

[Title](#) || Franco Scaldati - Biographical notes

[Author](#) || Viviana Raciti

[Translation from Italian](#) || Edward Tosques

[Published in](#) || «Sciami», 2018 - [www.nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com](http://www.nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com)

[Rights](#) || All rights reserved. © Sciami 2018. Visit [term and condition](#) on [sciami.com](http://sciami.com)

[Number of pages](#) || pag 1 di 2

[Language](#) || ENG

[DOI](#) ||

## Franco Scaldati - Biographical notes

*I'm the people I've met; loved or hated. I'm the books I've read. The films I've seen, the paintings I've contemplated, the music I've listened to, and, the more I keep all this inside me, the more it belongs to others.* [F. Scaldati, in V. Valentini, *Franco Scaldati*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 1997, p.117]

Franco Scaldati, director, playwright and actor, was born on April 13, 1943 in Montelepre, a small town on the outskirts of Palermo, which he soon left with his family to move to Palermo proper, where his father managed two bars. He quit school before finishing the elementary level, and at twelve started working at the famous tailoring firm of Peppino Ferina, where he remained until 1978. This first experience was significant, not only because he was dubbed “il Sarto” in theatrical circles (“the Tailor,” from which Scaldati’s first theater troupe also took its name, the Compagnia del Sarto, active between the 1970’s and 1980’s, formed after the staging of *Il pozzo dei pazzi*), but also from his clothes-making trade, which provided an ideal metaphor for the way he created his scripts. Throughout his life Scaldati developed and wrote the scripts he asked his company to interpret, in the morning writing in solitude, and in the evening meeting with his actors, when his words would find their voices, put to the test of stage acting. Of his vast dramatic production, for the most part in the dialect of Palermo, so far only 13 works have been published, while 36 have remained unpublished and 11 are rewritings. During the years he worked at the tailoring firm he developed a great interest in theater, wrote and read constantly, though he initially intended to become an actor. So he decided to audition for Nino Drago’s company, I Draghi, with which he made his debut in 1964 in John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* [see Drago, video interview of June 2, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yX35LOolZc>]. He worked with Drago until 1968 (at the Teatro Biondo and at the theater Drago himself opened, the Bunker), acting from texts by Luigi Capuana and Luigi Pirandello, but also those by Samuel Beckett and Dario Fo. During this period theater work seemed inseparable from political militancy in the streets of Palermo’s ZEN district. It was then that some of the actors who became companions of his future theatrical ventures began to gravitate around Scaldati: Melino Imparato and Ninni Truden, joined later by Gaspare Cucinella.

In 1972 and 1973 Scaldati resumed his writing, which he had abandoned in his first acting phase. He opened a small theater called the Re di Coppe, which he had to close after only one year. He rejected “politics, public service theaters and the so-called avant-garde,” preferring a theater that celebrated its actors and their means of expression [F. Scaldati in V. Valentini *Franco Scaldati*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 1997, p. 119].

From 1974 to 1978 Scaldati worked again with Drago and founded the Piccolo Teatro di Palermo. In this period Scaldati acted and wrote texts produced by the new Cooperative I Draghi 74, such as *Attore con la 'O' chiusa* (1974, his first “scenario,” hence not a real text, written by Scaldati and directed by Gigi Burruano), *Il Pozzo dei Pazzi* (also in 1974, written and directed by Scaldati) and *Manu Mancusa*. The play, co-directed with Burruano, marked the conclusion of Scaldati’s collaboration with Drago, but also a fundamental shift toward an unbroken continuity of his writing.

In 1976 he opened *La locanda degli Elfi*, which saw the debut of *Cuniesci Arriniesci* (in 1977, whose scenario went on to inspire *Il Cavaliere Sole* two years later). Between 1976 and 1978, within the Cooperativa Teatrale Gruppo 5, he presented *Lucio* (whose first title was *In forma di rosa*), a radical departure from his previous plays, initially misunderstood because of its imaginative, poetic force, which made it so different from the playful irony of the plays that had made him popular in Palermo.

From 1980 to 1985 Scaldati, who in meanwhile had started up a family and had two children, worked – especially as an actor – at the Teatro Biondo, which had just become a public service theater under the direction of Pietro Carriglio, and was hired by the Taviani brothers for the 1984 film *Kaos*. However, he didn’t stop writing or presenting his own plays, which were produced at both the Piccolo and the Biondo. In this period: *Il Cavaliere Sole* (1979-1980, unpublished, reworked several times, whose last version was staged in 2008), *Facciamo l'amore* (1980, presented several times with the addition-variant *Fiorina*), *La guardiana dell'acqua* (1981), *Assassina* (1984), *Indovina Ventura* (1983, unpublished, reworked several times even in recent years).

