

Shoeshine

*We all bend down to peek at a world
that keeps on going despite everything.*

Written and performed by
LUIGI CIOTTA



A dusty hand wound 78rpm gramophone, and a folkloristic “theatrical” shoeshiner who’s ready to polish anything you may be wearing on your feet, even the feet themselves!

A funny old Italian corner in your city: we laugh, we prepare a good coffee, we drink Italian wine and we try to speak all the languages. All about improvisations and clown; everything can happen, but all in the name of humanity, simplicity and sharing.

Shoeshine is specifically designed for flexibility. An original idea for festivals where it acts as an entertaining relaxation and rest area for the public!







Shoeshine is not a “show” in the classical sense, but more of a stationary comic theatre improvisation. The time spent having their shoes shined is a means by which passers-by and clients are drawn into older, simpler times, into a scene from bygone days and, through this endearing character’s delightful chit-chat, re-introduced to values that may be of some use in today’s world. It’s all about humanity and simplicity... and all very comical.

The shoe-shiner is a figure that most would imagine in the street, in any part of the world, at least until the 1970s and that conjures up images of poverty and emigration, but one that is, nonetheless, capable of surprising skill in his profession.

A vintage figure you would expect to see in black and white, perhaps because of his appearances in films like “The Immigrant” by Charlie Chaplin, “Sciuscià” by Vittorio De Sica or more recently in the 2011 film “Le Havre” by Aki Kaurismäki.



As we are normally caught up our modern lives, dominated by productivity, technological progress and, above-all, stress, this playful character evokes memories of the serenity of a break, a moment to reflect, to breathe, to listen and maybe meet someone who will make you look at things from a different point of view.





Anyway, if modern man is obliged to run around for the best part of his time, at the very least he should do so in suitable shoes! Shoes that will help him understand how important feet are for the stability and balance of the whole body and, most important of all, how, when running, it is necessary to draw energy from the earth as a tree does from its roots.

For is not true that in all races, whether by foot or in a car, it is a good idea to take a pit-stop, or rather a step back, from the race to better understand where we are really going?!



The spectator, client or shoe-shinee, whatever you want to call him, is invited to sit and put himself at ease as he is serenaded with a soundtrack that wanders from the 20s to 50s. He can read a selection of newspaper and magazines (that may help him acquire an improved sense of critique towards the mass media), sip coffee, tea or a glass of wine when the occasion arises, or perhaps simply allow himself to be waited on by a colourful and folkloristic shoe-shiner.





Our dear shoe-shiner implicitly reminds us of such values as humility, calm and humanity with the way he puts himself completely at the service of others and puts his “customers” at ease, in a world where work is hard to come by and where those who do work are marked by a panicked drive for success that brings out the worst in all of us. He does all of this using simple and engaging conversation that can range from the deepest problems in this our world to... how to make the best home-made pasta!

In this way, an area for the participant to relax in is created, however, it is more “active relaxation” and perhaps the means to a “peaceful personal release” and a chance to discuss and debate certain ideas with the small crowd of curious spectators. All this is done in a simple and relaxed way but is above all comical and ironic. Improvisation and clowning techniques are used primarily, but these are combined with story-telling, juggling and basic dance (from the Charleston to boogie woogie and rock n’roll).



TECHNICAL Rider



Length: 25 min

The performance can be repeated a number of 3 times in a day.

Stage space: the performance can be adapted to any space (better if flat!)

The performance tends to play with the surrounding space and enhance it.

It is preferable to play it in nature or in a “poetic” corner of your city.

Technical requirements: electricity connection

Age: from 6 years old

Language: the performance is all in Italian (even abroad), but mixing English, French, Spanish and/or playing with unknown languages. Suitable for an audience of all ages and nationalities.



Luigi Ciotta is a theatre actor, clown, buffoon, street performer and painter. Born in Palermo in 1979, he moved to Bologna in 2000, where he obtained a first-class degree with a dissertation on Medieval Art. During his university years, he developed a growing passion for theatre, which led him to move to Turin where he studied Circus and Physical Theater at the Performing Art University under the direction of Philip Radice for three years.

Luigi Ciotta

Since 2005 he has been performing his original shows worldwide, acting in Italian, French, English and Spanish. In 2009 his show *Funky Pudding* won the Cantieri di Strada “One Man Show” prize organized by FNAS (Federazione Nazionale Artisti di Strada). In 2014 Luigi Ciotta won the same prize with the show *Sweet Dreams*.

Current productions on tour:

Tutti in Valigia (Everything in a Suitcase), Sweet Dreams, Funky Pudding, Shoeshine, La Nasca, Fresh Market, Abattoir Blues.

Since 2016 he has been leading clowning workshops all over Europe and beyond.

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