



# Theodora: Empress of Byzantium

*Paolo Cesaretti*

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## **Theodora: Empress of Byzantium** Paolo Cesaretti

Theodora of Byzantium, rising from the lowest ranks of Byzantine society, became one of the most important and powerful women in history. In this gripping biography, Theodora's full story is revealed for the first time, according her a well-deserved place in the pantheon of great women.

Theodora's meager beginnings as the daughter of a bear-keeper could not have foretold her astonishing future as the wife of Justinian, the powerful ruler of the Byzantine empire. An actress at the time who was chastised for her scandalous performances, she eventually caught the attention of the young Justinian, who was no doubt charmed as much by her beauty as by her cunning.

Justinian and Theodora ruled the empire together from their rich and bustling seat of power in Constantinople, making decisions regarding the fate of their kingdom that would reverberate for centuries to come. Time and time again, Theodora's wisdom and counsel to the emperor saved Justinian's empire and assured their place in history.

Hailed by European reviewers as "Book of the Year" upon its publication in Italian, Paolo Cesaretti's book gives a balanced portrait of an intriguing figure who, in the face of those who tried to defame her, rose from the ranks of the poor to build an empire at the side of her ambitious husband.

Paolo Cesaretti, a professor of Byzantine studies, teaches at University of Chieti, Italy. In addition to many books on a variety of subjects related to Byzantine art and history, he regularly contributes to important Italian publications including *Corriere della Sera*.

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