

Tilde Corsi and Gianni Romoli

Present

FACING WINDOWS
(La Finestra Di Fronte)



Winner, Best Film, Best Actor, Best Actress – 48th Annual David Di Donatello Awards
Winner, Best Film, Best Actor, Best Actress – Italian Golden Globe Awards
Winner, Best Director – 38th Annual Karlovy Vary Film Festival
2003 European Film Award Nominee

A Sony Pictures Classics Release

106 minutes

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CREDITS

Cast

Giovanna Mezzogiorno
Massimo Girotti
Raoul Bova
Filippo Nigro
Serra Yilmaz
Maria Grazia Bon
Massimo Poggio
Ivan Bacchi

Giovanna
Davide Veroli
Lorenzo
Filippo
Eminè
Sara
Young Davide
Simone

Crew

Director
Written by

Photography
Art Direction
Set Decoration
Costumes
Sound
Sound Editing
Editing
Music
Assistant Director
Script Supervisor
Casting
General Organization
Production Manager
Camera Operator
Make-up

Ferzan Ozpetek
Gianni Romoli and
Ferzan Ozpetek
Gianfilippo Corticelli
Andrea Crisanti
Massimiliano Nocente
Catia Dottori
Marco Grillo
Benedetto Atria
Patrizio Marone
Andrea Guerra
Gianluca Mazzella
Laura Curreli
Pino Pellegrino
Alessandro Mattei
Lilia Cioccarelli
Luigi Andrei
Ermanno Spera

Produced by Tilde Corsi and Gianni Romoli

Co-Produced by R&C Productions S.r.L. Rome; Redwave Films London;
Afs Film Ltd Istanbul; Clap Films Lisbon

SYNOPSIS

1943, Italy: In the darkest days of the war, a young baker's apprentice suddenly murders his employer before taking to the empty midnight streets, frantically searching for someone or something...a haunting image of passion, rage and desperation.

Sixty years later: Passion seems to be missing from the life of Giovanna (Giovanna Mezzogiorno), a young wife and mother of two who appears to have found some sense of domestic peace. Her husband, Filippo (Filippo Nigro), is a good man, but saddled with a poor-paying night shift, and Giovanna supplements her own full-time income as a poultry inspector by baking pastries and deserts for a local pub.

With more than enough to do, Giovanna isn't too pleased when Filippo insists on bringing home a confused elderly man (Massimo Girotti) they find wandering in the streets. In and out of lucidity, the old man utters a single name ("Simone"), and to appease Giovanna, Filippo insists that he will take the man to a police station the following morning. But by the next evening, the old man is still there. Once again, Filippo has let her down.

However, the older man's presence and the mystery of his identity begin to have a profound effect on Giovanna. When she begins her weekly baking, the old man can suddenly recall the secret of how to make perfect flour for pastries. At the same time, Giovanna continues her indulgence of gazing out her apartment window to the flat opposite hers, where a handsome young bachelor lives. At a chance meeting in a bar Giovanna learns that the bachelor, Lorenzo (Raoul Bova) is a banker who is due to be transferred to a new branch.

Her neighbor urges Giovanna to have a fling with Lorenzo, but their connection deepens when, one night, Lorenzo aids Giovanna in locating the older man, who has wandered off. As the questions about the old man grow more and more complex, and the secrets of his past are slowly revealed, Lorenzo and Giovanna grow closer, equally consumed by the fate of this gentle old soul and their own obvious attraction. With Lorenzo's departure growing more imminent, and as the old man begins to slowly put the pieces of his life back together, Giovanna finds herself facing a series of choices about her life, her family, and her future, striking an eerily similar chord to the fateful choice that a young baker's apprentice had to make sixty years ago.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

We all find ourselves at a crossroads at certain times in our lives, moments where we can see two destinies in front of us that force us to reckon with not only what we want, but with what we have and what we have lost. For Giovanna, the young heroine of Ferzan Ozpetek's *FACING WINDOWS* (*La Finestra di fronte*), her crossroads will appear in the form of an aging man losing his memory desperately clinging to a difficult choice he made a lifetime ago.

Realistically compelling and magnificently rendered, *FACING WINDOWS* has been winning awards and acclaim in countries around the world since its release earlier this year, culminating in four "David" Awards – the Italian equivalent of the Oscar – and a total of eleven nominations. A multi-layered story featuring three initially unrelated characters at the center, the inspiration was, for director Ozpetek, surprisingly simple.

"Once, I met an old man who had problems with his memory," he explains, "and I spent many hours with him and learned a lot from his words." This old man was the inspiration for Davide, stunningly portrayed by the late Massimo Girotti. But Davide's story needed to resonate in a contemporary context. "It was also very important for me to tell something about the relationship between a young couple and the past," explains the Turkish-born director. "Today's young people don't know much about the Second World War and what happened to the Jewish people."

