

Host: Sara Marinelli:

Authors' Voices from La Piazza. The micro-litcast of the inaugural edition of the San Francisco Italian Literary Festival—"La Piazza"—2026. Presented by the Italian Cultural Institute of San Francisco and the Cultural Association Librai in corso.

I am Sara Marinelli, and I posed three questions to the authors participating in the festival.

In this episode: **Silvia D'Achille**

What type of stories do young people need today to navigate the present time and imagine the future?

Silvia D'Achille: I believe they have a profound need for authenticity. Stories may well speak of other eras, distant places, or invented experiences, but they must resonate with what readers truly live and feel—something entirely distinct from the factual accuracy of the story itself.

Let me give you an example: banal stories that aim solely to impart a lesson in a rigid, stereotypical manner fail to connect—whether with young children or older adolescents—and ultimately alienate everyone from reading. Indeed, writers must engage in a continuous process of empathy, constantly staying attuned to the lives of children and young people. And this process of staying current is achieved primarily through listening—a form of listening that must be truly profound and without judgment. Deep down, this is what we all ask for: to be seen and heard.

Sara Marinelli: We are at a festival of Italian literature abroad, and our stories are crossing borders thanks to translation. From the landscape of contemporary Italian literature, what would you like to see travel out into the world? And who is a children's or YA author—whether contemporary or from the past—whom you always recommend reading?

Silvia D'Achille: It is not that easy for Italian voices to cross national borders. It is said that we come across as peripheral, sometimes too tethered to the past, that we are not daring, that we are provincial. Besides the fact that I do not agree with this assessment, I believe that if we reimagine the "Italian province" as a *borgo*—a small village—and thus an even more intimate dimension, this can actually become one of our greatest strengths. Naturally, this is not a geographical argument; rather, I have a deep admiration for certain contemporary voices that, in my view, interpret this sense of smallness in an exquisitely poetic way. Writers such as Silvia Vecchini, Marianna Balducci, and Azzurra D'Agostino possess this

poetic quality precisely because they remain profoundly rooted in the everyday—in the act of doing, in living fully in the here and now—staying deeply connected to nature and to the authentic emotional world of children.

Sara Marinelli: Share a word that recurs in your writing—specifically, an Italian word you love, or one that is fundamental to the imagery of your novels.

Silvia D’Achille: I don’t believe a specific word appears often in my writing, but I know I have a favorite word in the dictionary, and that word is *merenda*—afternoon snack. It is undoubtedly the inner child I carry within me to answer. But the inner child, as we know, has a very strong voice in children’s authors. Moreover, *merenda* carries only positive connotations: it signifies comfort, sweetness, and rest—though a brief rest, taken amidst a thousand adventures—and it is often something we share. Thus, it is a moment of conviviality, as well as one of care. And so, yes, one could certainly say that these are the very things I love to weave into my stories.