

THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GREAT FILMS WITH BRUCE JACKSON & DIANE CHRISTIAN

PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO AND THE MARKET ARCADE FILM AND ARTS CENTER

OCTOBER 11, 2000: LA DOCE VITA

Pathé Consortium Cinéma/Riama Film 176 minutes

DIRECTOR **Federico Fellini**

SCRIPT **Federico Fellini, Ennio Flaiano, Tullio Pinelli, Brunello Rondi**

PRODUCER **Giuseppe Amago, Franco Magli,**

Angelo Rizzoli

MUSIC **Nino Rota**

CINEMATOGRAPHER **Otello Martelli**

EDITOR **Leo Cattozzo**

COSTUME DESIGN **Piero Gherardi**

Marcello Mastroianni Marcello Rubini
Anita Ekberg Sylvia
Anouk Aimée ... Maddalena
Yvonne Furneaux Emma
Magali Noël Fanny
Alain Cuny Steiner
Annibale Ninchi Marcello's father
Walter Santesso Paparazzo
Valeria Ciangottini Paola
Audrey McDonald Sonia
Polidor Clown
Lex Barker Robert
Count Ivenda Dobrzensky Giovanni
(uncredited)
Desmond O'Grady Steiner's Guest
(uncredited)
Prince Eugenio Ruspoli di Poggio Suasa
.... Don Eugenio Mascacchi (uncredited)

FEDERICO FELLINI (20 January 1920, Rimini, Italy—31 October 1993, Rome) is best-known as a director of films he wrote, and deservedly so, but before he started directing he co-scripted some of the great films of the Italian neo-realist era, among them Roberto Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta* (*Rome, Open City* 1946) and *Paisà* (*Paisan*, 1946). Fellini directed 24 films, some of which are *La Voce della luna* 1989, *Ginger e Fred* 1986, *Casanova* 1976, *Amarcord* 1974, *Roma* 1972, *I Clowns* 1971, *Satyricon* 1969, *Giulietta degli spiriti* 1965, *8 ½* 1963), *Notti di Cabiria* 1957, and *I Vitelloni* 1953. He was nominated for 11 writing and directing Oscars (including both for *La Dolce Vita*) but won none of them. Four of his films received the Best Foreign Language Film award: *La Strada*, *Notti di Cabiria*, *8 ½* and *Amarcord*. He received the Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993. His death could have been a scene from one of his movies: While recovering from difficult heart surgery he choked on half a mozzarella ball. Enza Da Castro, his production secretary, and

Roberto Mannoni, his production director, were with him. Da Castro called a doctor and two nurses into the room and told them Fellini was choking. The doctor yelled "Heart attack! Heart attack" and began giving him heart massage. When Da Castro and Mannoni again told her he was choking, she ordered them out of the room. Mannoni called Fellini's doctor, Professor Turchetti, and told him to come immediately. After 15 minutes, according to Mannoni, another doctor arrived with a resuscitator and other instruments, and a few minutes later Turchetti got there. But by then Fellini was dead.

MARCELLO MASTROIANNI (28 September 1924, Fontana Liri, Italy—19 December 1996, Paris, pancreatic cancer) first appeared in film in *Marionette* 1938 and last in a film about himself, *Marcello Mastroianni: mi ricordo, sì, io mi ricordo* (*Mastroianni: I Remember, Yes I Remember* 1997). There were about 150 roles in between, 6 with Fellini and 15 with his longtime friend Sophia Loren. Some of his films were *Prêt-à-Porter* 1994, *A Fine Romance* 1992, *Ginger e Fred* 1986, *Una Giornata particolare* 1977, *Roma* 1972, *Casanova '70* 1965, *Matrimonio all'italiana* 1964, *8 ½* 1963. "In front of a camera," he said, "I feel solid, satisfied. Away from it I am empty, confused." And "I don't understand why these Americans have to suffer so much to identify with their characters. Me, I just get up there and act. It's great fun. There's no suffering in it." **ANITA EKBERG** (29 September 1931, Malmö, Skåne, Sweden), the 1950 Miss Sweden, appeared in about 60 mostly-forgettable films, some of which were *Suor Omicidi* 1978 (a.k.a. *Killer Nun*), *Malenka* 1968 (a.k.a. *Bloody Girl*, *Fangs of the Living Dead*, *Malenka the Vampire*, and *Niece of the Vampire*), *Woman Times Seven* 1967, *Boccaccio '70* 1962, *Hollywood or Bust* 1956, *War and Peace* 1956, and *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* 1953. **ANOUK AIMÉE** (Françoise Sorya Dreyfus, 27 April 1932, Paris) appeared in about 70 films, but only one brought her international attention—*A Man and a Woman* 1966. She also appeared in *Prêt-à-Porter* 1994 and *Justine* 1969. **LEX BARKER** (Alexander Crichton Barker Jr. 8 May 1919, Rye, New York—11 May 1973, New York, New York, heart attack), a direct descendant of the founder of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, attended the Fessenden School and Phillips-Exeter

Academy, then went to Princeton but left to become an actor, for which his high society family disowned him. Barker played Tarzan five times, then became something of an international actor, playing in 50 films made in Brazil, Germany, Spain, Yugoslavia, Italy, Lebanon, and France, helped no doubt by his linguistic ability—he was said to speak French, Spanish, Italian and German. He enlisted in WWII as a private and mustered out as a major. **DESMOND O'GRADY** is an Irish poet perhaps most famous for the night he dove out of his Harvard window stark naked, his room afire, claiming to police that the IRA was clearly responsible; the police suggested smoking in bed as the more probable culprit; we have no idea how Desmond got into this movie.

