

# A bench on the road

By Laura Pasetti

Commissioned by the University of Edinburgh

Dedicated to Mena Bacigalupo

*3 Italian or Italian – Scottish women and a Chorus made by 3 Scottish women.*

*The Italian – Scottish women speak both languages shifting from one language to the other during their speeches.*

*On stage a wooden bench with an imposing big clock hanging down from above like in a train station. At the beginning three women are sitting on the bench. They are not related and, at the same time, they are totally related. They could be a daughter, a bride and a mother, but according to the different scene, they will appear slightly younger or slightly older, depending on feelings.*

*The chorus is formed by three women of the same age as the three women sitting on the bench.*

## PROLOGUE

*Three women are sitting on the bench. The youngest is dressed in the traditional costume of Picinisco or another Italian village at the beginning of 1900, her name is Terza donna, the middle one is dressed 1930, her name is Seconda donna, the eldest is dressed 1950, her name is Prima donna. The three women come from three different historical periods of time.*

**Terza donna:** Mi chiamo Teresa come Santa Teresa. Sono nata nel 1894 il giorno in cui si festeggia Santa Teresa. Tengo diciotto anni. I was born in a little village up in the mountain nel cuore dell' Italia, in the middle of nowhere. In mezzo al niente. Mia madre says that she has been waiting so many years for me after five boys "che la Madonna le ha fatto la grazia". Così mi chiamano Teresa della Grazia nel paese. Oggi è festa nel nostro paese e si balla e si canta fino a notte. L'ultima pizzica prima della partenza. Domani parto per la Scozia. My husband is waiting for me. We have a child of two... Sono due anni che non vedo mio marito. I will travel up with my son con il treno. Prima con il carro e poi con il treno. Io spero che la Madonna ci fa la grazia pure a noi e che staremo bene.

**Seconda donna:** Mi chiamo Philomena, but everyone called me Mena. I was born in Grassmarket, Edinburgh in 1905 from two Italian parents. My father was a shoemaker, a very fine shoemaker, and my mother teneva la casa. I got married to Vincenzo who has an ice cream shop in Portobello. We are not doing bad. Last summer we bought an ice cream

tricycle. Vincenzo is an artist, he plays the accordion like his father... la sera facciamo la musica con gli amici. I sing, uncle Joseph plays the guitar and Pietro, my cousin plays the mandolin. We played last night to celebrate il Battesimo of my nice Lucietta. Chiedo la grazia di vedere l'Italia prima di morire.

**Prima donna:** Mi chiamo Maria Concetta e sono l'ultima di sette figli. I was born in Manchester in 1923 and got married there with Carlo from Frosinone. I was sixteen then and Carlo forty three. I ran away the day of the wedding but my father caught me and I got married with a black eye. We came to Glasgow to work in my uncle's fish and chip shop. I had four children with Carlo. Then he disappeared. Someone said that he went back to Italy. I didn't care. I soon remarried with John, Giovanni. I had another three children with him. John was a barber and I worked with his sister as a hairdresser. Well, at the beginning I just helped out, capisci, clean the shop, wipe the floor, wash the towels... a bit of everything... and now I run the shop as my husband did not come back after the war. La Madonna mi guarda sempre, che tiene un occhio sui mei figli, che stanno sempre bene.

**Terza donna:** Mi chiamo Betty, I was born in Barga in 1898. My father was a craftsman... a terrazzo worker, and so were my brothers. They left three years ago and I joined them last year.

**Seconda donna:** Mi chiamo Giuseppina and I run a fish and chip shop in East Kilbride with my mother and my two brothers. My father died in the First World War...I never got married.

**Prima donna:** My name is Alice and I wash clothes per tante famiglie a Grassmarket. My daughter works in a confectionary shop in Elm Row. Il padrone is a cousin of my godfather.

