

Moreno Museum Association

presents

MoMu Teatro

in

A HAT FOR MORENO

Performers

Angela Ala

Laura Caspani

Franco Giura

Donatella Lessio

Andrea Mastropasqua

Simone Mondino

Matteo Pisu

Licio Rutigliano

Miladia Scarlat

Musicians

Franco Giura

Andrea Mastropasqua

Licio Rutigliano

Costume designer

Cristina Zago

Make-up artist

Federica Navone

Scenography

Angela Ala

Laura Caspani

Matteo Pisu

Consultants

Marco Greco

Maria Cristina Sidoni

Director Donatella Lessio

Presentation

This comedy shows **several episodes of the European adventures of J.L. Moreno**, born in Bucharest in 1889, who lived in Vienna and Bad Voslau, from there he left for the United States in 1925.

The aim of this production is to show the origin of some aspects of psychodrama, a method that initially manifests itself through some **anecdotes from Moreno's personal life**, rather than in theories. In the first part of his life, Moreno had many experiences, both in private and professional fields. These experiences led him to intuitively understand the connection between healing, theater, divinity, creativity, and relationships.

With this show we would like to bring some of these experiences to life, **focusing on Moreno's**

relationships, which allowed him to develop his personality and ideas.

We would like to see **how his complementary roles have allowed him to create the sprout of the psychodramatic process here in Europe.**

This show is an artistic creation: it is not a documentary. The idea was born to celebrate J.L. Moreno on the fiftieth anniversary of his death (2024). The director is Donatella Lessio, a psychodramatist from Turin (Italy) who proposed her idea to Marco Greco, president of the Moreno Museum Association, of which she is also a member. Her project was a **co-creative work** involving a group of amateur actors who, together, decided on the text and the theatrical performance. Her expertise is such that she is able to unite the entire theatrical process and the group of actors who were in their first experience together. The **MoMu Teatro Group** is made up of **non-professional actors, many of whom are or have been students of the Italian Institute “Psychodrama Studio” (a member of FEPTO).**

The title refers to the fact that when Moreno was young he wore a long coat and never wore a hat, which was quite unusual for the time, proving to be an original person. The actors put themselves in Moreno's shoes and take turns playing the role of Moreno wearing “his” hat.

This is a psychodramatic hat: a hat we give to Moreno but also a hat “for” Moreno, a symbol representing him. **The reference sources** were the autobiography of JL Moreno and his other writings (The Words of the Father, The Theatre of Spontaneity, Psychodrama Volume 1), and the biography of JL Moreno written by Prof. René Marineau , “J. L. Moreno et la troisième révolution psychiatrique” , Publisher: Métailié, 1989. In the show you may be able to recognize some passages taken (literally or adapted) from the aforementioned sources. The following summary also includes the three poetic texts recited in the original language to underline the international atmosphere that characterized J.L. Moreno's early life and his life in Vienna during that period.

Since 2022, this show has represented a psychodramatic challenge: to remain consistently original with each new performance by a group of non-professional actors.

Compared to previous versions, the current one is particularly elaborate, with specially designed costumes and live music. It draws inspiration from the famous **epitaph placed on Moreno's tomb: “Here lies he who brought joy and laughter to psychiatry,”** and aims to emphasise **the playful aspect of Moreno's philosophy**, instilled in young Jacob by his mother Paulina, who often repeated: “What can you do? Turn around and laugh!”

For this reason, **the group imagined Moreno's adventures staged by a troupe of ‘guitti’,** itinerant actors typical of the European and Italian theatrical tradition, heirs to the Commedia

dell'Arte and, further back, to the masks of Latin comic theatre. Their lives were precarious, especially if they failed to secure prestigious “squares” or perform at court. Actresses were often (or were considered) women of easy virtue, to the point that in various countries, and at various times, it was preferred that female roles be played by young men, appropriately made up and trained. This practice was the norm in Elizabethan theatre and remains so in traditional Japanese theatre.

We have therefore decided to honour our theatrical tradition by offering you an encounter with these “strolling players” and a special character: one of the actors wears a half-male, half-female costume. Is it a man playing a woman, or a woman playing a man? With this costume, we also wish to recall the role-playing of psychodramatic theatre, in which anyone can play any part — man or woman, adult, elderly, or child.

Scene 1

Prologue

NARRATOR

Welcome, spectators.

The singer greets you.

I'll tell you about the mad ardours

Of a peculiar doctor,

Who treated his patients

With a special method.

He was a psychiatrist

And an innovative artist.

He created psychodrama,

Which is a very serious game,

Thanks to which ghosts

Reveal themselves in the theater.

It may seem complicated...

I'm not boring you.

We will see, and it will be clear.

