

Tutto Cerami tuttocerami... Cerami biography

Vincenzo Cerami (Rome 1940) is an artist able to express himself through the different contemporary means of communication. Author of various works, from novels to cinema, from comics to lyrics, it's hardly surprising that in *Le monde-Culture*, at a report titled *Vincenzo Cerami, all languages' narrator* (16/07/2003), René de Ceccatty writes: «He does not like to speak about himself, because in fact, he rejects any identity. Scriptwriter who writes sometimes novels? Dramatist who answers the mermaids of cinema? Comic and tender author with Benigni?».

In many works of Cerami, the autobiographical testimony plays an important role. *Pensieri così* (Milano, Garzanti, 2002, pp 411) is a gathering of reflections on his encounters with great artists, like Milo Manara, Alberto Moravia, Pier Paolo Pasolini, as *everyday persons*. It's a text of personal memories, a diary that not only tells about his own self, but a self that unfolds in relation with many other ones which are part of his life. In fact, the notebook of an intellectual and moral travel.

In junior high school his teacher was Pier Paolo Pasolini, who introduced him to literature, particularly poetry. After high school he attended courses in physics at the university of Rome and at the same time worked on the set of several Pasolini films. He was assistant director for *Uccellacci e uccellini* (*The Hawks and the Sparrows*).

In 1968, he worked in the United States and Japan as a gagman.

In 1975, he adapted for the «Teatro di Roma» Paolo Volponi's novel *Sipario ducale*, which had won the Premio Strega that year.



literature literature literature

In 1976, Garzanti published his first novel, *Un borghese piccolo piccolo*, with an introduction by Italo Calvino. It was made into a very successful film directed by Mario Monicelli and starring Alberto Sordi. In 1978, his second novel, *Amorosa presenza*, was published. In 1981, Garzanti also published *Addio Lenin* (a narrative poem) and *Tutti cattivi* (a novel).

In 1983 and 1988, Garzanti published the novels *Ragazzo di vetro* and *La lepre*. In the spring of 1991, the publisher Einaudi printed a collection of stories entitled *L'ipocrita*. In 1985 his translations into Italian of Roman dialect fables entitled *Fiabe di Roma e del Lazio* became part of the editions of Oscar Mondadori.

At the end of May 1993, a collection of "mini-novels", *La gente*, was also issued by Einaudi.

The last volume of *Letteratura Italiana*, published by Einaudi, contains a long essay by Cerami dedicated to Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Le ceneri di Gramsci*.

In 1996, Einaudi issued a creative writing "manual" entitled *Consigli a un giovane scrittore (letteratura-teatro-cinema-radio)*; in 1997, *Fattacci*, stories of four notorious crimes in Italy; in 1998, the screenplay for the film *La vita è bella* (later a book with the videocassette included), which was very successful in Italy and abroad; in 1999, the theatrical text *Canti di scena* (including a cd); cartoon stories *Olimpo S.p.a.* (2000) and *Olimpo S.p.a. Caccia grossa* (2002), with the collaboration of the artist Silvia Ziche; and in 2001, the novel *Fantasmì*, issued in 2003 in France by Éditions du Rocher, under the title *Fantasmès*.

In 2001, for Mondadori Cerami wrote *La trascrizione dello sguardo*, an introduction to the volume of screenplays and treatments by Pier Paolo Pasolini entitled *Per il cinema*.

In 2002 Cerami returned to Garzanti, the publishing house of his first books, which issued a personal series with cover illustrations by Danijel Zezelj of *Un borghese piccolo piccolo*, *Consigli a un giovane scrittore* (a new, expanded edition) and *Pensieri così*.

For the Garzanti Cerami wrote the preface to the edition of Collodi's *Pinocchio*.



films films films

Cerami's literary activity has always progressed simultaneously with film and theater work.

He collaborated on the scripts of Sergio Citti's, *Casotto* and *Il minestrone*; of Marco Bellocchio's *Salto nel vuoto (Leap into the Void)* and *Gli occhi, la bocca (The Eyes, the Mouth)*; of Giuseppe Bertolucci's *Segreti segreti* and *I cammelli*; of Francesco Nuti's *Tutta colpa del Paradiso*; and of Antonio Albanese's *Uomo d'acqua dolce* and *La fame e la sete*. He collaborated with Gianni Amelio on the scripts of the films *Colpire al cuore (Blow to the Heart)*, *I ragazzi di via Panisperna* and *Porte aperte*. The latter won the European Oscar and was nominated for the American Oscar in 1991 as the best foreign film.

In collaboration with Roberto Benigni he wrote *Il piccolo diavolo*, *Johnny Stecchino* (which was issued as a screenplay by the publishing company Theoria), *Il mostro* (as a novel by Longanesi in 1994) and *La vita è bella (Life is Beautiful)*. Among the awards won by this film are five Nastri d'Argento, nine Davids of Donatello, the City of Jerusalem Prize, the Special Grand Prize of the Jury of the Cannes Festival, two European Oscars, and seven nominations and three Oscars awarded by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

In 2002, *Pinocchio*, with a screenplay by Benigni and Cerami and the direction of Roberto Benigni, was released in the theaters. The film received great public acclaim in Italy, Austria, Germany and Japan.



theatral production theatral production

In 1984, Cerami wrote for the Florentine theater group «Pupi e fresedde» the play *L'amore delle tre melarance*, which was successful throughout Europe. Later he worked in France for «Le Théâtre du Campagnol» and the «Théâtre Populaire Occitan» companies. For Jean-Claude Penchenat he wrote

L'enclave des Papes. In 1986, Theoria published another play, *Sua Maestà*, which was produced the same year starring Mario Scaccia. Immediately afterward, for the «Centro di Drammaturgia» of Fiesole Cerami wrote *Casa fondata nel 1878*, an exercise-text for a school of acting.