*The three women continue to tell different stories. Each time the story gets shorter until they just say their name. Their voices overlap and we don't understand the words. It is an improvisational work to carry out with the actresses. The voices should pause only to make the audience hear the names. They should finish together with the same phrase "che la Madonna mi fa la grazia".*

*Light off on the bench.*

*The Chorus comes in. They are carrying various objects and they engage in small actions representing the beginning of a journey. One revolution of the clock hands while the chorus speaks.*

**Chorus:** There is a woman sitting on the bench  
Just two steps far away from my own door  
She's clearly not from here this I well know  
Her eyes are dark and deep like the North Sea  
She seems to look for something I am not sure  
Her tears are not so visible and yet  
I feel her sadness coming like a breeze

There is a woman sitting on the bench  
Just two steps far away from my own door  
She carries a deep wound that never heals  
She lost a piece of her heart and can't recall  
The moment when the pain became so real  
She seems to wait for this piece to return  
From time to time she shut her eyes and smiles

There is a woman sitting on the bench  
Just two steps far away from my own door  
She is a traveler and yet she is not  
She is a pilgrim full of hope and fear  
I can't remember when I saw her first  
My mother said it was long time ago  
Her face has changed but always there she sits

*Lights off. Sounds of thunderstorm and heavy rain. The rain decreases.*

#### QUADRO 1 – THE SUN AND THE RAIN

*Lights on the bench. There are two women sitting on the bench. One revolution of the clock hands. Movement of the Chorus. The Chorus sings a traditional Scottish tune.*

**Seconda donna:** Ho lasciato il paese che pioveva. I left my village, my two sisters and my daughter. My daughter was crying...I could hear her cry while I walked on the path all the way down from the village to the main road. She is 6 years old Agata. Can't take her with me for now. I will get married as soon as I arrive in Peebles. My husband is a friend of my brother. He lost his wife and he needs someone to look after his children. Così...Ha un negozio... fish and chips... chocolate, cigarettes... I was born in London, but I had to come back to Italia after my husband died. My daughter was two then. I couldn't make it by myself. Aspetto qui che mio fratello viene a prendermi. E intanto penso. Anche qui piove...ma qui la pioggia non si ferma mai. Quando smette fuori, mi comincia dentro...*(she smiles and sighs)*... My mama buon'anima would say "Loretta la vita ti dà e ti piglia, non c'è tempo per piangere". No time for tears. La Madonna di Loreto c'è l'ho che è una statua bianca bianca. *(she takes out something from her coat)* Me l'ha regalata Carmine, my first husband, lui faceva le statue e le vendeva per strada a Londra. I pray la Madonna di Loreto for my daughter and for our future. Se tutta va bene my daughter will join me in a year or two. She will go to school and learn English. I will learn to write with her. Ho freddo. I am cold. I look around and I see all these beautiful women with white shirts and big hats on their head. I will buy a hat for Agata when she grows up. She will look like a Scottish girl... She will find a good Italian man... and she will be happy... Lo faccio per lei questo viaggio. I am getting some fresh air prima che la nave parte. Guarda le mie scarpe.. my shoes..sono rotte, ieri sul treno ho visto che tengo un buco cossi sotto il piede. Ma non si vede. Quello che non si vede non si sa... E io il buco non lo vedo.

**Terza donna:** I arrived at Waverley station in my mum's belly. She was six months pregnant and she wasn't fit enough to travel... But she wanted me to be born here. She

wanted it so much... My father named me after her... My father has a cart... an ice cream cart... the horse's name is Zi' Rocco... *(she laughs)*... Zi' Rocco because his uncle Rocco helped him to buy the horse. Così si ricorda che ci deve i soldi a Zi'Rocco... *(she laughs)*... My father is called Antonio... Come Sant' Antonio Abate, il protettore degli animali. Ecco perchè ci va d'accordo con il cavallo. *(She laughs)* E' venuto a piedi dal paese... a piedi! He is so proud of it. How many benches on the road from Italy to Scotland? *(She laughs)* We are like this in my family, we laugh a lot... We always do... It is our medicine...when you get a lump in your throat, you know... Ride che ti passa... My papa always told me this... Sì, sì...Usually we say "Canta" che ti passa", ma io sono stonata come una campana! *(she laughs)* I came to the cemetery early this morning. It is 18 years since my mum died. The day of my birthday. It has always been sunny on my birthday, like that day at Waverley Station, when my mum came off the train with her Sunday dress and all her dreams in each pocket... La mamma quando doveva partire gli aveva detto: "vai avanti Pietro, ce lo dobbiamo dare un futuro a questa nostra famiglia, vai.. che quando ti manca il sole dell'Italia, io arrivo e te lo porto..." E lei lo ha portato il sole dall'Italia: che ci sono arrivata io"... *(she laughs)* I came to the cemetery early this morning to tell her that io non me lo scordo come sono arrivata. E che se sono nata Scozzese, la capa dura è tutta italiana *(she laughs)*...

