



  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES  
COMPETITION  
2023 OFFICIAL SELECTION

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**tiff**  
TORONTO INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL 2023

  
New York  
Film Festival 61  
2023 Official Selection

# KIDNAPPED:

## THE ABDUCTION OF EDGARDO MORTARA

A FILM BY MARCO BELLOCCHIO



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## SYNOPSIS

In 1858, in the Jewish quarter of Bologna, the Pope's soldiers burst into the home of the Mortara family. By order of the cardinal, they have come to take Edgardo, their seven-year-old son. The child had been secretly baptized by his nurse as a baby and the papal law is unquestionable: he must receive a Catholic education. Edgardo's parents, distraught, will do anything to get their son back. Supported by public opinion and the international Jewish community, the Mortaras' struggle quickly take a political dimension. But the Church and the Pope will not agree to return the child, to consolidate an increasingly wavering power ...



## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

**Marco Bellocchio** was born in Piacenza in 1939. In 1959 he broke off his study of philosophy at the Catholic University of Milan and enrolled at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. Between 1961 and 1962 he made the short films *Abbasso lo zio*, *La colpa e la pena*, and *Ginepro fatto uomo*. He then moved to London, where he attended the Slade School of Fine Arts. His debut feature film, *I pugni in tasca* (*Fists in the Pocket*), won an award at Locarno in 1965 and brought him international recognition. In 2011 he received the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice International Film Festival. His work has been the subject of dozens of retrospectives around the world, including at MoMA (New York) in 2014 to commemorate his 50-years in filmmaking at that time, at the 43rd Festival International du Film de la Rochelle, and in 2018 at the British Film Institute (London).

Bellocchio has been president of the Cineteca di Bologna since 2014.

In 2016 *Fai bei sogni* (*Sweet Dreams*) was the opening film of the Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Festival. In 2019 *Il Traditore* (*The Traitor*) was In Competition at Cannes; it won six Donatellos and seven Silver Ribbons. In 2021, he presented the documentary *Marx può aspettare* (*Marx Can Wait*) Out of Competition at Cannes, receiving the Palme d'Honneur in the same year. In 2022, he was back at Cannes for the premiere of *Esterno notte* (*Exterior Night*), which won a European Film Award and was nominated for 18 Donatellos.





# DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

**2022** Exterior Night / *Esterno notte*

**2021** Marx Can Wait / *Marx può aspettare*

**2019** The Traitor / *Il traditore*

**2016** Sweet Dreams / *Fai bei sogni*

**2003** Good Morning, Night / *Buongiorno, notte*

**2002** My Mother's Smile / *L'ora di religione*

**1986** Devil in the Flesh / *Diavolo in corpo*

**1980** A Leap in the Dark / *Salto nel vuoto*

**1976** Victory March / *Marcia trionfale*

**1972** Slap the Monster on Page One / *Sbatti il mostro in prima pagina*

**1967** China Is Near / *La Cina è vicina*

**1965** Fists in the Pocket / *I pugni in tasca*



# COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR

The story of the kidnapping of the young Jewish boy Edgardo Mortara interests me profoundly, first and foremost because it allows me to portray a crime committed in the name of an absolute principle: "I am kidnapping you because God wills it. And I cannot return you to your family. You are baptized and therefore Catholic for all eternity." This is Pius IX's non possumus, which argues that, in the name of otherworldly salvation, it is right to quash the life of an individual, indeed of a child, who, because he is a child, does not have the strength to resist, to rebel. This ruins young Mortara's long life. Yet, after being re-educated by priests, he remains faithful to the Catholic Church, becomes a priest himself (a fascinatingly mysterious decision that cannot be dismissed as a simple survival mechanism, for after the liberation of Rome, Edgardo, finally able to "free himself," remains faithful to the Pope) and for the rest of his life he actually tries to convert his family, which stayed true to Judaism.

The kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara was also a crime against a peaceful, upper-middle-class family that respected authority, which, in Bologna, was still the authority of the pope, at a time when an air of freedom was spreading throughout Europe and liberal principles were being affirmed all over. Everything was changing, and for this very reason the little boy's kidnapping represents the desperate, and thus extremely violent, attempt of a moribund authority to resist collapse, and even to go on the counterattack. Declining totalitarian regimes often achieve small triumphs that momentarily delude them into believing they are winning (a brief spasm of life preceding death).

