

Published February 28th, 2024

'Io Capitano' - A hero's journey

By Sophie Braccini



Image provided

What makes a good movie? How about giving the audience a window to a moment of the human experience that will touch them so deeply that they will leave the theater a different person. Such is "Io Capitano."

The movie that will be shown at the Orinda Theatre for at least a week, starting on March 8, comes from Italy and is set almost entirely in Africa. It tells the perilous voyage of two 16-year-old Senegalese cousins who dream of Europe and cross half of their continent to reach Libya and from there, a boat for Italy. The scenario tells real stories, including that of Mamadou Kouassi, who was a consultant on the movie. After fleeing his country and crossing the Sahara Desert on foot, he was captured and tortured in Libya, sold as a slave laborer, before being able to cross the Mediterranean Sea. When Kouassi and film director Matteo Garrone were interviewed by the Huffington Post last January, they explained that the purpose of the film was to change the way immigrants are perceived around the world.

The linear movie follows Seydou and Moussa, two dreamers who, in spite of warnings from their relatives and friends, want to leave their small Senegalese village and make a better life for themselves and their families. They have no idea of the violence and exploitation they will be confronted with.

Kouassi explains that the film shows only a portion of the violence he encountered. The physical violence is quite difficult to bear at times, but maybe what is worse is how these people are dehumanized by those who exploit them or use them as targets for their sadism. Where no law protects them, the immigrants fall prey to trafficking and racketeering.

The movie follows the classical form of the Hero's Journey. Seydou especially has such a good and incredibly brave heart. He overcomes obstacles one after the other and he always gets up again, sometimes on his own, other times supported by his fellow men's solidarity. And this is one of the most optimistic elements of "Io Capitano," showing the support these people who are at their wit's end still give to each other. "Solidarity is a big part of our African culture," commented Kouassi in the Huffington's interview, "something we bring with us wherever we go."

This important movie is overall hopeful and a tribute to the courage of the immigrants, including a touch of fantastic imagery that adds lightness and poetry when reality is too harsh for the protagonists.

"Io Capitano" is a nominee for the 2024 Oscar in the Foreign Films category (just as "The Teacher's Lounge," last month's Orinda programming, is a nominee for Germany). It is a part of the International Film Showcase that brings a remarkable foreign movie to Lamorinda once a month. Details and tickets at www.orindamovies.com/

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA