



Compagnia Note di Quinta¹

ALICE: 88 TASTI NELLA STORIA

Theatrical Concert

OSCAR - PACTA Theater, Milan

January 30 / February 2, 2014 - WOMEN THEATER RIGHTS Project



Winning show
of the *Fersen*
Prize 2013

Supported by
ANED (NATIONAL
EX- DEPORTED
ASSOCIATION)

LA STRAORDINARIA STORIA DI ALICE HERZ SOMMER, PIANISTA EBREA SOPRAVVISSUTA ALLA TRAGEDIA DEI TOTALITARISMI DEL NOVECENTO FORSE GRAZIE ANCHE ALLA MUSICA.



Spettacolo Vincitore del Premio Fersen 2013 .
Patrocinato dall'ANED - Associazione nazionale ex deportati.



Regia Teatrale

Laura Pasetti

Regia Musicale

Trio Farrenc

Testo

Sonia Colombo

Interpreti

Sonia Colombo

Trio Farrenc

Flauto: Laura Faoro - Violoncello: Maria Calvo - Pianoforte: Clelia Cafiero

¹ Founded by Laura Faoro and her trio together with Sonia Colombo.

**«I was born optimistic: everything is a present...my music
actually is part of my religion»**

Thus begins the show...

**... in the dark, Alice's lively, vibrant voice, breaks the silence.
... on stage, some musical instruments, abandoned there or ...
perhaps just arranged as before a concert...
... four figures enter the stage:
are they actresses? Are they musicians?...
... it doesn't matter, they are all Alice.**

The subject:

Alice Herz Sommer (1903- 2014) should be famous today only for her piano skills as a concert player, if her talent had not clashed with the great course of the history of the twentieth century: yet the collision of Alice's life with the terrible events of the last century made her "Little story" a unique and exciting fresco, to be known. It is an extraordinary journey, in the dim lights and in the very black shadows of contemporary history, through the infinite love for life and music of a small, great woman. Alice played the piano till she died at 111 years old.

Born in Prague, but of Jewish origins, Alice Herz Sommer saw her promising career as a pianist hindered by the Nazi persecutions, until she underwent internment with her whole family in Theresienstadt in '42, the "model" lager where the Third Reich enclosed the Jewish



cultural elite. If the decision to memorize the arduous score of the 24 Chopin Studies saved her from depression and the risk of going crazy, her concert activity continued within Terezin guaranteeing her and her son a standard of living better than that of other internees and preserving them until the very end from the transfer to Auschwitz.

But Alice's story does not end with the Liberation: thanks to her willpower she was able to rebuild her life and career even later, surviving the Stalinist dictatorship in Czech Republic and reaching her sister in the newborn Israel, where she was hired as a piano teacher at the Jerusalem Conservatory.

At the age of eighty, following her son who had become a famous cellist in the meantime, she moved to London where she lived, playing the piano until she died in 2014.

The show:

Alice: 88 tasti nella storia ("Alice: 88 keys in history") is not a traditional show, it is not a simple recital with music, nor a concert in the common sense of the term: it is a "theatrical concert", a piece in which the "languages" of music and theater merge and intertwine their borders, combining the expressive power of notes and words. On stage there are three musicians and one actress, who all retrace the extraordinary history of the Jewish concert pianist Alice Herz Sommer, combining music, stage actions and acting, under the expert guidance of Laura Pasetti, director, founder of the Charioteer Theater and teacher of Piccolo Teatro - Milan and Accademia della Scala theater.

The idea is audacious, but not new, because already masters of the theatrical avant-garde of the 1900s - like, among all, Tadeus Kantor - have revolutionized the concept of making theater, conceiving it as a total work of art, to which all creative disciplines are called to make their contribution, in a synthesis of acting, scenic action, music and painting.



Synopsis:

The Note di Quinta Company gave birth to this show precisely in the belief that for a story as strong as Alice's - in which life, music and history are inextricably intertwined - only the combination of various arts would have guaranteed the right strength to theatrical communication, in order to create a synaesthetic experience, in which the arts become "infected", to arrive at a perceptive and emotional involvement of the viewer on multiple sensory areas.



The scene is filled only by the presence of the actress, the musicians / actresses and their respective instruments, a piano, a cello and a flute. The interpreters are all Alice: here, as in the perfect setting composed of a chamber concert, the true story of this woman comes to life.

Starting from the present, in a series of flashbacks the most salient episodes of Alice's long life are re-enacted, all linked by a single common thread, her deep love for music, which leads her to face positively the greatest tragedies of the history and of her life: the deportation of her mother, her internment in the Terezin ghetto, the deportation and death of her husband, the death of her twin sister and son. The show ends as it began. In an abstract space, Alice celebrates her 100 years by dedicating her day to what she loves most, music: her religion, her life.

Music:

Strictly performed live, music becomes the protagonist of the story. It is the protagonist's real weapon of salvation against the adversities of her existence. In the play, the music (Chopin, Beethoven,



Brahms, Schubert) is never a mere background, but is chosen and thought in its most genuinely emotional function, as a fundamental expressive medium that colors and marks the rhythm of the scenic action.

The reviews:

«In a well balanced mix of narration, live music and flash back, we thus see the protagonist going through the happiest but also the most terrible moments of her existence. During the three dynamic acts, the actress as a narrator [...] awears the

clothes of Alice Herz while the musicians [...] interpret the artist's life of Alice with scenic ease [...]. Another protagonist of the piece is live music which underlines the most significant emotional passages of the comedy. An artistically complete show not to be missed both for the perfect creative symbiosis between the text, the direction, the interpretation and the music and for its high historical value».

Fersen Prize Jury 2013

*«The small Oscar Theater becomes much bigger every time it hosts courageous and particularly intense shows, that is really very often, female shows like “Alice: 88 tasti nella storia”, [...] in which, the story of a woman who survived the Shoah because she was the daughter of artists and herself a quality pianisti is told in a very poetic way»
« ... as much truly magnificent live music as only small chamber concerts can offer».*

(Daniela Cohen, Saltinaria.it 2014).

«The show is built through a clever flashback in which the narration of the events predominates combined with music that accompany us on this dive into the past. Music becomes the protagonist of the story and takes us by the hand; it is everywhere, in the life of Alice and her son, in the Jewish tradition, even in the hope of salvation. Music will save the world as it saved Alice from the death camps».

(Alice Tagliabue, IT Festival 2013).

«The story is that of a Jewish musician, Alice Herz Sommer, who survived the Nazi death camps with her son. Music helped her surviving the horrendous death plan of the SS. On stage a piano, a flute and a cello gently accompany Alice's story. Words and music come together in a single nostalgic harmony and the melody of the piano, above all, reaches the heart of the spectator, captured in a story that is always the same, but always different on the Shoah».

(Sara Rancati, IT Festival 2013).