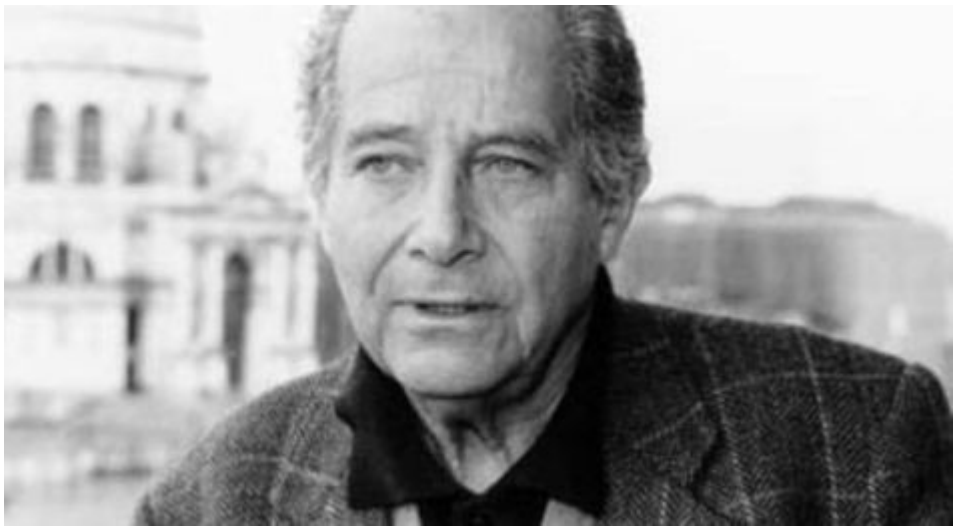
The 90â??s â?? History of the Venice Film Festival

Description

In 1990 the jury headed by Gore Vidal assigned the Golden Lion to

Tom Stoppardâ??s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, in preference to the visionary emerging talent of Jane Campion. This controversial decision kindled heated debate between the public and experts, with shades of the â??50s when the juries apparently ignored Viscontiâ??s films. An Angel at My Table only received the Jury Grand Prix. Likewise the great surprise of the following year, Raise the Red Lantern by Chinese director Zhang Yimou, did not succeed in winning the Golden Lion (it went instead to Michalkovâ??s Urga), however the last Festival directed by Biraghi was distinguished by a broad variety in selection, and the inclusion of young American talent such as Spike Lee and Gus Van Sant.

Filmmaker Gillo Pontecorvo (nominated Curator in 1992 then appointed Director until 1996), the director of La battaglia di Algeri, took up office with three decrees: make Venice the capital of quality filmmaking, bring the great directors and film stars back to the Lido, and revitalise the Palazzo del Cinema zone with young people. Pontecorvo succeeded in his intentions through a remarkable series of events and initiatives. During the years of his mandate Venice hosted the â??Auteursâ?? Assiseâ?• (1993), numerous seminars were held and the U.M.A.C. (World Union of Auteurs) was founded.



Gillo Pontecorvo

The spectacular films from the Notte section brought â??starsâ?• from the US firmament to the Lido â?? Jack Nicholson, Harrison Ford, Bruce Willis, Kevin Costner, Mel Gibson, Nicole Kidman, Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, with Golden Lions for Career Achievement to Dustin Hoffman, Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, and Francis Coppola; at the 1992 Festival, the Golden Lion was awarded to a comedian, Paolo Villaggio.

The Lido was re-animated during the Pontecorvo years with rock concerts held in the square facing the CasinÃ², and thanks to the initiative of â??CinemAvvenireâ?•, which entailed inviting high school work on film themes.

Of the films and filmmakers launched during Pontecorvoâ??s period,

mention must be made of the young Italians Mario Martone (Morte di un matematico napoletano), Aurelio Grimaldi (La discesa di AclÃ a Floristella), Carlo Carlei (La corsa dellâ??innocente at the first Festival, along with Sally Potter (Orlando) and Neil Jordan (The Crying Game).

Over the following years the Lido witnessed a series of appearances by filmmakers and works including Altman (Short Cuts, Golden Lion) and Abel Ferrara, de Heer and Radford (Il postino), Peter Jackson (Heavenly Creatures) and Milcho Manchevski (Before the Rain, Golden Lion), Lee Tamahori and Kathryn Bigelow (Strange Days), Tsai Ming Liang and Anh Hung Tran (two oriental Golden Lions), Gregg Araki, then Jane Campion once more (The Portrait of a Lady).

One of the innovations introduced by Pontecorvo was the landmark section â??Finestra sulle immaginiâ?•, a lively workshop of film and video, shorts, medium length and feature films, animation, anything new and unusual on offer from audio-visual production.

Under the direction of Felice Laudadio the films of Takeshi Kitano were launched on the international stage; in 1997 he received the Golden Lion for Hana-bi. In 1998 CosÃ¬ ridevano by Gianni Amelio became the ninth Golden Lion awarded to an Italian film. At this time a vast marquee was also erected in Via Sandro Gallo to host the ever-increasing members of the public for the Festival screenings.

In 1999, Alberto Barbera was appointed as director of the festival. He took up the position until 2001.

Festival Director, Alberto Barbera

(Source:www.labiennale.org)

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