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| Vittorio De Sica (1901-1974) |
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| Vittorio De Sica(Vittorio Domenico Stanislao Gaetano Sorano De Sica) was an Italian theatre and film actor, director, and screenwriter. He is considered one of the fathers of Italian Neorealism and of the Commedia all'italiana [Italian-style comedy] (the latter being an Italian film genre that was in vogue between the 1950s and the 1970s, which, taking Neorealism as its starting point, ironically — and sometimes bitterly — reflected the evolution of Italian society). De Sica’s career began as a theatre actor in the 1920s. Nearly ten years later, he appeared on the big screen.  De Sica began working as a film director in the 1940s with *Maddalena… zero in condotta* (1940), which recalls the cinema of *telefoni bianchi* [white telephones] (taking the name from art deco-style sets), made in Italy during the 1930s in imitation of contemporary American comedies. In the same year De Sica, along with Giuseppe Amato, made *Rose scarlatte* (1940), the story of a woman being courted by a mysterious admirer who is actually her husband. In the following years he directed *Teresa venerdì* (1941), based on a foundling girl who falls in love with the director of the orphanage, and *Un garibaldino al convento* (1942), a hilarious historical story taking place during Garibaldi’s epoch. |
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This experience gave birth to an extraordinarily creative partnership that would lead to the famous neorealist tetralogy: *Sciuscià* (1946), *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), *Miracolo a Milano* (1951), and *Umberto D.* (1952). *Sciuscià* — which is considered the third neorealist masterpiece after Rossellini’s *Rome Open City* (1945) and *Paisan* (1946) — tells the tragic story of two shoeshine boys who, in order to buy a white horse, get involved in a robbery and end up in a reformatory. The film was a commercial failure in Italy, but it received the Oscar for the Best Foreign Film in 1948. *Ladri di Bicliclette*, based on the novel by Luigi Bartolini (1946), is the story of Antonio Ricci (played by Lamberto Maggiorani), an unemployed family man who finds a job as a municipal billsticker and whose bicycle, indispensable for the job, is stolen. For this movie, De Sica won a second Oscar for Best Foreign Film. However, with *Miracolo a Milano*, the story of an orphan boy that dreams an imaginary world, De Sica moved slightly away from the neorealist path, mixing fable with realistic elements. *Miracolo a Milano* was also winner of the *Cannes Palm D’Or*. *Umberto D.* — a masterpiece on the themes of old age and loneliness, and dedicated to De Sica’s father — is considered to be De Sica’s last neorealist film.  After *Umberto D*., the De Sica-Zavattini partnership ended for a short period. De Sica shot *Stazione Termini* (1953) and the episodic film *L’Oro di Napoli*, but he and Zavattini later reunited to work together on two realist pieces: *Il tetto* (1956), the story of a young married couple unable to find a house who then decide to build one in one night, and *La ciociara* (1960), an adaptation of Alberto Moravia’s novel of the same title with Sophia Loren, who won the Oscar for Best Actress. They also worked together on the surrealist film *Il giudizio universale* (1961), as well as *I* *Sequestrati di Altona* (1962), which was based on Jean-Paul Sartre's drama *Les Séquestrés d’Altona* and starred Loren. Loren also acted in De Sica’s episode ‘La riffa’ in the collective film *Boccaccio '70* (1962), as well as in the films *Ieri, oggi, domani* (1963) (alongside Marcello Mastroianni), *Matrimonio all'italiana* (1964) (the winner of De Sica’s third Oscar), and *I Girasoli* (1970). In 1970, De Sica obtained his fourth Oscar with the film transposition of Giorgio Bassani's novel, *Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, a drama about the persecution of a Jewish family in Ferrara during the fascist period. The last film De Sica directed was an adaptation of Luigi Pirandello’s *Il viaggio* (1974), which again starred Sophia Loren. De Sica died in Neuilly (France) on 13 November 1974 following lung surgery. Filmography: *Maddalena... zero in condotta* [*Maddalena, Zero for Conduct*] (1940)  *Rose scarlatte* [*Scarlet Roses*] (1940)  *Teresa venerdì* [*Doctor Beware; Do You Like Women*] (1941)  *Un garibaldino al convento* [*A Garibaldian in the Convent*] (1942)  *I bambini ci guardano* [*The Children Are Watching Us*] (1943)  *La porta del cielo* [*The Gate of Heaven*] (1945)  *Sciuscià* [*Shoeshine*] (1946)  *Ladri di biciclette* [*Bicycle Thieves*] (1948)  *Miracolo a Milano* [*Miracle in Milan*] (1951)  *Umberto D.* (1952)  *Stazione Termini* [*Termini Station*] (1953)  *L'oro di Napoli* [*The Gold of Naples*] (1954)  *Il tetto* [*The Roof*] (1956)  *La ciociara* [*The Woman from Ciociaria*] (1960)  *Il giudizio universale* [*The Last Judgment*] (1961)  Episode ‘La riffa’ [‘The Raffle’] in *Boccaccio '70* (with Luchino Visconti, Mario Monicelli, Federico Fellini) (1962)  *I sequestrati di Altona* [*The Condemned of Altona*] (1962)  *Il boom* (1963)  *Ieri, oggi, domani* [*Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*] (1963)  *Matrimonio all'italiana* [*Marriage Italian-Style*] (1964)  *Un mondo nuovo* [*A New World*] (1965)  *Caccia alla volpe* [*After the Fox*] (1966)  *Sette volte donna* [*Woman Times Seven*] (1967)  Episode ‘Una sera come le altre’ in *Le streghe* (1967)  *Amanti* [*A Place for Lovers*] (1968)  *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini* [*The Garden of Finzi-Continis*] (1970)  *I girasoli* [*Sunflowers*] (1970)  Episode ‘Il leone’ [‘The Lion’] in *Le coppie* [*The Couples*] (1970)  *Lo chiameremo Andrea* [*We’ll call him Andrea*] (1972)  *Una breve vacanza* [*A Brief Vacation*] (1973)  *Il viaggio* [*The Voyage*] (1974) |
| Further reading:  (De Santi)  (Masecchia)  (Pecori)  (Wagstaff) |