

THE HARVARD FILM ARCHIVE PRESENTS
Vittorio De Sica – Neo-realism, Melodrama, Fantasy

The Harvard Film Archive is pleased to present a series of films by the legendary Italian director Vittorio De Sica: **VITTORIO DE SICA – NEO-REALISM, MELODRAMA, FANTASY, running JUNE 5 – JUNE 14.** The series will include such classics as *The Bicycle Thieves*, *Shoeshine* and *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* as well as more rarely screened, but equally stunning films *Miracle in Milan*, *Terminal Station* and *After the Fox*, starring Peter Sellers and Britt Ekland.

About the Series:

One of the most influential and talented directors of the postwar Italian cinema, Vittorio De Sica (1902-1974) is credited as a progenitor of the neorealist movement that radically reshaped the cinematic landscape in Europe and beyond. De Sica's early films defined the quintessence of neo-realism by transforming their necessarily small budgets into an aesthetic creed, a commitment to working with non-professional actors, shooting on location using available lighting, and encouraging intense character exploration and improvisation. Guided by the intelligent and rigorously structured screenplays of his frequent and most important collaborator, Cesar Zavattini, De Sica's major films — *The Children Are Watching Us*, *Shoeshine*, *Miracle in Milan* and, of course *Umberto D.* and *The Bicycle Thieves* — are preoccupied with urgent social and political topics facing postwar Italy — poverty and the hardscrabble life of the streets, intergenerational estrangement, and the sense of general moral decay and vacuity cast by the dark shadow of the Fascist regime.

De Sica's extraordinary rapport with actors grew from his own career as a popular matinee idol and star of sophisticated comedies in the 1930s, a background which also informed the glamorous sheen and light comic touches which became increasingly prominent in his cinema. Compared to the meteoric critical and popular success of his early films, De Sica's work in the 1960s was less favorably received until the comeback marked by *The*



Shoeshine (Sciuscia)

Garden of the Finzi-Continis. Although De Sica is celebrated today as one of the great Italian directors, important major works featured in this selective retrospective such as *Miracle in Milan*, *Shoeshine* and *The Gold of Naples* remain all too rarely seen.

Special thanks: Jen Alpert; Liborio Stellino, Consul General of Italy in Boston.

VITTORIO DE SICA SCREENING SCHEDULE:

Shoeshine (Sciuscia)
 Saturday June 5 at 7pm &
 Sunday June 6 at 9pm
 De Sica's heart-wrenching portrait of two impoverished shoeshine boys uses the ever-present Allied soldiers and bombed ruins as a constant reminder of the still reverberating devastation of war. De Sica and Zavattini's interest in symbols and, increasingly, fantasy, is legible in the figure of the horse that becomes the boys' sole source of happiness and, almost simultaneously, despair. Rarely screened today, *Shoeshine* stands with Bunuel's *Los Oliviados* as one of the great films about children.

Italy 1946, b/w, 93 min. Italian with English subtitles

The Gold of Naples (L'oro di Napoli)
 Saturday June 5 at 9pm

In this delightful episodic comedy about Naples, De Sica pays tribute to the city where he spent his childhood. Loosely structured around four short vignettes and featuring some of Italian cinema's biggest stars — including De Sica as an upper-class gambler — this anthology showcases the

lyric beauty of Naples and De Sica's evident love for its people and places while subtly plumbing the depths of the human heart.

Italy 1954, b/w, 107 min. Italian with English subtitles.

The Children Are Watching Us (I bambini ci guardano)
 Sunday June 6 at 7pm

A searing portrayal of familial disintegration vividly told from the perspective of a five-year-old abandoned by his mother, De Sica's proto-neorealist masterpiece foregrounds a thematic concern that recurs throughout his oeuvre — the troubled distance between children and adults as an echo of a dysfunctional society destabilized by fascism and war. As a vital witness to the callousness and ingratitude pervasive throughout society, the young boy's struggle to ascribe moral values to the world offers both an indictment and an ambiguous vision of hope.

Italy 1943, b/w, 85 min. Italian with English subtitles.

The Garden of the Finzi-Continis
 Monday June 7 at 7pm

The story of a wealthy Jewish family willfully shut off from the rest of the world and in reckless denial of fascism's hold on the Italian people, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* is narrated by Giorgio, a frequent guest of the family and the only one who foresees the impending and unstoppable forces that will shatter their cloistered world. Combining luminous flashbacks with the present, the film's structure resembles De Sica's own comeback: the once great director who was written off in the 1960's re-emerges out of the past with this late, luxuriant masterpiece.

