

Film at Lincoln Center and
Istituto Luce Cinecittà Present

Ermanno Olmi

June 14-26



Film at
Lincoln
Center



Tickets: filmlinc.org

Ermanno Olmi is a key Italian filmmaker of his generation whose career spanned more than six decades. Updating the stylistic hallmarks of Italian neorealism to craft fiction films full of light and dignity, Olmi time and again portrayed the experience of work and family and expressed the churn of history with humor and grace. Known for his commitment to working with nonprofessional actors and to capturing the specific textures of the locations in which he filmed, Olmi, who started out as a self-taught documentarian, drew inspiration from his Catholic faith and from the social and cultural preoccupations of his native Lombardy region—personified by peasants in rural farming communities or by white-collar workers in the provincial capital of Milan. But Olmi, who passed away last year at age 86, was also always concerned with the political and economic systems underlying the social and physical environments in which his characters lived and dreamed. Join Film at Lincoln Center and the Istituto Luce Cinecittà in paying homage to this singular and sophisticated voice in Italian cinema.

Organized by Florence Almozini and Dan Sullivan of Film at Lincoln Center, and by Camilla Cormanni and Paola Ruggiero of Istituto Luce Cinecittà. Co-produced by Istituto Luce Cinecittà, Rome. Presented in association with the Ministry of Culture of Italy.



Photo by Kash Gabriele Torsetto



The Cardboard Village

Italy, 2011, 87m

At the age of 80, Olmi directed his penultimate fiction film, a striking parable about the defense of faith in a world posed to deny it. An old church is scheduled for demolition: the paintings have been taken off the walls, the sacred objects put away, and a giant, mechanical arm starts to take down the life-size crucifix that hangs over the altar. Yet despite seeing the destruction of a place in which he has devoted so much of his life, the old priest (Michael Lonsdale, in a beautiful performance) feels a certain joy, for stripped of all its decorations, the building has returned to its true nature as a meeting place for humanity and the Divine, where the poor and the desperate can find a haven. As so often in his work, Olmi starts with a philosophical or spiritual themes and then fashions a story that gives these themes a powerful, contemporary relevance.

Friday, June 21 8:45pm

Wednesday, June 26 2:00pm

The Circumstance

Italy, 1973, 35mm, 97m

The modernist tendencies that Olmi flirted with throughout the 1960s and '70s reached their most intense and abstract heights in this fractured family portrait. Told in an elliptical maze of flashbacks and jagged edits, *The Circumstance* charts the unraveling of a well-heeled Milanese family over the course of a fateful summer when, after witnessing a near-fatal motorcycle accident, the mother becomes obsessed with the young victim. Applying his keenly observant eye for social details to an upper-middle-class milieu, Olmi crafts a trenchant and empathetic look at the search for meaning amid the empty alienation bourgeois existence.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Monday, June 17 4:00pm

Wednesday, June 19 8:30pm



The Fiancés

Italy, 1963, 35mm, 77m

Olmi achieved early acclaim with his third feature, which Kent Jones called "by far his most beautiful foray into modernist territory, simply because it feels so homegrown." As if to bridge the gap from his prior film, *Il Posto*, Olmi opens with a dancehall sequence in which our doleful protagonist—factory worker Giovanni (Carlo Cabrini)—faces the weight of his choices. Giovanni has been offered a promotion, but it means relocating from Milan to far-off Sicily for 18 months and leaving behind his longtime fiancée Liliana (Anna Canzi). There he finds loneliness and isolation among the mainland transplants and anxiety over his future with Liliana. Melding Antonioni-esque alienation and essentially neorealist content (using nonprofessional actors), Olmi tenders a work both melancholy and lyrical.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Saturday, June 15 4:30pm

Tuesday, June 18 8:30pm

Sunday, June 23 7:30pm

Genesis: The Creation and the Flood

Italy, 1994, 35mm, 91m

In one of his most ravishingly sensuous works, Olmi imagines the biblical book of Genesis as a golden-hued visual tone poem. Shot in Morocco with a cast of local Bedouins, *Genesis: The Creation and the Flood* begins as an old man answers his curious grandson's questions by recounting to him the Christian story of creation, from the first day, to the tale of Adam and Eve, to the myth of the great flood. Worlds removed from the high-gloss spectacle of Hollywood's biblical epics, Olmi's vision is a meditative, lyrical expression of personal spirituality that finds transcendence in the beauty of the natural world.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Friday, June 21 2:00pm

Tuesday, June 25 8:30pm



Photo by Simone Falso - ITACA



Greenery Will Bloom Again

Italy, 2014, 80m

At the age of 83, Olmi turned his attention to the First World War. But instead of making a combat film, he chose to capture a single snowy night on the Italian front, as soldiers burrowed in trenches confront their loneliness and find pockets of hope where they can. With measured pacing and sparse dialogue, hypnotizing in its patient alertness and reminiscent of Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* in its ethereality and focus on inner thoughts, this haunting meditation features actual World War I footage and is dedicated to the director's father, who told Olmi tales of the war when he was a child.

