

VareseNews

A tribute to the director Ermanno Olmi: Chiara Prize for his career

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It was a moved and tired **Ermanno Olmi** who appeared at the **Teatro Sociale in Luino** to receive the **Chiara Prize for his career**. The eighty-two-year-old director, who was interviewed by Monsignor Viganò, entertained the audience in Luino, talking about man's relationship with nature, God and the Church. "Our ignorance is defenceless, when we see the destruction of nature," Olmi explained.

The director almost seemed to take on the role of spokesperson for Pope Francis, when he asked the spectators, "What is more important, faith or charity? Charity, of course."

The award ceremony. The discussion between Olmi and Monsignor Viganò immediately got to the heart of the matter. Talking about *The cardboard village* and ***Genesis, the creation and the flood***, Olmi immediately felt at ease discussing the delicate theme of the relationship man has with religion. In outlining this eternal problem, which distinguishes man, Olmi concentrated on the fact that man is seen as the owner of the Earth. During the conference, there was a special surprise for Olmi, who was moved when a group of fourth grade elementary school children from Morosolo gave him a bas-relief, on which they had written their feelings after seeing the movie ***The tree of wooden clogs*** with their teachers.

The children also gave him a book with four stories, which they had written, about the topical theme of garbage, and at the end they gave him ears of wheat, which they had grown in the garden of their school, as a symbol of their rural tradition. The prize was given to the film director from Bergamo, by Guido Ruccio, the marketing director of AD. The Mayors of Luino, **Andrea Pellicini**, and Busto Arsizio, **Gigi Farioli**, the councillor for culture in Varese, **Simone Longhini**, and the councillor for infrastructure in Lombardy, Raffaele Cattaneo, also came

onto the stage to greet the audience.

Ermanno Olmi's career. Ermanno Olmi was born in 1931 in a small village near Bergamo, into a deeply Catholic family of farmers. His debut on the big screen was in 1959, with the film *Time Stood Still*. Greatly influenced by his modest, Catholic origins, Olmi focused on humble and ordinary people in his films, people who are often in contact with nature and are victims of solitude. He received great reviews with *Il Posto* (1961), *The Fiancés* (1963) and *A Man Named John* (1965), which starred the famous American actor, Rod Steiger. *The Tree Of Wooden Clogs* (1977), which is considered his greatest masterpiece, won several awards and gained recognition at the most important film festivals throughout the world. After a long illness, in the 1980s, he came back to media attention when he won the Golden Lion with *The Legend Of The Holy Drinker* (1993), which starred Paolo Villaggio (the winner of last year's Chiara Prize). His latest masterpieces are: *The Profession of Arms* (2001), *One Hundred Nails* (2007) and *The Cardboard Village* (2011). Ermanno Olmi has been able to describe the most profound evolutions in the social and cultural history of Italy. Appreciated also as a documentary director, he continues to display his particular cinematographic poetry, with an authentic literary and artistic sense.

The history of the Chiara Prize. The prize was created in Varese, in 1989, by a group of friends who wanted to commemorate the writer. Since then, the winners and participants have always been Italian writers of a certain calibre, known also throughout the world. Dedicated only to writers from Italy and from the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, the Chiara Prize **has added two sections in its history**. Since 1997, the prize for the career has been given to Mario Rigoni Stern, Carlo Fruttero, Andrea Camilleri, Franca Valeri and Paolo Villaggio, to name just a few. In 1998, the "young writer" section was added: ambitious young writers take part in a writing competition and complete for one of the most important arts prizes in Italy. In 2006, the "Festival of Tales" began, where, over a period of several months, a series of meetings are organised to discuss all aspects of culture, with contributions by Italian artists. As part of this festival, **the singer-songwriter from Emilia-Romagna, Luciano Ligabue, was given the Award for Words in Music**, at Villa Ponti, in October.

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