

ROBERTO MARANCA AND ITALIAN NIGHTS

By Giorgio Di Marzo

Roberto Maranca, President of Italian Nights, what is your personal definition of art?

Gosh, I feel I am back at the High School, "Maranca! Tell the classroom what Art is" Well, we need an astonishing and impressive definition here... so I would say that the Art is the attempt from the third-eyed-few to explain to the two-eyed-many what you see through it, using a special language. "So? How did I do it, professor? C- and sit down!". Jokes apart, I believe that art which is not tingling some hidden but common chords of yours it is not real art. I mean, I am not a fan of the elite art which you poor idiot cannot understand because you are not sensitive enough, but here I would probably open a can of worms about "commercial art" which I would rather not to. I am just advising you to get the subtitled version of a masterpiece of Neapolitan cinema "Così Parlò Bellavista", and in special the scene in which Salvatore, Prof. Bellavista's porter, gives his definition of art.

We first met last year in the occasion of the event KaleidoShort organised by the association Italian Nights of which you are President: I know many things have changed since then, so please tell us how Italian Night were born, what is now and what are your aims.

OK, let's put it down black on white once and for all, so that the intro to the events is ready made and reusable: IN was born on a day of late July 2005 in a crowded (and a bit stuffy) flat in Earls Court, following the example set by Soirée Italienne, an initiative that in France, under the guidance of David Morante, promoted the meeting of French and Italian authors, collecting all the works produced in an anthology. David moved then to London and through Italians of London, our sister association, organised the first meeting from which IN was formed (I even keep a taped interview taken during the Italian Jazz Festival in which David launched the idea almost 6 months before). It took a lot to distillate our own personality as an association, but now we have a Statute, an "Art Counsel", a group of very faithful and resourceful members, and, last but not least, three more-than-decently-organised events under our belts. In any case we are always looking out for new ideas and new members who would like to chip in a bit of time for our association, which, maybe I did not say yet, aims to bring

Italian culture and artists into the Anglo-Saxon world and at the same time to be a sound board for all the artistic ferments active in London, creating an Albion-Mediterranean mélange.

Let's talk now about the events that you have organised so far, in particular KaleidoShort last year and TerzaniNight in January 2007: why these events and what was their aim?

I must confess KaleidoShort was a kind of a strike of genius conceived as a remedy for a missing event. I explain myself: we were very strenuously working on a play on Pasolini's life, but with the big night approaching fast, a difficult evening finally we had to admit each other that we would have never made it. But the venue was booked and one of the actor of the group came up with the idea of a short-movie viewing. The idea was immediately liked and in less than one month we managed to find the movies, arrange the logistics, the catering and the equipment and to have most of the director to attend. The most important achievement was, though, to have given the public the chance to interact with someone who managed to convert in film a dream, which is probably in the secret drawer of many, myself included.

The evening with Terzani had been instead in the making for long time: thanks to contacts internal to IN, we had managed to reach Saskia, Terzani's daughter, and Ettore Mo, a famous Italian war reporter and Tiziano's friend.

Finally, between December and January, we collected the energy for preparing the event, and given the caliber of the character, we were all firmly intentioned to organize something that in only 90 minutes would have been a worthy tribute for the ones who knew him already, and a stimulus to want to know more for the ones who had not met yet his travel writing about a controversial Asia of glittering splendors and deep misery, all dressed by his lively philosophy. A big challenge, which we accepted and won, I think. My personal satisfaction is all in Saskia's and Ettore's compliments at the end of the evening.

Every coin has two sides: what are the positive and the negative ones of this experience?

Loads of positive: reward has so far offset the organisational effort and the unavoidable stress in the run-up to the event, if you really want to make a cost-benefit analysis. The whole group feels like we are part of something special and creative and that the sky is

the limit, and all these feelings are warming and contagious. As an improvement, maybe we should aim to have more events in English, also for obeying to our statute. On a less positive level I would put the time which I steal to my family and follow my six months old daughter growths, which, if you do not know I will tell you, is like following a never ending firework show: if you blink you have surely missed something.

What other events have you planned?

It is imminent an evening with Gabriele Torsello, a war photographer, just back from Afghanistan, whose life will be the subject of an event with photos and documentaries, and with a panel of eminent guests for discussing items related to his long journeys in that remote and delicate part of the world. And we also officially started the preparation of KaleidoShort 2, with a different format, and we hope we should be ready by the end of April. Well, then Pasolini is always there, the script is ready and very interesting, the difficulty is finding raw material, i.e. actors, and of the "for-free" type. Actually, I would take the opportunity to invite whoever might be interested (not only to Pasolini) to get in touch. Longer term I would like to have another Italian Jazz Festival, which, although incredibly expensive in money and energies, in the 2005 one and only edition was a simply unforgettable experience. Finally, who knows, apparently someone has had a very ambitious idea, we will not talk about it today but... keep in touch, and you will not regret it.

Though you are not an "artist", who are your favourite artists?

Whoddaheck told you that I am not an artist?!?!? Don't be mistaken by the fact that I work in a Big Corporation for the IT department... That's just my cover, I maintain myself artistic enough, though a bit mainstream, as I don't like art for the sake of art, and sometime artists may trip into that. Anyway, as anyone coming from Campania, I will give you a *quaterna* (combination of four numbers, we play a lot Lotto there): Klimt "The Kiss", Pink Floyd "The Dark Side of the Moon", Kubrick "2001 Space Odyssey", Balzac "La Peau de chagrin", you find the connections. Clearly being madly in love with "My land", my blood has a high concentration of salty water of the Mediterranean, which makes me biased about anything artistic would come from there. It goes

without saying that on my MP3 there is always space for Napule' and Tammurriata Nera and that I could watch "Toto' Turco Napoletano" or "I Due Colonnelli" a millions of time and still appreciate them as it was the first time: that's Art!

Thanks Roberto, and I look forward to seeing you at the next events... why not a retrospective about Toto'?

For further information: www.italiannights.co.uk

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