Fellini said:

“For me, the artist is someone who is called by demons and must reply to this summons. Doing so he is cast into a kind of galaxy with which he has special, arcane relationships. The problem is to recognize the sounds, the colors, the signs that correspond to the voice that called him. Once this problem is resolved, he need do nothing except perform in extrasensory fashion. When I enter into this state of grace, it is not I who directs the film, but the film that directs me. A huge amount of sensitivity is always required: you have entered a city you don't know but in which you must move with the lightness of a vampire, without ideas, ideologies, preconceptions, if not without everything. This is like the prologue, the atrium, the anteroom of creativity; only afterward do your practical experience, your craftsmanship and professionalism come in; in other words, the hard work of making creativity materialize. An artist does not do what he wants, but what he can: this tension is what constitutes art.”

“I'm not fascinated by theater; I'm fascinated by all forms of spectacle, theater, circus, cinema itself. These all contain congenial elements; when I show the atmosphere of show business, I speak of myself because my life is a show. I am a man wholly devoted to spectacle; I am one of those who tells stories to others.”

“Often I mix languages to express the truth of a situation.”

“I try to love everything in life, not only what we usually consider proper, honest, charming. I always like to show both sides of a thing.”

“I invented a non-existent Via Veneto, enlarging and altering it with poetic license until it took on the dimensions of a large allegorical fresco.”

“Cinema is an art of illusion and sometimes the illusion must show its tail.”

“Certain forced vocations make the organism show irregularities. Obligatory chastity, like that of a nun, can well bring such hair to the face.”

“I don't want to see my old films; they are like diseases, the germs of my fantasy.”

“Realism is a bad word. In a sense everything is realistic. I see no line between the imaginary and the real.”

“Film is only images. You can put in whatever sound you want later and change and improve it.”

“*La Dolce Vita* was considered scandalous—all over the world! The police wanted to take my passport away; they wanted to kill me, to put me in prison.”

“The title of [*La Dolce Vita*] came to have a meaning exactly the opposite of what I intended. I told that story about Rome because I know Rome, but it could have taken place in Bangkok, Paris, Babylon, anywhere. The city is an internal city. I wanted the title to signify not “Easy Life” but “The Sweetness of Life.”

“Ekberg came from the North, she was young and as proud of her good health as a lioness. She was no trouble at all. She remained in the basin for ages, motionless, impassive, as if the water didn't cover her nor the cold affect her, even though it was March and the nights made one shiver. For Mastroianni it was rather a different story. He had to get undressed, put

on a frogman's suit and get dressed again. To combat the cold he polished off a bottle of vodka, and when we shot the scene he was completely pissed.... It took eight or nine nights. Some of the owners of the surrounding houses would rent out their balconies and windows to the curious. At the end of each take the crowd would cheer. A show within a show. Every time I look at the picture of Ekberg in the Trevi Fountain, I have the sensation of reliving those magic moments, those sleepless nights, surrounded by the meowing of cats and the crowd that gathered from every corner of the city.”

“We change our accounts of events continually so as not to bore ourselves.”

“It's absolutely impossible to improvise. Making a movie is a mathematical operation. It is like sending a missile to the moon. Art is a scientific operation. What we call improvisation is, in my case, just having an ear and an eye to things that occur during the time we are making the picture. The history of 4 months, 5 months of shooting is not only the private story of the director making the picture, it is also a story of a trip, of mutual relationships, of love, of enemies, of vanity. . . . If you see that the picture is suggesting something new, you have to be open to that kind of suggestion, because sometimes it is the *picture* that directs *you* when you work in an open and honest way. That is *not* improvisation, that is just being faithful to what you are doing.”

“All art is autobiographical. The pearl is the oyster's autobiography.”

Some books on Fellini we've found useful and interesting are Peter Bondanella, *The Cinema of Federico Fellini* (with a foreword by Fellini, Princeton 1992), Peter Bondanella, ed., *Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism* (Oxford 1978), Costanzo Costantini, ed., *Conversations with Fellini* (Harcourt Brace 1995), and Federico Fellini, *Fellini on Fellini* (Delta 1974). *Bright Lights Film Journal* has a four-part revealing interview with Fellini on-line beginning at www.brightlightsfilm.com/26/fellini1.html. For biographical information and all kinds of good links on Fellini and his films, visit www.geocities.com/Hollywood/9766/fellini.html.

Join us next week for Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in Mike Nichols' **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?**...for cast and crew info on almost any film: imdb.com/search.html or allmovie.com...for information on major American films, including detailed plot summaries: www.filmsite.org... email Bruce Jackson: bjackson@buffalo.edu...email Diane Christian: engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu...for the series schedule, links and updates: www.buffalofilmseminars.com... for the weekly email informational notes, send an email to either of us.

**THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS ARE PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
& THE MARKET ARCADE FILM & ARTS CENTRE**