

Il papà di Giovanna

Giovanna's father is a 2008 drama film written and directed by Pupi Avati.

Some of the movies directed by Pupi Avati:

- *La rivincita di Natale (Christmas Rematch, 2004)*
- *Ma quando arrivano le ragazze? (2005)*
- *La seconda notte di nozze (2005)*
- *La cena per farli conoscere (2007)*
- *Il nascondiglio (The Hideout, 2007)*
- *Il papà di Giovanna (Giovanna's Father, 2008)*
- *Gli amici del bar Margherita (The Friends at Margherita Café, 2009)*
- *Il figlio più piccolo (The youngest son, 2010)*
- *Una sconfinata giovinezza (A boundless youth, 2011)*
- *The Big Heart of the Girls (2011)*
- *Il bambino cattivo (2013)*
- *A Golden Boy (2014)*
- *Il Signor Diavolo (2019)*

Pupi Avati's cinema resembles to one of those insects imprisoned in amber, which were often used as ornaments or paperweights in old houses. Like those insects, Pupi Avati's cinema is crystallized, immobilized in an ahistorical present, always equal to itself although it may appear different depending on the visual angle with which the translucent and transparent block of the mineral is approached.

Watching a film by Avati brings to mind the entrance into the old great-grandmother's house, full of laces and crinolines, imbued with the smell of aniseed candies and old and somewhat dusty furniture.

The movie *Il papà di Giovanna / Giovanna's father* was presented in competition at the 65th **Venice International Film Festival** where **Silvio Orlando** won **the Volpi Cup for the best male performance**. The cast includes Francesca Neri, Alba Rohrwacher and Ezio Greggio.

Awards

- 2009 - David di Donatello
- 2009 - **Nastro d'argento**
 - o Best non protagonist actor to Ezio Greggio
 - o Best non protagonist actress to Francesca Neri
- 2009 - Golden globe
 - o Best revelation actress to Alba Rohrwacher
 - o Special Golden Globe to Ezio Greggio
- 2008 - Venice Film Festival
 - o Best male interpretation to Silvio Orlando
 - o Pasinetti Award to Silvio Orlando

Storyline

In Bologna in the late thirties, Michele Casali is a design professor at the high school. Although he has a respectable social position, he does not lead a particularly comfortable life, living in a modest apartment with his wife, Delia, and daughter, Giovanna, who attends the same high school where his father teaches. Michele is always attached to his daughter, a very fragile girl, with whom he has a special relationship that keeps her mother apart. This is the cause of all Giovanna's insecurities. Michele is a longtime friend of Sergio's neighbor, an important fascist police commissioner and Giovanna's godfather. The friendship with Sergio gives Michele and his family countless benefits.

At school Michele notes that his daughter is attracted to a student named Andrea and the teacher, with the desire to make her daughter more confident in herself, offers the boy the promotion, and in exchange he frequents Giovanna. Giovanna is invited to the birthday party of her best friend Marcella Traxler, a wealthy family girl and granddaughter of a senator. During the party Giovanna notices Andrea is dancing with Marcella and taken by jealousy begins to drink until she feels bad. After a few days at school a tragic episode happens, Marcella is found dead stabbed in the gym, the head of the investigation is Sergio.

When Andrea is interrogated, he confesses to having had a relationship with the girl, but not to have killed her and to have seen Giovanna hidden while he was leaving the gym. So the police come to Giovanna's house to take her to the police station. After several hours of interrogation, Giovanna confesses to have murdered her friend. Waiting for the trial, Michele is forced to resign from the high school and tries to express his displeasure to the victim's family, without success. The only one who stays close to him is his trusted friend Sergio, who provides him with a lawyer. The lawyer proposes to support Giovanna's mental illness in order to avoid the jail and get the mental hospital, which is much soft.

Michele initially is against it because he refuses to think that his daughter is mentally ill, despite the evidence. Giovanna does not realize the seriousness of her actions. Once the trial was over, the judge recognized the defendant's mental illness, so Giovanna was locked up in the criminal asylum of Reggio Emilia. Michele visits his daughter daily and every time an excuse is invented for the absence of the mother, who does not have the courage to accompany him.

