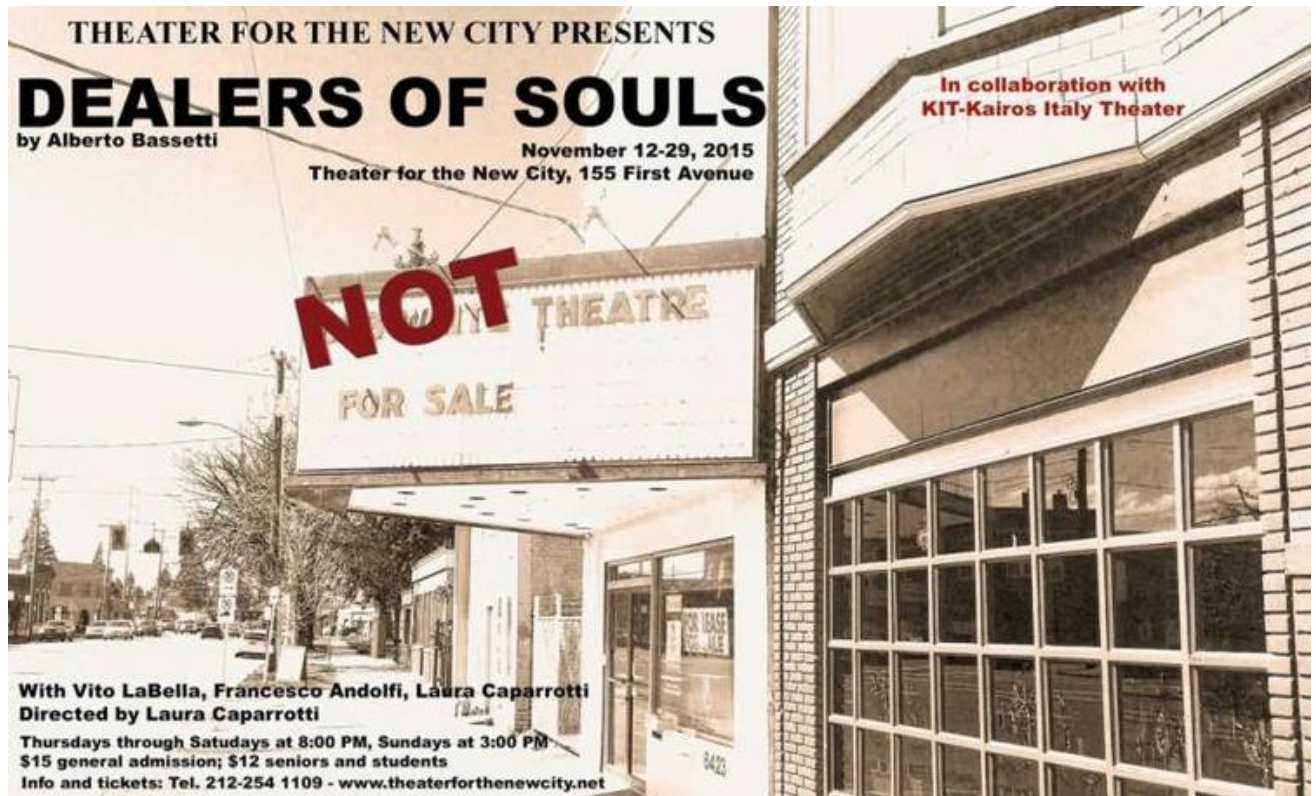




"Dealers of Souls" & the Importance to Keep Theater Alive

Natasha Lardera (November 11, 2015)



Theater for the New City is about to present the American premiere of "Dealers of Souls" by Italian playwright Alberto Bassetti. It is a mystical play that dramatizes the struggle, real and supernatural, to block the appropriation of a theater for a supermarket.

Head to the Theater for the New City for a mystical play that dramatizes the struggle, real and supernatural, to block the appropriation of a theater for a supermarket. "Dealers of Souls" by Italian playwright [Alberto Bassetti](#) [2] is having its American premiere from November 12 to the 29th. Written in 2001, the three character drama received a staged reading in 2013 at Casa Italiana as part of Kairos Italy Theatre's [In Scena! Italian Theater Festival](#) [3].

