



MUSEO NAZIONALE DEL CINEMA  
FONDAZIONE MARIA ADRIANA PROLO

*Martin Scorsese  
presents*

# CABIRIA

*by Giovanni Pastrone*



*A restoration by Museo Nazionale del Cinema - Turin  
in association with PresTech Film Laboratories Ltd. - London*

Martin Scorsese presents  
a restoration by Museo Nazionale del Cinema - Turin  
in association with PresTech Film Laboratories Ltd. - London

# CABIRIA

by Giovanni Pastrone (Italy, 1914)

Directed, subject and screenplay by  
Intertitles and names of characters by  
Photography by

Giovanni Pastrone  
Gabriele D'Annunzio  
Augusto Battagliotti, Natale Chiusano  
Segundo de Chomón, Vincent C. Dénizot  
Carlo Franzeri, Gatti, Giovanni Tomatis  
Romano Luigi Borgnetto, Camillo Innocenti  
Segundo de Chomón  
Ildebrando Pizzetti, Manlio Mazza

Set decoration by  
Special effects by  
Music by

## Characters

*Cabiria*  
*The nurse Croessa*  
*Karthalo, Moloch's high priest*  
*Fulvio Axilla*  
*Maciste*  
*The innkeeper Bodastoret*  
*Hannibal, Hasdrubal*  
*Sophonisba*  
*Massinissa*  
*Siface*  
*Archimede*  
*Scipione*

*Production*  
*Format*  
*Length of the original film*  
*Length of the restored film*

## Cast

Lydia Quaranta  
Teresa Marangoni  
Dante Testa  
Umberto Mozzato  
Bartolomeo Pagano  
Raffaele Di Napoli  
Edouard Davesnes  
Italia Almirante Manzini  
Vitale De Stefano  
Alexandre Bernard  
Enrico Gemelli  
Didaco Chellini

Itala Film, Turin, 1914  
35mm, 1:33, 16 fps  
3364 metres (183' 50")  
3308 metres (180' 17")

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL  
SALLE BUÑUEL

Saturday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2006, 9 p.m.

Piano accompaniment: Stefano Maccagno

## A sheer beauty

by Martin Scorsese

Sometimes I am startled by cinema. Truly startled. Just by the fact of it, and by the very particular means with which it allows us to tell stories. This, in particular, amazes me.

I find that the older I become, the greater my amazement at the work done by filmmakers closer in time to the birth of the medium. Perhaps because the joy of discovery is so palpable. It's important that we never lose this sense of joy as artists — which we always remember that the joining of one image with another, or the marriage of this particular image with this particular sound is a miraculous thing. The further we get from the medium's beginnings, the greater the temptation to take it all for granted. That's why I now find myself going back so often to what is referred to as early cinema. Where absolutely nothing was taken for granted.

I will never forget the first time I saw Giovanni Pastrone's extraordinary *Cabiria*. It was 20 years ago. I wasn't quite prepared for the sheer scope and beauty of this film. And I was completely unprepared for having my sense of film history re-aligned. There are so many elements that we took for granted as American inventions — the long-form historical epic, the moving camera, diffused light. Suddenly, here they were in a picture made two years before Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. And, of course, there was the discovery of Pastrone himself, a major figure in the early history of cinema.

I am struck by the fact that Pastrone, a native of Piedmont, not only studied the violin but made musical instruments before he took over Itala Film. Those of us who grew up with cinema as a fact of life need to remember that it wasn't just the spirit of mechanical and technical innovation that drove moviemaking forward, but the tradition of fine craftsmanship as well. We forget this — particularly now, when so much is done digitally. We shouldn't.

I'd always admired the craftsmanship of the Italian-made epics when I was growing up. Even as a boy, I sensed the differences with American-made pictures — I could feel the connection to ancient traditions of artistry and craftsmanship stretching all

the way back to the pre-Roman Etruscan era, in the textures, the colours, the set design. As I watched *Cabiria* that first time, I felt like I was seeing the origins of Italian film craftsmanship. The most famous example would be Pastrone's invention of the *carrello*, which, of course, led to the invention of tracks in order to move the camera. But this was not simply a mechanical device. It was an expressive tool. The camera movements in *Cabiria* do much more than follow the actors: they enrich the sense of space and the drama as well. This is important to remember. Pastrone made the camera itself a presence, and the meeting between this presence and the unfolding action became charged with mystery, possibility.

