



IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

15 | 20
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

LEVANTE

Dove l'Oriente incontra l'Occidente

Levant: where East meets West



15

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19

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PROIEZIONI
WORKSHOP

LECTIO MAGISTRALE
INCONTRI, DIBATTITI

MOstra FOTOGRAFICA

MUSICA

SCREENINGS
WORKSHOPS

MASTERCLASSES

MEETINGS, DEBATES

PHOTO EXHIBITION

MUSIC

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WORKSHOPS

MASTERCLASSES

MEETINGS, DEBATES

PHOTO EXHIBITION

MUSIC



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MOSTRA DEL CINEMA DI TARANTO 2025 IX Edizione

LEVANTE – Dove l'Oriente incontra l'Occidente

C'è un punto del mondo in cui i venti cambiano nome, le rotte si intrecciano e le storie migrano come stormi in cerca di una stagione più mite. Quel punto ha un suono antico: Levante. È un luogo della mente prima ancora che una geografia, una soglia di passaggio dove l'Oriente ha imparato a parlare all'Occidente e l'Occidente ha scoperto di non essere mai stato davvero solo.

La Nona Edizione della Mostra del Cinema di Taranto nasce in questa linea sottile, dove la luce del mattino disegna confini che la sera svaniscono. Qui, nel cuore della città, il cinema diventa bussola, strumento fragile e tenace per orientarsi tra memorie spezzate, identità ferite, popoli che non smettono di raccontarsi.

Quest'anno il racconto attraversa un nome che pesa come una storia millenaria e come una ferita aperta: Palestina.

Non come argomento, ma come presenza. Come eco di un patrimonio culturale che le macerie non riescono a seppellire, come gesto di resistenza affidato alle arti, come lingua che si ostina a sopravvivere nei volti, nei film, nei canti.

Dal 15 al 20 dicembre, Taranto si apre come una mappa stellare: il MUDIT, Palazzo Pantaleo, Palazzo della Provincia, il Salone degli Specchi, lo Spazio Porto AFO6. Ogni luogo diventa un frammento del racconto, un approdo, un porto di luce. Qui scorrono le opere in concorso, le sezioni Memory e Palestine, i laboratori, le masterclass: un mosaico di sguardi che ampliano i confini del possibile.

Quattro capitoli guidano il cammino.

15 dicembre. Le fotografie di Valentina Belli inaugurano il viaggio: Memorie Indigene apre uno spiraglio su ciò che resta e ciò che ritorna, su ciò che le immagini restituiscono alla vita anche quando il tempo tenta di cancellarlo.

18 dicembre. Abu Said Atef porta con sé la densità della storia. Le sue parole raccontano il patrimonio culturale di Palestina come si racconta un amico perduto: con precisione, con dolore, con l'urgenza di non lasciarlo svanire nell'oblio. È un incontro che sospende il tempo, che chiede ascolto più che applausi.

19 dicembre. Luciano Canfora attraversa l'Occidente con lo sguardo appuntito del pensatore. Il porcospino d'acciaio diventa metafora di un mondo che si difende pungendo, che predica pace mentre affila armi, che esita a guardarsi allo specchio.

20 dicembre. Moni Ovadia, con La terra senza, porta sullo schermo il tema del ritorno alle radici e il conflitto col passato, nonché il peso di domande mai risolte. Quindi apre un dialogo fuori degli schermi suebraismo e sionismo. Poi la musica dei Shahanah Tovah apre uno spazio condiviso: Un canto, due popoli risuonano come una promessa possibile.

La serata si illumina della presenza di Marcello Fonte, Palma d'Oro 2019, che accompagna la nascita dell'Istituto Levante e la proclamazione dei vincitori della Mostra.

Intorno, come satelliti, scorrono i film che arrivano da Gaza, i racconti italiani e internazionali del Levante, le analisi di Livio Costarella, i percorsi formativi di Valentina Belli, Gaetano Russo e Louis Nero. Ogni opera, ogni voce, ogni gesto sembra chiedere la stessa cosa: ricordare.

Perché il Levante, qui, non è solo un orizzonte.

È un modo di guardare il mondo: un varco, un attraversamento, una memoria che continua a camminare.

La Mostra del Cinema di Taranto 2025 è un invito a seguirla. A lasciarsi toccare dalle sue correnti. A riconoscere che, tra Oriente e Occidente, ci sono terre che non appartengono a nessuno e storie che appartengono a tutti.

Mimmo Mongelli

lunedì 15.12

PROGRAMMA LEVANTE

Dove l'Oriente incontra l'Occidente
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17:00 SALA MUDIT

Inaugurazione Mostra fotografica di
Valentina Belli
“Memorie Indigene”

FILM IN CONCORSO

SALA MUDIT A

18:00 Ya Hanouni

Lyna Tardount, Sofian Chouaib (FRA)

18:10 Dove nessuno vuole andare

Giuseppe Fedele (IT)

*incontro con autore e cast

19:30 Approdi

Lorenzo Scoraggi (IT)

*incontro con autore e cast

20:30 Io rimango qui

Giuseppe Palmieri (IT)

21:40 In paradiso per scambio

Pasquale Riccio (IT)

22:10 Imperia

Marcel Barsotti (IT)

SALA MUDIT B

18:00 Teona

Tommaso Gorani (IT)

18:30 Lenticchie di Palestina

Handi El Husseini (PAL)

19:00 The Shell

Sema Güler (TUR)

19:30 Mandillà

Lorenzo Rapetti (IT)

20:00 Desirè

Mario Vezza (IT)

21:45 Axè Salvador

Domenico Rodolfo Grillone (IT)



martedì 16.12



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PROGRAMMA LEVANTE

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FILM IN CONCORSO

SALA MUDIT A

16:00 **Piblokto**

Anastasia Shubina, Timofey Glinin (USA)

17:00 **Toxicity**

Francois Xavier Destors, Alfonso Pinto (IT)

*incontro con autore e cast

18:30 **Nu Fischia**

Pierdomenico Minafra, Antonio Carella (IT)

*incontro con autore e cast

19:00 **Girasoli**

Catrinel Marlon (IT)

21:00 **Marcello**

Maurizio Lombardi (IT)

21:30 **Luce al Rione Sanità**

Andrea De Rosa (IT)

21:45 **In viaggio con lei**

Gianluca Gargano (IT)

SALA MUDIT B

16:00 **La compagnia**

Daniela Alleruzzo (IT)

*incontro con autore e cast

17:30 **Piccola storia – un muro**

Federico Braconi (IT)

18:10 **Terra Vento Mare**

Elena Matacena (IT)

19:20 **Nado**

Daniele Farina (IT)

20:30 **Artist's Voices**

Alberto Nacci (IT)

21:15 **A Dream to Blossom**

Rodrigo Areias (PRT)



mercoledì 17.12

PROGRAMMA LEVANTE

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11:00 – 13:00 PALAZZO PANTALEO

Afredo Traversa Incontro-dibattito
con le Associazioni cittadine
Atleti della Cultura

SEZIONI MEMORY E PALESTINE

PROVINCIA SALONE DI RAPPRESENTANZA

10:00 PAL – **It Must Be Heaven**

Elia Suleiman (FRA)

11:45 MEM – **Borders**

Ali Abbasi (SWE)

16:00 MEM – **Ala Kachuu**

Maria Brendle (CHE)

16:40 MEM – **Il seme del fico sacro**

Mohammad Rasoulof (FRA)

WORKSHOP

PALAZZO PANTALEO

16:00 Workshop Valentina Belli

**“Vedere il contemporaneo: la direzione della
fotografia oggi”**

18:00 Workshop Gaetano Russo

“Tra Cinema e Teatro: il lavoro dello scenografo”



PROGRAMMA LEVANTE

Dove l'Oriente incontra l'Occidente
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giovedì 18.12

11:00 PROVINCIA SALONE DI RAPPRESENTANZA

Annalisa Adamo intervista **ABU SAIF ATEF**
scrittore ed ex Ministro della Cultura di
Palestina

SEZIONI MEMORY E PALESTINE

15:00 SALA MUDIT A

PAL – **Capernaum**, Nadine Labaki (LEB)

15:00 SALA MUDIT B

MEM – **Racconto di due stagioni**,
Nuri Bilge Ceylan (TUR)

PROVINCIA SALONE DI RAPPRESENTANZA

16:00 PAL – **Insyriated**, Philippe Van Leeuw (FRA)

17:45 MEM – **La bicicletta verde**

Haifaa Al-Mansour (KSA)

SEZIONE PALESTINE+

E INCONTRO CON I RAPPRESENTANTI DEL GAZA INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
WOMEN'S CINEMA E ARCHIVIO AUDIOVISIVO DEL MOVIMENTO OPERAIO E
DEMOCRATICO MONICA MAURER E MILENA FIORE

SALA MUDIT A

18:15 **Exception** – Ezzedine Shallah (PAL)

18:30 **Pins** – Mustafa Al Nabih (PAL)

19:00 **Artisti di Gaza: Ci sentite?**

Mustafa Al Nabih (PAL)

19:15 **Sacrifici** – Mustafa Al Nabih (PAL)

19:30 **Radici** – Mustafa Al Nabih (PAL)

20:30 **Il Tempo perduto** – Mustafa Al Nabih (PAL)

21:30 **Tears of Jasmine** – Mustafa Al Nabih (PAL)

SEZIONI MEMORY E PALESTINE

SALA MUDIT B

18:30 PAL **The Insult**

Ziad Doueiri (LEB)

20:10 PAL – **Shoshana**

Michael Winterbottom (GBR)



venerdì 19.12

PROGRAMMA LEVANTE

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11:00 SALONE DEGLI SPECCHI CASA COMUNALE

LUCIANO CANFORA

presenta la sua opera

"Il porcospino d'acciaio"

in dialogo con Annalisa Adamo

SEZIONE MEMORY+

SALA MUDIT A

16:00 **Dove i bambù crescono forti**

Valentina Belli (IT)

17:15 **Wed**

Habib Mestiri (TUN)

18:45 **Nelle scarpe di mio padre**

Carlo Benso (IT)

*autore presente

20:00 **Maradona, San Gennaro e lo sciopero dei miracoli**

Giulio Gargia (IT)

*autore presente

21:30 **La città dei santi di carta**

Pascal Pezzuto (IT)

*autore presente

SALA MUDIT B

17:30 **The Broken Key**

Louis Nero (IT)

20:30 **In the Moscow Slum**

Karen Shakhnazarov (RU)





sabato 20.12

PROGRAMMA LEVANTE

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SEZIONE MEMORY+

SPAZIOPORTO AFO6

10:00 MONI OVADIA E REAN MAZZONE

presentano il film di Moni Ovadia.

Introduce Mimmo Mongelli

10:15 La terra senza – Moni Ovadia (IT)

Dibattito tra Moni Ovadia e Annalisa Adamo

“Cultura ebraica e sionismo”

WORKSHOP

16:00 SALA MUDIT

Workshop Louis Nero

“Coproduzione internazionale: uno sbocco

del cinema italiano per uscire dalla crisi”

EXTRA 4: PROIEZIONI DI CORTI

SALA MUDIT A

17:30 Echos of Forgotten Legends

Massimo Cerbera (IT)

*autore presente

18:00 Gocce di luce

Silvia Monga (IT)

18:30 Quando piove a Baden Baden

Alessandro Soetje (IT)

19:00 Cussiah! L'albero più bello

Mimmo Mongelli (IT)

*autore presente

FESTA DI PREMIAZIONE

20:30 PALAZZO PANTALEO

Concerto del gruppo **Shanah Tovah** “Un canto, due popoli”, saluto dell'ospite d'onore **Marcello**

Fonte (Palma d'Oro – Miglior Attore Protagonista a Cannes 2019), presentazione del progetto

“Istituto Levante”, proclamazione dei vincitori e consegna dei Premi.





FILMS IN COMPETITION



DANIELA ALLERUZZO

Founder and creator of L'Arte nel Cuore Onlus, the first performing arts academy for students with and without disabilities. She conceived the story for the feature film Detective per caso and the documentary La Compagnia. She has produced several theatrical productions, feature films, and short films. In 2024 her short film Il taglio di Jonas received the award for Best Short Film at the San Diego Film Festival, Best Actor at the Sulmona Film Festival, and the RAI Cinema Channel Award at the Sudestival.

La Compagnia – The documentary follows the journey of extraordinary individuals and shows how, through art, they have found not only creative expression but also real employment opportunities. Their lives, passions, and daily challenges are portrayed with sensitivity and authenticity, revealing the beauty and strength that lie within diversity.



RODRIGO AREJAS

Rodrigo Areias began his professional career as a musician and music producer at the label Garagem, and entered cinema as a sound designer for directors such as Paulo Rocha and Edgar Pêra.

He studied Management at the Portuguese Catholic University and graduated in Sound and Image at the School of Arts. He specialized in Direction at the Tisch School of Arts (NYU), and attended the Production Eurodoc Program and Venice Biennale College.

A Stone Dreams To Blossom

(Original title: *A Pedra Sonha Dar Flor*) - In a boarding house in Vila Húmus, lost in the outskirts of the swamp, people survive in a dark time.

K. Maurício, a writer, immerses himself in his work *The Death of a Clown*, becoming hostage to impossible dreams. Pita, a facilitator, juggles words and people, enjoying a cynical game with those around him.

Between crimes and hallucinations, between the gothic of the night and the decadence of the arena, unfolds a hopeless story inspired by the works of Raul Brandão.



MARCEL BARSOTTI

In 2024, Marcel Barsotti made his directorial debut with *Transformation*, a dystopian, intricately AI-generated science fiction short film that received 11 international awards and 28 nominations, including the Prädikat Wertvoll distinction in Germany.

With *Imperia*, Barsotti completed his second major AI science fiction project, in collaboration with BAI Pictures and Schmerbeck Entertainment. Barsotti is also an internationally acclaimed film composer, with over 100 motion picture projects to his name, including *Pope Joan* and *The Miracle of Bern*.

Imperia - An artificial intelligence film:

when mysterious cubes appear on Earth and people vanish without a trace, brilliant scientist Lilly Rose uncovers a shocking truth—an ancient alien civilization is using humanity for a sinister ritual. But as Lilly delves deeper into the mystery, she realizes that she herself may be the key to either salvation... or destruction.



FEDERICO BRACONI

Born in 1987, after graduating from DAMS Bologna (Cinema program, specializing in New Media), he moved to London to attend courses at Raindance Film School. Upon returning to Italy, he completed a Master's Degree in "Audio and Video Editing" at La Sapienza University in Rome. His first film, *Orchestra Notturna Clandestina*, earned him a place among the six debut directors selected by the Kino Arthouse Academy for the advanced film directing course. Since 2015, he has been based in Rome, collaborating as a filmmaker with audiovisual production companies and communication agencies. His second work, *A Small Story of a Wall*, produced by Simonfilm, is currently being distributed by Premiere Film.

Piccola storia di un muro - *Piccola storia di un muro* explores the impact of art on people's everyday lives. Inspired by the reflections of artist Daniele Geniale, the film retraces the events that led, under the scorching sun of a hot Roman summer, to the creation of the largest mural in the Eternal City. Through the eyes of the residents of the Africano neighborhood, the first to experience the artwork, the artistic intervention—as well as the cinematic one—reveals its capacity to bring about real, felt, and radical change in the urban environment. As Majakovskij wrote, art is not a mirror to reflect the world, but a hammer to shape it. This film, in its own small way, aims to bear witness to that idea.