Be grateful to hear

The telling of the story

Of this exceptional man

And how he discovered

The value of the meeting,

of listening, of a glance;

The power of a hug

Which can be born in a group

Of supportive people;

And how do you help yourself,

If you live next to those

Who reach out to us;

And how much love can

Of a devoted young woman

To a passionate man

Who, waiting for a Voice,

He seeks meaning in his actions.

May my song accompany you
On an extraordinary journey

Between the rooms and corridors
Of this imposing hermitage:
Be careful, be careful,
Be here, be present.

I'll sing about a headdress,
Of the instant a mother
placed it on his son's head,
It was almost like a crown;
I will sing of a flag
Waving on a canal;
I will sing with outstretched arms,
Of girls in a brothel -
Can you say? It's not nice,
But it's real, that was it -
And unexpected visits;
I'll sing about a game, a baby

And of fables from a branch;
Of a thought that imprisons
Without giving respite or quiet
Of an actress and a wife,

Of suffering internees
Which, then, weave a net
Of the color of a ruby:
And, you will see, this story
It will touch your heart.

There are many characters
Who met our doctor:
He received and kept
From each a great gift.
His name was Moreno.

Here our journey begins..
Are you ready? Well ... let's go.

Scene 2 - Paulina, Moreno's mother, steps forward: a young Jewish woman from Romania, educated in a Catholic boarding school in Bucharest where she embraced French culture. At the age of 15, she married Moreno Nissim Levi, a significantly older Turkish man. She was often left alone, as her husband travels extensively as a trade representative; they had five children, the eldest being Jacob, whom she often calls Jacques. The family moved to Vienna.

Scene 3 - Paulina is affectionate towards her firstborn son. She recites Romanian poems to Jacques, ensuring he remains aware of his roots.

"Ce te legeni" - by Mihai Eminescu -

- *Ce te legeni, codrule,
Fara ploaie, fara vânt,*

*Cu crengile la pamânt?
- De ce nu m-as legana,*

*Dacă trece vremea mea!
Ziua scade, noaptea crește
Și frunzisorul mi-l rarește.
Bate vântul frunza-n dungă -
Cântăreții mi-i alungă;
Bate vântul dintr-o parte -
Iarna-i aici, vara-i departe.
Și de ce să nu mă plec,
Dacă pasarile trec!
Peste vârf de ramurile
Trec în stoluri rândunele,*

*Ducând gândurile mele
Și norocul meu cu ele.
Și se duc pe rând, pe rând,
Zărea lumii-ntunecând,
Și se duc ca clipele,
Scuturând aripele,
Și mă lasă puștiit,
Vestejit și amortit
Și cu doru-mi singurel,
De mă-ngân numai cu el!*

Why're you swaying forest trees,
Without rain and without winds,
Touching the earth with your limbs?
Trees:
Why should I not swing in tune,
When my time is ending soon!
Day is waning, night is growing
And my foliage is blowing,
Sideway wind that hits my leaves –
Drives away my vocalists;
Blows a broadside from afar –
Winters here, summer's far.
Why should I not bend and sway,

If the birds pass anyway!
Over treetop twigs away
Pass the swallow flocks their way
Carrying my thoughts astray
And my luck along the way.
And they go, in rows they fly,
Clouding the horizon sky,
And they go like fleeting time,
Fluttering their wings they climb,
And they leave me nude and bleak,
Wilted, blunt, and numb and weak,
With my longing left alone,
To find solace on my own!

Paulina foresees a grand future for her son, declaring that he is destined to be a wise man and a leader of peoples. She imparts this role to him by placing a hat on his head. This scene hints at

how Moreno's relationship with his mother deeply influenced his character and thinking. Having embraced his mother's "outlook" on life, to whom he will always be grateful, the young man grows.

"Go and buy a large cartful of sand and spread the sand in the yard. At noon, when the sun burns hot, put the baby on it and the sun will heal the baby of his sickness.

The day will come when he will be a very great man. People from all over the world will come to see him. He will be a wise and kind man. Do not cry."

In challenging life situations, Paulina often repeated the phrase:

"Was kann man machen? Umdrehen und lachen"

"What can one do? Turn around and laugh".

A hypothetical poem from Victor Hugo in 1816, which Jacob might have addressed to his mother, reads:

À maman

Mon coeur me dit que c'est ta fête

Je crois toujours mon coeur quand il parle de toi

Maman, que faut-il donc que ce cœur te souhaite?

Des trésors? Des honneurs? Des trônes? Non, ma foi!

Mais un bonheur égal au mien quand je te vois."

To Mom

My heart tells me it's your party

I always believe my heart when it speaks of you

Mom, what should this heart wish you? Treasures? Honors? Thrones? No, I don't think so!

