



A film by Christian Walther

with quotes from the book
«Christ Stopped At Eboli»
by Carlo Levi

Matera

From the shame of Italy to the Capital of Culture

A production of Insertfilm AG
in co-production with SRF Sternstunde Kunst

LOGLINE

From the shame of Italy to the European Capital of Culture: The incredible transformation of the southern Italian town of Matera from an ugly duckling into a sought-after tourist destination.

SYNOPSIS

The cave city of Matera is one of the oldest continually inhabited spots in Europe. It has been notoriously famous as 'the shame of Italy' in the 1950s on the basis of the novel «Christ Stopped At Eboli» by Carlo Levi. In the last few years, however, everything has changed: Matera will be the European Capital of Culture in 2019. And since this decision has been made, buildings are being renovated, school classes from all over Italy are being dragged through the narrow streets, and dedicated volunteers are working on all kinds of cultural and other projects, so that Matera will remain an attractive place to live and work.

A film about exceptional people in an extraordinary city, and about a question that many other small cities around Europe have to ask themselves constantly: How is sustainable tourism to be promoted?



ABOUT THE FILM

The main protagonists of the film are:

- the tourist guide Francesco Foschino
- the farmer Mario Viola and
- the architect Mattia Antonio Acito.

They tell us about the origins of Matera, how it flourished and how it slowly crumbled to the bitter end in the mid-1950s, when the old town was completely cleared. - «A cultural shock», says Francesco Foschino. A shock, however, that brought committed and persistent citizens to reverse the apparent end of the city.

One of these committed citizens is today's Mayor Raffaello De Ruggieri, who contributed significantly to Matera's revival with his culture circle 'La Scaletta'.

Whether the blossoming forth of Matera goes too far and whether the character of the city runs into danger of being lost, is discussed in the second part of the film.

The Off-voice from the open belongs to Carlo Levi, from whose book «Christ Stopped At Eboli» is quoted again and again.



CARLO LEVI

The author Carlo Levi and the city of Matera are connected, although Levi never visited Matera in person. He only wrote down what others told him about the city.

«The doors were open because of the heat, and I looked inside the caves. In these black holes I saw beds, miserable household goods and rags... On the floor lay dogs, sheep, goats and pigs. In general, every family has only one such cave. And they all sleep together. Men, women, children and animals. I have never seen such a picture of misery.»



With these stories Levi filled in his book «Christ Stopped At Eboli». In this novel, the physician, painter and later politician from Turin looks back on the time he spent in the mid-1930s, during the period of fascism, as an exile in southern Italy. He describes a world that seems to have fallen out of time:

«The seasons glide over the peasants' toil, today as three thousand years before Christ's birth; no human or divine message was addressed to this stubborn poverty. We speak a different language: our words are incomprehensible here.»

Shortly after the Second World War, the book is published. It has an enormous influence. It was probably the first time in history that a city has been completely evacuated because of a novel, says Francesco Foschino in the film. For this is what happened after the book had been published: The old town of Matera, one of the oldest permanently inhabited places in Europe, was evacuated from 1952 onwards. Not because of an earthquake or a flood, but because the politicians of the post-war period – for understandable reasons – wanted to create a new, modern Italy.

Seventy years later, Matera prevails over well-known Italian cities and is voted European Capital of Culture 2019 by the European Union.



STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR

Without Carlo Levi this film wouldn't have been made. And if Matera were better known, it probably wouldn't exist, either. Although Italy is one of the most popular countries in the world, only a small proportion of the tourists visiting are drawn to the regions in southern Italy.

It was therefore a surprise for many Italians when Matera was proclaimed the next European Capital of Culture in 2014. – So I went there, and found it a great pleasure to meet men and women who were so passionate about their projects.

When I found out that a novel contributed to the fact that Matera was branded and evacuated as 'the shame of Italy', I thought for myself: This movie needs to be made!

I wanted to tell the story about this incredible change from the city named 'the shame of Italy' to the city becoming the European Capital of Culture. And I also wanted to ask the question of how should a city position itself as a tourist destination. How much infrastructure is sufficient, which hotel is too much? This is a tightrope walk that countless other cities have to face: Which compromises have to be made to preserve the unique character of a place?