DCP from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Thursday, June 20 4:00pm

Saturday, June 22 2:00pm

Il Posto

Italy, 1961, 35mm, 93m

As with the earlier Italian neorealists, Olmi generally opted to work with nonprofessional actors and frequently shot on location, but such strategies are here used to depict life during the era of rapid economic expansion following the postwar recovery. The film follows wide-eyed Domenico as he journeys to Milan to interview for his first job. There, he becomes smitten with a young woman, Antonietta, applying for a position at the same company. "For me," Olmi once remarked, "the cinema is a state of mind and a process of analysis from a series of detailed observations," and this attitude is very much at work in *Il Posto*, a tender yet unflinching look at the passage into adulthood and capitalist bureaucracy, with all its concomitant disappointments.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Friday, June 14 4:30pm

Wednesday, June 19 6:30pm

Friday, June 21 4:00pm



Photo by Adria Cecchi Gori/Tiger/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

In the Summertime

Italy, 1971, 35mm, 105m

Olmi took a turn into Chaplin-esque whimsy with this rarely screened tragicomic fable about an eccentric mapmaker with a most unusual hobby: conferring phony aristocratic titles, complete with custom-made coats of arms, upon ordinary people in whom he detects a certain nobility. It's a curious avocation that leads to both unexpected human connection and serious legal trouble when his lofty fantasies bump up against harsh reality. The closest Olmi came to pure comedy—delicate and bittersweet as it may be—*In the Summertime* achieves a touching poignancy thanks to the director's abiding affection for the good-hearted outsiders of the world.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Saturday, June 15 6:15pm

Tuesday, June 18 2:00pm

The Legend of the Holy Drinker

Italy/France, 1988, 35mm, 128m

The spiritual humanism that runs through Olmi's work reaches transcendent heights in this sublime adaptation of a novella by Austrian writer Joseph Roth. When a pious stranger bequeaths him 200 francs—with the caveat that he someday repay the debt in the form of an offering to Saint Therese—a homeless alcoholic (a transfixing Rutger Hauer) living under the bridges of Paris finds himself launched into a subtly surreal journey of the soul that takes him from the height of luxury to the depths of despair. Set to the music of Stravinsky and punctuated by hypnotic passages that unfold with the hushed intensity of a reverie, *The Legend of the Holy Drinker* confirmed Olmi's status as cinema's most sensitive chronicler of the downtrodden and dispossessed.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Sunday, June 16 8:00pm

Saturday, June 22 7:30pm



Long Live the Lady!

Italy, 1987, 35mm, 105m

Six young men and women are whisked away to a mysterious, heavily surveilled castle in the mountains where they are being employed as the hired help for a swanky soiree, an elaborate dinner party for a coterie of intellectual and cultural elites presided over by an ancient, unsmiling noblewoman. But as the bizarre, oddly funereal night progresses, the young charges begin to suspect there is something fishy going on—and it's not just the enormous, grotesque flounder being served as the centerpiece. A subversive, Buñuelian send-up of one of Olmi's recurring concerns—the conditioning of young people for the labor force—*Long Live the Lady!* is a rich and strange feast indeed.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Monday, June 17 8:15pm

Wednesday, June 19 2:00pm



A Man Named John

UK/Italy, 1965, 35mm, 90m

This unique biography of Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli—the son of humble Bergamo sharecroppers who would go on to become the much-loved and subsequently sainted Pope John XXIII—casts Rod Steiger as an “intermediary” between the man and the audience, narrating and sometimes reenacting the formative events of his life. Based on the diaries Roncalli kept during his teenage years, *A Man Named John* is less a conventional biopic than an awe-inspiring, deeply felt spiritual portrait that glows with the Catholic piety and belief in the extraordinary goodness of ordinary people so central to Olmi's worldview.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Sunday, June 23 2:00pm