But happiness equal to mine when I see you.

Scene 4 - Moreno, a young student from Vienna, strolls through the Augarten. He observes children playing. He starts telling them a story to capture their attention.

"I walked through the Augarten, a park near the archduke's palace, where I saw a group of children loafing. I stopped and began to tell them a story. To my astonishment, other children dropped their games and joined in. So did the nurse maids with their carriages, the mothers and fathers, the policemen on horseback.... I sat at the foot of a tree, like being out of a fairy tale, and the children were drawn to me as if by a magic flute. It seemed that they had been removed from their drab

surroundings and brought into the fairy land. It was not so much what I told them, the tales themselves, but it was the act, the mysterious atmosphere, the paradox, the unreal becoming real.”

This situation captures the interest of Hans's mother, a shy and reserved child. It all happens at the park where Moreno involves the children in telling the story of "The Frog Prince": encouraging them to imagine new characters, plotlines, and even new endings, with Hans favoring the traditional version.

In the end, he challenges the children to invent new professions for their parents and encourages them to choose new parents from the adults in the park. Hans chooses another parent for himself, and his mother is outraged, accusing Moreno of causing disorder in her son's and the other children's minds.

Thanks to this experience, Moreno realizes that creative play can help change thought patterns and stereotypical behavior through the active exploration of new roles.

Scene 5 - During the day, Moreno encounters a prostitute and politely greets her, only to be abruptly ordered away by a policeman. Later, the ladies of a brothel in the Spittelberg district, speculate about the impending arrival of a doctor and a journalist, accompanied by a student (Moreno), who is recognized by one of the prostitutes he had met earlier.

The ladies are unsure of what to expect from him and inundate him with their problems. At this point, Moreno encourages them to talk to each other, confide in one another about their needs, and collectively bear their own burden. This way, the ladies realize they can help each other by forming a cohesive group. Moreno goes on to explain their desperate situation, who are rejected by society with no prospects for improvement:

“Here live people excluded by society, not because of religion or race, but because of their profession. Unacceptable for the bourgeoisie, for the Marxists, even for the criminals. A criminal is free again after serving his sentence in prison. These women are lost forever: no civil rights, no law protects their interests. Step by step, I want to help them support each other, each becoming a therapist for the other. Then I can leave.”

Scene 6 - It's 1916. During the First World War, many Italian-speaking Austrians (Tyroleans) are confined to refugee camps. One of these camps is located in Mittendorf, where Moreno is employed as a doctor.

Corruption, the black market, and oppression reign in the camp. The police, tasked with maintaining order, commit acts of violence against the weakest refugees including the rape of women. There is no harmony among the refugees.

Moreno notices that feelings of attraction and repulsion among the people, for different reasons that go way beyond nationality, on which the camp is organized. He also senses that these feelings can be measured as “distances” between people.

This insight leads him to experiment with sociometric planning of the community: if they were related to one another, then they would live, in the same barrack, improving their adaptability to the camp's dynamics. However, due to the exceptional situation, hunger, abuse, and diseases continue until the end of the war. This experience marks the beginning of sociometry.

Scene 7 - It is the year 1918. Moreno works as a doctor in Bad Vöslau and expresses his concern about his life in general.

Marianne, a young local Catholic, catches his eye on the street.

Over time, she seeks Moreno's help due to her respiratory issues. Despite his unconventional ways, she regards him as the miracle doctor of the town who assists people without requiring a payment. The two fall in love.

Marianne gives up her job as a teacher and leaves her fiancé. Marianne goes to live in Moreno's house. She becomes his companion, secretary, lover, and muse. She dedicates herself completely to him.

Bertolt Brecht, 1921, from "**Sentimental Song No. 78**".

Ach, in jener Nacht der Liebe

Als ich dann an dir erwachte

Schließ ich einmal müde ein:

In dem Linnen weiß und rein:

Und ich sah voll grüner Triebe

Ach, in diesem Linnen, dachte

Einen Baum im Sonnenschein.

Ich, will ich begraben sein.

Und ich dachte schon im Traume

Und der Mond schien nun ganz sachte

Von dem Baum im Sonnenschein:

Still in die Gardinen ein

Unter diesem grünen Baume

Und ich lag ganz still und dachte

Will auch ich begraben sein.

Wann wird mein Begräbnis sein?

*Als ich dann an deinem warmen
Leiblein lag und deinem Bein
Dachte ich, in diesen Armen
Will ich einst begraben sein.*

Oh it was a night of loving
And I slept exhaustedly:
And I saw the greenness budding
In the sunshine on a tree. And I thought, as I
lay dreaming
Of the sunshine on that tree:
Underneath its branches greening
Let them one day bury me.
Waking then in spotless linen
With you lying next to me
I thought : here's the shroud so clean in

Which I'll have them bury me.
And the moon came softly streaming
Through the curtains on to me
And I lay quite silent, dreaming
When my burial would be.
Feeling then your warmth beside me
Little body, thigh and knee
In these arms, I thought, I'll hide me
Here's where they can bury me.

