

The library of Babb-el

One of the places most frequented by Giorgio Dal Canto was the historic Pontedera printing house, *Bandecchi&Vivaldi*. It was founded in 1923 in Piazza Belfiore and then moved to Via della Repubblica, near the station in the post-war years before moving to the La Bianca industrial area in 1993.

Here Babb was 'at home'. He knew everyone, but above all, he had a close bond with the Vivaldi family, and in particular, with Sergio who contributed greatly to the dissemination of his art.

In 1984, an exceptional project took shape on the tables of this epic company: the '*Pontedera Almanacco*' yearbook. Benozzo Gianetti, who skilfully coordinated the historical team of the printing house, created a precious 'treasure chest' of historical anecdotes and city traditions, directed the job. Everything was seasoned with extraordinary irony, starting with the horoscope for the coming year with the signs of the zodiac drawn by Dal Canto. Babb's illustrations were to accompany the almanac for thirty-five editions until 2018. The following year was the first time for Antonio Bobò. In explaining this editorial initiative, the editors wrote, '*We present the first issue of the Almanac in the secret hope of being able to continue it annually in*



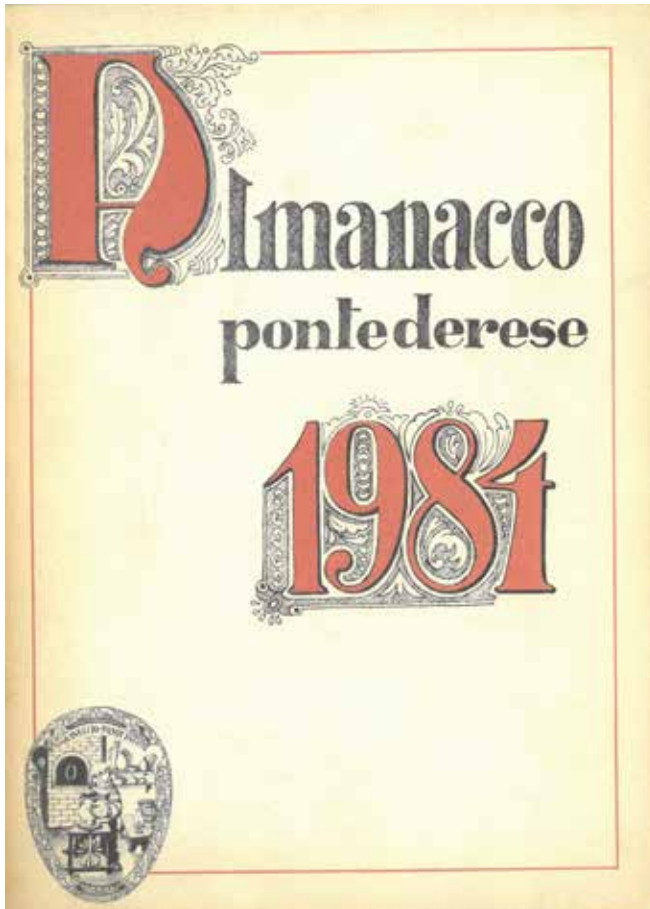
the future, if found to the liking of the town's people.

The Almanac contains the calendar with the saints of the day as proclaimed by the Pisan church, and also the most common astronomical references.

Interesting novelties are the historical annotations and reproductions, which for the year 1984, refer to the period 1850-1900, taken mainly from 'Pontedera tra cronaca e storia 1859-1922' by Roberto Cerri

and the local chronicles, edited by Fausto Pettinelli, cut out from 'La Nazione' from 1890 to 1920, bound in a simple envelope which survived the bombings of the Second World War and the flood of 1966.

To highlight the historical period of the second half of the 19th century, poems by Fucini and Bellatalla, excerpts, manifestos, nursery rhymes, lullabies, stornelli, horoscopes and magical beliefs have been selected, which bear witness to the popular cultural tendencies of the time. Other poems by living vernacular authors (one of whom is an authentic 'Pontederese' and the others from the surrounding area) wittily and amiably invite us to a retrospective and fascinating read. There are also recent and past docu-



The cover of the first *Pontedera Almanac*, 1984

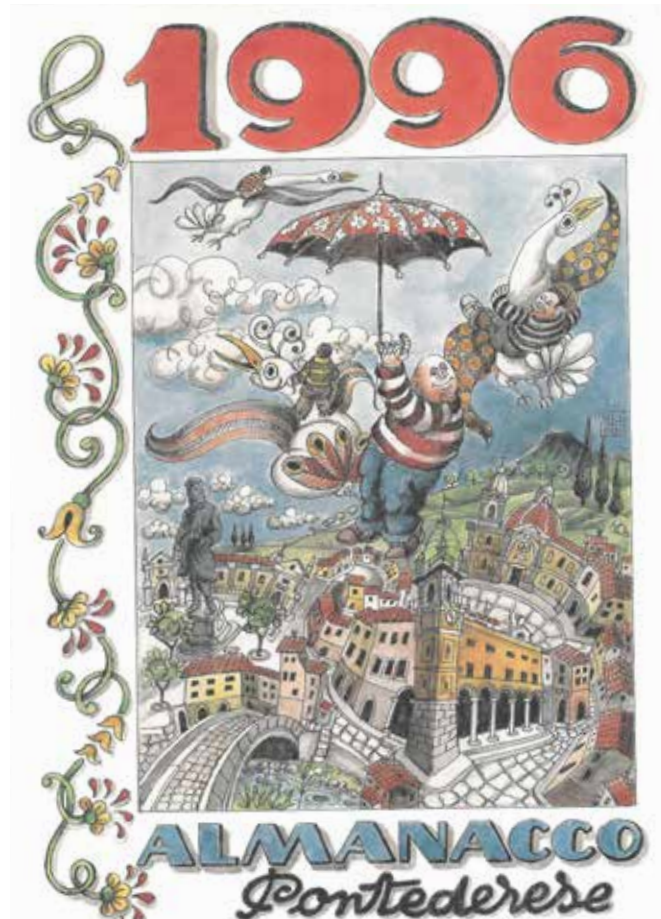
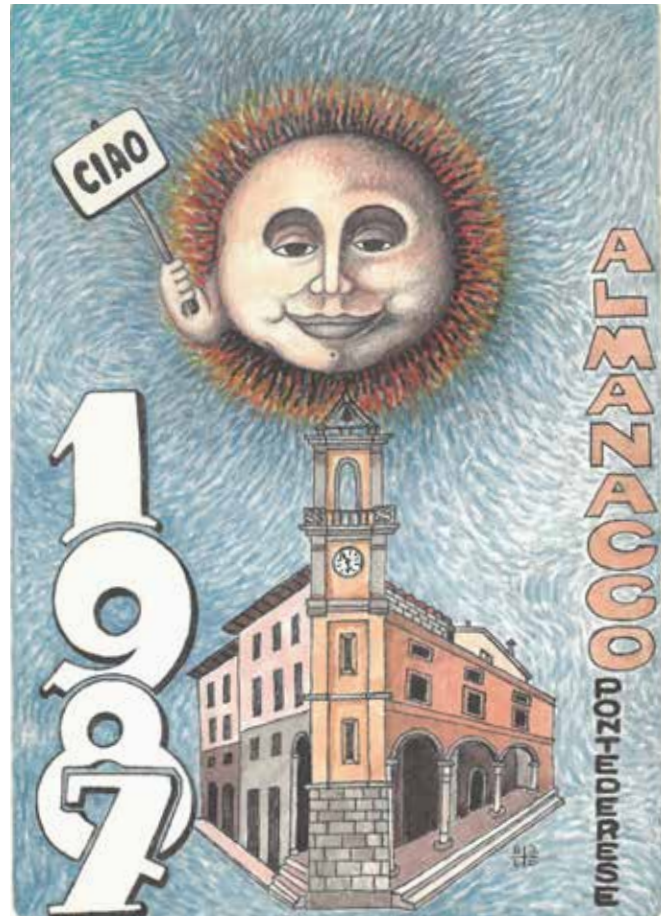
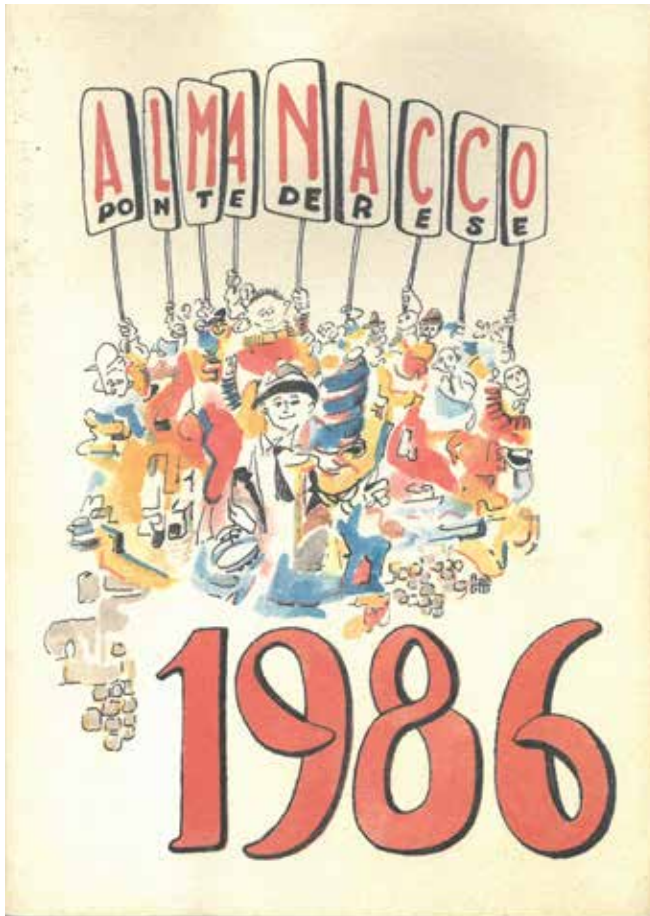


