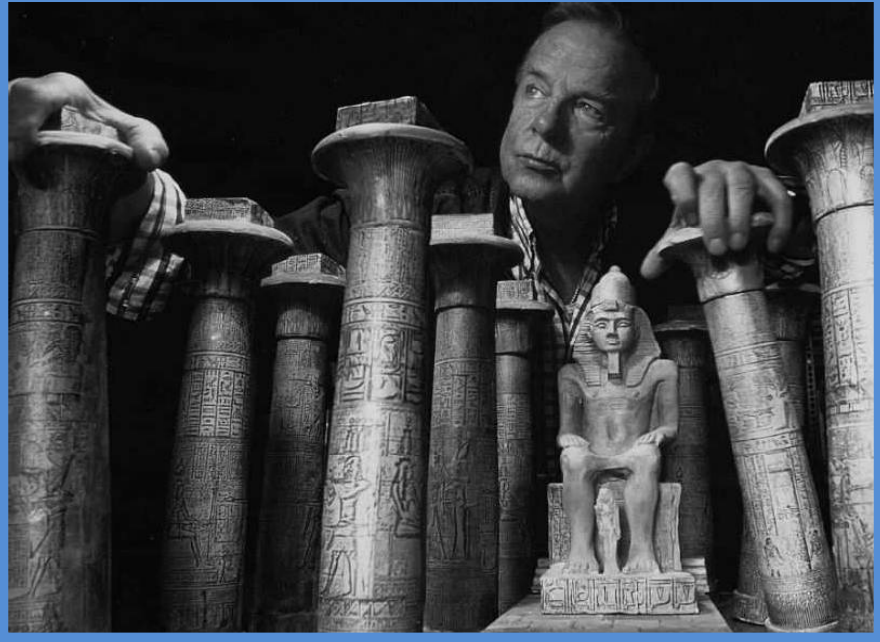


INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

“Franco Zeffirelli”

Throughout his career (spanning 70 years), writer, scenographer, costume designer and director Franco Zeffirelli produced 18 films, staged 31 theatre performances and brought to life more than 100 operatic works, all fruit of a professionalism that was built with commitment and rigor from his days as a young actor at the Accademia di Belle Arti and his love for music. His creations are both elaborate and patient constructions, the combination of an intuition based on wisdom and depth. The Museum at



the International Centre for the Performing Arts was created primarily as a permanent exhibition dedicated to his work.

The exhibition begins in the post-war period, when Zeffirelli attended the Department of Architecture in Florence, while also performing with amateur companies and working as an



Franco Zeffirelli Foundation. The main hall during a conference.

assistant to scenographer Camillo Parravicini. A meeting with Luchino Visconti during a performance at the Teatro della Pergola led him to definitively abandon his studies and dedicate himself to show business, and he entered into the Company founded and directed by Visconti. He would spend seven years alongside Visconti, years that Zeffirelli, years later, described as "precious,

extraordinarily educational and constructive for my future" first as an actor, then as stage manager for an historic show designed by Salvador Dalí and finally as a scenographer and first assistant director, also on films that have since become part of cinematic history.

Beginning in 1953, the exhibition explores the fundamental stages of Zeffirelli's zealous international career, made all the more exciting by the intense friendships he often had with his greatest collaborators. First and foremost, Maria Callas, who, under the direction of Zeffirelli, performed masterpieces by Verdi, Puccini, Bellini, Rossini and Donizetti. Alongside



Scene's costumes of movie "Romeo and Juliet".

priceless sketches and photographs of the shows is a costume worn by the Divina in *Turco in Italia* (courtesy of the Teatro alla Scala in Milan).

The exhibition is divided into 20 chapters, more than half of them dedicated to opera. From a young



Sketch drawn by Zeffirelli for *Romeo and Juliet* in 1965. Temper and water color.

age, Zeffirelli was fascinated by opera, which he frequented as an assiduous and passionate spectator and defined as "the Art that has it all: the grassy meadow in Olympus, where all the Muses gather holding hands". It is therefore only natural that he chose to dedicate himself first and foremost to this professional field.

