



Timer, ScenaMadre

by Samuel Zucchiati - Eolo, online theatre review

TIMER stubbornly eludes any attempt at summarisation.

Once the show is over, the most honest feeling is not that of having ‘understood’ anything, but of **having been immersed for an hour in a continuous stream of stimuli, images, sounds, quotations and fragments**. An experience that is almost physical rather than narrative. **This sense of dispersion is at the heart of the work.**

The dominant sensation is that of endless scrolling. That state of mind where you open Instagram or TikTok “for five minutes” and suddenly find yourself an hour later without really knowing what you’ve been looking at. Not because nothing was interesting – quite the opposite. But because every piece of content is immediately replaced by the next, **within an eternal present that allows nothing to settle.**

ScenaMadre theatrically constructs this mechanism to test our gullibility. **We believed in technology, in its promise to improve the world and, above all, communication. Well, technology has gone back on its word (yet again).**

“I feel like I'm breaking into pieces.

Disconnected from my body 24 hours a day.

Never whole.

Never complete.

Never one.”

Linda Amicone, Simone Benelli and Sofia Pagano constantly shift between registers, voices, postures and languages. They speak live, then suddenly switch to playback, lending their bodies to recorded voices from films, cartoons, radio programmes, pop culture and the digital imagination. Each fragment is swallowed up by the next without a break. **There is no real narrative thread holding the material together. Or to put it another way, the narrative thread is precisely the simultaneous impossibility of remaining within a single narrative for long enough.**

This is the condition that Douglas Rushkoff calls ‘present shock’ – a time that is no longer perceived as a journey, a progression or a narrative, but as a simultaneous accumulation of stimuli that

continually erase what came before them. **The future vanishes.** Even the past loses its substance. **All that remains is a hyperactive and intermittent present.**

The scene effectively conveys this sensation through **three large metal shutters**, which rise and fall ceaselessly. The performers pass in front of, behind and beneath them. At times they resemble gigantic vertical screens, monumental smartphones that open and close continuously before the spectator's eyes. At other times, they are mental doors, private thresholds, devices of separation, or a guillotine hanging over one of their heads.

TIMER asks the audience to inhabit the flow and try to construct possible connections for themselves. **A challenge and a provocation, because that is precisely what we do constantly** online as we navigate a diverse array of content – memes, tragedies, adverts, intimate confessions and comedy videos – all with the very same thumb gesture. The risk (**but we might also say the aim of the direction and dramaturgy by Marta Abate and Michelangelo Frola**) is, of course, that of saturation. In the audience, we often come face to face with the void that it represents – the constant proliferation of stimuli that produces a sort of perceptual anaesthesia. A gamble that pays off in depicting contemporary information overload not from the outside, but by allowing the spectator to experience it directly.

And so the fact of leaving without really being able to say 'what it was about' no longer seems like a limitation, but rather one of the most consistent consequences of the staging. Because *Timer* does not seem interested in constructing a memorable story. **Rather, it wants to make us feel what it means to live immersed in a time that keeps passing whilst we are distracted by something else.**

After the performance, we caught up with Marta Abate and Michelangelo Frola in the control room to ask them how such a precise yet chaotic staging mechanism had come about. It really does seem that **TIMER was not created 'about' young people but together with them. The three performers took an active part in the creative process**, constantly refining the material, adjusting their insights, and dismantling images and dynamics that, quite simply, did not truly reflect their perception of the present. Not so much a question of age, but of perspective. Abate and Frola seem to have realised that the greatest risk, in **portraying a hyper-connected generation, was to observe it from the outside using outdated categories.**

And it is perhaps also for this reason that the production manages to avoid the all-too-common rhetoric surrounding the relationship between young people and technology (rhetoric that has certainly been present in other productions at Segnali 2026 which sought to speak about, of, for, and never with or through young people). **TIMER never adopts the moralising tone of those who generically criticise 'young people who are always on their phones'.** It attempts – and succeeds – in reconstructing from within the perceptual quality of a fragmented, intermittent and saturated contemporary era.