Italy 1970, 93 min. Italian with English subtitles

Miracle in Milan (Miracolo a Milano)
 Friday June 11 at 7pm and
 Sunday June 13 at 9pm

An offbeat and entrancing entry in De Sica's neorealist canon, *Miracle in Milan* is an extraordinary fable that bends towards magic realism to imagine a place where society's most down-trodden can find purchase and possible escape from misery. Set within a fantas-



FINAL 24 — A DRAMATIZATION (DVD)
 MVDvisual

Final 24 is a fresh and revealing alternative biography series that unlocks the hidden secrets, psychological flaws and trigger events that led to the tragic deaths of eight global icons. Each episode maps out the final 24 hours of a different celebrity's life. Weaving in and out of this central narrative is the celebrity's backstory, which lays bare the threads of fate that led inextricably from childhood to the moment of death. Telling interviews with loved ones and confidantes combined with high-end dramatic reenactments and archival material, illuminate these compelling life (and death) stories.

NICOLE BROWN SIMPSON: June 12, 1994. Vibrant, funny, and beautiful, Nicole Brown Simpson appears to have it all. With loads of money, a great body, and two adorable children, the ex-wife of football legend O.J. Simpson is living the Hollywood dream. In 24 hours, however, the dream will be brutally shattered. Nicole will be dead, and her ex-husband will stand accused in the murder trial of the century.

VERSACE: It's July 14th, 1997 and Gianni Versace, probably the most famous fashion designer in the world is kicking back at his Florida mansion. In just 24 hours he will be dead. With exclusive interviews with his intimates, combined with archive and dramatic re-construction, *Final 24* maps out Versace's last day alive, and the dramatic events that led to his brutal murder at the hands of a serial killer. (1 hr.)

THE BEST OF ELMO 2 (DVD)
 Warner Home Video-Sesame Workshop

Join everyone's favorite red monster for a fun-filled story featuring some of the most popular Elmo segments ever! Elmo meets a robot on Sesame Street who is losing his power. The robot is a "Memorybot," and he needs "memories" to power up again. Elmo gladly shares his memories of special times with his friends — singing about the outdoors with Jason Mraz, rhyming with Adam Sandler, reciting the alphabet with Indie. Arie, and counting to for with Feist. Elmo remembers even more fun with Destiny's Child, David Beckham, and The Goo Goo Dolls. Will Memorybot get his power back? Every Elmo fan, young and old, will enjoy this story of friendship and treasure this collection. (49 mins.)

ROBIN HOOD COLLECTION (DVD)
 Sony Pictures Home Ent.

Sony Pictures Home Entertainment debuts four classic tales featuring the legendary swashbuckler Robin Hood, the legendary bandit who steals from the rich to give to the poor. **The Bandit of Sherwood Forest** (1946) stars Academy Award nominee Cornel Wilde as the son of Robin Hood following in his father's footsteps;

Prince of Thieves (1948) with Jon Hall wearing the green tri-cornered hat and tights; **Rogues of Sherwood Forest** (1950) has John Derek as Robin's son; and **Sword of Sherwood Forest** (1960) has Richard Greene reprising his role for Hammer Films from the long-running TV series. Four swash-buckling adventures of Robin Hood, England's most fabled hero. (Each classic approx. 76 mins.)

18 KIDS AND COUNTING: SEASON 3 (3-DVD)
 TLC

TLC's hit television series *18 Kids & Counting*, has viewers following the daily lives of the Duggars, a 20-member family from a small town in Arkansas who have become a pop culture sensation and have all of America talking. The Duggars aren't your average family, as high school sweethearts Jim Bob and Michelle firmly believe each child is a gift that should be cherished. With only two sets of twins among the 18 children, each with a name starting with the letter "J," and Michelle has been pregnant a dozen years of her life. Join them in road trips, birthday parties, camping trips, hockey games and farm visits. Three discs and 26 total episodes. (10 hrs.)

THE ROLLING STONES: RARE AND UNSEEN (DVD)
 MVDvisual

Rare and Unseen, takes an inside look at the sheer audacity of the band that took RnB and made it into mainstream rock: The Rolling Stones. From smalltime band to megastar rockers, The Stones have certainly had a major impact in the music world. They played, they recorded and they conquered the planet for five decades. This new DVD release is a collection of rare footage you won't find elsewhere! Features original rare film and videos of the band, newsreels and photographs from private collections. While this DVD does not contain any Rolling Stones performances or music, it does include interviews featuring Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Bill Wyman, Charlie Watts, and discussions about Rock'n'Roll, tours and nostalgia. (1 hr. 4 mins.)

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