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film festival
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AVVENTUROSA



BELLA E PERDUTA

a film by
PIETRO MARCELLO

written by
MAURIZIO BRAUCCI e PIETRO MARCELLO

with
TOMMASO CESTRONE, SERGIO VITOLO, GESUINO PITTALIS
and the voice of
ELIO GERMANO

produced by
AVVENTUROSA

with

RAI CINEMA

in association with

MARIO GALLOTTI

in collaboration with

ISTITUTO LUCE CINECITTÀ e FONDAZIONE CINETECA DI BOLOGNA

film of cultural interest supported by

MiBACT – DIREZIONE GENERALE PER IL CINEMA

distributed by
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CHARACTERS

SARCHIAPONE Campanian buffalo
TOMMASO shepherd and guardian of an abandoned palace
PULCINELLA traditional masked character, intermediary between the living and the dead
GESUINO shepherd and poet

WITH

TOMMASO CESTRONE
SERGIO VITOLO as Pulcinella
GESUINO PITTALIS
ELIO GERMANO voicing Sarchiapone

CREDITI

Directed by **PIETRO MARCELLO**
Produced by **SARA FGAIER, PIETRO MARCELLO**
Delegate producer **DARIO ZONTA**
Written by **MAURIZIO BRAUCCI, PIETRO MARCELLO**
Cinematography **PIETRO MARCELLO, SALVATORE LANDI**
Edited by **SARA FGAIER**

Produced by **AVVENTUROSA** with **RAI CINEMA**
In association with **MARIO GALLOTTI**
In collaboration with **ISTITUTO LUCE CINECITTÀ** and **FONDAZIONE CINETECA DI BOLOGNA**
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Supported by **ROLEX MENTOR AND PROTÉGÉ ARTS INITIATIVE**
SCAM – BOURSE BROUILLON D'UN RÊVE

International Sales **ISTITUTO LUCE CINECITTÀ**

Nationality **ITALY**
Year of production **2015**
Running time **87 minutes**
Format **16mm**

SYNOPSIS

From the bowels of Vesuvius, Pulcinella, a foolish servant, is sent to present-day Campania to grant the last wish of Tommaso, a simple shepherd: he must rescue a young buffalo called Sarchiapone.

In the Royal Palace of Carditello, an abandoned Bourbon residence in the heart of the 'Land of Fires' whose remains were looked after by Tommaso, Pulcinella finds the young buffalo and takes him towards the north. The two servants, man and beast, embark upon a long journey throughout a lost and beautiful Italy, at the end of which they will not find quite what they had expected.

WHAT ONCE WAS HAS BEEN FOREVER LOST AND IT IS THE IMPOSSIBLE WE DESIRE
A conversation with Pietro Marcello and Maurizio Braucci

The film's origin

The project was inspired by a book written by Piovene and the idea of going on a 'journey through Italy' along the entire peninsula. Starting with our origins—so from Campania—we chanced upon the 'Angel of Carditello', Tommaso Cestrono, and a Bourbon palace that had been abandoned for centuries: the story of this shepherd, who looks after the palace and rescues male buffalos from a pre-determined fate, should have been one episode of the film. But then—halfway through filming—Tommaso died, and it seemed important to follow his story, through a film that is, simultaneously, a documentary, a dream (so, like all dreams, full of references to reality) and a contemporary fairy tale.

The Royal Palace of Carditello

The story of the Palace of Carditello is a paradoxical one, exemplary of the schizophrenia of the society in which we live, where one speaks a great deal about the protection of cultural and environmental assets while those assets are abandoned or destroyed. Commissioned by Charles de Bourbon in the 1700s, it was a 'model farm', a centre of zootechnical excellence driven by the work of scientists from all over Europe: a glorious 'institution', until the arrival of the House of Savoy, who entrusted its management to a squire from Casal del Principe—a camorrist of the era—marking the beginning of a decline that in the 1900s has seen the Palace become a place of hiding for the Casalesi clan, and its surroundings a magazine for the trafficking of arms. For all these reasons, Carditello is a symbol of the country's incomplete history, of an Italy that was never unified by the Mazzinian dream, of its plundered south. An emblem of the bad luck that has struck the *Land of Work*, which in recent years has become the *Land of Fires*: a land that used to be extremely fertile—capable of three harvests a year—and which today is besieged by three landfills, one of which is amongst the largest in Europe, and by the High Speed Train blueprint.