THE PEOPLE

Francesco Foschino
Tour Guide

«At the time I was born and during my childhood, the Sassi of Matera were as empty as a piece of white paper.»



Mario Viola
Farmer

«What fascinates me about Carlo Levi is the question: Why did he want to be buried here?»



Raffaello De Ruggieri
Mayor of Matera

«Only those who dream and hope will advance. Those who don't get nowhere. Matera is a city that is advancing because it had this vision.»



Mattia Antonio Acito
Architect

«The visitor should feel like a fellow citizen – the city must let him feel that he is a temporary cultural resident.»



Mimí Coviello

Landscape Architect

«Only a few remained. But if we see this 'being only a few' as an opportunity, we can become extremely strong.»



Michelangelo Pentasuglia

Artisans

«It was a dream to live here, because here you never heard the noise of an engine. Today, everyone is sorry to have left the Sassi.»



Paolo Verri

Director of «Matera 2019»

«Carlo Levi's book had a tremendous impact. The politicians saw Matera as a symbol of a backward South, which had to be rebuilt.»



Silvia Padula

Art Historian

«During World War II, in the darkest moment of economic decline, a part of the church was walled up.»



IMPRESSIONS

Filmstills

Viewing platform



Chiesa rupestre Santa Maria de Idris



City center, Info panel «Matera 2019»



City center neighbourhood



City center Cave



Cripta del Peccato Originale



Chiesa rupestre di Santa Lucia alle Malve



Matera on a Saturday



Matera on a Saturday



«Gardentopia»



CREDITS

Contributors

Francesco Foschino, Tour Guide
Raffaello De Ruggieri, Bürgermeister
Mattia Antonio Acito, Architekt
Mario Viola, Landwirt
Mimí Coviello, Landschaftsarchitektin
Michelangelo Pentasuglia, Kunsthandwerker
Paolo Verri, Direktor «Matera 2019»
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INSERTFILM

Production

Insertfilm AG, Solothurn

Coproduction

SRF Schweizer Fernsehen

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SRF Pacte de l'audiovisuel
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Technical Information

Production format	FS7_2K
Evaluation format	HD422, dcp
Original language	Italien, Englisch
	Overvoicing german
Duration	52 min

Contact

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First Broadcast

SRF Sternstunde Kunst am 11th of march 2018
Festivals: Master of Arts, Sofia



DIRECTOR

Christian Walther

Hometown: Rüegsau BE

Christian Walther was born in Bern, Switzerland, trained as a grammar school teacher, educated in English, Media and History at the Universities of Bern and Basel and has been shooting documentaries since 2009. Since 1999 editor and performer of the cultural department of Swiss television, among others for the broadcasts «Sternstunden», «Literaturclub», «Mitenand» and «Kulturplatz». Since 2010 he is a freelance filmmaker and journalist for various SRF formats. 2015 Nordstern Medien GmbH was founded.

Filmography Documentaries

2018	Matera – Von der Schande Italiens zur Kulturhauptstadt, Prod. Insertfilm, SRF Sternstunde Kunst
2016	Die Rückkehrer, Prod. Insertfilm, SRF Sternstunde Religion
2013	Fremd – James Baldwin in Leukerbad, Essayfilm, Prod. Insertfilm AG, SRF
2013	Der Jura tickt anders – Kultur an der Peripherie, Dir. Anita Hugi, Christian Walther, Prod. SRF Sternstunde Kunst
2013	Unterwegs zu Richard Wagner – Eine religiöse Spurensuche Dokumentarfilm, Dir. Judith Hardegger, Christian Walther, Prod. SF
2012	Petra – Wunder in der Wüste, Dokumentarfilm, Prod. SF Sternstunde Kunst, 3sat
2011	Mit Bach von Leipzig nach Trogen – Unterwegs mit Rudolf Lutz Prod. SF Sternstunde Religion, 3sat
2010	Lonely Pioneers – The Young Gods, Dokumentarfilm, Prod. SF, TSR

Textworks and further information: christianwalther.ch und nordsternmedien.ch

