

INTERVIEW WITH PINO FERRARA, 'FATHER' OF THE GROUP ESCAPE IN ART

By Giorgio Di Marzo

Pino Ferrara, inventor and founder of Escape in Art, that is Italian theatre and literature in London, talks to GIORGIOSTUDIO about "his" Group.

Dear Pino, what is Escape in Art?

Escape in Art was formed years ago by some friends who found to share the will of doing something in the art field, even though at amateur standards.

The basis idea was born one day that I and my friend Roberto Guerrini, travelling by car, began declaiming poems. Reminiscences from school. "We may form a group and organise recitals" we said each other. No sooner said than done, we invented the name Escape in Art and started with some poetry recitals to which other dear friends participated, like Massimo de Rose and Silvana Camilletti, and Francesco Cinelli who accompanied us by playing his guitar.

I want to point out that Escape in Art, more than an association or a club, is a group composed by people who want to make something, with no interest in making a profit. In fact, eventual gains generated by the activities we organise are donated to charities.

How was your passion for theatre born?

The war was over – I am quite aged! – and a small theatre company was searching for a kid aged eight or nine; and thus my father, who loved theatre, took me for an audition. They chose me immediately. I started acting at nine and since then I have never stopped, even though I have acted more in life than on stage in theatres.

After realising that my way was theatre, I decided to study to become a professional. But not always in life one can manage to do what one would. Serious family reasons forced me to leave theatre to get a job that could pay me a salary straight away. I locked in a drawer my dreams bound to theatre and became a bank clerk. It took me thirty-five years before I could reopen that

drawer! And I did it in London, firstly by playing again as an actor, and then passing onto direction, thus realising my dreams.

Let's talk about the "Concorso di Poesia" [Poetry Contest] and the "Premio Letterario Fratelli Militello" [Militello Brother's Literary Prize] that you present every year.

I think that all of us, at some stages of our lives, write poems. I took part, with some success, at some poetry contest in Italy and I was fascinated by the idea of seeing the way others could express their feelings and give to everybody a chance to make a name for themselves. The formula was the right one. After talking with some friends of the Group we decided to try, and the facts made us right.

As to the literary prize, we have collected the requests of people who suggested a prose contest, as writing in prose is easier. We considered the idea and explained it to Lillo and Giovanni Militello, who voluntarily offered to sponsor the prize. Nothing could have been easier.

The very positive and much encouraging aspect is that at the latest edition, among the winners, there have been new names and mainly young authors. The proclamation and prize-giving ceremony has, moreover, finally found the right seat: in the past it used to be held at the Steiner Theatre, but in this edition we were hosted by the Italian Cultural Institute, and it was just a different thing. The elegance of the room, the surrounding paintings, the reading of the works made with the accompaniment of a piano, created some wonderful emotions.

What the satisfactions and the difficulties?

Let's start with the difficulties: the biggest is to find people willing to follow you, whilst when we stage a comedy the hardest thing is to fill up the theatre. Our Italian community seems to be not much concerned on this point. Rightly they prefer the professionals and people go and see the best plays staged by the English. But in London there is no one else doing theatre in the Italian language and then, if an opportunity is given to see a group, even though made by amateurs that play in Italian, one should go, especially by considering the fact that the proceeds are distributed to charities.

About the satisfactions, it is known that the gains from the shows organised so far by the Group have been donated to the infantile hepatology ward of the King's College Hospital. The ward is

directed by Doctor Giorgina Vergani, who operates many poor Italian children. Seeing a sick child close to die, and then after the operation seeing him smiling, is something that creates inside us a feeling... you feel good, you feel right, happy to have done something for the others.

What would you like to tell to theatre, literature and poetry lovers?

With regards to theatre, I would like to suggest to go to the theatre in order "to understand" what happens. Understanding all the aspects, technical and recitative; one should not be limited in following plot and acting, but "enter" the way of making theatre in all of its expressions.

As to literature and poetry, I would like to recommend participation. Participating is living, is having the chance to express oneself, to be part of something. Is confronting each other about common themes and making new friendships: a wonderful thing!

For further information: www.escapeinart.com