

Sul Nascere – A Director’s perspective

I was immediately drawn to the script on first reading, as Sul Nascere is a play that invites a special relationship between audience and actor. I have always believed that theatre should provide an experience for an audience that is different from film or television. If a play has a realistic scenic setting and the actors ignore the presence of the audience by never breaking the “fourth Wall” of the proscenium arch, then often that play is likely to make just as good a film or TV Drama.

Sul Nascere , with its structure inviting the audience to enter into the play by acting as imaginary university students, in a series of lectures, and combining scientific knowledge, with the drama of human emotions and situations, challenges the audience to engage in a special relationship with the play and the actor. In that sense it fulfils the main social function of theatre, which is not merely to entertain, but also to challenge perceptions and educate the audience into understanding the world we live in.

My first job as director was to find and cast an actor sufficiently versatile to play all five roles in the play and who had the stage presence to hold an audience in the palm of his hand for an hour, on stage alone. I had long been an admirer of the Neapolitan actor Fabio Brescia and could not believe my luck when I approached him and he agreed to join the project. Another big advantage of working with Fabio is that, although we would be performing the play in Italian, Fabio speaks perfect English , so rehearsal discussions would be so much easier !

Before rehearsals could begin I needed to find the context of the performance, and this involved immersing myself in the science of the subject and then creating the visual and auditory world for the performance. So step one was compiling a series of illustrative projections to accompany the script. Also, because the play was to be performed in a hotel conference room with no stage lighting or set – it was important to devise a means of transition between the seven sections of the text. I decided that the theme of Birth which is central to the play could be best served by using popular music that dealt with his theme as well as inspirational quotes on the subject of Birth – to give the audience a moment of reflection between each of the scenes. This pre work is always some of the most enjoyable and exciting work a director does. So – when Fabio arrived for the first rehearsal – all this structure had already been provisionally decided and available to use in rehearsal from Day 1.

In rehearsal we worked together to clearly define the character of the Professor and the other 4 characters who appear in the play. We also had to make sure that Fabio was totally convincing in his understanding of the Science of the subject., especially as we were aware that a large part of the audience would be made up of some of Italy’s most distinguished scientists.

A one person show of seven scenes also has to engage the audience throughout by constant changes of pace, emotion and rhythm and so the rehearsal process needs to experiment with all these elements to move the script successfully from “Page to Stage”

Sul Nascere in performance works on so many levels. There is of course the fascination with the Science of Assisted Reproduction, but we are also able to share the real emotional turmoil that the characters involved in the Narrative as it unfolds

Audience response has been fantastic with laughter, tears, and – at the CV1 Science Conference in Rome, a well-deserved standing ovation for Fabio and his performance. Carolina Sellitto’s incredibly inventive script gives the audience a unique insight into the science and the controversies surrounding assisted re production, at the same time inviting them to participate in the theatrical experience in a fresh and innovative form.

One of the biggest advantages of the play is that it can be performed anywhere with the minimum of technical requirements. Anywhere that can provide a projector and sound is suitable – and this means that, as well as conventional theatre spaces, Sul Nascere is perfect for conferences, high schools, and Universities. It should be seen by as many people as possible who have an interest in Science, Theatre, or who are themselves struggling with the difficult process of assisted re production.

It has been a privilege to work with such a talented writer and actor in bring this piece to life. It really has now been “born “.

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