

## The Elena Ferrante Phenomenon Returns to the Small Screen

Monica Straniero (January 29, 2020)



The TV adaptation of Elena Ferrante's novels follows the incredible international success of her books, which have been translated in numerous languages and are loved by millions of readers across the world.

The second season of *My Brilliant Friend*, the television show directed by [Saverio Costanzo](#) [2] and based on Elena Ferrante's best-selling saga, will be shown in Italian theatres on January 27, 28, and 29.

The first season, a hit both in Italy and abroad, tells of the friendship between Lila and Lenù (the nicknames of Raffaella Cerullo and Elena Greco), which begins during their childhood in a popular Neapolitan neighborhood in the 60s and follows them throughout most of their lives. From 1950 to 2010, from 6 to 66 years of age. Their relationship is what holds the story together, a friendship that



drifts and reunites throughout the years, at times tainted by rivalry and competition.

Saverio Costanzo, along with [Alice Rohrwacher](#) [3] - who was called to direct episodes 4 and 5, knows how to give the show a slow but consistent rhythm, bringing to a boil the terrible amalgamation of envy upon which the friendship between two oppressed women in search of their emancipation is inevitably built. Love and resentment, openness and egoism, confessions and secrets, cohabitation and detachment all follow each other, intertwining throughout their tempestuous relationship.

The direction makes sure to adopt a female perspective that reveals the ferocity faced by women without confining them to the stereotypical role of victims, without turning the narrative into a pathetic sob story. In the second season, we follow Lila and Lenù's youth. The two friends vacation in Ischia where they have an encounter that will forever change both of their lives, projecting them on different paths.

One of the show's most impressive aspects is Costanzo's reconstruction of the Neapolitan context. The backdrop is the Naples of the boom years, before urbanisation and industrialization, a reality in which the archaic and the contemporary coexist and mix.

A great European metropolis, where faith in technology, in science, in economic development soon proved to be completely unfounded. Elena and Lila's initiation defines their relationship - before anything else - as an oath of solidarity against the violence of their neighborhood, the Luzzati Rione.

However, the novelty and power of the second season - as of the first one - is Costanzo's courage and creative intelligence in managing to sabotage the genre's serial nature: the episodes remain open-ended, the assassins or kidnappers aren't found, the disappearances remain unexplained. A sour and uncomfortable tale, which manages to grasp a collective feeling, the need for a narrative that can show us the dark inner workings of our contemporary existence.

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[2] <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0182459/>

[3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice\\_Rohrwacher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Rohrwacher)