

FESTIVAL CASE STUDY

LUOGHI COMUNI 11 – “TEATRO IN CASA”

by Etre Associazione (Italy)

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*This case study has been written by Erica Bernardi on behalf of **Associazione Etre**.*

Luoghi Comuni 2011 - “**TEATRO IN CASA**” was the third edition of a festival organized each year by Etre Associazione. This festival focussed on theatre in-home.



Associazione Etre (<http://www.etreassociazione.it/fenetre/>) is a new network of Italian companies developing a performing art residency project in the Lombardy Region. Etre was founded in 2008 with the financial support of the Cariplo Bank Foundation, and it has currently 20 Residencies associated.

Etre's main activities include:

- promoting and supporting the form of residency;
- encouraging culture and performing arts in modern society;
- creating connections and developing projects with other performing art organisations all around the world;
- providing services for our Residencies;
- presenting Luoghi Comuni Festival;
- planning projects on a worldwide scale.

Luoghi Comuni is a format-festival that Etre organizes every year in different cities of the Lombardy Region. Since its birth in 2010, it has been presented in Como, Bergamo, Brescia and Mantova, in accordance with the local Etre residency.

The 2011 festival project answered to the need to go back to the audience and was organised by Etre Associazione in collaboration with Attivamente - Residenza Torre Rotonda and Teatro Sociale di Como As.Li.Co. The first two festivals were devoted to networking and putting the 22 Etre Associazione's residences in connection.

Since 2011, Luoghi Comuni Festival have focused on a single city, putting in the foreground the residence "guest" and alternating performances with moments of study for operators, critics and audiences.

The 2011 festival (LC11) took place in the first week of November in Como. Fondazione Cariplo and Provincia di Como were the key supporters of the initiative, Comune di Como sponsored the festival and Urbano Creativo was the media partner.

LC11 Objectives –

- To transform Luoghi Comuni Festival to a festival that lasts for only a few days in just one city and focused on a strong theme – **theatre in the home**. Theatre performed 'in home' is not a new concept in the Italian theatre world (and stems from a centuries old tradition).
- To reach audiences who do not normally go to theatre.
- To develop a new relationship with the audience.
- To come back to the audience through a reflection on theatre in the home, a new reflection for a theatre festival.
- To develop performances in private homes.
- To foster the involved communities' social cohesion.

- To define an interesting focus among the residences.
- To promote good practice in the field of audience development.
- To promote new ways of selling performances, through the **speed dating** formula: a meeting between theatrical programmers and producers.
- To ensure the homeowners were involved in the production process.
- To develop a non-theatrical general audience from Como and from the surrounding areas to be involved in the final phase as a spectator and in private discussions with the artists after the performances.

LC11 Target audiences -

- Homeowners' friends and relatives. A total of 11 productions took place in 11 different households in Como over the duration of the festival.
- A general (non theatre) audience of variable type and age.
- A small number of cultural professionals, mainly interested in the theatrical speed dating.

All these groups were helped us to naturally develop and reach other audiences through their networks.



Announcement of LC11

The key planning stages -

Activity 1 –

Public announcement (looking for the public to offer homes as performance spaces) made by Attivamente_Residenza Torre Rotonda - June 2011

Activity 2 –

Connection with the institutions (local organisations/partners) in Como and start up - June 2011 to July 2011

Activity 3 –

PM and coordination - June 2011 to November 2011

Activity 4 –

Research of spaces through citizens' involvement - July 2011 and September 2011

Activity 5 –

Festival's production - September 2011 to November 2011

Activity 6 –

Communication strategy - July 2011 to November 2011

Activity 7 – LC11 “Teatro in casa” Festival (performances, conference and theatrical speed dating) - November 2011 (4 days + 1 day preview)

The outcomes -

Overall the festival was a great success. Some of the companies involved went on to tour their 'theatre in the home' production, following the positive reception in Como.

- Residences' and festival's increased visibility. Word of mouth was strong and the festival benefited from this.

- Due to the in-home setting the relationship between the audience, the actors and the performance 'territory' was exceptionally strong. This gave the audience an intense theatrical experience.
- Development of a larger sense of inclusion among different social groups in the communities involved. A wide variety of audiences were brought together (from friends of the home owners to members of the local community). A broader audience was brought together – including those who would not usually go to the theatre to see a performance.
- A new festival format.
- Elaboration of an interesting model (theatre in home – calling upon the public to open their homes for a theatre performance) in the field of audience development.
- Larger and very different audience reached
- More aggregation between audiences. There was more social interaction between audience members. This was due to being in a home as opposed to in a formal theatre setting.
- There was also a sense of belonging among the audience. People were made to feel very comfortable and relaxed.
- A very high level of financial gain: the festival was produced with a very low budget.
- The theatre companies involved (some of whom were new to performing theatre in-home) developed a greater understanding how a company is able to create a real relationship with the audience – they could communicate directly with them, see their reactions etc.
- Discovery through a conference that although home theatre was nothing new, there was a certain home theatre's tradition that was interesting to rediscover. Again, some of the companies involved have gone on to do more work in this area.

- Overall – a sense of openness. The festival helped to create a new dimension of connection between artists and audiences, between the performance ‘territory’ and the theatre company/ residence, and between the theatre company/ residence and the institutions (local partners).

Effective practice –

- The national press and the Italian cultural professionals were not too heavily involved, at that time only the local press wrote something about the festival. But six months later Etre Associazione has been contacted by many cultural professionals and journalists showing an interest. This was great for profile building as in 2011, the professionals did not know Etre Associazione – our profile was low.
- One risk may have been not having a responding territory and too receptive audience, but this didn't happen
- The relationships with local organisations (partners/funders) was not very strong to begin with as the concept of the festival was very new. They did not know what to expect, could not understand the value it would bring. Due to a legacy now having been created on the back of a successful festival, Etre Associazione has been invited to bring the festival back. It will be important to build strong relationships and harness the success 2011 festival in Como – stressing the value that the festival can bring.
- The festival cashed in more than in other festivals because of a large general audience as opposed to a large professional audience. Working with home-owners helped us to reach this wider audience.

Conclusion -

- It is important that each organisation develops its own ways of reaching audiences, appealing to its own experience and to its own specific human resources, looking at the local community.

- The audience/artist relationship was an interactive one and audiences enjoyed a very direct experience. This had a very deep impact on the audience which was evident from their reaction to the performances and their comments/discussions which festival organisers and performers witnessed first-hand.
- The potential audience of Etre Associazione is huge but it is hard to reach: for this reason LC11 “Teatro in Casa” tried to go and take the audience directly at home, creating non theatrical situations that the audience recognised as theatre.
- Today we recognise that the artists need to have a conversation with the audience after the performance as much as the audience needs to talk with the artists.
- We also recognise that artists need a debate with a new audience, an audience without any kind of superstructures or experiences – perhaps theatre in-home creates an opportunity for this.
- But artists have to be open to the challenge. Organising a performance in a space such as a house is an important challenge for an artist because the artist has to be very open to the audience – they have to share their reaction.

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For more information –

<http://www.dionisi.tv/etre.html>

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