

Prévert mon ami **By Mario Cei, 2006 - 2010**

A singer-actor-teller, Mario Cei, after dedicating a show to Charles Trenet, turns as a chameleon to the world of Prevert, giving a loose account of his life, reading his poems and, most of all, singing with a true chansonnier sensitivity.

Filippo Crivelli

This play is a small theatrical jewel, just like Mario Cei's previous experience in the world of French author music, namely the "Boum! Je chante Trenet!", where he sketched a faithful Trenet, never predictable, even unreleased. Thanks to this amazing actor who seeks (and finds) his space in the niche of the chanson, the anti bourgeois provocation revives in front of a very bourgeois audience, the irony and the caustic criticism. Mario Cei aptly sings and plays at ease with whispered tones, but he succeeds in a vast range of different registers.

Paolo Bignamini, Il sole 24 ore on line

PREVERT IS ALWAYS NEEDED A small musical inspired by the French poet. "Prevert mon ami" is a short musical which brings in one room the sky of poetry, cinema and music, and where Mario Cei, accompanied by the piano arrangements of talented Alessandro Sironi, tells the story of a mythical figure in the French aftermath of the war: the chansonnier, poet, writer, playwright Jacques Prevert, who left us 30 years ago. After the bio musical on

Charles Trenet, here is the lyric writer of "Dead leaves" by Kosma, the screenwriter cherished by the great Carné and the "Enfants du paradis" of every order, time and level. He revives in the notes and thoughts that Cei communicates us with an intensity but never rhetoric. It is almost a theatrically paranormal conversation which evokes a peculiar style and age through a beautiful videoclip, featuring pieces of different poems and edited by the director of the play Filippo Crivelli. "I wanted to use Prévert's words" states Cei "because today, even more than before, we see errors, impositions, arrogant deeds and acts of fanaticism repeated". On stage, we have a recital which pays affectionately homage to the chansonnier. Coming straight from the heart, it strikes back to it, after stopping by the brain, thanks to actor and teller Mario Cei's constant and affective reasoning.

Maurizio Porro, Corriere della sera

CEI ON THE "RIVE GAUCHE" AMONG POEMS AND SONGS MEETS HIS FRIEND PREVERT After the hustle and bustle of Sanremo Festival, it's a relief to see Mario Cei's recital "Prévert mon ami", these days on stage. Far from being a nostalgic amarcord, the play is a lesson in style, I'd say. And I wonder why, in our national distracted and swayed theatre it hasn't get the clamour it deserves yet. With this "mosaic of songs, poems, collages, cinema and thoughts" of the eclectic Jacques Prévert, Cei, a classic school learned actor, revives in the audience - 30 years after his death- the poet of "Paroles". Moreover, with eclecticism and passionate participation, Cei revives the author of songs like "Barbara" and "Le feuilles mortes", which linger in the memory and heart of everyone, the screenwriter of legendary movies like "Les enfants au paradis", "Quai des brumes", "Le visiteur du soir". Over the 90 minutes of a perfectly bilingual show,Cei gives life to a great theatre that was buried on our memory. Culturally

flawless, the journey through the long xx century in France (when Paris was more popular than Hollywood or Broadway) is crossed by the long wave of the songs played by Kosma and Verger, whose music and lyrics are sung in the original language and translated on the screen: "Les enfants qui s'aiment", "Barbara" with the rain falling on the bombarded ruins of Brest ("Quelle connerie la guerre"). Songs of cruelty and of innocent blood spilled, the anti-bourgeois sarcasms of "Those who...". The research of the relatively unknown faces of Prévert's multifarious activity are some of the most remarkable aspects of this highly evocative recital, his ability to combine the elitist surrealism with the people's feelings, his social and political engagement during the period of the Popular Front, his love for childhood, his kind and anarchist pacifism. Crivelli, on his side, has put together silhouettes who not only did they represent the "monstres sacrés (sacred monsters)" of XX century France, Breton and Sartre, Barrault and Carné, Edith Piaf and Montand, but also made it all tastefully light. and the charmed audience could retain the turmoil of memories of a "living" Paris.

