



THE PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL
39th LIMITED EDITION: ONLINE OCTOBER 3 – 10 ON MYMOVIES.IT

RARE FILMS AND NEW RESTORATIONS WITH GREAT MUSIC, DAILY LINKS WITH INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES, CLASSES ON CINEMA AND MUSIC, BOOK PRESENTATIONS AND OTHER EVENTS

SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER: LIVE EVENT AT THE TEATRO VERDI, PORDENONE WITH LAUREL AND HARDY... BEFORE LAUREL AND HARDY

Press release

Putting films from a century ago online with musical accompaniment and the best possible visual and sound quality allowed by streaming; maintaining contact with our regular attendees, most of whom could not be in Friuli for this 39th edition because of the pandemic; grabbing the opportunity for reaching a new potential audience. These are the challenges faced by the **Pordenone Silent Festival (Le Giornate del Cinema Muto)** this year, and thanks to the collaboration of **international archives** and a partnership with **mymovies.it**, the excitement will continue during the festival's **39th Limited Edition**, scheduled for 3 – 10 October, with **screenings accompanied by the greatest musicians in the field** and a special **orchestra event**. Film historians, archivists, journalists, students, film-lovers, and anyone interested in rediscovering the art of silent film are all invited to follow the Giornate in a new mode, hoping and trusting that next year we can all come to the Teatro Verdi in Pordenone to celebrate the 40th edition of the festival.

The 2020 programme reflects the **richness of the seventh art: comedies, dramas and travelogues, ranging from the very beginnings of cinema to its full blossoming**. There are famous names such as **Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy**, also featured in our traditional repeat screening, live, at the Teatro Verdi in Pordenone on Sunday 11 October; and **G.W. Pabst, Cecil B. DeMille, Mary Pickford, and Sessue Hayakawa**, together with less well-known film-makers and actors who were among the finest exponents of the first three decades of cinema. During the week of 3-10 October the festival will be online with one programme per day running no more than two hours, and two programmes at the weekends, all accessible in live streaming, and available for 24 hours after the first screening, thus allowing viewers to watch from any time zone. After each event the audience will be able to delve further through live interactions with **musicians, film historians, critics and archivists** in conversation with festival director **Jay Weissberg**. Other special features include **Masterclasses on musical accompaniment** and **book presentations**. The two winners of the historic **Jean Mitry Award**, now in its 35th year, will also be announced. During this edition the **Collegium seminars** with major experts in the field will be reserved for Collegians alone.

THE PROGRAMME

Make way for laughter and rediscoveries with “**Laurel or Hardy**”, a series of shorts presented by **Lobster Films** in Paris in association with the **Library of Congress**, with Stan and Oliver appearing separately, in the period before they became the best-loved comedy duo in history. Last year, thanks to Lobster, the Pordenone audience saw *Duck Soup* (1927), the first short in which the two actors played alongside one another, though not officially as partners. Now the programming moves backwards in time, with unmissable titles such as *Detained* and the surviving reel of *Where Knights*

Were Cold with Stan Laurel, **The Serenade** and **The Rent Collector** with Oliver Hardy (paired with Larry Semon in the latter movie), as well as a film directed by Laurel in 1925, **Moonlight and Noses**, with the splendid **Fay Wray**, restored thanks to the collaboration of the Library of Congress and the Australian **National Film & Sound Archive** in Canberra.

Credit goes to the **Library of Congress** for another restoration, **Penrod and Sam**, directed by **William Beaudine** in 1923, an enchanting feature based on stories by Booth Tarkington (author of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, which inspired Orson Welles), with a plot based on the adventures and friendships of a group of children in 1920s America. One of the surprises here is the truly unusual, non-stereotyped representation of two African-American boys, played by Eugene Jackson and Joe McGray, very much a part of the young gang of friends.

Rochester's **George Eastman Museum** has restored **Cecil B. DeMille's** 1917 Western **A Romance of the Redwoods**, starring **Mary Pickford**, a beautiful example of the director's work from the 1910s, one of the busiest periods of his long career, when he produced dozens of films in the space of a few years.

There's also an exciting rediscovery from Italy. The **Fondazione Cineteca Italiana** of Milan presents **La tempesta in un cranio** (*Kill or Cure*; 1921), produced, written and performed by **Carlo Campogalliani**, one of the most exuberant and inventive figures of the first half century of cinema. It's a film about madness (real or imagined), with the principal goal of amusing the audience. A contemporary review in *La vita cinematografica* remains true a century later: "Simple in plot, attentive in script, not over-rich in detail, and with meaningful, well-composed scenes, the film constantly holds the spectator's attention, without ever being tiresome."

