



DIGITAL COLLECTION OF EUROPEAN ROMA THEATER AND DRAMA

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Children of the Wind

written by Sebastiano Spinella

(excerpts)

MY GRANDMOTHER (TAMBOURINE)

She dressed like a Gypsy, wore several skirts on top of each other, scarfs and a bandana on her head, golden necklaces, rings, armbands, big golden earrings, swore, cursed and spit like a sailor!! even had a golden tooth! She knew about herbs and plants, in her younger days helped deliver children, removed the evil eye! By placing a plate full of water and oil on top of the head: if the oil massed together the family would stay united! the marriage was sure! She'd give predictions that caused terror or happiness, read tarot cards, hand reading! She communicated with Spirits and Phantoms...

Story tells, her first marriage was to a man suffering from lunatism. She housed and protected him from the malignity of the neighbouring village, till one full moon night: he laid under a tree and died... From the fields of the mountain's side, she moved to the mountain's seaside, carrying her two lunatic children and all her belongings, on a Donkey back, with the ever rumbling of the volcano under her feet.

Sicilian Song with tambourine

In the city she sold the donkey and rented a tavern by the marketplace, sold bread and wine. She'd write the addition of the clients with a piece of chalk on the blackboard by the door: There was a client selling fake jewellery to innocent people called "the Wolf ": Incredible tall and thin, elegant tailor suit and gangster shoes, tiny pencil moustache! He would lean against the blackboard trying to cancel his addiction, causing my grandmother's wrath!!!! Until one day a tall, handsome man came into the tavern, kicked out the Wolf, rolled down the shutter and turned to my grandmother: Now you must marry me! It was my grandfather Sebastiano, Sebastianeddu, Neddu. My grandmother swears that at that very moment she heard the bells of the nearby church ringing loudly, or maybe it was a Mandolin!! They sold the tavern, opened a shop in the market, and started selling buttons. *(Cries and calls of the market)* They Moved in one room house with a three-floor bed, had three more children and the bed became a five- floor one! It

was war time, they didn't sell many buttons and there was not much food so, the kids would go scraping in the rubbish of the market to make the soup. Under the bombs of the Americans, that came to free the country from the Nazi settlers, but only to invade it with their cigarettes, chocolate, and military bases, my father was the last born: "Neddu! Neddu! (*In Sicilian then in English*) this kid is a monster, he's got a tail!!! And Truly a little tail was at the end of the sacred about half inch long. Very little but real! "He will kill us! You gotta cut it! (*In Sicilian than in English*) And so they did. And truly my father grew a strong man, respected, and feared specially when he gave you the bad eye!! His gaze was pure fire that scared everyone!! But he was goodhearted, and he took care of my grandmother all her life.

She'd gone through several surgeries and finally had removed both breasts, but she still had enormous boobies! As she didn't trust the local bank, she'd stuff in her bra all the money of the daily income, that she'd remove once a week to stuff it under a tile of the floor or inside the family mattress!!! She was the local herbalist's best and worst client as she would buy loads of herbs regularly, but regularly haggle and swore about the price. After the death of my grandfather, I became her Neddu! As she transferred all the love for him on to me... "Neddu here a coin, go get ice cream! Neddu here is a coin go get your favourite comic...!" (*In Sicilian than in English*) I was seven years old when she called me in the shop, took me by the hand, dragged me all the way to the tiny bathroom in the back shop, closed the door, locked it with the key, put the key in her bra, turned to me with gaze of fire in her eyes and said, "Swear!!! I was terrified! "Swear you'll not tell this to anyone in our family!", "What???", "Swear!!", "I swear!!!" She smiled, her eyes looked at me gently, she took my hand and started reading the lines in it. "You will live so and so long, will have so and so many children, you will travel the world because you are A Son of the Wind"

Song Tonada de Luna a cappella

As Money makes the world go round and round, the Natural reaction to the early misery, my father, his brothers, and sister became obsessed with money. Through the economic growth of the '70's, like the rest of the population, in order to reach a

middle-class status, they raced with each other on who got richer, “I have a house! I have two houses!! I have a Mercedes 190! I have a 220”, “I have a Porsche! A Villa, a two-floor villa, a three-floor villa” etc., making their life miserable, hostages of the new capitalistic trend. I have a clear memory of grandmother shouting “You have become worse than wolves! “, and she spat on the ground!

Roma Friends in Rome

Lost in Rome, eventually I was called into a music project for Roma children, to teach accordion

At my arrival to the social centre where the project was held, I understood that the project was dwelling in total chaos and 3 teachers out of 4 had quit because the children were too wild and undisciplined. The remaining teacher/organizer was desperate, as the kids refused to study music!! I was introduced to a group of 6-7 kids playing football in the yard. They stopped playing, surrounded me and pulled me toward a nearby bench where this enormous boy called Svonko was sitting, playing on a tiny accordion, much too small for him. I offered to shake hands, but the boy stood up and was a head taller than me and looked scary! "I don't shake hands with Italians pieces of shit!" My answer: "I'm Sicilian, not Italian!" This made some effect on him as I later understood that Roma like Sicily, Napoli and generally tend to have better relationships with people from the South of Italy. Still, he went on in an angry tone about a promise of a bigger accordion that he never got, and he was upset because he seriously wanted to study accordion. He was only twelve, but tall and big as a grown up and you could tell that he was the leader and protector of the whole group of kids whose rebellion was a protest of solidarity with their leader!!! I got the money from the organizer and the next meeting with the kids I showed up with a shining, black and beautiful accordion, and my photobook under my arm. The kids surrounded me in awe, as I approached Svonko still grumbling with his tiny accordion, and you can imagine the scene!!! Svonko offering his hand to shake, the bunch of kids laughing around us. I went on to show my photo book of my performance and there was another miracle: some of them had seen me performing in the central squares of Rome where they used to sell roses. I recalled seeing them, watching the show again and again with roses in their hands! I also showed pictures of travelling, my van, and the horse wagons.

"So, you are like us! Like our grandfathers, they had circus and played violins"

"Indeed, and You know what? We are called Children of the Wind!"

So now, we were friends!

We sat in a round, held a meeting, and agreed: 30 minutes of football and one hour of musical instrument practice! I was teaching accordion, euphonium, percussion, and soon a little orchestra of 5 was to play the first public essay together.

(...)

SVONKO AND THE MINISTER

My friendship with Svonko remained strong through the time. He loved music and was a trustful friend in difficult times. Was born in Rome as most of his generation but had no right for citizenship due to his condition, and as many others didn't apply for the Serbian passport, to avoid expulsion. He searched in vain for the status of 'apolide' (*stateless*) to get some kind of travel document.

He kept friends with a group of political activists and went to all their events with the main intention to bum them money, so at age 17 knew a lot about institutional rules and civil rights!

Rumours went about the State Minister of Interior to come on official visit at the camp, to quench the thirst of the media about the Roma's implication in national security.

Every day a clean dressed Svonko would be at the gate waiting for the Minister.

When the Blue Car arrived with a tail of dozens of journalists, Svonko was the first to shake hands with the Minister under the flashes of the photographs.

"Hello Minister! My name is Svonko Djordjevic" and I'm born in Italy, I'm Italian but I have no citizenship, soon I'll be 18 and I will be expelled to Serbia, I've never been there, I don't know nobody, I've never been out of Italy!"

Minister: "Eh... uh...We'll see what we can do..."

(...)