

LAST RECITAL

Alejandro Arévalo

Cast:

ROBERT, young man

SARAH, Robert's mother

NEIL, Robert's manager

ATLAS, musician

Small dressing room behind the stage of the great auditorium of X, at five PM. ROBERT is looking at himself in a huge mirror, his back to the audience. The mirror is part of a vanity table, full of musical trophies, which is set in the middle of the stage. The audience should be able to see him through the reflection of the mirror. On the right, an orange door, on top of which we can see an old clock which constantly makes a little sound every second. At the left, there is a small white piano. In the wall, just between the center of the stage and the piano, there is a poster, which says "GREAT CONCERT OF THE MASTER ROBERT MARINO. SIX O'CLOCK IN THE AUDITORIUM OF X". On top of the piano, we can see a mobile phone, some music scores and an elegant frame with the photo of an old woman. In the sheet holder there is an ugly, old teddy bear.

ROBERT

(Whispering to himself) One last recital. Just one more.

Telephone rings. Robert walks towards it and picks it, then he speaks moving through the room with anxiety.

ROBERT

Atlas? What a pleasure to hear from you again. What's the matter?

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ATLAS

Hey man! Yeah, long time no speak. I wanted to know if you were free tonight. I'm playing in a small local bar with some friends and we need some keys.

ROBERT

(Excited) Oh...tonight. At what time?

ATLAS

We would start around eight, but it would be nice if you could come around six so we can practise a little. I know you are a master of sight-reading *(chuckles)* but yeah, it would be nice. Are you in?

ROBERT

I think I would love to go, but I'm not sure.

ATLAS

Finding you that night in that crappy bar was good fortune. I don't want to lose contact with you, I'd be sad if we never had the chance to play again.

Robert looks at the piano for a few seconds. He picks up the teddy bear and drops him to the floor. He then organizes the music scores in the sheet holder.

ROBERT

I'm sorry Atlas, but I have a meeting with my family. Maybe another day?

ATLAS

Man, you could have that dinner tomorrow. But this gig is only tonight. I could even convince the band to have you more nights. I'm always talking about you but you never come. They will start thinking you don't even exist.

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ROBERT

I'm really glad to hear the offer Atlas, but tonight is just impossible.

ATLAS

(With great disappointment, similar to when a person seems to avoid you for a long time) Yes sure, another time then. Enjoy the dinner, pal.

Robert puts the phone on the piano and starts playing with great skill, a piece which starts slow and melancholic and gets quicker and played with anger. It must also seem to be improvised at the moment. During the play the clock moves faster, at the increasing tempo of the song. In the climax of the piece, two knocks sound on the orange door and Neil enters.

NEIL

(Passive aggressive) Shouldn't you be practicing today's repertoire instead of improvising weird music?

ROBERT

Weird?

NEIL

Well, Robert, even if I'm half-joking, you know this is not what people want. But don't take me that seriously, my old chum *(laughs oddly)*. So how are you feeling? Excited?

ROBERT

Weird. I guess I'm not excited anymore. I mean, I feel nervous, so many important eyes looking at me will never make me feel comfortable. But I don't feel like I used to about this music.

NEIL

Well, Robert, you just have to do what you have to do. Continue like this a few more years, fighting for your career. We are already organizing an international tour for January. And then you will be able to retire and live like a king for the rest of your life, not having to worry about music anymore.

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ROBERT

Why should I have to worry about what was supposed to be my most precious thing in life? I used to play to dull the pain, to forget and distract myself. I don't know if I can continue this lifestyle, Neil. And I don't want to think about an International tour. I think I should stop for a while, consider another path in my career.

NEIL

Do you really remember when you started playing Robert? When you and your mother had to eat bland rice everyday, when the only piano you had to practice on was the untuned old one in the station. Me finding you meant fame and fortune for you. If you want to go back to those times, that's fine. Just tell me. I will buy some bags of rice for you and your mother and leave them in your mailbox. What do you say?

ROBERT

Are you serious? I'm not doing this for you or your stupid money anymore. I have enough money now for anything I need.

NEIL

Robert, money is what rules the world. And fame what will make you immortal. If you stop now, all your effort would be meaningless. You are almost there. A new star. But you need to continue with this.

ROBERT

I will try, but I don't know if I will be strong enough.

NEIL

Everything is good. I trust you. Just don't mess up tonight.

Neil leaves the scene. ROBERT picks up the mobile phone and starts walking around the room, looking at it. The clock marks twenty minutes to six. Three knocks sound on the door. ROBERT puts the phone in his pocket.

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SARAH

Can I come in?

ROBERT

Yes, mother.

Sarah enters the scene. She is a woman in her fifties, with nice clothes and a serious stare.

SARAH

This place is smaller than the last one. So, how are you feeling?

ROBERT

I don't feel ready yet. And well, I have enough space, I don't need more.

SARAH

(scolding him) You always need to ask for more, Robert. That's how we got to this place.

ROBERT

Was it that way? I thought it was through my endless hours of practice. And some luck.

SARAH

There is no luck. And those hours of practice were the minimum, especially for reaching this place. You are young and full of talent. You should be grateful for everything you have instead of complaining.

ROBERT

Even if I don't practice as much as I should, I stopped seeing my friends and doing sports. I'm not educated in anything but classical music. I don't have hobbies any more. I don't remember what it was to not be frustrated, angry with myself all the time, chronically tired...

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SARAH

(exasperated) Why would you need anything but your art?

ROBERT

I'm not sure if it is art anymore. Art comes from passion, love and care. I don't feel that way. I don't feel what I play. And when I do, it is not through this music.

SARAH

But everybody else thinks of it that way.

ROBERT

And why do I have to live for everybody else?

SARAH

I didn't raise you to become this selfish. When you were little, you just played, played, and played. That was everything you wanted. What happened to all your dreams now?

(Robert silence, staring at his mother)

SARAH

I will see you after the recital. *(leaving)*

Robert lets himself rest in the chair in which he was sitting at the beginning of the play, now looking in the direction of the audience. Complete silence except for the ticking of the clock. After a few seconds he stands, picks up one of the trophies on the table and throws it at the clock, which breaks, and stops ticking. Robert picks the teddy bear from the floor and calls Atlas using his mobile phone.

ROBERT

Atlas, I changed my mind. I will be there in thirty minutes.

Curtain