



Shun Li and the Poet

A film by Andrea Segre

"Rapturous...Exquisite...Delicate...Atmospheric...The universal power of poetry." -Guy Lodge, *Variety*

"What a debut!...An aesthetic gem...First-class cast, brilliant script, and you have a great film!" -*Sight and Sound*



Narrative Feature / Italy / 98 min / Drama / Italian

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SYNOPSIS

Shun Li works in a textile factory near Rome, slowly paying off the broker that brought her from China to Italy, while saving money so she can bring her young son to join her. She is suddenly transferred to work as a bartender at a pub in a small town along the Venetian Lagoon. The pub is the hangout of the local fishermen, including Bepi, a handsome old Slav immigrant nicknamed "The Poet." A tender, delicate friendship grows between Shun Li and Bepi. But gossip soon threatens their innocent relationship, a bond that had once transcended two very different, yet not at all distant cultures.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER LUX PRIZE awarded by the **EUROPEAN PARLIMENT**

WINNER Best Actress at the **DAVID DI DONATELLO AWARDS**

WINNER of the **Best Feature Film Award,**
LONDON BFI Film Festival

WINNER of the **Eurimages Award,**
SEVILLE EUROPEAN Film Festival

WINNER of the **'Amor e Pschie' Award,**
MEDFILM Festival

OFFICIAL SELECTION:

VENICE Film Festival

REYKJAVIK Int'l Film Festival

GOTEBORG Film Festival

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Two necessities gave rise to the idea of the film: on the one hand, the necessity to find in a story, both realistic and metaphoric, a way to speak about the relationship between the individual and cultural identity, in a world that increasingly tends to create occasions for contamination and identity crises; on the other, the desire to talk about two important places in my life that are very emblematic of Italy today: the multiethnic outskirts of Rome, and the Veneto, a region that underwent extremely fast economic growth, which has gone from being a land of emigration to one of immigration in a very short time.

Chioggia, a small lagoon city with a strong social and territorial identity, is the perfect place to narrate this process with even more emphasis. I still remember my encounter with a woman who could have been Shun Li. It was in a typical Veneto pub, where local fishermen had been going for generations. The memory of this woman's face, so extraneous and foreign to these places weathered by time and worn by habit, has never left me. There was something dreamlike in her presence. Her past, her history, the inspiration for the story all came to me just looking at her. What kind of relationships could she build in a region like mine, so little accustomed to change? This question was the starting point for trying to imagine her life.

Shun Li and the Poet is also a synthesis of my work as a director of documentary cinema. Through these films I have mainly been dealing with two themes over the past ten years: migration to Europe (*A metà, A sud di Lampedusa, Come un uomo sulla terra, Il sangue verde*), and the social and geographic territory of the Veneto (*Marghera Canale Nord, Pescatori a Chioggia and La mal'ombra*). My various experiences in directing documentary cinema have enabled me to appreciate not only the story of what is real, but also in what is real, helping me to understand how it is possible to discover the intimate and profoundly human dimension of reality, also of the pressing and current themes in today's society. In *Shun Li and The Poet* I wanted to respect the methods and styles of documentary cinema, by also working with unprofessional actors and always choosing locations in the real world. At the same time, the precision and subtleness of the language of Asian cinema, and of some important examples of international independent cinema, have been important traces in order to be able to narrate the atmospheres and places I chose for this film.

-Andrea Segre, Director

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

I had worked with Andrea Segre on the documentary *La mal'ombra*, and then again on *Il sangue verde*, I knew him and we had a relationship of mutual respect. Succeeding in making a feature film together that narrates the present and the pressing themes of our territory, merging the language of a documentary with a more cinematographic vision, was a challenge that I felt was very close to the path we were following in our society. The strength of the story, its protagonist, its dreamlike dimension, though at the same time one that is rooted in the real world, the intermingling of local elements with the opening up to Asia, and the beauty and narrative power of places I knew well, convinced me that it was an adventure upon which to embark without hesitation.

The production history of *Shun Li and the Poet* thus started in July 2008, when we decided to present the project at the International Film Festival in Rome, in the section Fabbrica dei Progetti -- New Cinema Network. *Shun Li and the Poet* was selected and awarded "Best European Project" for its "original, poetic and deeply human approach to the subject of immigration".

On that occasion we met Francesca Feder, from the French production company Æternam Films, who decided to co-produce the film. They have been a part of our journey ever since. In the weeks that followed, Andrea Segre worked with screenwriter Marco Pettenello on the first draft of the screenplay. It was finished in time to participate in the Atelier of the 62nd Cannes Film Festival in May 2009, where *Shun Li and the Poet* was the only Italian project among the 16 selected.

In the meantime, a highly professional work team, on both a technical and artistic level, was defined and consolidated, which enthusiastically joined and supported the project. First of all, there was director of photography Luca Bigazzi, who had also already had the occasion to work with Andrea Segre on the documentaries *Magari le cose cambiano* and *Il sangue verde*. The interest expressed by Chinese actress Zhao Tao, who had been hired for the role of Shun Li, just as that of actor Rade Sherbedgia, who was hired for the role of Bepi, was immediate and fundamental, as well as was Marco Paolini's involvement in the project since its inception. The collaboration with Roberto Citran as the Lawyer, and Giuseppe Battiston in the role of Devis completed the cast, which, in its final form, puts renowned actors alongside nonprofessionals selected from Chioggia, in line with a documentary-style approach.