*Lights off. One voice of the chorus keeps singing in the dark.*

## FRAME 2 – CATHOLIC ICE CREAM

*The Chorus is pounding with pestle and mortars making a rhythmic sound. Improvisational work needs to be orchestrated so that action, sound and lines are balanced and create a harmony. The three women on the bench have on big white aprons. The Chorus moves towards the bench, getting closer to the three women as the scene proceeds. For the end of the scene the Chorus reaches a climax with the sound.*

**Prima donna:** Oh Madonna mia! This is a tragedy! Can you imagine? Closing the shop on Sundays? La domenica è il giorno più buono... E loro vogliono che chiudiamo il negozio. Ma chi gli ha detto che il gelato è peccato? Dio no, Dio di sicuro non gliel'ha detto.

**Terza donna:** The thing is...I went to the market to buy some eggs...

**Seconda donna:** Nessuno glielo ha detto. Nella Bibbia non c'è.

**Prima donna:** The thing is that they don't like us. Lo fanno per dispetto.

**Seconda donna:** No, I don't think so... non è per dispetto, They think that the ice cream is from the devil. You eat the ice cream and have... impure thoughts.

**Terza donna:** Robbie. This is his name. He has red hair and a nice smile... but no neck you know, non c'hanno il collo questi uomini di qua...but he speaks slowly for me... I still don't understand what he says... but he speaks really slow... I smile back...

**Prima donna:** Are impure thoughts a mortal sin?

**Seconda donna:** Eh... dipende... *(she mocks her and laughs)*...

**Prima donna:** ... Ma da che?... Da che dipende?!

**Seconda donna:** Da quanto latte ci metti dentro. Fallo con l'acqua il gelato che diventa meno impuro... *(they joke with each other)*

**Terza donna:** I said "Do you have some broken eggs for me Robbie?" Broken eggs are much cheaper, you know...

**Prima donna:** Peccato o no a me non mi importa. I am not going to close the shop on Sundays! We still have to give back the loan to my compare.

**Terza donna:** He was staring at me... he took an egg from the basket and he bang it on the counter... and he says "Yes Miss, how many broken eggs do you need?"... *(she laughs all the way through her next line)*

**Seconda donna:** Attenta... attenta che finisci all'Inferno con tutti sti pensieri impuri...

**Prima donna:** Ma mica è uno scherzo! Se ci continuano a dire che il gelato è peccato io come lo pago il debito a mio compare?

**Terza donna:** Accussì ha detto: "How many broken eggs do you need?" and he carried on banging eggs on the counter... *(she laughs)*

**Seconda donna:** Eh... che sangue bollente... You have to calm down... che diventi rossa come un peperone quando ti arrabbi... *(she laughs)*

**Prima donna:** Che ti ridi? Non c'è niente da ridere qua...

*The Chorus gets louder. The Three women laugh louder. Black out. We still hear them laughing until the light comes back on.*

### FRAME 3 THE LULLABY

*Only Seconda donna is sitting on the bench. She lights a candle. Chorus has babies in their arms. One revolution of the clock hands.*

**Seconda donna:** Sssh! She has just fallen asleep. Normally she takes longer but tonight she fell asleep very quickly. Maybe she knows che la mamma tiene tanti pensieri..

