



THE CRITIC

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ORESTE KIRKOP — PARAMOUNT PICTURES.



PROFILE OF A PLAYWRIGHT

ALBERT M. CASSOLA

This Magazine is not very much concerned with the purely literary aspect of things. So that even if Albert M. Cassola's short stories have been adjudicated as the best of all whenever he entered for a competition — and that was about eight times — we cannot deal with his successes as a writer. Nor do we intend to dwell on the fact that he won first prize both for the short story and the poetry contests of the famous *Pronostku Malti* for the same year. Indeed, we think no other local writer ever won a prize or high commendation in every competition he took part in.

So also we shall here limit ourselves to mentioning only his theatre books and works; for Albert Cassola is now renowned primarily as a playwright.

He started writing plays when he was only fourteen years of age and since then he gave us one full-length play in Italian (unpublished), three in Maltese and a two-act comedy also in Maltese. Besides, he has written one English, two Italian and some sixteen Maltese works, all in one act. We have no record of the sketches, scenes and duologues he has created but several of his drama criticisms and articles, as well as reviews of theatre books, appeared in *Controcorrente* of Italy, *The Amateur Stage* of London, *The Linguists' Review* (London), *M.C.I. Bulletin*, Malta, *Times of Malta*, *Malta Chronicle*, *Il-Malti*, *Il-Berqa*, *Lehen Is-Sewwa*, *Patria*, *Torch* and other papers.

Among his theatre books is "*Għadu Kemm Jibda!*" a volume of well over

300 pages and the only one of its kind in Malta.

He has written only two radio plays but the great majority of his one-acters, which were written with an eye on the radio, were broadcast over the Redifusion, some of them more than once.

The first play in Maltese to be broadcast from the B.B.C. was one by A. Cassola, as far back as 1940. History was made in the Malta drama field when his Italian play "*Il penitente*" was transmitted twice from Radio Monteceneri of Italian Switzerland.

Cassola also held talks on drama and playwriting both in academic meetings and on the Radio. Last Summer his short talk on the West End theatres of London was broadcast from the B.B.C. and rebroadcast locally.

Once he obtained the *Segnalazione d'Onore* and twice the *Encomio diploma*, which is the highest award, in Italian drama competitions which have a number of entries ranging between 300 and 400. He won also several commendations and prizes in theatre contests in Malta and is the only recipient of the *Inez Trophy* as a writer.

Bibliography of his theatre is extensive but mention may be made of, at least, the article published in "*Football and Footlights*" and of an interview which appeared in "*SNIAR*" of Rome. In that paper the late Giacinto Tua stated that a few Maltese playwrights were certainly making a name and among them was Cassola. He added that "*Certamente alcuni lavori meritano di essere conosciuti anche dal pubblico*



delle grandi città italiane. Vi sono commedie scritte con molto impegno e grande aderenza alla vita. Commedie sature di teatralità, giocate con verve e grazia, alcune persino originali". He then said that Cassola leads the dialogue "egregiamente" and that he is "particolarmente vivace, spigliato, organico

ed efficace." Cassola's name appears also in an Italian theatre encyclopaedia.

Our own opinion of A. Cassola as a playwright is indeed high but he himself modestly thinks that all his plays could be of some value only when they are carefully revised and corrected. He also says that his best play is yet to come and, anyway, it can never be among those already written. The cautious writer always regrets his past works and hopes to make amends by creating something really worth the while.

A. Cassola, who is a Fellow of the Institute of Linguists, is also a good stage and radio actor and producer, and many a time he gave us very high interpretations of his own works and of those of celebrated playwrights like Pirandello.

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