

ASSOCIAZIONE
TEATRO POPOLARE DI SORDEVOLO

The Sordevolo Passion Play: A performance that lives within its people since 1816

The "Sordevolo Passion Play" is a unique work of Popular Theatre in Italy and ranks second in the world for the number of spectators, surpassed only by the Oberammergau performance in Bavaria. It is a "people's work," born centuries ago and destined to renew itself over time as a symbol of identity, memory, and continuity. The event takes place in the small mountain village of Sordevolo, located in the Elvo Valley (Biella), a place also known for its landscapes that inspired the great poet Giosuè Carducci.

The Performance "The Passion" involves the entire community of Sordevolo across generations. Approximately 400 actors and extras, along with a complex organisation and numerous performances, create a deep social fusion and a rare example of authentic popular theatre. The production features scenes that faithfully recreate reality, including horseback riding and Roman chariots.

It is the largest Italian popular show performed by amateur actors—both young and old—who dedicate themselves to staging the Passion of Christ in a 4,000-square-meter amphitheatre that recreates Jerusalem in 33 AD. A unique feature of the event is its complete autonomy: costumes, scenery, direction, acting, and organisation are all managed using local resources.

Historical Origins: While the Passion celebrated 200 years since its first documented date in 2015, its roots likely go back much further. Regular performances have been reported since 1816. Since then, the show has been held every five or ten years, except during World War II.

Literary and Social Value: The script is a reworking of a late 15th-century Passion in verse, linked to the tradition of the *Compagnia del Gonfalone* in Rome and to even older 14th-century *laudari*. For the 2027 edition, the text will be updated while remaining faithful to its long-standing tradition.

Beyond its theatrical importance, the event holds significant social and economic value for the community. Historically, the proceeds from performances have been donated to charity, underscoring that the Passion is a shared heritage of the entire population.

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