A story of love marked by caste conflict is told in **Where Lights are Low** (1921) by **Colin Campbell**, newly restored by the **National Film Archive of Japan** in Tokyo from a unique copy discovered in Belgrade's **Jugoslovenska Kinoteka**. This is one of the few surviving films made in that period featuring **Sessue Hayakawa**, the first Asian international superstar, whose fame endured well beyond the silent period (his 1957 performance as Colonel Saito in David Lean's *The Bridge on the River Kwai* earned him Golden Globe and Oscar nominations). Hayakawa's role in Campbell's film – that of a Chinese prince (the practice of using Japanese actors to play Chinese characters, now unacceptable, was common at the time) – shows how well he deserved his fame as a matinée idol.

A 1935 film from China restored by the **National Archive in Beijing**, **Guo Feng** (*National Customs*), directed by **Luo Mingyou** and **Zhu Shilin**, offers a captivating drama with the great actresses **Ruan Lingyu** and **Li Lili** playing two sisters in love with the same man (**Zheng Junli**). While Li Lili's character is lively and energetic, Ruan Lingyu (in her last role; she committed suicide soon thereafter, aged only 25) is the older sister who is prepared to sacrifice herself. Produced by the Lianhua studios, of which Luo Mingyou was director, *Guo Feng* was made to curry favour with the Kuomintang government and its New Life Movement, which promoted a return to the traditional values of Confucianism.

The Giornate will present the **world premiere** of the new restoration by the **Danske Filminstitut** in Copenhagen of **Ballettens Datter** (1913), directed by **Holger-Madsen**, one of the most important directors during Denmark's golden age of cinema. Of equal interest is its protagonist, the great dancer **Rita Sacchetto**, daughter of an Austrian mother and Venetian father. *Ballettens Datter* was her second film, and it offers an excellent occasion to appreciate her talents as both actress and dancer.

The 1928 drama **Abwege** (*The Devious Path*) by pivotal director **G. W. Pabst**, starring **Brigitte Helm** (the android in *Metropolis*), tells a story reflecting on the ever-topical subject of marriage and the relationship between sex and money. Compared to the version known thus far (screened in Pordenone in 1997), the film has literally gone through a rebirth after restoration by the **Münchner Filmmuseum** in Munich, which has produced this new copy, beautifully tinted, from the original

negative. The original intertitles have also been reinstated, significantly enhancing our understating of the plot.

Even online, the Giornate audience won't be deprived of a full orchestral accompaniment thanks to the **Greek Film Archive** (Tainiothiki tis Ellados). The scarcity of Greek film production during the silent period makes any surviving title even more rare and valuable, and the film directed by **Dimitris Gaziadis** in 1930, ***The Apaches of Athens*** (οι Απάχηδες των Αθηνών), a precursor of neorealism, is a true revelation. The discovery of a copy in the Cinémathèque française was followed by restoration by the Greek Film Archive, which presented its world premiere in Athens last February with a score for orchestra and chorus.

During a period of severe travel restrictions between one country and another, festival director **Jay Weissberg** has involved a number of film archives – including **MoMA** in New York, the Norwegian **Nasjonalbiblioteket**, the **Cinémathèque française**, the **Cinémathèque royale de Belgique**, the **Gaumont Pathé Archives** in Paris, the **Narodni Filmovy Archiv** in Prague, and the **Filmoteca Narodowa** in Warsaw – in a **programme of shorts** enticing viewers to make their own journeys again as soon as they're allowed, perhaps to get a first taste of the places seen here, or to revisit others. The journey round the world in silent film will make stops in **New York, London, Cairo, Ostend, Bruges, Prague** and **Cracow**, among others, as well as **Trieste**, thanks to a beautiful silent documentary from the 1930s housed in the **Cineteca del Friuli**.

Another purely aesthetic experience, and a compelling invitation to travel in space and time is offered by ***The Brilliant Biograph***, a compilation of some of the earliest footage shot in Europe: 50 very brief shorts made in the period 1897-1902, presented by the Giornate (after their world premiere on 31 August in Amsterdam) by the Dutch **EYE Filmmuseum** in association with London's **BFI**. The newborn marvel of cinema celebrated its own existence and the technical progress it symbolized filming the comings and goings of a great metropolis, the motions of public and private modes of transport, and the human form engaged in sport and labour. The format employed in the original films – the 68mm used in Biograph's first years (its wonders already celebrated by the Giornate), unrivalled for clarity of image, rendering of detail and depth of field – resulted in a visual quality that continues to startle us today, and which 8K digital restoration has sought to maintain intact.

With the sole exception of the film with orchestral accompaniment, all the music in this special Limited Edition will be played by the extraordinary **musicians of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival: Neil Brand, Philip Carli, Stephen Horne, John Sweeney, José María Serralde Ruiz, Daan van den Hurk, Gabriel Thibaudeau, Günter Buchwald** and **Frank Bockius** as a duo, **Mauro Colombis**, and **Donald Sosin**. In addition, the event at the Teatro Verdi on Sunday 11 October will host members of Pordenone's **Zerorchestra**.

Pordenone, 7 September 2020
Le Giornate del Cinema Muto – Press office

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