



## **Mario Fratti's Award-Winning "Nine" is Re-Imagined by Hollywood**

Eleonora Mazzucchi (February 03, 2009)



The musical "Nine" took Broadway by storm in the 1980's with a young Antonio Banderas. Rob Marshall will direct a cinematic version that pays homage to Mario Fratti and Federico Fellini

Almost thirty years ago playwright Mario Fratti spun 8 ½ into Nine. Inspired by Fellini's iconic work,



Nine is a multi Tony Award-winning musical that starred Antonio Banderas and became a Broadway mainstay at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre during the 80's. Now the story of protagonist Guido Contini, a successful filmmaker whose life is an amusing circus of women, from mistress, to mother, to wife, is being adapted into a film by Rob Marshall.

With a budget of over \$80 million Marshall's Nine is one of the most ambitious and anticipated movies of 2009. The eclectic, star-studded cast reads like a who's who of actors from both sides of the Atlantic: Daniel Day-Lewis (in the title role of Guido), Marion Cotillard, Penelope Cruz, Nicole Kidman, Judi Dench, Kate Hudson, Martina Stella, Elio Germano and Ricky Tognazzi. The film is currently in post-production and shooting is being completed along the Lazio coast.

It is difficult to know whether Nine's original creator imagined an outcome of such Hollywood-like proportions. Mario Fratti began his career at only 22, when his controversial work *Il nastro*, a drama about Communist partisans' confessions obtained under torture, won the RAI award. His writings would continue to be considered subversive in Italy, until in 1962 Lee Strasberg, singularly impressed with Fratti's submission to the Spoleto Festival, encouraged him to join the Actor's Studio. A year later he moved to New York, where he felt at home in the city's avant-garde theater world. He would go on to write several plays, a large majority of which politically-tinged, with such self-explanatory titles as *Chile*, 1973; *Leningrad Euthanasia*; *AIDS*; the biographical *Eleonora Duse* (on the life of the legendary Italian actress) and *Che Guevara*. In all he has produced over 80 plays, translated into 20 languages. Nine remains his most well-known work to date.

His awards and achievements are many, including eight Drama Desk awards and seven Tony's. Along with praise for his "strong, cogent and tightly knit plays" (*The Washington Post*), most notably, Fratti has been called a "Pirandello of our time".

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