



FAIRBANKS STARRING IN *DON Q, SON OF ZORRO* TO OPEN THE 45TH EDITION OF THE PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

Programme for Saturday 3 October 2026 at the Teatro Verdi in Pordenone

Press release

The gala opening, on Saturday 3 October at 9:00 p.m., of the 45th edition of the **Pordenone Silent Film Festival** (Teatro Verdi, 3-10 October) is the spectacular *Don Q, Son of Zorro* (USA 1925) directed by **Donald Crisp**. Produced by and starring **Douglas Fairbanks**, the brightest star in Hollywood, following on the heels of the enormous success of films such as *The Mark of Zorro*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Robin Hood* and *The Thief of Bagdad*, which shone a spotlight on his physique and athleticism. He was the perfect leading man for adventure films and, after *Don Q, Son of Zorro*, he enjoyed further popular success with *The Black Pirate* and *The Iron Mask*.

Fairbanks began treading the boards as a teenager, starting his film acting career in 1915 when he was 32 years old, after great success as a stage actor. His first films were comedies, but he soon realised that he would be more successful if he took advantage of his sporting talents, so he turned himself into a sort of superhero, like in the first *Zorro* in 1920, bringing to life the masked avenger, the indomitable swordsman who defended the weak and the oppressed. That same year, 1920, he married Hollywood star **Mary Pickford**, and they became the world's most famous celebrity couple. They hosted memorable parties at their home Pickfair, welcoming the biggest names in film, finance and politics. Fairbanks was also a savvy business man, founding **United Artists** with D. W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, and his wife Mary Pickford, to maintain total control over their work, and free themselves from the control of the film studios. He also founded the Academy Awards and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) with 35 other film-industry luminaries, becoming the Academy's first president. Douglas Fairbanks died in 1939 at the age of 56. The following year, he became the first posthumous recipient of an Academy Honorary Award.

Returning to *Don Q, Son of Zorro*, it is curious to note that the screenplay adds the character of Zorro, who was born 15 years after the publication of the 1904 novel written by Kate Prichard and her son, Hesketh Hesketh-Prichard. Riding high on the commercial success of *The Mark of Zorro*, Fairbanks wanted to bring back the character in a sort of sequel, and was again rewarded by tremendous box office sales. In the film, Douglas Fairbanks plays two roles—both the father and the son—and introduces another novelty: in addition to his sword, Don Q also masters the whip, creating comical situations such as when he uses it to snatch the cigarette from the mouth of a rival. Other interesting elements of *Don Q, Son of Zorro* concern the actors. Director Donald Crisp played the role of the villain and was injured during filming, though this did not prevent him from returning immediately to his spot behind the camera. The female lead was played by 19-year-old **Mary Astor**, who would go on to win an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in 1942 for her role in *The Great Lie* by Edmund Goulding. She is best remembered for her portrayal of the femme fatale in John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon*. The cast also includes **Warner Oland**, who plays the Archduke Paul of Austria and was famous for playing detective Charlie Chan in the 1930s, as well as **Jean Hersholt**, who starred in von Stroheim's *Greed* a year earlier.

Don Q, Son of Zorro is being shown in a new restoration by the **Danish Film Institute**, accompanied by a new orchestral score from **Andrej Goričar** performed live for the very first time by the **RTV**

Slovenia Symphony Orchestra from Ljubljana, and conducted by Goričar himself. The score was commissioned by event partner **Slovenska Kinoteka**.

Screenings on the opening day begin at the Teatro Verdi at 2:15 pm with Biograph shorts by **D. W. Griffith** from 1908-1910, and with the first film in this year's continuation of our retrospective dedicated to **Italia Almirante Manzini**, including **Augusto Genina's** 1919 film ***La maschera e il volto*** (The Mask and the Face), based on the play of the same name by Luigi Chiarelli.

After travelling to Sicily and Liguria in the previous editions, we visit **Lazio** this year with a programme featuring both fiction and documentaries. The focus is naturally on Rome with *Villa Pacelli* from 1910, featuring images of the reception and guests of banker Ernesto Pacelli, cousin of the future Pope Pius XII, at his villa on via Aurelia; *Capriccio di miliardario*, which takes us on a tour of the monuments of Rome and to lesser known parts of the capital; and *Roma*, a 1921 American production conserved at the Cineteca del Friuli. ***Il romanzo di Maddalena***, a 1913 Film d'Arte Italiana production is a dramatic comedy set in the artistic quarter around via Margutta.

The Pordenone Silent Film Festival / Le Giornate del Cinema Muto is made possible thanks to the support of the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Ministry of Culture – Direzione Generale Cinema, the city of Pordenone, the Pordenone-Udine Chamber of Commerce, the Fondazione Friuli and with the participation of BCC Pordenonese e Monsile.

Pordenone, 2 October 2026

Le Giornate del Cinema Muto / Pordenone Silent Film Festival – Press Office

Info

www.giornatedelcinemamuto.it

info.gcm@cinetecadelfriuli.org

Infoline: 389 160 3000

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Press Office

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