

SAN FRANCISCO FILM SOCIETY™

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 22, 2008

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NEW ITALIAN CINEMA RETURNS FOR 12TH TRIUMPHANT YEAR IN SAN FRANCISCO AT LANDMARK'S EMBARCADERO CENTER CINEMA, NOVEMBER 16–23

**Eight-Day Series Features In-Person Tribute to Paolo Virzì, Seven Premieres from Emerging Italian Filmmakers,
North American Premiere of *Puccini and the Girl* and Matteo Garrone's Cannes Grand Prize Winner *Gomorrah***

San Francisco, CA – The San Francisco Film Society, New Italian Cinema Events of Florence, Italy and the Italian Cultural Institute of San Francisco present **New Italian Cinema, November 16–23** at **Landmark's Embarcadero Center Cinema**. This eight-day festival is dedicated to celebrating the rich cinematic tradition of Italy and bringing to Bay Area audiences the directors and films that are driving the recent resurgence in Italian filmmaking. The core of New Italian Cinema is the competitive section with seven films by emerging directors, bookended by a three-film tribute to Tuscan director Paolo Virzì, one of Italy's most socially concerned filmmakers, and the Closing Night screenings of two risk-taking films, *Puccini and the Girl* and *Gomorrah*.

“As Italian films enter a new renaissance, the 2008 New Italian Cinema festival offers a significant lineup of recent works by up-and-coming directors,” said Film Society programmer Rod Armstrong. “This year's edition covers issues of immigration, aging, friendship, murder and how to make great chocolate. Our Opening and Closing Night films, including Cannes Grand Prize Winner *Gomorrah*, give notable historical context to life in Italy, ranging from the 18th century to the present.”

The New Italian Cinema Events (NICE) organization in Florence—working with selection committee members Linda Blackaby, director of programming for the Film Society; journalists Deborah Young and Barbara Corsi; and Peter Scarlet, executive director of the Tribeca Film Festival—chose the films to present in the 2008 New Italian Cinema competition. Most filmmakers are expected at the Embarcadero for Q&As with the audiences. The NICE City of Florence Award will be decided by the combined audience ballots from San Francisco and New York and announced at the Closing Night Award presentation following the 5:15 pm screening of *Puccini and the Girl* on Sunday, November 23.

Sunday, November 16 Opening Night Director in Person San Francisco Bay Area Premiere

6:00 pm *Napoleon (and Me) (N (Io e Napoleone)*

Paolo Virzì, 2006

On the isle of Elba in 1814, the exiled Napoleon (Daniel Auteuil) finds himself welcomed by most of the residents. Not so easily swayed is an idealistic and obsessive young teacher named Martino (Elio Germano) who sees his chance to assassinate the ex-dictator when he is hired as Napoleon's secretary. Complicating matters is the comely Baroness Emilia (Monica Bellucci), who is involved with the young scribe. Amid intellectual parrying and romantic pairing, the question of who is manipulating whom constantly shifts. Rooted in the tradition of *commedia all'italiana* and aided by terrific performances in

lead and supporting roles, *Napoleon (and Me)* effortlessly combines comedy and historical drama with an effervescent touch.

Written by Furio Scarpelli, Giacomo Scarpelli, Francesco Bruni, Paolo Virzi. Photographed by Alessandro Pesci. With Daniel Auteuil, Elio Germano, Monica Bellucci, Sabrina Impacciatore. 110 min.

8:00 pm Opening Night Reception with Paolo Virzi

Complimentary Peroni beer, Italian wine from Siena Imports and appetizers from Fuzio Universal Bistro at One Embarcadero Center, Lobby Level (former Gallery One space).

9:00 pm *Napoleon (and Me)* see above

Monday, November 17 Paolo Virzi Tribute

Before winning over international audiences with *Caterina in the Big City*, Paolo Virzi stunned and delighted Italian filmgoers with his work. This is a rare opportunity to see two early Virzi films on the big screen: the Venice Festival Grand Jury Prize winner *Hardboiled Egg* (1997) and Virzi's directorial debut *Living It Up* (1994).

