

Nina

Un soggetto per un breve racconto

Authors: Fabrizio Visconti, Rossella Rapisarda

Starring: Rossella Rapisarda

Director: Fabrizio Visconti

Staging: Ulisse Pantaleone

Light design: Lucio Venosta

Producer: Eccentrici Dadarò

Inspired by

“**The Seagull**”, Anton Cechov

“**Letters**”, Anton Cechov

Characters

Nina: An actress and the main character of Anton Cechov’s “The Seagull”

Rossella: A real, contemporary actress

The audience: Acting as itself

Nature of the play

Monologue for two voices: An actress (Rossella) and a character (Nina); a person and a phantom knowing that—from time to time—theatre makes phantoms “*more lively and real than anything alive and real*”.

Narrative plot

“**Un soggetto per un breve racconto**” is loosely based on Anton Cechov’s “**The Seagull**”. It is the portrait of an actress, Nina, who is at the same time the central heroin of Cechov’s work and the emblem of any actor regardless of historical, spatial or gender distances. In parallel, Rossella—a real actress—approaches the role of Nina like a mirror in which to look at herself and inspect the human condition of anyone prone to face his desires and challenge his/her limits.

Like Nina, Rossella lives suspended between her love for a man who does not approve her faith in Art and an opposite but passionate love for staging. A train, which will change her life forever, is waiting for her. She must decide whether to take it or not during her monologue on stage. ‘What should I do?’, she asks herself. ‘Should I leave for an unknown place and a future in order to look after my love for Theatre or should I keep waiting for a man and a love I have been looking for so far?’ Her doubts are even more severe: ‘Should I choose Theatre? Theatre makes my life predictable since anything I have to do is already written in the plot. Also, whenever I am uncomfortable with a story, I can change for another plot. If not, should I push all my dreams and hopes into reality, where life changes relentlessly and everything can end abruptly?’

Reality? Illusion? What is more real? What is more illusory?

Why can't reality and illusion be the same? Why can't soul and matter melt together and be part of the same Universal Harmony? Why can't life be like the end of the monologue Kostja wrote for Nina?

The human path of the actress crosses naturally Nina's path. Nina's uncertainties and doubts are the same that anguish Rossella.

"A Story in a Nutshell" expounds in the form of a personal diary. No external narrator steps in. As such, the play escapes any attempt of distancing from the character that instead discloses all her secrets to herself and the listening audience. With the complicity of the spectators, her passionate confession becomes the way to face her doubts and eventually get rid of them.

The intense monologue embedding the poetic biography of an actress is rarefied, occasionally ironic. Rossella and Nina discuss about destiny, personal choices, and the endless variations of human nature floating in a suspended reality.

Director's elucidations

"Un soggetto per un breve racconto", which we familiarly address as 'Nina', is the outcome of a long artistic and personal path started in August 2000 in Moscow at Stanislavskij's house-museum. It was then that, together with our master Jurij Alschitz, we started working on Anton Chechov's **"The Seagull"**. Day after day this originally circumscribed experience started overcoming its boundaries and be part of our daily life.

Nina well reflects the same questions that have been accompanying our path of artists and individuals. These questions have now found the simplest but hardest answer possible: Love. Love for Life, love for Theatre, even when they seem impossible to reconcile.

In the earlier stages of this work we involved all the established 'partners' of people working in theatre: scenic design of importance, live music, references to painters, imbricated images, servants. All together they helped maintain the fusion and confusion between **theatre** and **reality**; a boundary we often find difficult to mark. We have gone through years of demanding renounces and investigation of the very essence of our work. We eventually faced the solitude and the nudity of man in front of his choices.

As such, we decided to purge our play. We unchained it from the obligations of all theatrical superstructures (scenic design, servants, musicians, ...). What now stands in front of spectators is the humanity and extraordinary essence of Rossella acting as Nina and Nina reviving through Rossella.

We do think the current version of the play is much closer to the public, which becomes part of our path. The monologue lightly turns into a dialogue around questions and passions crossing (our) life and work.

The script unravels the simple and germane reality of Nina. True to the inspiring force of **"The Seagull"** we also tried to deploy the tangibility of the body and opposed it to the intangibility of human urge to love. Art illuminates such an ambivalence and reveals hopes, crisis, disillusion, and new starts punctuating the turning points of our existence.

The physical and psychological proximity between the actress and the public helps her to make up her mind. Moreover, her final decision becomes a stimulus and an invitation for the spectators to question themselves about the 'train' they may take and they risk to let go. Roles turn out to be interchangeable.

As a matter of fact, fluidity and interchangeability of roles ground life. Each role implies its opposite. Art implies Life. Choosing Art is nothing but choosing Life whenever Art represents the only way to live.

The play celebrates the mystery of man and life; the mystery of the moving 'in-between-ness' of man swapping from earth to sky, and back again; the mystery of the conflicting need to feel rooted and unchained at the same time. Once again, Cechov's words vividly capture the point: "Anything is so wonderfully melted in this life..."