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edited by *Compagnia della Fortezza*

Compagnia della Fortezza is a project of the theatre workshop in the House of Imprisonment of Volterra, born in August 1988, with the care of Carte Blanche and the direction of Armando Punzo.

The few hours of work with the convicts initially scheduled grew at once exponentially: one of the characteristics of the company has always been the assiduousness and the continuity of their work, together with the aim at an artistic outcome of the workshops. Far from having re-educative or socializing purposes, Punzo's setting was to work «*in the interest of theatre, and its arts and crafts*». The revolution for the prison of Volterra, and indirectly for the caring of the **artistic quality** of the work carried out by Compagnia della Fortezza, started exactly from here.

The company has been producing an average of **one performance per year**; many of these, in the same way as the commitment of the actors-convicts, have been awarded some of the most prestigious prizes in the world of theatre and continue meeting with enormous approval with insiders, spectators and workers.

The success of the company's performances soon – in 1993 – brought about the **pilot experience** of performing their works outside the walls of the prison: since then, the main Italian theatres, festivals and reviews regularly invite the company. Crucial for this has been the **recognition** (in 2003) **of theatre activity as a working activity in every respect**. It has meant the possibility for the actors to go on tour, according to article 21 of the Penitentiary System, which provided for the convicts to work outside the prison. Therefore, the convicts did not have to use their special permissions – 45 days a year to meet their relatives – in order to go on tour, to insure safety to this extremely precious experience, and guarantee that there would be the conditions for keeping, or rather enhancing, the effectiveness of the action performed. With these premises, in **1994** the first **Centro Teatro e Carcere** started, based on an agreement between Regione Toscana, Provincia di Pisa and Comune di Volterra, with a base in Volterra. This was the first step to signing a protocol of agreement – on July 21, 2000 – for the institution of the “Centro Nazionale Teatro e Carcere”: signatories the Ministry of Justice, Department of Penitentiary Administration, Regione Toscana, Provincia di Pisa, Comune di Volterra and Ente Teatrale Italiano.

In 1998, the Dipartimento dello Spettacolo presso la Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri together with Ente Teatrale Italiano had already supported the project of a theatre workshop inside the prison, and had later, in 2001 and 2002, acknowledged the work of Compagnia della Fortezza as a “Special Project”, by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, that continued supporting the Company, with Regione Toscana, Comune di Volterra, Provincia and USL di Pisa. In addition, Compagnia della Fortezza have significantly influenced many **international choices of detention policies**. In the years 2004-2006 Carte Blanche lead the **European Project Socrates** named “*Teatro e Carcere in Europa – formazione, sviluppo e divulgazione di metodologie innovative*” followed by the most important institutions and activity centers in theatres and prisons in Europe. Innumerable works in other contexts followed, European and outside Europe (particularly the United States and South America), aiming at spreading their experience and the good practice that made Compagnia della Fortezza an example of artistic success and a model for realizing projects of theatres in prison.

The national purpose the company declared to have was to transform their experience in **the first “Repertory Theatre in Prison” worldwide**, a revolutionary project in intention, and actually already extant after almost twenty-five years of non-stop activity.

During their story, Compagnia della Fortezza received the following prizes:

2014 Premio Ubu to Armando Punzo, Silvia Bertoni and Alessandro Marzetti for best staging, for the performance *Santo Genet Commediante e Martire*

2014 Premio ReteCritica at the Festival Volterra Teatro for best strategy of communication

2012 Premio Peppino Patroni Griffi awarded by “Capri Hollywood International Film Festival” to Armando Punzo, for the extraordinary work carried out in his 25 years with the company

2011 Nomination Premio Ubu for best performance of the year, to *Hamlice – Saggio sulla fine di una civiltà*

2010 Premio Ubu to Armando Punzo, for best direction of *Alice nel paese delle meraviglie – Saggio sulla fine di una civiltà*

2009 Silver medal from the Presidency of the Republic awarded by the “Festival Viviani d’Impegno Civile”, to Armando Punzo

2008 Nomination Premio Ubu for best performance of the year, to *Pinocchio. Lo Spettacolo della Ragione*

2006 Premio miglior documentario to *Nella tana del lupo* – “Festival di Palazzo Venezia”, Rome

2005 Premio della Regione Toscana for Cultura Contemporanea sezione Spettacolo, to Armando Punzo ex aequo with Rete Regionale Teatro e Carcere

2004 Premio Ubu for best performance of the year, to Compagnia della Fortezza for *I Pescecani ovvero quello che resta di Bertolt Brecht*

Premio ANTC – Associazione Nazionale Critici di Teatro to Armando Punzo and Compagnia della Fortezza

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Premio “Carmelo Bene” of the literary review «Lo Straniero», to Armando Punzo and Compagnia della Fortezza
2003 Nomination Premio Ubu for best performance of the year, to *L’Opera da tre soldi*
2000 Premio E.M. Salerno for best video produced in Italian prisons
1996 Premio speciale Teatro Festival Parma-Banca Monte Parma for *I Negri* from Jean Genet
Premio Europa Nuove Realtà Teatrali to Compagnia della Fortezza
1993 Premio Ubu for best performance of the year to Peter Weiss’ *Marat-Sade*
Premio speciale Ubu to Compagnia della Fortezza, for their commitment in research and in drama
1991 Premio speciale Ubu for the work carried out inside the prison