Presented by Theater for the New City in collaboration with Kairos Italy Theater ([KIT](#) [4]), "Dealers of Souls" is a supernatural drama in which two men are negotiating the sale of an old theater.

The buyer, a clearly corrupt theater entrepreneur, promises to restore it but actually, he intends to turn it into a supermarket.



Can his intrigues be stymied by a strange actress who squats in the building, who seems to be part hobo and part phantom of the theater? [Laura Caparrotti](#) [5], Artistic Director of Kairos Italy Theatre, will be acting in the role of the Actress, while [Vito LaBella](#) [6] plays the Old Man and [Francesco Andolfi](#) [7] plays the Younger Man.

In Italy, theaters are under real estate pressure; their precious locations and spacious buildings are eagerly sought by developers who try to convert valued cultural assets into commercial buildings and the situation in the US is not that different. Ms. Caparrotti has indeed said that the play presents a situation that the Theater for the New City itself narrowly avoided in real life. Of course, it is also the story of many other theaters: some who survived and some which unfortunately we have lost.

This clash of artistic idealism and commercial opportunism has been dramatized by Bassetti in "Dealers of Souls," and he took the time to answer a couple of questions.

How did you get the idea to write "Dealers of Souls"? Does it describe a big problem?

My father, whom I lost really early on, shared ownership of a Cinema-Theater in his native town. The place was about to close down, therefore leaving the whole area without a performing arts center. I worked hard and I was able to open a multiplex, leaving the stage totally untouched. The place had always fascinated me because it was a gathering place that attracted all sorts of people.

Later on, as I entered the world of the arts I started meeting lots of passionate people but also many exploiters. That really perplexed me as I think that is a passionate world. Indeed the message of my play is that it's important that love for the Arts always wins. I wanted to write something that denounced a lack of respect for places, their history, the labor of those who designed and built them, and the ghosts that inhabit them.

"Dealers of Souls" deals with a present day issue because it doesn't focus only on the issue of theatrical spaces, but mostly on the passion that human beings who see it as a place of confrontation, of fun and of learning that involves everybody no matter of what social class, sex or religion. A critic has written that mine are "moral fables." I appreciate this definition, it takes into consideration my studies in philosophy. It is important to never forget the Spectator, thus creating mystery, plot twists, pathos or amusement even in the most dramatic stories.

Who are the dealers of souls?

The "Dealers of Souls" I am writing about are the Actors, who transform and sell themselves, becoming someone else for the audience sitting across from them. Yet I don't think this is negative, because it is an exchange that starts from the desire to communicate, to please, to be liked, and to be appreciated.

It comes from the needs and insecurities that we all have: that is why I don't call them dealers of voices, bodies or memories but I call them dealers of souls, because actors bare their souls and that is an act of pure love. The Woman, the Actress, is the symbol of ambiguity, volatility and deception, but she is also extremely faithful to her absolute choice: the Stage.

How important is theater and keeping it alive?

Theater will never die! To be honest with you, there is not a real crisis. It is normal that with the advent of cinema and television, the internet and all other sorts of media, audiences are in decline but that only means that narration is possible in all different places.

The matrix is always the story of characters who talk to each other or to themselves, who confront each other and collide, who love and hate each other... in other words, they are alive. All of this is Theater. If there were no electricity or technology, there would not be any cinemas.

But the theater is made by men, human beings who put themselves on stage; they can do it in daylight as in Ancient Greece, or in candle light just like when Molière was around, they can act on an immense stage or simply just standing on the ground in front of hundreds of people or just one person. The audience is the central element of the performance, without an audience there is no theater. This is the reality; theater is eternal and theaters are special places created so that this secular ritual can take place.



WHERE AND WHEN: November 12 to 29, 2015 [Theater for the New City](#) [8], 155 First Ave. (at E. 10th Street) Presented by Theater for the New City in collaboration with Kairos Italy Theater (KIT). Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 PM, Sundays at 3:00 PM \$15 general admission; \$12 seniors and students Running time: 60 minutes.

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- [3] <http://www.inscenany.com/>
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