

Art. 34 Times

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THROUGH *HIS* EYES

Writers are made of the same fabric as us. But they see things differently.

That is why I enthusiastically await a Vinaver's version of reality. To see all through *his* eyes not yours or mine.

But some might justly ask who he is. A Vinaver indeed. A Michel Vinaver. A contemporary French writer who has taken first France, and later, the world, by storm. A creator of theatre who can only be described theatrically. A lecturer of la Sorbonne. His 1964 play "Hôtel Iphigénie" was turned into TV film and one of the most recent plays by the same author include "11th September 2001". Vinaver's life as an author leaves nothing to be desired. Also known as France's translator of Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot's "Waste Land", his works have been translated, published, studied, applauded and criticized. His reputation nowadays is beyond any doubt an international one.

The play ... "The Television Programme" (Il-Programm Televiziv) (Actes Sud [France]). It has captured audiences across the whole of France since 1988 and is continually staged in its home country. It formed part of various festivals amongst which that of Châtillon-sur-Charallone in 2003. It will also be one of the performances inaugurating the Centre Informatique National de Montreuil in 2007. A translation of the play in the English language by Hannah and David Bradby was made in the 90's. It was staged in London's Gate Theatre in 1992. It is also one of the first to be studied in contemporary theatre worldwide.

Especially appealing to Francophiles, this year I have taken the opportunity to delve deeper into the mystic French language as well

as its psyche through the Vinaver medium. When I told Richard Spiteri, a French University lecturer about my idea, I guess he thought I might never spend so many hours translating. However I was more than pleased to show him that he had highly underestimated my enthusiasm.

So, this year's work, which is a comedy, started off at the translation stage. A translation which included a transposition and adaptation of the environment from a French one into a Maltese one and ended up in the inclusion of some Maltese (very) popular names on stage instead of the unfamiliar French ones. The humour, therefore, also starts off with the casting and the choice of characters' names. Of course this was no difficult task considering that the play speaks of journalists. And there it was. A sweet revenge? Not at all! But there it is and there it will be! A comedy featuring the influential journalist, the not-so-less-influential journalist and the ambitious journalist who sleeps up the ladder (representing no one locally of course!). These are all over-clouded by the powerful top-of-the-tops TV presenter. The *hamallu*, and the magistrate who changes into a sublunary peeping-tom of the world at night. Beside all these the frivolous, stupid secretary. And the black humour at the centre of the story. *Is-Sur Delia* (a transposition of a character originally baptized *Delile* by the French author) is an unemployed middle-aged man who has experienced all the stages of unemployment but who, in the nick of achieving success also, achieves tragedy. At his side, his wife, *Sa Delia*.

The end-product : surprisingly Maltese. The actors will include Tony Ellul (mair actor as well as director), Veronica Farrugia (main actress), Mariella Aquilina (Pamela, the mature journalist), Olivia-Anne Pace Marmara (Daphne, the not-so-less influential journalist), David Rizzo (the *hamallu*), Sarah Lee Zammit (the over-ambitious journalist trying to break through), Dorian Micallef (Magistrate Xuereb) and Joelene Penza (seemingly-idiotic-involuntarily-philosophic secretary)

The team of journalists get intertwined in between the media and justice when trying to tackle long-term unemployment of middle-aged people. This is how destiny brings all these people together on one stage. Is the magistrate going to give in to let the media pass in its

limousine? Who is the real perpetrator of the crime in question? Will justice be held? Or will the media be held possibly up? All these questions are to be answered at the end of the play, or are they not? Or were they ever to be answered? Or are they answerable? Who is the hero? Where is the tragedy? The real tragedy?

As soon as I passed the ball to Tony for his adaptation and direction the play was out my of hands. He also had the task of decreasing it to a record running time of one hour to accommodate the following literary and artistic programme as well as the launching of a book. What I'm sure of is that this year round the play will be a surprise to me as for anybody else. I have only been present for the rehearsals once and hardly know the actors although I know they've done a good job. However I know a lot of things will be happening on November the 4th after 6. Can we see the local state of affairs through *his* eyes? This needs still to be tested ... Vinaver forgive my Maltese (French-inspired) sense of humour!

For photos and more information www.lornavassallo.com