

# LIKE A LITTLE GRAIN OF SAND

*Giuseppe Gulotta,  
The Story of an Innocent man*

(2016)\*

## WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY

Salvatore Arena  
Massimo Barilla

## WITH

Salvatore Arena

## ADAPTATION TO ENGLISH

Simon Bartolo

## STAGE DESIGN

Aldo Zucco

## ORIGINAL MUSIC

Luigi Polimeni

## LIGHT DESIGN

Stefano Barbagallo

## HISTORICAL ADVICE

Giuseppe Gulotta  
Nicola Biondo

SELEZIONE INBOX AWARD 2016

ANCT CRITICS AWARD 2019

AUDIENCE AWARD &  
BEST ACTOR AWARD  
INTERNATIONAL MONODRAMA  
FESTIVAL BITOLA 2023



\*Play available with English, French and  
Macedonian surtitles

# **LIKE A LITTLE GRAIN OF SAND**

## **Giuseppe Gulotta, The Story of an Innocent man**

**WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY**

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**ADAPTATION TO ENGLISH**

Simon Bartolo

**SURTITLES**

Elizabeth Grech & Kenneth Scicluna

**STAGE DESIGN**

Aldo Zucco

**ORIGINAL MUSIC**

Luigi Polimeni

**LIGHT DESIGN**

Stefano Barbagallo

**SET DESIGN TECHNICAL TEAM**

Antonino Alessi

Grazia Bono

Caterina Morano

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**

Ylenia Zindato

**HISTORICAL ADVICE**

Giuseppe Gulotta e Nicola Biondo

Authors of "Alkamar. La mia vita in carcere da innocente"  
(Chiarelettere)

**A CO-PRODUCTION**

Mana Chuma Teatro / Fondazione Horcynus Orca  
Horcynus Festival '15

**IN COLLABORATION WITH**

La.P.E.C. e Giusto Processo  
Latitudini

**WITH THE SUPPORT OF**

Comune di Bova  
Fondazione Giuseppe Gulotta

**ENGLISH VERSION WITH THE SUPPORT OF**

Teatru Malta /Arts Council Malta

# THE STORY

<https://manachumateatro.it/en/comeunegranelloen/>

At the age of 18, Giuseppe Gulotta, a young construction worker with a life like many others, is arrested and forced to confess the murder of two policemen in "Alkamar", small barracks in the province of Trapani.

The crime hides an unspeakable mystery: secret services and statesmen who deal with neo-fascist groups, arms trafficking and drugs. In order to cover up the silence, any scapegoat would do. Gulotta lived 22 years locked up in jail for a crime he did not commit and 36 years of legal hell.

He never escaped. He struggled head high, remaining there *Come un granello di sabbia* (Like a Little Grain of Sand) in an infernal spiral until the obstinately sought and obtained revision process (the tenth one of a long series) when he was definitively rehabilitated.



# THE PERFORMANCE

It is a story with dark and tormented outlines, with violently dramatic consequences that cannot be restored.

For what Giuseppe Gulotta lived, protagonist of this story in spite of himself, but also for the experiences of the other various victims, addressing these events on stage is a great responsibility.

Of course, the responsibility of speaking up about this incredible legal affair, the long series of omissions, errors, flippancy, falsifications, clear violations of the law that make these events, a true and real judicial fraud.

Of course, the responsibility of taking account of the context and the interests at stake generating the drama.

However, it is mainly the responsibility of adapting the playwriting through the "human" story of Giuseppe (but also those of Salvatore and Carmine – the two victims of the massacre – or those of Giovanni, Vincenzo, Gaetano – the other designated scapegoats) to give justice to its personal dimension, that of a life nearly entirely taken away for dreadful reasons.

The challenge is to trigger a process of identification, even without having been through what he has endured, without having experienced his suffering with an incredible sense of dignity and awareness. This performance tries to make this short circuit narrative avoiding any rhetorical intent.

Giuseppe's voices attracts us in this vortex telling us, as if for the first time he has found someone willing to listen, the story of his interrupted youth, his arrest, torture, the guilty silences, the prejudices but also the unshakeable resolute hope in a final restitution of his own humble and high identity.

He does it by alternating with secondary but necessary voices: an enlightened vice police commissioner also crushed by this mechanism, the police officer coordinating the actions of torture (an overturned, lucid and not at all tormented Kurz), his wife Michela, the parents.

Every voice, every episode of the vortex, finds place within the light and oppressive scenography of Aldo Zucco, capable of becoming multifaceted through its few but important signs.

The original music of Luigi Polimeni, rhythmic and emotional counterpoint to the story, becomes dramaturgy itself, supporting the inexorable flow of the story in all its emotional scores.



# MANA CHUMA TEATRO

<https://manachumateatro.it/en/about-us/>

*Converging the use of stories, figures and styles drawn from Mediterranean cultural tradition with the use of innovative artistic forms.*

Contemporary theatre company managed by **Massimo Barilla** and **Salvatore Arena** engaged in the field of social theatre and in telling the contemporary history of southern Italy, awarded with the **Premio della Critica 2019 ANCT**.

