



THE KING OF
LAUGHTER

INDIGO FILM and RAI CINEMA
present

The King of Laughter

{ a film by Mario Martone }

with

TONI SERVILLO

MARIA NAZIONALE, CRISTIANA DELL'ANNA, ANTONIA TRUPPO, EDUARDO SCARPETTA

ROBERTO DE FRANCESCO, LINO MUSELLA, PAOLO PIEROBON

with GIANFELICE IMPARATO and starring IAIA FORTE

an Italian and Spanish co-production

produced by

INDIGO FILM with RAI CINEMA

in co-production with TORNASOL

with the support of Regione Lazio Regional Fund for Cinema and audiovisual media



with the support of



with the support of







{ CREW }

DIRECTOR

Mario Martone

OUTLINE AND SCREENPLAY

Mario Martone
Ippolita di Majo

PHOTOGRAPHY

Renato Berta

EDITING

Jacopo Quadri

SCENOGRAPHY

Giancarlo Muselli
Carlo Rescigno

COSTUMES

Ursula Patzak

MAKE-UP

Alessandro D'Anna

HAIR

Marco Perna

with the collaboration of
Aldo Signoretti

SOUND

Alessandro Zanon

SOUND EDITING

Silvia Moraes

SOUND MIXING

Giancarlo Rutigliano

DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT

Luca Federico

CASTING

Raffaele Di Florio
Paola Rota

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Viola Prestieri
Giorgio Magliulo

PRODUCED BY

Nicola Giuliano
Francesca Cima
Carlotta Calori

CO-PRODUCED BY

Mariela Besuievsky

A CO-PRODUCTION FROM

Indigo Film con Rai Cinema

CO-PRODUCED WITH

Tornasol

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

Regione Lazio - Fondo Regionale per il
Cinema e l'Audiovisivo

WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF

Regione Campania e della
Film Commission Regione Campania

WITH SUPPORT OF

Icaa

DISTRIBUTION

O1 Distribution

INTERNATIONAL SALES

True Colours

Duration | 132'

Year | 2021

Nationality | Italian



{ CAST }

TONI SERVILLO | *Eduardo Scarpetta*
MARIA NAZIONALE | *Rosa De Filippo Scarpetta*
CRISTIANA DELL'ANNA | *Luisa De Filippo*
ANTONIA TRUPPO | *Adelina De Renzis*
EDUARDO SCARPETTA | *Vincenzo Scarpetta*
ROBERTO DE FRANCESCO | *Salvatore Di Giacomo*
LINO MUSELLA | *Benedetto Croce*
PAOLO PIEROBON | *Gabriele D'Annunzio*
GIOVANNI MAURIELLO | *Mirone*
CHIARA BAFFI | *Anna De Filippo detta Nennella*
ROBERTO CACCIOPPOLI | *Domenico Scarpetta detto Mimì*
LUCREZIA GUIDONE | *Irma Gramatica*
ELENA GHIAUROV | *Lyda Borelli*
GIGIO MORRA | *Presidente del Tribunale*

with

GIANFELICE IMPARATO | *Gennaro Pantalena*

and with

IAIA FORTE | *Rosa Gagliardi*

and introducing

GRETA ESPOSITO | *Maria Scarpetta*
ALESSANDRO MANNA | *Eduardo De Filippo*
MARZIA ONORATO | *Titina De Filippo*
SALVATORE BATTISTA | *Peppino De Filippo*
ALDO MINEI | *Eduardo De Filippo detto Eduardiello*

with the friendly participation of

TOMMASO BIANCO | *Zio Pasqualino*
BENEDETTO CASILLO | *Luca*
FRANCESCO DI LEVA | *Il fotografo*
GIOVANNI LUDENO | *Ferdinando Russo*
NELLO MASCIA | *Giudice Istruttore*



{ SYNOPSIS }

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the Naples of the Belle Époque, theaters and cinemas are on the rise. The great comedian Eduardo Scarpetta is the box-office king. Success made him a very rich man: from his humble origins, he established himself on the scene with his comedies and the mask and character of Felice Sciosciammocca, who managed to replace Pulcinella in the hearts of the Neapolitan audiences. The theater is his life, and his complex family core gravitates around the theater, with wives, companions, lovers, legitimate and illegitimate children including Titina, Eduardo and Pepino De Filippo. At the height of his success, Scarpetta allows himself what will prove to be a dangerous gamble. He decides to parody the play "The Daughter of Iorio", a tragedy by

the greatest Italian poet of the time, Gabriele D'Annunzio. On opening night, all hell breaks loose: the play is interrupted by screams, whistles and insults from the poets and playwrights of the new generation who cry out scandal, and Scarpetta ends up being sued for plagiarism by D'Annunzio himself. And so the first historic copyright lawsuit in Italy begins. The years of the trial will be exhausting for him and his whole family, so much so that the delicate balance that held it together seems on the verge of dissolving. Everything in Scarpetta's life seems to be going in pieces, but with a great actor's performance he'll manage to challenge a fate that wanted him a loser, and he'll win his last game.







