

The “pleasant madness” of Villaggio charms Luino

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Utterly, but marvellously unmanageable. This was **Paolo Villaggio** in the Teatro Sociale, in Luino, where he received the Chiara Award for his life's achievement.

He arrived three quarters of an hour late (which was also due to an overlapping of events in the small lakeside town), hesitantly, choosing to hear only what he wanted to hear, but he immediately charmed the audience, who filled the Teatro Sociale. Villaggio gracefully ignored the prepared discussion that the presenter, **Claudia Donadoni**, tried desperately to keep to. He even “interviewed” her about her love life (“Are you married? Have you got a boyfriend? For how long? Who is he?”) and involved her “boyfriend Matteo” (Matteo Inzaghi, the director of local TV station Rete 55; but on this occasion, his professional position was of no importance at all for the extraordinary interviewer ...) in the questions.

The only person who managed to keep up with Villaggio during armchair chat was the official interviewer, **Massimo Boldi**, the delightful but quiet “master of the house” and long-time friend, who was able to follow his stream of thoughts, which ranged from the success of *The Battleship Potemkin*, to what the woman President of the Republic that the current President, Giorgio Napolitano, recently hoped for, should be like.

Of course, he was strictly “unpolitically correct”. First, he explained that his comment about *The Battleship Potemkin* came out during a left-wing film club, then, that he hoped that the woman President “isn't gross”; he then taught the presenter how a woman who loves an ironic man, doesn't need to ironic herself, but to have “two boobs ...”

In the Villaggio's actor's imagination, **Diego Pisati**, the critical historian of the newspaper *La Prealpina*, was a Middle-Eastern immigrant (“Excuse me, do you speak Italian?”), and there nothing that could convince him otherwise. Without the embarrassment, despite everything, on the part of anyone; because his presence alone could make a folk story of what he has seen. Even in that particular situation, even if not all the details he described corresponded exactly with reality.

It is no accident that the most serious part of the meeting was when they spoke about comedy. Villaggio did not skimp on compliments for Boldi, “the greatest comic today”, and he did not forget to mention Walter Chiari, “whose only fault was that he was handsome, which penalised him as a comic”.

And lastly, he praised the figure of the “dunce”, the real mask of the comic: “The character that reminds you of childhood, of playing, of not knowing, that must never talk about sex, which is for adults.”

At the end of the meeting, which had lasted only one hour, he promised to come back, but only to interview the next award winner, and, for next year, he suggested the “young lad”, who he had discovered and encouraged into the profession, decades before, at the Milan derby:

Massimo Boldi.

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