Advertising flyer



Illustrations from the 1984 *Pontederese Almanac*





Babb's zodiac signs



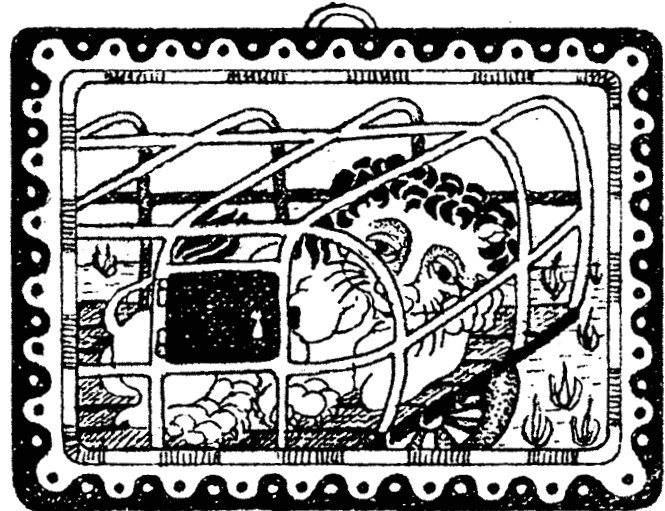
Aries



Cancer



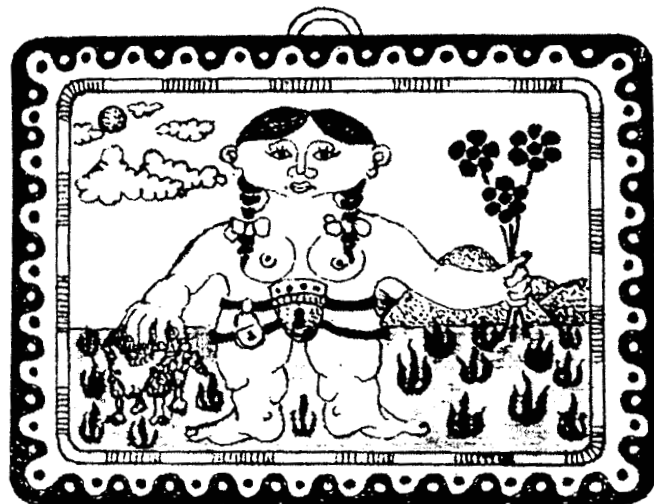
Taurus



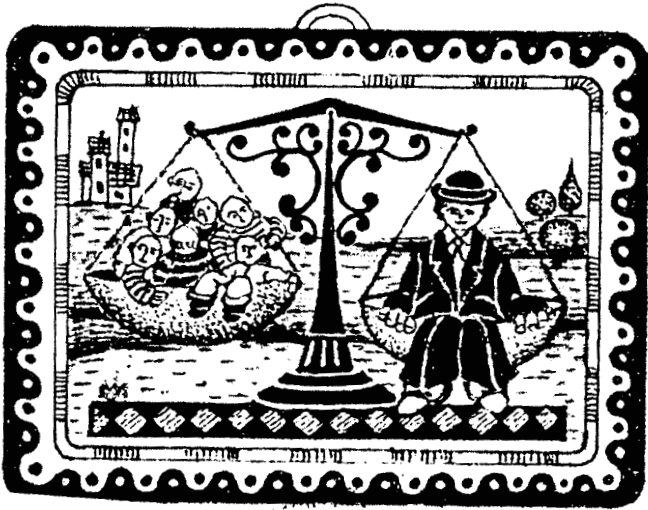
Leo



Gemini



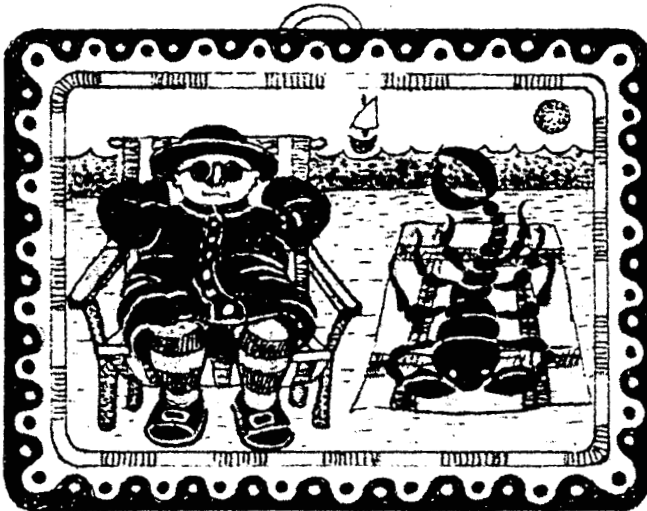
Virgo



Libra



Capricorn



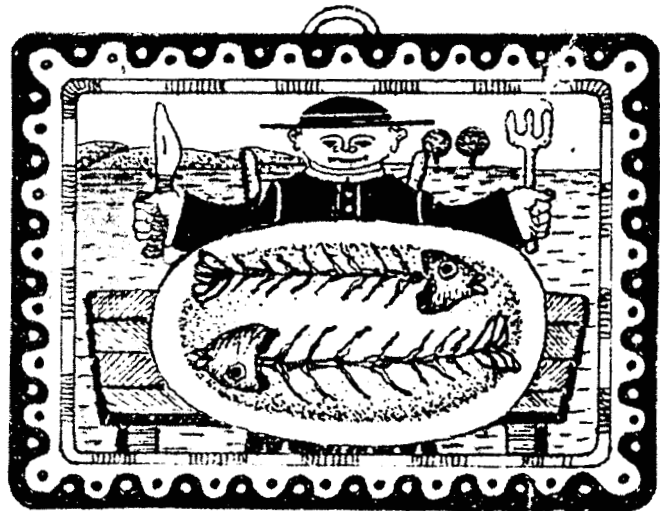
Scorpio



Aquarius



Sagittarius



Pisces



PARTE ER TRAMME

Er tramme era il più popolare mezzo di comunicazione, che collegava Pisa alla provincia: dalla Valdera alla costa tirrenica. Sur tramme, chiamato pure strasciapoveri, si parlava il vernacolo più genuino e vivo con le diverse inflessioni e sfumature dei singoli paesi che esso toccava: contado, borgate, paesi e città.

Anche questo foglio ha l'intenzione di collegare idealmente il nostro territorio, contribuendo a mantenere vivo il gusto del parlar pisano e desto l'interesse verso questo idioma che squilla ancora prepotentemente sulla bocca della nostra gente.

Il periodico tratterà i problemi della lingua-dialetto-vernacolo con l'apporto di studiosi, ricercatori e glottologi. Intende riproporre uno per uno i vernacolisti scomparsi, valorizzare i contemporanei, incoraggiare i debuttanti. Avranno un posto preminente la trattazione e la ricerca delle tradizioni orali tramandate di generazione in generazione, per scoprire modi, usi, costumi e linguaggio della gente comune. Sul periodico si troveranno indicazioni di concorsi, recensioni di libri, bibliografie, vignette e tanto spazio aperto per chi vuole collaborare.

Prima di noi, trent'anni fa circa, esisteva La Cèa, coraggioso foglio uscito a Pisa negli anni fra il 1950 ed il 1955, diretto dall'indimenticabile Domenico Sartori. Ebbe vita difficile, nuotò in acque incerte - così scriveva il Sartori su La Cèa del settembre 1950 - tra l'indifferenza dei più, tanto che un vernacolista ebbe a dire: «Te 'un ci 'redi, ma la pisaggine 'un c'è medicinali che la svegli». Noi vorremmo invece continuare rivando non solo a Pisa, culla del vernacolo, ma in tutto quell'arco pisano che collega i Monti, le Colline e la Pianura, dove scorre l'ultimo tratto dell'Arno.

La pisanità dovrà sfatare i vecchi adagi: «Pisa pesa per chi posa», «Il soccorso di Pisa» e «Rivano Pisani».

È un impegno che ci piacerebbe mantenere.

Benozzo Gianetti

PER UN VERNACOLO «RIVISITATO»

di Silvano Burgalassi

Nel momento in cui la maggior parte delle persone, anche intellettualmente dotate, riteneva che ogni vernacolo fosse «morto»¹, attaccato alle radici da quell'insidiosissimo male chiamato «modernità», ecco fare la sua comparsa, terza - se non erro - nella storia del vernacolo pisano, una rivista, dedicata appunto ad esso e che tenterà di esprimersi attraverso di esso².

Avevamo fondate ragioni, alcuni anni fa, prendendo parte ad una rivisitazione del vernacolo, non più in chiave di attenzione folkloristica pertanto interessante a più elevati livelli intellettuali, quanto in chiave di un recupero dei muri maestri della nostra cultura locale³, a fondare su tale recupero una buona parte delle nostre speranze contro-culturali di riappropriazione, da parte del «popolo», del suo linguaggio originario. Il vernacolo nacque dal popolo, per corruzione e per residua sedimentazione del parlare «colto», quasi rimasuglio di quel latino medio e et infima e latininitatis e di quel «tosco» letterario, reso celebre da prosatori e da poeti; se ne appropriarono, tramite il Fucini (1871-72), i letterati di epoca a lui posteriore, specie quelli meno adusi a scrivere in lingua; oggi ritorna al popolo perché in esso ritrovi la sua radice feconda, la sua ragion d'essere, questa volta non come precipitato residualmente della cultura colta bensì come consapevole ricostruzione di trame interiori.

