



## THE PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL GOES LIVE WITH MYMOVIES

THE EDITION OPENS SATURDAY, 3 OCTOBER WITH A PROGRAMME OF TRAVEL SHORTS  
THAT LETS OUR IMAGINATION FLY.

THE CHARMS OF CHILDHOOD ARE BROUGHT TO LIFE IN *PENROD AND SAM*, A  
CELEBRATED FILM BY WILLIAM BEAUDINE LONG THOUGHT LOST.

### Press Release

In this difficult moment when the necessity of new regulations forces us in so many ways to change our lifestyles, it's noteworthy that the **39th edition of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival**, a Limited Edition in streaming from 3 to 10 October via the MyMovies platform (accessible from the festival site [www.giornatedelcinemamuto.it](http://www.giornatedelcinemamuto.it)) kicks off with a selection of short travelogues. Only yesterday it was perfectly normal to hop on a train or plane to get us anywhere we wanted to go, but now such a fundamental action is either impossible in many parts of the world, or the mere thought of leaving our immediate environment is fraught with anxiety if not actual fear. To break this evil spell of unease, we have within us a formidable defence: our imagination. It's a weapon already brought forth by authors like Xavier de Maistre in *Voyage autour de ma chambre (A Journey Round My Room)* and theorized by W. Somerset Maugham, who went so far as to write, "The wise traveller travels only in imagination."

From its very beginnings, cinema has been a window on the world, looking out towards both near and far. To capture this idea, director **Jay Weissberg** has curated a travel programme with the assistance of numerous European archives, not as a mere sampling of exotic locales (even though we see **Cairo**, with all the Orientalist associations so fashionable in the early part of the last century), but above all a voyage through a much-loved Europe of the past, from **Poland to Belgium, London to Prague**. Nor should we forget **New York**, in a 1911 short from the **Museum of Modern Art**, showing a time when the city was undergoing fundamental changes, where automobiles jostled with horse-drawn carriages in the crowded streets and newfangled skyscrapers shot up like mushrooms.

We can't leave out an animated short from Pathé, ***Un Voyage abracadabrant***, a sort of precursor to Disney's *Up* with its flying house, as well as a film of **Trieste** that carries us, in a manner of speaking, to our very doorstep. Preserved at the **Cineteca del Friuli**, this short adds a dissonant note to the programme, not only because it technically doesn't belong to the silent era (the film was made in 1939, but the print survives without its soundtrack), but above all because it warns us of the dangers of nostalgia when disconnected from historical memory. A journey along the Trieste coast and among its bathing establishments passes through classic cherished locations like Sistiana, Grignano and Miramare, ending in the new Ausonia Savoia Baths with its fashionable Moderne structures. But then we note that the swimming pool is decorated with two large portraits of Benito Mussolini alongside a Nazi swastika. The Duce himself proclaimed Italy's racial laws not even one year earlier, just a few hundred meters from the Ausonia Baths, in the piazza dell'Unità. The travel programme can be viewed online Saturday, 3 October from 5 PM Italian time and will be available for 24 hours.

The feature that follows (screening at 8.30 PM Italian time) is ***Penrod and Sam*** from 1923, a true jewel of a film, "a fresh and diverting study of the small boy rampant" with an exceptional cast of child actors; it became a model for future films about childhood including *Skippy*, the first child-centred film to win an Oscar (for best direction) in 1931. Based on the novel by Booth Tarkington and centred on the adventures of a group of rascally friends in early 1920s middle America, *Penrod and Sam* is

striking also for the way it avoids many of the racial stereotypes of the era, especially in its portrayal of two Afro-American boys, played by Eugene Jackson and Joe McCray. Director **William Beaudine** began his film career as an actor in 1909 before becoming an assistant to D.W. Griffith and then a fully-fledged director for some of the biggest studios, working with major stars like Mary Pickford. He moved to England in the mid-1930s but returned to Hollywood in 1937, earning a reputation for speed and efficiency. For his contribution to the entertainment industry, the director was given a star on Hollywood Boulevard's Walk of Fame. *Penrod and Sam* was one of Beaudine's favourite films but it was unseen for decades until a few years ago when the **Library of Congress** discovered a print and restored it to what we can enjoy today.

After the films, don't forget to tune in to the live discussions with the festival director in conversation with scholars, archivists and musicians. For the travel programme, he'll be joined by Professor Jennifer Lynn Peterson in Los Angeles and musician José María Serralde Ruiz in Mexico City. After *Penrod and Sam*, Jay will be joined by Professor Katherine Fusco in Reno, Nevada, David Pierce of the Library of Congress, and musician Stephen Horne in London.

*The Pordenone Silent Film Festival takes place thanks to the support of the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali – Direzione Generale per il Cinema, the City di Pordenone, the Pordenone-Udine Chamber of Commerce and the Fondazione Friuli.*

Pordenone, 2 October 2020  
The Pordenone Silent Film Festival – Press office

**Info festival:**  
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