*Chorus hums a lullaby.*

**Seconda donna:** La Guerra è brutta cosa... Più brutta della fame... We came here because our families were struggling... La fame è difficile da spiegare... ma la guerra?... Come ce la spiego la guerra a questa creatura?... My husband left that I was five months pregnant... now Angelo is three months old and he has not met his father yet... Mio marito

is in Italy in the mountains, fighting against the Austrians... I had only one letter since he left... My other son is ten years old and he can read. He reads the letter for me every night... We light a candle and he reads. Mia carissima... the camp is near our village... I saw papà... How wonderful to hug him again... I am happy to serve my country. It makes me feel proud..." *(long pause)* I don't know if he is still alive... One night I dreamt that he was back from the war... He brought me a medal with Garibaldi on the front... and my mother's earrings... On Sunday at the church we are only women. Scots and Italians... Abbiamo tutte le mani che tremano e il cuore che sembra quello di Gesù con tutte le spine intorno... Accendiamo ceri alla Madonna con le mani che tremano... And we cradle our children with shaking hands...

**CHORUS** (each of them cradling a baby): Sleep / sleep / sleep / my child. Nothing will harm you / Nothing will touch you. Mum will protect you / Mum will feed you / Mum will always be with you /

*She blows the candle. Lights off.*

#### FRAME 4 – THE PROCESSION

*The Chorus and Terza donna women create the image of a procession. She is in front with her candle. They all have a shawl on their head. Using the procession as the main situation, they act a metaphor: they share the same pain and the same struggle. Scottish and Italian women survive the pain by supporting one another. Specific action for each character takes place simultaneously. They whisper their lines and overlap each other.*

*Sound of a gun shooting. Every time we hear the gun one woman falls. There is a scream. They stop whispering. They help her to stand up again. They continue to move. Slow motion,*

*Lights off at the moment of maximum climax.*

#### FRAME 5

*The chorus sings "Giovinezza Giovinezza primavera di bellezza..." They continue while Prima donna speaks.*

**Prima donna:** Onore, Famiglia e Patria... Honour, family and motherland. Mio marito says that Mussolini is the new Prime Minister of Italy, he is the one who called us Italians for the first time. (loud) Italiani! E questo noi siamo... Italiani.... He will save Italy... keep us in peace. He wants Italians living abroad to feel part of the Italian race... He can see us, he can see our Italian heart... What does it mean? ... I have Italian blood for sure... but Italia mia bella is miles away... I don't know... Mio marito dice che il Fascio ci darà rispetto qui in Scozia. Lui ce l'ha bisogno il rispetto della gente.,,

*The chorus keeps singing. Seconda donna appears clearly annoyed by them. The chorus stops.*

**Seconda donna:** Respect? What does this man know about respect? Does he live abroad? Respect is something that you need to earn every day here. Honour, family and motherland. For what I am concerned my honour is my family and my family is my motherland. I don't want to be saved. I don't need to be saved. Benito... I don't like the name... I don't like the man. Non mi piace. Non mi piace niente... Quello porta grane. He will make troubles. I don't need troubles. I have my shop with mio marito. We sell pesce e patate. What Benito know about my pesce e patate? Will he ever come to buy a fish and chips supper in my shop? No.. I don't think so... So che importa a me? I run the shop... I don't want troubles... He will make troubles ... Yesterday I look at the newspaper that a client was holding. A photo of Benito, first page. I didn't like his piercing eyes looking at me from the newspaper. It looks like he was looking at me and he was saying "I want your soul". E' il diavolo.

**Terza donna:** He looked straight at me. I have never seen eyes as blue as his. They can read you through. That was my first time at the Summer Camp organized by the Fascio for i figli degli Italiani all'estero. My brothers went first and then it came my time to go. I was so excited to go! The best summer of my life. Italy was amazing. The food... so much fruit... so juicy, so colorful. We were doing sports and many other activities during the day. The day was so full... my life was so full... We were singing together and we felt so much like one big family, all the Italians from France, Holland, England, Scotland... one big family. In the night time me and my mates squeezed out from the tent to watch the stars. It was so warm. And the crickets were singing. Someone couldn't bear it as it was so loud... but for me it was a lullaby. The music of the stars reaching earth... enchanting us, blessing our dreams with hope... us... piccoli Figli della Lupa. The day we went to Rome to see il Duce... my legs were shaking. He appeared at the balcony dressed all in white, a navy uniform... So beautiful... I think I fell in love straight away then. "Gioventù d'Italia! A chi la vittoria?" And we all shouted loud "A noi! Duce a noi!" I have no doubts, he is the one to lead Italy, he will make Italy a better country. He will make us proud to be Italians and we will be looked up by the Scottish, No more Italliani macaroni.... Hockey Pockey dirty Italians. I will walk down Leith walk and they will all say Buongiorno signorina, lei è una figlia della Lupa, una figlia della Patria... I love this man.