A ben vedere, come abbiamo avuto modo di dimostrare in saggi recenti⁴, in una città universitaria come Pisa, il vernacolo cresceva di vita stentata (a differenza di Livorno e di Lucca in cui esso nacque prima e visse di vita rigogliosa) fino a che il coraggio di R. Fucini (un non pisano, per giunta quando oramai era tornato di casa a Firenze) portò a livello nazionale una parlata locale, ignorata dai colti, ma non dai popolani d'allora. Tant'è che non appena il Fucini ruppe il ghiaccio, e in prosa (con la novella *Fioravante e la bella Isolina* di O. Nuti) ed in poesia (con i sonetti di Rocco da Buti (alias Giosafatte Codecasa) nel periodo 1874-78 ebbe inizio una promettentissima fioritura di edizioni che, evidentemente, attingevano ad un humus tanto florido quanto inesplorato⁵.

La fioritura ebbe, come tutte le espressioni culturali, i suoi alti ed i suoi bassi, i suoi periodi aurei (quelli di Beppe d'Angelo, di Arturo Birga, di Archimede Bellatalla, di Domenico Sartori per citare solo i maggiori) e periodi meno aurei, specialmente quelli degli immediati dopoguerra (1918; 1950), da cui una faticosa ripresa che richiede almeno 8-10 anni per ricollocarsi ai livelli precedenti. A prescindere da tali tragici eventi, il vero colpo di grazia al vernacolo pisano non sembrò darlo il cumulo di macerie a cui erano ridotti i

lungarni o le vie di ogni paese della provincia, o gli immancabili lutti familiari e sociali causati dalle guerre, quanto quel fenomeno che altrove ho illustrato⁶ e che si chiama, in termini tecnici, «cambiamento sociale» o «modernizzazione». Con esso si trasformò l'humus profondo su cui attecchiva il vernacolo, (nato e cresciuto in una cultura agricolo-contadina, respirando aria campagnola ed un clima di intensa solidarietà familiare e paesana a favore di un tipo di civiltà (quella industriale e post-industriale) che non solo ha polverizzato le professioni agricole e quelle artigianali, ma ha profondamente intaccato il modo di vivere, i valori di sempre e - perfino, se non fosse impossibile - il modo di percepire le cose, di viverle, di amare, di temere. Tutto il quadro valoriale e quello dei sentimenti è parso crollare sotto i colpi di maglio di un progresso che oggi non si rivela più tale; tanto che la crescita del vernacolo sembrerebbe effettuata più in chiave con quella operazione di riflusso che tanti temono che non allo scopo di conservare i significati più profondi del vivere e del morire.

Io, personalmente, non temo il «riflusso» se esso significa rimediazione attenta delle cose che furono, non per ripeterle meccanicamente bensì per valutarne l'importanza, la profondità, la rilevanza o altre non meno importanti proprietà.

(continua alla pag. 21)

Il saluto dell'Assessore Provinciale alla Cultura Giuseppe Menichetti

È con estremo piacere che salutiamo la nascita di questo periodico interamente dedicato al vernacolo pisano. Il «tramme o il trammino» è certamente un vecchio ma caro ricordo per tutti coloro che lo hanno conosciuto (a me viene spesso in mente quando passava davanti a casa mia nei pressi della cosiddetta «svortata der tramme di Ascina»). Il vernacolo pisano al contrario, anche grazie a questa iniziativa, non rappresenta una nostalgico ricordo ma una caratteristica essenziale per «trasmettere alle future generazioni un messaggio valido e stimolante a vivere sempre, ciascuno di

noi, nella fedeltà al proprio tempo e nel ricordo sapienziale del tempo che fu».

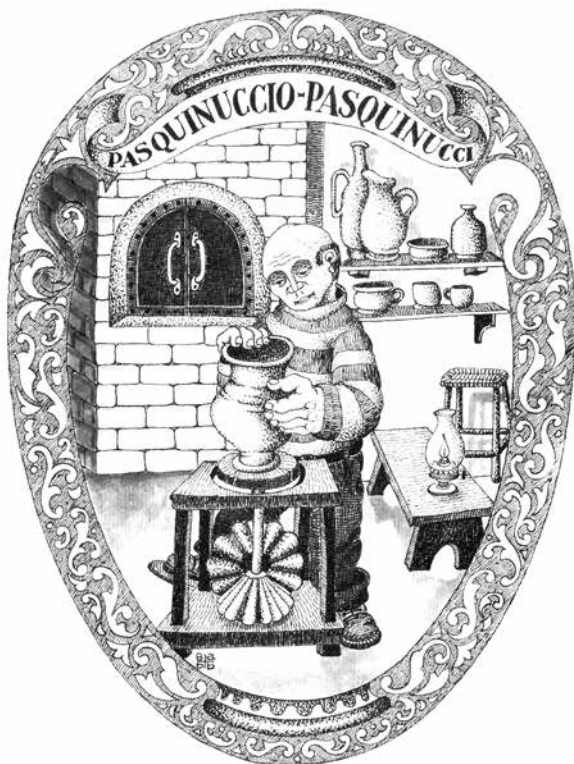
Al saluto si aggiunga un sincero ringraziamento per tutti coloro che, poeti e cultori, si sono impegnati in questa iniziativa, primo fra tutti l'amico Benozzo Gianetti.

Un ringraziamento personale, certo, ma anche e soprattutto da parte delle Istituzioni tutte che devono prendere impegno a sostenere la sopravvivenza di questo periodico perché esso indubbiamente può rappresentare uno strumento utile e valido per «mantenere viva la fiaccola del vernacolo pisano».

La Direzione del giornale ringrazia l'Assessore Provinciale alla Cultura, Dott. Giuseppe Menichetti, per il fattivo interessamento verso Er tramme da lui caldeggiato. Menichetti crede in tutti gli aspetti della cultura: in quella rivolta al popolo come il canto di tutti i cori della provincia in occasione del tricentenario di Bach, Händel e Scarlatti; nel Teatro dei Ragazzi; nel recupero della civiltà contadina e delle tradizioni popolari e adesso nel nostro periodico che ritiene un mezzo efficace di penetrazione in tutti gli strati sociali per mantenere vivo il vernacolo.

ments that underline the socio-economic environment in which previous generations lived, leaving an indelible trace.

The publication is also intended to be a simple and practical guide to the town's public and private services, to get to know the social reality with its institutions, schools, political parties, trade unions, cultural, philanthropic and sports associations, which make up Pontedera's vibrant social fabric. A valuable contribution to the publication of this volume has been made by the Pasquinuccio Pasquinucci Company, which, together with the son Marco, has continued to work in Pontedera for over a century in the manufacture of ceramics, porcelain and glass, boosting trade and bringing prestige to the city.



The drafting of the Almanac was entrusted to Benozzo Gianetti, who is interested in the history, languages, customs and traditions of our territory. To illustrate facts and events of the city. The painter Giorgio Dal Canto, known as Babb, collaborated with us. With his cartoons, he was able to capture and convey the flavour of a certain world, which is disappearing but still alive in the memory of the people of Pontedera'.

The seed sown by the Pontedera Almanac sprouted quickly and from that experience, after just one year, *Er Tramme*, a quarterly magazine in Pisan vernacular and popular traditions was born in 1985, also published by the Bandecchi printing house.

The magazine conceived, founded and directed by Benozzo Gianetti and the group formed around this figure, asked Dal Canto to create the graphics for the publication, starting with the drawing that would express the title in each issue.

Er Tramme takes its name from the tramway system that was present in the province of Pisa until the 1950s.

The tram connected Pontedera with Pisa. Navacchio with Calci, and Pisa with the coast. This is how Benozzo Gianetti, 'general' of the peaceful vernacular army, recounts the birth of Er Tramme: 'In the public library, in the early days of 1985, the Bandecchi & Vivaldi Company was presenting the second edition of the *Almanacco Pontederese*, edited by me and illustrated by Giorgio Dal Canto. Giacomo Maccheroni, Dino Carlesi, Bruno Pasquinucci, Giuliano Boldrini, Gianfranco Raspolti Galletti and many members of the public were there. At the end of the event, I presented the first draft of the publication,

5 ANNI DE

ER TRAMME

1985-89

MOSTRA DOCUMENTARIA

PONTEDERA 19-26 MAG. 1990

LOGGE DELLA PRETURA

DIRETTORE RESPONSABILE: VERONICO PRIMO
 A DELLE TRADIZIONI POPOLARI
 ANNO 4 - N. 4
 OTTOBRE DICEMBRE 1989
 SPED. IN ABB. POSTALE - GRUPPO EDIT. ARNABE - VIA GIORDA, 11 - PONTEDERA
 ALIBRI ARRETRATI DISPONIBILI L. 1.000
 L. 1.300

ER TRAMME

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1985 - 1989

5 ANNI DI "TRAMME"

di Renzo Gianetti

L'entusiasmo popolare di guardare la collana periodica, iniziata nel 1985 con "La Fila" Arca da Domenico Sartori e Antonino Ripa, solo cinque anni di fondazione, per l'interesse suscitato dal suo fondatore, via dagli spazi editoriali che hanno aperto in un tempo più pressoché inedito.

Andando lungo anni di pubblicazione di "Er Tramme", a distanza di anni si rivela che questi fondamenti della stessa operazione, non ancora a tutto, rimangono separati, di natura costituzionale, ideologica, tecnica e metodica.

L'interesse popolare della rivista è curato dalla Casa Editrice Biondelli e Vidal, che realizza la pubblicazione d'arte. Il suo obiettivo è un formato di rivista che mantenga i caratteri di molte testate e rappresenti, oltre che da un punto di vista grafico, il rispetto per il lettore, con la possibilità di leggere a tavola più giornali, la lettura è l'organizzazione del testo, oltre ad essere, spesso, del testo e proprio perché viene molto attento. Analizzare il periodo non è un lavoro, ma la speranza di poter leggere alla stessa maniera le altre testate, con la possibilità di poter leggere in un tempo più pressoché inedito. Il rispetto per il lettore è un obiettivo che si pone in primo piano. Il rispetto per il lettore è un obiettivo che si pone in primo piano. Il rispetto per il lettore è un obiettivo che si pone in primo piano.

