

Mario Fratti Interprets Eduardo De Filippo

Natasha Lardera (December 01, 2014)



Playwright Mario Fratti takes on the work of one of Italy's greatest playwright, actor, author and poet... Eduardo De Filippo. Together with young actress Giulia Bisinella, the author of *Nine* will read, on December 2nd at the Italian Cultural Institute, excerpts from *Filumena Marturano* both in the comedy's original language and in its English translation.

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"I picked [Filumena Marturano](#) [3] simply because it is an incredible masterpiece, one of the best in the world," Fratti told us as he is taking care of the final touches of his presentation.

In the balmy heat of late '40s of last century in Naples, *Filumena Marturano* lies on her deathbed waiting to marry [Domenico Soriano](#) [3], the man who has kept her as his mistress for twenty-five



years. But no sooner has the priest completed the ceremony, than Filumena makes a miraculous recovery.

As he reels in shock, Domenico discovers that this brilliant, iron-willed woman has a few more surprises for him. Eduardo De Filippo's famous play, written in 1946, memorably overturns conventional morality. Exploring themes such as family betrayal, divided loyalty and social status *Filumena Marturano* is an engaging and provocative piece of theatre, enjoying the status of a classic in Italian literature. In 1979, Laurence Olivier directed Frank Finlay and Joan Plowright in "*Filumena*."

"De Filippo's work is not that well known here in the USA and I think that the main reason why it's because it is tough to translate," [Giulia Bisinella](#) [4], who will read *Filumena*'s lines at the presentation, told us. "But this is just a difficulty not an obstacle that cannot be overcome. The themes addressed in the play are real and very human, while the characters are all wonderful in all their nuances. Specifically, *Filumena Marturano* is a comedy that honors all women.

Filumena is a wonderful, shameless woman, who, says whatever she wants to say with no constraint but who is also able to be incredibly delicate and feminine. She is both tough and fragile at the same time. She is Woman with a capital W."

"When I travel around the world," Fratti, who has just returned from Cuba, added, "whether I am in Russia, Argentina or anywhere, all theater lovers agree that De Filippo was the best. His magic was his ability to tell simple stories in a simple language that spoke to all.

He knew human psychology and knew how to address popular themes. Also he was able to use Neapolitan dialect and give it the value it deserves, as it is an important part of Italian culture. Once I was in Russia and I saw a performance of *Filumena Marturano*. The audience was laughing so hard and I asked myself how that was possible.

The translator had lived in Naples for two years in order to pick up the dialect, make it his own and translate it in a way that would please the audience... and he was successful. A good translation makes it all possible. And that's why at the presentation we will act each part in both languages."

Here in the US De Filippo is known as "The Naples-born author of more than 50 plays, which were performed all over Europe and in the United States, was famous for his boisterous, bittersweet comedies of Italian family life and especially of Neapolitan society during and after World War II," the *New York Times* wrote in the actor's obituary back in 1984.

But since then the representations of his work have been just a few. Thanks to Fratti, companies like Kairos Italy Theater and John Turturro (who in 2005 brought *Souls of Naples* to Broadway) though, his work is kept alive.

"I've never seen a play of De Filippo on stage," Giulia Bisinella added, "but hopefully his work will be performed more and more."

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