

“Tutti non ci sono/We are not alone” Opens the Sixth Edition of InScena!

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In 1980 La Mama, one of NYC's most notable off-off Broadway theaters, produced Dario D'Ambrosi's American debut “Tutti Non Ci Sono/We are Not Alone.” Among its biggest fans, Andy Warhol, who attended three different performances.

An ex soccer player from Naples, D'Ambrosi was the originator of the theatrical movement called “**Teatro Patologico**,” an art form that marries theater with pathology. The solo performance, which shows an inmate from a psychiatric ward who is victimized by neglect in the world outside the institution, was an immediate success drawing around-the-block lines of theatergoers. Written and performed by D'Ambrosi himself, “Tutti Non Ci Sono/We are Not Alone,” tells the story of a schizophrenic man who leaves a mental hospital in New Jersey and arrives on the streets of New York. Dressed in a gown, pajamas and a pair of slippers, he arrives at the theater. He speaks about a voice in his head telling him to kill himself, lamenting “Every night the voice says ‘throw yourself out the window.’ Why was I born with this voice in my head? It doesn't want to go back to sleep. Please help me make it sleep again.” He addresses the audience directly and asks to repeat some words he says, to hug him or to do something silly, making people uncomfortable and often react in a way that is how they normally do with the mentally challenged. The piece was written as a reaction to the Italian Mental Health Act of 1978 (also known as Basaglia Law or Law 180),

which was the first law to reform the psychiatric system in Italy and ultimately **closed the country's mental hospitals**, apparently replacing them with a range of community-based services, including settings for acute in-patient care.

In celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Basaglia Law, "Tutti Non Ci Sono/We are Not Alone," will open the sixth **annual edition of In Scena!** Italian Theater Festival NY on May 7th, at the Cherry Lane Theater.

How was "Tutti Non Ci Sono/We are Not Alone" conceived and how did the Italian Mental Act of 1978 affect you?

After the implementation of the Basaglia Law, or Law 180, and the closing of all psychiatric hospitals, I decided to be admitted to Milan's psychiatric hospital, Paolo Pini, in order to have a closer look at mental illness. "Tutti Non Ci Sono/We are Not Alone" was conceived and created thanks to my experience and through it I want to tell about the difficulties that the mentally ill found outside of the hospitals' walls and how they had to deal with them after years and years of segregation inside such hospitals. That Law really affected me because even though it was incredibly cutting edge, the country was not ready to integrate thousands of patients, some of them with serious pathologies. It was an important Law but there was not a real alternative to the psychiatric hospitals yet.



Dario D'Ambrosi in Tutti non ci sono/We Are Not Alone.

How did society view the mentally challenged back then and what about now? Has that changed at all?

In 1978, Italian society was not ready to integrate these patients into society. But now, due in part to the work of my pathological theater, the so-called "normal" society has understood that even the mentally ill can be useful and contribute to it with what they can do. We have succeeded in being the first country in the world to have a university theater course for the mentally challenged. I do hope that in the future more countries will follow our lead and do the same for their kids. Mr. D'Ambrosi is indeed the creator of The Integrated Theater of the Emotions, a university program for the differently-abled that was developed by his Teatro Patologico in collaboration with the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" and MIUR (the Italian Ministry of University and Research).

The reaction of the audience does change...they go from fear to remorse. what is the typical reaction audiences have? And how does it change country by country?

The audience's response to "Tutti Non Ci Sono/We are Not Alone" changes from country to country: in Europe they try to understand the difficulties that my character is going through, in the US there is more detachment almost as if they don't even want to be touched by/come close to the issue, in South America they really get involved and respond both emotionally and confrontationally.

How much room for improvisation is there during the performance?

The entire show is based on improvisation and on the audience's reactions. "Tutti Non Ci Sono/We are Not Alone" has been performed in several countries and in each of them the length has varied as well as the audience's reactions. It's fun to see how they react to the stimuli and provocations of the "crazy" man they find in front of them. The fact that Andy Warhol came to see the show three times back in 1980, when I performed at the **Cafe La MaMa** in New York, without even understanding a word of Italian proves how provocative and communicative the play really is.

For more information: **InScena!**