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ER TRAMME

DIRETTORE RESPONSABILE: VERONICO PRIMO
 A DELLE TRADIZIONI POPOLARI
 ANNO 4 - N. 4
 OTTOBRE DICEMBRE 1989
 SPED. IN ABB. POSTALE - GRUPPO EDIT. ARNABE - VIA GIORDA, 11 - PONTEDERA
 ALIBRI ARRETRATI DISPONIBILI L. 1.000
 L. 1.300

X ANNIVERSARIO DI FONDAZIONE

ER TRAMME

DIRETTORE RESPONSABILE: VERONICO PRIMO
 A DELLE TRADIZIONI POPOLARI
 ANNO 4 - N. 4
 OTTOBRE DICEMBRE 1989
 SPED. IN ABB. POSTALE - GRUPPO EDIT. ARNABE - VIA GIORDA, 11 - PONTEDERA
 ALIBRI ARRETRATI DISPONIBILI L. 1.000
 L. 2.000

15 anni

Poster created by artist Pagliuchi for the 5-year anniversary of *Er Tramme*

Er Tramme, year V, no. 4, October-December 1989

Er Tramme, year X, no. 4, October-December 1994

Er Tramme, year XV, no. 4, October-December 1999

which did not yet have a precise name.

After the showing, which everybody liked very much, I proposed the title 'Rivano pisani' which was shelved due to the overly cumbersome presence of 'Pisani' evoking never-ending parochial contrasts.

I had another solution in the folder, which people also liked. I wrote 'Er tramme' on the blackboard. A smug smile melted on their faces, and approval was spontaneously marked by applause. 'Er Tramme' began its rattling journey with the subtitle - *Trimestrale di*

vernacolo pisano e delle tradizioni popolari (Quarterly magazine in Pisan dialect). Giorgio Dal Canto produced the header in black and white in a colourful rectangle that changed from year to year, until the publishing house wanted the colour title it still has today. The first issue came out in March 1985 with twelve pages on a quarterly basis.' Benozzo gives an extra note for the 'five year anniversary of Er Tramme' by recounting where the idea or, as he calls it, 'the ambitious project' of the vernacular paper began. The aim 'was to resume the journalistic tradition begun in 1950 with 'La Cèa', edited by Domenico Sartori and interrupted after only five years of fruitful activity, due to the untimely death of its founder'.

In the first issue of 'Er Tramme', Babb features in the logo of the magazine and two drawings, one on the tradition of the spinning top game



and one at the end of an article on popular traditions.

After that debut, Dal Canto's lines never left the pages of the magazine, and this commitment was accompanied by the many posters produced to promote the events that 'quelli der Tramme' (the 'Tramme' guys) organised, such as the 'Third Meeting with the Vernacular' on 20 June 1987 in San Gervasio.

The covers were extraordinary, in black and white in the early years, and later in colour in a succession of themes, homages and irreverence. Among the undisputed protagonists is the 'strasciapoveri', the tram that

proudly usually appears in front of the Magistrate's Court and its bell tower, even though in reality

it never arrived there because the furthest it ever got was to Piazza Cavour. In the background the Leaning Tower, the Dome and the Baptistery, in short Piazza dei Miracoli, as if to say the tram comes from Pisa, but arrives in Pontedera.

The town was always represented by five elements: Palazzo Pretorio with its clock tower, the Church of the Holy Crucifix, the cathedral with its fountain, the Church of the Misericordia, the Napoleonic Bridge and the statue of Andrea da Pontedera.

In 1990, the first five years of *Er Tramme* were celebrated with a documentary exhibition (19-26 May), which was held in the loggia of the Magistrates' Court and announced with a poster designed by the artist Pagliuchi.

Sketch for the cover of the volume
Vernacolo sul tramme (Vernacular on the tram), 1995
 (Sergio Vivaldi Archive)



“1995 brings to subscribers’ homes *Vernacolo sul tramme*, an anthology of poems by 42 living vernacularists and 4 deceased poets’. The volume includes introductory contributions by Silvano Burgalassi and Ilario Luperini and the cover by Babb, who drew the tram from Pisa to Pontedera for the occasion. That year, the number of subscribers reached the significant quota of 1005. To celebrate the first ten years of the magazine ‘on the initiative of Mr Mario Marconcini, owner of the *Filatelica Pisana*’ a medal was minted, designed by Dal Canto and engraved ‘by the young Marco Arfaroli’. Also in 1995, the publication ‘Vernacolo

Sketch made for the first page of the magazine *Er Tramme*
 Year XXI, No. 4, October-December 2005
 (Sergio Vivaldi Archive)



sur Tramme’ was published, and Dal Canto was entrusted with the design of the cover featuring a ‘clattering’ train arriving in Pontedera from Pisa.

In 2004, it was again Babb who painted the image of ‘twenty years!’. In December 2005, he drew a chained-up tower, which the vernacular poet Gianfranco Raspolli Galletti commented on with a dialogue ‘between Beppe from Livorno and Meò from Pisa’: “Have you seen how Babb has painted/ on the ‘Tramme’ and then on the cover,/ the Campanile all chained up?/ Mèò, for old people, there’s no medicine!/ ‘Your tower is more and more bent:/



he's being held by left and right-handers, / but he can't even get up when propped. / The Orthopedic ward, listen up, is nearby. / Shut it Beppe! "He's not an outsider / look at your own house, since you're here, / inchained, right in 'Quattro Mori' / And it was because of certain performances / that they read them for a long time, you know, / you were born a labbronio with big lips." Babb also created the cover of the 2009 edition celebrating the 25th anniversary of 'Er Tramme'. It is a work where striped men led by their director Benozzo Gianetti are enveloped in a swirl of newspapers between Pontedera's Palazzo Pretorio and Piazza dei Miracoli, while birds fly around the scene carrying a coloured card bearing the number 25.

Babb's work invades the large sheets of the magazine and allows him to develop one of his greatest gifts, irony. In the works he creates to illustrate these pages, Giorgio has fun and it shows. He spares no one, and the numerous topics covered by *Er Tramme* allow him to sweep through history, society and custom. Leafing through the famous magazine, which is now celebrating its 39th anniversary, one collects another gallery of Babb's journey, which perfectly captures the spirit of the editors and takes the reader into its universe, which adds a clever touch of carefree living to its contents without ever abandoning the themes of its work. In September 1986, the magazine *Ghibli*, a quarterly of poetry and literature, was founded and Babb collaborated on the production of is-



Ghibli, No. 2, October-December 1986
Paesaggio con serpente (Landscape with snake),
 homage to Franco Fortini

sue two of the magazine (October-December). The editorial team was headed by Riccardo Ferrucci and included Francesco Paciscopi, Alessandro Corucci, Fiorenza Caetani, Mauro Giusti, Luciano Fusi and Bruno Cavallini. The latter is also entrusted with the graphic design. The publication was printed by Grafica Butese and the editorial office was in Via Carducci in Pontedera at the Arci club. Babb was entrusted with the so-called insert, a small cartoon illustrated by the artist, which contained a homage to Franco Fortini, to whom Dal Canto dedicated the cover design of the issue by writing 'Landscape with snake by Franco Fortini' and a contribution by Ferrucci entitled

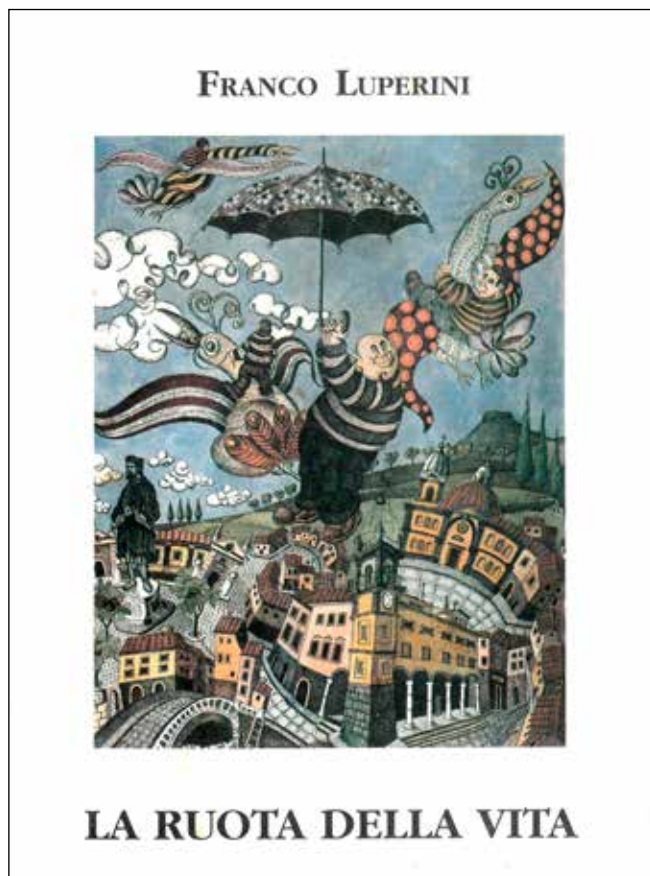


L'animale (The animal)
 cardboard inside *Ghibli* magazine (no. 2)

'a painter draws for the magazine'. We read in Babb's biography at the foot of the page that his studio in Pontedera is at Via Roma 43 and that Dal Canto 'is an artist who is deeply attached to his city and Tuscan places, to which he has dedicated some beautiful etchings. He is currently working on a series of paintings dedicated to the city of Pisa. The dreamy world and retro feel of his pictures immerse us in a nostalgic atmosphere brimming with feeling. His sad characters become emblematic of a world that everything corrodes and is forgotten. Irony and the grotesque are the privileged places from which Dal Canto observes the facts of life. A provin-

On the following pages

Giuliano Boldrini's book covers by Giorgio Dal Canto and an artist's study for *Una passeggiata per la città*, (A Walk through the City) 2003



cial painter, but of a high level. In Dal Canto, like Fellini, the province becomes a magical and secret place, an open door to the mysteries of life. His meticulous and precise painting depicts a universe which the viewer has the pleasure of entering.