Thus, as Davide slowly pieces together the shattered fragments of his memory, he finds himself in the home of a working-class couple, Giovanna (Giovanna Mezzogiorno) and Filippo (Filippo Nigro), who live with their two young children in an apartment building that faces another apartment building. The contrast between the Italy of Davide's youth is starkly contrasted by the busy, modern Rome of Giovanna. She works as a poultry inspector while her husband works the night shift, forcing them to utilize a neighbor Eminè (the delightful Serra Yilmaz) as a babysitter. Although she knows her husband is a good man and loves her children, Giovanna is clearly missing something in her life. She devotes precious time to baking pastries for a local pub, ostensibly to supplement her income. She's also begun to find herself gazing out of her apartment windows into the home of a young man, Lorenzo (Raoul Bova), who always seems to be entertaining a beautiful woman.

The presence of Davide – who quickly becomes a burden on Giovanna, as at first he offers only mixed clues to his identity – eventually forces Giovanna to take stock of her life. Seemingly random events – Davide being found confused on a footbridge, Lorenzo passing by the pub where Giovanna sells her pastries – lead the heroine to grow more concerned about the history of the old stranger. Who is "Simone" whom he speaks of so lovingly in his letters? How did the man survive the concentration camps? Why does no one report him missing to the police? And how is it that he knows so much about making pastries? As the answers about Davide and the events of his past begin to unfold, so, too does Giovanna's perspective on her own quiet, normal life. When Lorenzo begins to help

her with Davide, the connection between the two younger characters grows more intense. Knowing that Lorenzo is due to be transferred to another city shortly, Giovanna seriously begins to consider the possibility of a brief, passionate affair, hoping to rekindle a flame inside of her that she hadn't even been aware was put out.

What soon becomes the burning question of *FACING WINDOWS* is whether or not Giovanna, forced to make a choice about her life, will follow the same difficult path as Davide – always wondering what might have been if only a different choice had been made. “I think that throughout the ages, the feelings of people have always been the same,” says Ozpetek, reflecting on the similarities between the two stories.

Filming *FACING WINDOWS* in 2002, Ozpetek cast Giovanna Mezzogiorno, the daughter of two famous performers with an impressive resume of her own, as Giovanna. For the key role of Davide, Ozpetek cast veteran Italian actor Massimo Girotti, who has appeared as a “handsome tough guy” in films for several decades and worked with some of the great Italian directors – Visconti, Rossellini, De Sica, and Bertolucci. In recent years, Girotti had taken on smaller roles in lower-profile films and television shows, but it is impossible to imagine any other actor in the part of Davide.

For much of the film, Davide is a confused amnesiac, a state that Girotti plays with subtle mastery and an understated, neutral quality that makes him compelling not only to the film audience but to the characters in the film as well. Beneath the confusion lies a quiet dignity and sense of loss that are reflected on Girotti's distinguished, weathered face. “Massimo Girotti's performance is perfect,” Ozpetek declares. “Each expression of his face is really perfect. We spoke with many doctors about people who had problems with their memory, and Massimo understood exactly and acted in that way.” Girotti's reserved, minimal style really pays off towards the end of the film, when Davide begins to regain his faculties. That quiet dignity transforms into an almost angry pride; his reawakened passion for a love sacrificed to history long ago emerges just in time to push Giovanna towards her own difficult decision.

The brilliant performances by Girotti and Mezzogiorno – and strong supporting work from Filippo Nigro and Raoul Bova (rapidly becoming one of Italy's hottest exports, and on the tails of his smoky role opposite Diane Lane in *UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN*) – are at the center of *FACING WINDOWS*. Unfortunately, Massimo Girotti passed away before the film was completed, and he never got the opportunity to see the finished work that would prove to be the great achievement of his career. When *FACING WINDOWS* was released in Italy in April 2003, it was an instant hit with Italian critics and audiences. Girotti posthumously won the David Award for Best Actor – the only award nomination he ever received, a fitting tribute to a long and fruitful career.

Ultimately, *FACING WINDOWS* is about how we find love and passion in our lives in the midst of chaos and disruption. For both Giovanna and Davide, history and fate provide them with a chance to make a difference, either in their own ordinary lives or in the lives of others. Both of them soon discover that the choice is not as clear-cut as it seems, and despite her tumultuous emotional journey, Giovanna finds herself at the end

of the story in a place not too different from where she began. But Ferzan Ozpetek believes that Giovanna has discovered something new, wherein we perhaps find the deepest and most powerful sentiment that *FACING WINDOWS* has to offer: “I think what I would like the film to say to people, is first think about yourself. Before loving someone else, it is necessary to love ourselves – that is the secret.”