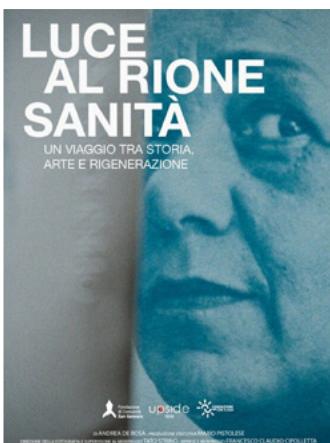
ANTONIO CARELLA

He trained artistically between Bari and Rome. In 2020, he made his television debut as Marco in *Up&Down* (Rai Fiction) and the following year appeared on stage in Massimo Venturiello's *Agamennone*. In 2023, he worked as assistant director to Virginio Gazzolo for the play *Il guardiano*. He is currently acting in various productions with the Diaghilev Company in Bari. *Nu Ffischia* marks his first experience behind the camera.

PIERDOMENICO MINAFRA

After studying acting and gaining experience on film sets, he turned to directing. With *Punto e a caso*, his debut work, he was a finalist at the BCT – National Festival of Cinema and Television in Benevento.

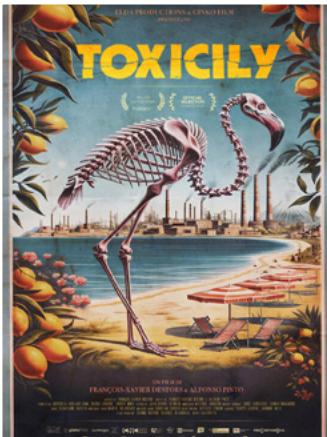
Nu Ffischia – Two young men from Puglia face the illness of their grandfather Mimì, a craftsman of whistles struck by Alzheimer's. Through a journey into childhood memories—visiting his workshop, his old Panda car, and the arid land—the grandchildren rediscover the man behind the disease.



ANDREA DE ROSA

(Naples, 1983) – Made his acting debut in the film *Santo Stefano* (1997), presented at the Venice Film Festival. In 2013, he released the album *Adailysong* and founded Apogeo Records, with which he produced over 25 musical works connected to the cultural regeneration of the Sanità district. A law graduate with honors, in the same year he created Upside Production, directing documentaries such as *Il Sistema Sanità – Le Pietre Scartate*, awarded at *Popoli e Religioni* and *Religion Today* and distributed on Sky Arte and Prime Video. He produced the cross-media project *Le Catacombe di Napoli* and is currently completing *Sirena Digitale – Il Suono degli Ologrammi*, for the University of Naples Federico II and *DATABENC*. He is involved in the projects *Festa della Musica* and *I Linguaggi della Creatività*. He coordinated the audiovisual production of *Federica Web Learning* (2019–2023). Since 2024, he has been teaching *Cross-media Seriality* at the Academy of Fine Arts in Naples and *Audiovisual Design* at the University of Naples Federico II.

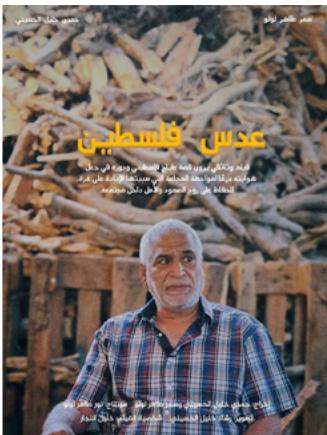
Luce al Rione Sanità – In Naples' Rione Sanità, the Church of Santa Maria Maddalena ai Cristallini, closed for over 40 years, undergoes a groundbreaking restoration. Renowned street artists Mono Gonzales and Tono Cruz transform the interior with participatory art, blending portraits of locals with religious iconography. A migrant boat from Lampedusa is repurposed as the church's altar, linking community renewal with Mediterranean migration. Students from the University of Federico II and prisoners from Secondigliano help craft the boat's wood into a guitar, later played by Sting in a special concert. The documentary captures these dual transformations: the church as a symbol of cultural regeneration and social inclusion, and the boat's wood as an emblem of hope, solidarity, and remembrance.



FRANÇOIS-XAVIER DESTORS

His movies explore the invisible side of mass crimes. His first feature-length documentary, *Rwanda, la surface de réparation* (86', 2014), tells the story of this popular genocide through the social, political, and cultural role of sports in Rwanda. Author of several historical documentaries (*Les voix de Srebrenica*, *Paris une histoire capitale*, *Les Années 68...*), he filmed in the polar city of Norilsk, a former gulag transformed into a closed city, forbidden to foreigners and tightly controlled by the world's leading copper and nickel producer. *Norilsk, l'étreinte de glace* (2018) is a cinematic exploration of our capacity to adapt and survive the collective history of our industrial societies. François-Xavier Destors continues his cinematic exploration of sacrificed territories with *Toxicily* (2023), revealing an ecocide at Europe's doorstep.

Toxicily – “Better to die of cancer than of hunger...” is the saying north of Syracuse, where one of Europe’s largest petrochemical complexes has been poisoning the environment and the people for 70 years. Toxicily gives a voice to those who survive, surrender, and resist in a land sacrificed on the altar of progress, modernity, and globalization.



HAMDI ELHUSSEINI

He is a documentary filmmaker from Gaza with extensive experience capturing compelling humanitarian and social stories through cinema. A graduate of the Faculty of Science at Al-Azhar University in Gaza, Hamdi has dedicated his career to documenting the resilience of the Palestinian people amid war, occupation, and environmental challenges.

Lenticchie della Palestina – A Palestinian chef and his role in using his hobby as a shield against the famine caused by the war in Gaza, preserving the spirit of resilience and hope within his community.



DANIELE FARINA

He is a video maker and director based in Milan. Since 2008, he has worked in video production in roles such as camera operator, editor, and director. In 2019, he co-founded the video production studio Instudios, part of Intarget Group. After years in the corporate sector, he moved on to a personal project: the documentary *Nado*, about the life of sculptor Nado Canuti. With Nado, he handled directing, script, editing, and executive production — an intimate and powerful work that tells a story of resilience and art.

Nado – It is an intimate and powerful journey through the life and work of one of the greatest Italian sculptors of the twentieth century. A story of resistance and courage, a human parable of will and joy that spans a whole century. Nado Canuti has faced the difficulties of life since he was young with tenacity and vision, transforming every obstacle into material to be sculpted. The story of a man who with three fingers shaped his destiny.



GIUSEPPE FEDELE

(Tricarico, 1991) – Photographer and video maker, specializing in graphics and editing. He began his career collaborating with the company Namias, working on web projects and for local broadcasters. Since 2022, he has been CEO of Fedelissimi s.r.l., developing audiovisual content, live streaming, and cultural projects. He participated in Matera 2019 and directed the documentary *Where No One Wants to Go*, dedicated to the centenary of the Congregation of the Sisters Disciples of Jesus Eucharistic. He is also a trainer in creative and technological fields, teaching in the GOL programs. His style combines narrative effectiveness, technical expertise, and attention to local visual culture, with a continuous drive for innovation.

Dove nessuno vuole andare – *Dove nessuno vuole andare* is a journey through time and spirit, a film revealing the mission of light of the Sisters Disciples of Jesus Eucharistic. From the heart of Basilicata, their story intertwines with Eucharistic spirituality worldwide.



GIANLUCA GARGANO

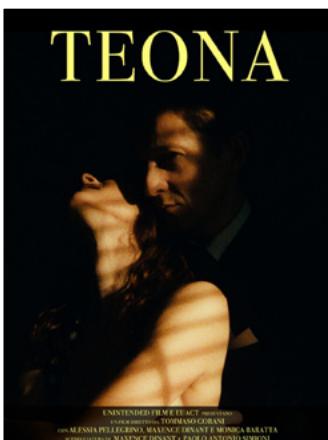
Born in 1975, is an Italian director and screenwriter focused on intimate and universal stories. After experiences in theater direction, he debuted in cinema with *Rapiscimi* (2019), a comedy-adventure shot between Italy and Portugal. The film highlighted his ability to combine narrative lightness with social reflection. His sensitivity to diversity led him to create *In Viaggio con Lei* (2024). This poetic docufilm delicately explores gender identity, disability, and the female world.

Supported by the Calabria Film Commission and distributed by 102 Distribution, it premiered in Rome.

It was selected for the Italia Green Film Festival, gaining attention from audiences and critics. Gargano also presented the work in institutional contexts, such as the International Day against Violence on Women. His style is marked by discretion and visual poetry, with a camera that observes rather than declares.

Thus, he emerges as an author who transforms cinema into a shared journey with the audience.

In Viaggio con Lei – An inner and on-the-road journey of a transgender girl in the female universe. It tells the stories of different women, including a girl with Down syndrome. The film touches deep chords of the soul with a European language and unexpected places. The camera remains hidden, narrating reality with poetry and discretion. Intentional blurring involves the viewer as if spying on other lives. It hopes prejudice against diversity and disability may fade away. A docufilm without classical interviews, built on intertwined stories and paths. Each character slowly reveals themselves, between present and past. A red thread connects the stories, unveiled only at the end. The viewer undertakes the same journey as the protagonists.



TOMMASO GORANI

e was born in Trieste, Italy, on September 30, 1989. He graduated from DAMS Bologna in 2012 and from Luc Besson's École de la Cité in Paris in 2015. Since then, he has directed several commercial, corporate, and independent projects, including *Laisse Moi*, *(i)Italians*, *An Italian Action Story*, *Teona*, and *The Wind Tunnel*. He has also worked on feature films such as *Lucy* by Luc Besson, *Taken 3* by Olivier Megaton, *Bis* by Dominique Farrugia, *Willy 1er* by Zoran and Ludovic Boukherma, *Marielle Gautier*, and *Hugo Thomas*, and *Jackie* by Pablo Larraín.

Teona – Many of us may have experienced a new situation or place and felt certain we had been there before, even if there is no concrete evidence that it existed or that these events actually happened. Others may have had dreams so vivid that they seemed to predict real events that would occur in their future. *Teona* explores a moment in time when the protagonist, Olivia, is trying to start a new chapter in her life, while fate seems more inclined to tell her a completely different story, leading her into a reality where time is no longer linear, but a whimsical spiral of *déjà vu* and dreams. Freud said that premonitory dreams might not show us what will happen, but what we wish would happen.



DOMENICO RODOLFO GRILLONE

Journalist since 1997, with ongoing and coordinated collaborations with Gazzetta del Sud and Quotidiano della Calabria, is author of the documentaries *L'isola della luna* and *Axé Salvador!*

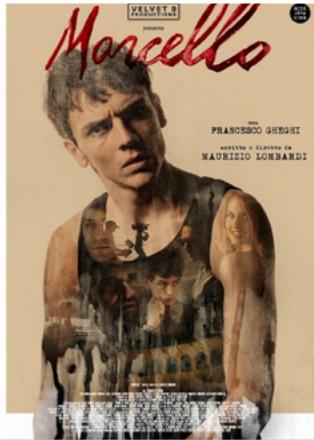
Axé Salvador! – It was born from the author's passion for Brazil and, in particular, for the city of Salvador de Bahia.



SEMA GÜLER

She was born in Elazığ in 1989. She graduated from the Faculty of Economics at Istanbul University in 2014. She has been active in acting since 2016 and took a screenwriting course in 2021. She won the TRT 12 Point 2022 Short Film Production Award and received support from the Ministry of Culture for the screenplay of her first short film, *The Shell*. The film was selected for numerous festivals. She gained her first directing experience with *The Shell*, which she completed in 2024. In addition to acting in national and international projects, she continues to produce her own cinematic projects.

The Shell – Leyla (28) is a young painter who has been exposed to male violence and spent some time confined at home. The wounds and stitches on her face are about to heal; however, Leyla is unable to face the impact of the trauma she suffered and isolates herself from life. A series of unexpected events unfolds when she throws away her self-portrait, which reminds her of the times when she was happy and can no longer bear to see it. Leyla must confront the truth and make a choice.



MAURIZIO LOMBARDI

(Florence, 1973) – He began his training at a young age with Ugo Chiti, later focusing on voice and body work with Gabriella Bartolomei and Franco Di Francescantonio, and studying dance and singing. A versatile actor, he also honed his skills through masterclasses with Ivana Chubbuck.

Internationally recognized, in 2025 he stars in M. Il figlio del secolo directed by Joe Wright and the American series Blade Runner 2099. In 2024, he appeared in Ripley (Netflix), Citadel, Romeo è Giulietta, Il Vangelo secondo Maria, and Sei nell'anima.

Since 2016, he has played Cardinal Mario Assente in Paolo Sorrentino's The Young Pope and The New Pope. Earlier, he acted in Il ragazzo invisibile 2 by Salvatores, Metti una notte, and Ridley Scott's All the Money in the World. Highly active in theatre, in 2016 he placed second at the Italian Theatre Awards (Le Maschere) for The Pride. As a writer and producer with Velvet 9 Productions, he created works such as L'uomo rondine, Pugni di Zolfo, the musicals Biancaneve and Peter Pan, No Party, and Ho visto cose, focused on the impact of AI. In 2024, he won the Golden Globe Italians Worldwide for Ripley and the Nastro d'Argento for Best Actor in a Comedy for Romeo è Giulietta. That same year, he made his directorial debut with the short film Marcello, awarded the Rai Cinema Channel Award 2024 at Alice nella Città.

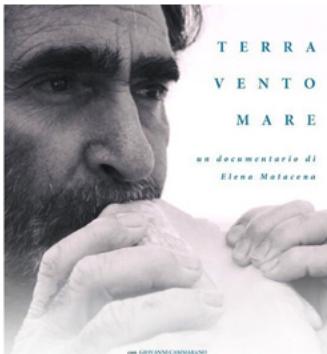
Marcello – Marcello and Nino. Two boys, lost in the chaos of the world. They carry a consuming anger inside. Out of revenge, they make a reckless mistake, destroying a bar owned by a small neighborhood boss. They run, and we follow Marcello as he hides—unknowingly—in Cinecittà, where he is swept up by a film crew. He plays along, using it to hide, but becomes part of it. Marcello embodies the desire to show that another world is truly possible—and this is Cinema. Where everyone is necessary. Outside, in life, one dies; inside, in imagination, one lives with a simple... “once upon a time.”



CATRINEL MARLON – She began working as a model at the age of 16. She was the female lead in Luigi Lo Cascio's first film, La Città Ideale (2012), and in 2013 received the Explosive Talent Award at the Giffoni Film Festival. In 2015, she was directed by Brando De Sica in the short film L'errore. In 2016, she won

the Kineo Award at the Venice Film Festival as a rising star of Italian cinema. In addition to her work in Italy, she appeared in the series CSI and in Gomera, directed by Cornelius Popescu. She also directed a commercial for Bulgari for Save The Children on International Children's Rights Day. Girasoli is her feature film debut.

Girasoli – 1963. Young nurse Anna begins her work in the children's ward of a mental hospital. There, she meets and grows close to sweet Lucia, a fifteen-year-old schizophrenic girl. Against the backdrop of a silent struggle between Dr. Marie and the strict Dr. Oreste over new experimental treatments, the bond between Anna and Lucia deepens, forcing them to make decisive choices for their respective lives.



con GIOVANNI COMARDO
opere ELENA MATACENA | ARNONE ACQUAVITA SENIOR | GIORGIO ACQUAVITA | ENZO PISCHIOLO
montage ALESSANDRA FERIOLI | mixaggio audio FRANCESCO DI MARCO | montate DANIELE COLFERAI
espressione di montaggio GIOVANNI ACQUAVITA | post produzione PISARAFITI STUDIO
produzione esecutiva PONTE DI ARCHIETTI PRODUZIONI | una produzione ASSOCIAZIONE BIBLIOTECA ARKÈS

ELENA MATACENA

Playwright, filmmaker, and painter holds a degree in Aesthetics from Naples and in Film History from DAMS Bologna. An expert in Hungarian cinema, she collaborated for several years with the Venice Film Festival, the Pesaro New Cinema Festival, and the Alpe Adria Festival. In 1997, she won the Solinas Award for a film screenplay. Her play *Il Manoscritto di Jakob Kreuzberg* has been published in Italy, France, and Poland. She has translated essays and a novel from Hungarian. In 2013, she founded La Biblioteca Arkès, a public library housing approximately 9,000 books. Her documentary *Lo sguardo dell'innocenza* was presented at the Festival Des Arts in Montréal and the Montreuil Festival. In 2019, she published the collection of plays *Requiem*, featuring a monologue read by Maria Rosaria Omaggio. Since 2019, she has directed the Centro delle Arti L'Arca di Pan in Umbria.

Terra Vento Mare – From design to launch: the birth of a lateen sailboat. The felling of an oak tree, which provides part of the wood, is followed by the laying of the keel. The assembly of the frame templates and the survey of the main frames define the skeleton of the boat. The laying of the planking, the sandpapering and the caulking define the shell of the boat. The painting and the rigging of the mast with a lateen sail indicate the final moment: the boat is ready to sail the sea. Each phase is carried out with a mastery that has thousand-year-old roots: the lateen sail boasts an ancient tradition in the Mediterranean. The knowledge of the Master Shipwright is lost in the mists of time.



ALBERTO NACCI

Born in 1957 in Trapani, Italy, he has lived and worked in Bergamo since 1982. He served as a Sound Design professor at the Academies of Fine Arts in Bergamo and Brescia. After a long career as a musician, with numerous musical productions and an intense concert activity, he turned to the production of art and culture documentaries, industrial films, and art videos, which have received numerous international awards. His works are appreciated both in Italy and abroad and have been selected for some of the most important cinema and video art festivals in Europe, the USA, and Asia. He represented Italy at EURONIGHT08, an international video art event promoted by the Italian Cultural Institute in Toronto.

Artist's Voice – The film is structured in four parts (Sound, Light, Time, the Sacred), key elements in the life of a creative person. The director proposes a long-distance dialogue between the artists, highlighting the different ways each of them experiences their own "making art."

Eight artists (4 men and 4 women) reflect on the sacredness of art and on the spirituality that guides creation: from the daily rituals in their studios to the silences that accompany their work, from preferred light conditions to the emotion of envisioning an artwork before it exists – almost like a mystical vision. Music plays a central role: prominent Italian jazz musicians collaborate, sharing the screen with artworks to offer a synesthetic vision that merges sound and image and restores "creative thought" to its generative power.



GIUSEPPE PALMERI

An engineer by profession, he pursues his passion for directing and video production by creating audiovisual projects, short films, and documentaries. In 2021 he began studying directing at the Libera Università del Cinema in Rome under the guidance of Patrizia Genovesi.

Io rimango qui - *Io rimango qui* evokes the youthful nostalgia of those who grew up in the 1980s, exploring the deep bond with one's place of origin and local territory. Through the narrative structure of the documentary film—shaped as a form of visual poetry—it unfolds an inner journey made of images that summon profound sensations and emotions. This work offers a delicate and sensitive portrayal of almost invisible stories, brought back into the light of memory and transformed into an emotional and visual journey.



LORENZO RAPETTI

Born in Genoa on April 15, 1990. After earning a degree in Arts and Performing Sciences from La Sapienza University in Rome, he moved to Prague to study Film Directing at FAMU's international department. After directing several fiction short films and documentaries, he returned to Genoa in 2017, where he began working as a videomaker between Genoa and Milan, directing fashion films, commercials, and short documentaries. In 2020, he founded the production company 010 Films together with Giovanni Giusto. He worked as producer on the documentary *Timekeeper – Travel Notes* by Kristina Paustian and, alongside the Dardenne brothers, is one of the producers of *Behind the Mountains*, presented in competition in the Orizzonti section at the 80th Venice International Film Festival. In 2025 *Mandillä*, the short film he wrote, directed, and edited, is released.

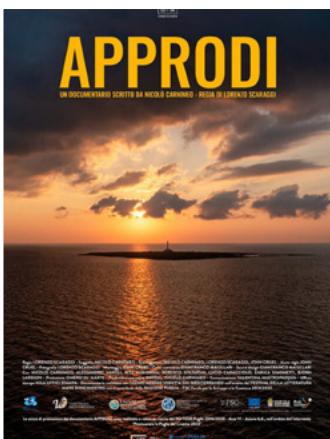
Mandillä - Somewhere in time, in an unnamed city, Mandillä lives with Violetta, of whom he is hopelessly in love. Mandillä suffers from insomnia and memory loss; at night, he collects debts for an unspecified criminal organization—an activity Violetta knows nothing about. The fragile balance of his life is pushed to the brink when, one night, he is forced to collect a debt from someone very close to Violetta...



PASQUALE RICCIO

Born in Naples in 1999, after earning a degree in Modern Literature at the University Federico II of Naples, he pursued his passion for cinema, graduating from the Rosencrantz & Guildenstern School of Filmmaking in Bologna. He has worked on several short and feature films in the directing department, gaining experiences that enriched his professional path. He loves storytelling and believes in the power of cinematic language as an expressive medium capable of leaving a mark.

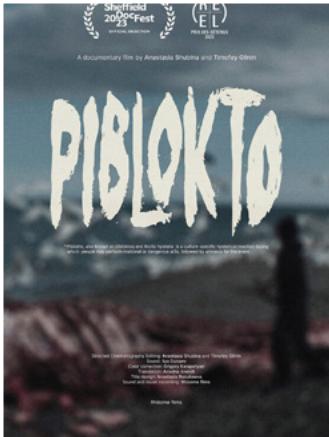
In paradiso per scambio - Paolo, a thirty-year-old overwhelmed by responsibilities, visits his mother Lina, sharing jokes and confidences while dreaming of building a family with his girlfriend Laura. Meanwhile, in the same neighborhood, Marco is caught in a complicated relationship with Sara and becomes increasingly involved in crime alongside his friend Roberto. While Paolo tries to balance work, love, and family, Marco spirals deeper into dangerous illegal schemes. Tension rises when Marco and Roberto are assigned a job that leads them to Paolo's store. In a fatal case of mistaken identity, Marco shoots an innocent man—Paolo is killed. Lina learns the tragic news from the television broadcast. While she mourns, Marco and Sara celebrate, and Marco proposes to Sara. Paolo's handycam, which captured happy moments with Lina and Laura, becomes a poignant reminder of what has been lost. The contrast between Paolo's normal life and Marco's criminal path highlights the story's inevitable tragedy.



LORENZO SCARAGGI

Journalist, video reporter, and traveler. Born in 1976 and holding a degree in Literature, he describes himself as a curious man. Driven by this curiosity, he has always sought to travel, document, film, or photograph anything that could satisfy his need for exploration. His work includes numerous reports on social issues, war, and the effects of conflict.

Approdi - Approdi is a geopoetic journey where words and images merge into a single narrative. The course is traced by the wake of a sail setting off in search of the identity of Apulia's ports, yet no navigation is predetermined.



ANASTASIA SHUBINA e TIMOFEY GLININ

They are multidisciplinary artists working across various media: documentary and experimental cinema, video art, photography, and performance. They have been collaborating since 2018 and currently live in San Francisco, United States.

Piblokto - On the Arctic coast of Chukotka lives a people isolated from the world. Their life revolves around hunting walruses and whales and protecting their villages from bears coming from the tundra. This theme turns the film into a meditation on death. Marine animals are the main source of food for the population, the remains are used to feed arctic foxes on a fur farm, and human cemeteries become targets for bears. It seems that all the inhabitants of this region are caught in the cycle of food and death. The film departs from the typical rhythmic structure of cinema and instead adopts the form of a shamanic ritual, an event that gives meaning to the peoples of the North.



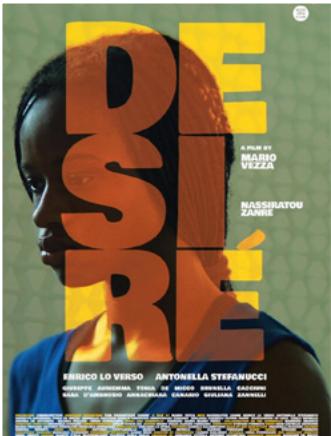
LYNA TADOUNT

Born in Perpignan, Algeria, Lyna Tadount grew up in the Paris region and became a self-taught artist passionate in various fields. She graduated from the Faculty of Letters at the University of the Sorbonne. From October 2023 to February 2024, she co-wrote and co-directed *Ya Hanouni* as part of the Nikon Film Festival, which allowed her to establish herself in socially engaged cinema. Currently, Lyna Tadount is enrolled in a series writing program at Nouvelles Écritures, where she is developing her own series project.

SOFIAN CHOUIB

Born in southern France, Sofian Chouaib began as a content creator on YouTube during high school but soon found his calling in cinema. He went on to study at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, where he graduated in 2021 in the cinema department. Sofian Chouaib currently works as a director and screenwriter in Paris.

Ya Hanouni - While Mom and Dad try to put their child to sleep, a competition arises between them: who will get him to say his first word?



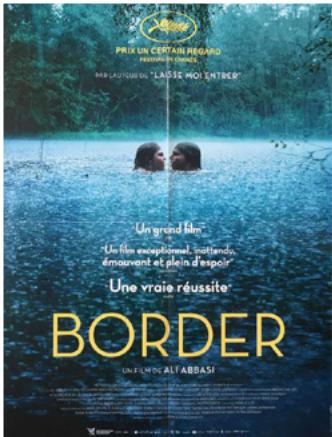
MARIO VEZZA

(Torre del Greco, Naples, 1983) – He has an artistic background. He graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts of Naples in New Art Technologies. Since 2006, he has been active as a filmmaker and VJ. In 2006, he moved to the United Kingdom to study at Dartington College of Arts, graduating in 2008 in New Art Technologies. Since 2009, he has directed short films, documentaries, and music videos. In 2022, he wrote and directed his first feature film, *Desiré*, released in 2024.

Desiré – Naples suburbs, 2022. *Desiré*, a sixteen-year-old Senegalese girl, lives day by day, without friends or passions; the only bond that matters is with Emanuele, an older boy involved in the local underworld. One night, he convinces her to act as a courier, delivering a backpack across the city. *Desiré* is arrested and sent to the juvenile detention center on Nisida Island. During her 18-month sentence, she embarks on a journey of self-discovery, finding theater, singing, and creative outlets she lacked in freedom. Meanwhile, outside the prison, the underworld searches for the lost backpack, intertwining her fate with unforeseen events.



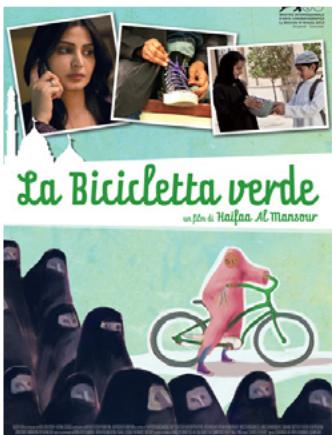
MEMORY/ PALESTINE



ALI ABBASI

Ali Abbasi is an Iranian-born director working in Europe, known for bold cinema that fuses social realism with fantastical elements. With *Border* (2018), he confirmed an original authorial signature: on one side, a story of marginality and rejected identity; on the other, mythological and unsettling imagery. The film earned him international acclaim and recognition at Cannes. Abbasi often uses metaphorical stories to question contemporary issues like diversity, exclusion, and prejudice. His cinema seeks no comfort; it pushes viewers to confront disturbing, challenging themes. After *Border*, he continued to work on intense, often unconventional subjects. His directing focuses on atmosphere, physicality, and emotional tension. Abbasi stands out for his use of space, bodies, and detail as narrative tools for visceral and symbolic cinema. He is considered one of the most interesting voices of the new European cinema.

Border – *Border* tells the story of Tina, a border officer with an unusual appearance and an extraordinary sense of smell: she can detect not only illegal substances, but also emotions such as guilt, fear, and shame. She works as a customs employee with unerring precision. One day she meets Vore—an equally unsettling man—and for the first time she cannot “sense” the truth about him, yet she feels disturbingly drawn to him. Their relationship forces Tina to confront a shocking truth about her identity and her true nature. The film blends social realism, fantasy horror, and romance, playing on the border between human and “other.” Dark settings, Nordic atmosphere, and a disturbing tone amplify moral and emotional tension. The film challenges conventions, appearing as a gothic fairy tale that tackles themes such as identity, exclusion, and diversity. *Border* is recognized as a bold work, capable of disturbing and provoking reflection. It won the “Un Certain Regard” section at Cannes in 2018.



HAIFAA AL-MANSOUR

Haifaa Al-Mansour is the first female film director from Saudi Arabia. Born in 1974, she grew up in a family open to cinema in a country where movie theaters were banned. She studied comparative literature in Cairo and film in Australia. She began her career with documentaries exploring the condition of women in the Arab world. With *Wadjda*, she achieved international fame and became a central voice in Saudi cinema. She often worked in difficult conditions, directing scenes remotely due to social restrictions. Her films address personal freedom, women's rights, and cultural transformation. She later directed international works such as *Mary Shelley* (2017). She is considered a pioneer of contemporary Middle Eastern cinema and continues to advocate for Arab women filmmakers.

La bicicletta verde – *La bicicletta verde* (*Wadjda*) is a 2012 film by Saudi director Haifaa Al-Mansour. It is the first film entirely shot in Saudi Arabia. It tells the story of Wadjda, a young girl from Riyadh who dreams of buying a green bicycle. In the country, bicycles are considered “unsuitable” for girls, but Wadjda refuses to accept this limitation. She decides to enter a Qur'an recitation competition to win the prize money. The story addresses themes of female empowerment and social restrictions. The film uses a simple, realistic narrative style, close to neorealism. It was often shot indoors because of the restrictions imposed on the director during production. It received numerous international awards, becoming a symbol of cultural change. The tone is poetic, tender, yet critical and courageous.



MARIA BRENDLE

She is a Swiss director and screenwriter known for sensitive, socially aware cinema. Trained at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, she developed a style centered on inner emotion and narrative ethics. Before Ala Kachuu, she directed short films and documentaries exploring human condition and personal vulnerability. Her poetics highlight strong characters—often women—facing moral and emotional dilemmas. Ala Kachuu brought her international recognition, focusing on an underreported cultural practice. Her work shows cultural research and respectful representation. Brendle values authenticity and empathy, avoiding sensationalism. She is also active in human rights and social awareness projects. She continues to develop works that merge civic engagement and aesthetic care, and she is considered one of the most promising emerging voices in European cinema.

Ala Kachuu – Set in Kyrgyzstan, Ala Kachuu tells the story of a young student kidnapped for a forced marriage. The film follows her struggle to adapt, rebel, or escape, showing the conflict between personal aspirations and cultural pressure. The narrative centers on the protagonist's point of view, revealing fear, resilience, and the desire for self-determination. The rural setting heightens tension and the feeling of entrapment. Brendle adopts a realistic, restrained style, strengthening the social denunciation without sensationalizing trauma. The short film addresses gender violence, tradition, women's rights, and individual freedom. It highlights the emotional complexity of those deprived of their own destiny. Ala Kachuu received international awards for its emotional intensity and humanitarian focus. It was nominated for the 2022 Oscars for Best Short Film and stands as a powerful portrait of the struggle for female freedom and self-determination.



