

New York Remembers Luciano Pavarotti

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Nicoletta Mantovani, widow of the Italian opera legend, who in 2007 established the Luciano Pavarotti Foundation, brings a special event titled “Voices of Italy,” to New York. I-Italy interviewed her

Once again, Italian talents land in New York City to continue the celebration of the Year of the Italian Culture in the city, which as Sinatra sings, never sleeps. Nicoletta Mantovani, widow of the Italian opera legend Luciano Pavarotti, who in 2007 established the Luciano Pavarotti Foundation in memory of the tenor, brings a special event titled “Voices of Italy,” to New York. The production



includes the operatic concert “Belcanto: Luciano Pavarotti Heritage.”

The show, intended not only to keep alive the memory of Big Luciano but also to internationally promote the career of young and talented singers, will debut on October 19th at the New York City Center.

We asked Ms. Mantovani to talk about the Foundation and give us a few previews about this special concert.

Belcanto is a production of the Luciano Pavarotti Foundation. How was this idea born?

“I met Luigi Caiola, Ennio Morricone’s manager, whom, together with his society ArsLab, is the producer of this event. The style of Belcanto was very much appreciated by Luciano and even now he is considered a great representative of this style. What Luigi had in mind, was to give a scenic form to this kind of music and the union, the opportunity of working together, came almost by itself”.

Can you reveal us something about the show?

Belcanto represents an overview of the belcanto style, from Monteverdi to the contemporary pop music, going through the most beautiful ditties ever like Una Furtiva Lagrima, Che Gelida Nanna and many others. The concert (with a live orchestra) will be combined with striking scenic designs, there will be special moments dedicated to Luciano, especially remembering his commitment and devotion to the youth. Young talents selected by the Luciano Pavarotti Foundation will be singing during this event.”

Was the selection process difficult? What does this commitment mean for you?

“During the selection I have always been supported by several experts, singers and orchestra leaders; or sometimes I participate in the final phases and auditions organized by other musical entities. The selection process is always full of pathos, knowing how much effort the young singers put in on these occasions, and with how much hope they face the examining board. However, evaluating the quality and the talent is the essential key to making this selection process happen. Recommendations here do not exist, the spot goes only to those who really deserve it.”

How do these young people live this experience? Can you tell us something about that?

“Young people live this experience with great professionalism and responsibility, and of course, with a lot of excitement. Finding yourself on a stage, knowing you are going to participate in events organized in memory of Luciano, under the aegis of the Foundation that bears his name, is for them a source of great pride. Luciano is for them the icon, the myth; it’s synonymous with success but also with commitment and determination. They know very well that the key to his success is the result of both talent and will.”

How many singers were launched by the Luciano Pavarotti Foundation? Do you think today the go-getting is more difficult than it was in the past?

“During the 5 years of activity of the Foundation we heard almost 500 new voices and we were able to involve more or less 50 singers in our events, either concerts, recitals, exhibitions or special happenings. Many of them, after the performances together with the Foundation, started to go around the theaters all over the world, they found an agent to represent them and, most of all, they continued to study and make progresses. The Foundation is not an agency, we don’t expect to build the career of these artists, we just want to give them an opportunity, open a door, after that they have to walk on their own feet. The advice we give is to never stop studying, just as Luciano.”

You once said that Luciano Pavarotti studied until the last day of his life. Maybe it is the best advise we can give to these young people?

“Yes, indeed. This is the cornerstone of our activity: the Foundation doesn’t have teachers, the

young people we select have their own tutors and a course of study already outlined. We give them the opportunities but following a precise philosophy, direction, the same that Luciano always taught to his students: never consider yourself as if you have already arrived, never stop studying and improving yourself. It's not enough to get to the top, it's necessary to have the humility and dedication to remain there as long as possible."

Keeping the memory of Luciano Pavarotti alive is not very hard to do, but teaching to love opera may be. How is your work received by the world?

"The Foundation tries to teach to love opera, the music and the culture. This has been Luciano's auspice during his whole life, to try to involve the young generation and make them appreciate a music genre that doesn't have to be considered elitist, but should be considered as communal and a 'popular' patrimony, in the most inclusive sense of this word. During his concerts in the parks and in the arenas, Luciano was able to gather a lot of people, and often it was a very wide and heterogeneous audience, also in terms of age. I remember there were many young people. This is one of the objectives of the Foundation and it's always received with great enthusiasm, also because nowadays there aren't entities or other institutions that promote culture properly."

How would you describe in a few words, Luciano's love for New York? How did he live here being Italian?

"Luciano was often described as the Ambassador of our culture in the world and the United States, especially New York, which was a second home for him and played a very important role in his career, marking important debuts and essential milestones. New York is a city that Luciano loved for its openness, always first in terms of tendencies and changes, 'fresh air blows always first in New York.' Italians here are loved, as the opera: Luciano represented the personification and the summary of these two great passions. The fact that he was Italian was seen most of all on the table...there were always fresh Italian products on the table: a lot of American friends have been inclined towards our good cooking by hanging out with Luciano, who often cooked for them."

Could you try to imagine a comment that Luciano would make, if he could, in regards to the work of the Foundation?

"I think Luciano would be very happy that today the Foundation continues with the activities he set up....we are trying to do what he didn't get the time to do. Luciano loved the youth, he wanted to dedicate to them time and advice, share his experience and passion: this is our aim and I think Luciano watches us and smiles.

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