

LE GIORNATE DEL CINEMA MUTO 2010

Rediscoveries and Restorations

MOVIE ACTOR (Roman Film Co., US 1932)

Regia/dir: Bruno Valletty; *f./ph:* Don Malkames; *partiture, dir. mus./scores, mus. dir:* Attilio Giovannelli, Ernest Migliaccio; *scg./des:* Standard Recording Studios; *registr. sonoro/sd. rec:* Harry Bellock, H.E. Reeves; *cast:* Farfariello [Cav. Eduardo Migliaccio] (l'attore cinematografico/the movie actor), Raffaello Bongini (manager), Joe L. Saitta (vice/assistant manager), Grace D'Andrea (stenografa/stenographer), Mrs. Raimo (la moglie/the wife); 35mm, 1340 ft., 14' (24 fps), sonoro/sound; fonte copia/print source: George Eastman House, Rochester, NY (AFI/Oregon Historical Society/Gene Stoeller Collection).
Dialoghi in napoletano / Dialogue in Neapolitan.

Preservazione effettuata nel 2000 a partire da un positivo nitrato 35mm con colonna sonora a densità variabile. / Preserved in 2000 with the support of The National Endowment for the Arts from a 35mm nitrate positive print with a variable density soundtrack.

Movie Actor is the only known screen appearance featuring Italian-American stage actor Farfariello performing from his "Macchietta coloniale" repertoire of Italian personalities. Produced and filmed in New York City by a crew comprised of American technicians and Italian immigrants, this vaudeville act starring Neapolitan comedian Farfariello is a satire on the struggle of Italian immigrants to adapt to American customs and society. Rejected after his audition for an impresario in Manhattan, the singer Farfariello disguises himself first as the brassy chanteuse Mademoiselle Fifi, then as a gangster of Little Italy (complete with a concealed handgun), and finally as a slightly tipsy Italian laborer who mangles "O Sole Mio" and then in a sparkling monologue extols the virtues of the Italian language and Neapolitan dialect, comparing them to the presumed awkwardness of English, thus providing a refreshing perspective on the popular culture among Italian-Americans in the early 1930s. Farfariello sings, clowns, and finally succeeds in impressing a very reluctant film manager (Raffaello Bongini) with his talent. All of these characters were part of Farfariello's stage act, and while film enables him to quickly change personas and costumes with lightning speed, in his theater performances Farfariello's audiences were happy to wait between transitions for each new character to emerge. His repertoire also featured an Italian military general in full regalia and a much lauded impersonation of Enrico Caruso which found favor with the great Italian tenor himself. Cav. Eduardo Migliaccio, whose stage persona of Farfariello entertained countless numbers of Italian immigrants for over 40 years, was born in Cava dei Tirreni, Italy, on 15 April, probably in 1880 (the actual year is contested by various sources). He studied design at the Istituto di Belle Arti in Naples, but took accounting courses as well. Immediately after graduation he emigrated to America, where he worked with his father, a bank official in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. Migliaccio's banking career was short-lived, as his real ambition was to be an actor, and his talent for comedy caused him to abandon the world of high finance and enter the field of entertainment. He made his professional debut at the Villa Giulia café at 198 Grand Street in the heart of New York City's Little Italy. Among the many humorous songs that he sang was "Farfariello," from which he took his stage name. Farfariello's repertoire of songs and skits or "Macchietta coloniale" was a gentle satire of the many characters who, like him, had immigrated to the United States. Farfariello wrote his own scripts and lyrics for many of his songs, created the makeup for his characters, and his sister designed and made the majority of his costumes. His success in America assured, Farfariello returned to Naples in 1937 to perform at the Teatro Augusteo, where his work received praise from the public, critics, and his fellow artists. After his return to New York he organized musical companies and recorded his repertoire of Neapolitan songs for RCA Victor. Farfariello died in New York City on 27 March 1946. His legacy has been preserved and commemorated in Cava dei Tirreni with the dedication in 2007 of a museum, a piazza, and a movie theatre in his name. The dedication ceremonies were attended by Farfariello's son Arnold Migliaccio, his wife Blanche, and their daughter Adele. – CAROLINE YEAGER