NURI BİLGE CEYLAN

Nuri Bilge Ceylan is one of the most important contemporary international directors. Born in Turkey, he is known for meditative, psychologically deep cinema. His films explore alienation, existential discomfort, and moral conflict. He uses long takes, intense dialogue, and a strong connection between characters and landscape. Natural settings or remote villages reflect the protagonists' inner worlds. His characters are never traditional heroes but complex, fragile figures. His style fuses realism, philosophy, and social observation. With *Racconto di due stagioni*, he confirms his focus on interior drama and ethical tension. His numerous international awards include those from Cannes and Berlin. He is considered a central figure in contemporary auteur cinema.

Racconto di due stagioni – *Racconto di due stagioni* is a drama by Nuri Bilge Ceylan set in a remote village in Eastern Anatolia. It follows Samet, a young art teacher preparing to leave the province for Istanbul. His life changes when he and a colleague are accused of inappropriate behavior by female students. Samet faces a moral and personal crisis that challenges his convictions. The story explores guilt, innocence, loneliness, and human fragility. He meets Nuray, a colleague with a troubled past who sparks both hope and inner conflict.

The narrative is slow, intense, and filled with reflective dialogue and psychological introspection. The snowy, desolate landscape mirrors the characters' alienation. The style is characteristic of Ceylan—realistic, contemplative, and philosophical. The film premiered at Cannes 2023 and was released in Italy in 2024.



ZIAD DOUEIRI

Ziad Doueiri is a Lebanese director and screenwriter known for direct, provocative cinema. He began his career in the United States as a camera assistant to Quentin Tarantino. His debut, *West Beirut* (1998), portrayed the civil war through the eyes of teenagers. Doueiri combines local sensitivity with an international style, addressing identity, conflict, and coexistence. With *The Attack* (2012), he explored terrorism and cultural belonging. *The Insult* (2017) is his most acclaimed film, awarded in Venice and nominated for the Oscars. His direction is characterized by realism, sharp dialogue, and close attention to moral conflicts. He does not shy away from controversy, sparking debate and critical appreciation. He has also worked in television, expanding his narrative approach. He is considered one of the boldest and most influential voices in contemporary Lebanese cinema.

The Insult – Set in Beirut, *The Insult* shows how an argument between a Lebanese Christian and a Palestinian refugee becomes a national court case. The incident begins with a trivial building dispute, but the exchanged words reopen deep historical wounds. The affair engages the media, politics, and public opinion, exposing ongoing tensions among Lebanon's communities. The film explores identity, memory, dignity, and reconciliation through the lens of a courtroom drama. Strong performances make the conflict human and credible, intertwining personal and collective trauma. The narrative is taut, alternating emotional confrontation and moral reflection. Doueiri uses legal drama to address sensitive political and social issues. The film maintains a powerful emotional and personal impact. It achieved international success, including an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film, and remains one of the clearest representations of the invisible wounds of today's Middle East

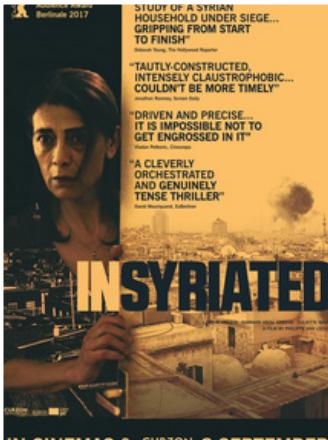


MOHAMMAD RASOULOF

Mohammad Rasoulof is one of Iran's most important contemporary filmmakers, known for political, courageous cinema. Born in 1972, he often worked under severe censorship and government restrictions. His films tackle abuse of power, individual freedom, and social pressure. He has been repeatedly arrested or persecuted due to the content of his work. Despite this, he has continued filming clandestinely, becoming a symbol of artistic resistance. His acclaimed works include *A Man of Integrity* and *There Is No Evil*, winner of the Golden Bear in Berlin. With *Il seme del fico sacro*, he continues investigating political repression and its intimate consequences. His poetics merge realism, dramatic tension, and deep ethical awareness. He is considered one of the most influential and courageous filmmakers in global cinema today.

Il seme del fico sacro – *Il seme del fico sacro* is a 2024 film by Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof. Set in Iran, it depicts the progressive disintegration of a family after the father, a judge, begins to feel threatened by the country's protest movements. His paranoia grows into obsessive control over his wife and daughters. The film explores the tension between power and vulnerability, political repression and individual freedom. The style is sober, intense, and rooted in contemporary Iranian realism.

The narrative centers on the female perspective, highlighting the silent courage of younger generations. The film attracted major critical attention for its political force and emotional portrait of oppressive climate. Presented at Cannes 2024, it was received as an act of artistic denunciation and resistance. The work was celebrated for balancing family drama and social allegory.



PHILIPPE VAN LEEUW

Philippe Van Leeuw is a Belgian director, screenwriter, and cinematographer known for socially engaged and stylistically essential cinema. He trained at INSAS in Brussels and at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. He began as a cinematographer before turning to directing. His debut, *The Day God Walked Away* (2009), explored the Rwandan genocide with great sensitivity. *Insyriated* (2017) earned him international recognition, uniting political urgency and cinematic precision. He favors stories that place human beings at the center of traumatic events, observing courage and contradictions. His directing uses controlled camera work, enclosed environments, and realistic details to build tension. He portrays conflicts and humanitarian crises without rhetoric or voyeurism. He continues to work as a cinematographer and visual consultant. Van Leeuw is considered one of the most sensitive and rigorous European filmmakers focusing on human rights.

Insyriated - Set entirely inside an apartment in Damascus, *Insyriated* depicts a single day of war through the eyes of a family trapped between bombings and constant fear. The mother, Oum Yayan, tries to protect her children and housemates as the conflict closes in. The apartment becomes a place of extreme tension, where every noise may signal danger. The domestic space becomes a metaphor for Syria itself: a besieged country still clinging to life. Interactions reveal fear, solidarity, anger, and dignity. Van Leeuw uses intimate direction, never leaving the apartment, letting characters lead the drama. The tight narrative shows how everyday choices become decisions of survival. The film addresses resilience, morality, and humanity under pressure. It received international awards, including the Panorama Audience Award at the Berlinale. *Insyriated* portrays war through the weight of everyday life for families.



PAL

NADINE LABAKI

Nadine Labaki is a Lebanese director, screenwriter, and actress known for her deeply human and socially engaged cinema. She debuted with *Caramel* (2007), an international success about women's lives in Beirut. With *Where Do We Go Now?* (2011), she tackled religious coexistence and pacifism with ironic tones. Labaki focuses on minorities, women, and children, blending artistic sensibility and civic commitment. *Capernaum* (2018) established her worldwide, winning the Jury Prize at Cannes. She often uses non-professional actors, creating authenticity and spontaneity. She participates in humanitarian projects related to children and refugees. Her visual style is realistic, emotional, and attentive to everyday detail. She is considered one of the most important voices in contemporary Arab cinema, continuing to create films that merge art, social responsibility, and love for humanity.

Capernaum - Set in the poor neighborhoods of Beirut, *Capernaum* tells the story of Zain, a young boy who sues his parents for bringing him into the world. Told in flashback, the narration explores abandonment, domestic violence, and everyday survival. During his escape from home, Zain bonds with a young immigrant mother and her baby, becoming their point of reference. The film portrays the social, political, and economic dynamics that oppress the most vulnerable. Nadine Labaki's style blends realism and emotional intensity with non-professional actors. *Capernaum* addresses identity, denied childhood, migration, and adult responsibility. The narrative alternates harshness and delicacy, showing tenderness even in the most difficult circumstances. The film won both public and critical acclaim for its social impact. It received numerous international nominations, including an Oscar for Best Foreign Film, and is considered one of the most powerful and necessary works of contemporary Middle Eastern cinema.



ELIA SULEIMAN

Elia Suleiman is a Palestinian director, screenwriter, and actor known for poetic, minimalist, and ironic cinema. He gained international recognition with *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996) and *Divine Intervention* (2002), awarded at Cannes. His style recalls silent cinema and filmmakers like Tati and Keaton while addressing contemporary political themes. He often plays himself, appearing as a silent observer between humor and melancholy. His films address the Palestinian issue through visual metaphors and a unique cinematic language. With *It Must Be Heaven*, he explores the global world beyond Palestine's borders. His directing features precise compositions, near-total absence of dialogue, and time as a narrative tool. Suleiman is also active as a teacher and cultural promoter. His filmography blends delicacy, irony, and poetry in depicting the human condition, making him a major figure in Middle Eastern auteur cinema.

It Must Be Heaven – *It Must Be Heaven* follows the journey of a Palestinian man who leaves his homeland in search of a place where he can finally feel at home. Through Paris, New York, and other cities, he observes everyday situations that become surreal reflections of modern contradictions. The film unfolds as a series of visual, ironic, and poetic episodes, almost without dialogue. Suleiman uses precise comic timing and silent observation to tell the story. The protagonist becomes a witness to the world, noting dynamics of control, fear, and alienation. Light, humorous atmospheres blend with an existential sense of disorientation. Even far from Palestine, social and political tensions emerge in new forms. The framing and rhythm turn small gestures into meaningful moments. The film earned international awards, including a Special Jury Mention at Cannes. It is a reflection on identity, belonging, and the search for peace in the modern world.



SHOSHANA



MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM

Michael Winterbottom is a British director known for his versatility and realist approach. His work spans political drama, documentaries, road movie and social comedy. He engages with historical and human-rights themes, favoring stories that connect individuals with complex geopolitical contexts. He frequently works with international cast and real locations, maintaining a strong authorial imprint. He gravitates toward stories rooted in historical events, treated with sensitivity and rigor. His filmography consistently seeks emotional authenticity. With *Shoshana*, he tackles a delicate period in Middle Eastern history, blending personal story and grand history. His directing balances intimacy and historical context with attention to detail. Winterbottom is considered one of Europe's most consistent directors in merging cinema and social engagement.

Shoshana – Set in 1930s Palestine, *Shoshana* tells the story of Shoshana Borochov, torn between political ideals and personal feelings. Daughter of a leader of the Zionist labor movement, she falls in love with Thomas Wilkin, a British officer. Their relationship, opposed by both communities, becomes a symbol of an era marked by violence and radicalization. The film intertwines love, political struggle, and emerging terrorism, showing how collective history shapes individual destinies. The direction recreates the climate of suspicion and conflict of the British Mandate. Every choice reflects universal moral dilemmas. The setting alternates sunlit landscapes and tense interiors, heightening emotional drama. The characters are portrayed with humanity and without judgement. The narrative blends political thriller and historical melodrama. *Shoshana* reflects on the price of love in wartime and the value of personal conviction.



MEMORY+



VALENTINA BELLI

Born in Rome in 1981. She graduated in Cinematography at Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (2008-2010) with the master Giuseppe Rotunno (A.I.C., A.S.C.), here she met director Pasquale Marino, with whom she shot "La Prova dell'uovo" (2010), "L'estate che non viene" (2011; 64th Cannes Film Festival - Cinéfondation), and "Imma" (2017). She works as a DOP for several fashion brands, including Puma and Marco De Vincenzo, as well as collaborating with directors such as Marco Missano and Roberto Saku Cinardi on many music videos.

In 2014 she shot his first feature film as a director, "SanBa" (Montreal Cinema du Monde FilmFest, 2015; Taormina Film Fest 2015, Taodue Award, Terre di Siena Festival 2015, Best Actor Award).

In 2016 she wrote, directed, shot and edited the documentary film set in Cambodia "Where Bamboo Grow Strong" narrated by Giancarlo Giannini. For over ten years she has collaborated with Trash Secco with whom has created music videos for artists such as Achille Lauro,

Ketama126; a creative partnership that also saw them side by side in the first feature film directed by Trash Secco "Bassifondi" (2022) written with the D'Innocenzo Brothers.

Dove i bambù crescono forti - In the strip of land between cultivated fields in the Cambodian countryside and the beginning of the Angkor forest near Siem Reap, far from the city's chaos and modern pressures, Master Ros Serey and his favored apprentice Yort live authentically in their world. In a reality suspended between tradition and discipline, outside contemporary dynamics, the young farmer and the master live humbly, protecting the cultural identity of their country and preserving its memory through their own lives. They are deeply bonded through the teachings of Kbach Kun Boran Khmer, an ancient martial discipline. Johnny, a boy of about 10, spends his days wandering between the forest and the town center, surviving through small tricks with his friend Chang, until he meets Yort and learns from his teachings.



CARLO BENSO

Author, screenwriter and filmmaker for cinema and theater, he directed the feature films *Te Absolvo* (Movie Factory) and *Fuorigioco* (Rio Film), exploring themes of forgiveness, conscience, guilt, and the loss of dignity. He created documentaries such as *Mazara – In My Father's Shoes*, on migration in the Sicilian Channel, and *Plurals*, examining sexuality and cultural diversity in Naples, both supported by regional film commissions. For cultural cinema, he worked on projects like *Il 700 a Roma* and *Da Praeneste a Palestrina*. In theater, he directed and adapted international and Italian works, including *La Cerimonia*, *Killer*, *Emigranti*, *V.S.A.*, *Birdy*, and *Collected Stories* (Italian premiere). His works combine social reflection, character psychology, and attention to contemporary reality, receiving recognition from cultural institutions and festivals.

Nelle scarpe di mio padre - The Mediterranean, Mare Nostrum, has always been a crossroads of civilizations, trade, and culture, now a stage for migration, conflict, and solidarity. Mazara del Vallo, a multicultural city, becomes the starting point for a journey through past and present. Guided by the narrative voice of the Dancing Satyr, the documentary recounts stories of those "saved" from drowning, intertwining historical memory and living testimonies. It is not only a document but a contemporary reflection, inviting consideration of migration, interculturality, and inclusion as tools to enrich societies, cultures, and economies.



GIULIO GARGIA

Italian director, screenwriter, multimedia author, and journalist, active between Naples and Rome, founder of the cooperative Tam Tam. His multidisciplinary work combines cinema, communication, new media, and artistic direction, focusing on social themes, urban phenomena, cultural identity, and collective imagination. Known for merging documentary and narrative invention, he uses a transmedia approach integrating film, comics, digital media, and performance. Major works include the Auditel trilogy (*Il fantasma dell'Auditel*, *Gli ammutinati dell'Auditel*, *La scomparsa dell'Auditel*) and the animated feature *Next Minds*. He directs the Tam Tam DigiFest, Italy's reference festival for digital cinema and hybrid visual arts.

Maradona, San Gennaro e lo sciopero dei miracoli - Directed by Giulio Gargia, produced by Cooperativa Tam Tam, Millennium Cinematografica, and Michelangelo Film – is a docufilm blending documentary, fiction, and animation to portray contemporary and mythological Naples. The story centers on a playful duel between San Gennaro (Patrizio Rispo) and Diego Maradona (Zap Mangusta) for the city's heart, against the backdrop of thirty-three years of urban, cultural, and social transformations. The documentary segment features testimonies from Conchita Sannino, Roberto Saviano, Salvatore Iodice, Marino Niola, Luigi De Magistris, Maurizio De Giovanni, and Don Luigi Calemme. The film explores popular devotion, faith, and football, showing Naples as a city capable of reinventing itself without miracles.



HABIB MESTIRI

An Italian director and filmmaker of Tunisian origin, specializing in fiction and documentary cinema. His artistic journey began in 1977 with amateur shorts, followed by television work in 1994 as a founding member of Italy's first Arab cinema channel, ORBIT AL OULA. He later returned to Tunisian cinema, developing a filmography blending art and history, with over 20 films and documentaries produced between 1991 and 2023, including *Vagues Brisées* (2017) and *Les Semblables* (2022, awarded for screenplay at the Oujda Festival). Collaborates with Italian and Tunisian producers, notably Etoiles Filantes Productions and Mind Shift. His work creatively combines documentary and fiction, exploring social and cultural themes from a Mediterranean perspective. Mestiri remains an important figure in independent cinema.

