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La pozza del Felice (Felice's pool)



FABIO ANDINA:
"Tage mit Felice"
Rotpunktverlag Zurich 2020
240 pages; CHF 28

"La pozza del Felice"
Rubbettino Editore,
Italy, 2018
209 pages; CHF 22

"He is the one who knocks on the door and wakes me up. And it is barely half five in the morning." When Felice gets up at the crack of dawn in the remote Ticino village that he calls home, he starts the day with a peculiar ritual. The first-person narrator – a young man who has fled the big city – joins the 90-year-old Felice in this ritual every morning. Whatever the weather, they walk up the mountain barely exchanging a word. They then bathe in a natural pool ("la pozza" in Italian) and walk down again. The young man describes what it is like to live in the village. But, more importantly, he tells us about the time that he spends together with Felice – a charismatic man whose life has been anything but easy. Felice's daily routine consists of down-to-earth practicalities such as chopping wood, cooking, and helping the neighbours. Daily life never

changes in this mountain village, where the locals are mostly elderly. Yet things take a turn for the unexpected when Felice receives a mysterious letter. News of the letter spreads like wildfire. Soon everyone knows about it, but no one knows what the letter is about. Felice seems to be expecting a visit and starts getting a room ready in his house.

Author Fabio Andina has a simple yet resonant writing style. His portrayal of the mountains is severe but not cold. Andina's attachment to Ticino is evident in some of his more poetic prose. His description of the locality is partly autobiographical and partly fictitious, as the author said himself in an interview. Plenty of its inhabitants are quirky, it goes without saying. Everyone helps everyone here, far removed from the consumerist rat race. However, there are also mentions of problems such as alcoholism or the exodus of young people into the city.

Felice (meaning "happy" in English) is a wonderful character – a 90-year-old who takes care of himself but is always there when others need help. This is a very calming story about a man who is at peace with himself. The novel was translated into German by Karin Diemering, who has managed to retain the feel of the original by adroitly interweaving certain words from the Italian.

Fabio Andina was born in Lugano in 1972 and studied film science in San Francisco. He now lives again in Ticino. Andina released his first collection of poems in 2005 and his first novel in 2016. "La pozza del Felice" (Felice's pool) is his second novel and the first one to be translated into German. Genevan publishing house Editions Zoé will publish the French translation in 2021.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Sounds

A seamless fusion of harp and piano



DUO PRAXEDIS:
Carl Rütti Works for
Harp & Piano,
Ars Produktion, 2019
Grand Duet,
Ars Produktion, 2017
Dreaming, Idagio, 2010

Say to a concert promoter that you want to perform as a harp-and-piano duo on stage, and they will probably ask you what your day job is. A Zug-based harpist and her piano-playing daughter were undeterred ten years ago – and have made a name for themselves as "Duo Praxedis".

Both are actually called Praxedis: mother Praxedis Hug-Rütti and daughter Praxedis Geneviève Hug. Both are trained pianists – the harp became Praxedis Hug-Rütti's second instrument when she was a student. After marrying, Hug-Rütti devoted less attention to piano playing and more time to her newborn daughter. Then one day, Praxedis senior and Praxedis junior performed together at a private event. "We didn't even know what piece to play at first, but we took Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos in D major, K. 448, and managed to bumble our way through on harp and piano," says the mother.

The two of them quickly realised that there was a wealth of original works out there for harp and piano. They now have an extremely wide repertoire that includes original compositions from the 19th century as well as arrangements of famous works, contemporary music, and their own arrangements. The duo have a very eclectic discography spanning twelve recordings over the last seven years. Praxedis junior: "If you are an artist, you need to make albums. Every CD puts us back in the shop window."

Mother and daughter get on both personally and musically, but they also regard themselves as soloists. "We are two individual musicians, but we support and look after each other on stage." Regardless of how the other is playing. "If my mother nails her harp cadenza, I have to nail my cadenza too. If she doesn't, I have to up my game even more!"

Individualists they may be, but it is remarkable how both adapt their own sound to that of the other. Unless you listened carefully, you would be forgiven for mistaking the harp notes for the piano notes, and vice versa. It is a seamless fusion of two instruments and two musicians.

CHRISTIAN BERZINS