Wednesday, June 26 4:00pm



Photo by Cinema S P A/Ital-Noleggio Cinematografico/
Koba/REX/Shutterstock



Photo by Cinemaundici/Koba/REX/Shutterstock

One Fine Day

Italy, 1968, 35mm, 105m

Olmi returned to the soulless corporate environs of *Il Posto* for this provocatively open-ended portrait of bourgeois moral breakdown. Unfolding in a series of fleeting flashbacks and impressions, the ironically titled *One Fine Day* takes place in the mind of a philandering, middle-aged advertising executive whose banal existence is upended by two sudden twists of fate—one that works seemingly to his advantage, the other a tragedy that leaves him questioning everything. Steadfastly refusing to pass judgment on his subject, Olmi creates a minutely sketched character study that exemplifies his mantra: “For me, the cinema is a state of mind and a process of analysis from a series of detailed observations.”

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Saturday, June 15 8:30pm

Tuesday, June 18 4:15pm

One Hundred Nails

Italy, 2007, 35mm, 92m

Conceived by Olmi as his final film (though he would ultimately go on to direct two more narrative features), this deceptively slight character study neatly summarizes the director's spiritual and humanist philosophies. Opening with a shocking crime—a twisted individual has driven stakes through 100 precious books at a university library—the film goes on to follow the perpetrator: a disillusioned religion scholar (Raz Degan) who flees the arid world of academia to rediscover himself amid the simple pleasures of the countryside. Awash in images of impressionist beauty, *One Hundred Nails* is a paean to that which Olmi loved most: the glory of the natural world and the goodness of everyday people.

Thursday, June 20 2:00pm

Wednesday, June 26 9:00pm



The Profession of Arms

World Premiere of a
New Digital Restoration
Italy, 2001, 105m

The Profession of Arms is Olmi's quietly shattering requiem for Giovanni de' Medici, the 16th-century military captain whose death signaled the end of an era in Italian history. Hired by the Pope to command an army of mercenary Italian soldiers against invading German forces, the fearless de' Medici leads his band of condottieri in a series of intense battles—until a cannon wound to the leg leaves him on the brink of death. With a meticulous attention to period detail, Olmi crafts a hushed and hallucinatory meditation on corporeal suffering, spiritual release, and the inhumanity of industrial warfare.

This restoration was completed in 2019 at the Istituto Luce-Cinecittà laboratories, by Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia - Cinoteca Nazionale and Istituto Luce-Cinecittà, from the original 35mm picture and Dolby Master audio. Laboratory work was supervised by director of photography Fabio Olmi. Sound restoration supervision by Federico Savina.

Sunday, June 16 5:30pm
Friday, June 21 6:30pm



The Scavengers

Italy, 1970, 35mm, 101m

Shot amid the scenic splendor of the Alps, this postwar-set pastoral follows the fortunes of a young soldier who returns from the front lines to his home village faced with no prospects. Desperate to earn a living, he joins forces with a boisterous, free-spirited old man who teaches him the ropes of a most dangerous line of work: salvaging undetonated bombs leftover from the war for scrap metal. A tender, rollicking portrait of intergenerational friendship shot with a documentarian's eye for naturalism, *The Scavengers* is an alternately lighthearted and serious variation on Olmi's key theme: the tension between the demands of labor and personal liberty.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Saturday, June 15 2:00pm
Monday, June 17 6:00pm



The Secret of the Old Woods

Italy, 1993, 35mm, 134m

Following the death of his uncle, a bull-headed army colonel (the beloved Italian character actor Paolo Villaggio) inherits a story-book mountain estate with the stipulation that he preserve, at all costs, the ancient woodlands adjoining it. When, despite the warnings of the townspeople, the stubborn military man proceeds with a plan to cut down the trees and sell the lumber, he awakens the spirits that dwell within the forest who fight to save their home. Gorgeously shot on location in the mist-shrouded, moonlit Dolomite mountains, this wondrous magical-realist fable is graced with a gentle animist spirit and an impassioned message of ecological stewardship.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Wednesday, June 26 6:15pm

Singing Behind Screens

Italy, 2003, 35mm, 98m

Stories within stories and plays within plays feature prominently in Olmi's late works, perhaps never more dazzlingly than in this rapturous blend of Chinese opera, high-seas adventure, and fairy tale. On a rain-soaked night, a timid young man mistakenly enters a Chinese brothel where he is mesmerized by a most amazing sight: an opulent stage production about the legend of a vengeful female pirate that shifts magically between layers of reality. A sensuous and surreal spectacle, *Singing Behind Screens* finds the director leaving his neo-realist roots behind once and for all in favor of sumptuous, fully transporative fantasy.

