



FROM TOD BROWNING TO ALFRED HITCHCOCK

THE PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL RETURNS – 41st EDITION

Pordenone, Teatro Comunale Giuseppe Verdi, 1-8 October 2022

Pre-opening, Teatro Zancanaro, Sacile, Friday 30 September

Replica of closing event, Teatro Verdi, Sunday 9 October

Press Release

The Pordenone Silent Film Festival returns for its 41st edition from 1 to 8 October 2022 at the Teatro Verdi in Pordenone with a week of **screenings with live music, seminars, presentations, meetings, masterclasses and awards**, once again all live, although there will be a selection of films **streamed online** for those who won't be able to travel to Friuli this year for a full immersion in silent cinema.

OPENING AND CLOSING EVENTS

The Festival's official launch on Saturday 1 October will be centred around the world premiere of the newly restored 1927 film *The Unknown* by Tod Browning (director of *Dracula* and *Freaks*, among others), memorably performed by **Lon Chaney** with the 23-year-old **Joan Crawford** at his side. The film, a dark love story set in a circus, is one of the great cult titles in the history of cinema and was first presented at Pordenone in 1994 with the piano accompaniment of John Cale, formerly of the Velvet Underground. Compared to that and other versions known so far, this year's Giornate will screen a new copy with ten additional minutes, rediscovered at the **Národní Filmový Archiv** in Prague and restored by the **George Eastman Museum** in Rochester, with a number of unknown sequences that add depth to the characters and plot. Mexican pianist and composer **José María Serralde Ruiz**, one of the international musicians who perform yearly in Pordenone and author of the new score, points out that "the restoration is truly startling because it brings a new film to our eyes". The music will be played by the **San Marco Orchestra of Pordenone**.

It is seldom remembered that **Alfred Hitchcock's** career began in the 1920s and that he made a dozen films before the advent of sound, many of which already feature the essential themes in the prodigious output of the master of suspense. Closing this year's Festival on Saturday 8 October will be Hitchcock's last entirely silent film, *The Manxman* (1929), based on Hall Caine's 1894 novel. Set on the Isle of Man, the story involves Philip, a lawyer, Pete, a sailor, and Kate, the daughter of an innkeeper loved by both men, as they struggle with class prejudice and the dilemmas posed by love, loyalty and friendship. Kate is played by **Anny Ondra**, the intense blonde Czech actress chosen by Hitchcock for his next film, *Blackmail*. A new score written by the British musician **Stephen Horne** and arranged by **Ben Palmer** will be performed under Palmer's direction by the **San Marco Orchestra of Pordenone** and **specialists in Celtic music**. The event is supported by the **Sunrise Foundation for Education and the Arts** and will be repeated on Sunday 9 October, again at the Teatro Verdi in Pordenone.

OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events begin on Friday 30 September with the **pre-opening** which, as usual, brings the Giornate back for one evening to the Teatro Zancanaro in Sacile, which hosted the Festival from 1999 to 2006. The feature is *Up in Mabel's Room* (1926), a comedy by **E. Mason Hopper**,

accompanied by the **Zerorchestra** conducted by **Günter Buchwald**. Based on the 1919 Broadway comedy of the same title written by Otto Harbach and Wilson Collison, the film – remade by Allan Dwan in 1944 – shows the cunning manoeuvres of Mabel (**Marie Prevost**, in a brilliant display of her verve), trying to regain the husband she divorced, and the escapades of the latter, engaged to another woman, as he seeks to recover a compromising gift from his ex. The screening will be repeated on Thursday 6 October at the Teatro Verdi.

No festival could ignore the centenary year of **Nanook of the North**, by the director and explorer **Robert Joseph Flaherty**, screening on Sunday 2 October. This is a cornerstone of documentary filmmaking – a hugely successful genre in our own era – and highlights Flaherty's narrative skills and above all his fascination with the Arctic and its dwellers. In addition to flutes and percussion, the accompaniment composed by the Canadian musician **Gabriel Thibaudeau** includes the characteristic throat singing of the Inuit people, an almost otherworldly sound, performed in Pordenone by **two Inuit singers** from Canada.

The traditional mid-week musical event (Wednesday 5 October) is a Danish epic from 1920, **Saga Borgarættarinnar**, the first feature film shot in Iceland, with stunning views of its landscape. The film was recently restored by the **Danske Filminstitutet** with the **National Film Archive of Iceland**. For the accompaniment, composer **Pórður Magnússon** and **Bjarni Frimann** will come to Pordenone from Iceland, with Frimann directing an ensemble of nine musicians.

THE MAIN RETROSPECTIVES

After several years of anticipation, the Giornate presents a **Ruritania** retrospective (to be continued in 2023), a substantial collection of films from various countries, all sharing a setting in mythical Balkan kingdoms such as “Ruritania”. Starting with Sir Anthony Hope's late 19th-century novel *The Prisoner of Zenda*, the concept entered popular culture through books, operettas and films. Hope's story was turned into film on six occasions, and the international success of the genre, which had an enduring legacy (think of *Roman Holiday*), is here illustrated by titles including ***Sui gradini del trono*** (Italy, 1912), ***Three Weeks*** (US, 1924), ***Hans Kunglig Höghet shinglar*** (Sweden, 1928) and ***The Runaway Princess*** (UK, 1929) by Anthony Asquith, after the novel by Elizabeth von Arnim *The Princess Priscilla's Fortnight*. The programme also presents parodies, with great comics such as **Stan Laurel, Harold Lloyd** and **Charley Chase**, and – exploring the relationship between reality and fiction – **newsreels** about authentic Balkan royal families.

Long considered one of the most important American dramatic actresses of the silent era and enormously popular in those years, **Norma Talmadge** was a versatile artist and equally talented in comic roles, especially early in her career. Many of her films have remained hard to find, but thanks to the collaboration between the **Library of Congress, Cohen Media** and the **Pordenone Silent Film Festival** it is now possible to screen a series of rediscoveries that welcome this extraordinary actress back into the pantheon of cinema. Alongside her early Vitagraph comedies the Giornate will present some big-budget hits she made with her producer husband Joseph Schenck for the Norma Talmadge Film Corporation, including **Sidney Franklin's *The Forbidden City*** (1918), ***Within the Law*** (1923) by **Frank Lloyd** and ***The Lady*** (1925) by **Frank Borzage**.

Other important **rediscoveries** and **new restorations** round off the rich and varied program of the 41st edition, and in addition to a tribute for the **90th anniversary of the Venice Film Festival**, there will be **travelogues**, documentaries on the **eruption of Mount Etna** in the early 1920s, **Dutch colonial films** of the early 1920s, films in the **Canon Revisited** section (including *Nanook*), and exciting rediscovery of some of the **earliest film images**.

The Pordenone Silent Film Festival - Le Giornate del Cinema Muto is realized thanks to the support of the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Italian Ministry of Culture (Direzione Generale Cinema e Audiovisivo), the Municipality of Pordenone, the Pordenone–Udine Chamber of Commerce and the Fondazione Friuli.

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Le Giornate del Cinema Muto – Press Office

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