

Ginger e Fred

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“The artist is the medium between his fantasies and the rest of the world,” (Federico Fellini). In *Ginger e Fred*, the Italian film director and screenwriter's style of blending Baroque images with reality is expressed through a reunion of former dance partners after breaking up their famous act of impersonating Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers 30 years ago. After a long separation, Amelia Bonetti and Pippo Botticella take a trip down memory lane as they perform their Hollywood dance routine one last time for a Christmas TV special.

Amelia, now a sweet-hearted grandmother, gets picked up from the train station in a van to head to the hotel where she will spend the night. From a peculiar woman with dark eyeliner to a band of people of short stature and a couple who claims they can converse with the spirits, she encounters uniquely queer people who will also be featured in the TV special. After some irritation and displeasure from her old friend's tardiness, she finally reunites with Pippo late at night. The last-minute reunion gives them no time to rehearse before the show, and Amelia is left worrying over their unpreparedness and her partner's overblown confidence. In the end, however, the magic of revisiting childhood seems to come alive as they go on stage and revive their popularity for another day.

I found the opening of the film quite intriguing as Nicola Piovani's nostalgic but hopeful music filled my living room. In a white, simple font, the title and the names of the cast and crew appeared on a blank screen that was nothing but blue. It was as if the audience was given a blank canvas to paint their memories, their childhood, their fantasies before Fellini presented his story. The tranquility and beauty created by the purity of the simple introduction have a significant impact on our impression of the first scene when the setting is established. Fellini introduces the

main character in a bustling train station as loud conversations, laughter, smoking, and energetic buzzing fill the atmosphere. He walks us through the city of Rome as piles of garbage on the filthy sidewalk, polluted air, and dirty walls of buildings come into view. The character of the film and the director is developed by humor from the juxtaposition of the sign that read "Roma pulita" behind people showing no concern about the filth surrounding them and the irony of a character's remark, "Beautiful day!", under a cloudy, dim sky.

The director's riveting method of amalgamating fantasy with reality is clearly defined by the carefully made artistic choices and the unique establishment of the setting. The fantastical components in Fellini's film are represented by the extravagant, bizarre hairstyles and costumes of the TV show guests who look like they belong in *Earth Girls are Easy* or *Star Wars* more than anywhere else. Also, the somewhat vulgar images of advertisements on billboards that he consciously chose to show on camera seem misplaced in the dirty streets occupied by townspeople who look as if they are up to no good. Meanwhile, Fellini establishes reality by using setting and focusing on people around the main characters. As a composer interested in film scoring myself, I immediately noticed the lack of music accompanying the motion pictures for the majority of the movie, and it made me realize that this decision draws more attention to the boisterous environment that Amelia and Pippo are often in. The loud bantering, arguments, and gossips around them in a hotel lobby or cafeteria settings increase the sense of reality. My favorite scene that symbolizes this creative fusion takes place in the second half of the film when Amelia and Pippo get dressed in preparation for their debut after retirement. Draped in her white, silky ballroom gown, Amelia looks into the mirror and notices Pippo behind her in his fine suit, watching her. Their sweet exchange of content smiles and the elegant outfits that bring back their lush, lively past are still overlaid with a sense of reality by having an old unused bathroom backstage as the setting.

With subtle, but noticeable details - such as including a TV in the background of every scene, having a character say "Artists are benefactors of humanity", and using a massive model of a pig as an advertisement that could make Salvador Dali jealous - sprinkled throughout the film, Federico Fellini tells a charming story of reuniting with old friends and bringing back wonderful memories. By fusing lavish styles of fantasy and the bitterness of reality, he develops his style as a filmmaker and continues to spread creativity and arts to people. We are reminded that the stern reality of the world sometimes needs a fresh breath of imagination and artistry to make our everyday life sparkle.

Works Cited

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