, Centro Cultural Vila Flôr** and **Temps d'Images**

Thanks to: Ana Mónica, Ângelo Rocha, Carlos Mendonça, Luísa Taveira, Manuela Santos, Rui Carvalho Homem, Salvador Santos, Toninho Neto and Bomba Suicida

*Mundo Perfeito is a company funded by the Portuguese Government/Secretary of Culture/DGArtes, in residence at alkantara and associate artist of O Espaço do Tempo.*

## TOUR

12 June 2015 - Centro Cultural Vila Flôr, Guimarães (PT)

11 and 12 December 2015 – Teatro Municipal Rivoli, Porto (PT)



## TEAM

### **TIAGO RODRIGUES**

*Text and director*

Tiago Rodrigues (born in 1977) is an actor, playwright and director whose subversive and poetic theatre has made him one of Portugal's leading young artists. His piece of work is astonishing: with his company, Mundo Perfeito, he has created thirty plays in the last decade. In the meantime, he has collaborated with other companies, choreographers and filmmakers and has been involved in teaching, curating and artistic community projects. His work has been presented in Europe, South America and the Middle East. Rodrigues has also collaborated with artists from Belgium, Lebanon, the Netherlands and Brazil. Deeply rooted in a collaborative theatre tradition, he has recently created pieces that stand out by the way in which they manipulate documents with theatrical tools, combining both public and private life and challenging our perception of social or historical phenomena.

### **SOFIA DIAS and VÍTOR RORIZ**

*performers*

Sofia Dias and Vítor Roriz are independent dancers and choreographers collaborating since 2006 in the research and devising of several works presented in Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Romania, Belgium, England, Holland, Slovenia, Cyprus, Poland, Finland, Brazil, Austria, Italy and Czech Republic. They teach regularly at Forum Dança/PEPCC and ESAD – Caldas da Rainha, and ran workshops at the Centro em Movimento (PT), Companhia Instável (PT), Módulos Nómadas/Alkantara (PT), CDC Toulouse (FR), ZurichTanzt (CH), Contemporary Dance Festival of São Paulo (BR), Art Stations Foundation/Poznan (PL), Tanec Praha (CZ). They have organised residencies and reflection meetings between artists, such as *Aware* in the context of the Alkantara festival 2014. They have been supported by several cultural organisations since the beginning of their collaboration: Bomba Suicida, Cia Clara Andermatt, Eira, Capa/Devir, Alkantara, Negócio/ZDB, Fórum Dança, O Rumo do Fumo, among others. They were invited to participate as a duo in works by Catarina Dias, Lara Torres, Marco Martins,



Clara Andermatt and Mark Tompkins. They are associate artists of Materiais Diversos and O Espaço do Tempo.

## **ÂNGELA ROCHA**

*Scenary and costumes*

She graduated in Theatre in the degree of Set and Costume Design by Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema in 2010.

She has worked as an assistant art director in film in the feature *O Frágil Som do Meu Motor* by Leonardo António (2011), and a property master in the short-film *Os Vivos Também Choram*, by Basil da Cunha (2011).

She took an internship as a Costume Designer in Rome with a scholarship from the Leonardo da Vinci Program in the Companhia Matéria Viva (2012), having created the light costumes for the performance *Come in un sogno*.

She was a set design and costume assistant in the company Artistas Unidos (2012-2013). She did the set design for the play *Monólogo Sem Título* by Daniele Keene (2013) and has made the costumes and props for the children's play *O Mundo das Cores* by Escola das Mulheres (2013). In 2014 she devised the space for the play *Por um dia claro* by Ana Lázaro, which participated in the FestivalBlackSea International Theatre in Turkey. She is responsible for the construction of the set and costumes for Mundo Perfeito's show *Bovary*. She is responsible for the set design of the play *Burnout*, directed by Marc Xavier, and is also responsible for building the models for the show *Albertine, o Continente Celeste*, by Gonçalo Waddington. She was a set designer for the play *Gôda*, by Ana Lázaro, which opened the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the theatre festival Acaso. She designed the set and costumes for the musical *Rapsódia Batman* by João Pedro Mamede and the set for the show *Os Belos Dias de Aranjuez*, directed by Tiago Guedes. She was the set and costume designer for the play *Mulher-Homem e Coroada*, by Susana Gaspar.