Ugo Ronfani, Il Giorno

Prévert and his verse ("This love") are an inseparable unity. Love is the first word that comes to mind, celebrated love, summoned love, adult love, child-like love, liberating love, universal love. Whether read, performed, sung, this feeling pours immediately that space of freedom which is the storehouse in "Vapori ZeroOtto". This time, the images and a piano occupy the stage. Pictures of Paris loved by Jacques Prévert and of its apparently ordinary people, but actually uncommon. The music, which sounds sometimes so hard to sing or even to whisper, but which is actually a vital support to his verses. "Prévert mon ami", a homage to the artist 30 years after he passed away, looks like a mirrors game, a articulated word play made of edited thoughts, words, images. There is theatre, there are avant-

gardes in it, even the ante litteram protest of a young Prévert, who fought against the futility and the idiocy of the war. And in this play you can also find Prévert's commitment when, at 30, he wanted to create a theatre of social awareness. If, at first glance, it seemed impossible to give a full account of such a multifarious author in just 1hr 20 minute-show, Filippo Crivelli and Mario Cei tried to do that approaching Prévert with rigour and respect. With his familiar style, Cei tiptoes with a firm voice in Prévert's house, in its '20s atmosphere of cinematic, musical and artistic research and experimentation. Alessandro Sironi on the piano brings his personal touch intertwining the keys of "Kosma" or "Crolla" with his own. From the screen, the faces of Jean-Louis Barrault in "Les enfants du paradis" and of Yves Montand in "Les portes de la nuit". How to not remember the cut on a layer of leaves and not think about yesterday? Among such a vaste production, Mario Cei traces a final bilance, which consists in 55 films and an incredible amount of songs, not to mention the drawings, collages children's books, or just his thoughts, who gained success thanks to "Les Frères Jacques", inimitable but much imitated clown team. Freedom flies on the wings of the bird that is the protagonist of several poems; the anarchy emerges from the fighting words against injustice. The poem "Ceux qui..." quoted many times among others, also by Enzo Jannacci, is the invective against the anachronisms of daily life and customs. More than 40 years after the 1968, Prévert is more up-to-date than ever. That "Get up now, stretch your hand and save us" couldn't be better performed than by Mario Cei, with generous participation and without restraint, as he does in the whole show. Hat off!

Elisabetta Dente, Il sole 24 Ore on line

Actor, singer and painter Mario Cei had a lot of material to work on with director Filippo Crivelli and pianist and composer Alessandro Sironi to set up the show “Prévert mon ami”, which has now become a CD. It is a collection of poems and songs, some in French and some in Italian, taken from this y theatrical endeavour. Cei's performance is witty, funny and eager, and both the arrangements of the original scores from Kosma, Henri Crolla, Christiane Verger, and the original jamming by Sironi are very effective. The two artists revives the scratch of the sardonic wordplay so typical of the French poet, together with the painfully scorching strength of his love poems, the most well known in his production.

Paola Molfino, Amadeus CD e DVD. CLASSICA

Besides these images and collages done by the artist, what makes Prévert so alive and close to us through the immediacy of the word, the rhyme, the aphorisms, the thoughts, is Mario Cei, very mask and loudspeaker of Prévert's world, his feelings, his restraints. Building with balance a thin thread, which links the different moments and the different facets of an amazing personality, and by reciting poems, singing lullabies and wonderful songs (in beautiful French), Mario Cei, aptly supported on the piano by Alessandro Sironi, sketches a loving and passionate portrait of a genial man at odds with the world, a free spirit of an age with a thirst for freedom. We wish nothing more but long life to this delicately deep recital, which builds an ideal bridge between France and Italy, the yesterday and the now, in the name of poetry.

Maria Grazia Gregori, DelTeatro.it

On occasion of the round number (TN: the 30 th anniversary) of Jacques Prévert's passing anniversary, Mario Cei's versatile talent decided to pay homage to the poet with a show he would have surely appreciated: a roundabout of words, whispers, music, clownish humour, craftily edited in a real chansonnier style. The Stradivarius record label wanted to make eternal the surprisingly, childish, virginal wonder of those sounds which become an emotion only apparently banal but actually striking and absolute, making it a CD recently released. On the piano, the supple poetry of Alessandro Sironi, who knows Paris and his shifty esprit by heart; he is the one who comments, disclaims, enhances through affinity or paradox Cei's verbal flights, he who couldn't be more on accordance with the Master of small things. The CD is to be listened over and over again, as a background music, a perfect didactic tool, a funny animation.

Elide Bergamaschi, Il Cittadino di Lodi

Often the best is lost in the process from the stage to the album. This does not apply to Mario Cei and his performance on Prévert, a name a little outdated nowadays. Taking advantage of a precise combination of songs and poetries by the French author, ("Dead leaves" included), Cei traces a thread between irony, lyricism and melancholy. In the economy of the recording, it is the "singing" part that prevails, which avoids any academic and loud slants. The role of pianist Alessandro Sironi is particularly important, as he is not just the author of the arrangements but also of the various asides of his own creation. Sironi's role is not just that of accompanying but also, in many occasions, of the perfect matador's alter ego. Prévert's world and the 50's can thus see the light again, free from high school inlays and nostalgia.

Piercarlo Poggio, Blow-up