His paintings are made of real objects and people, but its realism is only in appearance; it is fantasy that moves and animates Dal Canto's canvases. His technique relies mainly on drawing, on the force of the stroke, but there is no lack of just climatic impacts with strong light variations. (...) Dal Canto effectively continues the excavation of faces and places in his beloved Tuscany. A world

eternally poised between joy and sorrow, between smiles and anguish'.

In 1988 it was Dino Carlesi who asked him for a lithograph for his small publication *Una poesia*. In 1997, Babb did the cover for Franco Luperini's book, *La Ruota della Vita*, as Giovanni Pinori writes in the preface, 'it is a family saga, but it would be better to call it a 'clan', to which the author himself belongs'. The background of the story is the Pontedera of times gone by.

The same year, he was called upon for another publication *Pisa e Paesi Pisani*, 30 postcards with poems written in the vernacular, while in 2000, a close friend of his, Nicola Micieli, involved him in the celebration of a wedding, borrowing his work for a special edition book: *Viva gli sposi: divagazione favolistica*. (Long live the bride and groom: digression of the fable)

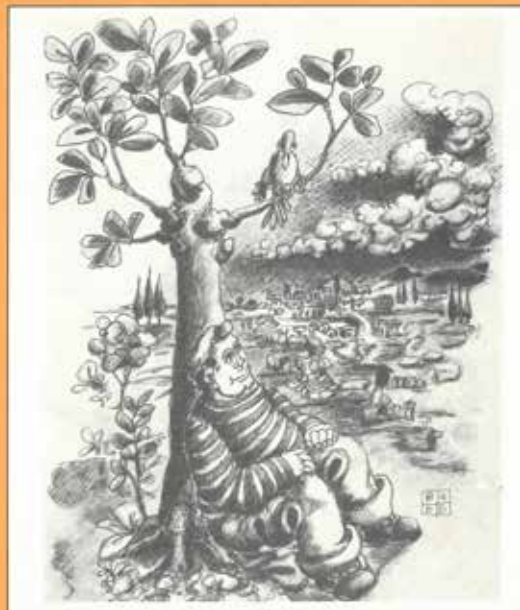
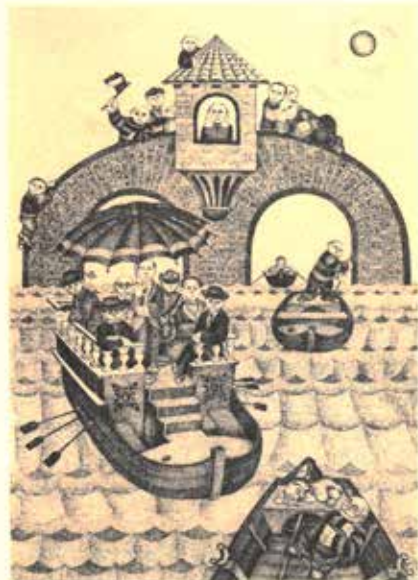
In October 2005, the *Circolo Culturale Identità* asked Babb for one of his works for the publication of the selected poems of the 19th 'Giovanni Gronchi' International Literary Competition and those of the 18th 'Roberto Bertelli' National Youth Literary Competition. He produced a view of Piazza del Duomo as seen from Via Lotti, with the large bingo board almost covering the façade of the church, even though historically it was the square that hosted this tradition.

In 2011, Mario Guglielmini with his book 'The Paradox of Power in Everyday Life' had the honour of hosting a work by Babb on the cover. However, the author who undoubtedly created the strongest relationship with Giorgio Dal Canto was the vernacular poet Giuliano Boldrini.

Boldrini began to use Babb's art in 1988, and has not stopped since. Giuliano's books are extraordinary for their irony, ingenious linguistic inventions and sense of tradition. A collection