Four rooms are dedicated to composers (Pergolesi,

Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini and Barber) and another seven monographs rooms are dedicated to the works that Zeffirelli revisited most often over the years, each time creating a different stagecraft: *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Falstaff*, *La Traviata*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Carmen* and *Don Giovanni*. Of the other chapters, the first two that open the museum recall meetings with Luchino Visconti and Maria Callas. Two more are dedicated to classical and modern theatre, and illustrate Zeffirelli's commitment to revitalizing the great classical theatre (especially those set in Italy, like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Lorenzaccio*) and promoting Italian dramaturgy abroad (Verga, Pirandello and Eduardo de Filippo). Four chapters cover his most important cinematographic works: films based on literary works (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Sparrow*),

opera films (*Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La Traviata* and *Othello*), religious films (*Brother Sun*, *Sister Moon* and *Jesus of Nazareth*) and autobiographical films (*Tea with Mussolini* and *Callas Forever*).

At the heart of the exhibition is a large room with Zeffirelli's 55 original drawings for the cinematographic transposition of Dante's *Inferno*, an unrealized project of great international coproduction that Zeffirelli worked on with enthusiasm in 1972. They are displayed with a multimedia installation by Daniele Nannuzzi and FXLab, which digitally re-elaborates the preparatory studies for the setting of the film's various scenes.

Almost 300 scenes and costume sketches by Zeffirelli are on display, along with posters, flyers,



Franco Zeffirelli with Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting, players of Romeo and Juliet, in 1968.

scene photography that capture the performances, accompanied by snapshots taken off stage or during rehearsals, 14 costumes and six scene models, all designed to recreate the impact of the individual shows in the most eloquent way and highlight the most significant elements time and again. All the works exhibited are accompanied by captions in Italian and English and by labels stating the place, date and cast of the shows and films.

The permanent exhibition is accompanied by a video, screened in a room located at the midway point: *The Art of Entertainment* by Pippo Zeffirelli.

A temporary exhibition, honouring a prominent performing arts personality, will always accompany the permanent exhibition. For the museum's opening, this honour will be bestowed to Lila de

Nobili, the internationally acclaimed painter, illustrator and set and costume designer, and a great friend and collaborator of Zeffirelli.

Born in Switzerland in 1916 to an Italian father and Hungarian mother, de Nobili moved to Rome in the 1930s, where she studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti. After her diploma, she began her career as an illustrator for *Vogue*. She moved to Paris at the end of World War II and met director Raymond Rouleau, with whom she made her theatre debut as a scenographer and costume designer in 1947. From then on until the early 1970s, de Nobili devoted her extraordinary pictorial talent to



One of the halls of International Centre for Performing Arts "Franco Zeffirelli".

theatre, infusing new life into canvas-painted scenery. Her work was never imposing because de Nobili produced her own scenery by personally painting each element. Aside from Rouleau, with whom she worked for more than 20 years, de Nobili also worked with Luchino Visconti, Gian Carlo Menotti, Peter Hall and Franco Zeffirelli. Her work in film was somewhat more sporadic, but it culminated in 1968 with *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Tony Richardson.

In 1970, she left the theatre. She resumed her painting studies and attended the Ecole de peinture et de décoration in Brussels, copying the great masters and giving advice to young students. She maintained her sense of curiosity and was active in all the artistic and cultural aspects of Parisian life, but stubbornly rejected almost all the projects she was offered, the only exceptions being a collaboration with Visconti in 1974 for the Spoleto Festival staging of *Manon Lescaut* by Giacomo Puccini, and one with Zeffirelli in 1988, in which she recreated one of her historic Teatro della Scala scenes of *Aida* for the film *The Young Toscanini*. Lila de Nobili died in Paris on 19 February 2002. Upon receiving news of her death, Zeffirelli said she was "the greatest scenographer and costume designer of the 20th century. The Master of us all. Every time I set about drawing a work, I think of you."

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