



The Italian Cantastorie

Antunellu Missinisi - Performance

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Europe had been at war for almost a hundred years

And in France Jean d'Arc was burning,

the clever Alphonse the Aragonese

Became King of Naples with a smart move.

And towards 1430,

he built a school for the smart people,

and dozy Messina became the mare

which gave birth to its son Antonello.

He was son of Garita

Antonello mother's name – ladies and gentlemen – was Margherita, "Garita" in Sicilian.

He was son of Margherita

And of Vanni the marble cutter,

who, with his clay, surely

taught him his craft.

But History here is quite empty,

as it does not tell us if Antonello

was meek or a rascal

with women or with friends.

Ladies and gentlemen, even *cantastorie* do not know anything about Antonello da Messina.

There are a few hypotheses about Antonello's birth.

We know only that he was born around 1430 in Messina... His mother, as you can see in the

cartellone at the tableaux number two, there, was called Margherita, "Garita". His father's

name was Giovanni, "Vanni", and he was a craftsman who worked with marble and ceramics.

Surely he must have taught his son how to work, how to model clay. But we do not know

about Antonello of Messina childhood and adolescence, we do not know whether he was

naughty, restless, whether he liked women or whether he was a quiet person.

We do not know anything. We only know that at a certain point, around 1470, his father sent him to Naples to study in the art workshop of famous painter Mastro Colantonio. And you can see him here, a young Antonello while learning painting from Mastro Colantonio. And in Naples – day and night - he used to study colours and perspective with a zealous and...

With a lot of will and a lot of passion

in Naples he used to paint day and night

in the workshop of Mastro Colantonio

Who taught him colour and drawing.

But often in the heart of this perfect mean

There was a murmur of melancholy

And this whispering was drifting from the Straits

Together with the freshness and harmony of San Rizzo hills.

In Naples, though, Antonello of Messina was thoughtful. He used to think of Messina, of the breeze from the Straits, of the sparkling sea, of his family, of his father, of his mother, of his Sicily.

And listen to what he did to fight his melancholy.

And while painting the cross...

Look at the *cartellone*, Antonello from Messina painting Christ's crucifixion. As a background he didn't paint the Golgotha, not the Calvary, but the Messina Straits, as if Jesus was killed in Messina.

And while painting
Jesus Christ dying on the cross,
Antonello found himself
in a Calvary with no voices.
In order to find consolation in his despair
he set the Passion
in Messina, there, in the docks
with the view of the shining Straits.
Ladies and Gentlemen, Antonello was always thinking of his Sicily and when he painted the
crucifixion, or Saint Sebastian's martyrdom he painted the Straits.
But after staying in Naples, he didn't go back to Sicily. Instead, he travelled around Italy:
Palermo, Rome, Milan, Florence, and – bit by bit - ...
There, in the continent,
He grasped the precise style (the Flemish school)
of the excellent Flemish painters,
that gave him taste and much joy.
Jan van Eyck and Van der Weyden
together with Piero della Francesca
were models for Antonello, who
was like a fish without the bait.
Until one day, ladies and gentlemen, he told his wife "Basta, my wife! Basta, Ianna! – that was
her name – Basta! I don't resist anymore here in the continent, I feel too homesick for Sicily. I
want to go back there, to Messina. I want to open an art workshop with my son and my
brother. Let's go!
So many times he said "Let's pack and let's go back to Sicily"
Until one day he decided:
"Basta! I want to go back to Messina!
Wife, take our stuff
And let's run away from this hubbub.
With my brother Giordano,
Iacobello and the other son
In Messina - and my choice is not random -
I'll open an art school and there I want to stay".