Recognised and financed by the Region of Calabria under Law 19/2017 as a theatre production company.

Since 2021, the company has been recognised by the Ministry of Culture as an innovative theatre production company.

The play *Come un Granello di Sabbia* (Like a Little Grain of Sand) was among the winners of the prestigious **Premio Selezione In-box 2016**.

Mana Chuma is an artist collective with multidisciplinary backgrounds (theatre, music, video, poetry, cinema, dance, interactive technologies). It has developed its own poetic and artistic research in order to create new forms of dramaturgy and narrative theatre using both Italian and the regional dialect and paying special attention to research on space and the experimentation of different places for theatre performance.

Mana Chuma Teatro develops its performances as projects in collaboration with artistic, cultural, educational and civil society organisations.



# FOTO DI SCENA

MARCO COSTANTINO (1,3,4)

ROSARIO DI BENEDETTO (2)



# FOTO DI SCENA

MARCO COSTANTINO (5,6,7)

ROSARIO DI BENEDETTO (8)



# FOTO DI SCENA

## INTERNATIONAL MONODRAMA FESTIVAL BITOLA 2023

DIOGEN HADJI-KOSTA MILEVSKI





# MASSIMO BARILLA

Playwright, poet, theatre director and producer. Former director of the Teatro Siracusa in Reggio Calabria, former cultural manager of the Hocynus Orca Foundation in Messina.

Director of Mana Chuma Teatro (Premio della Critica ANCT 2019), in the framework of which he has written and directed, among others, *Spine* (finalist of the Premio Ustica per il teatro 2003); *Di terra e di sangue* (2005); *'70voltesud* (2007); *Come un granello di sabbia. Giuseppe Gulotta, storia di un innocente* (Premio Selezione In-box blu 2016); *F-Aida* (2019), and *Calmaria* (2022).

He wrote and directed the film *26 settembre 1970 / il cielo limpido*. He also wrote the screenplay of the feature film *Primula Rossa* (2019) in which he also played a role.

He published: *Ossa di crita* (Mesogea, 2020), collection of poetry in the dialect of Reggio, some of which feature in the literary guidebook *Stretto di carta* by Dario Tomasello (Il Palindromo, 2021); The short story "Tre ombre piccole davanti al mare" in *Dentro più dentro dove il mare è mare* (Historica, 2021); long excerpts from two of his plays in *1990-2020. Le théâtre italien en résistance* (Les Éditions théâtrales, Paris, 2020).

He translated from Maltese into Italian with the author, and with Virginia Monteforte, Elizabeth Grech's poetry book, *Terre sospese* (Capire edizioni, 2019).

As a poet and writer, he represented Italy at the *Malta Mediterranean Literature Festival 2018*.



# SALVATORE ARENA

He studied in Barcelona and Messina and currently lives in Reggio Emilia. He is of Sicilian origin and Reggio Emilian by adoption.

He is an actor, director and playwright and collaborated with important artists such as Marco Baliani (*Giufà*, *San Francesco di Saramago*, *Bertoldo*, *Terra Promessa*, *Decamerone*), Letizia Quintavalla (*Fango*, *Il Pinguino senza frac*), Scimone and Sframeli (*La busta*, *Pali*, *Giù*).

Since 2002, he is the co-director of Mana Chuma Teatro, developing, with Massimo Barilla, a research path between 'other' forms of narration and new dramaturgy (Quadrilogy: "A sud della memoria": *Il mondo offeso*, *Di terra e di sangue*, *'70voltesud*, *L'ultimo Inganno*; *Terribilio di mare*; *Historia du surdatu*; *Spine*; *Lunga notte di Medea*; *Come un granello di sabbia*, *Quanto resta della notte*, *F-Aida*, *Calmaria*).

He wrote *Spine* with Massimo Barilla. Directed by both playwrights, the performance was finalist of the Premio Ustica 2003. He wrote the text *Longa è a jurnata* with which he was finalist for the Premio Riccione in 2005.

As an actor, he won the Premio Eolo with the performance *Per la strada*, in 2006, for the best Italian performance for children.

As an actor, he won the Premio Ubu in 2009 with the performance *Pali* for the best Italian innovative theatre.

He wrote and directed the performance *La cisterna* with Massimo Zaccaria, finalist of the Premio Ustica 2009. With Massimo Barilla, he wrote and directed the play, *F-Aida*, finalist of the Premio Dante Cappelletti 2019.



