



LE GIORNATE DEL CINEMA MUTO / PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL – 43RD EDITION

AN UP-AND-COMING STAR:
GARY COOPER IN ONE OF HIS FIRST BIG ROLES IN HENRY KING'S *THE WINNING OF BARBARA WORTH*

BEFORE ARSÈNE LUPIN AND SIMON TEMPLAR, THE FIGURE OF THE GENTLEMAN THIEF
DEBUTS IN 1928 FILM FORGOTTEN FACES

SICILY: A LAND OF SUN AND PASSION IN *L'APPEL DU SANG*

Press release

The programme for Saturday, 12 October 2024

PORDENONE - Just like its opening, the closure of the **43rd edition of Pordenone Silent Film**, on Saturday 12 October at 9.00 p.m. (with a repeat on Sunday at 4.00 p.m.) at Teatro Verdi, is marked by a western, and another big Hollywood name, **Henry King**. It is the turn of 1926 picture ***The Winning of Barbara Worth***, for which **Neil Brand** has composed an orchestral score that will be debuted by the **Pordenone Chamber Orchestra** conducted by **Ben Palmer**.

A prolific author, King made nearly 120 films from 1915 and appeared as an actor in many of them. He established his own cinema company and was one of the 36 great founding members of the Oscars. He explored almost all genres, from melodrama to comedy, biography to religious films, and naturally, westerns. He was familiar with all of the mechanisms of the studio system and showed particular flair when it came to directing actors, including superstars, and seeking out new talent. For ***The Winning Of Barbara Worth*** he chose Gary Cooper, who was contracted with a \$50 weekly fee, against the \$1,750 of Ronald Colman and \$1,000 of Vilma Bánky. The film tells the story of an attempt to dam the Colorado river and irrigate Imperial Valley, a real-life endeavour undertaken in 1905 that ended in disaster when the river broke its banks and flooded the valley. The film needed a location with the same characteristics as Imperial Valley (this was found in the Black Rock desert in the north-west of Nevada) and, above all, a realistic reconstruction of the disaster, which was achieved with amazing success thanks to **special effects** by **Ned Mann**. A great film needs a director with complete control over all phases of the production: *The Winning Of Barbara Worth* required the transportation of impressive sets in very short time frames and King proved himself capable of fully taking charge of operations. To ensure the authenticity of the film, a large number of local inhabitants were used because he preferred that their faces showed real lines and wrinkles, rather than painting them on in make-up. In the words of Kevin Brownlow: "Whether you like westerns or not, ***The Winning of Barbara Worth*** is essential viewing". A final piece of trivia: the assistant to the director of photography, George S. Barnes, is the same Gregg Toland who was later cinematographer on *Citizen Kane*.

On the morning of the final day of the festival, screenings will be moved to the Cinemazero theatre, as Teatro Verdi will be hosting rehearsals of the orchestra billed to accompany the evening's main feature. The programme starts at 9.00 a.m. with the Biograph films by Griffith from 1908, followed by two films for the series on Latin America. The first, ***Apuros do Genesio***, from 1940, is a sketch by popular Brazilian comic **Genesio Arruda**, who impersonates a rough, provincial character who has difficulty adapting to city life. The second, ***La virgen de la caridad***, from 1930, is the final silent fiction film made in Cuba and the only one that remains complete. It was directed by **Ramon Peon**, one of the most prolific directors of Cuban silent film, whose career was split between Cuba and Mexico and continued into the sixties. Pordenone's copy of ***La virgen de la caridad***, a religiously

imbued melodrama, is the result of restoration by the UCLA Film and Television Archive and the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) funded by the director, Brett Ratner. At 11.30 a.m. the last Uzbek film in the programme, ***Uning huquqi*** (Her Right, 1931), is a propaganda work created to present and underline the policies of the soviet regime and its campaign of reforms.

Screenings on Saturday, 12 October 2024 return to Teatro Verdi from 2.00 p.m. with ***Forgotten Faces*** (US, 1928) by **Victor Schertzinger**, an excellent low-budget picture with outstanding direction, a solid screenplay and captivating cinematography. The film is a thriller revolving around the figure of a gentleman thief, "Heliotrope" Harry Harlow (played by Clive Brook), who attempts to save his daughter from the wickedness of a vindictive wife (sensational Russian actress Olga Baclanova plays the obsessive and depraved mother). This film also launched the career of producer David O. Selznick who went on to make some of the greatest masterpieces of the Hollywood golden years, including *Gone with the Wind*.

At 3.30 p.m. the festival presents ***L'appel du sang*** (The Call of the Blood, FR 1919) by **Louis Mercanton**, the only feature-length fictional film in the programme dedicated to Sicily. Based on the novel of the same name by Robert Hichens, it was precisely the English nature of the literary source material that prompted the director to cast two British actors, **Phyllis Neilson-Terry** and **Ivor Novello**, both debuting on the big screen. The rest of the cast were made up of French and Italian actors and shooting took place in Italy, between Rome and Sicily. The film was very well received in France, the UK and Italy, and was also very popular with Griffith. In the US, however, no buyer was found and it was never distributed. Restoration was carried out by Lobster Films with the support of the Centre National du Cinema et de l'image animée.

At 5.30 p.m. the retrospective dedicated to Ben Carré closes with a rare film by **Raoul Walsh**, ***The Red Dance*** (US, 1928). Great historian and critic William K. Everson, winner of the 1987 Jean Mitry Award, observed that in the years between 1927 and 1928, the silent film industry was dying out, threatened by the arrival of talkies, yet in those two years it also reached its artistic pinnacle. It was as though there was an underlying, splendid fatalism in the knowledge that this magical period would disappear forever, and everyone was driven to give their absolute best. In this film, Ben Carré does such a magnificent job that his sets can be considered the true star of *The Red Dance*. The film tells a love story during the Russian Revolution, with the role of Tasia, the Russian ballerina, played by Mexican actress **Dolores Del Rio**, for an exotic combination.

Another highlight of the programme for Saturday 12 October are two curiosities: 1911 Italian short ***Per la morale***, rediscovered at the **Jugoslovenska Kinoteka** earlier this year, in which a fanatical moraliser, a forerunner of Fellini's Dottor Antonio in the *Boccaccio '70* anthology, sees threats to common decency everywhere. *Per la morale* will precede the screening of *The Winning of Barbara Worth*.

Finally, at 11.00 p.m., the festival presents the third instalment of feminist shorts. In one of these, ***Little Miss Mischief***, from 1922, as recently identified by comic-film expert Steve Massa, there is an appearance by Baby Peggy, imitating a cat. For Pordenone Silent Film, remembering **Diana Serra Cary**, the child prodigy who was hosted by the festival several times, is the perfect way for the 2024 edition to sign off.

The **online** programme, from 9.00 p.m. pm Saturday 12 October, offers audiences two films to enjoy: ***Song*** with **Anna May Yong**, accompanied by Philip Carli on piano and ***Girl Shy*** with **Harold Lloyd** accompanied by Zerorchestra playing a Daan van den Hurk score.

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Pordenone Silent Film Festival – Press Office

Infestival

www.giornatedelcinemamuto.it/en
info.gcm@cinetecadelfriuli.org
Infoline: +39 389 160 3000
Facebook: pordenonesilent
Instagram: pordenonesilent
Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/giornatecinemamuto/>

Press contact

press.gcm@cinetecadelfriuli.org
Giuliana Puppini +39 328 1080422 / Moira Cussigh +39 328 6785049
Fulvio Toffoli +39 366 2116251 / Lionella Bianca Fiorillo +39 340 7364203