

FILM



“Cinema Piemonte”

► **PREVIEW** The northwestern Italian region of Piemonte is noted for production of wine, wheat, and Fiats. Its principal city, Turin, a.k.a. Torino, was briefly the nation's capital after unification — and soon afterward became the focus of its early film industry as well. While both crowns were eventually stolen by Rome, the area maintained a role in Italian cinema through the decades. That history is sampled in this weekend of features set in Piemonte, presented by the Associazione Piemontesi of Northern California in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute and Regione Piemonte. The four programs run a wide gamut, not least because they span 90 years between them. The closer on Sunday should be a major occasion: a restored print of Giovanni Pastrone's 1914 *Cabiria*, the apex of the lavish costume epics that dominated Turin's industry and proved a huge influence on the likes of D.W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille. This three-hour tale of ancient Rome will be accompanied live by pianist Stefano Maccagno, playing his original score. Another big international hit was 1949's *Bitter Rise*, a heady brew of neorealism and noir melodrama that made Silvana Mangano — at the time a very well-developed 19 years old — into the first postwar Euro bombshell. Packed into tight clothes as a scheming peasant rice harvester, she seemed the very embodiment of wanton s-e-x years before Bardot, Monroe, and Loren came along. Mario Monicelli's 1963 *I Compagni*, a.k.a. *The Organizer*, is a somewhat more serious labor drama, with Marcello Mastroianni, superb as usual, portraying a professor agitating for improved textile worker conditions at the dawn of the 20th century. Opening the weekend, and serving as its lightest note, is Davide Ferrario's *Dopo Mezzanotte* (After Midnight, 2004), a whimsical romantic comedy set in Turin's Mole Antonelliana — a beautiful 19th-century structure that happens to house Italy's National Museum of Film. **(Dennis Harvey)**

CINEMA PIEMONTE Fri/29, 7 p.m.; Sat/1, 4 and 7:30 p.m.; Sun/2, 4 p.m., free

Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center, Marina at Laguna, SF

www.piemontesinoca.com, www.fortmason.org