Wednesday, June 19 4:30pm

Tuesday, June 25 6:00pm



Time Stood Still

Italy, 1958, 35mm, 83m

Tasked by the Edison-Volta electric company with documenting the building of a hydroelectric dam, Olmi turned the project into his first narrative feature: a charmingly inventive human comedy bursting with the fresh exuberance of youth. In a snowbound shack in the Alps, a veteran dam worker—charged with overseeing the construction site while the rest of the crew is away for Christmas—has his solitude interrupted by the arrival of an unexpected roommate: a rock 'n' roll-mad young man with whom he gradually forms an unexpected bond. Imbuing the simple story with sincere humanity, Olmi finds common ground in the gulf between generations.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Friday, June 14 2:30pm
Tuesday, June 18 6:30pm



The Tree of Wooden Clogs

Italy, 1978, 186m

Olmi's Palme d'Or-winning masterpiece is an epic, ennobling portrait of four families living and working on a wealthy landowner's estate in 19th-century Lombardy. From an accumulation of richly observed details, the director builds a work of monumental majesty that vividly portrays the peasants' hardships, celebrations, beliefs, relationships to the land and animals, and, above all, the rhythms and rituals of their work, at once backbreaking but honest in its purity. Balancing an almost documentary-like commitment to realism with a poetic feeling for landscape, *The Tree of Wooden Clogs* overflows with love and concern for its common heroes.

Friday, June 14 6:30pm
Sunday, June 16 2:00pm
Saturday, June 22 4:00pm



Walking, Walking

Italy, 1983, 35mm, 171m

Five years after the international success of *The Tree of Wooden Clogs*, Olmi returned with another neorealist historical epic, this one a sprawling retelling of the biblical story of the Magi. Opening in contemporary Italy as a village prepares for a celebratory reenactment of the wise men's journey, the film magically transforms pageant into "reality," following the three kings and a caravan of believers on their arduous pilgrimage to Bethlehem, their courage and faith tested every step of the way. Forgoing preachy piousness in favor of probing philosophical inquiry and earthy realism, Olmi crafts a provocative, uniquely elemental spiritual odyssey.

35mm print from Istituto Luce Cinecittà.

Sunday, June 23 4:00pm

Tuesday, June 25 2:30pm

ERMANNOLMI SCHEDULE

All screenings take place at the
Walter Reade Theater

FRI June 14

2:30 Time Stood Still

4:30 Il Posto

6:30 The Tree of Wooden Clogs

SAT June 15

2:00 The Scavengers

4:30 The Fiancés

6:15 In the Summertime

8:30 One Fine Day

SUN June 16

2:00 The Tree of Wooden Clogs

5:30 The Profession of Arms

8:00 The Legend of
the Holy Drinker

MON June 17

4:00 The Circumstance

6:00 The Scavengers

8:15 Long Live the Lady!

TUE June 18

2:00 In the Summertime

4:15 One Fine Day

6:30 Time Stood Still

8:30 The Fiancés

WED June 19

2:00 Long Live the Lady!

4:30 Singing Behind Screens

6:30 Il Posto

8:30 The Circumstance

THU June 20

2:00 One Hundred Nails

4:00 Greenery Will Bloom Again

"One of the last of the great filmmakers of the '60s . . .
An absolutely individual artist." –MARTIN SCORSESE

FRI June 21

2:00 Genesis: The Creation
and The Flood
4:00 Il Posto
6:30 The Profession of Arms
8:45 The Cardboard Village

SAT June 22

2:00 Greenery Will Bloom Again
4:00 The Tree of Wooden Clogs
7:30 The Legend of
the Holy Drinker

SUN June 23

2:00 A Man Named John
4:00 Walking, Walking
7:30 The Fiancés

MON June 24

No screenings

TUE June 25

2:30 Walking, Walking
6:00 Singing Behind Screens
8:30 Genesis: The Creation
and The Flood

WED June 26

2:00 The Cardboard Village
4:00 A Man Named John
6:15 The Secret of the Old Woods
9:00 One Hundred Nails

Tickets

\$10 Members
\$12 Students, Seniors, and
Persons with Disabilities
\$15 General Public

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This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Images: (this page) *The Secret of the Old Woods*; (cover) *The Legend of the Holy Drinker*, photo by Aura/Cecchi Gori/Tiger/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center
144 West 65th Street, New York, NY

Walter Reade Theater
165 West 65th Street, New York, NY