

In the Name of Justice: “Sciara – Prima c’agghiorna” Celebrates Courage, Resilience, and Social Change
(Sara Tiberini)

A mother. A land. A voice. “Sciara – Prima c’agghiorna”, written and performed by Luana Rondinelli, directed by Giovanni Carta, based on the novel “Francesco Serio. La madre” by Franco Blandi and scored by *I Musicanti*. The true story of Francesca Serio, mother of Salvatore Carnevale, the first union official murdered by the mafia on May 16th 1955, will be staged in the United States as part of the Italian Theater Festival in New York, taking place from April 29th to May 13th, in fine different theaters located in Manhattan, Queens, Bronx and Staten Island.

At the heart of "Sciara - Prima c’agghiorna" is Francesca Serio, or “Carnevale’s mom”, a contemporary Sicilian mother, part of both Italian history and contemporary history, a woman of extraordinary courage and resilience. She is the voice of a land that never gives up, that with the strength of love will be able to hold her head high despite pain and despair. Having endured the hardships of poverty and the pain of separation from her husband, Francesca embarks on a journey to Sciara with her young son, determined to carve out a brighter future amidst the toils of the agricultural fields. In a society that sought to confine women to the domestic sphere, Francesca defies expectations by taking on grueling labor alongside men, refusing to yield to the injustices of her time.

It is a human and historical drama, a play that can make you feel the heart of a MOTHER, a solo show that narrates the story of the first socialist mother who supported her son in fighting battles for dignity, social changes, and labor rights of farmers. But the play doesn’t only talk about this; it is also about love, solidarity, poetry, courage and the fight for justice and truth, because the main character is the first woman in history that reported the names of mafia criminals and bravely stood up against the mafia.

Set in post-World War II Italy, the play shows the struggles of two individuals, Francesca Serio and Salvatore Carnevale, who exemplify unwavering determination and courage in the face of adversity. Despite immense challenges, they refuse to be silenced, standing up for their beliefs and fighting for a better future for themselves and their community.

The play also explores issues of social justice and the fight against exploitation and oppression. Salvatore Carnevale's activism and advocacy for workers' rights and agrarian reform expose the harsh realities of labor exploitation and the pervasive influence of mafia violence and corruption. “Sciara” sheds light on the struggles of marginalized communities, urging viewers to reflect on their own roles in creating a more just and equitable society.

Where words fall short, music will step in to reinforce, expand and enrich the palette of emotions. It is the role of music to punctuate the heartbeat and the relentless march of time, which will inevitably foreshadow Carnevale’s death. Through a theatrical performance that harmonizes dramatic language with historical testimony and music, the audience will

have an immersive emotional experience that will accompany them to reflect on the conditions of a world and a history that are often unfamiliar.

The play is divided into 7 chapters: The Birth, Labor, Sciara, Politics, The Threats, The mafia and The birth, plus an agonizing dirge dedicated to Salvatore Carnevale. Music will accompany the audience from the very first moment, when Francesca cradles her son in her arms; from that instant, they are bound together on an incredible journey of life to defend others and challenge the system with their own courage, a system that no one had ever dared to defy before, out of fear. But a mother fears nothing when defending her own child. She has no bounds. And so, courage, love and civic passion are represented thanks to the musicians. Seven chapters guide the audience through Salvatore's life, from the day he was born to the terrible day of his death, when Francesca entrusts her one and only son to the eternity of the righteous. From that moment on, she will fight... fight for her son... in the perpetual hope that something might change, that justice might prevail. How can a mother survive her own child's death? Only the strength of love, love for her child, can endure the silence of judgmental eyes, of scrutiny, and sometimes, unforgiving gazes.