

## Performance and urban setting

Fairy tales don't belong to the past but they still live among us, playing in the streets, right in front of our eyes. They include all great stories, coming from grandparents and great-grandparents of every place, every colour, every race, every time. They represent our memory, our roots, the base of all our conquests and researches. Real stories, really happened long time ago and now brought back by a blow of wind, from a few sea drops or a bunch of musical tunes. Where do they come from? It's a magical, imaginary path among a fantastic universe: a place where kings and princesses, greedy merchants and ugly witches will get lost in time and space, among enchanted castles and ancient forests. Towards the re-discovery of unforgettable emotions made of poetry, music and the pleasure of storytelling. Thanks to the language of fairy tales we want to introduce kids to the world of art, to multiethnic integration, to the respect of nature and environment, together with the valuable treasures of love, friendship and fantasy. How? Through the many different experiences that Fiabesque, the big container of fabulous events, proposes.

And finally the versatility and variety of Fiabesque initiatives providing a wide range of new ideas, that, once developed, will lead to brand new projects, characterising a specific study which is being carried out.

Fiabesque, born as a mere winter event, a chance to re-evaluate the urban centre is now ready to become a real project, which will be developed and improved through years. All this will happen around three main features: performance, culture and formation. We could define the first two as the soul engines of the whole event, while the third one will come out from a fusion of the first two.

But let's move forward gradually: in this chapter, after describing Fiabesque set design and the many difficulties encountered during its realisation, we will concentrate on the art of performance. It means that we'll go deep into the core of the event by reviving the past editions and describing the future projects.

In the following chapters we will deal with culture and formation projects.

About set designing the first thing to say is that an artistic project like Fiabesque deserved an outstanding stage setting in order to amplify its overall visual impact.

During the planning phase we had to face several major problems ranging from the choice of the kind of set to propose, to all the natural and unnatural difficulties (like Christmas lights spread along the whole surface of the village, or the public illumination and the various working areas in the centre that were not easily matching with the atmosphere of Fiabesque)

The amazing natural beauty of this little ancient village in the end decided for us and the set design was based mainly on a sophisticated and powerful light system with the help of some high-definition silhouette- shadow projections on walls.

So streets, walls, windows and all the beautiful architectonic details became part of an incredible stage set, by playing a role suggested by their original shape and position. The giant bell tower for example, coloured by an intense light, for all the time of the event became a symbol of something magic and extraordinary going on in the village, while the ancient stone doors represented with their impressive light-games, the entrances to the enchanted world of Fiabesque.

The pure scenic joints were characterised only by the theatre elements and settings needed by the various performers, and accompanied by Tableaux Vivants (living pictures), spread throughout the centre, representing scenes of the most famous fairy tales from all the world.

Emilio Ortu Lieto, famous set and costume designer coming from important professional experiences with Martin Scorsese and Lindsay Kemp, together with Aldo Sala, expert light designer for big concerts (like Vasco Rossi's) and international commercial fairs, were the creators of the unreal, magic atmosphere of Fiabesque, the city of fairy tales.

A fundamental support was given by the Foundation for historical Viareggio Carnival, which provided some of the best pieces coming from their huge impressive artistic papier-machè famous carnival floats. So dragons, huge leaves and flowers, fantastic animals and all kind of suggestive effects were brought to a new life in the streets of Peccioli and constituted a strong visual effect in the scenic set.

DEFGHI group, made of video-artist coming from ISIA school and from Florence Art Accademy participate with a multimedia setting on the theme: The dark side of fairy tales. The place chosen was the so called Chiasso delle paure (street of fears), a narrow lane in the centre of Peccioli, which inspired a rich tradition of mysterious stories. This setting consists of some video and computer-graphic installations together with light-games and special effects, and aims of creating a small experience path inside mystery and fears, common features of most fairy tales.

Many other collaborations allowed us to add more pieces to the already rich mosaic which characterise Fiabesque's scenic set, and we can say that almost everyone who got in touch with the project participated by leaving his personal footprint.

Another visible mark left by Fiabesque is represented by the wooden signs on Peccioli stores, made by local handcrafts according to the style of the project and immediately adopted by all shop keepers as a sign of identity. Urban setting includes also a human component.

Beyond the many actors and artists performances in the streets, we had the idea of adding the so called Tableaux Vivents, an interesting theatre integration to the whole scenic setting. Through a selection among those who responded to our invitation, mainly local people, about forty characters were chosen. They were dressed up with costumes and displayed at every corner of the village, each one representing a particular character and creating famous scenes from the most popular fairy tales from all the world. So Africa as well as Russia, Asia and America, the north European Celtic tradition as well as the Basque regions.

