



**PORDENONE SILENT FESTIVAL
39 – LIMITED EDITION**

**DAY 2 OF THE FESTIVAL (Sunday 4 October)
THE CHINESE GRETA GARBO and SOME OF EUROPE'S
EARLIEST MOVING PICTURES**

Press Release

Sunday 4 October at the **Pordenone Silent Film Festival**, online this year, features **China** in the leading role. At 8:30 pm Italian time, and then available online for 24 hours, we present a 1935 film from Beijing's **China Film Archive**, ***Guofeng*** [*National Customs*], directed by **Luo Mingyou** and **Zhu Shilin**. This is the story of two country sisters whose lives take different paths after they leave high school, one worldly and the other strictly virtuous, following the principles of the New Life Movement promoted by the government of the time. Beyond a relatively simple plot, the film is remarkable for its sophisticated set designs, costumes and production, and for the talents of the two actresses, **Li Lili** e **Ruan Lingyu**; the latter was so popular that she was referred to as the **Chinese Greta Garbo**. *Guofeng* was the diva's last film: she committed suicide aged 25 – just before the release of the film, which was dedicated to her memory – because of sensational rumours about her private life. Nowadays her tragic fate recalls that of Marilyn Monroe more than Greta Garbo. Director Zhu Shilin was also a prominent figure in Chinese film of the period, combining the elegance and aesthetic sensibility of classic cinema with a modern handling of the camera, changing rhythm when required by the narrative.

Guofeng is preceded on the same day (starting at 5 pm Italian time) by ***The Brilliant Biograph***, a compilation of 50 shorts from between 1897 and 1902, each lasting about one minute, selected from the 68 mm Mutoscope and Biograph holdings at the **EYE Filmmuseum** in Amsterdam and the **British Film Institute in London**, which together with New York's MoMA own the greatest collections of these films, all startling in their visual quality. The experience unfolds in five thematic sections, each revealing the main aspects of life at the turn of the twentieth century: urban life, leisure, tourism, technological innovation, and vaudeville. This extraordinary programme had its world premiere just over one month ago, on 31 August, at the Eye Filmmuseum Amsterdam, and will soon be launched on a **world tour**.

Given the brevity of these shorts, any musical accompaniment presents a true challenge, and this has been brilliantly overcome by pianist **Daan van den Hurk**, who was commissioned to produce a score. *The Brilliant Biograph* also offers an appendix to the festival's inaugural **Urge to Travel** programme, with journeys continuing to **Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris, Venice, and Pompeii**, among others.

Director Jay Weissberg will be joined after today's films for live discussion about *The Brilliant Biograph's* content and its conservation by Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi and Frank Roumen of the EYE Filmmuseum, Bryony Dixon of the BFI, and musician Daan van den Hurk. *Guofeng* will be discussed by Victor Fan, Senior Lecturer at King's College London, and musician Gabriel Thibaudeau.

Pordenone, 3 October 2020

Le Giornate del Cinema Muto / Pordenone Silent Film Festival – PRESS OFFICE

Info festival:

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