

The Promise

By: Alexei Arbuzov

Play no. 229

Opening show: 15/08/1967

Hebrew by: Miriam OREN

Directed : Reuven Morgan

Set by: Joseph Carl

Costumes by: Joseph Carl – Ania Shnel

Lighting by: Feiwel Har

The Cast

Lika: Dalia Friedland

Marik: Israel Biderman

Leonidik: Alexander Peleg

The Promise

"The Promise" is a play about war and what comes after. It is also a play about time, and love, about victory and about defeat and the way in which these are so interwoven and dependent on each other that they become, after a while, blurred and indistinct. "Who will prevent me being what I want to be?" asks Lika in act two, "Who will be that enemy?" and Leonidik – speaking from experience – replies "It may be that the greatest enemy you have is you yourself".

Lika, Leonidik and Marik: we first meet them in time of war; the city is under siege and the three are already, or are about to become, orphans. Against a background of fire and destruction three young people meet, and quarrel, and fall in love. It is 1942 and the future holds the greatest promise of all: survival.

Four years go by, the guns are silent; Lika has already set out on the road to the future and is studying medicine at the same hospital in which she first learned to bandage the wounded. The two boys return, already men, restless with the feeling that the wastage and destruction of a long war must be put to rights. The war has left its scars not only on individuals but on the face of the whole world: Marik is anxious to set about the immediate tasks of rebuilding a shattered past, whilst Leonidik is more skeptic; "It may be" he says, "That we are simply the ones who survived, no more than that". Marik rejects this: "No"; he states, "We are the victors, the victors. And if we forget that, we are lost". In the second act the future still lies before them, but it is a future laden with responsibility for those for those who have come through the war.

Act three takes place fourteen years later: the future has arrived, much of the past has been forgotten, even the room in which the three of them met, loved, dreamed and grew up, is soon to be abandoned it, favour of a newer larger apartment. Without realizing it the three are fast approaching middle age, and many are the ideals that have been betrayed en route. It is Marik who still clings to what little is left of the promise: "Think of how many people were killed in order that we might remain alive, "Victorious and happy. And what are we? What am I? What are you? What is Leonidik?"

Into the fabric of a love story, set against a changing background of war and the ears that follow, Arbuzov presents us with the real meaning of victory: when guns start shooting, when fire and destruction are unleashed, a promise is given – a promise perhaps of a better world, and it is the victors who bear the heavy responsibility of fulfilling it. This holds true for war on any scale: and it is this that makes the play meaningful to us, here, today.