Giuliano Boldrini

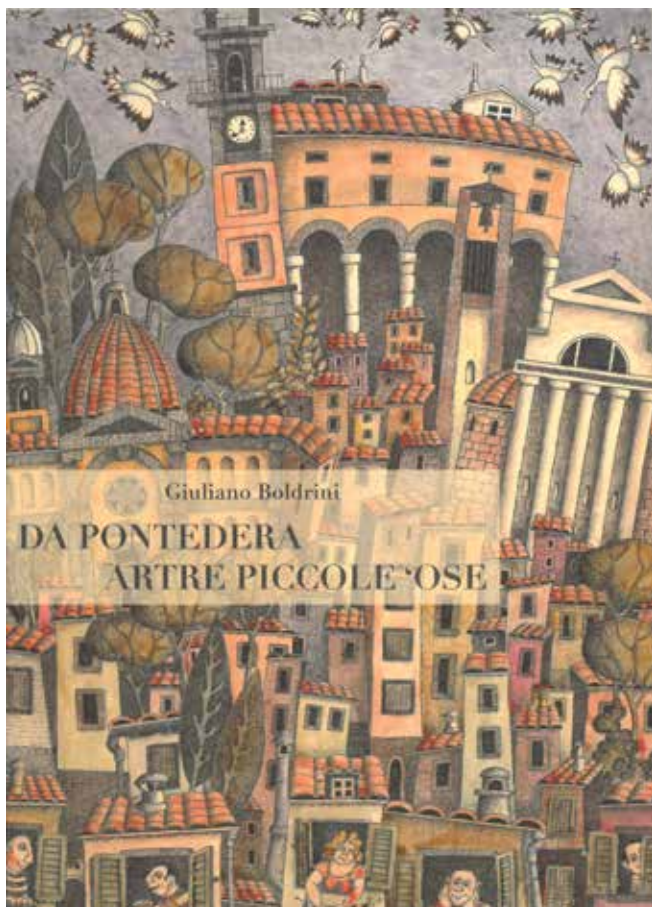
PONTEDERA E ' SU' RIONI



Giuliano Boldrini

FESTA DI PICCOLE 'ÒSE

Poesie in vernacolo pisano



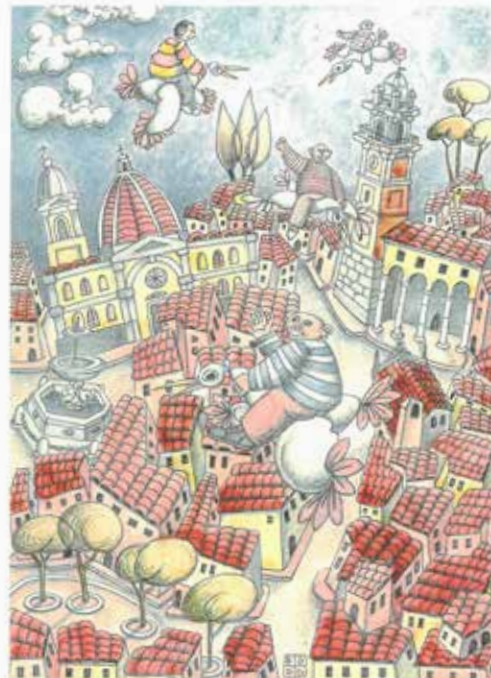
Giuliano Boldrini

DA PONTEDERA ARTRE PICCOLE 'ÒSE

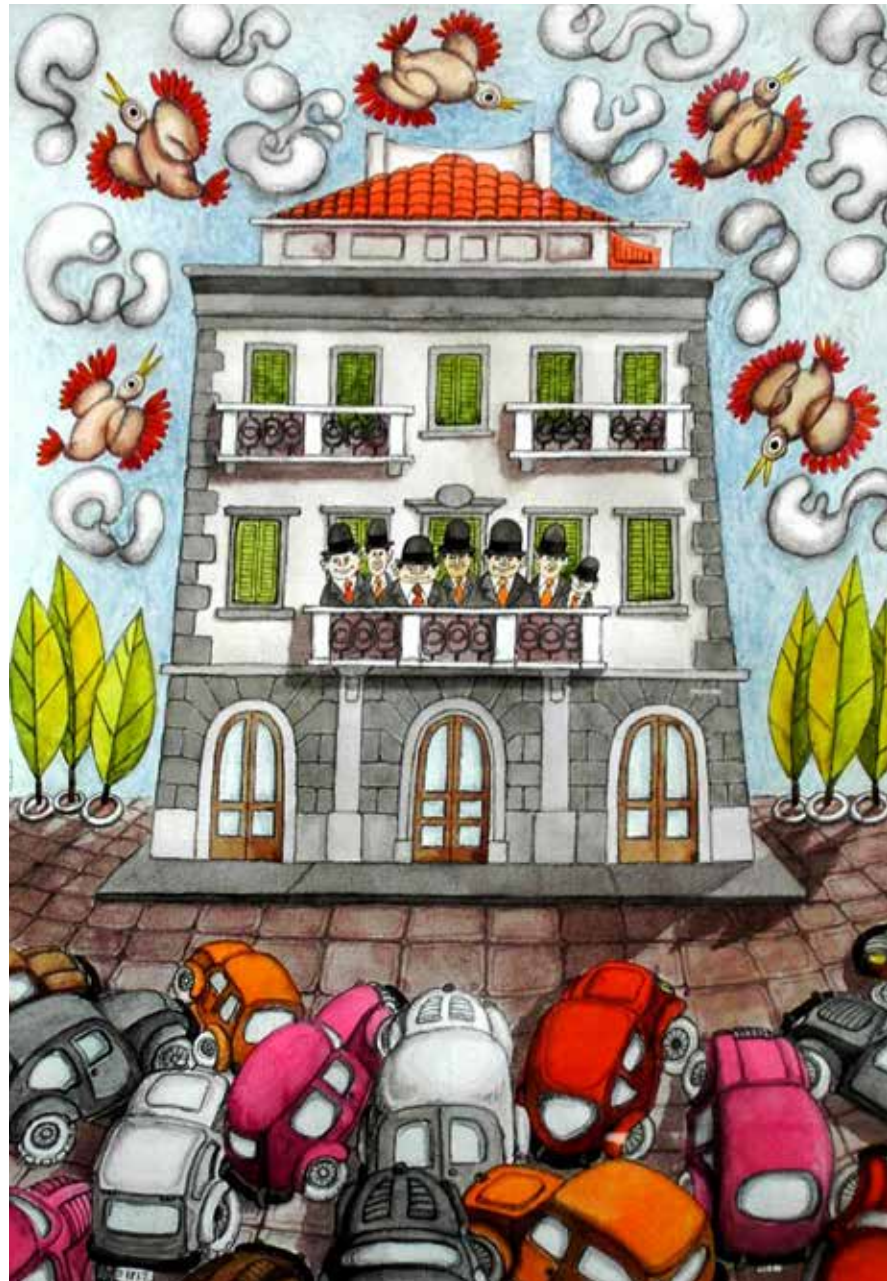
Giuliano Boldrini

Una passeggiata per la città

Briciolini di storia pontadere



Prefazione di Dino Carlesi



Hotel Armonia 1998.

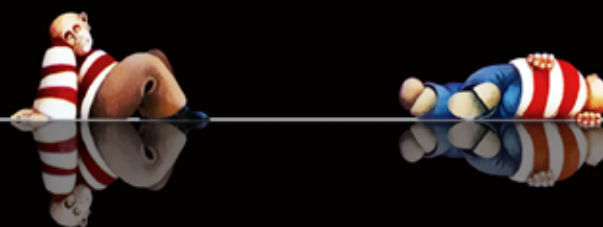
Watercolor two works 30×40 cm

These two lithographs were made in November 1998 on the occasion of the inauguration of the renovation of the Albergo Armonia.

In fact, you can see the old-style hotel on the right with the fountain and the fish that flutter, the birds in the sky and the priest who is resting peacefully in front of the church of the Duomo of Pontedera. The inauguration instead brings chaos to the square interpreted as many cars that are overtaking each other and with all the authorities invited on the main balcony. Obviously we are no longer in the previous condition.

ANDREA BOCELLI

Piccoli versi
D I S E G N A T I



regia
Alberto Bartalini

of many titles: *‘Da bocca d’Era, sonetti e altre rime in vernacolo pisano’* (1988), *‘Pontedera e’su’ rioni’*, sestets in Pisan dialect (1991), *‘Festa di piccole ’ose: poesie in vernacolo pisano’* (1994), *‘Una passeggiata per la città, briciolini di storia Pontederese’* (2003), *‘Da Pontedera artre piccole ’ose’* (2007), *‘La terzetà va all’Università’* (2010) and *‘Una passeggiata in periferia, briciolini di storia pontederese’* (2012).

The library of Babb-el slowly slowly but surely grew, and Giorgio Dal Canto’s art ‘dressed up’ many books, which thus became more precious, almost like magical little treasure chests.

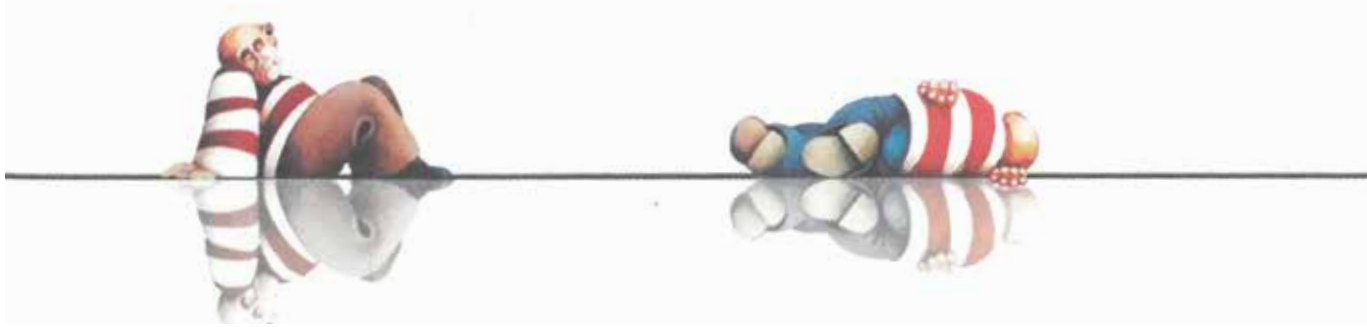
In 2018, this good fortune fell upon to the book by the great tenor **Andrea Bocelli**, a local talent but one of the world’s leading figures in the art of ‘bel canto’. In his book, **Piccoli Versi (Small Verses)** Bocelli used Stefano Stacchini’s illustrations of works from Giorgio Dal Canto’s pictorial universe to accompany his writings.

Piccoli Versi comes out in two distinct versions, a ‘pocket’ edition and a large format edition: **Piccoli Versi disegnati**.

The latter contains several contributions, including one by the prestigious author Andrea Bocelli himself: *‘To those who ask me where I can be found, I would answer without hesitation: “In my poor verses”; and do not look for anything else there, except for the little that I am. There you will be able to trace my eager and unfulfilled search for beauty, the inconsistencies, the need for air, for space, for freedom, for music hidden among words, for goodness, for life and faith. At the boundaries of reality, I have sought and will always seek the point where beauty and goodness coincide, as I firmly believe that everything that is beautiful is good and vice versa.’*

The singer from Lajatico concluded that his book, ‘a short anthology, enriched with illustrations by Stefano Stacchini and Giorgio Dal Canto, was born from the insistence of a few friends and an original, visionary editorial project by Alberto Bartalini1, and welcomed by Giuseppe Diomelli.’

The latter stated in his contribution to the book ‘I think that curiosity is the spark that ignites everything that creates enthusiasm and emotions. From an idea of our friend and director Alberto Bartalini, this work was born. It outlines a short selection of Andrea Bocelli’s poems in a brilliant and anachronistic manner. Much time was needed to graphically decorate this work, which was masterfully put together by the ‘visionary’ graphic designer, Stefano Stacchini. It was not easy to find the connections as well as the correspondence between the artist Giorgio Dal Canto, creator of the characters that populate the pages of this book, and the author of the poems Andrea Bocelli. I am thrilled that a team was formed whose work has achieved a result of the highest artistic value, and I hope that what has been achieved will arouse the curiosity of the attentive reader. The characters, taken from oil paintings by painter Giorgio Dal Canto, are positioned in relation and in contrast to what is expressed in the texts of the poems. They move, speak and are witnesses to the conflicts of everyday life. The work of painter Giorgio Dal Canto, a.k.a. Babb, was chosen for the representation of his eternal, unvarnished conflict against the world, and above all because the very fine, sometimes subliminal, details that the artist has been able to include in his paintings give life to his thought, defining

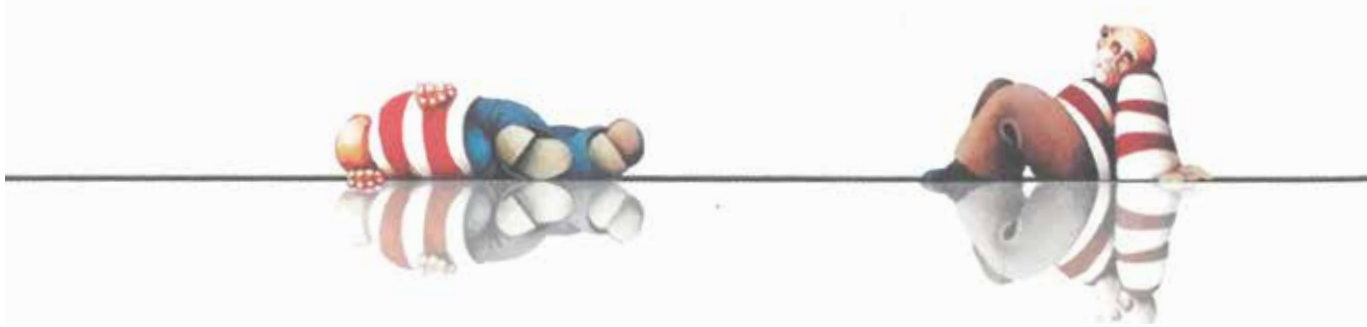


his being as eternally 'AGAINST'. Therefore, leafing carefully through these pages, curiosity becomes insistent and ignites thoughts, superimpositions, details and metaphors that provoke, like Andrea's poems, intense emotions'. Stefano Stacchini, who edited the artistic part of the volume, wrote the following letter to Bocelli: 'Dear Andrea, I am writing this letter to you not because we lacked the time and opportunity to meet, but because I would like to grant my thoughts here, too, the slowness and intimacy that has united us in these pages. In life, in the grip of a particularly poignant mood, good or bad, who among us has not succumbed to the impulse to write verses? Who has never confessed to poetry without shame and without this act making him a poet? Our friend Giorgio Dal Canto, known to everyone as Babb, also 'came clean' by painting ironic and biting stories. He used to transform his feelings into poetry, as if with a game, yet he never felt himself to be a poet. Therefore, Andrea, how could we have brought together your intimate writing with Giorgio's through my own, without sinning in poetic presumption if not through his own game? How could we have taken ourselves seriously without... taking ourselves seriously? Therefore, we played, hopefully, with grace and elegance. The visual poetry expressed in this book is ultimately nothing more than the product of our adult games. Things imagined by our sensibilities, created for fun and shamelessly shared with everyone.

