

## Maria Cassi's Life with Men... and Other Animals

Natasha Lardera (March 06, 2012)



From Florence to New York a play with a hilarious and poignant semi-autobiographical look at what life is all about and the lifelong process of figuring it out

Italy has long been known for its fine exports in wine, cheese, and olive oil. Now comes one more: Maria Cassi of Fiesole (province of Florence).

We are stealing this statement from [www.mylifewithmenandotheranimals.com](http://www.mylifewithmenandotheranimals.com) [2] to introduce to New York audiences one of Italy's most cherished theater treasures and her show. "My Life with Men... and Other Animals offers a rollicking crash course in seduction, love, death - and olive oil! Maria Cassi, a versatile and classically-trained actress, stars in this uniquely witty musical experience using finely-honed talents which have led critics to liken her to such legendary clowns as Jerry Lewis,



Jacques Tati, and Charlie Chaplin. In this semi - autobiographical show, Cassi provocatively poses the question, 'By what rules do we live and who decides what they are?'

In her inimitable way, Cassi is a comic anarchist, reinventing the rules of her conservative upbringing to reflect her maverick romanticism. With a gift for mimicry and a soulful voice, the charismatic performer traces a sensual journey from rebellion to freedom to true liberation. She is catapulted to a hard-earned wisdom by encounters with a repressive mother, a faithless boyfriend, a crazy American, a volatile chef-husband and a close friend who, like her, is a fool for love.

Cassi spares no one from her satirical tongue, least of all herself, as she holds up a fun house mirror to the conventions of her native Florence and mocks a generation's obsession with American pop culture. Through the brilliantly created refractions, she assesses what can be salvaged from the past to redeem the digital present, how love can be nurtured in a skeptical age, and how to embrace death when everything in culture appears to be a denial of it."The one woman show was co-written by Cassi herself with Patrick Pacheco, an American journalist, playwright and screenwriter.

And helping Cassi to sculpt her kaleidoscopic talents into a moving narrative is director Peter Schneider, one of the masterminds behind such Disney classics as Who Framed Roger Rabbit, The Little Mermaid, Aladdin, Beauty and the Beast, and both the film and stage versions of [The Lion King](#) [3] for which he won Broadway's [Tony Award](#) [4]. Having discovered Cassi while traveling in Italy, Schneider has been reported saying, "I am honored to help bring the extraordinarily unique and talented artist Maria Cassi to American audiences for the first time. Her exuberant show reminds us of the provocative magic of the theater and what it means to be gloriously, wittily, and madly human."

"When I first met Maria Cassi, I asked her if she worked with directors. She told me, 'No. The audience is my director.' So my job has been to be you. The audience. And what a privilege it has been. To sit in rehearsals, day after day, to laugh, to cry, to reflect, to be confused, to ask questions, to encourage new discoveries and to preside over the 'happy accidents' that are always part of the creative process," the director declared in a statement reported on the show' site. "The journey of a director is never a singular one. And so, while I have stood in for you, a whole team has stood with me. Over these many thrilling months, we have together learned 'to breathe' with Maria, to follow her unique style and tempi with sound, light, and visuals."

The creative team for My Life with Men... and Other Animals includes set design by Gianni Carluccio, costume design by William Ivey Long, and lighting design by A.J. Weissbard, with images by Valeria Palermo and music direction by James Edwards. The production is presented by [Madison Theatre at Molloy College](#) [5] in association with [Change Performing Arts](#) [6] and [Teatro del Sale](#) [7] (the latter was founded in 2003 by Cassi herself together with Fabio Picchi, in Florence. She is its president and artistic director, programming music, dance, and theater performances including her own shows for which the Teatro del Sale is an ideal venue).

In this one-woman coming-of-age tale, Cassi moves with grace from Italian to English, from high drama to low comedy, and from mime to music. She is a captivating presence, earning by dint of her respect for audiences the standing ovations which have greeted her in Italy and abroad. My Life with Men... and Other Animals, was first staged in January 2010.

MADISON THEATER AT MOLLOY COLLEGE, ROCKVILLE (NY) 9 - 10 March 2012  
45th STREET THEATER, NEW YORK 15 - 18 March 2012

Tickets for the New York City engagement are available online at <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/cal/33785> [8].

Tickets for the Molloy College engagement are available online at <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/cal/32785> [9].

Tickets for both engagements are available by phone at 866-811-4111 from 9am - 9pm Monday-Friday, and 10am - 6pm on Saturday and Sunday.



**Source URL:** <http://test.ility.org/magazine/focus/art-culture/article/maria-cassis-life-men-and-other-animals>

### **Links**

- [1] <http://test.ility.org/files/my-life-men-and-other-animals-maria-cassi>
- [2] <http://www.mylifewithmenandotheranimals.com>
- [3] <http://www.lionking.com>
- [4] <http://www.tonyawards.com>
- [5] <http://www.molloy.edu/long-island-connections/the-madison-theatre>
- [6] <http://www.changeperformingarts.it>
- [7] <http://www.edizioniteatrodelsalecibreofirenze.it>
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