She is a set designer for the group CH4, altamente inflamável, and she is also responsible for the stage objects in the group Dobrar.

She is a co-founder of the Condomínio festival – a festival of local culture in living spaces – created in 2014.

## **NUNO MEIRA**

*Light Design*

BA in Electronics and Communications Engineering, has attended the 4<sup>th</sup> year in Industrial Electronics Engineering in the University of Minho, and attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the Escola Superior de Música e Artes do Espectáculo in the Light and Sound Production degree.

He has worked with various theatre and dance makers such as Ana Luísa Guimarães, António Lago, Beatriz Batarda, Carlota Lagido, Cristina Carvalhal, Diogo Infante, Fernanda Lapa, Fernando Moura Ramos, Gonçalo Amorim, João Cardoso, João Pedro Vaz, João Reis, Manuel Sardinha, Marco Martins, Nuno Carinhas, Nuno M. Cardoso, Paulo Ribeiro, Tiago Guedes and Ricardo Pais. He was a founding partner of Teatro Só and Cão Danado e Companhia, and is also a regular collaborator of ASSÉDIO (since 1998), of the Companhia Paulo Ribeiro (since 2001), and of the Arena Ensemble (since 2007).

He was awarded the Prémio Revelação Ribeiro da Fonte in 2004 as best newcomer.

## **mundo perfeito**

Mundo Perfeito has been fighting the forces of evil since 2003, the year when it was born in a kitchen of a two bedroom suburban apartment in Amadora. The company's name translates the irony of a critic way of regarding the present and the idealism of an optimistic behaviour towards the future. It is also a name that makes people smile, for whatever reason.

Organized around the artistic work of Tiago Rodrigues, who shares the direction with Magda Bizarro, Mundo Perfeito is recognized for the quality of its work and also by the continuous attempt at innovation and reinventing itself. Besides producing Tiago Rodrigues' work, this small company is also known for its work with new authors, as well for the spirit of collaboration with portuguese and international artists. In the field of dramaturgy, Mundo Perfeito organized the project "Urgências", that resulted in three shows and presented more than twenty new texts of portuguese authors. Recently, in "Hotel Lutécia", Tiago Rodrigues staged texts by some of Portugal's foremost authors alongside with new texts by such international artists as Tim Etchells or Nature Theatre of Oklahoma. At the level of collaboration with international artists, stand out the performances "Berenice", in co-production with the Belgian company tg STAN, "Yesterday's Man", by the Lebanese artists Rabih Mroué and Tony Chakar with Tiago Rodrigues and the project "Estúdios" that since 2008 gave origin to several new performances and has promoted the collaboration of Portuguese artists with those of Belgium, The Netherlands, USA, Congo, France, Croatia, Brazil or Norway. With more than thirty productions, Mundo Perfeito has presented its work in theatres and festivals in countries such as Portugal, France, United Kingdom, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Lebanon, Brazil, Turkey, Romania, Ireland, Singapore and Germany. Mundo Perfeito has also been the cradle for upcoming artists in the last few years and will continue to produce emergent performance makers.

Among other recent works, the performances IF A WINDOW WOULD OPEN (nominated for the Best Theatre Performance, 2010 by the Portuguese Author's Society - SPA), SADNESS AND JOY IN THE LIFE OF GIRAFFES and THREE FINGERS BELOW THE KNEE (awarded with the prize for Best Theatre Performance, 2012 by SPA and with a Golden

Globe for Best Theatre Performance 2012 by the portuguese TV Channel SIC) and BOVARY stand out for its originality and for a permanent search of new ways to fight the forces of evil.

*Mundo Perfeito is a structure supported by Governo de Portugal | Secretário de Estado da Cultura | DGArtes, a company in residence at Alcantara and associated with O Espaço do Tempo*

## more information

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