



GIORNATE DEL CINEMA MUTO 2024 SILENT FILM FESTIVAL – 43RD EDITION

PAYING HOMAGE TO GIACOMO PUCCINI WITH KING VIDOR'S *LA BOHÈME*

The programme for Sunday, 6 October 2024 at Pordenone's Teatro Verdi

Press release

PORDENONE – The relationship between **Giacomo Puccini** and cinema has been enduring and influential for both sides. Various operas by the Tuscan composer — celebrated this year on the centenary of his death — show influences of the new art form, and cinema has drawn widely from Puccini's works ever since the silent era. One of the most masterful and successful transpositions of his work to the big screen is **King Vidor's *La Bohème*** from 1926, with one of the greatest actresses of the age, **Lillian Gish**, in the role of Mimì.

Already a muse of D. W. Griffith, with whom she shared great successes, Gish had recently moved to MGM under Irving Thalberg, on a contract that gave her ample decision-making power: for “her” *Bohème* she chose the director, actors (including the male lead, John Gilbert) and director of photography, and refused costumes created for her by Erté, providing her own with the help of her seamstress.

Audiences of the **Giornate del Cinema Muto / Pordenone Silent Film Festival** can watch ***La Bohème*** at the Teatro Verdi on Sunday, 6 October 2024 at 9.00 p.m. Taking on the challenging task of providing the live musical accompaniment is one of the pianists with greatest experience at the festival, Donald Sosin, and his approach to this renowned work is reason enough to attend. **Ben Carré** was involved in the set design, although his name was not in the credits for production reasons. The names that do appear are head set designer of the studios, Cedric Gibbons, and Carré's assistant, Arnold Gillespie, to whom the maestro passed on the job. Carré's style clearly shines through in the majority of the scenes and the final result makes this *Bohème* (it was the second time Carré engaged with the opera) one of the greatest works of the renowned stage designer.

The Pordenone Silent Film Festival is dedicating an entire programme to Carré this year, curated by **Thomas A. Walsh**, and, prior to the screening of *La Bohème*, audiences can enjoy ***La Course aux Potirons*** (The Pumpkin Race, FR 1908) by **Roméo Bosetti**. Two other films from this series are on Sunday's programme: ***La mort de Mozart*** (The Death of Mozart, FR 1909) by **Étienne Arnaud** and ***Trilby*** (US 1915) by **Maurice Tourneur**. Ben Carré, who began his career in the Parisian studios of Gaumont with Louis Feuillade, was called to America in 1912 by his compatriot, Arnaud, at Fort Lee film studios. It was there that, in 1915, he met Tourneur, who he worked with on ***Trilby*** and a further 34 films. Based on the novel written and illustrated by George du Maurier, grandfather of writer Daphne du Maurier (author of *Rebecca*), *Trilby* was initially a great success on the stage before various cinematic versions were released, with Tourneur's being the first in the United States.

Screenings will begin at 9.00 a.m. on Sunday with the **Biograph Project** presenting newly restored copies from the Library of Congress, drawn from paper prints of Griffith's 1908 films.

This will be followed by the rarely screened ***Driven from Home*** (US 1927), directed by James Young and presented here in the context of the festival's homage to **Anna May Wong**. She plays a hurt and vindictive wife by the name of Cho-san, a clear reference to Cio-Cio-San of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*.

The **Latin America** programme takes a trip to **Peru**, with two films: ***Luis Pardo*** (1927), telling the tale of a bandit, directed by **Enrique Cornejo Villanueva**; and ***Captura del Bandolero Andrés***

Ramos, from 1933, directed by **Francisco Diumenjo**. The next stop is **Uruguay** with **Robert Kouri's *Del Pingo al volante*** (From the Racehorse to the Steering Wheel, 1929). The film focuses on a group of women "who have fun, dance, chat and above all, sometimes mockingly, observe their male counterparts," recounts Georgina Torello, director of the journal *Vivomatografias*, who collaborated on the programme and the catalogue for the festival.

Audiences can also enjoy the imagery of ***Xudoybergan Devonov***, within the **Uzbekistan** program, documenting the life of the country's people prior to its transformation under the new Soviet order. Next up is ***Ikkinchi Xotin*** (The Second Wife), from 1927, directed by **Mikhail Doronin**.

The **Canon Revisited** section presents **Nino Oxilia's *Rapsodia Satanica***, featuring the greatest Italian star of the time, **Lyda Borelli**. This was filmed in 1915 but only released in 1917 due to the war, and the young director died in the same year, falling in the battle of Monte Grappa. A key figure in Italian cultural life in the early twentieth century, Oxilia directed 20 or so films beginning in 1913. The last of these was ***Rapsodia Satanica***, a variation on the Faustian tale, drawing inspiration from the works of Gabriele D'Annunzio and Liberty style, and accompanied in Pordenone by a score composed by Stephen Horne, who will perform alongside Elizabeth-Jane Baldry.

The second day of the festival will close at the Verdi with the first programme of **Feminist Fragments** under the title "No work, only play", presenting a series of shorts, many humorous, from the US, Argentina, Thailand and India. Mauro Colombis will provide live piano accompaniment.

Sunday, Oct. 6th boasts also two programs in the online festival. At 5 PM all eyes will be on Uzbekistan with ***Ajal Minorasi*** (The Minaret of Death, 1925) by Viacheslav Viskovskii, accompanied by the music of Günter Buchwald; at 9 p.m., Latin America takes center stage with the Chilean comic short ***Como por un tubo*** (1919) by José Bohr, followed by two Mexican titles: ***Abismos*** (1930) by Salvador Pruneda and ***Santa*** (1918) by Luis G. Peredo with **Elena Sánchez Valenzuela**, silent film diva, filmmaker and founder of Mexico's very first film archive. The accompaniment is by José María Serralde Ruiz. All online films remain available for 48 hours.

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Pordenone Silent Film Festival – Press Office

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