

The Karenina of Sonia Bergamasco - grace, technique and charm

Ms. Bergamasco retraces the genesis of the novel. The actress establishes a secret, hypnotic current with the audience.

From the darkness, the naked elbow of an elegant, aristocratic forearm emerges. This is the original image of Anna Karenina, the one Tolstoy himself declared to be the beginning of everything, an epiphany he had one day while stretched out on the divan in a sitting room. And this is how Sonia Bergamasco appears, seated at the piano, like a phantom emerging from the gloom: her arms dazzlingly white, her delicate profile, her blond hair gathered at the nape, her feet bare. She plays a funeral march by Tchaikovsky, her fingers run across the keys, and the space is suddenly saturated with completely feminine turmoil.

It is hard to define this Karenina (open rehearsals in unhappiness), the delicately balanced theater piece that Sonia Bergamasco has written together with Emanuele Trevi, affectionately directed by Giuseppe Bertolucci, which keeps far away from a banal adaptation and tries instead to trace the genesis of the character within the mind of the author. And while the history of literature tells of the endless drafts and re-drafts of the novel, this show stages the obsession: artistic, erotic and sentimental. Tolstoy's for his creature, and Anna's for the utter devastation of her feelings. Two extreme experiences that converge in the dramatic texture: it begins with a montage - from the diaries of the writer and his wife, letters and notes - and ends with Anna's inner monologue before her suicide (hurry home and re-read those feverish, extraordinary pages, anticipating Joyce), a fatal rush towards death, which is the other side of love.

It is not easy to hold together the invisible variables of this struggle between author, actress and character; in fact, something could be adjusted in the transition between the first and second parts, but that's a marginal observation. Because first of all, Karenina is Sonia Bergamasco, with her especially light embodiment of grace and impeccable technique, of emotion that builds while staying always at an imperceptible distance, of provocative charm. Actress and musician, she uses the piano to weave a vibrant relationship, transforming the instrument into a co-star able to play upon the strings of the soul before transforming into a funeral bier. All this in a close relationship with the audience, one so pressing as to become itself a dramatic element that spirals out and shrouds both stage and audience in a secret hypnotic current. That is why rather than a show, one should speak of a magical rite, officiated over by a priestess who is well-aware of the fragile mystery of the theater.

Sara Chiappori - la Repubblica - Milan - 20 January 2012