

Le Conversazioni Films of My Life with Taymor and Eugenides

N. L. (November 14, 2013)



Le Conversazioni, is an event created by Antonio Monda in collaboration with co-curator Davide Azzolini, and it is inspired by everything that is art, theater, literature, dance and film. This is not just a moment to hear what big stars like to watch, but it is an opportunity to learn what has influenced their work, to understand their style better and even to learn about films you have never heard of before

Everybody has done it at least once in their life: you sit down with a bunch of friends and you talk about your favorite films. What scared you when you were little, or what inspired you to become who you are today. You sit down, you remember your favorite parts, some lines of dialogue or the crazy costumes that actor wore and you have a conversation. In the case of Le



[Conversazioni. Films of my Life](#) [2], held at [The Morgan Library](#) [3], the conversation took place between Tony Award-winning director [Julie Taymor](#) [4] (The Lion King, Frida, Titus), Pulitzer Prize-winning writer [Jeffrey Eugenides](#) [5] (Middlesex, The Virgin Suicides, The Marriage Plot) and [Antonio Monda](#) [6], writer, professor and artistic director of Le Conversazioni literary festival.

Le Conversazioni, is an event created by Antonio Monda in collaboration with co-curator Davide Azzolini, and it is inspired by everything that is art, theater, literature, dance and film. The main event, [Le Conversazioni Scrittori a Confronto](#) [7] (freely translated as “writers face to face,”) which started back in 2006, takes place in Capri, an idyllic island on the south side of the Gulf of Naples, during the summer (end of June-beginning of July) and writers from all over (past guests include Michael Chabon, Alessandro Baricco, Jonathan Franzen and Sandro Veronesi) discuss, in front of a small audience, the theme of the season (victory vs defeat, politically correct and eros among others).

Since 2009 part II of Le Conversazioni takes place in New York City, but the sun and breeze of a summer day in Capri are substituted by the elegance and prestige of The Morgan Library. It's not just the venue that changes, but the formula of the conversation is different as well. At the beginning the topic discussed always was Beauty but then in 2011 the theme switched to Films of my Life. Guests have to present four of their favorite films. A specific scene is viewed and, following an explanation of why that particular film was chosen and is important to the artist, there is a conversation between all parties involved.

This is not just a moment to hear what big stars like to watch, but it is an opportunity to learn what has influenced their work, to understand their style better and even to learn about films you have never heard of before, so you can go home, watch it and maybe have your own conversation about it with your friend... it becomes a chain reaction, in a way.

So, strangely and not on purpose, Julie Taymor had picked only very theatrical, black and white films. Films that don't just tell a story but invite the spectator to think. Her picks: the period drama *Rashomon* by [Akira Kurosawa](#) [8] (1950, the film is known for its narration format, where various characters provide alternative and contradictory versions of the same incident), the propaganda piece *Yo soy Cuba* (I am Cuba) by [Mikhail Kalatozov](#) [9] (1964, the film is known for its acrobatic tracking shots and the use of infrared film obtained from the Soviet military), the war drama *The Informer* by John Ford (1935, the film was nominated for six Academy Awards winning four) and Fellini's masterpiece [Le Notti di Cabiria](#) [10] (1957, the film, written by [Fellini](#) [11] himself and starring Giulietta Masina, won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film).

Jeffrey Eugenides, who lightened the mood trying to connect all his choices by the “nudity” thread, picked *Walkabout* by Nicolas Roeg (1971, a film noted for its cinematography based on the novel *Walkabout* by James Vance Marshall), *The Swimmer* by Frank Perry and Sidney Pollack (1968, surreal, allegorical tale is based on the 1964 short story by John Cheever), the comedy-drama *Sideways* by Alexander Payne (2009) and the musical drama *Nashville* by Robert Altman (1975, the film has 24 main characters, an hour of musical numbers, and multiple story lines).

There must be at least one you have not seen and that has peaked your curiosity, so go ahead, watch it and then have a conversation about it with your friends. That's the way to do it.

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