



## **And it Spins Twice, a Play About Endless Possibilities**

natasha lardera (August 21, 2013)



For all those who are weary of seeing Italian Americans play mafiosi - GO see two Italian American actresses play SCIENTISTS. And it Spins Twice tells the story of Beth, played by Lucia Grillo, and Liz, played by Marlena Kalm. Beth and Liz are both theoretical physicists and they are involved with a musician named Ryan. A quick Q&A with actress Lucia Grillo.

For all those who are weary of seeing Italian Americans play mafiosi - GO see two Italian American actresses play SCIENTISTS. And it Spins Twice is a play produced by Tony Lepore, an Italian



American producer and music composer, by a production company, [Angry Bubble](#) [2], was co-founded by an Italian American woman, Eva Minemar (with Tony Lepore), to focus on their Italian heritage through [La Lupa Productions](#) [3] and the [La Lupa Film and Theatre Fest](#) [4] - and better theatrical roles for women.

The play, written by [Alexis Roblan](#) [5], tells the story of Beth, played by [Lucia Grillo](#) [6], and Liz, played by [Marlena Kalm](#) [7]. They are both theoretical physicists and they both are involved with a musician named Ryan, played by [Thom Christensen](#) [8]. [Julia Campanelli](#) [9] plays the role of June, a quacky new-ageist. The story takes place on two parallel universes which closely resemble our own. The audience is taken by the stories of these two women who are incredibly intelligent, who long for love and can see something the rest of their world cannot see.

I-Italy had a chance to meet with Lucia Grillo after a strong and passionate performance to ask her a couple of questions.

Actress and filmmaker Lucia Grillo has worked in theatre, television, and cinema. Screen credits include Spike Lee's Summer of Sam opposite Mira Sorvino and John Leguizamo, Tony Gilroy's Duplicity with Julia Roberts, and her self-directed award-winning A pena do pana (The Cost of Bread), opposite Vincent Schiavelli (Ghost, One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, Amadeus). The latter is an award-winning short film, shot on location in Italy, that continues to be invited to film festivals worldwide.

Lucia is currently in production on her second feature-length documentary, Testardi (Stubborn), and is developing her first feature-length narrative film, A Tigered Calm, which takes place between Calabria and New York: ([www.atigeredcalm.com](http://www.atigeredcalm.com)). She is also a producer, correspondent and editor of the TV broadcast Italics (Calandra Institute/CUNY-TV) .

### **What roles are out there for Italian American actors? only/mostly mafiosi?**

It depends on perspective, and on the actor, really. If viewed from the perspective of Italian American characters, representing Italian Americans, it can be quite limiting, especially to the ratio of working actors. But just because an actor is Italian American, does not mean she or he should be limited to playing those few Italian American roles. A trained or experienced - or even a naturally talented - actor can play whatever is within her or his "look" and/or expertise, unless they are very specifically a "type" - and do not play, for whatever reasons, characters of various social classes, ethnicities, accents, professions, etc. There are countless exemplary Italian American actors, from Al Pacino to John Turturro to Max Casella and Michael Badalucco - both of the latter recently interviewed on "Italics" CUNY-TV in May and coming up August 28th, respectively, and who talk, in part, about this very topic - who play everything from mafiosi to Shakespearean and Brechtian characters.

### **Being Italian American has been a factor on the roles you have been offered throughout your career?**

Being Italian American, and especially speaking Calabrese - let alone Italian! - has provided me with some of the best times in my career: playing a Sicilian character for Spike Lee and a Roman for Tony Gilroy; portraying my own Nonna and then a female drug dealer in my own directorial films made on location in Calabria; working as producer and on-camera correspondent for "Italics" (CUNY-TV); and many other roles in theatre from Pirandello to original contemporary plays. Don't get me wrong: I have probably played more non-Italian American, or rather, non-Italian (given that I have yet to play the typical - or stereotypical - Italian American) characters throughout my career. Or characters with Italian last names that did not possess what the entertainment industry considers to be stereotypical



Italian American qualities. Which is preposterous, when you think about it! But accessing this part of who I am - or my history as the child of Italian immigrants - has been amazing. And speaking of the typical Italian American character, it's something I'm dying to do, simply because it is so far from my own character that it would be a delight and bit of a challenge! Kind of like Beth, in that sense, as far as challenges go: I consider myself a scientific thinker, but I had to really research and study some basic string theory to transmit what the character is telling the audience.

### **What brought you to Beth? What kind of role is she for an actor like yourself?**

Tony Lepore and I had long been waiting for the opportunity to work together in this capacity. Angry Bubble Productions, which he founded along with Eva Minemar, another Italian American actress-director, focuses on better roles for women in theatre. A few years ago, they had selected one of my directorial films, "The Cost of Bread," in their fantastic La Lupa Fest in LA when my other film, "Ode to Hipponion," was accepted to the Cannes Film Festival, so I couldn't be with them personally in LA.

When Tony told me there was a possible role as a scientist, I was beyond myself. I love science and abandoned my childhood dream of becoming a scientist with the stronger pull of the arts - then the definitive pull of acting. Then, when I read Alexis Roblan's script, which really delves into science and scientific thinking v. societal impact on our thinking, and "big" questions about the origins of the universe v. "smaller" questions of intimate human relationships and what defines who we are in this kind of society, I called Tony immediately and accepted.

I have always carefully chosen the roles I play. They must say something, or be part of telling a story, about society and how people are affected by these social conditioning and such. Beth being an atheist is particularly appealing to me. I am an atheist and it is very frustrating to see so many religious themes in entertainment, and in society in general - very dangerous to humanity. I get so excited when there are atheist and critical-thinking characters in a play or film or TV show - and especially as an Italian American. There is so much of "god, country, family" taken blindly as a given common denominator of Italian American "culture" - three of the most harmful institutions in existence! - forgetting radical left Italian immigrant roots. Beth is a "godsend!"(Laughs).

**And it Spins Twice** is a World Premiere presented at FringeNYC, the New York International Fringe Festival - the largest performing arts festival in North America @ 21 Clinton Street.

### **Remaining performances:**

WED 8/21 @ 4:15pm

FRI 8/23 @ 8:45pm

SAT 8/24 @ 3:45pm

For more info visit: [www.fringenyc.org](http://www.fringenyc.org) [10]

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### **Links**

[1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/luciasbeth1377108222jpeg>

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[2] <http://www.angrybubbles.com/main.html>

[3] <http://www.lalupapro.com/eng/index.php>

[4] <http://www.lalupafest.com>

[5] <http://www.brainmeltconsortium.com/alexis-roblan.html>

[6] <http://www.calabrisellafilms.com/aboutus.php>

[7] <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2243538/>

[8] <http://www.broadwayworld.com/people/Thom-Christensen/>

[9] <http://www.juliacampanelli.com>

[10] <http://www.fringenyc.org>