ABOUT THE CAST

Giovanna Mezzogiorno (Giovanna) was born into a show business family, the daughter of actors Vittorio Mezzogiorno and Cecilia Saachi. She studied acting with legendary theatre director Peter Brook before beginning a career in film with an award-winning turn in “The Bride’s Journey” (1997). Her first international role was a supporting part in “Les Misérables” (2000) with Gerard Depardieu and John Malkovich, and the following year she delighted audiences with her role in the award winning “The Last Kiss” (for which she was nominated for her first Italian Academy Award, the David). For “Facing Windows,” Mezzogiorno won the David for Best Actress, as well as Best Actress Awards from the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists and at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in Czechoslovakia. Her other starring roles include “Nobel” (2001), “Malefemmine” (2001) and the upcoming “Entrusted” with Klaus Maria Brandauer.

Massimo Girotti (Davide) was an athlete and engineering student before he turned to acting in 1939. For six decades, Girotti was one of Italy’s most enduring leading men, working with great Italian directors like Roberto Rossellini (“Desiderio,” 1943), Luchino Visconti (“Obsessione,” 1943 and “L’Innocente,” 1976), Vittorio De Sica (“The Gate of Heaven,” 1946) and Bernardo Bertolucci (“Last Tango in Paris,” 1972). With well over 100 films and countless television shows to his credit, Girotti hadn’t been on the big screen in five years when he was cast in “Facing Windows.” Massimo Girotti passed away on January 3, 2003. He subsequently won a David Award for Best Actor – his only nomination in a sixty-four year career – for his touching and skilled rendering of a man tortured by the choices he made in the past.

Raoul Bova (Lorenzo) is one of Italy’s hottest stars, a handsome and magnetic presence that is emerging as an international sensation. A competitive swimmer as a youth, Bova first gained notice on the long-running Italian television series “La Piovra” and later on his own miniseries “Ultimo” and “Francesco.” Onscreen he was seen portraying the son of Sophia Loren and Giancarlo Giannini in Lina Wertmuller’s “Francesca y Nunziata.” His first English-language production was opposite Madeline Stowe and Sylvester Stallone in “Avenging Angelo,” but recent film audiences will recognize him from his appearance opposite Diane Lane in the “Under the Tuscan Sun.” He is also set to star in the long-awaited sci-fi thriller, “Alien vs. Predator.”

Filippo Nigro (Filippo) was born in Rome and first appeared as Paolo on the Italian television miniseries “La Dottoressa Giò,” and made his feature film debut in “Le Fate Ignoranti (His Secret Life)” directed by Ferzan Ozpetek.

Serra Yilmaz (Eminè) began her career in her native Turkey, appearing in numerous films and television programs in the 1980s. In 1999, she appeared in

Ferzan Ozpetek's "Harem Suaré" and subsequently in "Le Fate Ignoranti (His Secret Life)," and continues to perform in both Turkey and Italy.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Ferzan Ozpetek (director/screenwriter) was born in Istanbul and moved to Italy in 1978 to study at La Sapienza University in Rome. He worked for a time with Julian Beck and the Living Theatre, and started his cinema career as an assistant director on Italian films, notably with director, Maurizio Ponzi. He made his feature directorial debut with “Hamam” (1997) and followed that with “Harem Suaré” (1999). His next film, “Le Fate Ignoranti (His Secret Life)” (2001), garnered notice on the international film scene, winning the award for Best Feature at the 2002 New York Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. **FACING WINDOWS** won the David Award for Best Film, and Ozpetek was awarded the Scholars Jury Award for his direction. Ozpetek also won awards from the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists (Best Original Story, with Gianni Romoli) and the Karlovy Very International Film Festival in the Czech Republic (Best Director, Crystal Globe).

Gianni Romoli (screenwriter/producer) began his career writing for Italian television. His first feature was the horror comedy “Dellamorte Dellamore (Cemetery Man)” starring Rupert Everett in 1994. In 1999, he first partnered with Ferzan Ozpetek to co-write and produce “Harem Suaré,” and the two later collaborated on “Le Fate Ignoranti (His Secret Life)” and “Facing Windows.” Romoli was also the co-producer of “Eden” (2001), starring Samantha Morton and Thomas Jane.

Tilde Corsi (producer) first worked as a publicist in Italy, notably on “Fellini’s Casanova” (1976) before beginning a second career as a producer. Corsi’s first effort was “Dellamorte Dellamore (Cemetery Man)” in 1994, written by Gianni Romoli. Corsi then joined Romoli to produce Ferzan Ozpetek’s “Harem Suaré,” “Le Fate Ignoranti (His Secret Life)” and “Facing Windows.” Corsi also co-produced “Eden” (2001).