



ADRIANA CHIESA ENTERPRISES

ARA

**The tale of the tender
and moving friendship
between a lonely boy and
an extraordinary dog**

**Based on
a true story**



directed by
ALESSIA SCARSO

Italo

anything is possible...

starring

MARCO BOCCI

ELENA RADONICICH

BARBARA TABITA



ADRIANA CHIESA ENTERPRISES

INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION
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Italo

a film by
ALESSIA SCARSO

with
MARCO BOCCI
ELENA RADONICICH
BARBARA TABITA

a production
ARA FILM
(www.arafilm.it)



produced by
Roberta Trovato

With the support of the Italian Ministry of Culture
Department of Cinema

The film has been recognized as a National Cultural Interest



DIREZIONE GENERALE
PER IL CINEMA

With the support of Sicilia Film Commission



siciliafilm
commission

Italo died on 31 January 2011, leaving a great void in the town. It was in this same town that for the national premiere last Thursday, more than a thousand fans flocked to see the story of their four-legged friend.

IL MESSAGGERO

Almost like a fable, a story told with grace...

IL GIORNALE

... Italo was an exceptional dog. Every morning he got up and accompanied the children to school. He performed deeds, such as one night when he saved a waitress on her way home from work from being molested. From that day on, he appeared every evening to escort the young woman home.

IL GIORNO

"... emotions to transmit through emotions, values such as solidarity and helping those in need. Here, it is a dog that teaches these lessons..."

METROITALY.IT

A new "actor" has been born in the infinite gallery of dog-stars, his name is Tomak, and he plays the role of Italo (in the film by the same name), a stray dog the color of honey, who passed away in 2011 after having been made an honorary citizen of the city of Scicli, a Sicilian town in the province of Ragusa (UNESCO Heritage Recognition since 2002) where he decided to live, and above all, to perform his good works.

"It all began in March 2009", explained debut director Alessia Scarso, "when a pack of stray dogs wandering through the countryside attacked a little boy and killed him." A campaign was immediately launched to rid the area of the threat. The dog Italo, a stray mutt that had been in the town for some time, not only managed to survive, but was even given protection by the mayor who decided to adopt him on behalf of the population. The phenomenon of a dog that went to mass, accompanied children to school, and whenever he saw tourists arrive, escorted them to all the most interesting sights, just as a guide would have done...

LA STAMPA

It might seem like a sentimental fairy tale in Happyland, but it is a true story that took place in Scicli, Sicily...

IL GIORNO

The four-legged hero adopted by the inhabitants of Scicli...

It happened about six years ago in Scicli in the Sicilian province of Ragusa – with its little nativity-scene houses clinging to breathtaking Baroque rock precipices – that a stray dog, the color of honey, began to behave in an exceptionally social way, winning the affection of the townspeople who were still under the shock of a tragic occurrence. There had been a violent pack of stray dogs that had attacked a small boy. Almost as in a fable suspended between make-believe and reality – the events actually did happen – in "ITALO", Alessia Scarso's first film, the protagonist is an extraordinary four-legged friend honoured precisely with such a heraldic sounding name as Italo, that is made an honorary citizen of the town. No one in Scicli can forget him. Italo protected and consoled, he guided tourists, preceded funerals and so much more...

AVVENIRE

... Yet the true miracle of Italo is something more. That is, in a world that grows ever less kind, to recall the values of hospitality and compassion. A lesson in humanity taught to us by a being that is human in a different way.

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

ITALO, Alessia Scarso's first film, is the story of a stray dog, being released today in 200 theatres, distributed by Notorius Pictures...

"I met the real Italo," explained the director. "I was walking through the streets of Scicli and Italo, having identified me as 'tourist', never left my side the whole time. He would go to mass, then accompany children to school, and was present at weddings and funerals. Once, he saved a girl from being attacked by a thug." In short, an extraordinary dog, and this cinematic "fable" is dedicated to him.

