



**Henri Guette – Théâtreorama ([www.theatrorama.com](http://www.theatrorama.com)) – 3 August 2017**

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## **Gran Consiglio, a brilliant Mussolini**

### **Gran Consiglio, the Duce's path**

Fractured by wars and totalitarianism, the history of the 20th century has, as its dark heroes, Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini. Of the latter, notwithstanding the fact that his crimes were of no lesser importance, we do not know too much. With great care, Tom Corradini engages in *Gran Consiglio* in the task of retracing the path and the fall of the Duce.

### **Gran Consiglio : a historical show**

Alone on the stage, in *Gran Consiglio* Tom Corradini does not only show a performance as an actor but also a very carefully documented show. More than a year of research among books and shelves in order to find the just measure, without inventing a pure work of fiction and without giving a lecture at the same time. One may appreciate the show if having some notions on the history of Italy and the Second World War, in order to contextualise the events which are told, but the pure portrait of the character emerging in this play is sufficient in itself. It is the portrait of a man who dreamed of being a great chief of State and who ended up to be the head of a puppet republic. The anecdotes are many and allow to approach this historical character in a different way. The show begins with an overturn of the situation, in 1943 the Great Council of Fascism puts in doubt Mussolini's power and has him imprisoned. In this moment of crisis, hidden in his office, the man reveals his story, from birth to the premonition of his death, through writings, articles, letters.

### **Between grotesque and pathetic**

Thinking about his failed aspiration, as in the case of Adolf Hitler who dreamed about being a painter, Mussolini's recalls as there was a time he wanted to be a violinist. Nothing occurred as planned. Seeing himself as a Caesar, hopping from victory to victory, the Duce leaped instead from defeat to defeat. Fascism is not a light theme but the portrait of this man invites us to take a closer look at the relationship between society and the men left aside by it. The interpretation of Tom Corradini makes us sway from the grotesque to the pathetic. What other view can we have of the man who was at the start Hitler's role model and later his puppet? Besides being protagonist of this farce, Mussolini has something of terrible and ridiculous at the same time. In an unstable balance; this portrait is not a denunciation or a prise but rather a warning, a threat that we may pass at any moment from laughter to tears.

## **Great means**

Fascism consecrates the cult of personality. Master of stage, Mussolini, who seized the symbols of the Roman Republic, is here reduced to a series of symbolic objects. Because of this, this show can be staged anywhere, in minimal conditions, although the props used are very important. The picture of his "*mama*", the correspondence with Churchill, the fez, the gun... With these few means, the actor develops an extraordinary play, using the techniques of the clown and the resources of comedy, in order to paint the detailed portrait of a vulnerable and ghastly man at the same time. The considerations of Mussolini on society, his observations on the psychology of crowds are something terrifying, and very actual. Reviewing Fascism in perspective is a constant task, but we needed Tom Corradini to look at the beast in the face, as the only means do disarm it.