

Chiara Boscari and Marco Di Stefano from Milan to New York with *The City Rises*

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For the first time the Mario Fratti Award is given to a four-handed written script. We interviewed the young and promising authors Chiara Boscari and Marco Di Stefano, awarded and already on stage in Italy and Europe, that will receive the award in New York on the closing night on InScena!

The City Rises, winner of the Fifth Edition of the Mario Fratti Award (an annual award given to an original play in Italian or dialect, that is unpublished and has never been on stage before), was selected among the three finalists, the other two being “Rin Lizzie 17 (Ambulance Diaries)” by Marco Gnaccolini and “Four Men Closed in a Room (It Almost Looks Like a True Story)” By Mario Gelardi. The winning piece takes the name after the Futurist painting by Umberto Boccioni (at the MOMA) and talks about borders (theme of the 2018 Award): borders between national communities, cultures, and generations. The jury, composed by Mario Fratti himself, and which I had the honor of being a part of as a Cultural agent together with Giampiero Ciccio (actor and director), Alessandro Fabrizi (director) and two artists from the 2017 edition of InScena! Emilia Brandi (actress and director) and Francesca Falchi (actress and playwright), explained the choice in the following way (briefly): the script is direct, it finds in its lightness the contraposition to tragedy, without falling into pietism and leaving freedom to

understand the many points of view. The piece will be translated in English by Carlotta Brentan (Kairos Italy Theater), and published together with the four winners with the previous Festival editions. Established in 2014, the Mario Fratti Award accompanies InScena! ever since on the closing night with the award ceremony (a painting created for this purpose by the artist Victoria Bebrer) and the reading of the script at the Italian Institute of Culture, this year on May 21st at 6 p.m. Chiara Boscaro and Marco Di Stefano, both from Milan and in their early 30s, meet at the Scuola d'Arte Drammatica Paolo Grassi in Milan, even if they chose different majors (Stefano chose Directing, and Chiara Playwright) and then, in 2016, they found together for the award winning **Cofraternita del Chianti** company. The company, based in Milan, undertakes themes linked to contemporaneity and recent history. Together they led the multidisciplinary residency Manifattura K, recognized by the Mibact and by the Lombardy Region.

How was the project born?

CB: The idea? I got it in 2011, I think, in response to the incipit of an unfinished novel by a prematurely deceased journalist, Marco Formigoni. Then, over time, the material became richer, and it became something startling, even for us. Besides the characters and the story lines, the themes multiplied: jobs, speculations, **gentrification**, borders (territorial, social, moral, mental), integration, climate change...studying a city like Milan, undergoing a great change, has brought us to analyze the urban intervention for the EXPO, but the relationships with the mafias, immigration flows, event culture, the fog that's not there anymore as well.

MDS: The idea for the script came to my mind in 2011 in response to a call for bids dedicated to the journalist Marco Formigoni. The call required to begin from just a few lines written by the journalist about a body that falls into a construction site. Chiara and I wrote a short play starting from that image, but it didn't fully convince us. In fact, the call did not go well, and we put the script aside for four years. In 2015, it just happened that we went back to read it again and we decided to create from those few pages a well-rounded choral detective novel (with many characters) that in some ways would talk about the reality that surrounded us, that deeply changed since the first draft. Just think about the 2015 **Expo in Milan**. At that point, we had the idea of the narrator, the only character that really existed that appears in the entire script: Driss Moussafir, a Moroccan immigrant died on July 27th, 1993. He was killed by a Mafia car bomb at the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea in Milan while he was sleeping on a bench in the Porta Venezia gardens. In the same attack, a Municipal Police agent, Alessandro Ferrari, and the firemen Carlo La Catena, Sergio Pasotto, and Stefano Plicerno lost their lives.

What are the pros and the cons of a four-handed writing?

CB: The collaboration with Marco has been going on since 2010, and it's the best thing that could ever happen to me. Sometimes there may be paths we like to travel alone, but at the end of a long day of writing, or rehearsal, we look at the other/we go to the other for a sincere opinion or a merciless critique. A couple of more eyes and hands, offer different and unexpected ideas and languages, and in theater this is simply an added value

MDS: Chiara and I often write together, and now I only see the positive aspects of this practice. Moreover, we do it only when we really feel the need of it: each of us has a career as an individual author as well and this avoid frustrations of any kind.



Did you get inspired by anyone or anything in particular to write the story of the “The City Rises”?

CB: The City Rises is a reflection on the city that we chose, Milan, but also on cities in general. People are divided into two categories: those who see danger in the cities and those who see a promise in them. Someone makes it, someone doesn't, but they will continue to look for a place, an opportunity, a dashing moment of silence in the middle of the flood of disregarded hopes. Will it be worth it?

MDS: Since the beginning we had Boccioni's picture in mind as a reference, even if paintings are far away in time. In hindsight, I think the script was influenced by some reading I loved throughout the past few years. I am thinking of authors like Mayorga, Spregelburd, Sinisterra.

What did each of you bring to the script from an artistic and humanistic perspective?

CB: Great question, and very difficult response. Our two-man job goes on to the next levels, ever time deeper. It's a kind of relay. The other day, we were wondering what ideas and characters started one from the other, and we couldn't figure it out, because it's gestation was so long and complex. Instinctively, I would say that Marco brought the complexity of certain political themes, while I focused on the humanity of some characters. And on the comet. I claim the comet, but don't tell Marco!

MDS: As for me, I tried to clarify some issues that I struggled to focus. I write and create only if there's something I don't understand and I have the feeling I have to face: gentrification, for example, but also the difficulties of different cultures living together. Each time I work on a new

script or show, I feel like I have a new consciousness. If this doesn't happen, it means that I probably didn't do my work as I was supposed to. In the case of "The City Rises," I am very satisfied: I really love the script and I hope I can soon see it on stage in Italy and abroad.

What do you think it can bring the Mario Fratti Award to your work?

CB: The Mario Fratti Award will give (I hope) a productively complex script the opportunity to reach foreign markets, for which *The City Rises* can be a feasible bet. For a few years, we have been reaching out to European and international realities, finding a dialogue, good practices, and very interesting inputs. It's not a "fuga di cervelli" – brain drain – as we say in Italy, it's what makes this job the best job in the world.

MDS: In the past years, we work abroad a lot, but never in the United States. This for us is a first time and as all first times the expectations are really high. I hope this can be an opportunity to expose our work in New York and beyond. Moreover, our script was selected by the Italian committee of the Eurodram as well and the English publication of the text comes in the right moment.

For more information: [**InScena!**](#)

Translated by Giulia Casati.