

The Tragic Beauty of “A Kiss”

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by **Chance Morgan**

A kiss, to most people, is a simple gesture of love, intimacy and affection. But for Antonio Ligabue, the Swiss-Italian painter whose life is explored in Mario Perrotta's "A Kiss," it was the only show of love that he desired. In fact, the performance begins in a rush as Ligabue, portrayed by Marco Michel, frantically asks the audience for a kiss. Before learning about his artwork and life story, the audience connects with Ligabue's intense, desperate need for a kiss and everything it conveys.

Mr. Michel's performance as Antonio Ligabue maintains tremendous intensity, ably capturing every stage of the artist's life. He embraces Ligabue's youthful enthusiasm as a boy, his fear and well-meaning ignorance in early adulthood, his wonder while living as a hermit in the forest, his peace and gratitude for his mentor, and his bitter anger in old age. Ligabue's entire life and his emotional difficulties are captured with passion and piercing energy.

Throughout the show, Mr. Michel uses a series of enormous easels and a stick of charcoal to create large, lovely drawings that assist in the storytelling. In moments of especially powerful emotion or memory, he seizes the charcoal like a man possessed and renders beautiful sketches in real time. Mr. Michel interacts with them as if they were the people in Ligabue's life: his birth mother who left him in Switzerland, his adoptive Swiss mother, and the bullies who tormented him in an Italian village.

Two recurring themes in "A Kiss" are the idea of going away and returning, and, naturally, a kiss and what it can mean. Mr. Michel relates how every time Ligabue left, whether to an asylum, to the forest, or to the war, he desired to return, often to a woman. He returned to his mother from schools and asylums, and he returned to "Signorina," the "voice of peaches, voice of love" that he hears in the forest.

Many people believe that a great artist's life must be one of suffering, and that certainly holds true for Antonio Ligabue. He never knew where he belonged, never knew who he was, never knew why he was different, and above all, never knew the simple power of a kiss. Marco Michel, with words and direction by Mario Perrotta, brings to life a man whom many misunderstood, many abused, and many ignored. "A Kiss," however, is deeply understanding, beautiful, and impossible to ignore.

"A KISS – ANTONIO LIGABUE"

Performed by Marco Michel

Oct. 21 at 2pm

Playwright & Director: Mario Perrotta

Lights & Sound: Daniel Tschanz

Set Design: Peter Maurer

Support from: **Consulate General of Switzerland in New York**

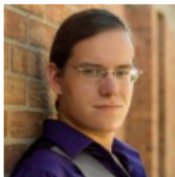
Show image by Luigi Burrioni, courtesy of the production

United Solo 2018

Theatre Row

410 West 42nd Street

New York City



CHANCE MORGAN is a writer and director currently based in New Jersey. He has worked for Dorset Theatre Festival, Northern Stage, and Bay Street Theatre. He is a graduate of Colorado Mesa University's theatre program, and spends his time developing his screenplays and musicals.