



Mondo - Tirak (dear) a comedy about loves that are born in Thailand

Dal nostro corrispondente a Bangkok - 14 lug 2022 (Prima Notizia 24) A play written and directed by Maurizio Mistretta, played by only male actors, ironically and lightly deals with the theme of loves that are born to Thai women but that -at a distance- show surprises that are not always pleasant, even some painful drama. The premiere took place at "Sole Mio Bangkok".

All expats, expatriates, who decide to live settledly, a love affair with a Thai woman knows what it is all about. And among so many roses there is certainly no shortage of thorns. One vexation that has now become a "classic" of its kind is precisely the Thai word "Tirak," which means "Darling." A sweet little word, to which a whole manner is attached that has become a kind of real iconography related to women and especially Thai girls who become the object of amorous attentions from Westerners, foreigners in general (themselves called "farang"). And so, after the initial approaches, when foreigners begin a relationship-especially when it is characterized by long distance times-girls begin to tell of their "sudden" family needs-a grandmother is sick and needs medical attention, a parent is in trouble because of some wrong investment, and -a case that has become emblematic especially when it comes to girls living in rural and suburban settings- the buffalo, so important for the family economy and to carry on the work in the countryside, also needs to be taken care of because it has a pathology, an illness that needs to be treated. In any case, these are eventualities -all of them- for which the girls -the "tirak" of the "farang"- ask for money. Remittances from foreigners who send money to their "tiraks," money withdrawn from ATMs when the "farangs" are in Thailand, either passing through or because they have moved in more permanently, are the "postcard" that describes a certain (quite large) part of the relations between foreigners and Thais. Of course, these are generalizations, but right on top of them opens up a veritable prairie of anecdotes, tales, and human experiences that, however, sometimes end not in laughter but in real drama: cases are far from rare where -in fact- properties end up in Thai hands outright, foreigners have emptied their bank accounts, houses and properties in general (which in Thailand can be foreign up to a maximum of 49 percent in most cases) fly away, everything dissolves, love fades, the far more pragmatic interests remain, and many foreigners, decide to throw themselves into the void from a high balcony of some palace or hotel rather than return to their homeland where they have nothing and no one to rely on. This is the frame of reference of the issue, familiar to expats and all those who fall in love or get married to a Thai woman. And on this generalized sea of relational complexities, is based the play "Tirak" written, directed and performed by Maurizio Mistretta, a Pisan who moved to Bangkok, where he founded BIAG, Bangkok International Artists Guild, runs an acting school, also works as a screenwriter and film director. A multifaceted theatrical genius who often tackles even particularly difficult themes with a key

between ironic and sarcastic. "Actually," the actor, director and screenwriter tells us, "it is an idea that I had in mind for a long time but that -due to various events and circumstances- was procrastinated several times, there were momentous intervening factors such as the Covid, just to give an example, and so it was often postponed until better times. Until, together with Willi Zogo and Matas Danievicious this time we decided to give it a try." These are two actors who in their daily lives carry out quite other professional activities in Bangkok and have gradually accompanied Maurizio Mistretta in other theatrical and even film events such as the film "Useful Idiots" written, scripted, directed and starring Mistretta himself. The play also sees support in images and music, coordinated at the Console by Edoardo Bonavolta. The theatrical premiere was held at the "Sole Mio Bangkok" catering venue directed and founded by Domenico Locantore, who is a soul endowed with great flair and creative energy, is himself a musician and singer, and in his location he has created a stage, with full instrumentation, available for the Creative Arts. Literary readings, recitals, live music even music contests that saw great participation of adults and children with charitable purposes. And all this without neglecting the high quality of its products and its Kitchen, a superb platform where to taste the typical flavors of the Italian culinary (and wine) tradition. "We eventually decided to see only male actors play all the roles in the play-continues Mistretta-for two reasons, on the one hand it enhances the hilarious aspect of the perspective with which we revisit this theme of relations between foreigners and Thais, a very desecrating key, light without being frivolous, the theme can also have particularly delicate implications, and we did not neglect to take into account the human factor in this whole picture. Secondly, precisely because we wanted to respect the human element and the culture in which we find ourselves, the nation where we live, we felt that if there were Thai girls playing the role of the "Tirak" on stage, this could have been disliked, it could have been misunderstood and considered disrespectful." Rehearsals for the play were not easy, less than in other circumstances, one might say. "The actual rehearsals," Mistretta reports, "were a very small part of the time devoted to defining texts, roles and movements on stage, because the larger share of time -every time we started it was like this- soon became a real group psychology session, a kind of group psychoanalysis. Everyone recounted their own experiences on the subject, we discussed the oleography of certain circumstances, after all, the play, gradually became what it is in its final aspect: not a mockery of the issue of "Tirak" towards their foreign lovers as much as the telling of our view of the "Tirak" subject and their way of relating to it, so we staged the point of view of our eyes, of our view on the subject." "Tirak" by Maurizio Mistretta, is a play that garners many laughs, the audience even intervenes with jokes, clapping, quivering and sharing from beginning to end. And -between laughs, between jokes- there remains much room for reflection. And sometimes, the bitter taste of the darkest reflections remains in the mouth.

di Francesco Tortora Giovedì 14 Luglio 2022