Wed - Loosely adapted from the novel *The Last Dreamer*, depicts a spiritual journey of resistance, intertwining personal and political dimensions during the 1980s and 1990s in Tunisia. A period marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the USSR, and the transition from Bourguiba to Ben Ali. This historical context is not just a backdrop, but a living narrative fabric that shapes the characters' destinies. The protagonist, Khalil, an idealistic intellectual, moves from optimistic journalist to persecuted exile, reflecting the fate of a generation. The film explores Khalil's psyche with a relentless (or fast-paced) rhythm, immersing the viewer in his pain through intense dialogues and authentic acting. The direction aims to make the viewer experience the characters' emotions as their own, in line with a vision of cinema as an empathetic experience. The title *Wed* is inspired by a song by Mohamed Abdel Wahab and symbolizes the spiritual and militant ties of a generation. The film meditates on resistance, broken ideals, and the search for meaning in a fragmented world. *Wed* aims to be both a historical testimony of Tunisia and a universal reflection on justice, dignity, and human commitment.



LOUIS NERO

(Turin, 1976) – Italian director, screenwriter, and producer, president and founder of the production and distribution company "L'AltroFilm" (1998). Over a nearly thirty-year career, he has collaborated with world-renowned actors including F. Murray Abraham, Harvey Keitel, Rutger Hauer, Faye Dunaway, Michael Madsen, Corin Redgrave, Geraldine Chaplin, Franco Nero,

Christopher Lambert, and Giorgio Albertazzi. He also worked with world-famous Italian artists such as Franco Zeffirelli and Tinto Brass. Represented by UTA (United Talent Agency), he is a permanent juror for the David di Donatello Awards, one of the most important cinematographic awards at Italian level. Besides producing all his directed films, he has co-produced works by other authors, including *Ex Drummer* (2007, Koen Mortier), the Hungarian comedy *Mario il Mago* (2008, Tamás Almásí), *Fratelli di Sangue* (2003, Davide Sordella), and *Principessa* (2009, Giorgio Arcelli). He currently collaborates with Nick Vallelonga, 2018 Oscar-winning screenwriter for the acclaimed film *Green Book*, on the screenplay of the TV thriller series *The Puppet Master*.

The Broken Key – As a child, Arthur Adams witnesses his father die in a mysterious water accident, leaving him with only two keepsakes: a Zippo-like lighter and an Ankh, the Egyptian "key of life." Fast forward to 2033 in York, a city filled with holograms and video messages, one of which invites citizens to cross the gates of death toward resurrection. Now a young archaeologist guided by his dying mother's wish, Arthur seeks to uncover the mystery of his father's disappearance and locate the missing fragment of the Turin Canon, assisted by his young assistant Sara and a series of enigmatic characters, each holding part of the final puzzle.



MONI OVADIA

Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1946, into a Sephardic Jewish family. He moved to Italy as a child, where he grew up and trained culturally, studying music and acting. His career spans theatre, cinema, television, and music, focusing on Jewish tradition and klezmer culture. Known for theatrical performances combining acting, singing, and live music, often addressing social and political themes, he explores historical memory, identity, and multicultural coexistence. Ovadia has published essays and books on Jewish history and culture, contributing to making often overlooked traditions and stories known to the wider public. Throughout his career he has collaborated with Italian and international musicians, directors and intellectuals, also bringing his art abroad. His commitment is not limited to culture: he is also active in public debate, defending the values of tolerance, human rights, and interreligious dialogue.

He has been a protagonist in television and radio broadcasts, where he combines cultural popularization and entertainment, becoming a recognizable and appreciated voice in the Italian panorama. His artistic and intellectual production has made him one of the main interpreters of Jewish culture in Italy, always with a critical and ironic view of contemporary society.

La terra senza – What does Ludovico hope to find in his native South after so many years away? Perhaps peace – but what peace can exist in a land he left to escape silence, collusion, and hypocrisy? What does he hope for in embracing Rosa again, his adoptive sister with whom he once shared youthful dreams and troubled loves, shattered by the murder of their friend Antonio, the balladeer? Rosa has had a son from a secret affair with a young criminal. Ludovico, long sheltered in his books, will find no peace: he has returned only to sell the family home. Ill in body and soul, his return will not save him, not even after discovering the existence of Giacomo, Rosa's son. The beauty of the sky, the sea, and the gardens is not enough. Shut inside rooms that no longer feel like his, surrounded by the old women's litanies and the Good Friday procession of the Dead Christ, Ludovico remains a prisoner of his own impossibilities.



PASCAL PEZZUTO

Born in Squinzano (Lecce), he lives between Lecce, Bari, Rome, and New York. A law graduate, he began his theater career early, receiving awards such as the Amnesty International Prize for Donne d'Assalto. He has worked in TV, radio, and cinema as actor, director, and screenwriter (*La Città dei Santi di Carta*, *Il Segreto dei Serial Killer*, *Vino Amaro*, *Antichi Mestieri di Terra d'Otranto*). He is also a teacher and researcher in theater and cinema, collaborates with prominent artists, founded the National Laboratory of Spoken Italian, and has directed theaters including Paisiello in Lecce and Tito Schipa in Gallipoli. Currently, he serves as President of the National Cinema and Entertainment Department of Rete Italia.

La città dei santi di carta

Around the mid-19th century, Lecce saw a rapid rise in new churches. To decorate them with statues of saints and the Virgin Mary, the bishop sought funds from the Pope, who sent an apostolic nuncio. With the Holy See nearly bankrupt, they turned to cheaper papier-mâché statues crafted by skilled local artisans. These magnificent "Santi di Carta" became an unexpected success, sold across Italy and abroad.

By the early 20th century, Lecce had become the world capital of papier-mâché art, shaped by masters like Achille De Lucreti, Luigi Guacci, and Giuseppe Manzo. The wealth generated by Vatican commissions prompted Archbishop Cuccarollo of Otranto to push for wooden statues produced in the north, sparking a fierce conflict with the Salento artisans, who appealed to the Duce and Pope Pius XI. In the Vatican, a true "trial" of the "Santi di Carta" began.



KAREN SHAKHNAZAROV

Born 1952. Film director, screenwriter, producer, and novelist. Graduated in 1975 from the Directing Department of the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK, class of Igor Talankin). Since 1976, he has worked as a director at Mosfilm. Since 1998, he serves as General Director of Mosfilm Cinema Concern, leading it through a difficult period in the 1990s to become Europe's largest single film complex.

In the Moscow Slum

Based on Vladimir Gilyarovsky's writings and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the Four*, celebrated theater director Konstantin Stanislavski stages *The Lower Depths* by Maksim Gorky. To understand the lives of the marginalized, he asks journalist Vladimir Gilyarovsky to guide him through Khitrovka, Moscow's notorious slum. During the visit, they encounter Rajah, an enigmatic figure, only to find him murdered, drawing Stanislavski and Gilyarovsky into the investigation, risking their safety and lives.



PALESTINE+

MOSTAFA AHMED NABIH – Novelist and Filmmaker – is one of the most influential Palestinian cultural voices, with over thirty years of experience spanning literature, theater, and cinema. A director, writer, and critic, he has transformed the memory and stories of Palestine into powerful artistic works: from novels and screenplays to theater for adults and children, as well as internationally awarded documentaries and short films, such as *Gaza 2009*, *Blue Sky*, and *The Innocents*. As Director of the Documentary Film Unit at Palestinian Television and founder of the Palestinian Children's Theater, he has created and led cultural institutions, trained hundreds of journalists and artists, and presided over juries at major local and international festivals. His art combines aesthetic sensitivity, investigative rigor, and social commitment, powerfully conveying the memory, struggles, and hopes of his people, establishing him as a central figure in Palestinian visual and theatrical culture.

Pins (documentary)

Running time: 20 minutes

Screenplay and Direction: Mostafa Nabih

The film follows two Palestinian girls, Farah and Zahra, displaced from Gaza, who transform a worn tent into the studio for a documentary program called *Pins*. Despite loss, illness, and daily fear, they continue documenting “pin-moments” in the lives of people enduring profound suffering.

The documentary features three main testimonies: an oncology patient deprived of treatment and the possibility to travel; a woman unable to have children, who has dedicated her life to raising orphans; a mother who lost all four of her children in a single bombing. The film also includes a recording of Zahra reading *Setti Sit El-Hassan*, a symbolic story that revives Palestinian folklore as an act of resistance against erasure.

Pins stands as a testament to the power of storytelling to resist, and to women confronting annihilation with the declaration: “We are here... we have not been erased.”

Artists of Gaza: Can You Hear Us?

Running time: 15 minutes

Screenplay and Direction: Mostafa Nabih

Artists of Gaza: Can You Hear Us? is a short documentary that tells the story of three Palestinian artists from three generations. Their lives are revealed beyond the images of bombings and bloodshed, diving instead into the depth of human experience and the artist's voice, which continues to express itself despite all challenges.

The film is a testimony to the strength of creativity and the determination to survive, transforming pain into art and offering a rare opportunity to finally hear the voices of Gaza from a purely human and artistic perspective. With the support of Areej, the film opens a window into the soul of the Palestinian artist who has endured adversity.

Sacrifices

Running time: 6 minutes

Screenplay and Direction: Mostafa Nabih

Sacrifices is a documentary inspired by the words of Palestinian writer Diana Shannawi: “The beautiful are sacrifices for the gods, and we are sacrifices of modern times.” The film offers an artistic vision of Palestine as a land of oppression and destruction. It explores the symbolism of offering the most beautiful as a sacrifice to the gods, in a short journey that reveals the resilience of art and artists in the face of injustice and suffering.

Roots (documentary)

Running time: 53:35 minutes

Screenplay and Direction: Mostafa Nabih

Roots follows a Palestinian couple in their seventies, narrating their lives from the Nakba to the present day. Through their stories, childhood songs, and traditional games, the film reflects the memory of an entire people and highlights the deep connection between humans and their land, past and present, memory and identity. The documentary offers a human perspective that combines resilience, cultural heritage, and hope despite the challenges of diaspora and change.

Lost time (documentary)

Running time: 47:30 minutes

Screenplay and Direction: Mostafa Nabih

Lost Time documents the suffering of Palestinian prisoners' families and the time lost with their children, creating a cultural and human gap between generations. The film highlights the psychological and social challenges faced by these prisoners and their families, offering a poignant portrayal of the impact of imprisonment on Palestinian society.

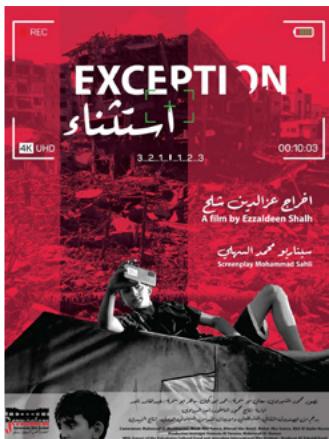
Tears of Jasmine (documentary)

Running time: 16:51 minutes

Screenplay and Direction: Mostafa Nabih

Jasmine Tears is an intense documentary that tells the story of a Palestinian mother who lost all four of her children due to an aerial bombardment, after they had decided to return home to wash and change.

Through this personal experience (or story), the film reflects the scale of the pain and suffering faced by Palestinian families in times of war, offering a profound human vision of loss, disorientation, and the psychological trauma caused by war.



EZZALDEEN SHALAH

He is a Palestinian director and festival director from Gaza, holding a PhD in Cinema from Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University in Morocco. He is the founder and president of the Jerusalem International Film Festival and the Gaza International Festival for Women's Cinema, as well as co-founder of the International Union of Arab Cinema Festivals, which encompasses 25 festivals in 14 countries. Shalah has directed numerous documentaries and feature films, including *Exception* (2025), *The Other World*, *The Dry Spring*, and *Gaza 2006*, and has served as a juror and consultant at major Arab and North African film festivals. His career spans directing, festival leadership, film criticism, and academic training, making him one of Gaza's most authoritative voices in cinema and cultural resilience.

Exception (documentario)

Running time: 15 minutes

Regia di: Ezzaldeen Shalah

Exception portrays a singular moment of humanity amid the devastation of Gaza, where civilians face the constant presence of death while clinging to one of the few remaining sources of hope: cinema. The documentary follows displaced residents gathering before a modest screen at an improvised film festival, seeking a brief refuge in the power of storytelling. Amid tents, ruined buildings, and relentless uncertainty, the simple act of watching films becomes a silent yet profound act of resistance – a reaffirmation of life in a landscape marked by immense loss.





EXTRA 4: SHORT FILM SCREENING



MASSIMO CERBERA

Massimo Cerbera is an Italian filmmaker, producer, and writer with over twenty years of international experience in the audiovisual sector. He has directed and produced short films, documentaries, advertising campaigns, and content for TV, collaborating with entities across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. His creative vision combines cinematic aesthetics, attention to narrative, and a strong sensitivity to social and cultural themes. His most recent works include *Echoes of Forgotten Legends*, *Zona Cesarini*, and *Daughter of The Stars*. He has participated in national and international festivals, receiving awards for direction, cinematography, and visual innovation.

Throughout his career, he has held key roles in highly complex productions, consolidating skills that range from directing to post-production. He has worked as a DOP (Director of Photography) and creative producer for commercials, fashion films, and music videos, developing a recognizable visual style. He is the founder of several production companies and has collaborated with institutions such as

the Apulia Film Commission and RAI.

Passionate about Asian cinema, science fiction, and experimental storytelling, he continues to develop original projects for the international market. He lives and works between Bari and the rest of the world, bringing with him an artistic vision that is both global and deeply personal.

Echos of Forgotten Legends

career, is preparing to return to the city. As she leaves, an apparently insignificant incident marks the beginning of something inexplicable.

During the journey back, the protagonist encounters a series of unsettling mishaps, which lead her back to echoes of ancient legends that slowly begin to merge with reality, until her entire existence is completely overturned.



SILVIA MONGA

After earning a degree in Literature and taking film courses, she began writing children's books and later wrote and directed shorts, music videos, and feature films. She is an Italian director and screenwriter, awarded nationally and internationally. Her films, screened in Italy and abroad, have won around a hundred prestigious festival awards. Her works are distributed in UCI Cinemas, RAI channels, and streaming platforms with RAI/Mediaset promotion. In 2023, she was named Ambassador of Genoa in the World. She has won multiple national awards including the Luigi Magni Prize, and numerous recognitions at the San Benedetto Film Festival, Cefalù Festival, Viareggio, Cortintelvi, Moonwatchers, Tulipani di Seta Nera Rai Cinema, and the Sorriso Rai Cinema Channel. Her documentary Giuseppe Garibaldi, eroe leggendario won Best Documentary and the Lucia Mirisola Prize. Internationally, she has received recognition in Sweden, London, India, Brazil, Japan, the United States, France, and Australia, as well as multiple nominations in European, African, and Asian festivals, confirming herself as a valued presence in the main international film circuits.

Gocce di luce

Goceci in love During the lockdown, a boy living with his grandfather and younger brother, waiting for his mother to return, becomes curious about Camilla, a girl who lives in the building across the street. Small details make him fall in love with her; glances and smiles become drops of light in Camilla's sad and painful life.