Of course, there are so many other ways of discussing this remarkable film: the extraordinary use of light, both realistic and



poetic, affording greater depth to each scene; the set-pieces, such as the eruption of Aetna, and the extraordinary final battle; the sets, particularly the temple of Moloch, and the hand-crafted production design; Italia Almirante-Manzini's wild, extravagant performance as Sophonisba, Gabriele D'Annunzio's equally wild and extravagant language in the intertitles; and last but not least, the first appearance of Maciste, Italian cinema's first action hero. In the end, though, *Cabiria* is not a collection of great moments or choices, but a magnificent, entrancing whole.

I'm grateful to Alberto Barbera and the Museo Nazionale del Cinema for this wonderful restoration. And I'm grateful to Giovanni Pastrone for this remarkable film, *Cabiria*.



## The masterpiece restored

by Alberto Barbera\*

In the history of Italian silent films, no movie can equal *Cabiria* in importance and success. The film was made between 1913 and 1914 and was distributed worldwide starting in March 1914. The attention and public success it achieved at the time rightfully place it alongside many Hollywood blockbusters of later eras, which made (and continue to make) the history of cinema. Pastrone's masterpiece was immediately popular and, right from the beginning, it attracted the attention of executors, producers and the press for its impressive advances in the development of the dawning cinematographic art form. Today, no book about the history of cinema can fail to exalt the film's peculiarities, list its merits and underline its main characteristics. *Cabiria* is celebrated as the triumph of period super-productions, Italy's most important contribution to the valorisation of the power and spectacular resources of staging, one of the first and most masterly attempts to unite the newly-invented cinematographic art form with the expressive means of literature, painting, architecture, music and theatre.

It is no surprise that today *Cabiria* represents for us a seminal film in the history of cinema as art and entertainment, a film which undoubtedly had an influence on the great American filmmakers of the time – above all, David W. Griffith and Cecil B. De Mille – who found direct inspiration for those historical colossals for which Hollywood later became justly famous. The boldness of Pastrone's project registered a series of records, many "firsts." It was the first film ever to be over three hours long. No Italian producer had ever before dared to invest a sum that was twenty times higher than the average cost of a film at the time (one million lire as opposed to the usual 50 or 60 thousand). No director had ever sensed – and taken advantage of – the expressive potential inherent in the movements of a movie camera when mounted on a *carrello*. Thanks to this invention, which Pastrone developed with his ingenious collaborator Segundo de Chomón, the movie camera finally began to move around inside the set, which took on real, three-dimensional forms of monumental proportions. No



one had ever before dared to take elephants and several hundred extras to the Alps, in the dead of winter, to film Hannibal's crossing, which only lasted a couple of minutes onscreen. No one had ever completely understood the importance of a true marketing campaign, which could be the envy of marketing strategists today. In order to rescue cinema from its condition as mere popular entertainment and raise it to the level of a work of art, the director-producer entrusted the project to the resources of strong cultural endorsement and secured the prestigious collaboration of two of the greatest Italian intellectuals of the time: the writer Gabriele D'Annunzio and the musician Ildebrando Pizzetti, to whom he attributed a large portion of the merit of the film's creation, merit which, in fact, they deserved. Actually, D'Annunzio's collaboration didn't go beyond writing the intertitles and inventing the names of some of the main characters (including the highly-



successful Maciste), while Pizzetti's collaboration was marked by a certain amount of conflict. To the point that the well-known composer limited himself to creating the famous *Symphony of Fire* (an eleven-minute mini-masterpiece), while the rest of the score was an excellent work of "quoting" by another musician, Maestro Manlio Mazza.

