

Are You Ready for "The Decameron" @ Casa Italiana-Zerilli Marimò?

Natasha Lardera (February 26, 2014)



After presenting Machiavelli's *La Mandragola*, YoungKit, a branch of KIT, Kairos Italy Theater, Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò's Theater Company in residence, will present, on March 6th at 6.30 pm, Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, a collection of novellas that document Italian life in the 14th century. We met Laura Caparrotti, artistic director of Kairos Italy Theater, and the actors

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The Decameron (Il Decamerone), subtitled Prince Galehaut (Prencipe Galeotto), is a collection of novellas by the 14th-century Italian author Giovanni Boccaccio. "The book is structured as a frame story containing 100 tales told by a group of seven young women and three young men sheltered in a secluded villa just outside Florence to escape the Black Death, which was afflicting the city. Boccaccio probably conceived the Decameron after the epidemic of 1348, and completed it by 1353." (Wikipedia)

The different tales vary from erotic to moral, some are real life lessons while others are incredibly funny. Nevertheless, they all document life at the time. Written in the vernacular, the language of Florence, The Decameron is considered a masterpiece of classical early Italian prose.

YoungKit, featuring Ilaria Ambrogi, Francesco Andolfi, Giulia Bisinella, Carlotta Brentan, Francesco Meola, Jacopo Rampini and Irene Turri, is representing the three novellas Machiavelli was inspired by to write The Madragola.

"I have been in love with The Decameron since my school days," Laura Caparrotti, artistic director of Kairos Italy Theater who is now directing The Decameron, said, "I think it's fresh, funny, modern and very theatrical. Of course you need a group of talented, very open and fresh actors. As I got such a group, called YoungKIT, I dared to do it. We are having a lot of fun while we are digging into Boccaccio's world, which is not so far from ours."

We ask Laura more questions to find out as much as possible about the performance. The event has been named

The Decameron Part 1, is there going to be another part?

Laura Caparrotti - "It will be a dream to stage all the 100 novels. We'll continue to stage some of them, in part 2, part 3, part 4... directed by other directors maybe, we'll see. The tales we are working on right now are the ones that inspired Machiavelli. In one of the stories Ricciardo Minutolo falls in love with a married woman and tries to get her for himself. In another one, which reminds us of the Monicelli's film *Amici Miei*, two friends punish a man who is not so bright, even though is a doctor. We want to show the audience where Machiavelli got the idea from and how much Boccaccio influenced so many writers to come."

The tales of The Decameron have inspired numerous writers, including Poe, Moliere and Lope de Vega; what makes them so special and still so actual?

LC - "I could say everything. They are immense like Shakespearean plays, but they make people laugh. The characters are not buffoons, they are people we can meet on the street. I always give the actors examples of today's people or situations when we rehearse The Decameron. Boccaccio was looking at what was going on in real life and was writing about it. It was a time when the human being was starting to be more important than the divine and human emotions, and even physical emotions, were celebrated."

Francesco Meola, one of the actors, added, "For the young protagonists of the story, sharing different tales about universal topics such as love, life, scams and betrayals is a remedy to face a difficult period, leaving the plague and death behind. There is a sense of community linked with the pleasure of going through these different aspects of life, in order to produce an atmosphere that is sensual, vital and rich of entertainment. The Decameron taught us the best way to overcome a bad period is always with laughter."

The Decameron is written in the vernacular, the language of Florence, The Decameron is considered the masterpiece of classical early Italian prose. How is it to present it in English? Does it lose something? LC - "We always start with a two week period rehearsals on the Italian, then we go into the English. We do that in order to fully appreciate not only the meaning but the language, the original language which is always way more difficult, of course, than the translation. This time we were lucky to have a brand new translation of the Decameron, by Professor Rebhorn. Having worked on the original, we do take the liberty of changing words, using also some of the original language. Yes, you lose something in the translation, but not the meaning and the core of the text, of the story. You don't lose the author and that's the most important aspect!"



Carlotta Brentan, one of the actresses performing on the 6th, had to say "We worked on transforming prose that was written over seven hundred years ago into a viable theatrical language. That was a real challenge: how to adapt this piece, intended to be read silently by individuals, into a cohesive entity that could be performed aloud by actors, and that would succeed both in making sense for the audience, and in being more engaging than a simple reading? Our director's vision for this has been to remain faithful word-for-word to the original text, while dividing up each sentence of every novella according to whose point of view it is being narrated from. Each actor was then assigned all lines, or parts of a line, that were told from their character's point of view. Sometimes these include direct dialogue – which is easy, from an acting perspective. But most of the time, we find ourselves "acting" sentences that describe what our characters are doing or thinking in the third person. That definitely takes some getting used to, because it's almost as if we are speaking all of our character's subtext aloud. However, once you get used to it, it's fantastically entertaining for the actor – and hopefully really fascinating for the audience."

Please note: This event is FREE for Members of Casa Italiana. If you are not a member and wish to purchase a \$10 ticket, [click here](#) [4].

Member-only RSVP: 212-502-7944 RSVP deadline: 24 hours prior to event start. All seats will be released 10 minutes prior to scheduled start. (For all other inquiries please call 212-998-8739)

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