LA MATTINA Oscar Cosulich

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FILM FESTIVAL FOR YOUTH
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**MINSK INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL LISTAPAD
(BELARUS)**

**KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
(INDIA) *opening film***

**PANTALLA PINAMAR
FILM FESTIVAL
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**SEDONA INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
(U.S.A.)**

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MONTE LIBRIC
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(SOUTH COREA)**

**ITALIAN CONTEMPORARY
FILM FESTIVAL JUNIOR
(CANADA)**

**SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
(CHINA)**

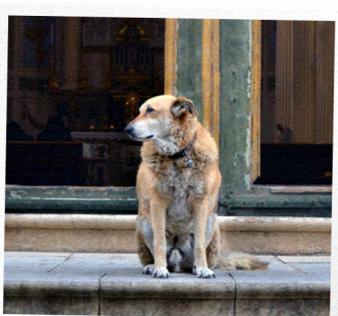
**TEL AVIV INTERNATIONAL
CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL
(ISRAEL)**

**N.I.C.E. 2015
NEW ITALIAN CINEMA EVENTS
(U.S.A.)**

WHO WAS ITALO ?

In 2009, in the wake of an unfortunate incident involving a pack of stray dogs and a small child, the town of Scicli decided to round up all the strays and remove them from the streets. It was just at this time that this mongrel with a honey-coloured coat arrived in Scicli. Some people think he was left alone when his elderly owner died, others say he was abandoned by a vagabond. However, Italo never revealed his true story to anyone. Strangely, the psychotic fear of stray dogs began to lessen upon his arrival and obviously he could never have frightened anyone. He chose Via Mormina Penna in Scicli, Sicily, a UNESCO heritage site since 2002, as his new abode, because he was sure of finding food there opposite a pizzeria. He began to attend Mass in the Church of San Giovanni in the main square. The parish priest's angry reaction, after all "Can we allow dogs in church?", was to put up a notice outside saying "No dogs allowed.". Italo, however, pretended that he couldn't read and continued attending Mass. After a while, he learned the itineraries of the guided tours and he began to lead the tourists along the routes. He gained his enduring place in the collective imagination on the occasion of the funeral of a young man killed in a road accident. The night before the funeral he kept a vigil at the church door and on the following day, to everyone's amazement, he headed the funeral cortège in front of the coffin.

Who was Italo? What was Italo? The people's answer is that he was the reincarnation of someone who loved Scicli. He policed the UNESCO historic town centre, running after cars driving through the restricted transit zone and barking at them. On Sundays he attended Mass. He participated in funerals, weddings and religious festivities. He would greet the children as they came out of school and in an unforgettable unscheduled appearance during the "Festa della Madonna delle Milizie" (a historical re-enactment of the battle between the Normans led by Count Ruggero and the Saracens which took place in 1091) he made his entrance just as the Emir Belcane was scornfully addressing Count Ruggero as "Christian dog". And he was centre stage. The following year the Mayor had to issue an order that Italo be kept on a leash during the festivities, in case he decided to give an encore.. "Cameras roll, action". When a famous Italian actor was filming a commercial in Scicli, he went on set every inch the consummate actor. He slipped through the corridors of Palazzo Spadaro and managed to wish happy 75th birthday to Piero Guccione, a very renowned contemporary artist born in Scicli. Pure fantasies? Every incident has been recorded, photographed, filmed. Finally, a noblewoman donated 2000 euro to have the statuette made for the crib where Italo took his place last Christmas alongside the Ox, the Ass and Baby Jesus.



FROM THE REALITY TO THE FILM



If Italo had not existed, a film director would have had to invent him. As he really did exist, it was inevitable that he should star in a film. It was a story waiting to be told. The film version of Italo's story is not only about this extraordinary "character" but involves a multiplicity of intrigues in the lives of the inhabitants of a small town community all centred on Italo. Our aim was to create a comedy which would also be moving and full of humanity. Besides Italo, the other protagonists are three children and three adults portrayed against a Sicilian background full of colour and tradition.



SYNOPSIS

SHORT VERSION

The tale of the tender and moving friendship between a lonely boy and an extraordinary stray dog that taught a whole village about being human.