{ DIRECTOR'S NOTES }

Throughout his whole life, the great Eduardo De Filippo refused to talk about Scarpetta as a father, but only as a playwright. When his brother Peppino portrayed him cold-heartedly in an autobiographical book, Eduardo stopped talking to him. He gave an interview to friend writer shortly before his death: "*We're old now, we should be able to talk about it, Scarpetta was a severe father or a bad father?*". His only answer remained this: "*He was a great actor*". Qui Rido io is the fictional novel about Eduardo Scarpetta and his tribe.

Mario Martone



{ HISTORICAL NOTES }

The year is 1896, only a few months have passed since in Paris, in the basement of the Salon Indien du Grand Café, the Lumière brothers made their invention known to the world. Now, in the Teatro Salone Margherita in Naples, a dazzling example of liberty architecture, they present what the Neapolitans will call 'o mbruoglio int'o lenzuolo, the "trick inside the sheet": Cinema. And right there, at Galleria Umberto, the first cinema theater in Italy will open its doors, followed by the first film production. It's no coincidence that the first female Italian director, Elvira Notari, is also a Neapolitan citizen. Fascinated by a lively city, teeming with ideas and a rich cultural life, the Lumières even chose to capture the bustling ferment and beauty of Naples in some extraordinary shots, including the film *Port et Vésuve*.

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the first years of the 1900's, much like Paris, Berlin and London, Naples is, in fact, a capital of modernity, a place where creativity seems to reign undisputed. In those years, Naples is the meeting place of Gabriele D'Annunzio - poet, writer, absolute protagonist of the political and cultural life of the time, the greatest exponent of Italian decadentism and fervent nationalist - and Benedetto Croce, the most authoritative Italian philosopher and historian and a staunch anti-fascist, but also for a large group of poets and playwrights including Salvatore Di Giacomo, Ferdinando Russo, Roberto Bracco, Raffaele Viviani. Oscar Wilde also found refuge in Naples and Capri after his prison sentence in Reading, just like Maksim Gorki and Lenin did.

The cultural vigor which the intellectuals of the time sparked is also testified by the birth of numerous magazines and newspapers including *Il Mattino* founded by Edoardo Scarfoglio and Matilde Serao, on which D'Annunzio himself writes, and the magazine *Napoli Nobilissima* by Benedetto Croce and Salvatore Di Giacomo. But perhaps, the verses turned into songs by Di Giacomo, Libero Bovio and Ernesto Murolo are the ones that forever made Naples immortal in the eyes of the world. Poetry becoming songs, verses morphed into melody. A veritable Neapolitan songbook came to life in those years, taking off and establishing itself all over the world.

Memorable, lively, courageous years, in which Eduardo Scarpetta stands out as the most successful theatrical author and actor. Born into a middle-class Neapolitan family, after the early death of his parents Scarpetta is forced to leave his studies and work: at fourteen years of age, he starts his career in the theater. His big break comes in 1870, when he finds great personal success with



