

Waiting Tables and Waiting for a Brighter Future: This is Waiting

Natasha Lardera (March 18, 2013)



A documentary by Italian filmmaker Cristian M. Piazza tells the story of three Italian Immigrants and one City, New York. A journey surrounded by everyday victories, nostalgia and the fear of failure.

Three Italian immigrants and one City: A journey surrounded by everyday victories, nostalgia and the fear of failure. This is Waiting, the story of three contemporary Italian immigrants in New York City. Their day-to-day lives are filled with hard work and many challenges as they pursue better lives. While working day (and night) jobs in restaurants, each follows his personal dream.

Waiting is a work in progress, a documentary by Italian filmmaker Cristian M. Piazza that features the everyday, each individual's journey through little victories, nostalgia, and the fear of failure, of an opera singer, a boxer, and an aspiring entrepreneur.

The film we have a peak at them preparing for a big event, something important for their careers and lives. Who knows, something that could change their lives forever.

Floriano Pagliara is a professional boxer from Cecina (Tuscany) and he is captured on film as he works in a restaurant, at home, during training sessions and as he prepares for an important match.



Paolo Buffagni is a tenor from Modena and, during the documentary, he is preparing for a main role in the opera, *La Traviata*. It is an important step for a singer who has often performed for free in hundreds of locations (including the NYC subway) just to get his name out there.

Paolo Inferrera, instead, has a more troubled history but equally interesting. The filmmaker sees him as a “hamster in a wheel,” always running, stopping would mean dealing with some serious issues... and indeed he has had quite a few. Now that he is doing better he wants to open his own restaurant.

We had a chance of speaking with director Piazza and ask him a few questions.

How did you get the idea to shoot this film?

“I think nobody has told this story before. Maybe I’m wrong but it seems so personal and I’m so involved that it makes it original. When people refer to Italian immigration and Immigrants they usually explore the old waves of immigrants, those that came here at the turn of the XX century or after the world wars. On the other hand they refer to the wealthy ones; the big trendy companies that made Italian lifestyle so famous: Ferrari, Armani, Prada, and so on. I’m ok with that! However, there is this group of people, quite young, mostly middle class, quite anonymous I would say, almost underground. They keep coming, they seek luck, they want to try new things and start from scratch. I know plenty of them. I’m one of them too. Nobody talks about them and they are an essential part of NYC.”

How similar or different is their story to your personal one?

“I can relate to their stories just for the fact that we have emigrated and moved to NYC. Then, there are many aspects of their path that are quite akin: finding a purpose, pursuing a goal, sacrifice, being far from family, and of course being Italian. But audiences can feel related with them and being from someplace else. That is what makes you a New Yorker, for example. Relating to this idea of starting from scratch, giving yourself a second chance or a third...”

I had great responses from people from South America, whose grandparents emigrated there (Italians or not) a few generations ago. The same thing has happened with Italian- Americans who somehow see their ancestors reflected in this modern version of an immigrant. Although, the reasons that brought them here are completely different, still the process of adaptation and fitting into a new culture and mingle with their differences is pretty much the same.

On top of that we found the sense of community, which is the real lifesaver for an immigrant or for a human being in general. I strongly believe in that and you can see it in the film. The singer is doing this within a community of singers and musicians who share their love for Opera and they walk together and support each other. Also, ethnic groups gather and survive, people with whom you share a language and a bunch of memories.”

Are you an immigrant who came to the US to have a different life?

“My case is a little different. I’ve lived in many cities including places in South America. I visit Italy as much as I can but I never escape from it. I wish there were more opportunities for young professionals but it’s not the case right now. “Change is never linear,” says Chomsky and that is true for Italy and for us here living in NY.”

How did you select the characters in the film?

“The idea was born in 2008 when I worked with one of the guys. He was so sociable and funny with everyone, and still is, that a thought crossed my mind: “someone should make a movie about him” (I was really thinking about Italians in NY restaurants). It remained in the back of my mind for a couple of years and then one day it just came back.

After brainstorming with a friend about production, we searched and talked to many people. More than talking, we thought of which of our friends would be a match for the project and we took it from there. So I approached Paolo, the tenor, and suggested the idea of making a film about his experience in New York.

Regarding Floriano, the boxer, it was a stroke of good luck, a fluke. Initially we had a different boxer in the lineup. He accepted to be part of the doc and then he opted out before we started filming. We



were in deep trouble and so inadvertently someone told me about this Tuscan guy who worked in Brooklyn and was also a boxer. We went to talk to him and were amazed by his unassuming nature. The first boxer was an amateur and Floriano came here already as a Pro. Everything happens for a reason.”

You played several different roles in the production of the film, how was it?

“Sometimes I feel like an orchestra man: playing many instruments at the same time. I created this project from scratch in a moment where I found myself jobless after working for a nice online project for RAI here in NY. I sat down and said “I have to do something for myself, this is a perfect time,” so somehow I turned my disappointment into positive energy and tried to move forward rapidly from those circumstances.

I shaped the idea, my friend Tommaso was also part of it at the beginning, and from there it was hands-on camera with plenty of ups and downs. There were times when I wanted to let go of the project; it was time consuming and not profitable at all. If you want to make a Documentary to make money you’re making it for the wrong reasons. But I got over those moments of weakness and kept going. Now we are starting to see the results. So I’m directing but I’m also producing and helping with the editing. I’m managing the Social Media sites and working very meticulously with everyone.

Initially I thought of filming everything in 6 months and that it would take probably another 6 months to cut it. After a couple of months I was without a cameraman and I felt lost for a while. I decided to get my own camera and be my own cameraman. At the beginning, I’m sure, I took it personally but then I realized not only that it was part of the experience but it gave me the chance to observe closely each one of the characters and learn an immense amount of things from them.”

Tell me about the title, Waiting?

“If you ask me why the title is in English I can tell you that this is a film made in New York, by someone who has lived here for many years, opposed to someone that would come from abroad to look at these episodes of life. I have lived here and I understand the rhythms of the city; how people think and behave, the famous New York State of Mind.

There is a play on words. As you know, Waiting refers to those who serve in restaurants and the guys in the film belong to this field, and then the expectation of a better life, to achieve what they are looking for.”

Waiting is almost done filming. “I could say that we have completed 99% of the footage,” Cristian added, “Right now we are editing and promoting the film on Social Media. We would like to send the Doc to festivals all around the globe and see the reactions. We are getting the Website ready: Waitingdocumentary.com and we are also preparing a Soundtrack with songs from a band from Bologna called Mr.Brace led by Davide Brace Rastelli and we want to include other artists.

I’ve practically funded the film myself so far. I started to shoot three years ago with no financial help. We are definitely looking for funds. We applied for a film grant but we have to wait a few months for the answer. We plan to launch a Crowdfunding campaign as soon as possible (April?). That’s why we want to build an audience on Social Media before launching the campaign.”

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