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VOICE OF NAPLES

Dino Rosi has been singing opera since he was six

BY CHRISTINA SANTUCCI

csantucci@queenscourier.com

At the age of six, Dino Rosi, an only child, started singing opera around his house in the center of Naples, Italy.

"There was nobody in my family that is a singer. It's like somebody who likes playing the piano very much. It's in my genes, in my DNA," he said emphatically.

Although at first he received little encouragement for his musical pursuit, Rosi harangued his parents until he was allowed to begin singing lessons. Several years later, Rosi's teacher, Maestro Mino Campanio, told him that his voice was better suited for classic Neapolitan songs.

So instead of learning opera favorites sung by his idol Luciano Pavarotti, Rosi focused on songs originating in his hometown – including, "O Sole Mio" and "O Soldato Innamorato," his favorite about a soldier going off to World War I and reassuring his love of his return.

"These are songs that have a lot of feeling," he said.

Rosi also learned songs in five other languages – English, Spanish, Hebrew, French, and standard Italian, which is differentiated from Neapolitan dialect. Rosi explains that many phrases are different – like "I love you," which translates to "Ti amo" in Italian.

"I learned [other languages] so that I could reach bigger audiences and reach more people," he explained, listing "Grenada" as one of the songs he sings in Spanish.

In 1968, Rosi, along with his parents, Alfredo and Anna, and his new wife, Pasqualina, packed their belongings to move to the United States – first Boston, then Pittsburgh, then Astoria, about 25 years ago.

"I just came here to see if I could try my luck as a singer," Rosi said of the move.

After continuing to study music

at Brooklyn School of Music, Rosi read about an Italian festival/concert – planned for April 6, 1976 in Madison Square Garden – in a newspaper and decided to call to see if he could try out.

"When I was discovered, I was discovered by pure chance," Rosi said, describing how he called the show's organizer, Vincenzo Fragale, and finagled a tryout even though the organizer said he wasn't interested. When Fragale heard Rosi sing, he booked the young singer to open for the show's star, Luciano Tajoli – who was considered the Frank Sinatra of Italy.

Fragale told Rosi, "I'm going to bill you as a the voice of Naples" or "La Voce di Napoli."

More than 30 years later, Rosi remains an active singer – performing at Italian festivals, banquets for Italian dignitaries, and working on his next CD, due out in March 2007 and entitled, "Bella." His last album, "Dino Rosi: the Best Of," was released in 2005.

Rosi and his wife also had two daughters, Anna, 29, and Marlena, 22.

Within the past 10 years, Rosi has begun singing at senior centers as a way to share his talent – sometimes performing in as many as three to four senior centers per week. Rosi has frequented the Atria in Kew Gardens, Flushing House in Flushing, and Sterling Glen in Forest Hills, where residents beam with nostalgia as he performs show tunes, a bit of opera, as well as his Neapolitan classics. One of his favorite numbers, Sinatra's "My Way," is very popular with the seniors.

"I keep in shape singing," he said, "I'm giving back something. I just want to make them [the seniors] happy."

In addition, Rosi said that he also schedules several concerts at Queens libraries each month, as another way to share his voice.

"I wouldn't continue doing it if it wasn't so rewarding," he said.



Italian-American Dino Rosi performs at senior centers so as to share his singing talent.

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