



PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL – 45TH EDITION

THE NEW RESTORED VERSION OF *A PAGE OF MADNESS*

NARRATED BY BENSHI ICHIRO KATAOKA AND ACCOMPANIED BY
MAKIA MATSUMURA, KISAYO KATADA AND NOBUAKIRA KIYOMOTO

Programme for Wednesday 7 October 2026 at Pordenone's Teatro Verdi

Press Release

On a dark and stormy night, a patient dances at a psychiatric hospital. Her husband works as a custodian at the hospital in order to be able to be near her. He feels remorse for having abandoned her years before, when he was a sailor... This is the opening of the film *Kurutta Ippēji* (A Page of Madness), scheduled for Wednesday 7 October at 9:00 pm at Teatro Verdi. This **special event at the Silent Film Festival** is certainly one of the most significant of this year's edition, part of the programme dedicated to the **art of benshi**, in which a live storyteller gives voice to the characters of Japanese silent films, and describes and narrates the action, establishing a relationship with the audience important enough to influence the pace and sometimes the drama itself.

Kurutta Ippēji by **Teinosuke Kinugasa** is an extraordinary work that is both experimental and narrative, combining Japanese tradition, literary modernism and great European cinema. This masterpiece has a mystical air about it because it had been believed to be lost for half a century, destroyed in a studio fire. But, in 1971, the director found a print in his former home. This new digital restoration by the **National Film Archive of Japan** was commissioned by **Yanai Initiative**, involving UCLA and Waseda University, and supported by philanthropist Tadashi Yanai. The original blue tint of 1926 was re-created and the film has regained new life. The film will be narrated by benshi **Ichiro Kataoka**, one of the most admired today, and accompanied by **Makia Matsumura**, (piano), **Kisayo Katada** (percussion) and **Nobuakira Kiyomoto** (shamisen). *Kurutta Ippēji* is the ultimate expression in cinematography of "Shinkankakuha" (New Perception School), an avant-garde artistic movement. Stylistically, the film features very quick editing, overlays, double exposures, oblique framing, deformed images and variations of focus, with actors, writers and technical crew contributing to its creation. Interestingly, the cast and troupe built and painted the sets together, took turns pushing the camera and worked together with no rigid role divisions. The screenplay is the work of **Yasunari Kawabata**, who was the first Japanese citizen to win the **Nobel Prize in Literature** in 1968. The assistant to the director of photography was a very young **Eiji Tsuburaya**, future special effects genius and inventor of Godzilla. Director **Kinugasa** is also an intriguing character, beginning his career as an actor, playing female roles, as was traditional. Later, as an experimental director, he made only two films: *Kurutta Ippēji*, followed by *Jujiro* (Crossroads), two years later. For decades, it was the best known Japanese silent film in the West. After this brief interlude, **Kinugasa** returned to narrative cinema and a more commercial genre, with his 1953 *Gate of Hell* winning the Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and an Academy award for Best Foreign Language Film.

Also on Wednesday 7 October, at 4:45 pm, the festival presents an interesting series of Czech avant-garde films. When Czechoslovakia was born in 1918, following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was one of the most advanced countries in Central Europe, both in industrial terms and in its openness to cultural ferment and newness arriving from the West. In this context, the intermingling of avant-garde artistry in photography, cinema, theatre and advertising was especially fruitful, starting in 1929 with the **Film und Foto** exhibition in Stuttgart, which made a strong impression, and inspiring **Alexander Hackenschmied**, pioneer of Czech cinema and photography.

Before emigrating to the United States in 1938, where he continued intense documentary work that won him an Academy Award in 1965, Hackenschmied worked a great deal in advertising, applying perfect cinematographic technique to the creation of advertisements.

Czech directors and artists active in the late 1920s and 1930s sought to illustrate all of the aspects of the modernisation they saw around them: such as architecture in the film ***Prague, City of a Hundred Spires***, by Jaroslav Hesoun, architect, designer, theatrical set designer, typographer and graphic artist; and modernisation with the city's electrification in the 1928 film, ***Prague in the Glow of Lights***, by Svatopluk Innemann, both of which are included in the day's programme. The cinematographer was **Václav Vích**, who worked with Gustav Machatý a few years later in *Erotikon*, and was much loved in many European countries, especially in Italy where he received a Nastro d'argento for Best Cinematography in 1947 for *Daniele Cortis*, directed by Mario Soldati.

The **Jonathan Dennis Memorial Lecture** will be held at 6:15 pm. This annual conference in memory of the founder of the New Zealand Film Archive will feature **Allyson Nadia Field**, Professor of Cinema and Media Studies and director of the Film Studies Center at the University of Chicago. In her talk "**Rediscovering Black Film, Rewriting Film History**", Field will discuss the rediscovery of African American cinema, which was present right from the very beginnings of the seventh art, and the resulting need to rethink the history of American cinema, starting with the rediscovery of ***Something Good - Negro Kiss*** (1898), the first known film to depict a passionate kiss between two Black actors on screen, and which has gone viral on social media.

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

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