the farce *Feliciello mariuolo de'na pizza*, where he plays a character that will remain inextricably tied to his fame: Felice Sciosciammocca. In those years he will also work alongside Antonio Petito, the famous *Pulcinella*, who'll support him by staging the first comedies written by Scarpetta who, at the young age of twenty-seven, with a large loan secured thanks to his extraordinary success, manages to take over the San Carlino Theater. From there, Scarpetta begins an actual reform of popular theater, that leads him to abolish subject acting and masks - the one of *Pulcinella* above all - and to pour care and devotion also into acting, make-up, and staging. Scarpetta understands that "people wanted to laugh", but in a different way. So he starts writing brilliant comedies inspired by *vaudeville* and the french *pochade*. However, these are not mere translations, but actual re-writings. He's the first to realize that, in addition to the "low people" represented by *Pulcinella*, there's a middle class, a bourgeoisie that, trying to mock the actual noble and failing to do so, can become the comic subject of the stage representation. Felice Sciosciammocca and his mask without a mask, embodies all of this, the "mama's boy, petty bourgeois, a bit dull, with ladylike quirks and bumbling speech... in his skimpy checkered suit, ballet shoes and narrow-brimmed sheath dress". Scarpetta also turns out to be a skilled theatrical impresario, to the point of hiring many of his most feared rivals to stage his masterpiece *Miseria e nobiltà* in 1888, followed by *'Na Santarella*, the peak of his success with one hundred and ten consecutive performances in Naples and more than one hundred representations throughout Italy. It's in this context that, from the pages of the city newspapers, a heated debate arises, questioning the value of Scarpetta's dramaturgy. A controversy that will last for years, and that in the first years of the twentieth century still sees Salvatore Di Giacomo and the group of writers of the Art Theater clamoring for the abandonment of farce in order to attempt a profound renewal of the Neapolitan dialect theater. So, in 1904 when after his parody of the D'Annunzio drama *La figlia di Iorio*, Scarpetta was brought to court and trialed for plagiarism and forgery, Di Giacomo took the side of the prosecution as an expert. Scarpetta finds himself isolated from the whole Neapolitan cultural world, with the only remarkable exception of Benedetto Croce who in turn, agrees to appear as a defense expert, thus also opposing D'Annunzio from whom he's separated by an irreconcilable ideological distance. Croce argues that Scarpetta's parody is neither plagiarism nor forgery: counterfeiting a work of art means appropriating the artistic effect of that work, but the works of D'Annunzio and Scarpetta had opposite aims: sadness on one hand, laughter on the other. Croce concludes by quoting Bergson: "*Parody is in art, because it's in*



life: next to the infinitely large, there's the infinitely small. It is no coincidence that someone defined the ridiculous as the sublime, but upside down". Croce's report ends up becoming case-law, speaking from that moment on on the freedom of parody and satire in Italy, while Scarpetta, after winning the case, retires from the stage. As for the real revolution wrought in Neapolitan dialect theater by Scarpetta, as suggested by Eduardo De Filippo, it perhaps took place mostly behind the scenes: it was the codification of a real technique of representation, the adoption of the written script, the care for costumes and sets, basically, the anticipation of modern theater direction. Founder of an extraordinary theatrical dynasty, Scarpetta was the father, among others, of Eduardo, Titina and Peppino De Filippo. Unrecognized children who bore their mother's last name but wanted on stage near him by their father since they were children. Eduardo De Filippo, actor, author and director of great fame, will confront tradition in a constant dialectical relationship between the face and the mask, which in his works will translate into a tragic kind of comedy, while Peppino De Filippo will choose to leave the family company to make his own way in cinema, where his personality will find its fullest and truest form. The extraordinary knot that held Eduardo Scarpetta's life and theater together finds perhaps its most accomplished representation in his masterpiece, *Miseria e Nobiltà*, masterfully interpreted years later by Totò, in which Scarpetta had specifically written the part of Peppiniello for his son Vincenzo. A part which was then portrayed by his other children Titina, Eduardo and eventually also by Peppino. A familiar and theatrical chain embodied in that child role, the son of a poor father, running away from home to earn his bread and willing to exchange father and mother in order to eat.



{ MARIO MARTONE }

Mario Martone is a director of theater, cinema and opera. He created the Falso Movimento theatrical company in the 1980's and then founded with Toni Servillo the Teatri Uniti company, through which he created his first independent films. Later, he became the director of Rome and Turin's theaters. He has made two films set in the nineteenth century that attracted millions of viewers, staged operas in some of the world's greatest theaters and continued to cross-breed artistic languages and experiment relentlessly. In 1999, he created the Teatro India in Rome. In 2018, the museo Madre in Naples dedicated a large personal exhibition to him. During the pandemic he adapted the *Barbiere di Siviglia* and the *Traviata* for television. He recently came back in front of a live audience with the staging Goliarda Sapienza's *Filo di mezzogiorno*.

{ FILMOGRAPHY }

2021 | Qui rido io (The King of Laughter)

2019 | Il Sindaco del rione Sanità (The Mayor of Rione Sanità)

2018 | Capri-Revolution

2014 | Il giovane favoloso (Leopardi)

2010 | Noi credevamo (We believed)

2004 | L'odore del sangue (The scent of blood)

1998 | Teatro di guerra (Rehearsals for war)

1997 | La salita (episode from the tv series I VESUVIANI)

1995 | L'amore molesto (Nasty Love)

1992 | Morte di un matematico napoletano (Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician)









{ MUSIC }

Musical selection curated by Mario Martone (a sentimental journey)

