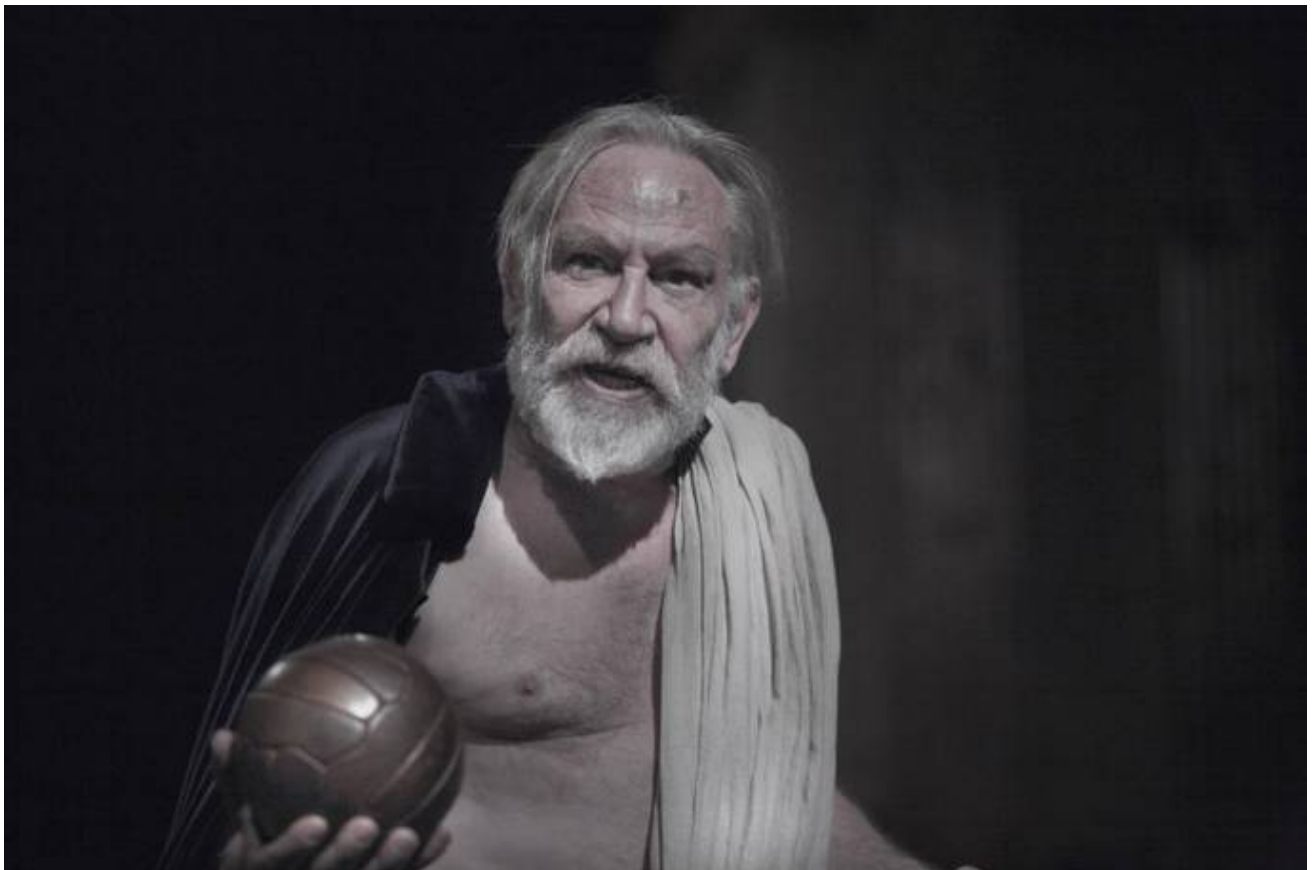


Leopardi's Operette Morali: A Visionary Journey into the Depths of Man's Soul

Natasha Lardera (November 06, 2013)



7 of Leopardi's moral essays were presented by the Mario Martone's Teatro Stabile Torino at the La Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi as part of a series of celebrations of the city of Turin that have been taking place throughout the city of New York. Deep and thought provoking text, skilful directing and impeccable acting result in a must see show.

