

## **The Betrothed Between Memory and Imagination**

Letizia Airos (October 10, 2011)



The show directed and starring Massimiliano Finazzer Flory returns to New York. With him, Gilda Gelati, prima ballerina at La Scala and Elsa Martignoni, violinist in the Giuseppe Verdi Orchestra. The costumes were made by La Scala Theatre's designers.

### [\*\*ITALIAN VERSION\*\*](#) [2]

An important cultural event returns to the U.S. and Canada. The drama based on The Betrothed by Alessandro Manzoni, directed and starring Massimiliano Finazzer Flory. On stage, chapters one, six, eight, 12, 21, 34, and 38 are highlighted through prominent figures of Italian literature such as Don Abbondio, Don Rodrigo, Fra Cristoforo, Lucia, L'Innominato, and Renzo. The debut will take place on October 11 at the Terrace Theater at the prestigious Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. After that, the show will travel in the U.S. and abroad.

The performance is in Italian with English supertitles; admission is free. Over the past two years it



has been presented in several countries around the world and was conceived to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Italy's unification.

On stage Maximilian Massimiliano Finazzer Flory will be joined by Gilda Gelati, prima ballerina in the corps de ballet at La Scala and Elsa Martignoni, violinist in the Giuseppe Verdi Orchestra who will perform music by Verdi, Bellini, Paganini, Rota, and Berio. The show's costumes were made by La Scala Theatre's designers.

We spoke with Finazzer by telephone and asked him a few questions.

We saw your show at NYU a few months ago. You will now go back on tour and even return to New York. Does this confirm audience interest and demonstrate a measure of success?

I have a great deal of satisfaction because the tour is proof that culture brings together not only the arts but also people. So the show encompasses literature, music, and dance but also brings the collective imagination of Italian Americans closer to a singular desire – fantasy and power, the ability to tell the truth about our dreams. So I'm glad to see the success of this work from 360 degrees."

Will it be the same show that we saw last spring in New York?

This time there will be something new: an additional chapter. An extra 20 minutes. The costumes are also from La Scala and are from 1628. It's Italian labor, 100 per cent – because even thought is a style. So it's high quality artistic craftsmanship. I'm not afraid to get close to both circus men and craftsman. The actor is both – the craftsman because he must do his job well and a man of the circus because he must know how to take risks, how to walk on a tight wire without a net.

In a society that's completely fake, plastic, calculated, experienced through Photoshop, we are real people. The American public has understood this perfectly – this is the strain and the tension.

There were many young Italians at Casa Italiana. Do they comprise your ideal audience?

I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Baroness Zerilli-Marimò who supported our show. She is the show's benefactor and I am very grateful to her as I am grateful to Director Stefano Albertini. They proved themselves to be very supportive and sensitive.

Yes, there were many students and young people at Casa Italiana. This time we plan to have Scuola d'Italia involved as well as those students who gravitate toward Lincoln Center and attend other universities.

The generational change is critical, even more so as a driving force between memory and imagination. The adult audiences keep memories alive while young people have imagination; we need both if we want a good story. Memory without imagination is nostalgia; imagination without memory is entertainment. But imagination alone cannot get the job done.

So then it's necessary to combine memory and imagination?

It's nice to put both of them together. Performance is a genre for young people and the historical novel is an art form, perhaps a more mature or older one. Here we have put together two different generations, those who believe in the historical novel and those who believe in performance. In my opinion, this inter-connectedness is essential.

Manzoni's novel continues to be very relevant, even today. The fight of the humble against different forms of power, attempted rebellions, etc....

At the time, it was said that it was an erudite novel for the humble and a humble novel for the erudite. Who are the rebels today? In Manzoni, famine also means starvation of understanding – bread riots for those who want to know more. Soon our children will want to know more. How will



they do it? The bread riot is the revolt of knowledge. The marriage that I perform is not only between Renzo and Lucia but also between culture and economy.

We cannot continue to hold onto culture without economics, but economics without culture is just the will to overpower. We need to find common ground. It cannot be all in the hands of the patron nor can it be in the hands of the welfare state and public funds.

But does investing in culture remain, especially in Italy, essential to overcoming the economic crisis? This time I'm here without so much as a government grant, and so it is in Argentina, France, and Turkey. I am somewhat proud of that. Public and private donors should invest in sponsorship or in your media, for example. Investing means not only putting money into culture but also creating jobs.

The world of culture and performance is driven by employment. Americans teach us that every dollar you put into a movie will produce many more. This is now true for theater, exhibits, libraries, publishing. The framework is very important.

Bringing a company often people means hotels, transportation, photographers, press offices, dinners, taxis. I produced all of this, I have to invest in all of it, and I have to produce a framework for each show. This must be recognized by the government and by private interests.

The government must recognize that I'm producing a framework for New York, Washington, Pittsburgh, and Toronto, not to mention the fact that audiences will multiply this wealth in the future.

But, I repeat, we want targeted public investment – not welfare, not funds that are wasted but funds that will bring in a return.

MORE INFO: <http://www.finazzerflory.it/> [3]

The Betrothed by Alessandro Manzoni, directed and starring Massimiliano Finazzer Flory  
Narrated by David Gibbons

Choreography by Gilda Gelati, prima ballerina, Corps de Ballet, La Scala Ballet Theatre

Music by G. Green, P. Mascagni, V. Bellini, N. Paganini, L. Berio, N. Rota

Performed by Elsa Martignoni, violinist, Giuseppe Verdi Orchestra, Milan  
Costumes by La Scala Theatre

Performed in Italian with English subtitles

FREE ADMISSION FOR ALL SHOWS.

Upcoming 2011 Tour Dates

October 11, 2011 – Washington, D.C. – Kennedy Center, Terrace Theater

October 16, 2011 – Pittsburgh, PA – Bellefield Auditorium, University of Pittsburgh

October 18, 2011 – Toronto, Canada – Green Theatre

October 20, 2011 – New York, NY – Lincoln Center, Kaplan Penthouse

2011-2012 Tour Dates

Argentina

November 1, 2011 – Buenos Aires – Teatro San Martín

France



November 21, 2011 - Paris - Teatrino dell'Ambasciata d'Italia

Turkey

December 2, 2011 - Istanbul - Palazzo Venezia

Monaco

January 9, 2012 - Monte Carlo - Princess Grace Theatre

United States and Canada

March 9-12, 2012 - Miami; Chicago; San Francisco; Houston; Montreal

Mongolia

May 8, 2012 - Ulan Bataar - National Theatre of Opera and Ballet

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