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Roberta Ferraro, Ilaria Cercere and Alessio Ferrara inaugurated their travelling theater company, Bus Theatre, last week on July 23, in Agerola, Naples, with a programme of photography, clownery, dance, acrobatics, music, circus-theater and street theater

## All The World's A Stage

ELISABETTA SANTI

Before theaters existed, plays were conducted in the courtyards of inns, open spaces and on common land. In Italy, the Greeks and Romans left an indelible mark with great amphitheatres, but in other parts of Europe, like England, the idea of a permanent space to host performance art didn't even exist until the 1500s when Richard Burbage built London's first public playhouse, *The Theatre*.

These days, it's hard to imagine a time when there wasn't a defined place to see theatrical performances, however, for three young Neapolitans this has become a reality.

Meet Roberta Ferraro, Ilaria Cercere and Alessio Ferrara who inaugurated their travelling theater company, **Bus Theater**, last week on July 23 in Agerola, Naples, with a programme of photography, clownery, dance, acrobatics, music, circus-theater and street theater.

The trio have been friends for 15 years and have been working together on their exciting new project since 2014. "We are all from the Vesuvius area," Roberta said gaily under the Neapolitan sky, with the matte-black bus in the background. "Our lives went their separate ways for a while, and now they are reunited again thanks to this *autobus*."

They are a multi-disciplinary team, with varied and innovative art forms, however it's the heart

of this project that makes the company so compelling – their desire to share and exchange art, stories and traditions with the places they visit. They look forward to the possibility of collecting experiences in one town and taking them with them to the next, just as the old storytellers and performers did. "We don't just want to promote our own products, but we also want to create a space of meeting and exchange," they said.

The double-decker bus, which intimately seats an audience of 25 at a time was first transformed into a theater in Matera, in the Basilicata region, by the company, *il Teatro delle Gru* with the help of *Ruatti* architectural studios. It started up in 2007 but the project ended in 2011. However, Ferraro, Cercere and Ferrara relaunched the project last year with the help of the crowdfunding platform, *Produzioni dal Basso*, where they reached their goal of 30,000 euros.

Cercere and Ferrara are actors and Ferraro graduated in sociology and worked in the not-for-profit sector for years. Ferrara is also a dancer and freelance performer with "un piede a Napoli e un piede a Berlino" as he is professor of theatrical circus studies in Berlin. Their company is simple – it's a theater on a bus. However they also have a great social commission. Collectively they seek to bring theater to people who would not normally have the chance to attend for geographical or social reasons.

Cercere and Ferrara previous-

ly organized theater workshops for women who have been victims of sex trafficking. Cercere worked for years in a social cooperative whose main goal was the inclusion of immigrants into the local area. She worked mostly with children and young people, recently immigrated to Italy or whose mother tongue was not Italian, hence why perhaps they are planning a series of shows that will be able to be enjoyed without the necessity of knowing the Italian language.

Roberta expressed how the

people. When we arrive in a *piazza*, everyone sees us – everyone becomes interested, even if they don't get to see a show, they will interact with us somehow."

They are currently stationed on the Amalfi coast for the 'Agerola sui sentieri degli Dei' festival, which takes place at the end of this month. They will be showcasing Samuel Beckett's "Happy Days", directed by Annamaria Palomba, with Ilaria starring as Winnie. From September onwards they are

which is so rich in beauty and landscape, yet is lacking in cultural offers and possibilities."

Ideas for their company include the desire to be eco-friendly and sustainable by running off solar power and having a hydrogen engine. "Insomma le idee sono tante!" Roberta laughed, and Alessio added, "The principal idea is to bring theater and the performing arts [...] to places which are less accessible; to all the little towns and villages, which often are lacking in theatrical structures where art is represented."

They plan on positioning themselves next to national parks and run down, rural areas with small populations, all in the name of sharing their artistry and promoting and encouraging culture. "The idea is to validate the art, culture and environment of lots of different places... places which are a bit outside of the dynamics of big cities." The beauty of the bus is that it opens up, and can transform itself into an outdoor stage, for hundreds of people so national park performances are entirely possible.

The troupe also wants to travel abroad, to Europe and the USA and is currently seeking sponsorship to launch a project in America with Bus Theater.

Roberta ended our conversation with the quote often attributed to Oscar Wilde, "Stai attento a quel che desideri perché potrebbe avverarsi" – be careful of what you wish for, you may get it.

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The double-decker bus, was first transformed into a theater in Matera, in the Basilicata region, by the company, *Il Teatro delle Gru* with the help of *Ruatti* architectural studios

mobility of the bus enables the troupe to establish a true closeness with their audience. "It's not just people going to the theater; it's the theater going to the

planning on focusing their work in the south. "We want to give particular attention to the south of Italy, because it's where we are from... the south is a place