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A NEW MASTERPIECE FROM BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI

“‘The Spider’s Stratagem’ recalls the Stendhalian world of Bertolucci’s best film, ‘Before The Revolution.’ A handsome film.”

—Vincent Canby, The New York Times

“Simple, enthralling and almost surreal. Bertolucci has a great eye and a superb sense of mood. I’ll give ‘The Spider’s Stratagem’ 4 camera eyes.” —Leonard Harris, WCBS-TV

“‘The Spider’s Stratagem’ is possibly Bertolucci’s simplest and most glowing work. An engrossing film. A fine entertainment.”

—Judith Crist,
New York Magazine



“Fascinating. Bernardo Bertolucci is unquestionably the most exciting director of his generation.”

—Paul D. Zimmerman,
Newsweek

“Dazzling in its theatricality. The handling of the story is enthralling. A film of stunning visual impact. One of those rare films that can be seen over and over again.” —Norma McLain Stoop, After Dark

“Bertolucci’s best movie.” —Jay Cocks, Time Magazine

“Bertolucci’s best film.” —Village Voice

“THE SPIDER’S STRATAGEM”

Directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. Based on a story by Jorge Luis Borges.
With Giulio Brogi and Alida Valli. In color. A New Yorker Films Release.

New Yorker Theatre



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Bernardo Bertolucci's

THE SPIDER'S STRATAGEM

(La Strategia del Ragno)

Director.....BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI
Producer.....GIOVANNI BERTOLUCCI
Production Company.....R.A.I.
Screenplay.....BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI, EDOARDO DE GREGORIO,
MARILU PAVOLINI, after the Borges story
Photography.....VITTORIO STORARO (Technicolor)
Cameraman.....ENRICO UMETELLI
Editor.....ROBERTO PERPIGNANI
Art Director.....MARIA PAOLA MAINO
Sound.....GIORGIO PELLOU
Music.....Schoenberg, 2nd Chamber Symphony; Verdi
Assistant Director.....GIUSEPPE BERTOLUCCI

Leading Players

Athos Magnani, Sr. & Jr.....GIULIO BROGI
Draifa.....ALIDA VALLI
Costa.....TINO SCOTTI
Gaibazzi.....PIPPA CAMPANINI
Rasori.....FRANCO GIOVANELLI
Sailor.....ALLEN MIDGETT

Italy - 1970

Running Time: 97 minutes

A NEW YORKER FILMS RELEASE

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SYNOPSIS - THE SPIDER'S STRATAGEM

Bertolucci's film, THE SPIDER'S STRATAGEM, is based on a two-page "Fiction" by Borges which Bertolucci has transposed from the Ireland of the "troubles" to the town of Sabbionetta in Italy's Po Valley in 1936.

The film begins "now": a young man (Giulio Brogi) comes back after 30 years to the town where his father, a local anti-Fascist hero, was killed. But in the town he finds only evasive answers, veiled threats. Only his father's ex-mistress (Alida Valli) seems glad to see him. Her name is Dreyfa (her father was a fervent Dreyfusard), and through her the film switches back and forth to the thirties. In these reconstructed scenes, Brogi plays his father, and Valli plays herself as she was then.

But Dreyfa counsels him to leave the murder unsolved; so do his father's old friends. The boy begins to suspect that one of them must be guilty, until he discovers the truth. The "traitor" was none other than his father. When his treachery was discovered, he managed to persuade his comrades that his punishment must not discredit the Cause. So between the five of them they cook up a fantastically operatic plot. The whole town is made into a vast theatre in which the drama of Athos Magnani's "heroism" is played out. Using operatic elements (a gypsy from "Il Trovatore," prophecies from "Macbeth"), he is to be killed, ostensibly by Fascist elements during a performance of "Rigoletto."

The horror of this infernal machine, the neatness of this human web, in which the fly contrives at his own death, is pointed up by Bertolucci's use of the menacing notes of Schoenberg's Second Chamber Symphony and Dreyfa's vine-buried villa, while at the same time it is countered by the fresh gaiety of the thirties landscapes.

Is the son of Athos Magnani to ruin it all, now, by telling the truth? No. When he gets to the railway station, however, he finds that his train is delayed. Forty minutes late, announces the stationmaster. Then, two hours late. When he walks over to the lines, he discovers that they are completely overgrown with weeds. No train will ever pass through again: the web has won.

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A NOTE ON BERTOLUCCI

Bertolucci, one of Italy's foremost "underground" or "protest" directors of today, was born in Parma in 1941. His father is a poet and film critic.

Bertolucci was studying modern literature at the Rome University when Pier Paolo Pasolini asked him to act as assistant director on his first film, ACCATONE. In 1961, Bertolucci launched forth on his own and made THE GRIM REAPER from a story by Pasolini. The film obtained considerable success at the 1962 Venice Film Festival.

He also followed in his father's footsteps, writing poetry, and in 1962 won the most coveted of all Italian literary prizes, the Premio Viareggio, for a collection of his poems entitled "In Search of Mystery."

Two years passed before he made his second film, BEFORE THE REVOLUTION. It was shown at the Cannes Film Festival and won the Max Ophuls Prize and the Prix de la Jeune Critique in France. Next, he made three one-hour documentaries entitled "The Petroleum Road" for television and an episode of a three-part film, LOVE AND ANGER, with the Living Theatre. This was followed by PARTNER starring Pierre Clementi.

His last work before THE CONFORMIST was a color feature made for Italian television, THE SPIDER'S STRATAGEM, based on a short story by Jorge Luis Borges and starring Alida Valli. His newest film is THE LAST TANGO IN PARIS.

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