



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

### PORDENONE PAYS HOMAGE TO ANNY ONDRA, SENSATIONAL IN CARL LAMAČ'S *SAXOPHON-SUSI*

OTHER FILMS INCLUDE CECIL B. DEMILLE'S COMEDY *CHIMMIE FADDEN OUT WEST*, THE MEXICAN FILM *SANTA* STARRING ELENA SÁNCHEZ VALENZUELA, AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESTORATION OF THE GERMAN FILM *DAGFIN*, DIRECTED BY JOE MAY

The programme for Monday, 7 October 2024 at Pordenone's Teatro Verdi

#### Press release

PORDENONE – Czech film actress **Anny Ondra** will light up the night on Monday 7 October at the **Giornate del Cinema Muto Silent Film Festival** in Pordenone (Teatro Verdi, 9 p.m.), as she stars in the 1928 German film *Saxophon-Susi* (Susy Saxophone), directed by **Karel Lamač**, who was her Pygmalion and husband for a few years, and with whom she created her own production company that saw major international collaborations. *Saxophon-Susi* is a delightful comedy featuring Anny Ondra at the peak of her career (she starred in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Manxman* the following year; that film was a memorable closing event at the Silent Film Festival in 2022), exuberant, radiant and simply breathtaking in her outrageous dance number. Boasting an international cast, the film was filmed in three European capitals: Berlin, Paris and London. At its premiere in Berlin, the film was accompanied by an original score composed by Paul Dessau that was performed live. The score, since lost, included a very popular song of the period, a jazzy foxtrot titled *Susie Blasst Saxophon* that can still be heard on various platforms. Elements of the film were discovered in France, Italy, the Czech Republic and Russia, and the recently restored version screening in Pordenone reflects the film's original international character. Unfortunately, the film could not be fully brought back to its original form given that approximately 30 minutes remain lost; however, most of the missing scenes concern co-star Mary Parker, and the story feels complete.

Anny Ondra continued her acting career during the talking pictures era, starring in Alfred Hitchcock's *Blackmail*, and in many German films in the 1930s directed by Karel Lamač, from whom she had divorced. She married a second time, to German boxer Max Schmeling (famous for having beat Joe Louis), with whom she remained until her death.

An exceptional trio will accompany *Saxophon-Susi*: **Neil Brand** on the piano, **Frank Bockius** on percussion, and **Francesco Bearzatti** on the saxophone.

A female character is also the protagonist of *Santa*, a 1918 Mexican film that will be screened on the morning of Monday 7 October. The film is directed by **Luis Gonzaga Peredo** and features **Elena Sánchez Valenzuela**, a much-admired star of silent films who later became a cineaste and the founder of Mexico's first cinematographic archive. Her vibrant and intense performance encouraging reflection on the condition of women in a rapidly evolving society makes *Santa* a landmark of early 20th century Mexican culture.

On Monday, at 12:15 p.m., the Festival will screen *Chimmie Fadden Out West* (US 1915) directed by **Cecil B. DeMille**, which is being presented as part of the Canon Revisited section. Although best

known for his epic films, this time DeMille directs a comedy. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* called the film an “exquisite comedy with a touch of romanticism at the end that adds a profound feeling of humanity to this light-hearted piece”.

Thanks to its major restoration in 2023-2024 by the Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum in collaboration with the Dutch Haghefilm and the Italian L'Immagine Ritrovata, the Festival will be presenting in the afternoon a rare German film from 1926: ***Dagfin*** directed by **Joe May**. May was born in Vienna under the Hapsburg Empire, studied in Berlin and is considered the father of German cinema, counting Fritz Lang among his director disciples. Before dedicating himself to cinema, he lived in Trieste for a short time, working in the textile industry. The period just before 1926 was a difficult one for him, as it brought the death of his daughter, who was a successful actress, together with financial difficulties. ***Dagfin*** was a very costly production, a rare gem from this period that was strangely ignored, then forgotten, and it greatly deserves renewed attention. Its pacifist and antimilitarist content, openly favourable to the Armenian cause, did not go unnoticed by German censors who believed it undermined diplomatic relations with Turkey. The film stars the great expressionist actor **Paul Wegener** and Italian actress **Marcella Albani**.

During the afternoon of Monday 7 October, the Uzbek cinema retrospective presents one of the most interesting titles: ***Ajal Minorasi*** (The Minaret of Death, 1925), directed by **Viacheslav Viskovskii**. This was the first film produced by Bukhino that introduced the use of the Uzbek language instead of Russian in the intertitles, and the producers felt confident it could be exported to Muslim nations like Turkey, Persia and Egypt (indeed, it received a wide international distribution). The finest costumes in the film came from the court of the deposed Emir of Bukhara and the outdoor scenes spotlight the city's spectacular monuments. Soviet official bodies were displeased with the film's plot however, which retold a 16th century legend. While the film was a huge success both in its home country and abroad, the political committee ensured no further films of its type would be produced. The score for the film features traditional instruments played by Uzbek artists **Abror Zufarov** and **Sobirjon Tuyokov**.

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Le Giornate del Cinema Muto Silent Film Festival – Press Office

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