



Hear What's in the Heart-A Shoemaker's Tale

Manhattan Theatre Source
177 MacDougal St
West Village
212-279-4488

Description

****** [FOUR STARS]** My review can be summed up in four words: Go see this play! Actor-writer Steve Scionti plays eight characters in his courageous homage to his Italian-American family, which might well remind you at some point of yours. Each story is told in the context of the legacy left by Steve's late grandfather, Angelo Morello, and with each vignette the audience gets a richer, more flavorful picture of Scionti's extended clan. The quality of the acting is exceptional: Scionti transitions from one relative's story to the next without a single blink or pause, pulling you into the story with passion. The first scene finds his grandfather working in his shoe repair shop; later episodes take us from Scionti's teenage years, when he was studying dance and playing baseball, to the final conversations he had with his grandfather. There is a scene with his mother, Rosetta, fretting over the realization that they've run out of Tuttorosso crushed tomatoes to prepare an authentic Sicilian dinner after the funeral, and a hilarious depiction of Scionti trying to convince a hard-nosed pizza maker to lend him some Tuttorosso. Memorable characters abound: I especially loved the aging but zealous priest, Brother Connelly, who teaches a sex education class at young Steve's high school. And while everyone walks out of this performance with memories of vibrantly funny and touching moments, spectators in the front row also leave with little bits of orange pulp, thanks to Scionti's impression of his father, Sebastiano, who literally spits out advice through a mouthful of fruit.

Ingrid Hernandez-Monroy



Review: "Shoemaker's Tale" a beautiful feat of stagecraft

- by BY ANN HICKS * STAFF WRITER * FEBRUARY 14, 2009

Sicilian-American Steve Scionti's one-man show, "HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale", well deserved all the shouts of "bravo" and vigorous applause it received on Friday night. Scionti spins an all-encompassing fairy tale as richly varied as Sicilian spices, about family, personal passions and eternal longing for a better life.

At the core of this tale of verismo is his wise, maternal grandfather, Angelo Morello, the shoemaker who settles in the 1950s in Middletown, Conn., to raise a family whose members have loads of attitude and opinions about everything, from food to sex to religion. As for Morello, his passion is opera, and Rossini is its embodiment.

Scionti, a remarkable physical actor, transforms himself into various characters using a few props - mostly clothing - to illuminate a story that begins at the wake for his grandfather. His movements seamlessly link each episode from his childhood to adulthood, and on the journey we meet his grandfather; his dad, Sebastiano; his Mama Rosa; his brother Antonio; uncles Amadeo and Manny; Jerry, the crazed pizza-maker; Brother Connolly, his Jesuit high school teacher; and others. Each character is given its honest due, and an exact fit into the life-sized puzzle he painstakingly constructs.

Like a latter-day dervish, Scionti is all over the stage, demanding attention from every angle as he spins, dances, fights, curses, cries and laughs while carefully maintaining a perfect balance between the comic and the serious. This show deserves to be seen. It's a beautifully realized performance of a powerful story.

Industry Magazine
November 2008

HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A SHOEMAKER'S TALE

- by **Sandy Skinner**

"HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale," a one-man show both written and performed by Steve Scionti, originally began at the Zephyr Theater in Los Angeles, CA. The show, formally staged as "Antipasto! A Sicilian Celebration", "Life's A Pizza" and "The Gathering - U Cuzulu," has attracted audiences to sold-out performances in Los Angeles, Westchester, New York City and most recently, on September 15th, right here in Greenville, SC.



Mr. Scionti's riveting true tale of his Italian family residing in the United States is set against the backdrop of a post-funeral gathering to commemorate the life of his grandfather, Angelo Morello (who was a shoemaker that owned Angelo's Shoe Repair shop in Middletown, CT. where Scionti was raised). Eight characters are portrayed, all by Scionti himself, in the performance. The characters include his grandfather, Angelo, of course, as well as other family members: His father, Sebastiano, his mother Rosetta, his brother Antonio and uncles, Manny and Amadeo. He also portrays a local neighborhood pizza maker, Jerry, as well as a former schoolteacher, Brother Connelly.

Scionti's multifaceted performance is at times heartbreaking while at other times downright hilarious to the point of uncontrollable laughter (I would know because I feared not once but twice rather that I would have to temporarily excuse myself from the audience in order to regain my composure except that I wasn't willing to miss anything). However, several things remain constant throughout the show. The love within Scionti's family is, albeit tested at time, steadfast and resilient while the lesson from an other ordinary man (Scionti's grandfather, Angelo) is extraordinary. The lesson is as such that one exits the theatre feeling all the better and wiser for having been exposed to such a gem.

The show received two Drama-Logue Awards for Best Performance and Best Writing while it was performed in Los Angeles and was also chosen for presentation at the very prestigious H.B.O. Workshop.

