

LE GIORNATE DEL CINEMA MUTO 2010
Rediscoveries & Restorations

SANTA LUCIA LUNTANA – MEMORIES OF NAPLES (Cinema Productions, Inc., US 1931)

Regia/dir: Harold Godsoe; *prod:* Angelo De Vito; *mont./ed:* Russell Shields; *mus:* maestro cav. Giuseppe De Luca (registrazione/rec.: Metropolitan Studio, Fort Lee, New Jersey); *cast:* Raffaele Bongini (Don Ciccio), Yolanda Carluccio (Elena, la figlia “buona”/the “good” daughter), Carmela Fazio (Elsie, la figlia “cattiva”/the “bad” daughter), Orazio Cammi (Mickey, il figlio/the son), Mario Renard (Mario), Leo Leone (Mr. Gravesend, il ragazzo di Elsie/Elsie’s boyfriend), Miriam Battista (Molly, l’amica di Elena/Elena’s girlfriend), Pasquale Sangioanni (Aitano, il vicino/Don Ciccio’s neighbor), Maria Sangioanni (Marianna, la moglie del vicino/Aitano’s wife); 35mm, 5269 ft., 60' (24 fps), sonoro/sound; fonte copia/print source: George Eastman House, Rochester, NY.

Restored in 2001 from a 16mm print with the support of The Film Foundation and Telecom Italia.

Dialoghi e didascalie in inglese e napoletano / Dialogue and intertitles in English and Neapolitan.

Restauro effettuato nel 2001 a partire da una copia a 16mm, col sostegno di The Film Foundation e di Telecom Italia. / Restored in 2001 from a 16mm print with the support of The Film Foundation and Telecom Italia.

Santa Lucia Luntana – Memories of Naples represents one of the few surviving examples of feature filmmaking by the Italian-American film industry in the 1930s. The Italian theatrical community of actors, impresarios, directors, and writers based in the New York City/New Jersey area provided a potent pool of talent and resources for the creation and distribution of films depicting the Italian immigrant experience and the cultural tensions it created within families and the community. These films benefited from the advanced sound technologies that were in wide use within the American film industry, giving their producers a bit of an edge in the market as sound was only just beginning to be introduced in Italy. While these films were not always well received by the mainstream American press, they were nonetheless popular with their intended audience, and with the presence of Raffaele Bongini in both Santa Lucia Luntana – Memories of Naples and Movie Actor (billed as Raffaello) one begins to discern the formation of a real industry with recognizable stars.

Santa Lucia Luntana – Memories of Naples is a domestic drama in which the widowed Don Ciccio, an immigrant from Naples, worries over the fates of his three grown children: Elsie, who loves to party with her American boyfriend Mr. Gravesend; Elena, the dutiful daughter who has been fired from her job because she rejected the advances of her employer; and Mickey, who refuses to take honest employment and instead becomes involved with cheap hoodlums. Mickey’s attempt to steal money from his father results in a breach between the two. Brokenhearted at his son’s deception, Don Ciccio is doubly cheered when Elsie and Gravesend marry, and Elena and her boyfriend Mario also wed. Mario and Elena return to the “paradise” of Naples to live, taking Don Ciccio with them. A reformed Mickey works and saves over the next five years, sending money to his father in Naples. In a fittingly sentimental gesture, a remorseful and repentant Mickey finally journeys to the villa in Naples where his family lives to beg his father’s forgiveness.

Santa Lucia Luntana – Memories of Naples is in many ways typical of films of this period. The exaggerated acting style with mannered gesticulations is typical of that found in contemporary stage performances and also harks back to commedia dell’arte. The new sound-film medium itself presented a challenge to actors and technicians alike as they sought to adapt and re-invent styles and techniques to accommodate the demands of the microphone. Nevertheless, Santa Lucia Luntana – Memories of Naples is an important milestone in this particular film genre. Like its companion film Movie Actor, it represents a small but significant portion of a forgotten chapter in film history. – CAROLINE YEAGER