

## The Ex-Gay Story in the Pop Music World

By Roberto Marchesini

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Italy's "Festival di San Remo," the most important musical happening in my country which is seen on T.V. by millions of Italians, became the unlikely platform this year for a powerful ex-gay testimony. The singer, Giuseppe Povia, winner of the festival in 2006, presented a song entitled, "Luca Era Gay" (Luca was once gay). The title of his song, implying that some gays can change to heterosexuality, was sufficient to destabilize the Italian gay movement. Gay activists threatened to block the festival, and Europarliamentary member Vittorio Agnoletto asked for a European resolution to stop Povia from performing the song. Povia, himself, received death threats. The gay association "Everyone" denounced Povia to the Procura of the Republic for alleged "homophobia." These efforts failing, gay activists then asked the Festival organizers to "counterbalance" Povia with a song by a gay singer, about "the perfection of homosexual love." That effort too, failed.

Finally, on February 17th., Povia sang his song on the first evening of the Festival. "Luca Era Gay" recounts the transformation of a man named Luca from the gay lifestyle. Without the help of psychologists and psychiatrists, he digs deep within himself to understand the sources of his homosexual attractions. An emotionally disconnected, detached father and a smothering mother, he says, created confusion about his sexual identity: "I looked for men who would be my father, I went with men not to betray my mother." The song also alludes to a superficiality in homosexual relationships. He says, "between love and deceit, often we betrayed each other." The song ends with this verse: "This is my story, only my story. No disease. No healing. Dear dad, I forgive you even if you didn't come back. Mum, I often think of you, I love you and sometimes I still bear your reflection, but now I am a father and I am in love with the only woman I have ever loved." The music, a soft rap with dramatic tunes, carries a direct and honest text while never judging homosexually oriented people for their own personal lifestyle choices.

Before Povia's song was aired, the Italian comedian Roberto Benigni presented a twenty-minute show in which he condemned Povia, saying that homosexuality isn't a sin and that gays have been persecuted historically "because they love someone." He then read an excerpt from Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis."

After Povia's song, contrary to all custom, the conductor gave the microphone to Franco Grillini, former parliamentary member and former president of ARCIgay, the foremost gay association in Italy. Grillini said he had received a cellphone message from a friend (although all celphones were supposed to be turned off during the festival...), who had cried when he had just heard Benigni reading "De Profundis," because it brought to mind his partner who had died of AIDS. Grillini concluded by saying that Povia must learn what gay love is.

Then, the unforeseeable happened: people in the theater started to hiss at Grillini (in Italy, hissing is like booing)! The crowd's sympathy was with Povia, not with the gay activist.

Povia's song went on to the finals and Saturday night, won second place in the San Remo Festival, while outside the theatre, gay activists continued to protest against him. Povia himself said: "I too had a gay phase--it lasted seven months and then I got over it."

The popularity of "Luca Era Gay" has given courage and dignity to the ex-homosexual community in Italy, who, until now, have been thoroughly intimidated by gay activists. The text's real-life insights regarding the ex-gay experience are undeniable.

TO SEE VIDEOS OF THIS SONG, VISIT [HERE](#)