KINONIK

LA STRADA (1954)

Directed by Federico Fellini

Wednesday February 19th 2pm & 7pm
starring Giulietta Masina and Anthony Quinn



La Strada (1954) began with a tone, said Fredrico Fellini. "A kind of a tone that lurked, which made me melancholy and gave me a diffused sense of guilt, like a shadow hanging over me. This feeling suggested two people who stay together, although it will be fatal, and they don't know why." In his first marked shift from his neorealist roots, Fellini's La Strada is an unfinished poem – its images immaculate, its sound ambient, suggestive, and rarely perfectly in line with what you see on screen. The most difficult film he would undertake, it would survive initial mixed reception to go on to be regarded as the tenth greatest film of all time.

Sold to the strongman Zampano by her desperate mother, sweet Gelsomina follows in her dead sister Rosa's footsteps to take up a life on the road. An absolute foil to Zampano's worldly, impulsive nature, Gelsomina struggles to understand her new role and her growing affection for her brutish owner. A dashing acrobat – and the ensuing jealous triangle – will prove the downfall of all involved.

Starring Fellini's wife Giulietta Masina, Anthony Quinn (Zorba the Greek), and Richard Basehart (Moby Dick), Fellini brought the same meticulousness to his casting he did to his shooting. It took him months to identify the proper players for each part, and weeks still to convince some to accept the roles. Shooting had to begin before funding was even secured. Injuries, foul weather, scheduling conflicts, endless re-shoots, and Fellini's nervous breakdown all complicated the completion of the project. But when done and dubbed (it was common in Italian filmmaking to record without sound and add voices after), Fellini felt he had made what was perhaps his "most autobiographical" piece, emotionally if not factually.

The first film to win the Best Foreign-Language Film Award at the Oscars in 1956, regarded as a turning point in Italian cinema and "one of the most influential films of all time" by the American Film Institute, the impact of this tender tragedy cannot be understated. A labor of love about the labor that is love, La Strada is the cornerstone of Fellini's development as a director, and a seminal moment in film history.