

# Chronology

Neapolitan Silent Cinema

# Origins

**1896** Screening of Lumiere films at Salone Margherita.

Film *'O pazzariello d'a Pignasecca*: dialect and picturesque.

**1897** Roberto Troncone acquired a Lumiere camera.

**1898** ItaloAmerican Recanati used his store of musical instruments in Galleria for film screenings.

**1900** Troncone screened *Il ritorno delle carrozze da Monte Vergine* at Salone Margherita.

**1903** The Troncone brothers opened a theatre and created the Italian and American Animatograph company soon to be renamed Partenope Film.

**1904** Gustavo Lombardo started working as a distributor.

**1905** OFFICIAL BEGINNING OF ITALIAN FILM HISTORY (*La presa di Roma*)

Elegant Sala Ruggieri opened.

Troncone Bros produced *La camorra*.

**1906** Troncone documented *L'eruzione del Vesuvio*, a world-wide success.

**1907** The Troncones built their own studio, becoming the first Neapolitan film manufacturer and produced *Il delitto delle Fontanelle*. the comedy short *Marito distratto e moglie manesca*, debut of a very young Francesca Bertini.

Film magazine "La lanterna" started publications.

Nicola Notari ran a lab for film colouring and, with Elvira, started the production of sponsored shorts, *Arrivederci e Grazie*.

In Naples film theatres reached the conspicuous number of 20.

**1908** Gustavo Lombardo started film magazine "Lux" with a debate on film as Art. In 1908 out of 7 film magazines printed in Italy 6 are published in Napoli.

# The first phase

**1909** Dora Films was officially born.

Augusto Turchi (from Cines) with Bientenholz (from Turin) started the “Vesuvio” company with the project of competing with the other “Italian” companies, by making historical pictures (*Corradino di Svevia*), modern dramas (*Amore ed arte*) and the stereotypical *Le marine napoletane*. They built their own studio, with a “large shooting stage, with a mechanical shop, film developing, printing, tinting and editing labs, and a set construction department” and articulated an efficient distribution network. “Vesuvio” even had a musician (Romolo Bacchini) who composed an original score for each film.

The Troncone Bros became Partenope Film, reorganised their studio and hired Vincenzo Scarpetta, Eduardo’s brother.

**1911** In addition to Eclair, Gaumont, Vitagraph, Edison films, Gustavo Lombardo opened an office in Rome too and distributed one of the first feature films, *l’Inferno* (Milano Films).

Dora Films made local productions, with actors “presi dalla strada” including son Eduardo (alias Gennariello) and worked with Miquel Di Giacomo. It made *Ritorna all’ombra*, and some “documentaries” on war preparation.

**1912** Partenope produced *Testa a testa* written by Raffaele Viviani and *Il diritto di vivere* by Roberto Bracco.

“Vesuvio” (in the hands of Bientenholz) hired Gennaro Righelli and produced *La fanciulla di Derna*, on the Libya war, the feuilleton *La portatrice del pane* and the prestigious feature length film *Decamerone*.

Dora Films set up a studio and produced, among other titles, *La figlia del Vesuvio*, *Eroismo di un aviatore a Tripoli*, *La guerra italo/turca degli scugnizzi napoletani*, and the documentary *L’emozionante cattura di un pazzo a Bagnoli*.

**1913** Giuseppe Di Luggo (from Teatro San Carlo) created Napoli Films, built a studio at Vomero, hiring personnel from Rome to make mainstream films. Lombardo supported him.

Elvira Notari directed *Tricolore*.

# Between Naples and Rome

1914 Giuseppe Barattolo's Caesar Film  
produced *Assunta Spina* and Morgana film  
*Sperduti nel buio* both set and shot in Naples.

# Songs and patriotism

**1914** Notari produced *A Marechiare 'ce sta 'na fenesta*, and *Addio mia bella addio*.

*Partenope* made *Fenesta che lucive...*

**1915** Notari made *Sempre avanti Savoia!*

Lombardo acquired a film theatre in Rome.

Giuseppe De Luggo (Napoli Films) found new patrons among captains of industry and members of the aristocracy in Naples and Rome, like counts Francesco and Giulio Antamoro. Giulio Antamoro, who had been one of the main directors at Cines, became managing director of Napoli Films, transformed into Polifilms in 1915.

Polifilms produced several patriotic films like *Alla bajonetta!...* with Tilde Kassai and *La fiammata patriottica Savoia*, *Urrah!*, *Guerra redentrice*, with Guido Trento as a protagonist.

Led Gys, still in Rome, interpreted *Sempre nel cor la Patria*.

**1916** Gys interpreted *Passano gli unni* for Films Manipulation Agency (Turin)

Notari shot *Gloria ai caduti*, *Carmela la sartina di Montesanto* (Galdi) and *Ciccio il pizzaiuolo* (Mastriani).

Lombardo produced at Polifilms *L'avvenire in agguato* written by Bracco, and created Lombardo-Teatro-Film.

**1917** Lombardo produced at Polifilms *L'ombra* (Mario Caserini). Polifilms made *Il buon ladrone*, about a redeemed *camorrista*. De Luggo transferred Polifilms to Lombardo.

U.M. Del Colle shot and interpreted *'O Sole mio*, produced by the Roman company Megale.

Elvira Notari directed *Il nano rosso* (Invernizio) and *Mandolinata a mare*.

**1918** Leda Gys started working for Polifilms in Naples, making *Leda senza il cigno* (Antamoro) from D'Annunzio, *Una peccatrice* adapted from Verga and *Sole! Regina di Marechiaro* with Giovanni Grasso. Polifilm adapted *Il doppio volto* by Serao with the American actress Helen Arnold.

Dora Films made *Il barcaiuolo di Amalfi* and *Gnesella*, popular dramas with social implications.