6:15 pm *Hardboiled Egg (Ovosodo)*

Set in the city of Livorno (the filmmaker's hometown), this is the coming-of-age story of Piero, nicknamed "Ovosodo" after the part of town where he lives. Deftly weaving lighthearted comedy with indelible moments of social realism, Virzi portrays Piero's hardscrabble life at home with his mentally retarded brother, his easily annoyed stepmother and his criminally inclined father. Amid familial difficulties, school crushes and new friendships, a kindly teacher named Giovanna (Nicoletta Braschi) helps Piero find his way. With heartbreaking observations and rib-tickling vignettes, Virzi has created a pitch-perfect tale of male adolescence. Written by Francesco Bruni, Paolo Virzi, Furio Scarpelli. Photographed by Italo Petriccione. With Nicoletta Braschi, Edoardo Gabbriellini, Regina Orioli, Malcom Lunghi. 99 min.

9:00 pm *Living It Up (La bella vita)*

The Tuscan coastal town of Piombino is the setting for Virzi's nuanced story of economic and marital hardships among the working class. A supermarket checkout girl named Mirella (Sabrina Ferilli) marries a steelworker named Bruno (Claudio Bigagli) during a prosperous period for Italy in the late 1980s. When the economy goes into a downturn, Bruno is laid off and, seeking new pastures, Mirella takes up with a television presenter. Through reconciliations and new liaisons, Virzi's directorial debut focuses on the attachment between the two as they negotiate their way in a changing world. Written by Paolo Virzi, Francesco Bruni. Photographed by Paolo Carnera. With Claudio Bigagli, Sabrina Ferilli, Massimo Ghini, Giorgio Algranti. 97 min.

Tuesday, November 18 City of Florence Award Competition Films

6:15 pm *The Girl by the Lake (La ragazza del lago)* San Francisco Bay Area Premiere

Andrea Molaioli, 2007

In a small town in the Italian Dolomites, the body of a lovely young woman named Anna is found by the side of a lake. Though there are no signs of assault or struggle, Inspector Giovanni Sanzio (Toni Servillo) determines that she has been murdered and sets about uncovering the motive and culprit. As he investigates, he questions Anna's ex-boyfriend, her father and even the village simpleton. Meanwhile, the meticulous detective deals with some issues at home, including a precocious teenage daughter and a wife with Alzheimer's. Picking up an astounding ten David di Donatello Awards (Italy's version of the Oscars), Molaioli's debut feature is a scintillating whodunit shot in a spectacular locale. Written by Sandro Petraglia. Photographed by Ramiro Civita. With Toni Servillo, Valeria Golino, Fabrizio Gifuni, Marco Baliani. 95 min.

Preceded on November 18 only by director Francesco Sperandeo's *Bab al Samah* (2008). A Tunisian man's search for redemption leads him on a cathartic journey. 15 min.

9:00 pm *Lessons in Chocolate (Lezioni di cioccolato)* North American Premiere

Claudio Cupellini, 2007

A ruthless Perugian businessman gets his comeuppance in this delectable romantic comedy starring Italian model Luca Argentero. He plays Mattia, a cost-cutting contractor who is being blackmailed by his injured employee, an Egyptian named Kamal (Hassani Shapi). At fault for the mishap, Mattia is forced to attend a chocolate cooking class in Kamal's name. When he catches the eye of fellow chef Cecilia (Violante Placido), he takes advantage of being mistaken for the put-upon, hardworking immigrant, and various amusing situations ensue as his imposture is in danger of being revealed. Cupellini's debut feature offers an extremely entertaining romp with a delicious chocolate center. Written by Fabio Bonifacci, Christian Poli. Photographed by Giovanni Cavallini. With Luca Argentero, Violante Placido, Neri Marcorè, Hassani Shapi. 98 min.

