

Imago Extraordinary Contribution to Cinematography

March 2019

The second Imago International Cinematographer's Award for extraordinary Contribution to Cinematography was awarded in Belgrade to the World's Oldest Festival devoted to the Craft of Cinematography, the Manaki Brothers. It was a fitting tribute to the men and women who for forty years have worked so hard and establish the Festival Internationally. The presentation was made to Gena Teodosievska, Festival Director and Blagoja-Kunovski -Dore Artistic Director by BSC Vice President Nigel Walters.

The brothers Milton and Yanaki Manaki could never have imagined that their pioneering cinematography throughout the Balkans could be so admired and respected a hundred years later. When they returned from London after purchasing the first Film camera in 1904 they became true pioneers and trail blazers for their new art. Working as cinematographers to capture the reality of Balkan life for posterity they became the first film directors and first film editors. They were not inhibited by Producers or Associates, script editors, film critics, costume or make-up supervisors! The first cinematographers had freedom to become the first film makers.

The Manaki Festival reminds cinematographers and film makers throughout the world of the influence and inspiration which can be captured through a camera lens. Film is the great art form of the 20th Century and the ancient country of North Macedonia can be justly proud of the Manaki Brothers and their historical contribution from the charming Balkan city of Bitola.

Manaki is much more than a Festival: it has become an ideology for all lovers of the moving images and those creating them steadfastly from behind their cameras. The British names honoured in the list of great cinematographers such as Nyquist, Yusuf, Storaro, Coutard, Ondrocek, Zsigmond, Ballhaus, Alekan, John Seale, have included Freddie Francis, Billy Williams. Peter Suschitzky, Chris Menges, Roger Pratt and in 2018 Roger Deakins. Freddie Francis always claimed it as his favourite Festival.

The Manaki Festival has become a Global event. Thanks to the devotion to film of the dedicated directors the Festival has played an important role in discovering and recognising new and emerging talent in cinematography.

Six years ago, under the Festival directorship and encouragement of Labina Mitevska, the Festival Director, Imago established the first Balkan Conference of Cinematographers. With the support, encouragement and generosity of Tomi Salkovski, and the Macedonian Professionals Association Imago brought together the Societies of Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia. They have been meeting in friendship and collaboration annually ever since. The Macedonian and Greek Societies came closer, The Serbs assisted the establishment of the small Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bosnian President Mustapha Mustaphic told the audience in Belgrade at the launch of his autobiography that without the help of the Slovenian Society the publication would not have been possible. The Slovenians for their part have established a Festival of Balkan films annually in Ljubljana. This epitomizes the true Spirit of Imago by bringing cinematographers together in friendship and co-operation. None of this would have been possible without the generosity and vision of the organisers of the Manaki Festival.

Imago as a non-profit organisation run by unpaid volunteers has benefited greatly from a long association with this charming Festival. It represents the very soul of film and cinematography. Cinematographers everywhere are grateful to North Macedonia for commemorating the Brothers

Milton and Yanaki for forty years and helping raise the standards and awareness of the craft of cinematography throughout the Balkans and the World.

Nigel Walters BSC