

Title || Babilonia Teatri: biographical notes

Author || Renata Savo

Translation from Italian || Flora Pitrolo

Published on || «Sciami», 2017 - [www.nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com](http://www.nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com)

Rights || All rights reserved. © Sciami 2016. Visit [term and condition](#) on [sciami.com](http://sciami.com)

Number of pages || pag 1 di 1

Language || ENG

DOI ||

## **Babilonia Teatri: biographical notes**

by *Renata Savo*

Enrico Castellani and Valeria Raimondi, both from the region of Verona, in 2006 engaged in a research after undergoing a "training" with the company Viva Opera Circus founded in 2000 by Gianni Franceschini<sup>1</sup>. Gianni Franceschini was one of the founders of Aida, a structure for producing and housing the theatre for boys and girls, in Verona.

2005 is the year that established the bases for future developments: Raimondi and Castellani have since been more and more involved in organizing educational workshops with children and elderly persons, as well as with the inmates of the prison of Montorio. *Ricordi di Guerra, ricordi d'Amore*, the so-called «non-show», was actually done in that year: somehow it foreshadowed the method of doing theatre devised for *Pinocchio* (2012): a theatre consisting of bringing out the autobiographical story of each of the characters on the stage, in this case the elderly of the house Pia Opera Ceccarelli: wearing their everyday clothes and standing in a semicircle, one at a time spoke of himself, following the simple instructions of the directors.

Their work in the prison was on the same wavelength, allowing them to leave all conventions connected with the staging of a performance behind: the first work, *Cabaret Babilonia*, was inspired by the war in Iraq, they being the spokesmen of an antimilitarist declaration. The title recalled the ancient Mesopotamia city, not far from Baghdad, but according to Stefano Casi's suggestion, it was «also the evocation of an elsewhere, a legendary door between past and present, a Biblical incarnation of evil»;<sup>2</sup> the style was that of the cabaret as well as that of Karl Valentin's tragicomic and absurd theatre. The show was never performed, but it left a clarifying mark as to what path to take, and the name of that chaotic city, symbolic of both fusion and confusion of cultures, would be kept for the name chosen for the company when in 2006 it would take part in the Premio Scenario, dedicated to the theatre of the youth.

The Premio Scenario *childhood* was «meant to stimulate young artists to rethink the theatre for childhood and adolescence»<sup>3</sup>; so, for that occasion, *Panopticon Frankenstein* was staged, a performance where the interests for human meetings expressed before in the workshops carried on in jail came together, and where the use of control devices present in our society was disclosed.

Very interesting was the transfer to the stage of a quality recalling the TV zapping, the reality shows, the satirical show *Blob*, the format of the interview reported by a voice off stage that called to mind the double interviews of the program "Le Iene"; these forms of communication were not directly quoted, yet were recognizable in the manner of conceiving the dramaturgy of the shows produced by the company, which belonged to a contemporary and "popular" imagery. With *Panopticon Frankenstein*, then with *Underwork* and *Made in Italy* (this play secured national fame to the company), Babilonia Teatri set up a recognizable language displayed in the centrality of the written text and in gestures and expressiveness, and in the absence of "interpretation";<sup>4</sup> the text was "spoken" with an almost singsong voice, as if lines were pronounced in chorus.

Also *Pinocchio* has elements of continuity with the previous performances. Valeria and Enrico worked on it for a whole year, seeking a flexible dramatic style that would allow the three performers, Paolo Facchini, Luigi Ferrarini and Riccardo Selli, to act naturally, because «if you assign pre-established cues or fix too downright actions, you risk showing automatons, actors playing badly».<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Founded together with Marisa Dolci and scenographer Gianni Volpe, Viva Opera Circus produces performances where the actors are story-tellers and puppeteers at the same time. These are the first approaches to the universe of Collodi, the author of "Pinocchio", even not being the opera in its strict sense.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 29

<sup>3</sup> From the announcement to the first edition of the Premio Scenario *childhood* 2006

<sup>4</sup> Stefano Casi, *Per un teatro pop ... quoted*, page 71

<sup>5</sup> Ibid