Wednesday, November 19 City of Florence Award Competition Films

6:15 pm *Cover Boy: The Last Revolution (Cover boy: L'ultima rivoluzione)*

Carmine Amoroso, 2007

A nuanced drama about the exploitation of immigrants and their labor, this film offers a memorable performance by newcomer Eduard Gabia in the lead role. He plays Ioan, a handsome Romanian immigrant endeavoring to escape Ceaucescu's depredations by heading to Rome with a friend. Once there, he scrambles to find an under-the-table job and is befriended by an older janitor with whom he discusses opening a restaurant. When a pretty photographer spots him on the street and whisks him off to Milan to model, the attractions of fame and fortune begin to tempt him. The film compellingly portrays Ioan's moral quandaries and his endeavor to retain his humanity amid a callous society. Written by Carmine Amoroso, Filippo Ascione. Photographed by Paolo Ferrari. With Eduard Gabia, Luca Lionello, Chiara Caselli, Francesco Dominedo. 97 min.

9:00 pm *A Night (Una notte)* North American Premiere

Toni d'Angelo, 2007

This affecting, personal drama revolves around five friends and a philosophical cabbie who traverse the nighttime haunts of Naples after a friend's funeral. After the service, refusing to call it a night, the former pals variously splinter and reform as they hit a restaurant, a nightclub, a late-night party, the beach and a bar. Conversational topics include life in the city, soccer, drinking and drugs and, of course, women and love. Romantic liaisons begin and personal confessions are made. Throughout, writer/director d'Angelo showcases the glories of Naples in the wee hours while revealing an ear finely tuned to the random discussions about life that take place between people who were once great friends. Written by Toni d'Angelo, Salvatore Sansone. Photographed by Rocco Marra. With Nino d'Angelo, Riccardo Zinna, Luigi Iacuzio, Alfonso Postiglione. 91 min.

Thursday, November 20 City of Florence Award Competition Films

6:15 pm *Lessons in Chocolate* (see November 18)

9:00 pm *The Girl by the Lake* (see November 18)

Friday, November 21 City of Florence Award Competition Films

6:30 pm *The Rest of the Night (Il resto della notte)* San Francisco Bay Area Premiere

Francesco Munzi, 2008

This suspenseful drama follows two trajectories—one profiling an unhappy middle-class Italian family and the other focusing on two small-time hoodlums, one of whom is a recent immigrant. When the two stories converge during a harrowing burglary, the thematic issues of contemporary malaise and xenophobia come to a deadly result. Munzi, who moved New Italian Cinema audiences in 2005 with his first film *Saimir*, has crafted a complexly realized work where perspective and alliances constantly shift and misguided adults pass their suffering on to the children they love. Written by Francesco Munzi. Photographed by Vladan Radovic. With Sandra Ceccarelli, Aurélien Recoing, Stefano Cassetti, Laura Vasiliu. 101 min.

9:15 pm *Black Sea (Mar nero)* North American Premiere

Federico Bondi, 2008

This moving drama tells the story of elderly and somewhat bitter widow Gemma (Ilaria Occhini) and her young Romanian caretaker, Angela (Dorothea Petre). Though fraught at first, the relationship between the two lonely women develops and they come to depend on one another. When Angela's husband goes missing in Romania, Gemma must decide how far the bonds of loyalty go and the distance she is prepared to travel in order to help her friend. Bondi's first feature precisely and interestingly delineates the differences between his two protagonists and touchingly shows how each crosses divides of age and culture in the name of friendship. Written by Federico Bondi, Ugo Chiti. Photographed by Gigi Martinucci. With Ilaria Occhini, Dorothea Petre, Vlad Ivanov, Maia Morgenstern. 95 min.

Saturday, November 22 City of Florence Award Competition Films

1:45 pm *The Rest of the Night* (see November 21)

4:30 pm *A Night* (see November 19)

7:00 pm *Black Sea* (see November 21)

9:45 pm *Don't Waste Your Time Johnny! (Lascia perdere Johnny!)* North American Premiere

Fabrizio Bentivoglio, 2007

Suffused with a gentle humanism, this touching film follows the exploits of an aspiring teenage guitar player living in mid-1970s Caserta. When Milanese master pianist Augusto Riverberi (played by the director) comes to town, young Fausto (Antimo Merolillo) is hired to help him out. Though the musician is arrogant and selfish, the opportunities presented by the job may just give the hopeful strummer the break he longs for. With wonderful supporting performances by Lina Sastri as Fausto's mom, Valeria Golino as a lovely beautician and Ernesto Mahieux as an incompetent music manager, Bentivoglio has crafted a lovingly quirky comedy filled with touching moments and beguiling era-specific clothing and settings. Written by Umberto Contarello, Filippo Gravino, Guido Iuculano, Fabrizio Bentivoglio, Valia Santella. Photographed by Luca Bigazzi. With Valeria Golino, Toni Servillo, Antimo Merolillo, Ernesto Mahieux. 104 min.