The relationship with Marianne allows Moreno to undergo significant spiritual experiences. Together, they wait to hear the voice of God, which reveals Himself to them on a clear night with the following words:

"I AM GOD,
THE FATHER,
THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE.
THESE ARE MY WORDS,
THE WORDS OF THE FATHER.
HOW CAN ONE THING
CREATE ANOTHER THING?
HOW CAN THE ONE THING
CREATE THE OTHER THING,

IF THE SECOND THING DOES NOT
CREATE THE FIRST THING?
HOW CAN THE FIRST THING CREATE THE
SECOND THING,
IF THE CHILD DOES NOT GENERATE THE
FATHER?
THE FIRST CREATED THE LAST,
AND THE END CREATED THE BEGINNING.
I CREATED THE WORLD,

AND THEN I MUST HAVE CREATED
MYSELF.
I AM THE FATHER,
AND NO ONE IS MY FATHER.
I AM THE CREATOR,
AND NO ONE IS MY CREATOR.
I AM GOD,
AND NO ONE IS MY PROPHET.
I AM NOT YOUR GOD, I AM GOD.
I AM NOT THE GOD OF THIS NATION, NOR
THE GOD
OF THAT NATION. I AM GOD.
I AM NOT THE GOD OF THIS CLASS OR
THAT
CLASS,
I AM GOD.
I AM NOT CALLED BY NAME. I AM.
I AM

ONLY HERE TO GENERATE,
ONLY TO CREATE YOU.
I AM NAMELESS.
I AM ONLY HERE TO BE.
I WAS NAMELESS UNTIL YOU SPOKE
WITH ME.
I PROCLAIM MYSELF AS THE FATHER,
CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE,
VISIBLE TO ALL, WHILE PROCLAIMING
MYSELF BEFORE ALL.
NO ONE CAN SPEAK FOR ME,
NEITHER A SON,
NOR AN APOSTLE,
NOR A WITNESS.
NO ONE CAN SPEAK IN MY PLACE. GOD
PROCLAIMS
HIMSELF."

Scene 8 - A strange patient intrudes into Moreno's life: he expresses his discontent with life, his restless spirits, questions about the essence of life, and his nightmares.

Eventually, he makes an unusual request: he asks Moreno to assist him to commit suicide, in exchange for a substantial inheritance.

Moreno and Marianne are uncertain but willing to help. They suspect that the man might free himself from his desire to die, by staging it.

There is no audience before them, only the patient, Moreno as the therapist, and Marianne as the auxiliary ego: Marianne will play the characters, while Moreno is the director.

The patient is the author of the script but also the audience of his own suicidal thoughts.

Scene 9 - Moreno explains why he has chosen the path of theatre instead of founding a religious sect, entering a monastery, or creating a theology.

He elucidates the significance of the Theater of Spontaneity and introduces the scene dedicated to the story of Barbara.

"Why did I choose the path of theater instead of founding a religious sect, entering a monastery, creating a theology...although one does not exclude the other? When I consider the situation from which my ideas arose... I suffered from an '*idée fixe*' that would have been called boasting at the

time, but from today I begin to reap the fruits... I could say it was granted to me by God's grace. This fixed idea became my constant source of productivity: I was convinced of the existence as a kind of primal nature that is immortal and is reborn with each generation, a first universe that contains all beings, and in which all events are sacred. I liked that enchanting realm [...] I did not plan to leave it ever."

Georg speaks with his lover Barbara. He addresses her as a gentle, delicate, and sensitive woman (as in the roles she usually embodies as an actress). But Barbara also has another soul: a rebellious, authoritative, self-confident monster that cannot bear Georgs' protective and romantic infatuations.

The couple has a complicated life off-stage. Georg has confided his suffering to Moreno, who has an inspiration: to assign Barbara roles of evil women, criminals, murderers. He senses that through the therapeutic power of theatre, Barbara can express her suppressed anger on stage to make her private life more peaceful.

Scene 10 - Moreno's hat is passed by the actors who each dons the hat. Moreno is ready to bid farewell to the audience but reviews the "gifts" he received through the situations and characters of the show before doing so.

These "gifts" constitute the treasure of ideas, experiences, and intuitions he will take to the United States in 1925. He will return, in his travels, to Austria. He will also return to Vienna at the end of his earthly experience. We can meet him through the legacy he left us.