But Giovanni Pastrone's film is more than a masterpiece of origins, a film that is justly celebrated alongside many other landmarks in the autonomy and expressive power of the cinematographic language: *Intolerance*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Metropolis*, *Napoleon*... Like them, *Cabiria* has become a legend. In the sense that, similar to the diffusion of many fairytales and legends, one doesn't have to have seen it to think one knows it. Even people who have never seen a projection of one of the many variations of the film (which are often incomplete or in poor condition) think they know something about it. And, as is the case for many other legends which feed our imagination, the very multiplicity and diversity of the known variations strengthen even further its slightly exotic and mysterious allure. The fact is that Pastrone's masterpiece was almost invisible for a long time, at least in the exact form that was originally created by its author. None of the various editions that were later made over the years have reached us in a complete and correct state. Even the various efforts to preserve or restore the film (the latest, which was carried out by the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, dates back to 1995) were unable to give us back the splendour of the original version. There are various reasons for this. First of all, the fact that the original negative of the film, along with the positive copies that were made at the time, are lost. But it must be remembered that the Museum owns and preserves the widest and most exhaustive collection of documents and material about the making of *Cabiria* and its later releases. This important collection was recently enlarged by never-before-seen, precious documents which were donated to the Museum after their surprise discovery. Plus, the evolution in technology and methods of restoration have rendered the previous efforts at conservation obsolete and unsatisfactory. Thus, it was decided to carry out a new, ambitious work of restoration in

collaboration with PresTech Film Laboratories Ltd., London. We rightly believe that the results are destined to change the minds of those who thought that retracing our steps was a useless excess of philological zeal. The new restoration, carried out by João de Oliveira, with the crucial collaboration of a group of researchers from the Museo Nazionale del Cinema who worked on the analysis and interpretation of the original documents, offers so many new elements that it is like discovering Pastrone's masterpiece for the first time all over again. First of all, there are two editions which are quite different, not only from each other but, even more, from the copy that is now in circulation. The first is the reconstruction of the original edition which dates back to 1914 and was considered lost. Thanks to many recently-discovered documents about the making of the film and to the complex work of collation, interpretation and comparison of the material in our possession (films, documents, archives, photographs, music), it was possible to reconstruct a "critical edition" that is able to guarantee a level of reliability equal to at least 95% of the original. The work involved in bringing the images of the film back to their original splendour was surprising. Each single frame of the film was restored using the most sophisticated photo-chemical and digital technology, restoring the plastic and photographic qualities of the original shots, recuperating the entire range of greys and colour through the same procedure of imbibition described in the precise indications left by the director in his meticulous colour storyboard. A small miracle which would have been simply unimaginable a couple of years ago; a project which required a year and a half of work and major economic investments, and which was made possible thanks to a generous contribution by the Piedmont Region. The second version corresponds exactly to the sound edition the director made in 1931, when he modified the editing, inserted new sequences, eliminated others and added a sound track that was synchronized to music that was commissioned to two virtually unknown composers, Avitabile and Ribas. It had never been heard again over the intervening 70 years, but the score — recorded on Bixiophone records at the time and conserved at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema — has come back to life thanks to a difficult and complex work of sound



restoration which required a careful process of digital transcription, followed by an intricate operation of cleaning, stabilization and restoration of the sound, without altering the original characteristics and the "noise."

*Cabiria & Cabiria* is a special project of the *Cultural Olympics*, which took place during the Turin 2006 Olympic Winter Games. The premiere of the 1914 version was projected at the Teatro Regio of Torino on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006, and the restored 1931 version was presented at the Cinema Massimo on March 21<sup>st</sup>. For the presentations, the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, in collaboration with Editrice Il Castoro, published a large historical-critical book featuring new interpretations to enrich the solid tradition of *Cabiria* studies with many new contributions by scholars of various disciplines (not just experts of cinema, but archaeologists, musicologists, Italian studies experts and historians of contemporary times), documents that have never been published before or which are little known - a rich critical anthology and a rich iconographic apparatus.

\*Director of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema of Turin



## Cabiria, a new challenge for restoration

by João S. de Oliveira\*

For generations, Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria* has polarized the attention of film historians and researchers. Over the last 40 years, *Cabiria* was restored many times; these restorations represent the evolution of the concept of film restoration, showing how our perception and methods have changed over time. The Museo Nazionale del Cinema's recent acquisition of new materials about *Cabiria* created the opportunity for reviewing the film's preservation and is the main reason for this new restoration project.