Man and nature: a universal theme

We presented the project by starting with what we know best, but the environmental disaster that has affected Campania resembles many others throughout the world, and the relationship between man and nature is perhaps the real universal theme of our age: *Bella e perduta* is also the poetic story—seen through the eyes of an animal—about this relationship, which goes from harmonious to conflicting. And 'our' Sarchiapone is in some way the symbol of an increasingly 'overwhelming' relationship: it is from the way in which people treat animals, in fact, that one measures the extent of their civilization.

The rage of the righteous

Who, over the decades, has objected to the violence against nature? Certainly not the administrators, the white-collar workers. It has been the humble, the poor: their battles, often seen as selfish, reactionary, but which instead—as we have come to understand over the years—have defended the land and the public health. The protagonists of this defence have been those who, first-hand, saw the effects of man’s attack on nature: poisoned grass, polluted water. Tommaso Cestrono was a shepherd, a simple man who loved beauty, who knew how to recognise it but was unable to express it if not through care, that same care he offered animals: it is the emblem of a generation that, although lacking the tools to articulate an ‘environmentalist’ discussion, became a bastion—the only one—of the landscape’s defence. *Bella e perduta* is the picaresque story of the adventures of two humble souls (a man, Tommaso, and an animal, Sarchiapone), but it also the story of redemption in which the humble souls, the myths, become standard bearers of the ‘rage of the righteous’, who rise up without intellectualism against dishonesty and speculation.

Pulcinella and the fairy tale

Before becoming the masked character of Commedia dell’Arte that we all know, Pulcinella originated in Etruscan culture as a semi-divinity who listened to the dead to speak to the living, carrying messages from the afterlife: our Pulcinella is assigned the task of taking Sarchiapone, the young buffalo saved by Tommaso just before he died, away from the Royal Palace. We have imagined a journey made by the two of them towards a new destination, Tuscia, during which the animal manages to magically recount his own story. The writing of the fairy tale took place ‘on the job’, during the completion of this journey, responding to the environment. When we eventually reached the destination, the home of Gesuino—a shepherd from Alto Lazio—he provided us with a further connection between fairy tale and reality. Faced with the offer of keeping a buffalo who had escaped neglect and had been brought there by Pulcinella, he proposed a tragically real end for Sarchiapone: the animal cannot escape his fate as a servant of man, who determines his fate at will. And so once again, death, this time ritualistic, sacrificial, but nonetheless the animal’s death.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

«I learnt to look at Italy contemplating its landscape from trains, rediscovering time after time its beauty and its ruin. I have often thought about making an itinerant film that would cross the provinces to describe Italy: beautiful, yes, but lost. Leopardi described it as a woman crying with her head in her hands due to the burden of history, the atavistic evil of being too beautiful.

*When I chanced upon the Royal Palace of Carditello and the fairy tale—because it really is a fairy tale—of Tommaso, the ‘Angel of Carditello’, a shepherd who sacrificed everything to dedicate many years of his life to look after this abandoned artistic asset, I saw a powerful metaphor for what I felt compelled to describe. Following the premature and sudden death of Tommaso, *Bella e perduta*—initially conceived as a ‘journey through Italy’ intended to touch upon other regions—became a different film, marrying fairy tale and documentary, dream and reality.*

Carditello is the symbol of a lost beauty and the struggle of an individual, an orphan who refuses to surrender to a rotten mechanism of destruction and decay. And at the same time this story, deeply rooted in our country’s history, examines a subject which has never been so universal: the relationship between man and nature.»

Pietro Marcello

PIETRO MARCELLO

Born in Caserta in 1976, he attended the Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied painting. Self-taught, he has worked as a teacher in a Naples prison, and he organised and planned the CineDamm film season between 1998 and 2003 at the Damm in Montesanto, Naples. During that period he started making radio programmes (*Il tempo dei magliari*) and documentaries. In 2003 he made his first short films, *Carta* and *Scampia*.