## Tommaso Chimenti – Recensito.it

### “COME UN GRANELLO DI SABBIA”: 36 ANNI URLANDO LA PROPRIA INNOCENZA

*“Come un granello di sabbia” (with over 100 representations, winner of In-box ‘16 and Premio ANCT ‘19) by Massimo Barilla (also a valuable poet) and Salvatore Arena, (...), is not the simple reconstruction of the chronological case of events, which in any case would have had a positive value in making Gulotta’s incredible story known, but takes us inside the protagonist’s thoughts, his inner self, his fears.”*

## Paolo Randazzo – Dramma.it

### COME UN GRANELLO DI SABBIA

*It is great when, in the simplicity of scenic gesture, theatre succeeds in condensing and reproducing the sense of an entire historic moment, when it manages to read that moment profoundly and to reproduce it in its most profound, authentic, lacerating and tragic way.*

*(...)Historical truth, political sense and quality of staging, three ingredients in perfect balance that make this performance that could have easily lost meaning and sense, important”.*

## Vincenzo Bonaventura – Gazzetta del sud

### COME UN GRANELLO DI SABBIA. D’ORO

*“Come un granello di sabbia” (...) has an immediate value: it does not take possession of the incredible true story (...) to transform it into a heart-breaking one, able to play with the simplest and most superficial emotions. It would have been the easiest and most profitable way. Instead, also thanks to the excellent acting, full of nuances, (...) the path of the civil and human tension has been chosen effectively, able to deeply touch and fully involve the audience and to tell the extreme dignity of Gulotta, almost enabling its tangibility. (...) The authors-directors and the actor have covered the entire dramatic story of Gulotta with a sort of “monologue-dialogue” in which many characters that revolve around the former life-imprisoned chase each other. (...) Arena is alone on stage. He is brilliant at going from one character to the other with no excess but just a meagre sense of cadence and accent. Not everyone is able to do this.*



## **Marco Menini –Krapp’s last post**

### **UN GRANELLO DI SABBIA GRANDE COME UN MACIGNO**

*Every now and then, one can watch performances that have a necessary raison d'être, plays that tell stories without rhetoric, without trying at all costs to seduce the audience, that keep us awake, make us reflect and above all have a soul (...), performances that gift us with true "theatre moments".*

## **Gigi Giacobbe –Sipario.it**

### **COME UN GRANELLO DI SABBIA**

*It is a terrible story of Kafkaesque implications that Salvatore Arena tells in the Laudamo Hall of Messina, demonstrating a determination that is congenial to him in a monologue with infinite vocal tones (...).*

## **Francesco Tozza –Scenario on line**

### **INGIUSTIZIE DI GIUSTIZIA E CATARSI DEL PALCOSCENICO**

*In the work admirably interpreted thanks to the talented actor (...), there is a gloomy and troubled atmosphere of bewilderment, in an endless opaque, shady and slimy landscape despite the deliberate narrowness of the stage. (...) It is the catharsis of the stage, the ancient medicine used to purify human passions, understanding them to overcome them; subtly bringing back to conscience insidiously deleted events in order not to forget.*

## **Antonia Dalpiaz – L'Adige**

### **GULLOTTA TRA IL PUBBLICO: RESTITUITEMI LA MIA VITA**

*Gullotta (...) sees himself and his own story pass in front of him, through the voice, the body, the silences of an actor, Salvatore Arena, who tells the incredible events with a profound artistic and human involvement (...).*

*Very applauded work and convincing interpretation.  
A theatre experience that will not be easy to forget.*



**Guido Valdini – Repubblica Palermo e  
Repubblica Palermo.it**

**STORIA DI UN'ODISSEA GIUDIZIARIA RECITATA  
SENZA ENFASI**

*If there is no truth for Giuseppe Gulotta, scapegoat crushed by an obscene mechanism between the biblical and the Kafkaesque, there is at least an unshakable hope for justice.*

**Francesco Saija – Nuovo soldo**

**LO SPASIMO DI TRAPANI**

*A very intense recitative and dramaturgical crescendo that leads the spectator to almost split in two and move on to the stage with heart and soul, enter the "painful path" of a young man that is now free and whose large part of life especially youth has been snatched. A very successful performance of great civil and theatrical engagement (...) that should tread the stages for years (...).*

**Giovanna Villella – Lameziaterme.it**

**CAPTIVUS O DELLA VITA SOTTRATTA**

*A theatre of the present that offers us a ritual blackness, an absolutely full void, supported by a dramaturgical writing built on the poetics of the fragment where the reflections of the present time are interwoven with memories, with glimpses of life lived in a score of words and gestures (...) Salvatore Arena's is intense and palpating. It restores the breath, the emotions, the pain, the love, the expectations and the dignity of a man that has remained voiceless for too long.*

**Jovana Matevska Atanasova – Elemental.mk**

**„КАКО МАЛО ЗРНО ПЕСОК“ – ЗА ВИДЕЛИНАТА И ВИНАТА**

*Salvatore Arena redefines monodrama in every aspect, from theory to practice, especially when he is hovering in the half-light and asks "What place, what world is this? Where revenge is worth more than justice?" For me, and I dare say for many, the show did not end there. I took it home, it survived in Internet searches, discussions, the excitement of a play thanks to which I am happy to have travelled in Italy, even without ice cream, pasta carbonara or pizza. The justice served in the epilogue was more delicious than anything else. Undoubtedly, the monodrama 'Come un granello di sabbia' will leave a mark in the festival anthology: a performance, a date - that of 18 May - to remember and that will be a reference for future participants.*





national contact

+39 3803240740

international contact

+33 662480113

[direzione@manachumateatro.it](mailto:direzione@manachumateatro.it)

[elizabeth.grech@manachumateatro.it](mailto:elizabeth.grech@manachumateatro.it)

[www.manachumateatro.it](http://www.manachumateatro.it)