MIMMO MONGELLI

Mimmo Mongelli, a director trained at the Silvio D'Amico 01National Academy of Dramatic Arts, studied under masters such as Luca Ronconi, Andrea Camilleri, Mario Bolognini and Aldo Trionfo. He began his professional career working alongside G. G. De Bosio and Ugo Gregoretti, moving with ease between theatre, cinema, television and opera. Since 1983, he has signed a wide range of productions, presenting his works at international festivals and showcases, and establishing a personal and recognizable artistic language. Alongside his directing career, he writes original scripts, adaptations and translations for stage, radio and audiovisual media, while maintaining an acting career that began in 1981. As a lecturer at several Italian Fine Arts Academies, he has coordinated professional training programs for actors and directed theatre companies and cultural venues between Rome and Puglia. He has collaborated with major institutions such as Teatro Petruzzelli and the Teatro Stabile di Roma. He is President of the Levante International Film Festival and Artistic Director of the Taranto Film Exhibition, contributing to the promotion of auteur cinema and the

cultural growth of the region. As a filmmaker, he has written and produced award-winning works including *La casa delle donne*, *Outis Suite*, *Franco, L'aurora che non vedrò*, *Italiani anche noi*, *Un antico manoscritto*, *Gocce di luce*, *Tabarka* and *Bluerose*. His most recent productions include *Cussiah! L'albero più bello* (2024), created for the Apulia Region and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and *Il Selenita* (2025), supported by the Liguria Region. He is CEO of the film production company "7th Art International Agency", based in Bari, with which he develops national and international projects

CUSSIAH! The Most Beautiful Tree

Lu (Lucretia) is 20 years old and lives in Brooklyn, New York. She is the daughter of Mike, a fifth-generation descendant from Puglia, and Josephine. She is a beautiful Black woman, with a mother of African American origin.

Mike is ill and about to die, but he has one last wish: that Lu travels to Puglia to retrieve the time capsule that his grandfather, during a trip 40 years earlier, had him bury at the foot of "The most beautiful tree," so that he could retrieve it upon his return to the region as an adult. Something that never happened. To indicate "the most beautiful tree" to her, he asks her to search among his things for a map that, among other details, precisely indicates where and which tree it is; but he does not have time to show it to her before he takes his last breath.

His love for his land of origin is, moreover, demonstrated by a series of photos and objects that he jealously keeps in an old suitcase. The suitcase has a saying on its side, a dialect expression that Mike often repeated, even without motivation, like an interjection: "Cuss iè!" (This is it!), which, due to his American accent, became "Cussiah!" Among the other memories in the trunk, Lu also discovers an old book with marvelous drawings of Apulian folklore characters and the map of Puglia that Mike had asked for on his deathbed, featuring several scattered markings. Lu is fascinated by all of this, especially by the images in the book, discovering an archaic, mysterious, and magical world. Furthermore, feeling that she must honor her father's wish, she decides to leave. At Bari airport, Lu is welcomed by two young peers, a girl and a boy—Lucrezia (just like her!) and Ranieri—who are her very distant relatives, tasked with accompanying her on this search for "The most beautiful tree." The first stop is her ancestral village, Pietrano, where a crowd of relatives await her, lined up in front of the ancient family house, mixed with some bizarre figures, very similar to those in the old book.

And so, the adventure in the region begins, following the instructions on the old map. Lu, with immense astonishment, during her encounters on the journey in search of "The most beautiful tree," not only sees magnificent patriarchs but, as if by magic, she also sees the same mysterious characters present in the drawings of the old book, which, moreover, seem to exist only for her!

The three travelers, Lu and the two "cousins," thus pass from the Gargano to the Land of Bari, then to the Taranto area, and finally to Salento. In each of these territories, she experiences the intangible poetry that ancient places and peoples communicate, strengthens the blood bond with her two companions, admires the green giants of Puglia, and becomes increasingly comfortable interacting with her new "imaginary friends." One day, walking through the narrow streets of a town in the Brindisi area, she crosses paths with a male figure who seems to await her around every corner, only to disappear. The hunt for the mysterious man goes on for a while until she finds him again at the foot of a majestic olive tree. Here Lu recognizes Mike, who tells her: "Cussiah!" before vanishing forever. The three young people then begin a frantic excavation among the roots of the patriarch. And finally, the time capsule emerges from the clods of earth: a traditional ceramic vase, richly decorated. Lu smashes it, and the vase reveals its precious contents: the golden kernels of wheat that Mike, 40 years earlier, had collected with his grandfather!

The three young people, lying satisfied at the foot of the giant, amidst the kernels scattered on the ground, sleep under a vividly star-filled sky.



ALESSANDRO SOETJE

(Bologna, 1970) – He is a director, cinematographer, and producer based in Milan. Graduated in Philosophy at the University of Milan, he began his career as a photographer and director of photography for documentaries and international TV programs. In 1993, he won the National Erotic Photography Contest. His documentary *Bambini d'Africa* (1998) won several awards, including the Silver Lily. He collaborated with Sergio Zavoli on the series *Viaggio nella scuola* (2000) and became a freelance journalist in 2003. He produced commercials, branded content, and documentaries, returning to documentary directing with *La nostra pietra* (2013–2018), selected in Montreal and awarded in 2021. For RAI3, he directed seven documentaries for Geo, winning Best Direction with *Old Wild Lorenz*. His Aware Migrants campaign received the Grand International Prize for Advertising Strategies and was shortlisted for the Clios Awards. His episode *The Power of Beauty* won at the French Riviera Film Festival (2020). His documentary *Matera, madre nascosta* and *La Valtellina e le sue Montagne* were broadcast by ARTE. Recent works include *Capitan Carnevale* and the short *Quando piove a Baden-Baden*.

the French Riviera Film Festival (2020). His documentary *Matera, madre nascosta* and *La Valtellina e le sue Montagne* were broadcast by ARTE. Recent works include *Capitan Carnevale* and the short *Quando piove a Baden-Baden*.

Quando piove a Baden-Baden – The country is in lockdown. COVID-19 has decimated nursing home residents. In an old noble villa that turned retirement home, two parallel stories unfold through corridors emptied by pandemic regulations. Alfredo, the meticulous but slightly clumsy medical director, must face an inspection by strict ASL inspector Viola, reporting on anti-COVID measures. Meanwhile, Georg, an elegant and carefree foreign guest seemingly indifferent to health precautions, uses every skill to win the heart of a new resident, Alida, whose resistance gradually weakens. The two stories will inevitably intersect, but nothing is as it seems.



JURY





LEVANTE

Dove l'Oriente incontra l'Occidente
Levant: where East meets West

15|20
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO



FADIĶ SEVIN ATASOY is an award-winning actress, writer and director from Istanbul. Coming from a family of actors, she began her acting career at the age of four in the National Theater. There, she was the youngest to win the Best Actress Award from the Seljuk Theater Festival. Fadiķ continued her career as a child star with her own show on National Broadcast. She has received B.A. and M.A. degrees from the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Bilkent University. After graduating, she became the leading actress of the Turkish National Theatre and toured throughout Europe. Fadiķ received Golden Orange Award for movie Jail Birds and Best Actress Award from International Ankara Film Festival for the movie 8 days of Zeynep. She won Best Actress Award for her performance in Merhaba at the First Run Film Festival by New York Tish along with many awards. She held positions on the jury of several prestigious international film festivals. In 2011 she collaborated with Turkish-italian film director Ferzan Ozpetek for the Film Festival Turco di Roma and performed as the Master of the ceremonies. She is the co-founder of the first official Turkish theater in New York City along with her father. Fadiķ was appointed "Ambassador of Cinema" by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey in Los Angeles, USA. After fulfilling her mission, she continued acting and writing. She is the writer of the fiction novel "Fadiķ and the Red Suitcase". She is the lead actress of Kardeşlerim, aka All for my Family TV show, is now airing in 120 countries. Fadiķ continues starring at her one woman show Muse90401. The show premiered at Los Angeles then toured to Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Istanbul, Copenhagen and New York.



CARLO BENSO – Author and Director – A cinematic and theatrical screenwriter and director, he directed the feature films *Te Absolvo* (Movie Factory) and *Fuorigioco* (Rio Film), exploring themes of forgiveness, conscience, guilt, and the loss of dignity. He created documentaries such as *Mazara – Nelle scarpe di mio padre*, on migration in the Sicilian Channel, and *Plurals*, examining sexuality and cultural diversity in Naples, both supported by regional film commissions. For cultural cinema, he worked on projects like *Il 700 a Roma* and *Da Praeneste a Palestrina*. In theater, he directed and adapted international and Italian works, including *La Cerimonia*, *Killer*, *Emigrant*, *V.S.A.*, *Birdy*, and *Collected Stories* (Italian premiere). His works combine social reflection, character psychology, and attention to contemporary reality, receiving recognition from cultural institutions and festivals.



GIULIO GARGIA Italian director, screenwriter, multimedia author, and journalist, active between Naples and Rome, founder of the cooperative Tam Tam. His multidisciplinary work combines cinema, communication, new media, and artistic direction, focusing on social themes, urban phenomena, cultural identity, and collective imagination. Known for merging documentary and narrative invention, he uses a transmedia approach integrating film, comics, digital media, and performance. Major works include the Auditel trilogy (*Il fantasma dell'Auditel*, *Gli ammutinati dell'Auditel*, *La scomparsa dell'Auditel*) and the animated feature *Next Minds*. He has made numerous short films, docufiction and multimedia projects. He directs the Tam Tam DigiFest, Italy's reference festival for digital cinema and hybrid visual arts. His production always reflects a strong connection with contemporary reality and local culture.



KHEDIJA LEMKECHER Author and director, began her career in documentary and fiction filmmaking. She also works as a producer and produced the feature film *Bab El Fella – Le Cinémonde*. Her latest short fiction films, *La Nuit de la Lune Aveugle* and *Bolbol*, have been selected and awarded at numerous international festivals. Her first feature, *Belles de Nuit*, was recently selected for the official international competition at the 45th Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF45). Her second feature project in development, *Un Huitième*, won a development award at CINMED, the Céci residency at Moulin d'Andé, and a post-production prize, and was selected for the Séquence 7 residency at Château du Tertre and the Fabbrica dell'Arte residency in Corsica.



LOUIS NERO (Turin, 1976) – Italian director, screenwriter, and producer, president and founder of the production and distribution company "L'AltroFilm" (1998). Over a nearly thirty-year career, he has collaborated with world-renowned actors including F. Murray Abraham, Harvey Keitel, Rutger Hauer, Faye Dunaway, Michael Madsen, Corin Redgrave, Geraldine Chaplin, Franco Nero, Christopher Lambert, and Giorgio Albertazzi. He also worked with world-famous Italian artists such as Franco Zeffirelli and Tinto Brass. Represented by UTA (United Talent Agency), he is a permanent juror for the David di Donatello Awards, one of the most important cinematographic awards at Italian level. Besides producing all his directed films, he has co-produced works by other authors, including *Ex Drummer* (2007, Koen Mortier), the Hungarian comedy *Mario il Mago* (2008, Tamás Almási), *Fratelli di Sangue* (2003, Davide Sordella), and *Principessa* (2009, Giorgio Arcelli). He currently collaborates with Nick Vallelonga, 2018 Oscar-winning screenwriter for the acclaimed film *Green Book*, on the screenplay of the TV thriller series *The Puppet Master*.



RELATORI E OSPITI





ATEF ABU SAIF (Gaza, 1973) is a Palestinian writer and intellectual, author of novels, short stories, and important war diaries. Born in the Jabalia refugee camp to a family from Jaffa, he studied at Birzeit, Bradford, and Florence, where he earned his PhD. Active since the late 1990s, he has published widely translated works, including *A Suspended Life* (Arabic Booker Prize finalist) and *The Drone Eats with Me*, a diary of the 2014 war with a foreword by Noam Chomsky. His novel *Running in Place* was the first book by a Gaza author translated into Hebrew. During the 2023 war, he wrote daily diaries later collected in *Don't Look Left* (2024), a firsthand account of devastation. Parallel to his literary career, he has held political roles, including spokesperson for Fatah and Palestinian Authority Minister of Culture (2019–2024). In 2019, he was attacked during protests against Hamas.



LUCIANO CANFORA (Bari, 1942) – One of Italy's foremost classical philologists, historians, and essayists. Emeritus Professor of Greek and Latin Philology at the University of Bari, he is known for his studies on ancient democracy, Greek and Roman historiography, and critical analyses of contemporary politics. A prolific author, he has published seminal works such as *La democrazia. Storia di un'ideologia*, *Il mondo di Atene*, *La schiavitù del capitale*, *Il papiro di Artemidoro*, alongside numerous volumes on Thucydides, Herodotus, Lenin, 20th-century Europe, and the question of freedom. He has contributed to newspapers and cultural magazines (including *Corriere della Sera*) and frequently intervenes in public debate with rigorous, sometimes contrarian, positions, combining classical erudition, philological method, and strong civic engagement.



LIVIO COSTARELLA He is a journalist, writer, and musician. A long-standing contributor to *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, he writes about music, cinema, and the performing arts. A graduate of the Bari Conservatory, he is the author of essays on cinema and collaborates with festivals and cultural events as a critic and lecturer.



MILENA FIORE Milena Fiore is a staff member of the Audiovisual Archive Foundation of the Workers' and Democratic Movement (AAMOD), where she serves as head of the technical area and is part of the Supervisory Board. She works as a video editor and digital archive technician, managing the full technical workflow of audiovisual materials. Her responsibilities include file management, digital preservation, quality control, and the preparation of content for public access. She oversees the operational handling of digital copies and provides technical support across the Archive's activities. Fiore has edited numerous historical, political, social, and performance-based projects.

Among her key works for AAMOD are: *Il Mediterraneo, l'Italia e la Grande Guerra*; *Cent'anni dopo*; *Nakba* and *Yom al-Ard* by Monica Maurer; Gramsci (with the Gramsci Foundation); *Senza rossetto*; *Working Class Heroes*; *Sulle terre d'Argentina*; and the collective film *Fuori campo*. She is currently editing *Shooting Revolution* by Monica Maurer. She has also worked as assistant editor and researcher on *Arrivederci Saigon* and *Pagine Nascoste*. Her work includes educational projects and audiovisual workshops, especially with the association CroMA, focusing on collective and social memory through images.



MARCELLO FONTE (1978) – Calabrian actor and director, one of the most original voices in Italian cinema. Raised in Reggio Calabria, he moved to Rome where he began working in theaters and gradually approached acting. After small roles in independent productions, he gained attention in *Corpo celeste*, *L'intrusa* and *Io sono Tempesta*. He made his directorial debut in 2015 with the autobiographical film *Asino vola*, presented at Locarno. International recognition came in 2018 with Matteo Garrone's *Dogman*, earning him Best Actor at Cannes, along with European Film Awards and the Nastro d'Argento. Known for authenticity and intensity, he portrays fragile but deep characters, alternating between auteur cinema, comedy, and educational projects with youth and is considered one of Italy's most instinctive and sensitive performers.



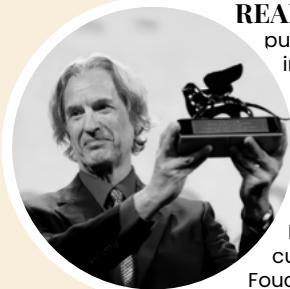
ROBERTO GAMBACORTA, graduated in Production Organization at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, has collaborated with the CSC since 1990, producing numerous educational films and cultural documentation works. He has produced award-winning films and shorts, including *In nome di Giancarlo* (1991), *Il Tuffo* by Massimo Martella (Kodak Prize, Venice 1993), *Isotta* (1995), *Dancing North* (1998), and *L'ultima lezione* (Globo d'Oro 2001). In 2004, he won the David di Donatello with the short film *Zinanà*. In 2008, he founded Rio Film, producing works such as *Uno scippo* (Globo d'Oro 2008), *U' su* by Mimmo Mancini, *Jody delle giostre* (David di Donatello 2011), the documentary *Il sole nel piatto*, and the feature film *Fuorigioco* (2012). Recent projects include *Fondotinta* (2024), *Un Natale del 1945* (2023), *Stolen Moments* (2024), *Sofia* (2025), and the RAI documentary *Bonvi – Una vita inventata*. Films in development include *Curtino* (2026) and *Prime Code*, in preparation with IGM Studios.