Thank you for your friendship Andrea'. Alberto Bartolini, the director of the works, recounts the origins of the volume: 'A long and rich friendship, the one between me and An-

drea Bocelli. That is why, considering the intelligent multifariousness of his interests, when he expressed to me the idea of publishing his poems, I was not at all surprised. His poems immediately seemed to me to be written in verse created to give space to emotions, memories, suggestions, thoughts; a way of meeting up with himself and with others, to discuss, to creatively share both the certainties and the doubts of everyday life. We talked about it, with the usual sincerity and friendship. He was firmly convinced that he was not a poet, and I was sure of the relevance of his writing, which aimed to unearth unexplored and only rarely concretely expressed areas within himself. Memories and images of his childhood, his town, his people, his life; finding pleasure in talking about them together; to recall the past and imagine the future. Imagining together. Like when, as children, we gave vent to our imagination by inventing stories and events that often replaced reality itself. This is where the idea came from and the project took shape. The idea of teaming up with a refined visual poet, Stefano Stacchini, and an artist, Giorgio Dal Canto, who has always lent his way of expressing himself to the most imaginative wanderings in the most unimaginative places. An event of considerable artistic merit in terms of content and communication methods, thanks also to Giuseppe Diomelli's precious contribution.

It was a gamble, but in the safe expectation of best results: The delicacy and gentleness of Andrea's compositions would have happily gone hand in hand with the visual elaborations that Stefano Stacchini created with Babb's imaginative figures. The use of his



own, Mario Eva Mulas', Luca Rossetti's and Stefano Marinari's photos, and finally with Giorgio De Martino's significant literary commentary. Therefore, it was, and we can say with satisfaction that the twelve elegant plates that are an integral part of the volume fit well with the poignant compositions that Andrea lovingly created, following the emotions that each word and verse aroused in him from moment to moment.' One of the contributions was by Babb, who for once put down his paintbrush to pick up his pen and wrote, 'The attention that Alberto Bartalini has shown me for some time now can only have given me a great deal of pleasure, starting when he took me to the Venice Biennial, to a world full of surprises and unexpected awards. And all the more so when he proposed me to accompany Andrea Bocelli's poems, something I had never hoped for, not even by a long shot. An immense satisfaction: to put myself in relation with this great interpreter of the art - not only music - of our century. Deference and admiration. And some bewilderment too, which I overcame without thinking much about it; otherwise I might have risked illuding myself more than I should have. I read the poems and com-

pared them with my own figures, the ones I have been constructing for many years now. It seemed to me that his verses referred to atmospheres tied to the magic of a slow, sincere transparent and silent world. Therefore, I looked more carefully at my own figures; I saw them as being close to that world, although perhaps a little shabbier. Moreover, I was reassured, not least because I felt supported by the trust of Alberto and my 'patron' Beppe Diomelli. When Bartalini then told me that my figures would be reworked and embellished by the interventions of Stefano Stacchini, whom I knew for his refinement and visual culture, then I really calmed down and I dived into the adventure. With a conviction suggested to me by those critics who had had the courtesy and patience to write about me: 'His figures are situations of life, aimed at avoiding the risk of losing the direct encounter with things, with animals, with one's fellow human beings, with their faces, with their looks, with their smells: in front of him there is always man, powerful or miserable, master or victim, in either case always deserving of a difficult but attainable forgiveness'.

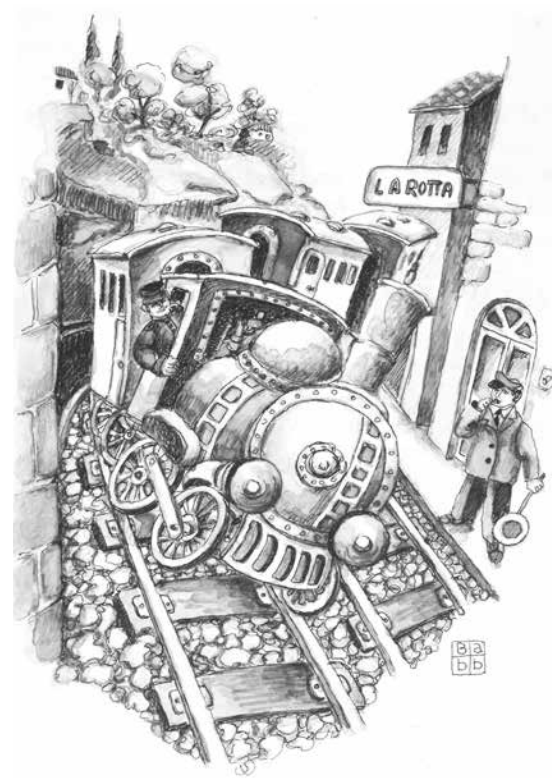
So they say'.

¹ Alberto Bartalini was portrayed by Giorgio Dal Canto in 'Alberto Maria Lucifero' (2012): where 'an imaginative and funambulist director, in his baroque style, occupies the stage with educational inventions'. Babb, Giorgio Dal

Canto, Harmonious Conflict edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, Index of Lies



Illustration for the 1984 *Pontederese Almanac*



The tram and the train

Babb had a great passion for trams and trains. Locomotives and carriages crowded many of his works, often becoming the protagonists thereof.

The birth of the magazine *‘Er Tramme’* contributed to this passion in him, and he designed the headline logo and created numerous illustrations and cover designs.

Moreover, Pontedera, his hometown, has always had an intense relationship with the railways. In the 1840s, the Leopolda railway was built, connecting Livorno, Pisa, Pontedera, Empoli and

Florence, and forty years later the Pisa-Pontedera tramway was completed.¹

The last stop on tram’s route was in Piazza Cavour and its arrival was, even if it occurred several times a day, an ‘event’ that Babb immortalised invariably, by referring to an image from the early 20th century.

Dal Canto loved model railways and watching trains, the real ones, pass by in front of his studio in Via della Repubblica, in the old Bandecchi & Vivaldi building, where he had moved after the historical printing house moved out of Via Roma.

Who knows how many times he heard them whistle as he imagined leaving for some distant destination and then returning with his eyes on the canvas to continue travelling with his art.

¹ For this story, please refer to: Michele Quirici, Enrico Agonigi, *Pontedera e le strade ferrate, il tram e il treno*, Edizioni L’Ancora, Cld Libri, Fornacette 1999 and Michele Quirici, Enrico Agonigi, Fausto Condello, *La Luc-*

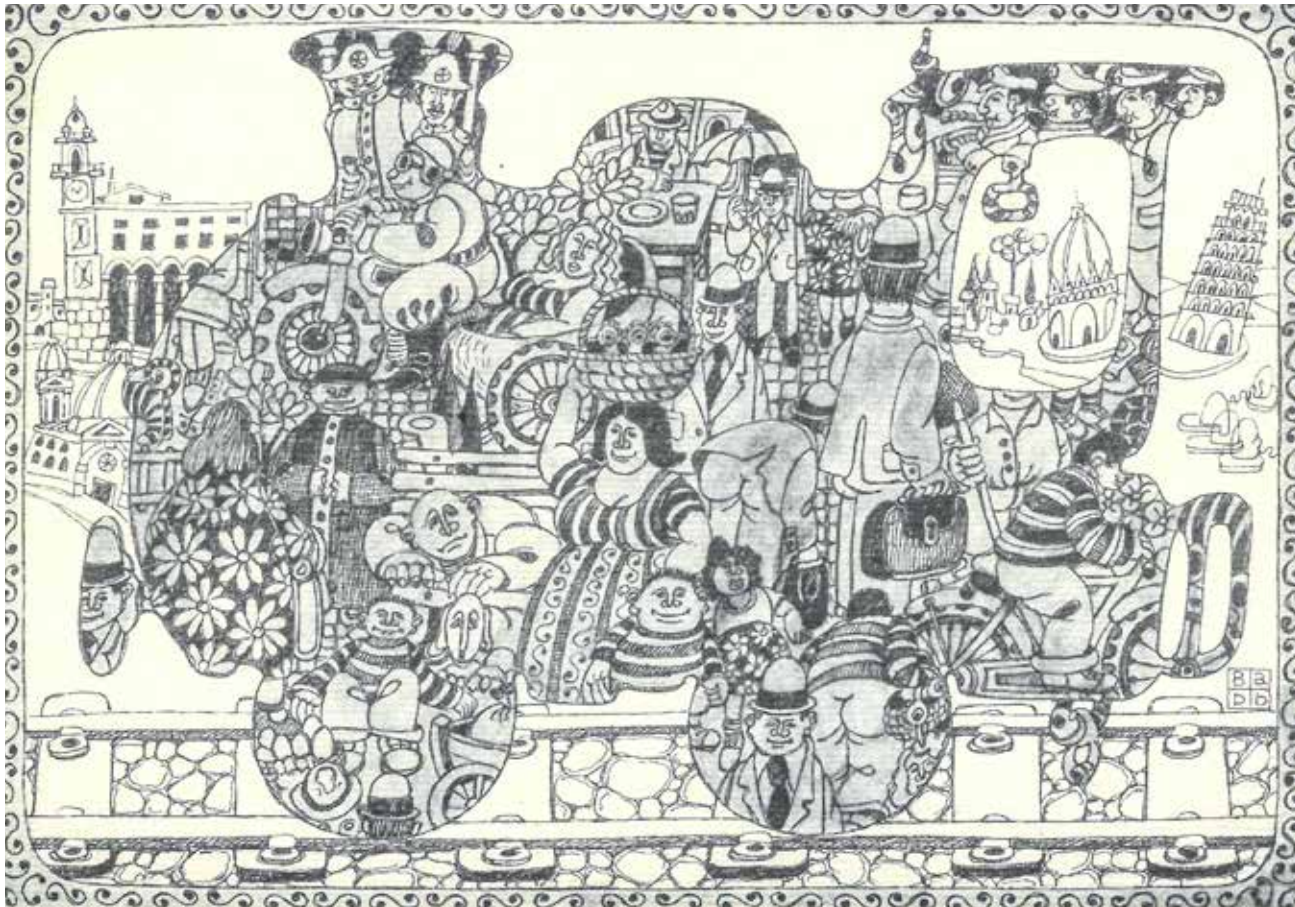
ca-Pontedera-Volterra. I progetti delle strade ferrate in Valdera, Valdinievole and the Pontedera-Livorno, Edizioni L’Ancora, Cld Libri, Fornacette 1999

