

Friulian language cinema and other visual arts

The birth of the Friulian cinema can be said to date from 1981 and Vittorio Cottafavi's *Maria Zef*, a film based on Paola Drigo's 1936 novel of the same title. A key figure in the project was Siro Angeli, who not only wrote the screenplay but also played the lead magnificently.

Other outstanding films were made around the same time *Maria Zef* was being filmed, such as Lauro Pittini's *I varès volût vivi*, or the Friulian version of *Controlettura* (*Cuintriletture*, with the addition of new material), by Marcello De Stefano.

De Stefano also wrote a screenplay in the Friulian language far earlier, in 1954-55, when he was still attending the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, well aware that language is a key component in creating a people's sense of identity and is not merely an expressive, outer sheath. So it was that between 1981 and 1984 he made *Grafiz tun orizont* on the figure of the blessed Luigi Scrosoppi, the first film on a religious subject in our cinema. In 1986 he decided to make a Friulian-language version of the trilogy *Controlettura – Una linfa che scorre – Uomo, macchina, uomo*, which became *Cuintriletture part prime, seconde e tierce*, his most important work on the meaning and values of an ethnic group, and on what it can give the world of today. Marcello De Stefano's is an unusual cinema, a cinema halfway between a documentary and a feature film, a genre he described as a "docufilm". It is an aesthetic exploration of new means of expression; it does not confine its content to the pure record of reality, but attempts to convey an original view of the world to the audience and prompt discussion and reflection.

In order to promote films shot in *marilenghe* (mother tongue – Friulian), Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche - CEC in Udine decided in 1988 to organize *Mostre dal Cine Furlan*, a festival to be held every two years to showcase everything produced in this field and to stimulate fresh creativity in the cinema.

It is thanks to this event above all that there was a constant improvement in the quality and quantity of films produced in the 1990s, from feature films to documentaries and experimental animations. This was the context that generated a number of filmmakers who went on to make themselves known to the cinema-going public, such as Lauro Pittini, Lorenzo Bianchini, Massimo Garlatti-Costa, Benedetto Parisi, Giancarlo Zannier; Dorino Minigutti, Renato Calligaro, Remigio Romano, Carlo Della Vedova and many more besides.

While film production was largely amateur in the early stages, it became increasingly professional over the years, to the point where some of the filmmakers mentioned above became full-time directors and renowned producers. This professionalization bore its first fruit at the turn of the century. In 1999 Lorenzo Bianchini made the medium-length film *I dincj de lune*, the first example of a horror film in the Friulian language (Bianchini returned to the genre two years later with his highly-successful *Lidris cuadrade di trê*), while Lauro Pittini shot a biopic on the writer Pieri Menis (*Pieri Menis, ricuarts di frut*).

In the same year Carlo delle Vedova and Luca Peresson made the first documentary in the *Farcadice* series (encompassing five films: *Colonia Caroya*, *Charleroi*, *Umkomaas*, *Toronto* and *Italia*), which tell the story of Friuli emigration to all corners of the world. In 2000 Massimo Garlatti-Costa shot the comedy *Buris, libars di scugnî vignî*, followed in 2004 by the documentary *Friûl viaç te storie*. From that point on, documentaries would constitute the lion's share of film productions.

Indeed, the years after 2004 saw a great flowering of documentary film making, both classical and creative. Besides Massimo Garlatti-Costa's *Friûl viaç te storie* already mentioned, Dorino Minigutti delved into archive material in 2004 to make his *Nûfcent, viodesclerosis dal Friûl*, a collage of ten mini-stories, each of which representing a decade of the past century, which evoke the stories and political events that have had an important impact in Friuli, sometimes tragically. Minigutti gathered and selected the most significant and unusual archive material and incorporated commentary by means of a special editing technique that retells our land's history in a completely fresh way, highlighting both times of hardship and times of laughter, while avoiding all trace of rhetoric or nostalgia.

The film was shot in two parts, *Nûfcent, viodesclerosis dal Friûl* (part 1), which includes the first five episodes covering the early part of the century, made in 2004, and a second part made in 2006. Dorino Minigutti's film won the 2007 Mario Quargnolo prize, a prize awarded by Mostre dal Cine Furlan.

In 2005 Stieffin Morat and Giorgio Cantoni introduced a strong experimental note in their documentary on the river Tagliamento and the people who live along its banks. Entitled *Mugulis*, the film won first prize at the 2005 Mostre dal Cine Furlan. Stefano Morandini chose a decidedly classical style to record a tradition that is still keenly observed in the mountain region of Carnia, but which was present throughout Friuli at least until the 1950s – namely the use of tree frogs and wooden clappers (instead of bells) to commemorate Christ's Passion. Entitled *Crasulas a Enemonç*, was highly commended and won the Mario Quargnolo prize that same year.

