

## Watching another be yourself

by Augusto Corrieri

Last year, in 2006, I made and performed my first solo piece, entitled *Quartet (for Anna Akhmatova)*.

Shortly after making this work, I unexpectedly found myself in the position of having to make another show.

Regardless of my own desires, there was an anonymous and untraceable pressure around me to produce something else, better or worse, different or similar.

This is perhaps the famous second album syndrome, and it is something that we all experience, in different ways, *after* we have done something worthy of another's attention.

There is this terrifying question, floating in the air around you: "What next? What now?"

The new work is *Quartet #2 (for Anna Akhmatova)*.

It is an exact replica, or photocopy, of the first version of *Quartet*. The only difference is that it is executed by performer Donna Shilling, not by Augusto Corrieri.

Over the last month, Donna has tirelessly watched a live video recording of my solo performance, moving along to the image on the screen, copying every move and gesture down to the smallest detail. We have also spent two weeks rehearsing together, in which time I have had the uncanny experience of watching myself performed by another.

To the question of what it feels like to watch someone else execute one's own performance piece, I am happy to answer like this: where first there was one person standing alone on stage, moving, speaking, waiting, and falling to the ground, there are now two people standing alone on stage, moving, speaking, waiting, and falling to the ground.

And in as much as there are now two of us performing this solo piece, it seems safe to say that the solo has become a duet.

We took the original show and photocopied it in order to produce its sequel. Or, to be more precise, we have somehow made a twin performance: what I thought was "my" solo performance – alone, unique, self-enclosed – has mysteriously joined forces with a double, a kind of mirror image of itself. And because of this doubling, the original performance is no longer the same: it is inhabited by its sequel, just as the sequel is inhabited by the original.

As I write these words, I feel that *Quartet #2* is an ideal response of sorts to that pressure of having to produce something new. For it is simultaneously a "new" and an "old" work; it is both "identical" and "different" to my previous piece; it is both a "repetition" and "an original".

So if the pressure to produce something new can never be completely dispelled, it can perhaps be turned against itself and used to one's advantage. The new work, the sequel, then becomes this: playing with the very idea of what constitutes a new work.

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