Pastrone made different versions of the film: an Italian version and, probably, another version for international distribution. Later, in 1931, he produced yet another version with sound. The Museo Nazionale del Cinema decided to preserve the different existing versions of the film using today's state-of-the-art technology. An expert team of researchers from the Museo Nazionale del Cinema assisted in the analysis of the extensive relevant documentation. The restoration was carried out at PresTech Film Laboratories in London using photo-chemical and digital restoration technologies.



### The 1914 Version

We based the reconstruction of the 1914 version of *Cabiria* on a variety of sources, including recently acquired documents; the musical score by Pizzetti and Mazza; press cuttings of the time; production notes; the original script of the film; Pastrone's detailed notes and storyboards; reports of the previous restorations, as well as various film elements including original camera negative off cuts. After we reconstructed the time structure of the film, we began to fill in the scene spaces with the available footage, choosing the best elements for every scene.

The first stage of our work compared all the existing film materials to trace the origin of each and determine the earliest possible generation available. During this work it was noted that some scenes had been shot using a film stock technology that wasn't available in 1914. This technology only became available during the mid-to late Twenties, so these scenes were certainly shot later for the 1931 version. These later scenes, either in their entirety or in part, are present in all available restorations of *Cabiria*, indicating that the previous restorations are a mix of various versions, being perhaps more representative of the 1931 version than of the 1914 one. This later footage concerns mainly the *Second Episode*, specifically the sequence known as the "Temple of Moloch." This sequence is a very important element of *Cabiria's* narrative structure and Pizzetti's score was to be played during this sequence.

Yet the newspaper cuttings from 1914 show something different. They state that *The Symphony of Fire* was played as a prologue – before the film started – "with the screening of some 2 or 3 scenes with allegories of fire, after which the film started." Certainly, Pastrone had second thoughts as to how to present Pizzetti's music.

### The 1931 Version

While planning the re-edition of *Cabiria* with sound, Pastrone realised that some synchronised sound was necessary to provide impact and attract a new audience. Pizzetti had always regretted writing the music for the 1914 version, so when Pastrone asked him for permission to use his music for the 1931 version he

refused. Consequently, Pastrone commissioned the composers Avitabile and Ribas to write a completely new sound track in synchrony with the newly-edited version. Synchronised sound effects were distributed throughout the entire film.

At this point, Pastrone added to the *Second Episode* an intertitle, "The Symphony of Fire," and new scenes, like the detail of a hand, decorated with a symbol, as it makes a Roman salute, and many shots of a priest and choir singing. When we first played this sequence with the restored sound (from the 1931 shellac disc) there were no surprises: the priest sings in lip synch. This proved our hypothesis on the filming date of the subject material.

### Image Restoration (Photo-Chemical and Digital)



Most of the existing film elements of *Cabiria* are fourth or even sixth generation; we tried to use the earliest possible material. The duplicates available were sometimes of poor quality. Pieces of original camera negative off cuts were used as quality reference. Image elements were liquid gate optical printed onto black and white duplicate film stock. When necessary, the originals were liquid gate scanned with a modified *Kodak Genesis Plus Scanner* at a resolution of 4K. After digital restoration, the data was written back onto black and white duplicating film stock.

Most of the original graphic material and art work from *Cabiria's* intertitles are preserved at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema.

The utilisation of this material increased the quality of the restoration. Since *Cabiria* was distributed worldwide, the Museo Nazionale del Cinema also possesses originals of intertitle translations and graphic material in many European languages. These intertitles were reproduced and restored with photo-chemical and digital technology at PresTech Film Laboratories.