LONG VERSION

Based on a true story, Italo vividly depicts the life-altering friendship between an extraordinary dog and a lonely child. One day, a good natured stray dog by the name of Italo, wanders into the small Sicilian town of SCICLI. But Italo's arrival causes a terrible uproar in the village, everyone there is fiercely opposed to having stray dogs around. Everyone... except Meno, a precociously wise 10 year-old, who is as lonely and introverted as can be. Since his mother passed away Meno has shut everyone out, including his workaholic father. It will take all the unconditional love a special dog like Italo can give to force Meno out of his shell, leading him into a series of adventures that will teach him the difference between acting like a grown up and actually becoming one.



THE CHARACTERS



MENO (VINCENZO LAURETTA)

Exceptionally intelligent, withdrawn and touchy. At ten years old, after the death of his mother, he has already transformed himself into a little adult who finds it difficult to relate to children of his own age. It isn't easy to make him laugh or cry but Italo succeeds in doing both and in teaching him the rules of friendship.



ANTONIO (MARCO BOCCI)

Meno's father and a man of few well considered words. Since the death of his wife he has become totally absorbed in his work. He administers the town and the household with the same severity he demonstrates in educating his son, with whom he can't really communicate. Antonio's defensive shell is beginning to show signs of weakening where Meno's teacher Laura, is concerned... however it will be the encounter with Italo that will resolve everything between them.



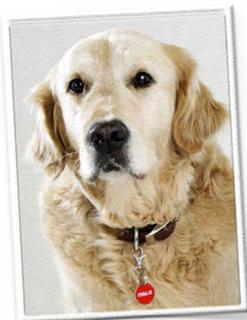
LAURA (ELENA RADONICICH)

A previously failed marriage brought her to Sicily: she is regarded by everyone as the foreigner. She is Meno's teacher and is passionately dedicated to her profession: she would do anything for "her" children. Nevertheless, she could employ the same amount of energy in looking for her glasses which are on her head.



CHIARA (MARTINA ANTOCI)

In the same class as Meno. Sociable and easy-going but already agitated by the onset of puberty. She dreams of the first time she will kiss "her" Meno. It's a shame that the boy is still totally disinterested.



ITALO (TOMAK)

A loveable honey-coloured mongrel. An anarchical temperament and noble nature, he becomes known and loved for his extraordinary humanity. He is finally adopted by the whole populace and becomes the town mascot.



LUISA (BARBARA TABITA)

Exuberant town councillor and candidate for mayor, Antonio's main rival. Luisa Nigro is explosive, garrulous, irresistible especially when her poetic fancy takes flight and pours forth in the most improbable metaphors.



PAOLO (MATTEO KORRESHI)

Small and cocky. In his slight form is hidden the strength of an atomic ant. Meno is his favourite victim to bully especially since he has a secret fondness for Chiara. How to hide the more tender side of his character from the rest of his gang who he fears would reject him as leader if they suspected it?



THE THREE GOSSIPS

Married to the three men they are the indispensable town gossips. The "cuttiggiare" the scandalmongers who know more than everyone else about the public affairs of the town. They certainly do not approve of a dog being allowed in church.



THE CHORUS OF THE PLAY

Three men sitting in the square, just such as you can find by the dozen in all the small towns of southern Italy. They provide the "chorus" of the play. In thick Sicilian dialect they comment on all the more important town happenings.

THE DIRECTOR



ALESSIA SCARSO

[Storyline, Direction, Editing]

Born 1979. Obtained her Diploma in Editing from the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, the oldest film school in the world and the most important one in Italy. She has worked as editor and postproduction coordinator with several journalists, producers and directors, making special reports, investigative documentaries, and short films. She has also directed several commercials, documentaries and enquires for official publicity campaigns. Her début in directing fiction was with the short "Uninstalling love" which was selected in more than 100 festivals worldwide and has won dozens of prizes. She is also responsible for the editing of the film "Come Non Detto", a Moviemax Media Group production. "Italo" is her feature debut.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENTS

On the 15th March 2009, in the countryside near Scicli, in Sicily, a pack of stray dogs attacked and killed a young boy. In the same period and in the same town, a stray dog arrived, who made himself the darling of the whole community. The film is inspired by these two items of local news and by my encounter with Italo when we spent one summer afternoon together.

