

Ibsen Women and the denied freedom

By Rita Borga

Ibsen Women – Put an Eagle in a Cage

It is said that in 1906 in Cristiana, the previous name of Oslo, **Eleonora Duse** stood up for long, wrapped only with her shawl, looking at the window of Henrik Ibsen's house. He was ill and forced to stay at home, Eleonora hoped to catch just for an instant the profile of the author that she deeply loved and that she performed in Italy for the first time.

The Norwegian actress Juni Dahr, member of the company of the National Theatre of Bergen for 12 years, starts from this image, silently like the snow and that could refer to a picture of Hammershoi. Then, she pulls back the curtains, not too much. The chromaticism is simple and there are six characters: Hilde, Hedda, Nora, Mrs. Alving, Ellida, Hjordis. "Ibsen Women". The melancholic breath of the flautist **Chris Poole** draws the Scandinavian nature: the land of the fiords, of the coniferous forests, of the rough sea, of the freezing cold wind among the rocky isles.

The performance (Le donne di Ibsen) was presented at the Teatro Ca' Foscari in Venice that also this year has programmed some international pieces in its season. The premiere of the performance was in 1989 during an international symposium about Ibsen at the Yale University. The performance consists in six monologues played in English (with some Norwegian accents) through which the actress presents the portraits of the main heroines of this nineteenth-century author. Father of the modern concept of dramaturgy, Ibsen created his works like places for critic and existential reflection.

Juni Dahr makes bright all these characters, she draws their thoughts, their wishes and their weaknesses like the strong imagination, the revengeful desperation, the impulsive and wild temperament. This is a path in the deepness of six bounded souls that want the freedom and that don't accept the big social lies and the emotional addiction and control. As well, these women are strong and wishful to find the way out escaping from those little hooks, needles and embroidery that made them beautiful and thin but tightened and choked them. The fashion corsets they wore were hidden under the clothing and they limited the belt, surrounded by big men hands.

"Put an eagle in a cage and it will bite the bars whether they are of iron or gold" (Metti un'aquila in gabbia e morderà le sbarre, siano esse di ferro o d'oro) says Hjordis in "The Vikings of Helgeland".

These women played by the Norwegian actress are personalities in evolution. In spite of their belonging to a "light theatre", they capture and make everlasting these vital passions, betrayals, inner and external clash...in that constant relationship between tragic and comic, between being and appearing.

Ibsen Women - Put an Eagle in a Cage

created, directed and performed by Juni Dahr
music composed and performer by: Chris Poole
costumes: Juni Dahr
light designers: Marianne Thallaug Wedset
photo: Marianne Thallaug Wedset
production: Visjoner Teater, Marianne Roland
duration: 50 minutes
clapping: 1 minutes

Seen in Venice, Teatro Ca' Foscari, 9th November 2011