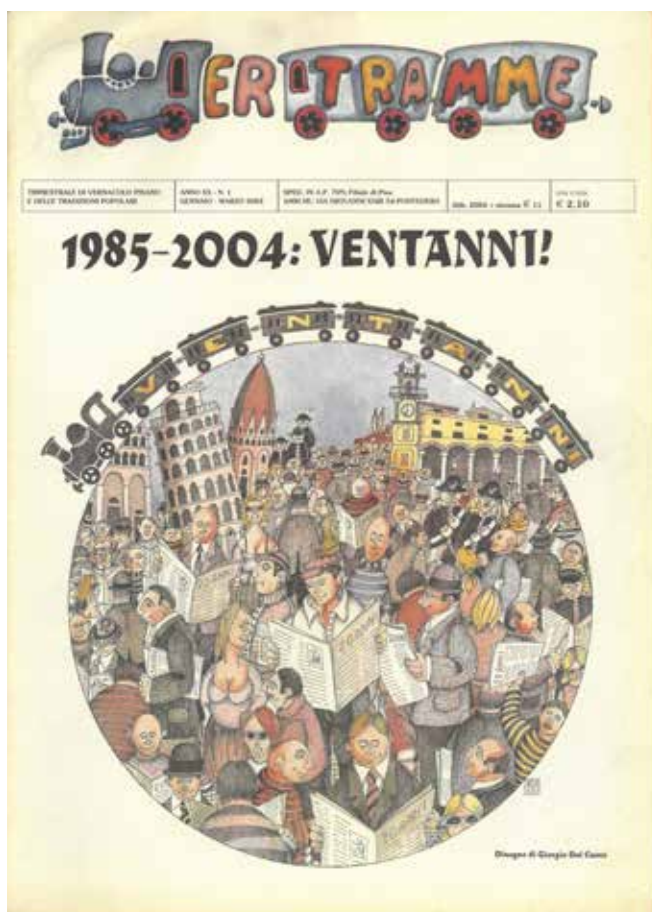


Sketch for the cover of *Er Tramme*, year X, no. 1, January-February 1984



Sketch for the cover of *Er Tramme*, year XVI, no. 3, July-September 2000

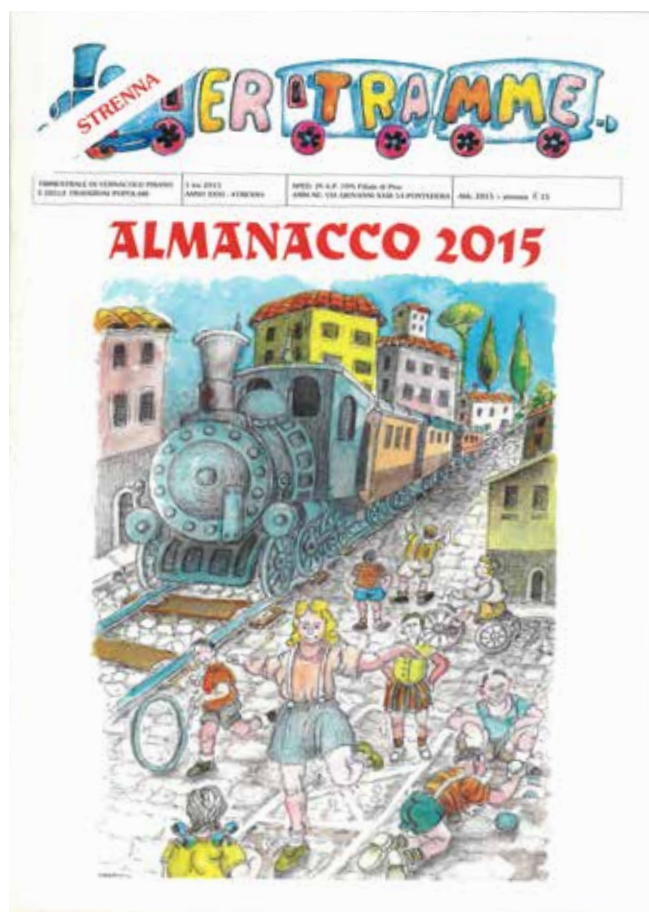




Er Tramme, no. 1, January-March 2004

Er Tramme, no. 1 bis, 2015 , strenna

Er Tramme, no. 1, January-March 2009



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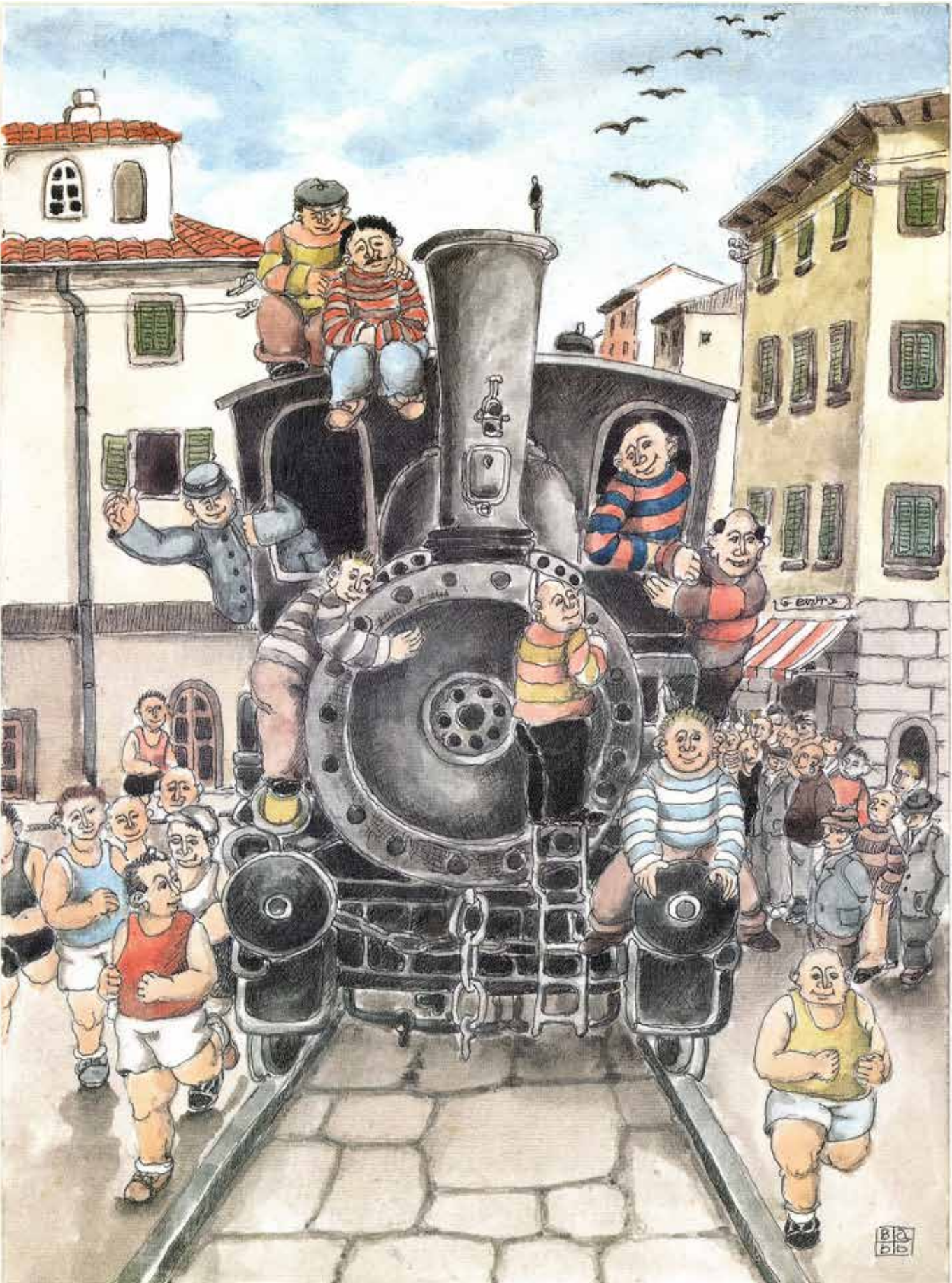
Top

La locomotiva (The Locomotive), 1996
Indian ink on drawing paper 45x33 cm

Indian ink drawing in preparation for an oil painting. Dal Canto considered the locomotive an important achievement and in fact kept the drawing hanging in his living room.

Below

Illustration for the box set 'Pisa e paesi pisani' 30 postcards with poems in the vernacular published by the 'Er Tramme' quarterly magazine on the Pisan vernacular and popular traditions, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera, 1997



Sketch for the poster of *La marcia della Valdera*



Pontedera, Piazza Cavour, etching (Bandeccchi&Vivaldi)



Piazza Cavour. Arrival of the tram. Ed. Pettinelli & Co. - Pontedera. Photo Ricci (Moreno Bertini)



A “magical” place of Babb in a print matrix of the artist



A work by Babb that portays Sabatino known as Bati, a blind musician who came from Ponsacco and every Friday, market day, and for the Fair he entertained the people of Pontedera and the occasional public with his ‘ocarina’ flute, also selling the legendary Sesto Cajo Baccelli almanac.