Geppetto making Pinocchio in his poor workshop, the little match seller, Alice in Wonderland drinking tea with the Mad hatter or the terrible witch of Snow White preparing her poisonous potion.

Characters who suddenly come out from their scene and wander around the street of the village, before coming back to the settings to where they belong.

At the same time stilts, jugglers, illusionists and fire-eaters move around the street entertaining the visitors and completing the theatre setting while make-up artists paint on kids faces the features of famous fairy tales characters.

After the description of Fiabesque scene set, which is already a performance let's now describe performance itself.

Fiabesque is mainly street theatre inspired on fairy tales. All acting companies have then proposed performances related to this theme. Some of them were street performances with particular scenic installations, some others were simple itinerant shows of one or two people around the "ring" of Peccioli centre, all of them animated the village from the stage of Fiabesque theatre with their colours, costumes, and various exhibitions always based on fairy tales.

Emanuela Zaccherini, director of production, professional expert in great international productions for cinema, television and important advertising campaigns and Maria Silvia Archimede, assistant of several major Italian movie directors and expert in big events of

street theatre, were in charge of the casting, the executive production and the general artistic direction, co-ordinating perfectly the big mass of actors and characters together with the central production.

This was Fiabesque: a real true fairy tales festival. Its frame was of course very important (street art is in fact theatre and scenic representation at the same time) and during Fiabesque Peccioli transformed itself into a big stage, a scenic ensemble where the many characters were playing their role.

Even those who didn't need a specific scenic set found themselves inserted into a precise frame which enhanced their performances. Thinking about integrating performances and set design we imagined a series of possibilities until we came up to the hypothesis of an original performance created according to Fiabesque needs. Which could be called Fiabesque, that means a new fairy tale, crossing the world of fairy tales. Here our thought move straight to Shrek, the green orcus who travels among the world of fairy tales and mix up with all of them: from the Sleeping Beauty to Cinderella, the Cat with magic boots or Pinocchio.

The idea was that of a tale which in its developing could speak about the whole world of fairy tales, keeping a certain distance among the different pieces of the performance but gathering them all with a homogeneous effect. Such a performance constitutes a sort of global event in the village. The stage is therefore not a precise spot but moves around the whole village and the various moments take place in an itinerant way along all the urban path, with a pre-organised sequential to preserve the meaning of the story. Thus, we thought to divide the story into four blocks, as Fiabesque was originally planned in four parts, taking place in each Sunday of the month of December. So four monographic blocks in each one of which the narration ends by leaving the door open for a part no. 2, like in a movie. And in no. 2 the door to no. 3 in no 3 to no 4, and so on. Without creating a dependence among the different parts. In this way the public is free to decide if assisting at only one of them and at the same time if interested they can decide to come back for the following parts.

With time these four parts could concentrate into one single day and the urban setting designed to be transportable so that Fiabesque could become an itinerant structure and move around the main Italian squares, transforming them in one-day world of fairy tales.

An important jump for Fiabesque which would move out of Peccioli borders towards a national or even international dimension. From Copenhagen to Bagdad, with Peccioli always acting as dynamic barycentre.

This was the starting slogan of Fiabesque project. Of course these are not easy goals. It sounds more like a challenge.

Furthermore, just to leave our fantasy free (how could we not, speaking about fairy tales?) we considered another extreme synthetic version of the event, condensing it in a two-hour performance by minimising the scenic set and maximising the recitative performance feature.

This ambitious goal is that of realising a musical and distribute it into the national and international musical circuits.

For the moment in this planning phase we called the winter event with the name Fiabesque Winter. The project in fact considers also a summer version. The Winter version offers some advantages but at the same time presents quite a lot of difficulties. The advantages are represented by the scarce landscape of open-air events in winter time, especially around Christmas, where everything is concentrated on the main festivity and are mainly initiatives for small groups of people. The main bet of Fiabesque is related to the weather condition that can be really harsh in this time of the year. The

extremely low temperature which often characterise these December days have sometimes heavily conditioned the organisation of the event. For example it's highly recommended to stop all performances after 8pm because at night the cold becomes a real obstacle to keep the kids outside.

On the other end in summer the disadvantage is related to the excess of performances and events of any kind going on in the streets and squares of almost all villages. But obviously there's no other Fiabesque.

From this consideration we went back to the original format. That's why we propose now Fiabesque Summer, which means to be a mere festival of street theatre dedicated to fairy tales, without the huge set design characterising Fiabesque Winter which will continue to be the main event. Four days in winter, a long week-end in the summer months, with itinerant theatre performance which can involve not only the "capital" Peccioli but all villages nearby.