The following year he completed *Il Cantiere*, a documentary that won the 11th edition of Libero Bizzarri. In 2005 he made the documentary *La Baracca*, which won the public prize at Videopolis. That year he also collaborated as a volunteer with an NGO in Ivory Coast to create the documentary *Grand Bassan*.

In 2007 he made the documentary *Il Passaggio della Linea (Crossing the Line)*, which was presented at the 64th Venice International Film Festival, and brought him international acclaim.

In 2009 his first feature, *La bocca del lupo (The Mouth of the Wolf)*, won Best Film and the FIPRESCI Prize at the 27th Turin Film Festival, the Prix International de la Scam at the Festival Cinéma du Réel in Paris, the Caligari Preis at the Berlinale, the International Jury Prize and the Signis Prize at BAFICI and many others.

In 2011, he made *Il silenzio di Pelešjan (The Silence of Pelešjan)*, which was presented as a special event at the 68th Venice International Film Festival and participated at many international festivals.

The Royal Palace of Carditello (text taken from *Enciclopedia Treccani's website*)

The Royal Palace of Carditello, also known as the Royal Estate of Carditello or the Reggia di Carditello, in the Caserta province, was built in 1744 by Charles de Bourbon, who installed a stud farm for horses there.

It was part of a group of 22 sites (which included the Royal Palace of Caserta, the Royal Palace of Portici, the Royal Palace of Capodimonte and the Royal Palace of Naples) belonging to the royal House of Bourbon-Two Sicilies dynasty, places dedicated to the royal family's recreation and hunting—and thus called 'Royal Pleasure'—and at times also the location of agricultural activities, often established using modern means, aimed at experimenting in model farms.

It received new development with Ferdinand IV of the Kingdom of Naples, who introduced—in the context of his social and economic Enlightenment projects prior to the French Revolution—the breeding of cows and the production of cheeses, appointing the architect Francesco Collecini (1787), a collaborator of Luigi Vanvitelli, to construct a large complex, including a royal residence and surroundings designed for a farm.

The space at the back of the palace was divided into five courtyards intended for farming activities, whilst the area in front—reserved for horse racing—was formed in the style of an ancient Roman circus: a clay track, with short semi-circular sides, which encircles a central lawn; at the far ends two fountains with marble obelisks; at the centre of the lawn a small, circular temple-like building, from where the king watched the horses (...).

The solution adopted for the palace was a rigorously symmetrical double T system: at the centre is the royal hunting lodge—with neo-classical noble features, crowned by a balustrade and a belvedere—from which the long, low wings reserved for the farm stretch.

Inside the palace, two stairways separate to the left and the right, leading to the noble floor, with decorations that recall the hunting art the Bourbons were so passionate about. From the same floor the king, the family and the dignitaries, appearing at the balustrades, could follow the celebrated receptions in the underlying chapel, with its delicately frescoed cupola and walls.

In 1791 Fedele Fischetti, a Neapolitan painter and one of the decorators of the Royal Palace of Caserta, completed frescoes in the vault of the Royal Estate of Carditello's main hall, working on them almost until his death in Naples on 25 January 1792. The ceilings are by Giuseppe Cammarano, a Sicilian painter from Sciacca who, along with C. Angelini, was considered the principal exponent of neo-classical Neapolitan painting, whilst the Prussian landscape painter Jacob Philipp Hackert, known as Hackert of Italy, called to Naples by Ferdinand IV, decorated the walls with rural scenes that represented the royal family.

The majority of the marbles and the décor that adorned the palace have been removed over the years, and only a small part are found in museums or in other royal residences.

The surrounding buildings—in due course assigned as storehouses and stables and to this day containing ancient agricultural equipment—are almost all in a state of serious disrepair. The royal palace is in a state of abandon, as is the remaining part of the estate, following the sale of the majority of the 2,000 original hectares that surround it.

In 2011 an order by the Court of Santa Maria Capua Vetere arranged the sale of the Royal Estate of Carditello, but the 11 auctions announced in 2013 did not end well.

In 2014, thanks to the intervention of the Minister of Cultural Heritage, M. Bray, a preliminary agreement was signed between the Società Gestione Attività, which has taken over the financing of the Bank of Naples, and the Ministry, which foresees the transfer of the building complex to MiBACT (Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism).