

STEMAL ENTERTAINMENT CINEMAUNDICI AND BARBARY FILMS AND RAI CINEMA PRESENT

Based on Boccaccio's masterpiece  
THE DECAMERON

# WONDROUS BOCCACCIO'S

A FILM BY PAOLO & VITTORIO TAVIANI



IN A TIME OF DEATH,  
THE ONLY SANCTUARY IS THE IMAGINATION...

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# WONDROUS BOCCACCIO

A FILM BY **PAOLO & VITTORIO TAVIANI**

WITH

**LELLO ARENA**      **PAOLA CORTELLESI**

**CAROLINA CRESCENTINI**      **FLAVIO PARENTI**

**VITTORIA PUCCINI**      **MICHELE RIONDINO**

**KIM ROSSI STUART**      **RICCARDO SCAMARCIO**      **KASIA SMUTNIAK**

**JASMINE TRINCA**      **JOSAFAT VAGNI**

ITALY / FRANCE - 121 MIN - COLOR - 1.85 - 5.1 - 2015

**mk2**



## SYNOPSIS

Florence, Italy, 1348. As the plague ravages the city dwellers of Tuscany, a group of young men and women takes shelter in a remote villa in the hills surrounding Florence. Now living as a community, they decide to tell each other a story a day to take their minds off their precarious situation...



#### **DIRECTORS' NOTE**

We tell this story, these stories, freely inspired by the “*Decameron*” by Boccaccio, because we wanted to take a challenge: to bring into opposition the pale colours of the plague – which, then as now, in various forms, is everywhere – to the transparent colours of love, ingenuity, poetry.

We put this challenge in the hands of ten youngsters, seven women and three men, who will find strength by forming a community close to nature, with Franciscan rules, such as preparing their own bread. A choice of simplicity that allows them to look and plumb the complexity of human adventures, recalling them with the power of imagination.

**Paolo and Vittorio Taviani**



## 5 QUESTIONS TO PAOLO AND VITTORIO TAVIANI

**You decided to take on a great literary work of art, composed of one hundred novels collected in a compilation. What is contemporary about this compilation?**

We wanted to get closer to young people and to this brutal present time they are exasperated by - we recognize them in our families, we meet them in our streets and around the world. All of a sudden, images and sounds appeared to us again violently: Florence in the 1300's, disfigured by the plague, ten young people, seven women and three men, who don't want to surrender to the darkness that is undermining them and that is taking away their will to live. They leave the city and rely on the powers of nature and fantasy, with obstinacy, fear, passion and joy...

Yesterday like today, anywhere, the plague can appear through thousands of faces. But today, particularly for the two of us - we were immediately convinced -, the match between Boccaccio and his Decameron is finally due. This match touches us and makes us grateful. Now our WONDROUS BOCCACCIO must be told to others, in a different language that makes works created from a same story become. We can't answer your question any better: the plague, young people rebelling, and the fabulous events that are evoked... all have the same heartbeat.

**How much did the previous versions of *the Decameron* influence you, particularly Pasolini's version? How different is WONDROUS BOCCACCIO from his? What is its identity?**

We have said it before: a literary work can offer stories to cinema. Some directors find pleasure in illustrating them and some don't. We don't. Of course, we love the works that inspire us, but we consider their plots as ways to talk about our own anguish and desires. Boccaccio has lent us his novels and his inexhaustible rich imagination. He has lent his work to several directors. Including Pasolini. His film is a poetic, violent representation of erotica, of flesh and sex. The film was persecuted by censorship because, in those years, it coincided to sexual liberation battles. We prefer not to talk about other versions of *the Decameron*.

WONDROUS BOCCACCIO is the offspring of current times and as Tuscans, we are certain that it is self-reflecting and unique. In all of its subjects, even sensuality, which is underlying everywhere in the book.

**Which novels did you choose?**

Which novels? We can't reveal that. We love the audience; they must enter the theatre unaware and abandon themselves to the emotions of the discovery.

We can only say that during the filming we were very moved with the contrasting and pleasant loves, we laughed at the grotesque cases of "guilty females" or naive dupes. These were a variety of emotions that stimulated our pleasure to narrate.

**Does the music have a crucial role? In addition to highlighting and accompanying situations, does it have a narrative function?**

Each of our ten young people requested their own sound space, a place to move and to recognize: freedom of rhythms, contemporary instruments, and electronic agitation. With their feet planted firmly in today's sound, the challenge was possible: going from their daily dimension to the world of these fantastic tales, evoking another musical universe, a melodramatic one. The two musicians playing in this movie focused on this clash with the complicity of Rossini, Verdi and Puccini. It was exciting for them and for us, to set acoustic harshness against melodic waves, present and past. As always, music plays a main role in our movie.

**A thought and a comment about the actors...**

We all know that for a director, speaking well about his own cast is an indirect way of self-complimenting, and to speak well about his movie. Maybe it is indeed! We are grateful to the creativity of our actors. It is the first times we had so many actors and actresses to direct on a set. Or we could more accurately say: "many actresses and actors", because women are often the main protagonists in this film and they boosted our creativity. The seven girls are the ones to decide to leave the plague-stricken Florence: "... I leave you - says one - adding up the daily number of dead in the evening. I'm going up the hill, under the open skies... I want to start breathing again ...". In the film, it is also the girls' invention to tell the stories.

Most of the cast are already well known and loved by the public, others are still working their way up, and some are beginners. Each one of them gave a personal contribution to the characters, with professionalism, gaiety, anxiety and sometimes oddity.

This event brought together two distant generations: theirs and ours. There was a passionate exchange, a mutual give and take.

## WOMEN ARE THE ENGINE OF THIS STORY

In the countryside, in a large house that has a view of a beautiful valley, these young people tell stories that have a common theme, love: a feeling seemingly grotesque at times, sometimes dramatic, often with great eroticism. While the images of spectacular landscapes between the Val d' Orcia, Pienza and Montalcino scroll by, the absolute key protagonists are the women, who, in this film, seem to have been painted by Masaccio in this cinematographic fresco. "For us this film is all feminine. It's the women who decide to leave the city and it will be the women who will tell the five stories using art and imagination, which one must search for at any cost" say Paolo and Vittorio Taviani who represent them as flowering damsels in an unforgettable scene, as they enter the water all dressed in white. The moral of the story? There is none other than "love is possible. There is no closure. And all thanks to these women who live their sentimental lives even if they are immoral."

## CATALINA AND GENTILE: WHEN LOVE IS THE ANTIDOTE TO DEATH

The first story is played by Vittoria Puccini and Riccardo Scamarcio. Catalina (Puccini) is the main character, loved by a man who isn't her husband. When she falls ill her husband sends her away to die alone, whereas Gentile (Scamarcio) stays by her side and is able to resurrect her, and then becoming her lover. "We worked intensively on the close up of Vittoria Puccini's awakening. We had to bring out the light from her eyes because this is a story of resurrection through love", say the Taviani brothers who have no doubt: "Love conquers death. And there is such a desire for love in Boccaccio; love has such a strong reason to exist. There is a very emblematic scene in where Catalina, thought to be dead, is embraced by her lover, who unlaces her blouse, seeks her breast and touches her sensually as if she were still alive."



## CALANDRINO: HOW CRUEL CAN THIS MONSTER OF A HUSBAND BE?

In some ways, the theme of the second story is the opposite to the first, which is the story of Calandrino, whom we all studied in school, played by an ugly and dark character, barely recognizable Kim Rossi Stuart. "We chose this story because it represents something that often happens today." This is the theme: what would a man do in this day and age if he were a foolish like Calandrino and could receive the gift of being invisible? "We thought of a man who - foolish or not - in the end, thinking he can get away with anything, brings out his darkest side. He turns into an unexpected monster that chases young girls and becomes even more horrible when he comes home to his wife. He is not invisible to her and he knows she can see him. At first he calls her a witch, and then he beats her violently and kicks her in the back. Clearly, there is a reference to the daily news that we read and watch every day about women who endure violence inside their own family."



## GHISMUNDA AND DUKE TANCREDI: TYRANT FATHER FIGURES WITHOUT A CRUMB OF LOVE IN THEIR HEARTS

The third story is a mixture of the first two. The main character is Ghismunda (Kasia Smutniak), daughter of Duke Tancredi (Lello Arena), for whom she has deep affection. But when her much older husband dies, she returns to her father's home, and makes the mistake of falling in love with a manservant, Guiscardo (Michele Riondino). Her father will not accept this and will have the young man killed. "We have always been shocked by the contemporary stories with absurd relationships between married people where love is hindered because of religion or social status." This woman decides to die with the man her father has had killed in the end and renders meaningful this phrase - that can also be found in Boccaccio's original text - that says: "I have loved and if it is true that I have loved, after death I will still love you the same." For the Taviani brothers, therefore, love goes beyond death in this case as well.

Also very interesting is the research that was made on colour, which changes in each episode. In this story, there is a violet colour that tends to darken as the story flows with a sombre environment from beginning to end.