The other great documentary series was *Farcadice* by Carlo Della Vedova and Luca Peresson. The saga began in 1999 with *Farcadice – Diari di viaç, Colonia Caroya, Argentine*, continuing in 2006 in its aim of recording the various phases in Friulian emigration to all parts of the world with *Farcadice, diari di viaç: Charleroi, Belgjiche*, which focused on one of the most tragic events associated with it. Many people left Friuli to seek work in Belgium, only to encounter sickness and disaster in that country's coal mines.

There were several other excellent documentaries made in 2006, such as *Sul troi par Lucau*, by Lauro Pittini, which recorded one of the most earnestly observed traditions in Carnia, a pilgrimage whose sacred nature has always been combined with its role as a link between two neighbouring peoples: the Carinthians and the Friulians.

Other films made that year include *L'amôr une volte*, by Michele Federico, *Storiis in cuatri lenghis* by Erica Barbiani, Sergio Beltrame and Vera Tomasin (winner of 2007 Quargnolo prize), Gianni Fachin's *Furlans di Romania* and Irene Rubini's *La Fradaie dai*

Teracîrs e Mosaicicj Furlans inte Americhe dal Nord. The last of these, which puts the spotlight on the extraordinary centuries-long history, talent and works of Friulian mosaicists and marble decorators around the world, was followed up two years later with ***La lungje strade dai teracîrse mosaiciscj furlans in Europe***, by the same director.

The year 2007 saw the filming of ***Farcadice, diari di viaç, Umkomaas, Sud Afriche***, the third episode of ***Fracadice***, tracking native Friulians to the South African diaspora, leading into the fourth and final episode, ***Farcadice, diari di viaç, Toronto, Canada***, which makes a considerable leap in time and space to visit the Friulian community in Toronto. Dorino Minigutti returned with a sports documentary entitled ***Il balon tal cjâf*** – a series of eight interviews with athletes. A particularly captivating and surprising documentary was a work presented by Fernando Birri, a director with an international reputation, whose poetic multilingual short, ***Elegia friulana***, is a homage to his family's origins.

Last, but not least, Alberto Fasulo's ***Rumore bianco***, is a tribute to the Tagliamento, the lands it snakes through and the men and women who live there. Fasulo comes from San Vito al Tagliamento and is a film director (and now also a producer) who has built a considerable career in the industry over the years. Before directing ***Cos'è che cambia?***, an affectionate depiction of the town of his birth, Fasulo had worked with various filmmakers as director's assistant, assistant cameraman, cameraman and live sound technician. He also helped produce the Friulian-language documentary entitled ***Babel blu*** (whose theme is the flag of Friuli), which was directed by Renato Rinaldi.

Another fine documentary that should not be overlooked is ***Cjavelârs e pelassiers***, by Fredo Valla and Nereo Zeper, about the hair-gatherers who used to travel from the Occitan valleys in northwestern Italy (especially from the town of Elva) all the way down the Po valley until they reached Friuli. Fredo Valla is an Occitan documentary filmmaker, whose many projects include conceiving and writing the screenplay for the film ***E il vento fa il suo giro / E l'aura fai son vir***, directed by Giorgio Diritti (2007). He has nurtured a close relationship with Friuli over the years and many of his films have been screened at the various Mostre dal cine Furlan, one edition of which saw him included as a member of the jury.

Autogrill, the first sitcom in the Friulian language was filmed in 2008 and consisted of six episodes directed by Claudia Brugnetta and broadcasted by RAI (Friuli – Venezia Giulia regional broadcasting centre of the Italian national broadcasting company). This was followed in 2014 by ***Bed & Breakfast***, a seven-episode series created and directed by Claudia Brugnetta and written by Barbara Bregant and Federico Scridel.

Visins di cjase, directed by Marco Londero and Giulio Venier, both from Gemona, was made in 2012. The screenplay is by Renzo Brollo and was commended at the Concors par Tescj Cinematografics competition. Around the same time, Alessandro Di Pauli and Tommaso Pecile began to give concrete form to their project ***Felici ma Furlans***, another sitcom that was extremely successful with the general public, especially online.

The link between music and the cinema has been reinforced over the years thanks to Marco d'Agostini's recent documentary films: ***JNK, oltri la ultime frontiere*** (2013) and

the various films dedicated to ***Suns Europe***, which were shot before 2015 when the first edition of the European Festival of Performing Arts in Minority Languages was held. Besides documenting what occurs during the event, which every year at the beginning of December turns Udine and Friuli into the Europe's multilingual and creative hub, the documentary also records the views of the artists taking part. This is an important example of what it means today to use one's mother tongue in an artistic context.

It is worth concluding this overview by mentioning the latest significant docufilms. This category certainly includes Massimo Garlatti-Costa's ***Missus*** (2017) and ***Predis*** (2018), which examine the still largely neglected "Glesie Furlane" movement and its role in the struggle for Friulian autonomy.