

## The Theatre

This building was established as a theatre and still is today, but there was a time when it was it was sequestered and transformed into a cinema by the Allies. In addition, in the years immediately after the war it was assigned by the council to five or six families whose houses had been destroyed by air raids. The space was transformed "as best as possible" to deal with the emergency. The families lived in this temporary accommodation until the 1950's when the Theatre was used as a warehouse, until it then fell into disuse for a long time.

It was during this time that I first encountered the theatre through my childhood adventures. There were two opposing gangs in this area: those from Mont to the east, and those from Valona to the west. I remember the contests and games, a little like the book "The Paul Street Boys". The theatre, where large spaces and small dressing rooms alternated, was the ideal place to hide surrounded by walls that were charred by the kitchen fires made by those who had lived there after the war. A territory unto itself, fascinating and far from the daily routine of our lives, a place of adventures and mysteries. I would never have thought that one day I would end up working here!

It all began in the seventies, when the town's Council decided to renovate the building. I worked for the council and became involved in the renovation. I remember that time very well, from the conception of the project, the start and the growth of the reconstruction. I was sent to Cesena's Bonci Theatre to take a Theatre technicians course aimed specifically at those who worked in the smaller Theatres in Romagna, like ours.

More than a hundred years had passed since it had first been constructed when finally on 14 November 1992, Cesenatico's public theatre was reopened fully restored. I remember the emotion of the inauguration, we were afraid that there would be last minute hitches, but fortunately everything went very smoothly, and we breathed a huge sigh of relief! The first Theatre season began with the show "La donna del mare" (the lady of the sea) dedicated to the great actresses of Italian Theatre such as Franca Rame, Adriana Asti, Ombretta Colli, Paola Borboni... It was a triumph, a great celebration. I must admit, however, that we were unfamiliar with this kind of show, suffice it to say that the architect was furious when, during work for the first stage setting, one of the stagehands started fixing something with nails to the floor and it ruined the new wooden stage!

In the nineties, companies would come to set up shows here. Within ten to fifteen days the stage would be transformed, it was a wonderful experience: often the scenery arrived ready and were adapted to the space, I took a course in stage lighting and would watch all the rehearsals.

On these occasions I got to know the workers and artists better, we would go and eat together, creating a wonderful atmosphere of friendship. We were all pumped with adrenaline ready for the show's launch!

Little by little the Theatre became my world, made up of memorable days and also meeting great actors. Famous Italian Actors, such as, Raf Vallone, Alessandro and Vittorio Gassman, Alessandro Haber, Valeria Valeri all passed through our theatre which renewed a tradition that saw the great Ermete Zacconi (a famous Italian stage and film actor born in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) perform on these boards in the early years of the twentieth century.

There are many memories that I hold dear, like the assistants of the most famous actors and actresses who would arrive first so they could set up the dressing rooms and make them a little more homely by placing photographs and personal objects in front of the mirror together with the make-up bag and stage clothes. One evening, during the round of applause, I remember Paola Borboni received a cascade of roses as a gift from the gallery. I still have a light-hearted poem that Paolo Poli recited at the end of one of his shows. Poli was a special person: the first to arrive and the last to leave, always very kind to all of us!

When Dario Fo, who had a home in Cesenatico, won the Nobel Prize for Literature, we set up an exhibition dedicated to his work as a theatre artist. One evening, to celebrate, I organised a barbecue at my house: it's not an everyday thing when you entertain a Nobel Prize winner as a guest at your home!

Even today this Theatre offers an abundant season of poetry, concerts, operettas and children's shows. Alongside the great names of Italian theatre, the amateur drama and dialect Theatre companies of Cesenatico and Romagna take to this stage too.

Even if the Theatre is empty right now, try closing your eyes and imagine hearing the chatter coming from the dressing rooms, the rustling of the ropes on the stage, the voices of the staff preparing to welcome the audience. Soon the doors

will open, the spectators will enter, sit on the seats, in the boxes, and in the gallery, ... the magic will begin!

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