

U.S. Premiere!

Emma Dante/Compagnia Sud Costa Occidentale

Le Sorelle Macaluso
(The Sisters Macaluso)



Photo credit: Carmine Maringola

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Alexander Kasser Theater

**Arts + Cultural
Programming**



**MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY**

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Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts
Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

U.S. Premiere!

Emma Dante/Compagnia Sud Costa Occidentale

Le Sorelle Macaluso **(The Sisters Macaluso)**

Written and directed by **Emma Dante**

Performers **Serena Barone, Elena Borgogni, Sandro Maria Campagna, Italia Carroccio, Davide Celona, Marcella Colaianni, Alessandra Fazzino, Daniela Macaluso, Leonarda Saffi, Stephanie Taillandier**

Lighting Design **Cristian Zucaro**

Armor Design **Gaetano Lo Monaco Celano**

Administrator **Sandra Ghetti**

Assistant Director **Daniela Gusmano**

International Management **Aldo Miguel Grompone**

Coproduction: Teatro Stabile di Napoli, Théâtre National (Bruxelles),
Festival d'Avignon, Folkteatern (Göteborg),
in collaboration with Atto Unico/Compagnia Sud Costa Occidentale,
in partnership with Teatrul National Radu Stanca—Sibiu.

With the support of the Program Culture of the European Union.

CITTA IN SCENA
CITIES ON STAGE



Cultura

Duration: 70 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audiences and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

Program Notes

The characters involved are gathered together mourning the death of a family member and preparing for the funeral. Members of the family, both living and dead, are presented without distinction as the story unfolds.

This piece is inspired by a short story a friend once recalled to me. His grandmother, delirious from disease, one night called out screaming, “Am I alive or dead?!” Her daughter replied, “Alive, you’re alive!” The mother responded, “Yes, alive! I’ve been dead a long time, and you didn’t tell me so as not to scare me.”

The scene is empty and dark. Suddenly a body lunges on stage from the obscurity. It is a woman. Adult. Scarred. Behind her appear faces of both the living and the dead in mourning attire. This group advances toward us with a sure step. A dancing woman joins this procession. The sisters Macaluso appear as a flock of birds suspended between the earth and the sky. In a state of confusion between life and death.

The family is composed of seven sisters there to reminisce, to cast blame, to dream, to cry, and to laugh about their own stories. We are at the funeral of one of them. At the border between here and there, what is and what was, for now and evermore, spirits are ready to take away the deceased.

This is a family in transition from lightness to dark. A young father appears to his daughter in her fifties, a mother grasps her husband in an eternal embrace. The remnants of dreams are suspended in loneliness and the deceased are boldly in front of us.

—*Emma Dante*

About the Artist

Emma Dante (Writer/Director) was born in Palermo, Italy, in 1967. She graduated from the National Academy of Dramatic Art in Rome with degrees in Dramaturgy and Direction. She founded the Compagnia Sud Costa Occidentale in 1999. She has received various prizes and awards. In 2001 she received both the Scenario Prize for the show *mPalermu* and the Lo Straniero Prize for emerging director. In 2002 she won the Ubu prize for best playwright. In 2003 she won the Ubu award for *Carnezzeria* for best play. In 2004 she won the Gassman award for best director as well as the National Association of Theater Critics prize for dramaturgy and direction. In 2005 she was awarded the Golden Graal prize for best director of a play for *Medea*.

Dante wrote and directed *Le Sorelle Macaluso*, which premiered at the Teatro Mercadante di Napoli and was co-produced by the National Theater of Brussels and the Avignon Festival. *Le Sorelle Macaluso* went on to win the Le Maschere award for best show of the year, the Critics Prize, and the Ubu award for direction and best performance in 2014.

Dante has produced work presented at La Scala and the Teatro Massimo di Palermo, among other venues.

About the Company

Compagnia Sud Costa Occidentale was founded in Palermo in August 1999 by Emma Dante. After years of being forced to hide due to strong indifference on the part of local institutions and theaters, in April 2008 the company took root in Palermo in a basement on via Polito, behind the former cultural site Cantieri Culturali della Zisa. The house, called the “Vicaria,” is a former shoe factory. In addition to offering theater classes through a permanent lab, the Vicaria has developed important debates, exhibitions, performances, meetings, and events that have freed it from the official flag of representational theater. It is no coincidence that the

associates participating in the activities were, above all, ordinary citizens rather than those in the know.

Compagnia Sud Costa Occidentale has never been funded by public money and has always lived off of sales revenues from the shows self-produced or produced by other theaters. It is composed of actors coming from different experiences who are confronted with projects where a single show is never stopped, never ending or ever resuming, but widening and narrowing as the case may be. Its way of doing theater does not hold prisoners and is always open to those direct infections that give a sense of intellectual freedom. Different people with different specifics and talents came close to the company's approach and have temporarily shared the tiring and rigorous exploration of its theater, allowing the beating heart of the company to be even stronger and more compact.

The starting point of the company's research arises, essentially, from sin and from the worst that the actor has to offer as an act of love. The actor is called to say it entirely, without shame, in order to overcome that sense of ridicule that hinders the creative encounter. And above all, the actor is invited to forget about the ego, that predominant and vulgar ego that pushes away from the true objective of art: the need for a profound reflection on life.

Compagnia Sud Costa Occidentale does not care about the result; the "show" is just the point of arrival of a paradoxical reinterpretation of reality that becomes language, where the sign is not the message, the map is not the territory. A show is a "theorem of the lie," where a sign is used to lie, to play, is an expression of the liar's paradox: "What I'm doing is not what I'm doing." It is essential for the company to discover the ribs, to apply its talent to an artistic process and train every day to make this life experience available to its performers. They want to enter consciously into a process of authorship to generate words before pronouncing them.

Founder Emma Dante says, "I do not like actors who know how to play, nor the artists who identify themselves with their idea of doing art. I play with theater as if I played my life! For me, the artistic gesture of greatest value is the offering of one's own misery and dignity. Etty Hillesum wrote, 'The only thing that counts is to humbly offer one's own self as a battlefield.'"

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