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Under the Radar: 5 Questions About 'Too Late! antigone (contest #2)'

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Two actors, one male and one female, growl like dogs, hit each other and perform other acts of aggressive gamesmanship in “Too Late! antigone (contest #2),” a radical retelling of the story of Antigone by the Italian company Motus. (The show, part of the [Under the Radar Festival](#), is performed in English with Italian subtitles.) The actors barely have time to catch their breaths to deliver their lines before another physically demanding task — swinging from a rope, for example — begins. The audience has front-row seats.

Enrico Casagrande and Daniela Nicolo, members of Motus who created and directed the piece, recently spoke with ArtsBeat, via an interpreter, about what inspired their show. Here are excerpts from the conversation.

Q. *Your piece looks as if it's a retelling of the story of Antigone, but with some modern twists. Does that sound about right?*

A. Casagrande: It's our vision of Antigone in today's life. We don't really think about Antigone in a historical way. We transform her power, her great force, in the today, here and now.

Q. *In a video clip of a performance I see there are audience members very close to the actors.*

A. Nicolo: The actors are very involved. They reflect about the play in the play. They discuss the text while re-enacting the text. They discuss it among themselves. It's a meta-theater work.

Casagrande: The audience surrounds the actors on stage. There is no participation, but the audience members can see each other. They are involved like witnesses. Much like “Spring Awakening,” they are on the stage.

Q. *Tell me more about your theater company.*

A. Casagrande: We are a group that works with new technology. But for this we decided to be minimalistic in an empty space. The two main actors on stage do the performance only with small objects: a mask, two chairs and a table. It was very important for our experience to do something with nothing.

Q. *One of the objects looks like a pen. In the program guide there's a photo of one of*

the actors, who is topless, writing a word on her leg. Explain what's going on there.

A. Casagrande: There are some parts of the text that we underlined during rehearsal which were important for us. Antigone is so convinced of her words, so sure of herself, that she writes them in permanent marker on her body. The sentences are simple but important.

One of them is from a Pasolini film, "[Porcile](#)." It's about the relationship between parents and their children. It's about this kind of conflict. The sentence, which everyone knows in Italy, is: "Ho ucciso mio padre. Ho mangiato carne umana. Tremo di gioia."

[Translator: "I killed my father. I've eaten human flesh. I'm trembling with joy."]

Q. *Wow. Not a lot of humor in the show, I take it?*

A. Casagrande: There are some parts that are ironic. You can laugh but maybe in a cynical way, not laughing like in a comic way.

"Too Late! antigone (contest #2)" runs through Jan. 15 at the Public Theater. More information is at the Under the Radar [Web site](#).