## USIMBALDA AND ISABETTA: "WE ARE SINNERS. OUR FATHER HAS MADE US OF FLESH."

The tone changes in the fourth episode that dampens what we have just seen. What happens when grotesque is mixed with love? In a convent with a very rigid abbess (Paola Cortellesi), she discovers that Sister Isabetta (Carolina Crescentini) has let a man into her room. Abbess Usimbalda reproaches her in the beginning and threatens her in front of all the other nuns. Later on, we discover she has also experienced a night of sex. The story turns around with the abbess who admits to being "a sinful woman like all others, because Our Father has made us of flesh". The Taviani brothers comment: "Paola manages to be comic but also cruel and evil in her acting. Her skill is to be able to pass from the inflexible abbess to that of the woman who simply admits she has a man in her life and therefore also invites the other nuns to make the most of it, mainly because not all of them have this gift". A capsizing that leaves the spectator with a sense of "wonder", but that also testifies the absolute freedom to love, beyond all judgment.



## FEDERIGO AND GIOVANNA: AN ERROR MADE WITH LOVE MUST BE FORGIVEN

And finally, perhaps the most famous story, the one of Federigo degli Alberighi (Josafat Vagni). Federigo is dirt poor and sacrifices his adored falcon to prepare a meal for his beloved Giovanna (Jasmine Trinca). “The killing of the falcon is the exaltation of absolute love because it is as if he kills himself for love”, say the Taviani brothers. This gesture horrifies the young woman at first, when she goes to Federigo to ask him to give her the animal, because her son was very ill and the falcon represented her last chance to save her son. After the child’s death, Giovanna goes back to Federigo and gives him her hand in such an intimate and delicate way as to awaken a sense of incredible sensuality. “There is a moment of anger, but in the end she understands and in that gesture there is all the understanding of what has happened”.



## SHOOTING LOCATIONS

Shot in Tuscany and Lazio, WONDROUS BOCCACCIO is set in the most enchanting places in Central Italy. In Tuscany, the shooting took place in the castle of Spedaletto and Tarugi tower in Pienza, in Potentio, thousand years old Castles, of the Grosseto region, in Badia a Settimo, in the municipality of Scandicci, in the Romitorio Montalcino castle and Nobili-Tarugi palace (attributed to Antonio da Sangallo the Elder) in Montepulciano, also in Villa La Sfiacciata, overlooking Florence with a unique view. In Lazio, among the selected sets, there is the famous Odescalchi Castle in Bassano Romano, Montecalvello Castle, built by the Lombard King Desiderio and made famous by Balthus, the Abbey of Sant’Andrea in Fiumine and the Basilica of Sant’Elia.

