



**MEMBERS'
CHOICES
SEASON**

Eden Court Cinema,
Tuesday
12 November 2017
at 7.15pm

Notes written by
Mike Noble, leaning
heavily on Philip
French's review
published in The
Observer, Sunday 29
May 2011.

Le Quattro Volte

2010, Italy/Germany/Switzerland., Colour; Drama, Running time: 84 mins. 'U' Cert.

Cast: Giuseppe Fuda, Bruno Timpano, Nazareno Timpano

Director and writer: Michelangelo Frammartino

Cinematographer: Andrea Locatelli

Le Quattro Volte ("The Four Times") is the sort of film which must give the worst possible task to a promoter. In this day and age, how do you persuade people to go to see something with no film stars, or even 'actors', in the usual sense, no plot or conventional storyline, no music and no dialogue? The film might be described as "a sort of documentary about life in the awesomely beautiful but impoverished southern area of Calabria from where the director's family originally moved north." Specifically it is about the remote mountain town of Caulonia, although this is only named in the final credits. It is an extraordinary movie, however, which deserves the widest possible viewing and will have huge appeal to anyone with enthusiasm for the best of world cinema.



It's not just a documentary, though. As Philip French, writing in *The Observer*, Sunday 29 May 2011, said, it is much more than one of those films about someone visiting a neglected corner of the world to observe ancient customs that linger on and then to ruefully comment on changing times. "It is an essay, a cinematic poem, a spiritual exploration of time and space, and it's designed to make us think and feel about the world around us and our place in it."

The movie that first came to his mind while French was watching *Le Quattro Volte* was, he said, *The Tree of Wooden Clogs*, Ermanno Olmi's masterly, documentary-style account of a year in the lives of five peasant families in 1898 Lombardy. Hopefully you may have been able to see that film when Eden Court Cinema was at last able to screen it for us on 18 July. But Frammartino, "although also working with non-professional

performers, does not have Olmi's explicit interest in historic injustice, and he aims to go beyond the human and the social."

There is no camera movement during the first half-hour. There is "no music, just the sound of bells, of the wind in the trees, of the bleating of goats." And for me it is the early images, like the one on this page, (above) which remain in the mind. The director is here reinforcing in the viewer the sense of being a spectator, an outsider, like someone who is watching in fascination the detailed goings-on in an ant heap.

At the start we are introduced to two central figures. A charcoal-burner is tending his volcano-like charcoal pile and an elderly goatherd is tending his flock in the breathtaking countryside. We don't see the charcoal burner again until much later, but we watch the old peasant in close-up as he and his dog drive the goats from the hills. Everyone else is seen from a

distance, remote figures both in town and in landscape.

“The film subtly draws us into its own sense of time as the goatherd completes the rituals of the day and prepares for bed by taking a strange grey medicinal powder in water.” The nature of the powder is best divined from watching the film, so I won’t explain it here. Just watch out for the dust which is first seen dancing magically high up in the air inside the church!

the right as the people move to their Calvary. But the camera does not go to Golgotha. It remains behind, looking down on the diligent dog, who first intimidates a tardy altar boy running after the paschal procession, then causes an accident that releases the goats to roam the town and to be present at their master’s deathbed. This is both funny and touching, something that will move those of a religious inclination and amuse admirers of Luis Buñuel.



“These two old people represent old folk traditions existing beside and within the church, and in a brilliantly orchestrated sequence we see the goatherd die at Easter time. His death coincides with a procession of villagers walking out of town to a nearby hill where the actor playing Christ will place his cross beside the two already there. We’ve seen three men dressed as centurions arrive and the local Mary and Martha join them, and the camera pans to

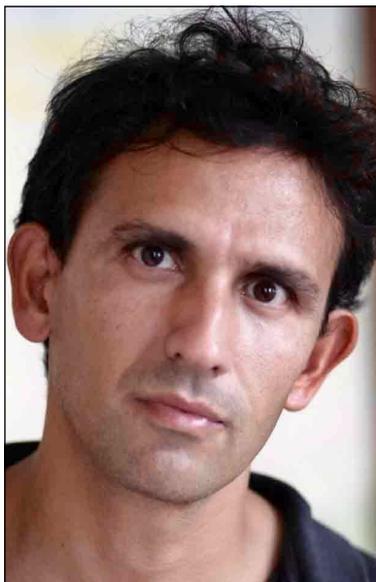
“Thereafter, the goats are under new management whose faces are not seen and whose dress (jeans and rubber boots) is less traditional. A kid is born and later goes astray. Winter is registered by a single shot of a snow-covered landscape. Suddenly spring is back with what one supposes to be some kind of fertility ritual that involves everyone in town helping to cut down a vast fir tree, trimming it and dragging it into town to erect it in the square near the church. From a nearby

roof we see an intrepid young man shin up it. As with everything else, we're invited to watch, wonder and make of it what we will.

"At this point the charcoal-burners re-enter the scene to cut up the tree and transport it to their corner of the mountains. They conduct their task using ancient skills, their work resembling the pyre for a god or a hero, and we observe it with reverence. Later we see the charcoal brought back to be used by the townspeople who brought down the tree."

As Philip French says, we can sit and enjoy this film in a meditative mood, and we may very likely infer or sense something of Frammartino's underlying aims. The title, *Le Quattro Volte*, apparently comes from Pythagoras, who lived in Calabria in the 6th century BC and spoke of each of us having four lives within us – the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human – "thus we must know ourselves four times."

"In bringing the goats, the tree and the charcoal-burning process to the foreground and relegating the humans to a less dominant position than is customary, Frammartino believes he has given the audience "a pleasant surprise: the animal, vegetable and mineral realms are granted as much dignity as the human one."



Director **Michelangelo Frammartino**

Michelangelo Frammartino was born in 1968 in Lombardy, Italy. He is a Milanese artist, originally trained as an architect, and has turned from photography and video installations to the cinema. *Le Quattro Volte* is his second film.



Eden Court Cinema
Tuesday 26 November
2017 at 7.15pm

Shot mostly within the hermetic confines of the hotel, *The Consequences Of Love* gives Titta's claustrophobia and alienation a vividness that is only enhanced by cinematographer Luca Bigazzi's vertiginous camera angles and Pasquale Catalano's disorienting triphop soundtrack. For in the end, as in the beginning, Titta is a prisoner, fixed in place and unable to escape, his only small consolation being his faith, unwavering, if highly questionable, in his fellow man. This is a tense, tragic portrait of a life suspended. Simply unmissable.

Our next screening...
The Consequences of Love Paolo Sorrentino, 2004

The second film in our
Members' Choices Season



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