**CHORUS:** *(All together)* In the name of God and of Italy, I swear to carry out the orders of my Duce and to serve with all my strength, and if necessary with my blood, the cause of the Fascist revolution. *(one phrase each)* Mussolini has conquered Abyssinia. / A new land for the Catholic Church to feed with the rosary, the crucifix and the Pope. / After Mussolini has killed with gas all the starving people there aren't many to feed with prayers.

**Terza donna:** Have you ever thought what it means to be a foreigner? At school I had to change my name, make it Scottish, but it didn't work anyway: they call me smelly Nelly all the way through school because my breath smelt of garlic. On the way to school I used to stick my tongue out as much as I could. I thought the smell would have gone away... And after school it didn't change much: the Italian is here, the Italian said so and so...

I am not Italian!! I am born in Scotland. I am Scottish! I am like you! We want some respect. I want to feel at home and yet... I will never feel at home. Alienated, isolated, ...keep your mouth shut , keep your head down.. I am like you. Can't you see? Le mie lacrime sono salate quanto le vostre.

**Prima donna:** My husband is a member of the Fascio club and when we go the social club... I have to say... I feel like a queen. I know what makes my husband proud, I feel it too: he feel considered, he feels recognized, his work, his sacrifice, all make sense now because he believes that the Italians will stop being seen as a bunch of illiterates stealing work from the locals. This is why he joined the Fascio club. The war? We don't want any war. We don't want anything bad to happen to our children, to your children.. We want to belong. And now we finally feel we belong...

**Seconda donna:** You will never belong. You will never been anything else than what you are. Mi sono messa il cuore in pace. Mussolini won't change anything. Nobody can change anything. Time. Il tempo... il tempo cambia le cose... se tieni la memoria di quello che ti succede... la memoria rimane ai tuoi figli e ai figli dei tuoi figli e il cuore cresce, e la testa cresce... e le persone imparano...ma ci vuole tempo... Che la Madonna ci aiuta donne , che Maria was a foreigner.. and Jesus was a foreigner...

**CHORUS:** God, the Almighty, help us. Holy Father, help the women to pass the memories of our sacrifice to our children, and to the children of our children, Maria, madre di Dio, prega per noi.

**Prima, seconda e terza donna:** Maria, madre di Dio, prega per noi.

## FRAME 6 – MARY'S ROSARY

*Sounds of airplanes and gun machines. The Chorus has Rosaries.*

**Prima donna:** Italy is at war. Nel nome del Padre del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo. *(All three women touch their forehead the chest and the shoulders with their right hand making a cross)*

**CHORUS:** In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*The six women are doing the same action, saying the Rosary. The action needs to be experimented through improvisational work with the actresses until they found the right movement and rhythm.*

**Seconda donna:** Amen! We have closed the shop early today. My husband thinks that it is not safe to keep it open till late.

**Terza donna:** I am scared. My brother will point a gun against my husband. My sisters in Italy are called enemies. And we are called enemies but... we didn't do anything!

**CHORUS:** Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.



**Prima donna:** Devo essere forte per mio marito. Lui si è chiuso di sopra e sta attaccato alla radio. He can't believe that Mussolini has betrayed us all.

**Seconda donna:** What have you done Italia mia?? What have you done to us?

**Terza donna:** I am pregnant, my husband is Italian, and my child will be Scottish. I have an enemy in my belly. Shoot me, shoot me now, Mr Churchill, we will both die and your problems will be over.

**CHORUS:** Benedicta tu in mulieribus,  
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

**Prima donna:** The money in the bank is frozen. All our money... All our sacrifices... We have lost our saving, we have lost our reputation.

**Seconda donna:** We have lost our identity before even having one.

**CHORUS:** Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,  
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.