Sicily is well known as a land of contradictions, exposed to invasion by foreigners, who both conquered and enriched it. "ITALO" presents a picture of how Sicily confronts the issue of dealing with strangers from a novel perspective. It tells the story of how, once the barriers of prejudice and initial diffidence are overcome, it succeeds in accepting diversity. No matter if in this case the stranger is a loveable, benevolent stray dog.

It's the story of a lonely, taciturn little boy and a very special dog, Carmelo, nicknamed Meno, and Italo. It not only chronicles the events in the life of a very singular dog who really existed, who attended Mass and guided tourists, but also a tale about growing up. Against this background the other characters, the inhabitants of the town, carry on their lives. Typical personalities who give a strong identity to the small community in which the story takes place like the mayor, the schoolteacher, the town councillor, the gossips, the old men who spend their days on a bench in the square, all personalities taken from the reality of everyday life whose idiosyncracies add colour and authenticity to the story.

Sicily has a reputation for guardedness, this film wants to show its sincerity, the witty authenticity of its people, mitigating through native humour its apparent contradictions and presenting them with an interweaving of realism and fantasy. The staging dwells on the 17th-century late Baroque architecture of the sets, on the hard stone of the grottoes in the natural quarries hollowed out by the centuries, and reveals the views and landscapes of the towns of Scicli and Modica, creating a fantastic fresco of the Sicily of today loved by UNESCO, while evoking in evident admiration the contemporary artists who have chosen to portray these places in their paintings.

An incredible true story, followed up, fictionalised and written with passion, which has inspired intense emotion in everyone who has read it, requiring an exceptional cast, something extremely rare if not unique for a first film, and I am especially proud that it features the very best acting talents that Sicily boasts of at the present time, as well as prestigious cameos like Piero Guccione, to name but one. A true story which aroused affection during the filming in the locations and also during the subsequent technical phases, captivating and winning over everyone who came to know about the course of events, almost as if they had actually met Italo himself.

The actions which involve both sets of characters, adults and children, are likewise connected to encounters with Italo. Each one of the characters will undergo change, especially Meno who will find, thanks to this fantastic stray dog, the key to how to grow up. Italo, however, will never belong to Meno, nor to anyone else. He belongs to everybody and nobody and, beloved of all, will leave behind him a greater lesson than he imparted by his presence.



INFO

title **ITALO**
tagline **anything is possible**
year **2014**
duration **104 minutes**
genre **family/biographic**
country **Italy**
language **italian**
subtitles **english**
shooting format **Red Epic 4K**
screening format **DCP / 24fps / 2.35 scope**
sound **dolby 5.1**
colour **colour**
director **Alessia Scarso**
production **Arà**
producer **Roberta Trovato**
associate producer **Carmelo Scarso**
italian distributor **Notorious Pictures**
italian release date **15 gennaio 2015**
international sales **Adriana Chiesa Enterprises**

cast **Marco Bocci**
Elena Radonicich
Barbara Tabita
Tomak (the dog)
Vincenzo Lauretta
Martina Antoci
Matteo Korreshi
Lucia Sardo
Andrea Tidona
Marcello Perracchio
Tuccio Musumeci

and the voice of **Leo Gullotta**

screenplay **Coralla Ciccolini**
storyline **Coralla Ciccolini**
Alessia Scarso

script editor **Isabella Aguilar**
DoP **Daria D'Antonio**
editor **Alessia Scarso**
composer **Marco Cascone**
music producer **Alabianca Group**
set designers **Giuseppe Busacca**
Maria Rosa Carpinteri

costume designer **Fiorenza Cipollone**
sound **Emanuele Cicconi**
first assistant **Alice Filippi**
casting and acting coach minors **Stefania Rodà**
executive producer **Luca Emiliano Pancaldi**
line producer **Ognjen Dizdarevic**



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