Sunday, November 23

12 noon *Don't Waste Your Time Johnny!* (see November 22)

2:30 pm *Cover Boy: The Last Revolution* (see November 19)

5:15 pm *Puccini and the Girl (Puccini e la fanciulla)* Closing Night North American Premiere

Paolo Benvenuti, Paola Baroni, 2008

Visionary filmmaker Paolo Benvenuti, collaborating here with his wife Paola Baroni, fascinatingly employs elements of pure cinema in this historical depiction of musical maestro Puccini and his possible extramarital dalliance with a housemaid. In

1909, the great composer is working on *La fanciulla del West* in his Tuscan villa in Torre del Lago when whispers start circulating—by the musician’s stepdaughter—of his supposed inappropriate behavior. As the story unfolds, all dialogue is heard in muffled tones or through letters read in voiceover as visual representation and musical moments take center stage. Based on recently discovered historical material and employing actual footage of Puccini from 1915, this film richly and indelibly reinvents the musical biopic. Written by Paola Baroni, Paolo Benvenuti. Photographed by Giovanni Battista Marras. With Tania Squillario, Riccardo J. Moretti, Giovanna Daddi, Debora Mattiello. 84 min.

7:30 pm Closing Night Reception

Complimentary Peroni beer, Italian wine from Siena Imports and appetizers from Fuzio Universal Bistro at One Embarcadero Center, Lobby Level (former Gallery One space).

8:45 pm *Gomorrah (Gomorra)* Closing Night San Francisco Bay Area Premiere

Matteo Garrone, 2008

Hard-hitting, complex and filmed in a fluid fly-on-the-wall style, Garrone’s Cannes Grand Prize winner, adapted from Roberto Saviano’s controversial award-winning book, examines in vivid detail the organized crime syndicate known as the Camorra. Focusing on the power its members wield in a northern suburb of Naples and their influence on occupations from dressmaking to waste disposal, this hyper-realistic drama pointedly demonstrates the organization’s ability to destroy familial bonds as well as individual lives. Far from the glamorized portrait of the Mafia common in American films, *Gomorrah* is grim, gritty, almost documentary-like cinema—an exposé of widespread corruption and an impassioned demand that something be done to halt its spread. Written by Maurizio Braucci, Ugo Chiti, Gianni di Gregorio, Matteo Garrone, Massimo Gaudioso, Roberto Saviano. Photographed by Marco Onorato. With Toni Servillo, Gianfelice Imparato, Maria Nazionale, Salvatore Cantalupo. 135 min. Distributed by IFC Films.

Film tickets \$10 year-round SFFS/IIC members, \$12.50 general, \$11 seniors, students and persons with disabilities; CineVoucher 10-Packs \$90 SFFS/IIC members, \$115 general; Opening Night film and reception \$15 SFFS/IIC members, \$20 general; one Closing Night film and reception \$15 SFFS/IIC members, \$20 general; both Closing Night films and reception \$25 SFFS/IIC members, \$32.50 general. Tickets available online at www.sffs.org or by calling 925.866.9559. Open October 21 for SFFS/IIC members and October 28 for the general public.

Full schedule and information: www.sffs.org.

For screeners and interviews contact Hilary Hart at 415.561.5022 or publicity@sffs.org.

For photos and press materials visit: <http://download.sffs.org/press/>.

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The San Francisco Film Society, presenter of the 52nd San Francisco International Film Festival (April 23–May 7, 2009), is a nonprofit arts and education organization dedicated to celebrating international film and the moving image.

This release is available at www.sffs.org/press.

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