

Groningen (NL), NP3 - The White Cube  
16 November 2019 h 16.00

## SO, WHAT IS YOUR QUESTION

a performance in three parts or acts,  
which is a reflection on a creative relationship and process  
a poetic dialogue / made visible / through interactions  
with oneself, with the other, with the audience

by and with  
Marina Kazakova and Sara Maino

***On the stage, a square table, 2 office chairs***

*The table is in the center of the stage, the two chairs, one in front of the other.*

*Beside the table, or in the background, two umbrella stands, with some umbrellas in each stand.*

***Over the table:***

*a typemachine Olivetti Lettera 32, a small speaker connected to a Panelplayer (a device for sound installation); some sheets of paper cut by hand, a feather or two; Greek incense, a coal disc, a matches box; a small branch found in Bruxelles, a little stone from a garden, a leaf or two; a table light.*

1  
TO EXPRESS

***Marina and Sara enter together.***

***Sara sits at the table. Her back shown to the audience.***

***Marina stands in front of Sara, back to back. They do not touch.***

*So that, from the audiences' point of view, Marina is visible, Sara is quite covered by Marina's body.*

*Silence. Addressing the audience, slowly articulating every word, no gestures.*

MARINA

First, is the question.

Then comes the answer,

***(pause)*** perhaps.

***Silence***

SARA

***(action)*** *She takes the coal disc, the matches and lights Greek incense. A visible flame, a cloud of smoke, perfume is perceived in the room, briefly.*

MARINA

***(standing still, looking up to her left, starts reciting)***

***Sara's hands on legs***

I know the window

from which one can see

you,

tall and skinny,

standing

on an empty street,

over a naked world,

a naked night owl,

with your hands ready to be,

to typewrite the nature

and me

sitting on a windowsill

ready to jump

down, to you.

***(to the audience)***

I know the window

through which I slip out,

and instead of driving to work,

unnoticed and unaccompanied,

I drown

deep inside your flood,

***(looking down, eyes only, not the head)***

down your Stravinsky-like

unrhyme,

down your gentle unrythmes - ***(pause)***

chi ha vissuto per amore,

per amore si muore -  
the ones who live for love,  
are killed by love.

*(to the audience, again)*

*Sara cuts the paper for the typewriting, little delicate movements, aside the typemachine)*

I know the window  
from which I see  
your fingers  
hammering a typewriter,  
I watch the poems - your wrists -  
running over the black rows of keys.  
Your massive Rachmaninov's hand-span  
cannot be interpreted,  
they write the letters I cannot see from distance,  
they shoot the words onto the paper,  
they type  
as fireworks,  
and then as singers  
reach the highest notes  
in their compass,  
you look above  
at all the windows of the house,  
you stop your eye on me,  
sitting on the 4th floor -  
1 2 3 4 -  
I make your hands go rounds  
over the keys,  
I catch you in an unrhymed  
silence,  
it feels like the beginning of the world.

*(Marina moves one step to her right, pause)*

**MARINA** *(together with Sara)*

**1 - 2 - 3 - 4**

**SARA**

*at the same time, she presses the spacebar of the Olivetti 4 times*

MARINA

*silence, listening the action of Sara with the typemachine*

SARA

*She inserts the piece of paper in the machine. Once finished, Marina starts. Sara: hands on legs.*

MARINA

Exactly the second *(eyes to her right)*

when people don't know that they are happy.

A moment later

the window goes as misty

as a still November afternoon. *(Marina follow the spectator and then looks down left towards Sara, but does not turn the body only eyes)*

A thousand of swans

carry a single "Do" note

to the utmost fortissimo,

the swans pass rapidly  
over your closed eyes and open arms,  
the swans catch me  
on their wings,  
when I jump down (*and turns to the audience*)  
from that magic window  
from which one can see  
you, tall and skinny,  
standing  
on an empty street,  
over a naked world,  
with your hands ready  
to catch me and the birds,  
to pronounce in unison  
a single "Do"  
note  
to the utmost pianissimo.

