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## **Interview in Romania Libera**

English Translation

### **1. "Husbands" by John Cassavetes and "Husbands" by Doris Mirescu. What is the difference between the two productions?**

DM: John Cassavetes' Husbands is one of the most beautiful movies ever made about losing yourself and the loneliness of humans. About friendship, childhood, the need for love and finally about death. It is a hard, naked film, it is brutal and magnificent. Cassavetes changed my life when I discovered his cinema. There was something in it shattering and dangerous, a true and intense look at the lives of human beings, of the relationships between them, between men, women, suffering, joy. The emotions contained in silence, nothingness, the simplest gestures. The quotidian. Time, also. The notion of letting the camera film, without cutting... film life, in its unbearable mess, and men in their distress, with their fears and their pain.

My show is called John Cassavetes' Husbands. In the title itself, there's the idea that I am asking questions of a film that was made forty years ago and that I allow this film to ask me primordial questions about representation, about the very notion of mise en scène. I am interested in raw emotion. In broken, ruptured things. It is the crack which I find most important, because therein is revealed something essential about human-ness. The imperfect is what is magnificent.

The three main characters are played by actors who are much younger than in Cassavetes' film. Almost adolescents. This led me to a reflection on childhood, on the suppression of adulthood. Harry, Gus, and Archie behave like big kids. They are taking playing at being carefree to the extreme in their refusal to see the emptiness which confronts them. And yet the emptiness is what it's all about and to see children confronting this hollowness is very disturbing. It hurts, it hurts badly. The dialogue between the original film and the adaptation is at the heart of this piece. Cassavetes could not say "Cut!", because he wanted the actor to get lost and find something unexpected, something dangerous. Here, there is no cutting at all. No off-screen. Everybody's on stage, all the time, everything is open. Revealed. Including the work of the cameras, the trajectories of the five cameramen. The editing is done in real time. By an editor who recycles all the images on a monitor and shows us several angles, several images. Everything is live and alive. Nothing of the process of creation disappears.

### **2. According to the American press, your version of "Husbands" at the Under the Radar Festival seems to be extremely different. I heard that some of the spectators left the show at the beginning. But the show had a great impact in the media. How did you draw the critics' attention? What was the ingredient that made the media go wild?**

DM: What is disturbing in my production is the risk taken by the staging. It erases itself, it disappears. At least from the surface. The intention is to show the erosion, the decomposition of human beings. The vortex of life. (It took almost a year of rehearsal... everyday for many hours.) Which means the spectator is not protected by the security of a wall. There is no comfort. There is danger, chaos, fear. Time, duration. Multiple points of view. You have to decipher what is shown. Make sense out of many meanings. No pattern or diagram offers a ready explanation. The spectator has to take the risk of getting lost. Of suffering too. I do not like passivity in theatre. Nor in film, for that matter. The eye has to be active. Awake. Cassavetes was so demanding on this level. He refused glibness. He fought in the name of something absolute, of a truth that wanted to show life at any cost. Forty years ago, he shocked the press

because of precisely this. Of this drive to render emotion, emptiness too. His moviemaking was not polite. He did not pay respect to know-how, to vacuous and soulless rules.

What creates the scandal is life itself. Because it is not always pretty. Because it is unpolished, hard, raw. Not necessarily precise. Because meaning is not immediately offered. Many spectators left during the same moment, the bathroom scene. Which lasts almost 25 minutes. Shown on the main screen in the set. A cameraman follows the actors in real time. They go offstage to a bathroom on the floor below. There, they vomit, scream, fight. Suffer. In today's world, time, duration... are not acceptable. Everything is very fast. You don't linger. In this show, time is at the heart of the experience. The effort is what is shown. The difficulty of being alive. The horror, the disgust which death inspires. The nothing moments, when you breathe and look in the mirror. Empty corridors and chance meetings. So, there it is... all of that bothers people. They do not know how to react. How to see. We try to put things into categories, because that reassures us. But here, there's not just one category. There are some very young actors who have never stepped on a stage before, and some who are much older and experienced, there are cameras and projections, but it isn't film. There is a set, but it is multiple. Several rooms and action taking place everywhere all the time. Which led some reviewers to call it clumsy, unprofessional. And say that there's no direction. Which, for me, is not an insult but a great compliment. There are multiple angles and frames that tell several stories at once and these stories talk about life. And about the impossibility of life.

### **3. Why did you replace Stuart from Cassavetes' film with John?**

DM: Stuart became John, because of John Cassavetes. Because my show is a tribute to John, to his desire for truth and his questioning of accepted notions and rules. The actors are in a dialogue with him. Beyond time. It's about memory, too.

### **4. I saw Florin Penisoara in "California Dreamin'" and now he's playing in New York. Where did you discover him? How did you make him interested in your project and what do you think of him as a theatre actor?**

DM: I'd seen Florin act in a show a few years ago in New York. The piece was not very interesting, but Florin had a very beautiful presence. I'd started to work with another actor, an American. It wasn't going well at all. I decided to replace him. I remembered Florin, his intensity. I called him. We met. I talked to him about Cassavetes and gave him the script. Three hours later he called me back and said... I do not really know what I've just read, but I know I want to do it. It's like nothing else and yet I am very moved.

Florin is magnificent actor. Real, accurate. Intense. Funny and moving. To me, what is important in the work is collaboration. With him, it happens very naturally. He is always inventing. He understands time and space. He listens, he hears. He takes risks. He is not afraid to go deep into things. This kind of talent is precious.

### **5. It is said that you have a different vision because you are not born and raised in the US. How do you comment on this?**

DM: That is an easy statement that comes from the desire to make people and things fit into easily identifiable categories. The difference does not come from my not being born in the United States. I think an artist is a stranger, a foreigner, by definition. He does not belong to one country or another. The artist lives in the world, in the human. My outlook is neither American, nor French, nor Romanian. It is a human outlook, confronting humanity and the world which confronts me.

**6. Can you tell our readers something about you biography? It is known that you left Romania for Switzerland, and several years after Doris Mirescu is in New York. What was your artistic path and why did you choose it?**

DM: My parents left Romania when I was very small. They did not want to raise a child in a dictatorship. Freedom is at the heart of who I am. "The freedom to be free", said Cassavetes. The freedom and the courage to ask questions. To go elsewhere. To lose your frame of reference. I lived in Paris, did some of my studies there – literature at the Sorbonne – at the same time studying acting, theatre. Then I went to New York to study film and theatre. After my studies at Columbia, I founded my company, Dangerous Ground, whose name is a direct echo to one of my most beloved films, "On Dangerous Ground", by the great artist rebel, Nicholas Ray. So, there it is, me too, I'm a rebel. I love adventure, danger. The wide open roads of American films, the huge skies of John Ford.

**7. Your resume posted on the Dangerous Ground Productions' website is really impressive. You studied in France and in the US as a producer, artist, screenwriter etc. What's missing from this resume?**

DM: The future. The unknown. What has not yet been done. What is to come and become.

**8. Do you still speak Romanian? Did you go back to Romania? Do you have plans to come back as a tourist, as an artist?**

DM: Romania is very present within me, like a wound deep in my heart. A great melancholy... I have rather blurry images of my childhood... my childhood room, with a big window. The grey light. My parents have always spoken to me in Romanian, so yes, fortunately I speak the language of my origins. And I feel Romanian in my soul. It is a wounded country with marvels of poetry and madness. Of courage for life. I have family in Romania, so yes, I do go there from time to time. And I love going there. I still have so many things to see in Romania, the monasteries for example, and, to come and create something there... yes, that would be wonderful. A return to buried origins. What can be more moving?