In 1987 *Assassina* won the TTVV award in Riccione, gaining nationwide popularity with the critical support of Franco Quadri. Other awards and tours followed in Italy. In 1989 *Il pozzo dei pazzi* was directed by Elio De Capitani and in 1990 *Lucio* was staged by Chérif; 1990 saw the publication of a first collection of four texts written in a ten-year period (*Il Pozzo dei pazzi*, *La guardiana dell'acqua*, *Assassina*, *Occhi*) for the publishing house Ubulibri. Between 1989 and 1991 he also directed the Piccolo Teatro, carried through a theatrical project in three phases, *Angeli* (1988-1990), with actress Antonella Di Salvo, who later proved an invaluable collaborator. The *Laboratorio Femmine dell'Ombra* adventure began in 1992, sponsored by Di Salvo until 1998 -1999. Various projects were undertaken with and in the most deprived areas of Palermo (their headquarters were, until 2013, in the Alberghiera district).

In addition to the core text, which in the meantime had spawned adaptations-variants presented and collected separately (*Sul muro c'è l'ombra di una farfalla*, 1992-96; *Si aprono i tuoi occhi ed è l'aurora*, 1997; *Sabella*, whose first

Title || Franco Scaldati - Biographical notes

Author || Viviana Raciti

Translation from Italian || Edward Tosques

Published in || «Sciami», 2018 - [www.nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com](http://www.nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com)

Rights || All rights reserved. © Sciami 2018. Visit [term and condition](#) on [sciami.com](http://sciami.com)

Number of pages || pag 2 di 2

Language || ENG

DOI ||

version was *L'ombra della luna*, 1998; *La gatta rossa*, 1998; *Ombre Folli*, 1999, none of which was ever published), this period saw the plays linked to another famous pair of Scaldati's theater: Totò and Vicé. Having appeared for the first time as characters in the 1983 text of *Indovina Ventura*, they first found a place all their own in 1993, when they were brought on stage during the Orestiadi of Gibellina. Scaldati presented a variant again in Gibellina the following year, *Toto e Vice, sono in realtà ... due lucciole* (1995) *Sono Totò e Vicé due pupi di zucchero*, (s.d.), and *Mastra e bambina*, (s. d.). These versions were combined in the Rubbettino edition only ten years later, in 2003. Two other texts written during his Laboratorio Femmine dell'Ombra period are *La locanda invisibile*, which won the Ubu Prize, and was co-produced together with the Teatro Biondo, and *Santa e Rosalia*, a text strongly linked to the city – the soul – of Palermo, both in 1996 and both unpublished despite various reworkings during the new millennium. In the 1990's he returned to movie acting, especially for the Palermo director Pasquale Scimeca, in *La notte di San Sebastiano* (1993), *I briganti di Zambùt* (1997) and in 2005 *La Passione di Giosuè l'ebreo*, but was also directed by the better known Giuseppe Tornatore in *L'uomo delle stelle* (1995) and, in more recent years, in *Baaria* (2009).

Between the end of the 1990's and the early years of the new millennium the dynamism of his first workshop gave out. Di Salvo and Scaldati went their separate ways, but the laboratory continued its work in the Alberghiera district, both on pre-existing texts (with a preference for Shakespeare classics) and working on original one's by Scaldati. In 2000-2001 the Associazione Compagnia delle Lanterne opened, a brief parenthesis soon replaced in 2002 by the Compagnia Franco Scaldati, which has remained active even since Scaldati's death. During these years Scaldati renewed his collaborations: in 2005-2006 he took the position of artistic director of the Orestiadi of Gibellina; several texts of his were published with a distinctly greater frequency than in the past (*Adelina, Adelina e Adelina cosa fanno?* Tyita 2003, *Libro Notturmo*, ERSU 2005, *Pupa Regina. Opere di fango*, Ubulibri 2005, *La gatta di Pezza*, Ubulibri 2009, *Teatro all'Albergheria*, Ubulibri 2009 containing the texts of *La notte di Agostino il topo* and *Sonno e Sogni, Oratorio per Don Giuseppe, I quaderni del Sarto*, 2012, dedicated to the figure of Father Pino Puglisi, who had been murdered by the Mafia). In 2003 he was one of the stars in the Cipri and Maresco film *Il ritorno di Cagliostro* (he planned to work together with them on the Cinico TV sketches); in 2012, together with Franco Maresco and Roberta Torre, he organized theatrical events and workshops for the project *In Cantiere*, ai Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa in Palermo. Scaldati continued to work with his own company, doing workshops and performances, until June 1, 2013, the day he died.