MONICA MAURER is an independent filmmaker and journalist. She began her career in the 1960s writing for German newspapers and the U.S. radical magazine Ramparts. In the 1970s she turned to documentary filmmaking, becoming a key voice in portraying the Palestinian struggle. Between 1977 and 1982 she worked with the Palestinian Cinema Institution and the PRCS Information Department.

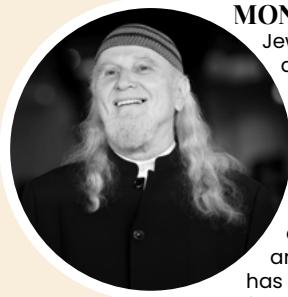
She produced major films on resistance, daily life under occupation, and international solidarity. Her most important works include Palestine Red Crescent (1978), Children of Palestine (1979), The Fifth War (1980), Ashbal (1981), Why? (1982), and War Lab (1984).

From 2000 she collaborated with artist Emily Jacir on the restoration and digitization of Tel al Zaatar footage. The restored archive was donated in 2014 to the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut and Ramallah. Maurer is currently digitizing her own film archive and developing the film Shooting Revolution, focused on the 1970s Palestinian revolution in Lebanon. She has served on the Board of Directors of AAMOD.



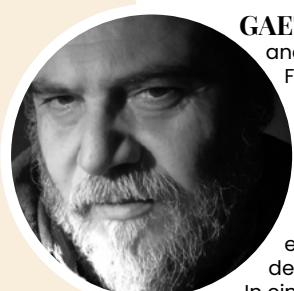
REAN DILIO MAZZONE (Palermo, 1954) is a photographer, publisher, and producer, and one of the most active figures in the cultural dialogue between Italy, the Mediterranean, and Latin America. Founder of the NEF Center and author of internationally acclaimed photographic volumes (including Berlin Beyond the Wall, with texts by Günther Grass), he has exhibited in Italy and abroad and curated exhibitions such as Nicaragua, a Reality of the Americas, in collaboration with Ernesto Cardenal. He directs the historic publishing house Ila Palma, founded in 1954, publishing central figures in world culture – from Jorge Amado to Noam Chomsky, from Michel Foucault to Cecilia Meirelles – and has led Edizioni Associate, receiving the "Culture" Award from the Italian Prime Minister's Office.

Since 1993, he has been a key figure in Italian independent cinema, collaborating with Maresco and Cipri, Quatriglio, Benvenuti, Ovadia, Contento, Torre, and Guillermou. He has produced cult films (Lo zio di Brooklyn, Totò che visse due volte), auteur works selected at international festivals (L'Isola, Antonio Vivaldi – Un principe a Venezia, 8th Wonderland), and award-winning documentaries such as Belluscone (Horizons Prize at Venice, David di Donatello) and La mafia non è più quella di una volta. His documentary contributions on cultural memory figures and themes are also significant, ranging from Fellini: sono un gran bugiardo to Tina Anselmi. Una vita per la democrazia, including works produced with institutions such as RAI, Luce-Cinecittà, UNICEF, and Save the Children. He is currently developing new feature films and the series La mafia non lascia tempo and works on the CineUtopia on-demand cinema platform, active since 2025.



MONI OVADIA

Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1946, into a Sephardic Jewish family. He moved to Italy as a child, where he grew up and trained culturally, studying music and acting. His career spans theatre, cinema, television, and music, focusing on Jewish tradition and klezmer culture. Known for theatrical performances combining acting, singing, and live music, often addressing social and political themes, he explores historical memory, identity, and multicultural coexistence. Ovadia has published essays and books on Jewish history and culture, contributing to making often overlooked traditions and stories known to the wider public. Throughout his career he has collaborated with Italian and international musicians, directors and intellectuals, also bringing his art abroad. His commitment is not limited to culture: he is also active in public debate, defending the values of tolerance, human rights, and interreligious dialogue. He has been a protagonist in television and radio broadcasts, where he combines cultural popularization and entertainment, becoming a recognizable and appreciated voice in the Italian panorama. His artistic and intellectual production has made him one of the main interpreters of Jewish culture in Italy, always with a critical and ironic view of contemporary society.



GAETANO RUSSO (Bernadida, 1961) is a sculptor, visual artist, and set designer. Graduated in Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts of Bologna under Quinto Ghermandi, he has taught at numerous Italian academies and since 2016 is a tenured professor of Artistic Anatomy at the Academy of Lecce. A versatile artist, he conducts cross-media research combining painting, sculpture, and installations, exhibiting in Italy and abroad (Rome, Milan, Düsseldorf, Zurich, Chicago, London) since 1984. He has directed cultural projects and large events, including *Lo sbarco degli Achei* (MiBAC), the Museo del Paradosso, and Plastic Free installations with Legambiente.

In cinema and theatre, he has designed sets, collaborating with directors such as Giovanni Brancale, Fabrizio Maria Cortese, Krzysztof Zanussi, Federico Rizzo, Abel Ferrara, and Peter Greenaway. He has curated documentaries and special projects with Donald Ranvaud and contributed to the Venice Film Festival. He has received numerous awards, including Casa Sanremo Soundies Awards, Premio Alberini (to Ettore Scola), Premio Carmine Coppola, Saracinema, Vinitaly, and honors for sets and installations.

Shanah Tovah



Nadia Martina (voice)
Fabio Zurlo (accordion)
Gianpaolo Saracino (violin)
Vincenzo Grasso (clarinet)
Ovidio Venturoso (percussion)

"One Song, Two Peoples"

This concert was conceived as a dialogue between two worlds, between Jewish culture and Arab-Palestinian culture. An encounter shaped by sounds, traditions, and hopes, where music becomes a bridge, a neutral space, and the voice of a shared humanity. Notes that do not divide, but unite. Because before differences, there is listening. And through listening, peace can emerge.

IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

LEVANTE
Cinema, Teatro, Musica e Documentari
Città Vecchia - Taranto

18
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

Annalisa Adamo
intervista

**ABU SAIF
ATEF**

Scritto e
dir. da Ministro della Cultura
di Palestina

PALAZZO DELLA PROVINCIA – via Anfiteatro 4
ore 11.00

IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

LEVANTE
Cinema, Teatro, Musica e Documentari
Città Vecchia - Taranto

19
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

LUCIANO CANFORA

presenta la sua opera
"Il porcospino d'acciaio"

in dialogo con
Annalisa Adamo

SALONE DEGLI SPECCHI PALAZZO DI CITTA'
ore 11.00

IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

LEVANTE
Cinema, Teatro, Musica e Documentari
Città Vecchia - Taranto

20
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

**MONI REAN
&
OVADIA & MAZZONE**

presentano "La terra senza" di Moni Ovadia

introduce Mimmo Mongelli

Discussione tra Moni Ovadia
e Annalisa Adamo
"CULTURA EBRAICA E SIONISMO"

SPAZIOPORTO
ore 10.00

IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

LEVANTE
Cinema, Teatro, Musica e Documentari
Città Vecchia - Taranto

17
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

WORKSHOP

VALENTINA BELLi

"Vedere il contemporaneo:
la direzione della fotografia oggi"

Palazzo Pantaleo - Città Vecchia
ore 16.00

IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

LEVANTE
Cinema, Teatro, Musica e Documentari
Città Vecchia - Taranto

17
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

WORKSHOP

GAETANO RUSSO

"Tra Cinema e Teatro:
il lavoro dello scenografo"

Palazzo Pantaleo - Città Vecchia
ore 18.00

IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

LEVANTE
Cinema, Teatro, Musica e Documentari
Città Vecchia - Taranto

20
DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

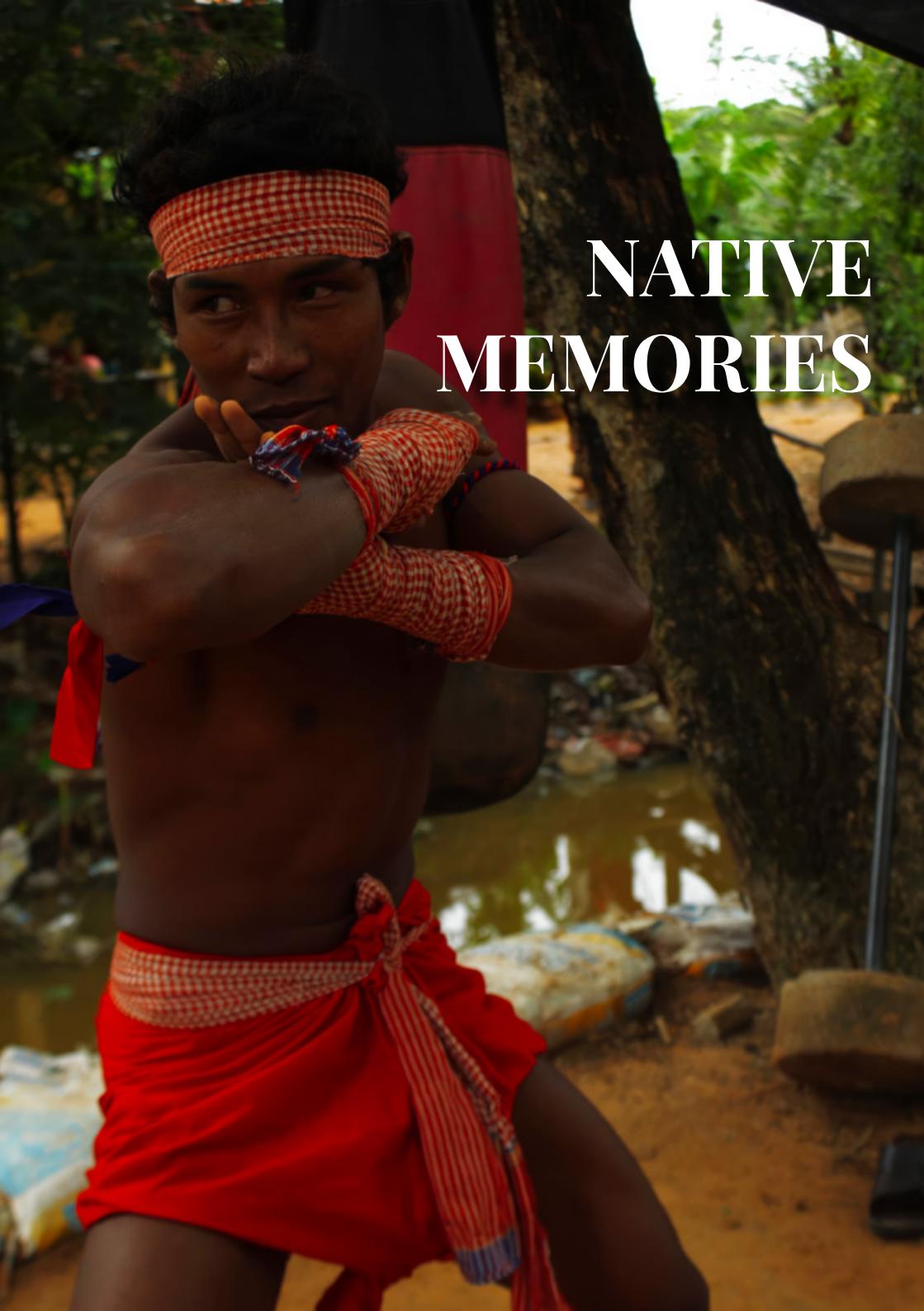
WORKSHOP

LOUIS NERO

"Coproduzione internazionale:
uno sbocco del cinema italiano per
uscire dalla crisi"

Palazzo Pantaleo - Città Vecchia
ore 16.00





NATIVE MEMORIES

"Many cultures of the past have remained shrouded in oblivion, while others have left traces which, if followed, reveal unimaginable worlds."

These words by Harold Haarmann capture the spirit with which we sought to retrace the vestiges of certain Indigenous memories tied to parts of the Levant — from the Golden Triangle between Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar to the mountains between Cambodia and Vietnam — through the photographs of Valentina Belli, an Italian cinematographer and photographer among the most compelling and incisive on the international scene.

"INDIGENOUS MEMORIES" is an exploration, grounded in reality and in what exists, at the edge of the civilized world — an exploration that questions us, calling on us to rethink the possible paths of humanity and all those routes we have cast aside, which instead we have a duty to protect, by first distancing ourselves from a globalized and globalizing worldview that, in its pursuit of profit alone, risks overwhelming our own civilization as well.

"INDIGENOUS MEMORIES" is an exploration—rooted in reality and in the tangible—at the edge of the civilized world, calling upon us to rethink possible trajectories for humanity and all those paths that have been cast aside, yet which we now have the obligation to protect. This means distancing ourselves from a globalized and globalizing model that, in its pursuit of profit, risks sweeping away even our own civilization.

It is essential to remember that indigenous memories are inseparable from fundamental human rights, particularly the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007 in New York. The declaration reaffirmed their right to the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, to self-determination, and to non-discrimination. This implies that populations—both collectively and as individuals—have the right to life, to liberty, to a dignified existence, to religious freedom, and to protection from discrimination based on their origin or indigenous identity. The international protection of indigenous peoples and their cultures, traditions, and customs confirms once again that no cultural heritage should ever be considered expendable, for every loss—whether caused by bombs, pollution, or neglect—is a collective failure. Likewise, every memory preserved is a political act. We must therefore cultivate a non-passive culture of memory: one that does not bow to omissions; that defends not only tangible works of art and historical monuments but also symbolic spaces and intangible heritage; that revives dormant languages; that safeguards vulnerable landscapes as well as the slower and more remote cultures of the Earth that still survive. Institutions, the judiciary, communities, academic knowledge, and politics must be mobilized so that culture and memory may be protected from evident harm as well as from slow and invisible forms of decay.

If human rights and photography have long formed a powerful alliance for narrating and reflecting upon diversity—integrating it into our collective imagination—the modern, incisive sensibility of Valentina Belli is able to stir the depths of the observer, masterfully restoring the sacred aura of encounters with the intimate and fragile world of the indigenous peoples living in the region known as Zomia.

This vast area of Asia, stretching from the Tibetan Plateau along the mountain ranges of the Indochinese Peninsula, is not only a physical place—as the artist explains—but a concept in continuous transformation, one that transcends physical dimension. Here, the unspoiled archaic and tribal identity of societies expands time and space, shaping a territory that is not only what is visible, but also what is invisible, ancestral, and rooted in memory. The ancient martial art Kbach Kun Boran Khmer, for instance, is a striking case of intangible heritage: following the Cambodian genocide, its survival depended solely on the stories and memories of the old Masters who lived through the atrocity.

Belli's field notes—essential tools for delving deeper—are reproduced in full in the exhibition captions. These notes bear witness to the authenticity of her research and rediscovery work, carried out through dialogue and observation together with the native communities inhabiting those extraordinary lands.

In the narrow strip of terrain between the cultivated fields of the Cambodian countryside and the edge of the Angkor forest near Siem Reap is also set Valentina Belli's film, screened at the 9th edition of the Taranto Film Festival, titled *Where the Bamboo Grows Strong*, with narration by Giancarlo Giannini. The film confirms the artist's profound, sharp, and poetic exploration: in highlighting the relationship between Humankind and Nature, she never misses the chance to emphasize tradition, intangible culture, and memory.

The exhibition of Belli's photographs, as well as her film, represents a crucial opportunity to reconsider our duty to defend what globalization has not yet overwhelmed and erased, and to reflect on how much remains to be said about life outside the globalized world. For, as Zygmunt Bauman reminds us, "questioning the seemingly unquestionable premises of our way of life is perhaps the most urgent service we owe ourselves and others."