-Francesco Bonsembiante, Producer

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Andrea Segre

Andrea Segre earned a PhD in Sociology, focusing on endangered social groups with an emphasis on immigration in Italy. He founded ZaLab, which “hosts participatory video and documentary workshops in intercultural contexts and geographically or socially marginalized situations.” Andrea’s first film, *Lo sterminio dei Popoli Zingari (The Gypsy Extermination)* was a documentary about the gypsies in Nazi concentration camps. He has since made several more documentaries that promote cross-cultural knowledge and understanding, including *Pescatori a Chioggia (Fishermen in Chioggia)*, which helped inspire his first narrative film *Shun Li and the Poet*.

Documentaries Include:

Maghera CanaleNord (2003). 60th Venice International Film Festival Special Mention at the RomaDocFestival

Dio era un musicista (2004). 62nd Venice International Film Festival

PIP49 (2006.) Episode for “Checosamanca”, Eskimosa-Gruppo Feltrinelli and RaiCinema

A Sud di Lampedusa (2006) MedFest Award at the 10th MediterraneoVideoFestival finalist in the 13th Ilaria Alpi Award

Among His Most Recent Works:

Come un uomo sulla terra (2008). Numerous awards including 2.SalinaDocFest; Special Mention Vittorio De Seta Award; Gran Prix TeleFrance CMCA. Official Selection at many festivals in Italy and abroad: Milan Film Festival; Visioni Italiane, Bologna; CinemAfrica, Stockholm; Sao Paulo Film Festival; and nominated for the David di Donatello, in the Documentary section

Magari le cose cambiano (2009). “Avanti!” award at the 27th Turin Film Festival

Il Sangue Verde (2010). CinemaDoc award at the Venice Days - 67th Venice International Film Festival.

ABOUT THE CAST

Zhao Tao (Shun Li)

Zhao Tao started out as a dancer, and is now an internationally renowned actress. She earned a degree in Chinese Folk Dance from the Beijing Dance Academy, and was teaching at Taiyuan Normal College when she was discovered by China's leading art film director, Jia Zhang Ke, She soon became his muse, starring in several of his films including *Still Life*, winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice International Film Festival. Zhao and Jia married in 2012. Zhao won the David di Donatello Award (the Italian Oscar) for Best Actress for her starring role in *Shun Li and the Poet*.

FILMOGRAPHY

I Wish I Knew (2010) by Jia Zhang-ke; 63rd Cannes Film Festival—Un certain Regard

Ten Thousand Waves (2010) by Isaac Julien

24 City (2008) by Jia Zhang-ke; 61st Cannes Film Festival--Official Selection

Wait (2008) by Peng Tao

Still Life (2006) by Jia Zhang-k; Golden Lion - 63rd Venice International Film Festival

The World (2004) by Jia Zhang-ke; 61st Venice International Film Festival – Official Selection

Unknown Pleasure (2002) by Jia Zhang-ke; 55th Cannes Film Festival -- Official Selection

Platform (2000) by Jia Zhang-ke; 57th Venice International Film Festival-- Official Selection

Rade Sherbedgia (Bepi)

Rade Sherbedgia is a poet, singer-songwriter, and one of the most well-known actors from the former Yugoslavia. After graduating from the Academy of Dramatic arts in Zagreb, he found success on both

stage and screen. When the Yugoslav Wars led to the dissolution of the nation in the early 90's, Rade and his family fled to Serbia and eventually emigrated to the U.S., where he started working in Hollywood productions, winning roles in popular films and TV series. Noteworthy performances in his extremely prolific career are the award-winning Macedonian film *Before the Rain* (1994) for which he won a best actor award at the Venice Film Festival, Francesco Rosi's *The Truce* (1997), Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1998), and Jeremy Podeswa's *Fugitive Pieces* (2007) for which he won a best actor award at the Rome Film Festival.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

In the Land of Blood and Honey (2011) by Angelina Jolie

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (2010) by David Yates

The Code (2009) by Mimi Leder

The Eye (2008) by David Moreau

Mission Impossible II (2002) by John Woo

Space Cowboys (2002) by Clint Eastwood

Snatch. (2000) by Guy Ritchie

Eyes Wide Shut (1999) by Stanley Kubrick

Il Il dolce rumore della vita (1999) by Giuseppe Bertolucci

Polish Wedding (1998) by Theresa Connelly

Mighty Joe Young (1998) by Ron Underwood

Broken English (1996) by Gregor Nicholas

Before the Rain (1994) by Milco Mancevski

CREDITS

CAST

Shun Li	ZHAO TAO
Bepi the Poet	RADE SHERBEDGIA
Coppe	MARCO PAOLINI
Lawyer	ROBERTO CITRAN
Devis	GIUSEPPE BATTISTON

GIORDANO BACCI

SPARTACO MAINARDI

ZHONG CHENG

WANG YUAN

AMLETO VOLTOLINA

ANDREA PENNACHI

WU GUO QUIANG

SARA PERINI

FEDERICO HU

CREW

Director	ANDREA SEGRE
Story	ANDREA SEGRE
Screenplay	MARCO PETTENELLO, ANDREA SEGRE
Director of Photography	LUCA BIGAZZI

Editing	SARA ZAVARISE
Original Music Score	FRANCOIS COUTURIER
Production Coordinator	NICOLA ROSADA
Sound	ALESSANDRO ZANON
Sets	LEONARDO SCARPA
Assistant Director	CINZIA CASTANIA
Casting	JORGELINA DEPETRIS
Costumes	MARIA RITA BARBERA
Script Supervisor	GINA NERI

Produced By

FRANCESCO BONSEMBIANTE for JoleFilm (Italy)

In Coproduction with
FRANCESCA FEDER for Aeternam Films (France)

In Collaboration with
RAI CINEMAS

In Coproduction with
ARTE FRANCE CINEMA