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indelible images



The Spider's Stratagem

La strategia del ragno

Selected by Joan Chen

ITALY 1971, 100 min.

DIR Bernardo Bertolucci

PROD Giovanni Bertolucci **SCR** Marilù Parolini, Eduardo de Gregorio, Bernardo Bertolucci **CAM** Vittorio Storaro, Franco di Giacomo **ED** Roberto Perpignani **CAST** Giulio Brogi, Alida Valli, Pippo Campanini, Franco Giovannelli, Tino Scotti

Based on "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero," a story by Borges about an individual's self-discovery through the false symbols and ideals of a political regime, *The Spider's Stratagem* flaunts the admirable complexity and imaginative control so admired in Bernardo Bertolucci's neo-political, psychological dramas. In this early classic, Bertolucci, one of the world's greatest directors, teams up with peerless cinematographer Vittorio Storaro. A young man, Athos, arrives in his father's hometown, a strange, bright Renaissance place called Tara, in the Mantuan countryside. He learns that his father, Athos Magnani, is the town's martyred hero. Twenty years before, his father had been executed by the Fascists, and it seems that everything—the school, the main street, even a statue in the square—pays homage to his memory. Athos has been summoned by Draifa, his father's mistress, ostensibly to avenge his father's murder, but there is, somehow, an attempt to fuse the image of the young Athos with his father, and gradually the latter's personality (and fate) seems to overtake the youth. The past overwhelms the present, landscape takes over the man-made edifices and slowly, hypnotically, the plot unravels, revealing the truth about what happened before. Be alert, *The Spider's Stratagem* forewarns us—with jungle drawings under the titles and lush greenery in villas and forests; be prepared for the interrelation of symbolic action and visual beauty.

Selected Filmography: Bernardo Bertolucci (b. Parma, Italy, 1941) *The Last Emperor* (1987), *Last Tango in Paris* (1973), *The Conformist* (1971), *Partner* (SFIFF 1971), *Grim Reaper* (SFIFF 1962)

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This film was first shown at the Festival in

1971

"Bernardo Bertolucci is one of the best directors I've worked with; I really learned a lot from him. He is extremely well read—when we



Joan Chen

were in China together for *The Last Emperor*, I learned that he'd read more classical Chinese than I had—as well as warm, nice and very close. He loves his actors and actresses and, really, was in love with

everyone—I discovered that he even kept a picture of John Lone in his wallet. He is very versatile and very inspiring, and I would love to work with him in the future. He made memorable and classical films. It is his sense of poetry that I love the most."

San-Francisco-based **Joan Chen** was born in Shanghai and was selected for the Actors' Training Program by the Shanghai Film Studio in 1975. Her second film, *Little Flower*, won her China's Best Actress Award in 1980. The next year, Chen left China for the United States to study filmmaking at California State University, Northridge. She began her U.S. acting career in 1985 and has appeared in *Tai-Pan*, the Academy Award-winning *The Last Emperor*, *Blood of Heroes*, *Turtle Beach*, the television series *Twin Peaks*, *Golden Gate*, *On Deadly Ground* and *Heaven and Earth*, among others. She returned to Shanghai in 1993 to star in Stanley Kwan's *Red Rose*, *White Rose* (SFIFF 1995) which won her the Best Actress Award in Taiwan and the Film Critics Award in Hong Kong. *Xiu Xiu* is Joan Chen's directorial debut.