***Marina closes her eyes. Stands still. Silence.***

SARA

Risposte che non vedo / Answers I don't see  
Risposte che non sento. / Answers I don't feel  
Sorde alle voci di domande  
che qui chiedono, che vogliono  
Deaf to the voices of questions  
Voices that here ask, and just want...  
lontane dalla fretta, voci di sonno  
e di rabbia.  
to keep away from rush, voices of sleep  
and tension.  
Dentro sere, / Inside the nights  
voci che vorrebbero afferrare stelle / Voices who would catch stars  
stelle sembrano piovere, verticali su di noi / While stars seem to rain, vertically over us  
mentre noi sappiamo piatte, immobili e però vibranti / Whereas we do know them flat, static and yet  
pulsing like us  
come di noi, la voglia, la mia voglia / like our wish, my wish  
di sfondare il cielo di notte / to break through the night sky  
fare breccia nel notturno di noi occhi / To breach into our nocturnal eyes  
per possederne il segreto. / To keep their secret.

***Marina opens the eyes. Silence (like reacting to Sara's poem). Starts reciting, standing still.***

MARINA

My hand trembles,  
I can scarcely write,  
I have so much  
to say to you.  
*(while reciting, she takes an umbrella from the background and opens it, puts it on a stand)*

***1st umbrella***

***In the meanwhile, Sara cuts paper for the other people)***

Unable to imagine anything  
except your hands

pouring that Sangiovese wine.

**2nd umbrella**

For a second  
you fix your eye on me  
with that certain  
and solemn air  
which marks  
the women of the old Florentine's paintings, (*open umbrella*)  
and although  
your attitude is, doubtlessly, instinctive,

**3rd umbrella**

you seem to hold your hands back,  
as though some higher power  
is keeping them  
in a control mode.

**(near the stand under the umbrella)**

I strove to bear away  
with me in memory  
the movement  
of your hands  
over the glasses and the table,  
the hands  
to which I probably  
will never return.

**(fix the 3rd umbrella)**

The unrehearsed hands incident-  
hands - the interpreters of feelings -  
shake my evening  
right now.

**4th umbrella**

I know nothing  
of how your hands spend their time  
during the day,  
neither of their past,  
so little, in deed, of their future,  
which, of course, stimulates my desire  
for knowledge.

**5th and last umbrella**

Every morning,  
I pass the florist's window,  
calla lilies and roses  
catch my eyes, (*invite Melanie to the stage*)  
I think at once  
to send them to be delivered  
into your sleeping hands, (*opens the umbrella*)  
with one certain and solemn note:

**(you give the umbrella to her)**

"My hand trembles,  
I can scarcely write,  
I have so much  
to say to you". ***Both the spectator and Marina hear Sara's sounds typing and watch her.***

2  
TO REVEAL

***Sara now typewrites the 3 lines of the beginning.***

First, is the question.

Then, come the answer, perhaps.

So, what is your question?

***At the end of the typing, Marina moves the empty chair, then rotates the chair with Sara in front of the audience, behind the table. Then, Sara turns the typemachine. She reads the sheet.***

SARA

First, is the question.

Then, comes the answer, perhaps.

So, what is your question?

SARA

***(to the spectator with umbrella)***

Please, take a seat.

***The spectator with the help of Marina puts the umbrella in the stand and then goes to Sara's place. Take a seat and waits for Sara's poem. Marina sits with the audience.***

***Sara puts away the sheet with the three lines. (She will give it to Marina in part 3).***

***Sara invites one person at a time at the table. She creates instant poetry with typemachine for each person. Sara will give them the gift, the paper with writing.***

***(Duration: around 10-12 minutes, according to the number of spectators and interactions)***

***After a number of people have come to the table, Marina stands up, observes the last interaction with a spectator. She interrupts the sequence of interactions, turning the empty chair to the audience.***

MARINA ***looking at the chair***

In the Southern sunlight

I walked into the sterile  
hand symphony of yours.