He's ironic, vivacious, clever and surprisingly contemporary... this is [Giacomo Leopardi](#) [2] according to [Mario Martone](#) [3]. The former was an Italian poet, essayist, philosopher, and philologist from the 19th century, the latter is a Neapolitan film director and writer who is also the director, since 2007, of the [Teatro Stabile Torino](#) [4], Turin's most interesting theater.

Between the years 1823 and 1828, Leopardi composed his prose magnum opus, [Operette morali](#) [2] ("Small Moral Works"), which consists (in its final form) of a series of 24 unique and innovative dialogues and fictional essays focusing on a variety of themes that had already become familiar to



his work by then. 7 of these moral essays were presented by the Teatro Stabile Torino at the [La Scuola d'Italia Guglielmo Marconi](#) [5] as part of a series of celebrations of the city of Turin that have been taking place throughout the city of New York.

Starring [Renato Carpentieri](#) [6], [Iaia Forte](#) [7], [Giovanni Ludeno](#) [8] and [Franca Penone](#) [9], the 7 moral works were: Dialogue Between Fashion and Death, Dialogue Between Torquato Tasso and His familiar Spirit, Dialogue Between the Earth and the Moon, Dialogue Between Hercules and Atlas, In Praise of Birds, Dialogue Between an Almanac Peddler and a Passer-By and Dialogue Between Christopher Columbus and Pedro Gutierrez.

“The production is Mario Martone's noteworthy response to the challenge of transforming a masterpiece of Italian literature into one of the major successes of recent years: Operette Morali is a visionary journey into the depths of the author's soul and into the fundamentals of his oeuvre... The issues he examines are fundamental and primal (and very contemporary): the quest for happiness, the burden of unhappiness, the unkindness of Nature, life that is pain and boredom.”

In Dialogue Between Fashion and Death, Fashion tells Death they are sisters (because they are both born from Decay) but the latter wants an explanation.

Here it is: “I say then that our common nature and custom is to incessantly renew the world. You attack the life of man, and overthrow all people and nations from beginning to end; whereas I content myself for the most part with influencing beards, head-dresses, costumes, furniture, houses, and the like. It is true, I do some things comparable to your supreme action. I pierce ears, lips, and noses, and cause them to be torn by the ornaments I suspend from them. I impress men's skin with hot iron stamps, under the pretence of adornment. I compress the heads of children with tight bandages and other contrivances; and make it customary for all men of a country to have heads of the same shape, as in parts of America and Asia. I torture and cripple people with small shoes. I stifle women with stays so tight, that their eyes start from their heads; and I play a thousand similar pranks. I also frequently persuade and force men of refinement to bear daily numberless fatigues and discomforts, and often real sufferings; and some even die gloriously for love of me. I will say nothing of the headaches, colds, inflammations of all kinds, fevers -- daily, tertian, and quartan -- which men gain by their obedience to me. They are content to shiver with cold, or melt with heat, simply because it is my will that they cover their shoulders with wool, and their breasts with cotton. In fact, they do everything in my way, regardless of their own injury.” All this talk about pierced noses and crippling small shoes sound contemporary?

The dialogue form of Leopardi's text allows him a fragmentation of his point of view. His multiple talents, the contradictions that breathe life into his thoughts and his unique irony are present in each and every character that is speaking. This is not a classic theatrical text but Martone was able to make it such by preserving the overall structure of each piece although applying some necessary cuts and adaptations. Deep and thought provoking text, skilful directing and impeccable acting result in a must see show that hopefully will return to New York soon.

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- [2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giacomo_Leopardi
- [3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Martone
- [4] <http://www.teatrostabiletorino.it/?lang=en>



[5] <http://www.lascuoladitalia.org/>

[6] <http://www.fandango.com/renatocarpentieri/filmography/p11171>

[7] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laia_Forte

[8] <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3520392/>

[9] <http://www.scenedalparcodellaluna.com/index.php/artisti/9-franca-penone>