Besides the extreme act of violence to which little Edgardo was subjected, I would like to delve into the loss and pain he suffered after his forced removal, as well as his continual attempts to reconcile the will of his second father, the pope, with the diametrically opposed will of his parents to bring him home. His mother exhibits tenacious determination, whereas his father, thinking only of his son's welfare, is less rebellious.

Attempting to achieve an impossible reconciliation throughout his life, Edgardo never disavows his parents or his origins, nor does he ever accept the fact that his mother will remain Jewish until her death.

Edgardo's conversion is always resolutely affirmed, but is punctuated by sudden, unexpected, more-or-less subconscious rebelliousness. Edgardo never becomes the pope's puppet, and this manifests itself in his suffering and the numerous prolonged illnesses that leave him bedridden for long periods of time...

Edgardo also pays a physical price for unquestioningly affirming his faith. Happiness remains but an increasingly fading memory of the years before his abduction (Edgardo was not yet seven years old when it occurred).

As I mentioned earlier, the other enigma of this story is Edgardo's conversion. As a child he converts to Catholicism (very young and impressionable, so the prevailing narrative asserts, he did so in order to survive; we would now call this "Stockholm syndrome"), remaining faithful to his second father, the pope, in the person of Pius IX, throughout his life.

Now, I don't wish to seek a "middle" ground, but Edgardo's conversion, so absolute and seemingly without the slightest doubt, certainly makes his character all the more interesting... And it introduces us to worlds that for us do not exist, but that are very real for so many people... We can observe the "phenomenon" objectively or, with love and empathy, try simply to portray a child whose soul has been violated and who, as an adult, remains faithful to those who have violated him because he believes them to be his saviors. Ultimately, a character emerges who defies all rational explanation. This is a film, not a work of history or philosophy, nor an ideological argument.

# MAIN CAST

**Paolo Pierobon**

*as Papa Pio IX*

**Fausto Russo Alesi**

*as Momolo Mortara*

**Barbara Ronchi**

*as Marianna Mortara*

**Enea Sala**

*as Edgardo Mortara*

**Leonardo Maltese**

*as Edgardo Mortara (adult)*

**with Filippo Timi**

*as Segretario di Stato Antonelli*

**and with Fabrizio Gifuni**

*as Pier Gaetano Feletti*





An **Ibc Movie** and **Kavac Film** production with **Rai Cinema**

Coproduced by: **Ad Vitam Production**

Coproduced by: **The Match Factory**

Coproduced by: **Bayerischer Rundfunk** in association with **Arte** and **Arte France Cinéma**

with the participation of **CANAL+** and **CINE'+**

With the support of: **Film- und Medienstiftung NRW**

With the support of: **RÉGION ILE – DE – FRANCE**

With the support of: **the Region of Emilia-Romagna and the Region of Lazio regional cinema and audiovisual funds**

Project development: **Anastasia Michelagnoli**

Executive producer: **Patrick Carrarin**

Executive producers: **Alessio Lazzareschi, Maurizio Feverati**

Editing: **Francesca Calvelli, Stefano Mariotti**

Director of photography: **Francesco Di Giacomo**

Original score: **Fabio Massimo Capogrosso**

Music publishing company: **Creazioni Artistiche Musicali C.A.M. Srl – a Sugar company**

Set design: **Andrea Castorina**

Costume design: **Sergio Ballo, Daria Calvelli**

Visual effects supervisor: **Rodolfo Migliari**

Production coordinator: **Sonia Cilia**

Casting director: **Maurilio Mangano**

Inspired by the book: **Il caso Mortara** by **Daniele Scalise** published by **Mondadori**

Screenplay: **Marco Bellocchio, Susanna Nicchiarelli** in collaboration with **Edoardo Albinati, Daniela Ceselli**

Historical consultant: **Pina Totaro**

Coproduced by: **Alexandra Henochsberg, Pierre-François Piet, Viola Fügen, Michael Weber**

Produced by: **Paolo del Brocco for Rai Cinema**

Produced by: **Simone Gattoni**

Produced by: **Beppe Caschetto**

Directed by: **Marco Bellocchio**







# TECHNICAL DETAILS

Original title: **Rapito**

International title: **Kidnapped**

Duration: **134 min**

Format: **DCP**

Frame Rate: **24fps**

Resolution: **4K**

Sound: **5.1 Atmos**

Year: **2023**

Original languages: **Italian, Hebrew**

Countries of production: **Italy, France, Germany**

Production Companies: **Kavac Film**

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COMMISSION, REGIONE LAZIO - FONDO PER L'AUDIOVISIVO**

