

Otto Marvuglia is many things.

(Arianna Premoli)

Among them, a passionate man, and a first-class money squanderer, but – most importantly – a capable illusionist: in his own words, his third eye is so powerful that he's become blind to the material world. He will make time stop and go backwards, he will turn men into stags, and even make Calogero Di Spelta's wife disappear right in front of her husband, never to be seen again.

Or, does he?

Aided by his loyal sidekick and right-hand woman, Zaira, Marvuglia carries out the greatest illusion known to mankind: having a man reflect upon his own behaviour.

Or, does he?

In this tragicomic play, Edoardo De Filippo takes you on an intimate journey, making you witness the slow but inevitable unravelling of a marriage that was not meant to be, and the bittersweet feeling it leaves behind. Because Otto Marvuglia may be blind to his financial shenanigans, but blind to a man's heart he is not: he guides Calogero Di Spelta through grief, anger, and acceptance, making him – and you – question his actions and his feelings. That is, until things get slightly out of Otto's hands, and his illusions turn against him.

In this short but poignant play, De Filippo conducts every element with a knowledgeable hand, knowing just how much humour a scene needs to lighten up the mood, and how much raw emotional honesty from the characters to make it memorable.

The multifaceted Otto Marvuglia has remarkable depth of character, as we discover throughout the whole play, adding piece after piece to build a colourful picture of a complicated man. His playful nature, sharp wittiness, and warm heart make him a well-rounded main character who's a pleasure to follow along with.

The sharp-tongued Zaira, with her down-to-earth attitude, is pivotal in keeping Marvuglia's feet firmly on the ground, lest he fly too close to the sun with one of his magic tricks. She is his logical counterpart, keeping up with their daily menial tasks – such as shopping for coffee, a much-needed staple in an illusionist's life – so that “they both don't end up in the gutter”.

Still, it's the character of Calogero Di Spelta that grabs the spotlight – a timeless portrait of the love-torn man, quite unable to show his true feelings and, thus, losing everything he cares for in the process. Calogero is not just a character in a play but a faithful representation of human pride and the costs it entails.

Agile settings, fourth-wall breakings, and smart interactions with the audience set the groundwork for this incredible play, creating a lively pace which will have you glued to your seat.

Yes, your seat at the theatre. Or is it the Metropole Hotel?

And are you sure you're watching a play? Or is it the evening show at the Hotel?

Are you sure you're you, and this is all not just another illusion?