Zomia is not just a territory but an evolving concept that reflects the ethnographic and social transformations of the indigenous mountain tribes. According to Willem van Schendel and James Scott, Zomia represents a vast region of Asia, from the Tibetan Plateau to the mountains of the Indochinese Peninsula, defining stateless ethnic minorities who have long evaded state control to preserve their identity. Despite their resistance, the impact of modernity is relentless. The indigenous groups encountered in the mountains of the Golden Triangle between Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and China, and on the plateaus between Cambodia and Vietnam, face daily challenges in preserving their cultural identities amid increasing economic and social pressure. This report is a document of the idiosyncrasies of the modern era.

1. AKHA TRIBE

The Akha are a stateless animist tribe with deeply rooted rituals and identity. In some villages, ritual totems for ceremonies and spirit gates marking the settlement are still present. Akha Luma women sell betel nuts along the roads wearing their traditional headdresses. Although ecotourism has helped promote Akha culture, tourist agencies keep most of the profits, perpetuating the typical discriminations experienced by border peoples—lacking legal protections and social safety nets.

2. JARAI TRIBE

The Jarai, known as the “People of the Waterfalls,” have been elephant trainers for 2,000 years. Women perform most domestic tasks, while men are responsible for hunting and building. They practice animism, believing that everything in nature possesses a spirit. Their main deities include the spirits of the sky, mountains, and earth. The dead are buried with symbolic objects, and after five years a farewell ceremony is performed to release the soul.

3. HMONG TRIBE

Originally from southwestern China, the Hmong migrated to escape genocide and settled in the mountains along the Laos border. They are organized into clans and follow a syncretic animism fused with Taoist elements. Rituals are guided by a shaman and accompanied by music played on their traditional instrument. The Hmong are known for their involvement in the Vietnam War and drug trafficking; after allying with the United States and the subsequent victory of the communist party in Laos, they faced violent repression. Many sought asylum abroad, creating a global diaspora. Those who remained are often hired—without alternatives—as low-level labor in the trafficking of opium, heroin, and amphetamines.

4. TAMPUAN TRIBE (CAMBODIA)

The Tampuan practice shamanic rituals and use betel and rice wine in ceremonies and communication with spirits. They rely on subsistence farming and often sell their products at the market for just a few dollars, sometimes walking 10 km carrying a woven bamboo basket, crafted through the traditional Tampuan art of basketry. The loss of ancestral lands due to land grabbing has impoverished many villages; poverty frequently hinders children's access to education, leaving the tribe in a limbo of partial literacy and lack of rights.

5. LANTEN TRIBE (LAOS)

The Lanten are a small ethnic group belonging to the Yao family, who migrated from China's Yunnan province around 200 years ago. They usually settle near rivers to secure access to water, essential for their weaving activities and bamboo paper production. Modernization has affected their traditions: the loss of natural resources and limited access to markets have made it difficult to maintain their traditional lifestyle. The only surviving legacy—despite intermittent prohibition periods—is opium, their ancestral resin.

6. KREUNG TRIBE (CAMBODIA)

The Kreung are an aboriginal Mon-Khmer-speaking tribe, believed to have origins dating back to around 2000 BC, when their ancestors may have arrived in Southeast Asia from southwestern China or the Khasi Hills in northwestern India. Kreung traditional houses are built on stilts, and their daily life revolves around agricultural work. Their cultural traditions include customs linked to puberty, where young people can meet in “love huts” to find a partner.

7. KACHOK TRIBE (CAMBODIA)

The Kachok are an animist ethnic minority living near Virachey National Park in Cambodia's northeastern Ratanakiri province. Their language, part of the Mon-Khmer branch, is considered endangered as it is transmitted mainly orally. They maintain unique funerary traditions, burying their dead in the jungle far from the village, to honor the spirits. The graves—small huts built from various materials depending on the deceased's social status—are decorated with two wooden statues placed in front, one with female features and the other male, both wearing objects that belonged to the deceased.

THE LAST DISSIDENT: KBACH KUN BORAN KHMER

Master Ros Serey taught Kbach Kun Boran Khmer, an ancient martial art nearly wiped out during the Cambodian genocide. The discipline is threatened by government propaganda, which repackages it into a pop-style surrogate for Western audiences, and by cultural appropriation filled with inaccuracies and invented stories. Serey fought to keep his spiritual, mental, and combat knowledge alive so it could be passed on to a country that has already lost so much. His legacy continues through the school now run by his wife and daughter after his death in 2021. The importance of preserving cultural identities lies at the core of his teaching.



TEAM



ANNALISA ADAMO

Annalisa Adamo is a lawyer, cultural promoter, and storyteller of beauty and legality. She has dedicated her life to building bridges between institutions, art, and communities, transforming cultural projects into tools for civic growth. She coordinates the Taranto Film Festival, managing relationships, communication, and the programming dedicated to the Mediterranean, and oversees the Mediterraneità network, which weaves together stories, traditions, and knowledge from countries across the Basin. She collaborates with Italialibera, writing on culture, environment, and society, and works with international festivals, designing talks and events where cinema, art, literature, and music engage with the public. As a trainer and lecturer, she imparts to young people the power of legality, civic responsibility, and ethical creativity. She has held key roles at the Municipality of Taranto, directing General Affairs, Environment, Heritage, and the Historical Archive, contributing to the preservation of the city's memory and cultural heritage. Through the Antelitteram network, she promotes democracy and civic values, while exhibitions, conferences, and publications testify to her tireless commitment to art, contemporary culture, and fostering dialogue between tradition and innovation.



ALESSIA CARRIERI

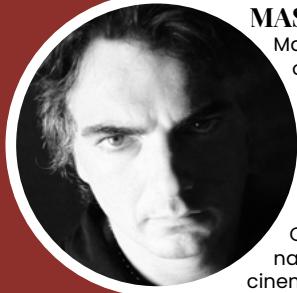
Alessia Carrieri is a communication designer and visual designer for culture and performing arts. She trained in Cultural Heritage for the Performing Arts at the University of Salento and has been working since 2011 in the field of cultural and theatrical events.

Since 2016, she has been the founder of Progetto Koriolano, a communication studio specializing in cultural events, branding, and web design.

Since 2020, she has been creating 2D digital content for videomapping, virtual sets, and immersive installations, with projects carried out in Italy and Morocco.

She is also the founder of the theatre company Formediterre, for which she oversees image, costumes, and set design. From 2013 to 2020, she participated in numerous theatrical productions and served as communications manager for festivals and distributed cultural projects.

Alongside her design work, she works as a stage photographer, with publications in national and international magazines, including *The Guardian*.



MASSIMO CERBERA

Massimo Cerbera is an Italian filmmaker, producer, and writer with over twenty years of international experience in the audiovisual sector. He has directed and produced short films, documentaries, advertising campaigns, and content for TV, collaborating with entities across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. His creative vision combines cinematic aesthetics, attention to narrative, and a strong sensitivity to social and cultural themes. His most recent works include *Echoes of Forgotten Legends*, *Zona Cesarini*, and *Daughter of The Stars*. He has participated in national and international festivals, receiving awards for direction, cinematography, and visual innovation.

Throughout his career, he has held key roles in highly complex productions, consolidating skills that range from directing to post-production. He has worked as a DOP (Director of Photography) and creative producer for commercials, fashion films, and music videos, developing a recognizable visual style. He is the founder of several production companies and has collaborated with institutions such as the Apulia Film Commission and RAI.

Passionate about Asian cinema, science fiction, and experimental storytelling, he continues to develop original projects for the international market. He lives and works between Bari and the rest of the world, bringing with him an artistic vision that is both global and deeply personal.

VALERIA D'AUTILIA



Valeria D'Autilia, originally from Taranto, is a professional journalist with a degree in Communication Sciences. She has been working in the field for over twenty years.

Since 2018, she has been collaborating with the national newspaper *La Stampa* and its online edition. She covers news and current affairs, with a focus on topics such as labor exploitation, immigration, environmental issues, work, and social matters, producing articles, investigations, and reports. She has also collaborated with the national TV networks LA7 and NOVE. Deeply connected to her territory, she previously worked for Studio 100 TV.

As a consultant, she oversees communication for various regional and national organizations. She has managed the press office of the Taranto Film Festival since its inception in 2016.

She is the author of the essay "While, the Sixth W of Web Journalism", published in the scientific journal *H-ermes* of the University of Salento. She is also the recipient of several journalism awards.

MARITA DE LUCA



Actress in numerous productions by the Teatro delle Vigne Company (1991–2000) and Formediterre Teatro (2014–2025), as well as voice-over narrator in various videomapping projects and immersive installations under the artistic direction of Antonio Minelli.

Cultural operator in organizational, production, and press communication roles for Italian and international projects, events, and performances.

Translator of short films, she has curated the subtitling of several films presented at various editions of the Taranto Film Festival.

Editorial secretary for the publishing house Antea Edizioni in Milan, and controller for Matrix, a company within the Telecom Italia group.

ANTONELLA MADDALENA

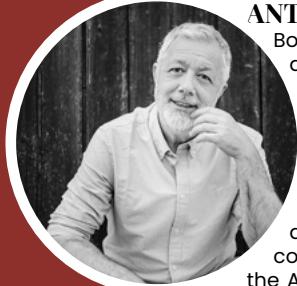


Antonella Maddalena is an Italian actress with extensive training in cinema, theatre and holistic techniques, refined through work with Dominique De Fazio (Actor's Studio) and international masterclasses. She graduated with honors in Educational Sciences and has a master's degree in Bioethics, combining research, art, and neuroscience, integrating research, art and neuroscience. As a writer, she has published the novels *Lumen*, *L'odore del vuoto*, and the anthology *Punto di rugiada* with Besa, establishing herself also in the literary field.

She has taught philosophical counselling, theatre and creative writing at the University of Bari and in several professional institutions.

In cinema, she stars in the multi-award-winning *Bluerose* (2024) and in works such as *L'aurora che non vedrò* and *Outis Suite* and has appeared in films including *Honeymoons* and *La casa delle donne*. International awards such as Best Actress confirm her artistic standing.

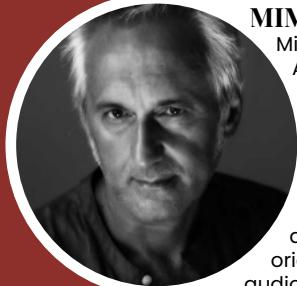
Her theatre career spans monologues, classical works and EU projects. As an author of screenplays, theatrical texts and documentaries, she also works in directing, artistic programming and action painting, participating in national and international cultural projects and festivals.



ANTONIO MINELLI

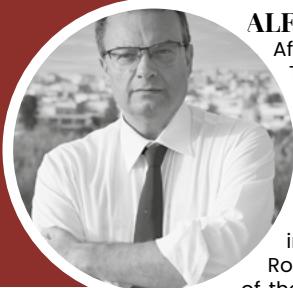
Born on January 17, 1962, he is an Italian director, digital artist, and author with over forty years of experience in theatre, live events, and digital productions. He has directed and curated historical reenactments, narrative videomapping projects, and immersive installations in numerous Italian and international cities, including Bari, Rabat, Foggia, and Chiusi della Verna (AR), collaborating with cultural associations and public institutions. In theatre, he has worked as a director, adapter, composer, and performer for productions by national and international companies. He has taken part in prestigious festivals such as the Avignon OFF Festival and the Carrefour International du Théâtre d'Enfants, receiving national and international recognition.

His experience ranges from traditional theatre to multimedia and digital events, with an innovative approach to immersive storytelling. Minelli has also developed cultural projects for cinema, children's theatre, and videomapping, integrating digital technologies with live performance. He has collaborated with Italian and international cultural institutes, coordinating complex events and artistic directions. His career is marked by interdisciplinary experimentation and a strong focus on the enhancement of cultural heritage. He has contributed to the training of young artists. In addition to theatre and live events, he has produced music videos, documentaries, and special effects for film and television. His work reflects a strong connection between art, technology, and community, promoting immersive and participatory experiences.



MIMMO MONGELLI

Mimmo Mongelli, a director trained at the "Silvio D'Amico" National Academy of Dramatic Arts, studied under masters such as Luca Ronconi, Andrea Camilleri, Mario Bolognini and Aldo Trionfo. He began his professional career working alongside G. G. De Bosio and Ugo Gregoretti, moving with ease between theatre, cinema, television and opera. Since 1983, he has signed a wide range of productions, presenting his works at international festivals and showcases, and establishing a personal and recognizable artistic language. Alongside his directing career, he writes original scripts, adaptations and translations for stage, radio and audiovisual media, while maintaining an acting career that began in 1981. As a lecturer at several Italian Fine Arts Academies, he has coordinated professional training programs for actors and directed theatre companies and cultural venues between Rome and Puglia. He has collaborated with major institutions such as Teatro Petruzzelli and the Teatro Stabile di Roma. He is President of the Levante International Film Festival and Artistic Director of the Taranto Film Exhibition, contributing to the promotion of auteur cinema and the cultural growth of the region. As a filmmaker, he has written and produced award-winning works including *La casa delle donne*, *Outis Suite*, *Franco, l'aurora che non vedrò*, *Italiani anche noi*, *Un antico manoscritto*, *Gocce di luce*, *Tabarka* and *Bluerose*. His most recent productions include *Cussiah! L'albero più bello* (2024), created for the Apulia Region and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and *Il Selenita* (2025), supported by the Liguria Region. He is CEO of the film production company "7th Art International Agency", based in Bari, with which he develops national and international projects.



ALFREDO TRAVERSA

After graduating from the Silvio D'Amico Academy, Alfredo Traversa gained significant touring experience with Italian and international directors, including K. Zanussi. Together with Tito Schipa Jr., he authored a RAI drama about a great Italian tenor. He was the first in Italy to work on multi-ethnic theatre and on projects dedicated to Dante Alighieri with the Municipality of Siena. Several of his theatrical works have been staged in Greece and Kosovo. He has worked as an actor for the RAI offices in Bari, Naples and Rome. For three years he collaborated with Ugo Ronfani at Milan's Teatro Dal Verme and Teatro Parenti in the field of theatre criticism. He has given lectures in Buenos Aires on Italian cinema and has created distinctive docufilms on P. P. Pasolini and Walter Chiari, collaborating with Tatti Sanguineti. In Puglia, he founded the Teatro di Fantiano.



LEVANTE

Dove l'Oriente incontra l'Occidente
Levant: where East meets West

17

DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

INCONTRO-DIBATTITO

ATLETI della CULTURA

modera **Alfredo TRAVERSA**

interventi di operatori culturali e di organismi di
produzione culturale

conclusioni di **Fabrizio IURLANO**

coordinatore
della Consulta delle Associazioni Culturali
di Confindustria Taranto

in prospettiva dei **Giochi del Mediterraneo**



IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025

Palazzo Pantaleo - Città Vecchia

ore 11.00



IX EDIZIONE/EDITION 2025
LEVANTE
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DICEMBRE
DECEMBER
TARANTO

FESTA di PREMIAZIONE



Concerto del gruppo
Shanah Tovah
“Un canto, due popoli”

Saluto dell'ospite d'onore
Marcello Fonte
Palma d'Oro
Miglior Attore Protagonista
a Cannes 2018

Presentazione del progetto
“Istituto Levante”

Proclamazione dei vincitori
e consegna dei Premi.

PALAZZO PANTALEO - CITTÀ VECCHIA
ore 20.30



La Mostra del Cinema di Taranto "Levante: dove l'Oriente incontra l'Occidente" è sostenuta dal Pci Puglia 2021-2027, Area tematica 06 - Linea di intervento 05.22 "Attività culturali", Piano Strategico della Cultura della Regione Puglia. L'evento inoltre è realizzato con la partecipazione del Comune di Taranto.