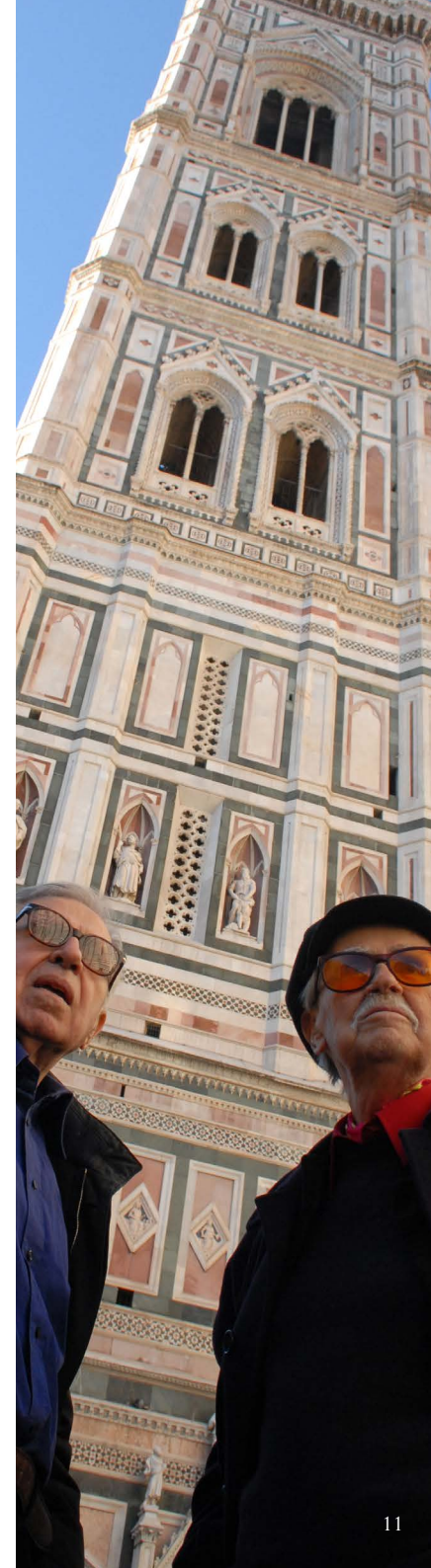


## PAOLO AND VITTORIO TAVIANI

Venice 1986: Life Career Golden Lion

## SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

- 2015 Wondrous Boccaccio
- 2012 Cesar Must Die (Berlin 2012: Golden Bear, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury)
- 2007 The Lark Farm
- 2004 La Sanfelice (TV)
- 2001 Résurrection (TV)
- 1998 You Laugh (Two Kidnappings or Kaos II)
- 1996 The Elective Affinities
- 1993 Fiorile (Cannes 1993: in Competition; David di Donatello Awards: Best Production Design)
- 1990 Night Sun
- 1987 Good Morning Babylon
- 1984 Kaos (David di Donatello Awards 1985: Best Screenplay)
- 1982 Night of the Shooting Stars (Cannes 1982: Grand Prize of the Jury, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury; David di Donatello Awards 1983: Best Film, Best Directors, Best Cinematography, Best Editing)
- 1979 The Meadow
- 1977 Padre Padrone (Father and Master) (Berlin 1977: Grand Prix; Cannes 1977: Golden Palm, FIPRESCI Prize)
- 1974 Allonsanfan
- 1972 Saint Michael had a Rooster (Berlin 1972: Recommendation)
- 1969 Under the Sign of Scorpio
- 1967 The Subversives (Venice 1967: in Competition)
- 1963 Outlaws of Love
- 1962 A Man for Burning (Venice 1962: Pasinetti Award, Cinema 60 Award, New Cinema Award)
- 1960 Italy Is Not a Poor Country (documentary)



## CAST

### The protagonists of the stories (in alphabetical order)

|             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Tancredi    | Lello Arena          |
| Usimbalda   | Paola Cortellesi     |
| Isabetta    | Carolina Crescentini |
| Niccoluccio | Flavio Parenti       |
| Catalina    | Vittoria Puccini     |
| Guiscardo   | Michele Riondino     |
| Calandrino  | Kim Rossi Stuart     |
| Carisendi   | Riccardo Scamarcio   |
| Ghismunda   | Kasia Smutniak       |
| Giovanna    | Jasmine Trinca       |
| Federico    | Josafat Vagni        |

### The storytellers (in alphabetical order)

|            |                           |
|------------|---------------------------|
| Elissa     | Melissa Bartolini         |
| Neifile    | Eugenia Costantini        |
| Panfilo    | Moisè Curia               |
| Fiammetta  | Miriam Dalmazio           |
| Lauretta   | Camilla Diana             |
| Filostrato | Nicolò Diana              |
| Dioneo     | Fabrizio Falco            |
| Emilia     | Ilaria Giachi             |
| Pampinea   | Barbara Giordano          |
| Filomena   | Rosabell Laurenti Sellers |

## CREW

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Written and directed by   | Paolo and Vittorio Taviani  |
| Director of photography   | Simone Zampagni   |
| Camera Operator           | Bruno Di Virgilio   |
| Costumes                  | Lina Nerli Taviani  |
| Production design         | Emita Frigato   |
| Editing                   | Roberto Perpignani  |
| Casting                   | Francesco Vedovati  |
| 1st assistants director   | Mimmola Girosi, Andrea Vellucci   |
| Sound                     | Benito Alchimedede, Maurizio Grassi   |
| Administrator             | Concetta Pistoia  |
| Original score            | Giuliano Taviani and Carmelo Travia (Ala Bianca Publishing)   |
| Line producer             | Patrich Giannetti   |
| Executive producer        | Donatella Palermo   |
| Produced by               | Donatella Palermo and Luigi Musini<br>Stemal Entertainment, Cinemaudici and<br>Barbary Films                                |
| With                      | Rai Cinema  |
| In association with       | Grazia Volpi  |
| Coproducer                | Fabio Conversi  |
| With the contribution of  | General Direction for Cinema – Ministry of<br>Cultural Heritage and Activities<br>Tuscany Region<br>Toscana Film Commission |
| With the participation of | Lazio Region – Regional Fund for Cinema and<br>Audiovisual  |
| In collaboration with     | AMER S.p.A. (under the rules of the Tax Credit)   |
| And with the support of   | ACETIFICIO CARANDINI EMILIO S.p.A (under the<br>rules of the Tax Credit)  |
| In association with       | CINEFINANCE ITALIA S.R.L. (under the rules of the<br>Tax Credit)  |
| In association with       | Indéfilms 3   |
| With the contribution of  | Eurimages   |

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Loosely based on *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio (BUR Publishing)



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