



PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL – 45TH EDITION

THE WORLD PREMIERE OF THE RESTORED *L'ARZIGOGOLO*

STARRING ITALIA ALMIRANTE MANZINI AND WITH COSTUMES DESIGNED BY
CARAMBA

BASED ON A PLAY BY SEM BENELLI

Programme for Monday 5 October 2026 at Pordenone's Teatro Verdi

Press release

"Arzigogolo" means a twisted play on words, a quibble or artificial and complicated reasoning, and the plot of **Mario Almirante's** film *L'arzigogolo* [The Whim] (IT 1924), starring **Italia Almirante Manzini**, is indeed quite tangled, although audiences of the time were more or less familiar with **Sem Benelli's** play of the same name. The film was a big success for the Alba Film company of Turin and, during the years in which Italian cinema was considered to be in decline, it demonstrated that the country was still capable of producing high quality products able to compete with the finest international productions. Italia Almirante Manzini worked in both theatre and film and was one of the most famous stars of the time. She was also well known in South America, where she frequently travelled on tour with the members of her company, which, in 1926, included a very young Vittorio De Sica. Some prints of her films have been discovered in archives in Brazil, where she lived for many years, testifying to her popularity on the continent. The restored version of *L'arzigogolo* was also found there and is being shown on Monday 5 October at 9:00 pm in a **world premiere** at Teatro Verdi in Pordenone, thanks to a collaboration between the Cinemateca Brasileira in Sao Paulo, the Cineteca del Friuli in Gemona and the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin. Musical accompaniment for the film will be performed live by **Stephen Horne** on piano, **Elizabeth-Jane Baldry** on harp and **Frank Bockius** on percussion. Sem Benelli's granddaughter **Stefania Benelli** will be in attendance.

L'arzigogolo enjoyed both critical and public acclaim, with *La Rivista del Cinematografo* giving high praise for the direction, comparing Mario Almirante to Griffith, Lubitsch and Abel Gance, and emphasising the extraordinary photographic work of Ubaldo Arata, who would enter history 20 years later for his work on *Roma città aperta*, and **Caramba** for the set and costumes. Caramba was the stage name of Luigi Sapelli, whose father, a harsh Piedmont nobleman and military man, did not want him to work in theatre. Caramba was the most brilliant and innovative costume designer of his generation, and friend and collaborator of Mariano Fortuny and Arturo Toscanini, with whom he curated the rebirth of the Teatro alla Scala and the historic, posthumous *Turandot* première by Giacomo Puccini.

For the **Weimar senza censure** [Weimar Uncensored] series at 4:30 pm, the festival will screen **Heddas Rache** [Hedda's Revenge] (1919) by **Jaap Speyer**. Audiences reacted violently to the film with extremist right wing groups blocking its screening in Berlin, and with all copies of the film ordered destroyed in Bochum. While it was certainly not a pornographic film, it was considered scandalous for the direct way in which it dealt with prostitution and for showing how tenuous the line between bourgeois respectability and the status of loose women can be.

Spanish cinematography was largely unknown outside the country, both during and after the silent film era. It is believed that over 90% of Spanish production between 1896 and 1950 has been lost. So, efforts begun in the late 1970s and increasing in recent years with the involvement of 11 Spanish cinemateques in collaboration with the international cinemateque community have become a model of how to search for and safeguard what remains. The four programmes chosen for the Pordenone Silent Film Festival represent a wide selection of production companies, themes, geopolitical regions, genres and figures who worked during the silent film era. The best known name is certainly that of **Segundo de Chomón**, collaborator of Méliès, a magician of special effects and an innovative genius of cinematographic techniques. He also worked in France and Italy. In Spain, he established two film developing and printing companies in Barcelona, and began filming documentaries as early as 1902. The 1904 film ***L'hereu can pruna*** [The Heir of the Casa Pruna] and the 1905 film ***Los héroes del sitio de Zaragoza 1*** [The Heroes of the Siege of Saragossa] offer a historical reconstruction of the Saragossa resistance against Napoleon's troops in 1808. The two films are included in the programme on Monday afternoon starting at 2:00 pm, as are reels of the **wedding of the King of Spain Alfonso XIII** in 1906 filmed for Pathé Frères. Although many production companies were present at the royal wedding, only Urban filmed the anarchic assassination attempt after the ceremony. The royal couple survived, but 24 people were killed and over one hundred people were injured. The **Caspervék Ensemble** will accompany the screening of the Spanish films, featuring Laura Lorenzo on flute, Virginia Lis on clarinet, Óscar Presa on trombone, Ángel Saavedra Arozamena on Spanish guitar and Brais Gonzáles (who arranged the score) on piano.

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Pordenone, 4 October 2026

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

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