**Prima donna:** I am worried for my family

**Seconda donna:** I am worried for my future

**Terza donna:** I am worried for my dreams

*The action with the Rosary becomes compulsive and very fast. Sounds of airplanes and gun machines become stronger and then a sound of glass breaking puts an end to any other sounds. The three women freeze. After 10 seconds they drop the Rosary, all six of them.*

## FRAME 7 - ENEMY ALIENS

*Prima donna stands and starts crying. One woman from the Chorus gets out and comes back immediately with a suitcase. She puts it at the feet of Prima donna and look at her. She goes back in line with the other two of the Chorus. We hear sound of glass breaking.*

**Prima donna:** Do you remember when we were both pregnant and we used to sit on this bench together? A bit of fresh air to get rid of the nausea. My child and your child were born on the same day of the same year. You said that it was a sign...that we were meant to be friends. L'italiana e la scozzese... Tuo marito pesca il pesce e mio marito lo fa fritto. Do you remember? I have seen you crossing to the other side of the road when you see me. Your son came to the shop last night. He came with our neighbours, with our friends... He threw a brick and smashed our window. He shouted loud "Go home you bastards... go home you..." (*The Scottish woman put a hand on her mouth. Prima donna removes her*

hand.) Ti sei accorta che il cuore te lo sei perso in strada? Io il mio l'ho messo nella valigia. Perché nel petto fa troppo male. (*Exits*)

*The Scottish woman puts her hand on her chest. Sound of a church bell. She makes abstract actions showing her sorrow. No words. All three Scottish women move together. The first Scottish woman falls and stays on the ground.*

**Seconda donna:** They came at midnight, my husband was holding my hand, we didn't speak much that evening. He sang a song, una canzone del paese, che ci aveva imparato sua mamma quando era piccolo. (*The Chorus sings a traditional tune from Molise*) We sang piano piano con il fazzoletto sulla bocca che a lui ci veniva da piangere. L'hanno portato senza la giacca. We knew they were coming but we were not ready. I was not ready... Ci ho detto "metti le calze pulite, quelle della domenica". Ma lui mi abbracciava e non mi lasciava andare. Poi hanno picchiato alla porta... Se ne è andato con le calze bucate. E io sono rimasta con le calze buone in mano... (*She stands up. Second Scottish woman gets out and comes back with a suitcase. She comes closer to the bench. She puts the suitcase at the Seconda donna's feet. The music gets louder.*)

*The two women stare at each other for a while, then they open their arms simultaneously and they hug. Music stops. The Scottish woman starts humming the Italian song and makes a few steps while holding Seconda donna. They seem dancing. Improvisational work explored with the two actresses. They hum together until Seconda donna faints. The Scottish woman carries her out slowly.*

**Terza donna:** I have been sitting on this bench for an hour now... maybe more. We have three days to pack our things and leave. We must go away from the Coast, they said... Where are we going? This is our home. We have no other place to go... My mother didn't say much. Fai la valigia Betta, aiuta i tuoi fratelli. Una valigia per uno. Then she played the piano. She never does it during the day, only in the evening with my father sitting on the chair watching her beautiful hands playing the tunes that they both like. My mum has beautiful hands... Since my father was taken to jail, my mother stopped playing the piano, but today, after the police told us to go, she sat at the piano and she played. She was still playing when I went out. My little brother was just coming back from the beach. He had something in his hands, he said "Look Betty, look what I found", it showed me a bullet. "I saw the airplane Betty, I saw it high in the sky, coming down towards me... straight at me... It was big, it was beautiful..." The bullet was still warm. (*While she is speaking the Third Scottish woman of the Chorus goes out and comes back again with a suitcase, she goes to the bench and puts the suitcase down*).