And finally, the best part is that "HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale" is scheduled to be performed five more times and that each show will be performed on a Monday night thereby making it easier for those of us in the hospitality industry to enjoy a live performance on our evening off!

Arts

Steve Scionti's one-man show is A matter of the heart

By Ann Hicks
Arts Writer

Family? We all have one. But if it's Italian, especially if Sicilian, life can unfold as a series of "pastabilities" rich as ripe Tuttorosso tomatoes and closely cobbled with love, loyalty, heartbreaks and machismo.



All that and much more color Steve Scionti's one-man show, Titled "HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale," the show is an allegory whose focal point is Scionti's maternal grandfather, the late Angelo Morello, the shoemaker.

The prologue becomes the epilogue as Scionti bounds on stage and begins the tale of Morello's post-funeral family gathering. And while Scionti, an academically trained dancer/actor, enters as himself, he soon morphs into eight different characters, all family members and friends.

Scionti's show is a Rossini opera made grand by the people he affectionately portrays with humor and pathos - his dad Sebastiano, brother Antonio, uncles Amadeo and Manny, the neighborhood pizza-maker Jerry and others. And then there's Scionti's Mama Rosa. She prefers Tuttorosso tomatoes in her marinara sauce and pitches a fit if she doesn't have a can at hand.

But most of all, there is his dying grandfather, Morello, a lover of Rossini's music and the person who most influenced Scionti's life and world view. The old shoemaker's credo - "You take the good, no mater how bad, everybody has a good. Let's go eat" - would have made great lyrics to some Rossini score.

Fair Warning..Fairer Advice

**from Stephanie Young
at The Revenant Culture**

Before the play even begins, Steve Scionti warns you: this show is a tribute to his grandfather, and his grandfather, well, he was a bit emotional. You think Scionti's apologizing. Strong emotions are, after all, something to be apologized for, right? But the moment Angelo Morello walks on stage-the warning is forgotten. This aged Italian immigrant is thoroughly alive. You can't help but love him, and love him for his passion. He's only a shoemaker, a humble man who knows (and sings) all the operas, dreams impossible dreams for his family, eats mouth-watering food, and he does all of it with beautiful, tremendous emotion.

Passion for life. "HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale." It's a one man show, in which Scionti plays out the scenes and memories relating to his grandfather's funeral. His grandfather isn't the only emotional one-the whole community is full of passion-from the young Scionti (who dreams and fights his way to Broadway) to Jerry (who cusses more people out of his pizza shop than he actually serves) to Mama Rosa (who would rather die-or kill-than be caught sugaring her marinara sauce like a Neapolitan).

Sound like a bunch of stereotypes? They are. But Scionti is a skilled artist-he quickly sculpts each stereotype only to break it down, to let us get inside the hearts of these people. And that's the lesson Angelo Morello would have for us, too-to listen to the heart, to hear what is good. And, of course, to eat pasta.

Like any good Italian, Scionti spends much of his time talking about food. But that's not all he talks about. The string of memories actually seems quite random, exactly like the disparate thoughts that tangle up in your head after the death of someone you love. It's...complicated. For those looking for a quick, catchy, mindless descriptor, I'm tempted to offer up "My Big Fat Italian Funeral," but that's a bit irreverent. Then again, is it possible to be irreverent about dear Brother Connely's enthusiastic Sex Education class? Or about the teenage Scionti's bikini-brief disco? Probably not.

I haven't mentioned Scionti's performance yet. Good reason: I didn't think about it. By the night's end, we were all on our feet in a standing ovation, but it wasn't for Scionti, not at first anyway. We were on our feet, filled with emotion for Angelo Morello, his rich life and death and legacy. Only then did I see Scionti, the writer and actor who single-handedly brought this vibrant, passionate community to life. Scionti's many performances, songs, and dances are electrifying. It's hard to pick a favorite character or scene-each one was

enthralling. Scionti has taken his grandfather's advice...and improved on it. He's listened to the hearts of these people, and now, to our great benefit, he goes where his own "heart take a him-up, up, up to sky." And for us timid Americans, that means a healthy dose of emotion.

The New York Times
ON THE WEB

Emelin THEATRE

Library Lane · Mamaroneck, NY 10543

The Emelin Theatre Summer Series presents

LIFE IS A PIZZA!

["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale"]

Slices of Life From a Sicilian American Family

The award-winning *["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale"]* is originally written by Steve Scionti and James Shanta with a new draft by Steve Scionti and Anthony Crivello. Scionti's one-man powerhouse of a show opens at the funeral of his beloved immigrant grandfather, then leaps back and forth through time to introduce a cast of characters whose Italian American pride run as hot as their passions from woman, food, white patent leather loafers and Rossini. *Back Stage* calls Scionti "One amazing actor. A physical poet of charismatic energy who creates onstage a whole family of excitable Sicilians." The *LA Weekly* calls *["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale"]* "Exuberant".