### Tinting and Toning Processes

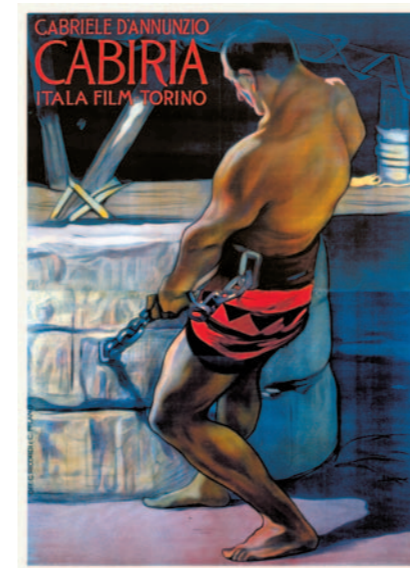
Again, thanks to Pastrone's exceptional planning and organisational skills, all the tinting records in the form of handsome colour storyboards are preserved and were used as reference during restoration. These storyboards are composed of the first and last frames of each scene from the different versions of *Cabiria*, mounted on cardboard with indications as to the number of frames in each scene. In the



1914 version a tinting process using German dyes was utilised from which we were able to determine type and concentration. In the 1931 version, a completely different set of colours was utilised since Pastrone decided to use pre-tinted base stock from Pathé and Kodak.

The restoration used the original tinting and toning processes and respected the original tones by means of an imbibition process. The various colours were applied in a splice-free print. Printing, tinting and toning was conducted at PresTech Film Laboratories.

\*PresTech Film Laboratories Limited, London



### Fondazione Maria Adriana Prolo Museo Nazionale del Cinema

Founding members

Associazione Museo Nazionale del Cinema

City of Torino

Compagnia di San Paolo

Fondazione CRT

Province of Torino

Piedmont Region

Istituto Luce

Board

Alessandro Casazza (President), Franco Prono (Associazione Museo Nazionale del Cinema), Stefano Della Casa, Domenico Gargale (City of Torino), Paolo Morandi (Piedmont Region), Massimo Rostagno (Province of Torino), Alide Lupo (Fondazione CRT), Giovanni Zanetti (Compagnia di San Paolo), Luciano Sovena (Istituto Luce), Maurizio Giletti, Franco Cristiano, Alberto Ferrero (Auditors)

President

Alessandro Casazza

Director

Alberto Barbera

Coordinator

Daniele Tinti

Conservator

Donata Pesenti Campagnoni

Communications and Promotion

Maria Grazia Giroto

Press Office

Veronica Geraci

Administration

Erika Pichler

### Martin Scorsese presents: Cabiria

A restoration by the Museo Nazionale del Cinema of Torino, in association with PresTech Film Laboratories Ltd. of London.

The restoration has been carried out by João S. de Oliveira, with the collaboration of Silvio Alovio (Library of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema) and Ivano Bellino (Film Library of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema).

The project, which was coordinated by Donata Pesenti Campagnoni (Conservator), was carried out with the collaboration of Roberta Basano (Photo Library), Carla Ceresa (Archives), Marco Grifo and Fabio Pezzetti Tonion (researchers).

Restoration of the photographic material belonging to the collection of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema was carried out by Fototeca s.n.c. of Bologna. Restoration of the paper material was carried out by Paola Gallarini. The colour reproductions are by Roberto Goffi.

The Museo Nazionale del Cinema would like to thank the Film Libraries which put their cinematographic material at the disposal of the Museum: Filmoteca Española (Catherine Gautier, José Maria Prado, Madrid), Gosfilmofond (Moscow), MOMA - Museum of Modern Art (Steven Higgins, Peter Williamson, New York), Hungarian National Film Archive (Vera Gyurey, Budapest)

The Museum would also like to thank the Piedmont Region, the City of Torino, the Province of Torino, the Fondazione CRT and the Compagnia di San Paolo for their precious support of *Progetto Cabiria* and its promotion.

Particular thanks go to Martin Scorsese and the team of Sikelia Productions: Raffaele Donato, Emma Tillinger, Freida Orange (New York).

Graphic design

De Silva Associati



FONDAZIONE CRT



MUSEO NAZIONALE DEL CINEMA  
FONDAZIONE MARIA ADRIANA PROLO

Via Montebello 15, 10124 Torino, Italia

Tel. +39 011.813.8511

Fax +39 011.8398.501

info@museocinema.it

www.museocinema.it