*Terza donna stretches her arm out and opens her hand. She drops a bullet. When the bullet touches the ground, we hear an amplified surreal sound. Lights change. Recorded sound of a piano playing and two voices, male and female, singing over it and laughing. The Scottish woman stretches her arm out to reach Terza donna. Terza donna looks at her and, after a moment, shakes her head. She picks up the suitcase and leave. Scottish woman sits on the bench and covers her face with her hands. Black out.*

## QUADRO 8 – MY SISTER’S SHOES

*Lights on. One woman on the bench. No chorus.*

**Terza donna:** They left a week ago, my mum and my eldest sister. Up North... with all the other Italian women... I was born Scottish... so...Mi hanno lasciata qui a fare la tela... I didn't go upstairs since they left. I sleep on a chair... I open the shop, I close the shop. I open the shop, I close the shop... I don't know why I do it as we have lost all our customers... Yesterday she came in the shop... the little girl that lives up the road. She was wearing my sister's shoes. I said to myself "These are my sister shoes... le scarpe della festa... I know they are... she wore them for her Communion... she had a nice white dress and her white shoes... like an angel... "What are you doing with my sister shoes, you little Scottish girl?" But I didn't say anything. I couldn't... too scared... too scared of a Scottish girl... I don't like Scottish girls... I don't like Scottish full stop... They must have taken the shoes that night... when they broke into the shop... Erano come le vacche impazzite... The shop was completely wrecked... everything they could put they hands on was taken... even my sister's shoes and my mother's shawl... Le hai mai viste le vacche impazzite? Hanno gli occhi fuori e si spingono una con l'altra... e fanno un verso... fanno paura... I looked at the child in front of me with my sister's shoes. She must be 7 or 8 like Carolina... E penso alla vacche... e mi viene la rabbia... "Out!"... I said... "Out of my shop... go home!"... She ran away... It is not my fault if I have been left behind... it is not my fault if I lost everything I cared for... If my family is destroyed...It is not my fault if I don't like you... I don't like you... I don't like me...the way you look at me... I mean... Do you know what is funny? ... That I am Scottish... like you... I was born here... This is why they left me behind... I am not Italian enough to be your enemy, I am not Scottish enough to be your friend...

Lights off.

## FRAME 9 – SILENT WALTZ

*Lights on. Terza donna is still sitting on the bench with no shoes on. A woman from the Chorus comes in with a pair of white shoes. She gets closer. She gives her the shoes. Terza donna puts the shoes on. They dance an imaginary waltz together. Black out.*

## QUADRO 10 – SUL MARE LUCCICA

*The three women are sitting on the bench. The Chorus is standing with a lifesaver. Sounds of the sea made by the Chorus all the way through the scene with climax in specific points.*

**Prima donna:** Father, forgive me for I have sinned. *(She crosses herself and starts rocking back and forwards. She continues whispering words until her next line).*

**Seconda donna:** Sì, internati, internati... come criminali... Mio marito per primo... poi mio figlio più grande... No... non ce lo perdono... No...

**Terza donna:** My brother is in the Army, he is Scottish... we all are except my father... My father is Italian... they locked him away...

**Prima donna:** *(a little bit louder)* Father, forgive me for I have sinned.

**Seconda donna:** Stanno insieme, signore Iddio, stanno tutti insieme...lo non chiedo niente altro più... Solo che stanno bene... e stanno insieme...

**Terza donna:** My Italian father is in prison and my Scottish brother is staring at him on the other side of the cells door.

**Prima donna:** *(she gets louder every time she speaks)* Father, forgive me for I have sinned.

**Seconda donna:** Even if they come back as thin as sticks... I will sort them out... Un bel piatto di pasta con i ceci... Ma che stanno bene...

**Terza donna:** Brother... tell me... what father said to you? Please brother, tell me!

**Prima donna:** Father, forgive me for I have sinned.

**Seconda donna:** Grazie Signore che hai ascoltato le mie preghiere...

**Terza donna:** I am sorry. My father said to my brother "I am sorry".

**Prima donna:** Perdonami Signore se ho dubitato...

**Seconda donna:** Father, forgive me for I have sinned.

**Terza donna:** I am sorry...

**Prima donna:** Father, forgive me for I have sinned.

**Seconda donna:** Father, forgive me for I have sinned.

**Terza donna:** I am sorry... I am sorry... I am sorry...

*Prima donna stands up and begins her actions. Chorus and Prima donna engage in a physical dialogue.*

**Prima donna:** I am sorry that I wasn't there for you. I am sorry that the water was too cold for you. I am sorry that I didn't protect you. It must have been hard to face the darkness. It must have been hard to face the fear... It must have been hard to leave me behind.

