

Massimiliano Finazzo Flory. Futurism Between Art and Politics

Marina Melchionda (November 11, 2009)



Accompanied on stage by saxophonist Riccardo Bianco and the beautiful and gracious dancer Michela Lucenti, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs of the City of Milan Massimiliano Finazzo Flory presented his “Futurist Show Performance” at Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò. The day before he was at the Italian Cultural Institute to perform before a large public reunited on the occasion of the last day of mandate of Director Renato Miracco. “I would have never accepted this political mandate if they had asked me to step off the stage”, the politician and artist told us

On November 5, the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs of the City of Milan Massimiliano Finazzo Flory performed a monologue on futurism at [Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò](#) [2]. His show was part of a full calendar of events that Italian public institutions, cultural foundations and organizations in New York dedicated to the centenary of the foundation of Italian Futurism.

The day before, at the [Italian Cultural Institute of New York](#) [3], Commissioner Flory paid homage to the cultural movement that drastically changed the classic canons of Italian art in the 20th before the opening of three different exhibitions dedicated to the theme, "Women of the Futurism: Valentine De Saint Point", "Neapolitan Futurism", and "100 years of the Giro d'Italia - 100 years of Futurism". It was also the last day of mandate as Director of the Institute for Renato Miracco: "I am proud to welcome Commissioner Flory on such a special occasion. His performance and the three exhibits that are being opened tonight are my personal homage to the great current of Italian futurism", he stated.

Accompanied on stage by saxophonist Riccardo Bianco and the beautiful and gracious dancer Michela Lucenti, Mr. Flory presented his "Futurist Show Performance", a collection of pieces from *Fondazione, Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909) (Foundation, Manifest of Futurism) and *Manifesto dei Drammaturghi futuristi* (1911) (Manifest of Futurist Dramaturges) .

The two performances, the first held at the Institute and the second at the Casa, were quite different the one from the other. During the first, as an example, Michela Lucenti danced among the public sit in the huge, elegant conference room. The fact that she did not remain on the stage, as it happened at the Casa, made the show appear somehow more "intimate", while in the second case it was certainly perceived as more "dignified", distant. Director Renato Miracco had strongly wanted this to be the last of the events of his mandate at the institute, as he sees in futurism the necessary spur to modernization and innovation that must be given to the world of culture in Italy. The same spur he gave it from Park Avenue during these two years of mandate.

"Futurist Show Performance" , performed in full at the Casa, included other deep and engaging texts such as "Zang Tumb Tuum" by Tommaso Marinetti, the founder of Italian Futurism, and "Fontana Malata" (The Ill Fountain) by Aldo Palazzeschi.

Also to be mentioned, Giovanni Papini's declaration "Perchè sono futurista" (Why I am a futurist), an extremely provocative text in which the author challenges the classic canons that characterized Italian (and foreign) art up to that time. "I am a futurist because the excessive adoration of a "glorious past" mortifies ingenuity, makes the heart pusillanimous, slows inspiration, and ends up instilling sterility in those who are incapable of waking up in time": words that he not only recited, but knew by heart and mind, "we need to believe in the word, because the word is embodied in men".

There were thoughts and words that invaded the silent and crowded auditorium that were fully consciousness of the possibility that not everybody could fully understand them.

Futurism has indeed often been defined as an "elite movement", one that could potentially embrace different kinds of art and involve wide numbers of artists but which imposes such drastic "rules" that the simple adhesion to its principles requires a certain dose of courage. "We despise all those works that merely want to make people weep or move them (...); we teach authors to despise them (...); we teach authors and actors the pleasure of being booed. Not everything booed is beautiful or new. But everything applauded immediately is certainly no better than the average intelligence and is therefore something mediocre, dull, regurgitated, or too well digested", the Manifest of Futurist Dramatists proclaims.

However, it would be quite reductive to summarize the wave of innovation that Italian Futurism brought with these few, although neat paradigms. Futurism means "remaining faithful to vocation" as Mr. Flory told us, it means "nourishing thoughts that have no barriers", as he emphasized. And last, but not least, love Italy above everything, and put art to the service of the country. "I am a futurist because Futurism means Italy - an Italy greater than the Italy of the past, more worthy of its destiny and of its future place in the world, more modern, more advanced, more avant-garde than other nations."

After his performance we asked Commissioner Flory a few questions about his double role of



politician and actor, and his commitment to theatre and art.

How do you reconcile your life on stage with your political mandate?

I feel I can do both. In fact, it is my belief that the artist must work to serve the institutions and, as an institutional representative, I am lucky to work in the cultural field. So I can't imagine a better combination.

How do people in Italy perceive this "double mandate"?

In Italy I am certainly a very rare case, if not unique. I deeply love Milan but I must say that I would have never accepted the nomination as Commissioner for Cultural Affairs of the City of Milan if they had asked me to step off the stage.

What is your personal mission as a politician?

To give other artists like me the best chances to express themselves and their art at the highest levels. Since I am an artist myself, I wish that the Department of Culture of the City of Milan continues to encourage our artists to do research, to question themselves, and not to be afraid of risks and changes. This is what Futurism commands, and I fully espouse these dictates.

Otherwise? What is the main risk?

The main risk is that culture becomes an "empty word", a heavy, auto-referential term, a container full of traditions that have no reason to exist anymore.

Is the Expo Milano 2015 part of this personal mission you are embracing?

It is a great challenge, an occasion to reflect on the role culture has in a person's life. Culture nourishes our soul, it is the healthiest food we could have. I would like it if the artists participating in this event took this opportunity to introduce their pieces to the world with no masks, that they take the risk to show who they really are and what they do. This is the only way by which this Expo can become a sort of Olympics of Culture that must be challenging and creative at the same time.

Can we say that you administer the Department of Culture of Milan in a "futurist way"?

Yes, as an artist my collaboration (but not my complicity) with bureaucracy is futuristic in itself. Every day I have to sign hundreds of papers, and working at the desk for a "free" person like I am is a great compromise for me. I do this because it is the only way I have to introduce the innovations and reform required by Futurism to my city's administration.

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