***Marina sits and go on telling***

Before you had a second to resist,

I shot the image with my eye  
and moved on

to your next 'hand pas'.

I saw right through your fingers -

your innocence and inability

for sudden kisses,

your passion for simplicity

and order.

I have recorded till the smallest skin cell

their 'Rite of Spring',

exactly as they had revealed themselves to me.

In your hands

I found unstable harmony,  
a happiness of milliseconds  
that can't be traced or photographed.  
I heard right through your fingers  
a symphony  
I never heard before,  
a symphony of an unborn composer,  
played on an entirely new instrument - the closest to human voice reciting poetry.  
The purpose of your hands  
is anything  
but mystery.

***The sound of the “fine corsa” (bell) of the Olivetti is heard. It's the signal for the next action.***

3  
BALANCE

*At the sound of the bell, Sara gets up, moves the chair to the right side of the table and rotates the typemachine in front of herself.*

*At the same time, Marina moves her chair to the left and takes a seat at the left side.*

*They now sit one in front of the other.*

SARA

E dunque, qual è la tua domanda.

MARINA

*(slowly)*

How can you hide from what is always in you?

How can the rain walk up the window?

How can be no reflection

in the mirror,

when you are facing it?

SARA

So, what is your question.

MARINA

Does a kiss have the beginning?

Is language a picture?

Are hands of yours my answers?

Is silence a splendid

response

or the black void?

*Tishina...*

SARA

Here I am,

revealed.

The gate, open.

Crossed the ridges of love

your trembling beauty,

and still, in the transparent iris...

your unbelieving eye.

MARINA

Imagine?

SARA

**Imagine!**

MARINA

You are imagined!

Just try to touch your voice?

Are you able?



SARA

*'Fantàzia' - Imagine.*

MARINA

Through the window  
I can see the sunlight  
and two figures,  
flying,  
as on Marc Chagall's "The Flying Lovers".  
*(pausa)*

With your piano fingers  
you erase  
the landscape,  
leaving the two of us  
under the white umbrella  
of the sky.

SARA

Just stay.

MARINA

Are we... alone?

*Мы здесь одни?*

SARA

*Tishe.* And quiet, and still.

MARINA

*Да,* exactly. You said: " Don't move".

SARA

Ascolta, distratto silenzio  
un luogo fermo, il sé dei tanti rumori  
le distrazioni, le attese dei ritorni  
Se guardi, quando guardi  
Mi ritiro, ora sparisco  
mal digerisco i tuoi allontanamenti, le tue ricerche cerco  
e ora sono, fantasma delle attese  
ma, sempre presente, a un tempo  
e a un altro, nella camera con il fuoco  
acceso sulle lontananze, sulle distanze  
sul perfetto esilio, sul ritorno  
a quella inesprimibile fiamma.

***Sara takes the sheet with the three lines, nearby the Olivetti, with the right hand. Marina raises her left hand and touches the sheet, kept vertically in the hand of Sara, so that this action is visible to the audience.***

*Their hands are scarcely touching, the sheet with the poem is between their hands.*

MARINA

I have been standing

under the rain  
of hands  
for ages:  
a month,  
a life,  
a lunar moon.  
I have been standing still,  
I've been a full stop.

*Marina takes the sheet with the three lines in her hand, observes it.*

SARA  
Listen, distracted silence  
a still place, the self of so many noises  
inattentions, waiting for the returns.  
If you look, when you look  
I move back, now I disappear  
I hardly stand your leaving, your research  
I research  
and now I am, ghost of waits  
always here, at this time  
and at another time, in the room  
with the fire burning  
the distances, the perfect exile, the return  
to that inexpressible flame.

*Marina closes the paper and keep it closed.*

MARINA  
I am freeing my palms,  
as the rain flows often  
onto Brussels -  
unceremoniously  
and with no bounds.  
At this magic moment  
of our Earthly existence,  
I give you not only my hands,  
but also my overcoat,  
my Anna Rizzo Firenze hat,  
my high gloss black shoes,  
and my bracelet - as well.  
You...

