

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: Carlo Lucarelli.

I believe that, in today's pervasive media culture, we are constantly exposed to narratives that are fast-paced, self-referential, and often instrumental to power. Yet literature possesses a power of its own: the power to let us look at contemporary reality with keener eyes. What narratives do we need today to navigate the present time and imagine the future?

Carlo Lucarelli: We need narratives that are profound, courageous, and effective—which, after all, is precisely what a narrative should always do. They must be profound because a narrative must be capable of observing the world and delving into its depths, rather than stopping merely at the surface because it is convenient, easier, or perhaps more politically correct or commercially viable. No: a narrative must go deep, examining even the contradictions inherent in the very world it seeks to portray. And for this reason, it must be courageous—meaning it must tell the whole story without sparing anyone, not even ourselves, should we discover that what we previously believed turns out to be inaccurate—or, at the very least, that it's not the only version of the facts.

Furthermore, these narratives must be effective; that is, we must tell the story of the world using the world's own language. And this is precisely what fiction has always done. We select themes—we choose specific events pertinent to those themes—and we arrange them in sequence, evoking emotions that ensure we will never forget those themes and the powerful impressions they left on us.

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 an author—whether contemporary or from the past—whom you always recommend reading?

Carlo Lucarelli: God bless translators—and especially the good ones—who ensure that our words manage to reach languages and cultures that are completely different, yet undoubtedly eager to read.

Fortunately, we Italians are widely translated—including many contemporary writers, new voices, and young talents alike. However, there are some authors I would love to see translated much more often. One of them is Eraldo Baldini—a magnificent storyteller from my home region, Romagna. He is a truly exceptional narrator who writes about themes that may seem strictly local, but which in reality speak to the entire world; they explore all the contradictions inherent in rural life—nuances that can veer into the realm of horror, or rather, plunge headfirst right into it.

Eraldo Baldini is often hailed as the “Italian Stephen King.” Well, I would love for Stephen King himself to read one of Eraldo’s stories someday.

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.

Carlo Lucarelli: A word that appears frequently in what I write is *paura*—fear. It is a word that might seem ugly. Yet, to me, it is actually quite beautiful.

Fear is an incentive for knowledge; it is, in itself, a form of knowledge. It is something unsettling, strange, mysterious—something lurking down at the end of a hallway, behind a half-ajar door—something that simply cannot leave you indifferent.

You can react in two ways: the wrong way—by closing yourself off, hiding under the covers, building a wall, running away, or simply refusing to engage; or you can react in the right way—by getting up, going to take a look, opening that door, and discovering what lies behind it.

Very often, what you find are things you had absolutely no reason to fear. That is why I like fear: because it is a marvelous instrument of knowledge.