

IL CINEMA RITROVATO on Tour, 7th edition

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Il Cinema Ritrovato, translated as “rediscovered cinema,” is an addictive event that has been taking place in Bologna, Italy for the last thirty-six years. Growing year by year, as it expands its offerings and its venues, it hooks more and more people who undertake the yearly summer pilgrimage to spend nine days absorbed by the images projected on screens from bygone eras. We call these devotees *cinephiles* or “lovers of cinema.” The affliction itself is called *cinophilia*. With the *Il Cinema Ritrovato on Tour*, the School of Film and Television would like to invite the LMU community to partake in the infectious excitement of seeing rare films and rediscovered masterpieces that have been brought back to life in pristine, new restorations. SFTV’s selection of nine films will be playing from October 18th to 21st in our Broccoli and Mayer Theaters.

“Ritrovato” refers to something that is found anew – something lost, now recovered. This fundamental pleasure drives the festival and its flock of cinephiles. However, given the fact that the program boasts upwards of 400 films each year, the reality is also that the nine-day engagement provides its attendees with ample room to discover what they never knew. In this case, “ritrovato” also means to have suddenly found oneself someplace, as if by chance. The pleasure of these encounters with the old-made-new is compounded by the setting: Bologna is a mid-sized medieval city, bathed in a red hue, known both for its culinary prowess and for the thirty-eight miles of porticos that earned the city its UNESCO World Heritage site designation in 2021. The city is also host to the University of Bologna, the oldest university in the Western world. The festival’s premiere screenings take place each night in Bologna’s central square, the Piazza Maggiore, flanked by the towering Basilica of San Petronio on a screen that stands three-stories high. The screenings, which include certain evenings of silent cinema accompanied by the city’s orchestra, draw anywhere between 3,000 to 6,000 spectators.

This summer, a new cohort of LMU students attended the third iteration of SFTV’s summer study abroad program linked to participation at the festival. For this digital-native generation, there is no class lecture or screening that communicates the scale and importance of the encounter with film history – its preservation and restoration – as successfully as this first-hand experience of becoming immersed among a lively gathering of cinephiles from around the globe. They all rush to attend a theatrical screening of a Charlie Chaplin film, an experimental 16mm program, or to witness the festival’s carbon arc-light projector in action (a machine the festival affectionately calls “la nonna” – the grandmother).

This year, our students have become curators themselves. They have selected two films for our “From Bologna to LA” evening on October 20th: *Man’s Castle* (Frank Borzage, US, 1933) and *Macario* (Roberto Gavaldón, Mexico, 1961). Both films are fables of sorts, highlighting cinema’s ability to fulfill our human need to find meaning in the ordinary and to transform mundane experiences into extraordinary ones.

A Depression-era film, *Man's Castle* addresses the economic struggles of the time. Yet, through the love story at its core, it aims to convey that hope and refuge can be found amidst adversity. The film also features one of the great stars of the era, Spencer Tracy, in one of his most vulnerable roles.

In contrast, *Macario's* protagonist (Ignacio López Tarso), a peasant struggling to feed his family, finds the solution to his plight by striking a deal with Death. *Macario* was a film made in celebration of Mexico's *Day of the Dead*, decades before Disney's *Coco* (2017). We are also celebrating our screening of the film with a best costume contest!

Resurrection and insurrection go hand-in-hand during the evening that opens the festival: an outdoor screening of rarely-seen silent films with live piano accompaniment by silent-cinema pianist Donald Sosin on the Drollinger Stage. The films are a sampling from the 4-disc DVD/Blu-ray release of *Cinema's First Nasty Women*, which received recognition at this year's *Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival*. This collection celebrates feminist comedy, unruly activism, and queer gender play. The curation for our October 18th screening of these rarely seen films uncovers the vibrant, "Contagious Revenge" of early 20th Century women as captured on celluloid. Long before the success of *Barbie* (2023) and the soon-to-be-released *Poor Things* (2023), cinematic women were disrupting the status quo.

If one considers all the films that we will project during our seventh edition of *Il Cinema Ritrovato on Tour*, a collective theme emerges: realism in film. Starting with the first film ever projected for an audience, *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1895) by the Lumière Brothers, film's photographic base has lent itself to the impulse to document the world and life as they are. This impulse has never been more relevant nor more challenged than after the Second World War, when the devastation and suffering caused by the war, the Holocaust, and the deployment of the atom bomb raised the stakes for what could be realistically and ethically represented on screen.

Perhaps the most influential of all film movements, Italian Neorealism, took root during the post-war years. Neorealism responded to this large-scale destruction with human-scale films meant to depict and raise awareness of the suffering and economic devastation that regular people – rather than those of Hollywood fictions – had to endure. This year, we are showcasing a number of films, only one of which belongs directly to the Italian Neorealist period, *Miracle in Milan* (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1951). Even then, it's a film that marks the beginning of the end of the Neorealist cycle, employing certain fantastical elements and returning to the ethos already present in *Man's Castle* regarding the role that fantasy plays in helping us navigate through harsh realities. More true to the spirit of classic Neorealism, the Serbo-Croatian film *Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, Yugoslavia, 1965), a landmark film, presents a triptych of loosely related stories set during World War II. The film showcases the stunning cinematography of Tomislav Pinter and is both poetic and harrowing.

Like *Miracle in Milan*, which is also a comedy, *Too Bad She's Bad* (Alessandro Blasetti, Italy, 1955) provides a balm and a respite from the films that depict harsher realities. It is an uproarious comedy starring Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni in her first starring role and in their first collaboration. Vittorio De Sica, better known as a director of neorealist films such as *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), plays a supporting character and steals most of the scenes in which he appears. *Too Bad She's Bad* is among the films that mark Italy's definitive departure from Neorealism, as filmmakers turned to embrace the incipient economic boom and the ensuing shift toward a more commercial cinema.

Also adding a touch of levity, we'll showcase the documentary *Viva Varda!* (Pierre-Henri Gibert, France, 2023), offering an overview and celebration of the late filmmaker's life and pioneering contributions. Varda innovative storytelling, norm-breaking, and empowerment of women in cinema have left an indelible mark on both film history and feminist filmmaking, serving as a lasting inspiration to emerging talents.

Among Neorealism's enduring global legacy, which has helped spawn counter-cultural cinematic movements around the world, was its insistence on raising awareness of difficult social issues by invoking empathy from its audience. Neorealism was, first and foremost, a humanist movement. We close the festival with two American films – *Nothing but a Man* (Michael Roemer, 1964) and a surprise screening – that draw inspiration from Neorealism (and *cinéma vérité*) as they address oppression and racism in the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s.

These two films, which anchor the one-day symposium closing our festival, feature African-American actors and non-actors in the portrayal of the experience of Black Americans during the Civil Rights Era. However, both films are directed by white men. In today's socio-cultural landscape, where cancel culture and an intolerance for appropriating others' points-of-view prevail, these films offer us an opportunity to reflect on and discuss the conundrum inherent in humanist projects that aim to generate empathy as a means to understand the plight of others – a core element of any attempt to create more equitable and just environments. Yet, we must also now grapple with the belief that alterity is unbridgeable and unknowable. For instance, some hold to the opinion that only actors with the same lived experience as a character can portray that character. For the final one-day symposium, we will be joined by leading scholars in the field of African American Cinema to facilitate what we hope will be a lively and generative discussion.

SFTV would like to thank Guy Borlée and the Cineteca di Bologna as well as our LMU co-sponsors: the College of Communications and Fine Art, the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, Global-Local Affairs, and Faculty Affairs.

We hope to see you at our events! They are all free and open to the public.