

Saturday 19/7
h 21.30

I AM VERTICAL
FRANCESCA ASTREI

by and with
Francesca Astrei
lighting
Chiara Casali
with the support of
Fondazione Teatro di Roma
special thanks to
Carrozzerie n.o.t. / NidOramai



PRESENTATION OF THE SHOW

During a depressive episode, finding the words to express your suffering is exhausting: pain isolates you, and opening up gets harder, to a point where your own struggles aren't a prison, but a safe space. The sorrow becomes home and the world outside is too heavy, sometimes even more painful than the pain itself.

But what's it like for the people close to those who "dwell in pain"? Loving someone that is trapped in their own pain generates even more pain: how can you establish communication between the external and internal world, while limiting suffering on both sides?

Every single depressive episode is like a death simulation. After a while, even if we don't understand why, the crisis mitigates and it looks like we're back to "normal life", aware that a new demon can come out of nowhere. There's no solution. With time we simply learn to recognize signals, we understand what can help contain the symptoms, and we get used to accept our own void. Every journey is different and unpredictable. Complete recovery is unlikely.

Depression is a puzzling subject: if you know it then you know how it works, but for the rest is inscrutable. Andrew Salomon in his inspiring essay "The Noonday Demon", states that depression can only be told with metaphors and allegories: knowing the intimate and subjective nature of the way pain grapples onto the individual, I couldn't agree more. And for that reason I decided to use the metaphor of Lazarus, from the catholic tradition.

Lazarus, locked away in his own tomb, gets called back to life at the words "Rise and walk": simple directions that would allow the body to snap out of the paralyzing pain.

Depressed people talk about how, in the darkest moments, you don't feel neither alive or dead, the feeling is to not exist in an existing body and to be able to feel your beating heart lifeless: Lazarus, while getting out of the tomb, seemed to encapsulate this condition.

Will Lazarus, archetype of the dead/alive, be able to come back to life? What if "Rise and

walk” were more of a punishment for his mind, instead of a blessing?

Understandably, his family is impatient to see him getting out of the tomb: and not getting out of his own final resting place will inflict more pain, however, emerging would entail the baffling fatigue of restarting life, conscious of one’s vulnerabilities.

This isn’t a monologue about the Gospel; Christian tradition is referenced purely as a metaphor for being trapped in a tomb or cradle-like state, contrasting with what outsiders might see as an obvious solution. The lighthearted and ironic nature will be the foundation of a profound analysis on what does it mean to go through a depressive episode, while looking at it from different points of view.

BIOGRAPHY

Francesca Astrei, born in Rome in 1995, graduated in 2018 from the Silvio D’Amico National Academy of Dramatic Art. She made her stage debut with Paolo Rossi in “Il Re Anarchico e i Fuorilegge di Versailles”. She also collaborated with Armando Punzo and La Compagnia della Fortezza on the show “Naturae” at the Volterra Prison. In 2020, she was part of the cast of productions directed by Roberto Rustioni and Giorgio Barberio Corsetti.

In 2021, she began working with the L.T.I. Piero Gabrielli Company, which includes actors with and without disabilities, directed by Roberto Gandini. In 2023, she won the FringeMi award with the monologue “Mi Manca Van Gogh”(I miss Van Gogh), which she wrote, directed, and performed. In 2024, following the production of “The Non-Existent Knight” directed by Tommaso Capodanno, she received a nomination for Best Emerging Actress at the Italian Theatre Awards (Premio Le Maschere del Teatro Italiano).