# 1919-1924 (I)

**1919** After a pause because of the war, Troncone made *Nennella* from a novel by Davide Galdi, with Giovanni Grasso.

Lombardo Film hired French performers Charles Krauss and Maryse Dauvray to make sophisticated mainstream dramas.

U. M. Del Colle worked at Tina (Kassay) Film and directed the *sceneggiata* *Torna a Surriento* and *Temi il leone* (by Serao).

Dora Film produced *Gabriele il lampionaio del porto*, *Chiarina la modista* (from Invernizio, censored) and *Medea di Portamedina* (from Mastriani)

**1920** Censorsip became more active.

Goffredo Lombardo was born from Lombardo and Gys.

Gys interpreted traditional melodramas (*Il Miracolo*, *Un cuore nel mondo*). At Lombardo Film U.M. Del Colle directed truculent *Mimi Fanfara* and *Marta Galla* (Galdi) and *Il re della forza* with “strong man” Giovanni Raicevich.

Notari made ‘*A legge* and ‘*A Piedigrotta*.

Elio Cinegrafica produced *Santa Lucia Luntana* with star Elvira Donnarumma.

**1921** Lombardo enjoyed an enormous success with *I figli di nessuno* with Leda Gys in the role of Suor Dolore and with *La pianista di Haynes* (both directed by Ubaldo Maria Del Colle). He produced also the psychological drama *Amare il mondo e' bello* (Umberto Paradisi).

Gennariello produced and interpreted ‘*A mala nova*, and *Gennariello poliziotto e figlio del galeotto*.

Notari directed ‘*O munaciello* and *Luciella*

# 1919-1924 (II)

**1922** Dora Film produced *E' piccirella* and *'A Santanotte*.

Lombardo produced adventure films (*L'uomo della foresta*, *La figlia del fuoco*), a sophisticated comedy *La trappola* (Eugenio Perego) which launched as a comedian Gys, who also interpreted *Mia moglie si e' fidanzata* (Gero Zambuto).

U.M.Del Colle directed and interpreted the popular *Lucia Luci*. Its producer, Emanuele Rotondo, soon started his own company, Miramar, specialised in *sceneggiate*.

**1923** The beginning of the crisis for Italian cinema, which did not affect Neapolitan companies.

Lombardo produced the extraordinarily successful *Santarella* (Perego) with Gys.

Dora Film's *Core 'e frate* was distributed in the entire peninsula.

Troncone produced *Core 'e mamma*, in Neapolitan dialect.

Peppino Amato directed *Sotto 'e cancelli* (Miquel Film) severely censored

Miramar produced the *sceneggiate* *Mamma lontana* (Bascetta), *Reginella* and *Pupatella* (from songs by Libero Bovio) and *'O Schiaffo* (from a song by Pacifico Vento).

Inspiration Pictures shot in Naples *The White Sister* (Henry King) with Lillian Gish, Ronald Colman and Gustavo Serena.

# “Between 1924 and 1925 more than one third of Italian films was produced in Naples” (I)

**1924** Notari directed *A Marechiaro ce sta na fenesta* and *'Nfama*, which did not receive the visa for export because of censorship issues.

Lombardo produced 8 films, among them *Vedi Napoli e po' mori*, and the pochade *Grand Hotel Paradis*, directed by Perego and interpreted by Gys. She appeared also in the adventure film *Saiytra*.

Italian-American Vincenzo Pergamo produced *Core furastiero* and other sceneggate directed and interpreted by U.M. Del Colle

**1925** At Lombardo Film Gys interpreted the costume film *La fanciulla di Pompei* (Antamoro) while Charles Krauss directed *La casa dello Scandalo*, with Lido Manetti.

Dora film successfully distributed *Mettete l'avvocato* in the South and abroad.

The Notaris shot *Rosa la bella di Porta Pia* in Rome, cut by half by the censors, and distributed in 1927 as *Fantasia 'e surdate*.

**1926** Two films shot in Naples by two non-Neapolitan companies *Napoli che canta*, (Roberto Roberti) and *Risa e lacrime napoletane* (Orlando Vassallo) about a couple who emigrates in the US.

The only Neapolitan productions were Miramar's *Mi chiamano Mimi'* (Washington Borg), *Napoli che se ne va* (Del Gaudio, Delmonico) and *Tra i sorrisi di Napoli* interpreted by U.M. Del Colle.

Troncone produced a remake of *Fenesta che lucive...* but the company went broke.



# “Between 1924 and 1925 more than one third of Italian films was produced in Naples” (II)

**1927** Lombardo film made *Napoli e' una canzone* (Perego) with Gys “pazzariello” with a lottery for a honeymoon in New York.

Dora Film produced *L'Italia s'e' desta*, on WWI.

Del Gaudio produced *O 'Marenariello* (UM Del Colle)

Miramar made *Si mo ddice 'o core*.

**1928** Lombardo Film produced *Napule... e niente cchiu' sul mondo del varieta'* (Perego) e *Madonnina dei Marinai* (U.M. Del Colle) both with Gys, with big promotional stunts.

In *Napoli terra d'amore* (Dora Films) Gennariello played jazz music.

Lombardo transferred his activities in Rome and constituted Titanus.

**1929** Caesar Film produced a remake of *Assunta Spina* (Roberto Roberti) with Rina De Liguoro and Febo Mari.

Dora Film produced *Napoli, sirena della canzone*.

Titanus (Lombardo) shot in Naples *Rondine* and *La signorina Cicchiricchi*, Gys' last film.

**1930** Pergamo produced a sound version of *Zappatore* (Gustavo Serena) from the famous song.

Dora Film closed production with *Trionfo cristiano*, commissioned by Italian Americans and continued functioning only as a distributor.