The former professor decides to move to the countryside near the asylum to stay even closer to his daughter, leaving his wife, with whom he has been in crisis for many years and convinces his friend Sergio, always attracted to her, to start a relationship with her. When Giovanna finally leaves the asylum and the war is over, she and her father return to the old apartment in Bologna. Sergio no longer lives next door, executed by the partisans. One evening Michele takes his daughter to the cinema and Giovanna meets her mother in the cinema after so many years. Thus the family reunites.

Giovanna's trial

The handling of the case and Giovanna's involvement isn't handled terribly effectively. We are shown nothing, we have seen little of Giovanna's actions or behavior to be able to understand what has happened, certainly nothing to suggest that she might be capable of murder, and there is very little detail provided on the presentation of the murder case or the trial. Giovanna confesses, giving

obscure and unsound reasons for the killing, so there is not even any question of did she or didn't she do it. Everything is seen from her father's perspective.

A short describing of Giovanna's father

The film tells of a particular family, in which the two parents raised their daughter Giovanna, suffering from mental disorders in a different way. Between the two parents, it is Giovanna's dad who has a strong and deep bond with his daughter, it is Giovanna's dad who has chosen to protect her by showing her the world and above all herself through an unreal vision that will be revealed later tragically dangerous. And it is always the father of Giovanna who chooses to take care of the daughter who, instead, can see always and only through the eyes of paternal love.

We learn and come to greatly admire his dedication in looking after his daughter despite the privations he suffers, sacrificing his marriage, his job, his home and his dignity and having to do it all moreover in the middle of a war.

Orlando, is a protagonist with chronically sad face (even when he's smiling) and marvelous facial expressions, his eyes conveying a painful humanity.

The more explored feeling through the film

It is this unconditional paternal love that is sensibly explored throughout the film. And it is this paternal love that is admired throughout the film along with the interpretation made by Silvio Orlando, an interpretation even more laudable if one thinks that - as the actor explained at the press conference - not having the paternal experience from which to draw directly, he had to imagine a lot.

What can we witness from Silvio Orlando interpretation?

Through his interpretation, one can witness the paternal tenderness in front of a particular daughter as his own, one can witness the natural disbelief in front of what is incredible to him until the evidence of the facts. And, always through his interpretation, one can witness the greatness of a man who, while being considered "one of the last" by his own wife, in the final part of the film will give a deep lesson of life and dignity to this same woman who has never been able to truly be a mother.

What about the girl? And the interpretation of Alba Rohrwacher?

Alba Rohrwacher - who reveals a rare sensitivity even in the smallest but not irrelevant nuances - gives life to a fragile but intense character, who lives in her own mental dimension, nourishing fantasies sometimes wrongly fed by her father, but always in the intent to protect her from the real world. But Giovanna is also a character who is able to catch flashes of this same reality in a surprisingly lucid way, sometimes carrying out actions suggested by a certain cunning / manipulative / Machiavellian attitude and that leads us to questioning where the true boundaries between madness and lucidity lie.

The historical event revealed in the story

The film tried to approach, a constant recurring in Avati's poetry, which is the atmosphere back to a few decades ago, in this specific case that of an Italy on the brink of IIInd World War. If at that time Avati was a child, there is something in the film that concerns precisely that moment of his life, that is, the meticulous reconstruction of the house in which he then lived in Bologna, just as this city was chosen as setting of the film's action. These are intimate / personals details entrusted

by the director during the press conference, details that in turn have been useful in bringing to life an intimate story.

The director's strategy in making this movie

Avati has always been more interested in the characters than the context. The period of the IIInd World War is recreated with great care and the viewer gets a sense of how different the quality of life was back then, that's undeniable, and it's obvious that Avati chose that specific time-frame to make the situation more poignant. The risk is that when he actually has to focus on the strictly historical aspect of the matter i.e. the downfall of Fascism, it all feels quite rushed and a bit stereotyped.

The critics say that the most obvious defect of the Avatian style is made of useless historical paintings, of "typical" and predictable characters, of an anachronistic style and rhythm of narration.

If there's a lesson in there about **endurance having its own rewards**, *Il Papà di Giovanna* demonstrates that very well indeed.

Reviews:

<https://cineuropa.org/film/84652/>

<http://trovacinema.repubblica.it/film/il-papa-di-giovanna/350238/>

<https://www.sentieridelcinema.it/il-papa-di-giovanna-2/>

<https://www.operateatro.it/it/Recensioni-Cultura-e-musica/IL-PAPA-DI-GIOVANNA>