*The physical action narrates the story of Arandora Star. It reaches its climax. The voices of the Chorus and Prima donna entangle in a dramatic crescendo until the metaphorical death of Prima donna.*

**Seconda donna:** It's June and il mare luccica.

**Terza donna:** It's June and it is my birthday.

**Prima donna:** It's June and the Italians are drowning.

*The physical dialogue between the Chorus and the Three women creates the image of a Funeral Procession. There is no separation between the Chorus and the Three Women. Prima donna is carried out by all the others.*

**Prima donna:** Mamma aiutami... I can't move... Mamma aiutami... I can't breath... Mamma aiutami...

*The action slows down, all the movements are in slow motion. Only one member of the Chorus is left behind. When she is alone on stage, she starts singing "Sul mare luccica".*

*Black out.*

#### FRAME 11 – EASTER SUNDAY

*Three women sitting on the bench. One is dressed as a bride, the other two wear hats and they are dressed up for Mass. It is 1950. The atmosphere is very different. We hear the sound of birds. The Three women seem aware of each other for the first time. They look at each other and relate to each other while telling their stories. The Chorus unfolds a big white cloth and puts it on the floor. The Chorus sits on it. They hold the physical action of a picnic. One revolution of the clock hands.*

**Prima donna:** C'e il sole... si vede tutta Edinburgh da questa panchina.

**Seconda donna:** After Easter Mass we always have a picnic... the children are running around and we sit down together con la famiglia... e mangiamo il salame del paese...

**Terza donna:** I couldn't choose a better day for getting married.

**Prima donna:** I feel at peace with myself up here. I feel at peace.

**Seconda donna:** All the family is here. Sono venuti dall'Italia e da tutta la Scozia

**Terza donna:** When we are together memories arise.

**Seconda donna:** And we ends up with some tears and too many glasses of vino.

**Prima donna:** Maybe... I like when we are like that... When we remember each other where we came from.

**Seconda donna:** We tell stories... the stories of our parents and our grandparents...

**Prima donna:** The children love our stories...

**Terza donna:** It is a shame that my granny is not here today... She would have been eighty three in May. She enjoyed so much telling me her story. The day that she left her village, the day that she arrived here... The struggle..

**Seconda donna:** ... the sacrifices...

**Terza donna:** ...the hope...

**Seconda donna:** My mother used to say... when I am born again, I want to be a tree... but not a young tree... I want to be a mature tree.

**Prima donna:** The beginning was hard... I thought I would never make it. But my roots grew harder and my branches reached out... I survived... despite the wind, the heavy rain... And now the tree is tall and strong... I can touch... *(she looks at Terza donna)*

**Terza donna:** I can touch the sky with my leaves... I enjoy the warmth of the sun... and the breeze... and I am not afraid of my past anymore.

**Prima donna:** When I am born again I want to sit on this bench every Sunday morning and paint... I want to paint a road that goes from my mother's village to this bench and I want to paint it yellow.

**Terza donna:** When I am born again I will be that road and I will carry the laughs and the tears of all the pilgrims that are walking on that road.

*The Three women eat in silence a piece of bread.*

## EPILOGUE

**Chorus:** There is a woman sitting on the bench  
Just two steps far away from my own door  
She's clearly not from here this I well know  
Her eyes are dark and deep like the North Sea  
She seems to look for something I am not sure  
Her tears are not so visible and yet  
I feel her sadness coming like a breeze

There is a woman sitting on the bench  
Just two steps far away from my own door  
She carries a deep wound that never heals  
She lost a piece of heart and can't recall  
The moment when the pain became so real  
She seems to wait for this piece to return  
From time to time she shut her eyes and smiles

There is a woman sitting on the bench  
Just two steps far away from my own door  
She is a traveler and yet she is not

She is a pilgrim full of hope and fear  
I can't remember when I saw her first  
My mother said it was long time ago  
Her face has changed but always there she sits

*Voices of children playing in the distance. The Bride and Seconda donna move and join the Chorus. One member of the Chorus gives a present to the Bride. They kiss. Prima donna remains sitting on the bench. She sings a traditional Italian song. She stops from time to time. She struggles to remember the words. She laughs.*

*Lights off.*

*Curtains.*