INDIFFERENTEMENTE

(U. Martucci / S. Mazzocco)
performed by Sergio Bruni

SCETATE

(M.P. Costa / F.Russo)
performed by Sergio Bruni

COMME FACETTE MAMMETA

(G. Capaldo, S. Gambardella)
performed by Sergio Bruni

BARCAROLA SUL LAGO OP.116

(Carlo Walter Graziani)
Public Domain

'E SPINGULE FRANGESE

(S. Di Giacomo, E. De Leva)
performed by Sergio Bruni

LA FIGLIA DI IORIO

(D'Annunzio / Pizzetti)
Act II "Che stie mutolo il patrono"

TARANTELLA

(M. D'Arienzo / L. Ricci)
performed by Nicola Attolico mandolino,
Domenica Attolico pianoforte dell'Orchestra
Giovanile La Bottega dell'Armonia - Bari

LU CARDILLO

(P. Labriola, E. Preite)
performed by Sergio Bruni

CHI VO' BENE A MARONN 'E L'ARC

Tradizionale
performed by Viviana & Serena Ebbanesis

'A PACCHIANELLA 'E UTTAIANO

(Capurro, Giannelli)
performed by Giulietta Sacco

CANZONE APPASSIUNATA

(E.A. Mario)
performed by Sergio Bruni

FORTUNELLA

(S. Gambardella / P. Cinquegrana)
Public Domain
performed by Antonio Siano, Andrea Espasiano,
Nunzio Ricci, Antonio Colica

ERA DE MAGGIO

(S. Di Giacomo, M. C. Costa)
Public Domain
performed by Antonio Siano, Andrea Espasiano,
Nunzio Ricci, Antonio Colica

DDUJE PARAVISE

(Parente / E. A. Mario)
Edizioni Leonardi
performed by Antonio Siano, Andrea Espasiano,
Nunzio Ricci, Antonio Colica

PUSILLECO ADDIRUSO

(S. Gambardella / E. Murolo)
Public Domain
performed by Antonio Siano, Andrea Espasiano,
Nunzio Ricci, Antonio Colica

VOCE 'E NOTTE

(De Curtis / Nicolardi)
performed by Roberto Murolo

LA GEISHA

(E. Scarpetta)
Public Domain
performed by Gianfelice Imparato e Rosetta Cucchi

CARMELA

(S. Bruni / S. Palomba)
performed by Sergio Bruni

BAMMENELLA

(Raffaele Viviani)
performed by Angela Luce

A' RISA

(B. Cantalamessa)
Public Domain
performed by Berardo Cantalamessa

Track direction and arrangements
performed on set by
Antonio Siano





Indigo Film is an independent production company founded by Nicola Giuliano, Francesca Cima and Carlotta Calori. Over the years, Indigo produced feature films, documentaries, TV series, diversifying its production with great attention to quality and the search for new authors and voices. Among the many film produced there's Paolo Sorrentino's *La Grande Bellezza* (*The Great Beauty*), winner of an Oscar®, a Golden Globe® and a Bafta Award for Best Foreign Film in 2014, and *Il Divo*, winner of the Prix du Jury at the Cannes Film Festival.



Tornasol is among the five most important Spanish production companies. Founded in 1987, it's based in Madrid and is mainly involved with movie production. In its thirty years of activity, Tornasol produced more than 140 films, receiving major awards including the Oscar for Best Foreign Film® (*The Secret of His Eyes* by Juan José Campanella), the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Festival (Ken Loach's *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*) the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival (*A Sad Trumpet Ballad* by Alex De la Iglesia).



Founded in 2002, Film Movement is a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films based in New York City. It has released more than 250 feature films and shorts culled from prestigious film festivals worldwide. Its catalog includes titles by directors such as Hirokazu Kore-eda, Maren Ade, Jessica Hausner, Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrzej Wajda, Diane Kurys, Ciro Guerra and Melanie Laurent. In 2015, Film Movement launched its reissue label Film Movement Classics, featuring new restorations released theatrically as well as on Blu-ray and DVD, including films by such noted directors as Eric Rohmer, Peter Greenaway, Bille August, Marleen Gorris, Takeshi Kitano, Arturo Ripstein, Sergio Corbucci and Ettore Scola. For more information, visit www.filmmovement.com.





GVI RDO 10
ROLL A
SCENE 26B-3
TAKE 1
DIRECTOR: M. MAETZKE
CAMERA: R. BEATR
DATE: 6-10-90

PRESS CONTACT

Michael Krause | Foundry Communications | (212) 586-7967 | mkrause@foundrycomm.com

FILM MOVEMENT BOOKING CONTACTS

Maxwell Wolkin | Theatrical | (212) 941-7744 x211 | maxwell@filmmovement.com

Erin Farrell | Non-Theatrical & Festival | (212) 941-7744 x206 | erin@filmmovement.com