For the «Teatro del Buratto» in Milan he wrote *Hello, George!*, a play about Gershwin and his music.

Cerami has been collaborating for years with the composer Nicola Piovani. They wrote *Le Cantate del Fiore e del Buffo*, which had a triumphant debut at the Festival of the Ville Vesuviane in August 1990, a successful run at the Sistina theater in Rome the following year, and then a long tour in Italy.

In the 1990/91 season a production of Cerami's play *La casa al mare*, starred Luca De Filippo. It was staged again in the 1997/98 season with Massimo Wertmüller, Angelo Orlando and Tosca d'Aquino under the direction of Attilio Corsini.

The 1992/93 season saw the staging of the musical tale *Il signor Novecento*, with a text by Cerami and music by Nicola Piovani. It was interpreted by Lello Arena, Norma Martelli and the singers Francesca Breschi and Donatella Pandimiglio. Piovani himself directed the Aracoeli orchestra.

For Maurizio Scaparro, Cerami wrote the play *Teatro Excelsior*, which opened at the theater Eliseo in Rome in November 1993, starring Massimo Ranieri.

At the end of the same year, Cerami's musical tale *Canti di Scena* opened at the theater dei Satiri in Rome. Cerami himself and Norma Martelli recited the text. The music was by Nicola Piovani. In 1981, an early version of *Canti di scena* with members of the national orchestra of Athens was enthusiastically received at the festival of Heraklion in Greece.

In the 1994/95 season, while *Canti di scena* was on tour in Italy (and would continue with changes until 2000), the play *Borderò*, with music by Nicola Piovani and starring Lello Arena and Nicola Di Pinto, opened at La Cometa theater in Rome.

In April 1998, *Romanzo Musicale*, in which Cerami acted alongside Ninetto Davoli and Norma Martelli, opened at the theater Mancinelli in Orvieto. The music was written by Nicola Piovani and the songs were interpreted by Pino Ingrosso, Donatella Pandimiglio and Simona Patitucci.

In November 1998, again working for the theater Mancinelli in Orvieto, Cerami and Piovani wrote *La Pietà*, a concertante Stabat Mater for two female voices (Rita Cammarano and Amii Stewart), a speaker (Gigi Proietti), and twenty-two members of the Aracoeli orchestra directed by Nicola Piovani. The work was performed with great success in Bethlehem on Good Friday of 1999 (at which time Cerami was given honorary citizenship of the city of Bethlehem). In March 2002, the Istituzione Universitaria dei Concerti included *La Pietà* in the program of concerts at La Sapienza University of Rome.

During 1998, for the «Teatro Stabile» of Parma, under the direction of Franco Però, Cerami read the Guido Ceronetti translation of *Ecclesiastes* in the synagogues and churches of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna.

In March 2000, the play *Ring*, directed by Franco Però, opened at the «Teatro Stabile» of Parma.

In May of the same year, two other theatrical works by Cerami were performed: *Socrate*, a tragedy written for the Piccolo Teatro of Milan and acted and directed by Gigi Proietti; and *Francesco, il musical*, on the life of St. Francis, for the music of the composer Benoit Jutras, performed at the Lyrick Theater of Assisi.

In 2001, the Company della Luna and the Theater Mancinelli of Orvieto produced *Concerto fotogramma*, with music by Nicola Piovani and text by Vincenzo Cerami. In January 2003, this work was performed with extraordinary success at the National Theater Chaillot in Paris.

Under the auspices of the Mantua Literature Festival in September 2002, in the course of five evenings Cerami presented *Lettere al Metronomo*, verses read by the author himself. The performance included the singing voice of Aisha Cerami with Aidan Zammit at the keyboard. Nicola Piovani was responsible for the music.

In the mid 1980 Cerami began to write as a professional journalist. His articles and stories appeared in «Il Messaggero», in Montanelli's «Il Giornale», in «l'Unità», «la Repubblica», «La Stampa» and «Il Secolo XIX».

In April 2001, Cerami participated in an encounter in Tokyo of Italian writers with the Japanese literary scene and students of the university organized by the Grinzane Cavour Prize and the Italian Culture Institute in Tokyo.

In the academic year 2001/2002 Cerami taught a course in *Teoria e tecniche della scrittura creativa*, as part of the course in literature at the Faculty of Human Sciences at La Sapienza University in Rome. The same course was offered in 2002/2003 and 2000/2004 and was attended by a greater number of students, including those from other faculties.

The September 2002 issue of *La nuova ecologia*, the monthly magazine of the Legambiente, contained Cerami's diary entitled *Schegge di memoria*, which was written to commemorate the September 11th tragedy in America.

On december 2003, at the Catholic University of Louvain he will have, for a second time, a Polivalent Writing Workshop.