

Marco Paolini

Actor, author and director, indeed one of the most famous on the Italian theatrical scene, Marco Paolini is particularly known to the public for the strong civil commitment which characterises his performances. Alone on stage, he brings the protagonists of his stories to life, those who took part in the most thorny events of Italian and international history.

In Italy Marco Paolini is considered as the father of the "narrative theatre", following in the footsteps of Dario Fo.

Born in Belluno in 1956, he very quickly became part of several theatre companies. He worked, amongst others, on the experiment of the Teatro Settimo in Turin; that is how he starts telling stories and how the *Albums* begin, the first episodes of a long collective biography which spans Italian history from the 1960s up until today.

He becomes known to the public through his account of *Il racconto del Vajont*. Created in 1993, it will be performed hundreds of times in Italy and will be broadcasted live on public television in 1997. In it, Paolini tells of the Vajont catastrophe: on 9 October 1963, in the Dolomites in the Veneto region, 260 million cubic metres of earth and rocks from Mount Toc slide into the Vajont dam lake; the wave of water produced by the fall floods and destroys several villages, causing the deaths of thousands of people. In this "civic oration", Paolini opens up a complex page of Italian history revealing the political and scientific contradictions which led to the disaster.

After the success of *Il racconto del Vajont*, Paolini establishes himself as an actor and interpreter of stories with a strong civil impact: he relates the tragedy of the DC9 aeroplane which disappeared mysteriously in the sky over Ustica on 19 June 1980 (*I-TIGI Racconto per Ustica*, 2000); he traces a story of Italian capitalism, from its birth to its crisis, going over events at the petrochemical hub of Porto Marghera, near Venice (*Parlamento chimico*, 2002); finally, he recalls the painful events of the retreat of a group of Italian soldiers on the Russian front during the Second World War, inspired by the famous novel of the writer Mario Rigoni Stern (*Il Sergente*, 2007).

In his "civic orations", Paolini also tackles some complex stories which cross the Italian borders: he deals with the catastrophe in Bhopal, in India, which occurred during the night of 3 December 1984 because of the explosion of a factory producing pesticides (*Bhopal 2 dicembre 1984*); he develops a reflection around economic power in our society (*Miserabili. Io e Margaret Thatcher*, 2006); or again he deals with the extermination of handicapped people and people with mental illness in Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1941, an event known as Aktion T4 (*Ausmerzen*, 2011).

Alongside these stories, Marco Paolini devotes himself to the great figures of Italian and world culture. This is the case of Jack London who Paolini rediscovers through a musical and verbal ballad in which he reinterprets the accounts of the American writer (*Ballata di uomini e cani*, 2012). And he focuses particularly on the story of Galileo, the father of modern science, a discloser but above all a great thinker, who remains open to doubts until the end of his life; in *ITIS Galileo* (2010), Paolini tells of Galileo's work and his importance in the creation and development of scientific thinking. After his success in theatre and television in Italy, the show arrives in Switzerland at the Vidy-Lausanne Theatre in a new French version, *Galilée, le mécano* (2014), directed by Charles Tordjman.

With a passion for maps, travelling and languages, Paolini approaches his narratives paying particular attention to the countryside, its transformation and history, as for example in the famous work dedicated to Venice, *Il Milione* (1997), or in the project *Fén* (2013), an installation of wood, iron, hay and words

presented to the 55th Venice Art Biennale and accompanied by text on the relationship between man, the countryside and work.

Artisan and custodian of the story-telling profession, Paolini performs his shows both in the great Italian theatres and also in small halls and non-theatrical settings: by travelling Italy back and forth, he has told his stories in schools, universities, squares, hospitals, prisons, cultural centres, mountain huts..., performing before a great number and variety of members of the public.

He has also been able to present his art to the television-watching public thanks to live transmissions, from the *Racconto del Vajont* (Rai2, 1997) to the recent *Ausmerzen. Vite indegne di essere vissute* (La7, 2011) and *ITIS Galileo* (La7, 2012).

In the cinema, Paolini has worked with the greatest Italian directors including Nanni Moretti (*Caro diario*, 1993), Carlo Mazzacurati (*Il toro* 1995; *La lingua del santo*, 2000), Daniele Lucchetti (*I piccoli maestri*, 1998), Marco Tullio Giordana (*Sangue pazzo*, 2008), Davide Ferrario (*Piazza Garibaldi*, 2011), Andrea Segre (*Shun Li and the Poet*, 2011), Marco Segato (*La pelle dell'orso*).

In 1999 he started up Jolefilm, the company which produces all his shows and with which he develops his passion for cinema and documentary.

His works are published in Italy by Giulio Einaudi Editore in the form of book-DVD sets. And the most important Italian daily newspapers (La Repubblica - L'Espresso, Corriere della Sera) have dedicated DVD collections to him presenting all his works.