

Welcome to In Scena!

by Laura Caparrotti (June 12, 2014)



The Italian Theater Festival in New York

The love story between New York and Italian theater is an old one. Eleonora Duse; Eduardo Migliaccio, better known as Farfariello; and later Luchino Visconti, Aldo Fabrizi, Nino Manfredi, Bice Valori, and Ugo Betti: so many great names of our theater have shone in New York, On- and Off-Broadway.

Twenty years ago, when I started producing Italian theater in New York, never imagining I

would one day establish the Italian Theater Company in NY, Giorgio Strehler was the big Italian theater director, and independent Italian companies were invading the Off-Off Broadway spaces.



Although the demand for Italian theater has never disappeared, both main stages and many Off-Off ones continue to view foreign productions as too challenging to be produced or presented. The main reason I started doing Italian theater in New York was to show New York and therefore the world that the incredible artists and beautiful stories of Italian theater could speak to foreign audiences.

Introducing Italian theater to American audiences

For almost twenty years my company Kairos Italy Theater and I have introduced New York stages to plays unknown in America by Ennio Flaiano, Eduardo de Filippo, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Franca Valeri and Dino Buzzati.

Last year, I organized In Scena! Italian Theater Festival NY, the first Italian theater festival to take place in all five New York City boroughs. In ten days the Festival presented three shows from Italy and one NY production, honoring the greatest Italian playwright living in the City: Mario Fratti, author of "Nine". We also had four readings of Italian plays in translation, an Opening Night with Italian artists based in New York, and even a theater performance in the park. Each non-English performance played to a full house. The response was so overwhelming that now, as I write this, I am about to start an even bigger second edition of the Festival. If it's crazy to do Italian theater in New York, then my collaborators and I are really out of our minds!

The 2014 edition

This year we will be presenting six productions and four readings, plus an opulent Opening Night, workshops, special events and the first edition of the Mario Fratti Award for new Italian playwrights. The stellar schedule of events includes award winning performances in "Mutu" by Prima Quinta and "L'Italia s'è desta" by Compagnia Ragli; a playful dialogue on poetry and love in "I Corteggiatori"; a dialogue/soliloquy on work safety in "Raep"; and a dialogue between two young Italians who find themselves living New York for the first time in "Neighbors." Academy Award Winner Iaia Forte, lead actress in "The Great Beauty", will star in "Hanno tutti ragione", based on the novel by Paolo Sorrentino, director of this year's Best Foreign Film.

The readings are also very exciting: "Santos", from a story written by Roberto Saviano, author of "Gomorra"; "Fallaci, a Woman Against" by Emilia Costantini about the famous Italian journalist and personality; and "Story of Love and Soccer" by Michele Santeramo about immigration in the South.

And the love story goes on

What we are presenting constitutes a very small percentage of the proposals we received from Italian theater companies, and we are able to accommodate these artists only because so many locations opened their doors to the Italians. The Festival has doubled its duration! Early this year, with the YoungKIT, we staged "The Mandrake Root" and "The Decameron". It was a success. The audience loved it and demanded more. And that means only one thing: the love story never ended. It's not true that Italian theater cannot be understood by non-Italians. It's not true that different languages or traditions are obstacles. The audience coming to our shows is the answer. The happy faces filling the seats of all the location in all five boroughs tell us that the love story continues. We must take one last step to convince theater producers and owners that foreign theater, plays in translation included, can be successful. Once American theater companies start producing shows by Italian playwrights, then the love story will go on and on forever!

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