**SARA + MARINA**  
...you finally / let / my hands rain **(together)**

MARINA  
I let them lock the door.  
I let them set the heater on,  
that your ink and fingers  
won't freeze,

and that you can write and touch me without  
gloves on.  
I let my hands rain upon your  
trembling  
silencio.  
My heart just missed a beat.  
I let my hands rain over  
your burning  
typemachine.  
I let my hands rain  
the Russian rain  
upon your  
freeing Da Vinci palms.  
The Russian Rain  
over Da Vinci palms!  
I let my hands rain inside the  
building  
where we slowly  
are starting off  
towards the ceiling,  
levitating  
in a tandem -  
in a symmetry  
of open everything,  
fitting into both  
the circles and the squares of each other,  
seeming to fly  
but standing firmly  
on the ground  
under this thick rain  
dripping from our palms...

SARA

E' finito il rumore.  
Il dorso, invisibile  
agli uni e a te stessa.  
E' il tempo di restare.  
Con la fronte luminosa  
abile alle certezze.  
E' tempo di andare.  
Di seguire  
Il cuore lento  
Il fuoco fermo.

MARINA

Like smoke letters of an airplane  
your words  
pronounce the park, the theatre, the pines,  
but what I only hear is your timbre,  
I'm standing in the gallery beside a canvas  
or in a park beside you,

turning myself into a catalogue -  
making the records of a beauty  
that can be easily destroyed  
by time  
or by dissolved illusion.  
A quick sharp step  
over the marble  
of the long hall of porticos -  
your sudden smile  
feels like a drama  
of a Greek writer,  
the chirping of crickets outside,  
the hot silence,  
I am decapitated:  
I see you  
entering the gallery  
to slip into the chair beside me,  
to show me the painting of Jacopo  
Pontormo,  
to observe  
the hands of mine and on the canvases,  
a curious sensation  
that you might be  
my tangible reality,  
my only tangible,  
my only silhouette  
to be embraced by and be dissolve in,  
as smoke letters of an airplane.

***Sara assembles the installation on the Olivetti***

SARA

So, noise has stopped,  
look at your back, invisible  
to them and to yourself.  
It's time to remain.  
With bright forehead/with bright mind  
confident, able, certain.  
It's time to go.  
Time to follow  
the slow heart  
the firm fire.

MARINA

This rhythm that flows like snow in us-  
a synchrony of two falling feathers.

***(she turns to the audience sitting on the office chair)***

If I could focus all of my attention  
to explore the bits of time that pulse inside your elbows, inside your shoulders, inside your  
everything...  
The moon light from the roof window  
would accentuate your hipless figure,

the sound of the piano  
would thunder into the mansard -  
Rakhmaninov!  
We'd rush into the garden,  
running down the stairs in unison,  
the staircase seems steeper suddenly,  
I'd need to grip your fingers  
harder,  
in the garden, biting my lip,  
I'd remember forever  
the way you stood  
watching almost the full moon  
sonata of Rakhmaninov.  
Heedlessly, the two of us  
would race through woods,  
the moon would cut through trees,  
the whole forest is visible  
and everything seems suddenly true and clear  
in our lives -  
everything seems filled with light.  
A faint shiver would pass  
over my back,  
the star of your hand would tighten,  
a huntsman's rifle  
would sound  
in the air,  
It is as if all of my fears  
have disappeared.  
I'd continue for many hours  
to stand there in our own momentum,  
between the mountains,  
before I rip open  
your shirt,  
the buttons  
would fly around  
the grass.  
There would be little we can do  
except love.

***Marina puts the hands on her legs.***

***Sara starts the sound installation*** (with the three lines of the beginning spoken by the voices of Marina and Sara in English, Italian and Russian).

***Sara turns the chair to the audience with hands on her legs.***

***Marina and Sara stand up together and exit.***

*The sound installation is audible, like a track of memory of the whole performance.*

The end, 11 Nov 2019