Back Stage West

Zephyr Theatre

**7456 Melrose Ave.
West Hollywood.**

ONSTAGE TONIGHT

Reviewed by Madeleine Shaner

The Gathering, ["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale" - originally written by Steve Scionti and James Shanta, new draft by Steve Scionti and Anthony Crivello]. Performed by [Scionti], it takes a series of cliched characters but embodies them in one amazing actor, [Scionti], a physical poet of charismatic energy who creates onstage a whole family of excitable Sicilians. [Scionti] produces all the characters so effortlessly from his limitless repertoire that we are totally caught up in the affairs of Middletown, Conn., where this joyfully transplanted family makes its home.

Drama-Logue

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ONSTAGE TONIGHT

Reviewed by J. McCart

The *Gathering* ["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale" - originally written by Steve Scionti and James Shanta, new draft by Steve Scionti and Anthony Crivello]. A journey through grief and back again to joy, The Gathering ["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale"] is a celebration of life within one Italian family as told through the experience of one and the voice and characters of various family members following grandfather Morello's funeral. The journey from present to past and back to present reveals intimate and memorable moments with parents, grandfather, siblings, uncles, cousins, the priest/teacher, and the neighborhood pizza parlor owner. With skill, speed and superb timing, Scionti transforms from one character to another, weaving tempo, mood and intensity as tools of illusion to journey into these moments of memories, filled with poignant humor and sustainable truths. Scionti is a masterful storyteller who vividly communicates a montage of animated characters transformed as three-dimensional stream of consciousness in action, singing, dancing, shooting at basketball, and pizza tossing.

The *Gathering* ["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale"] create a delightful and poignant evening of theatre.

WESTCHESTER COUNTY Weekly

Singular Sensations

Steve Scionti's one-man show is an exhaustive, humorous and poignant exploration of family.

By Susan Jennifer Polese

The lights come up on the stage and there stands a coat rack strewn with clothes and hats. A cane is set against a wall, and pairs of shoes are lined up along it. In mid-sentence Steve Scionti bustles onto the stage already in character--initially as himself--and brings the audience back to 1990 in Middletown, Conn. He is at a family gathering, or "U Cunuzulu" in Sicilian, which took place after the funeral of his grandfather. Instantly engaging, Scionti struggles with putting on a tie, deals with his demanding mother and talks on the telephone simultaneously.

And so the pace is set for an incredible evening of theater. Scionti's one-man performance, "The Gathering," ["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale" - originally written by Steve Scionti and James Shanta, new draft by Steve Scionti and Anthony Crivello] is an exhaustive, humorous and poignant exploration of family.

The play comes to The Schoolhouse Theater in Croton Falls after a successful run in Los Angeles at the Zephyr Theater and the HBO Workspace, where Scionti won the Drama Logue Critics Award for Best Performance and Scionti and James Shanta won for Best Writing.

Scionti transforms himself into various family members and friends with skillful grace, periodically narrating the action. In addition to presenting himself at various stages of his own life--get ready to enjoy some groovy disco dancing, circa 1974--he becomes Uncle Amo, a sunglasses-wearing wise guy who warns his nephew about life on the wrong side of the tracks; brother Anthony, who confronts Scionti during a basketball game about his refusing to go to church on Christmas Eve; and a local pizza man who loves to scream "Get the hell outta here!" when the neighborhood kids "bust his balls."

The most stunning metamorphosis is when the actor becomes his grandfather, Angelo Morello, a shoemaker who fashioned the boy's first pair of dancing shoes. Scionti's body contorts into that of an old man as he dons a cap and suspenders and carries a cane. In one exchange the character of Grandfather Morello encourages his young grandson to "Listen to the words, but hear what's in the heart."

Grandfather Morello wasn't the only one with encouragement to offer the budding actor. Growing up in an atmosphere that respected and encouraged creative expression led Scionti into acting. His beloved

grandfather loved to sing opera and his father played stand-up bass in the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

"There are these great home movies of my grandfather and I, when I was a little kid, singing opera together," says Scionti. "Since I was 5 years old I knew I wanted to go into some form of entertainment."

He began studying dance as a child and eventually earned a bachelor of fine art, theater and dance degree from The Boston Conservatory of Music.

The Gathering ["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale"] began as an exercise in an acting workshop. The assignment was to improvise characters from your life for the class. These vignettes would eventually become "The Gathering" ["HEAR WHAT'S IN THE HEART: A Shoemaker's Tale"]. [Audiences and fellow actors alike] knew this was something special.

"Steve's collection of characters needed a structure. It's become a full hour of theater with a solid story which deals with the universal theme of family."

"Family goes across all racial and ethnic lines. You don't have to be Italian to enjoy this play. It tells of the blue-collar people who came to America and worked hard to achieve the American dream," says Scionti.