**Pioneer Italian filmakers in Argentina**

The first ever feature-length animated film was made in 1917 by a young Italian émigré to Argentina from Santa Giuletta in Pavia, Lombardia. **Quirino Cristiani**, and his colleagues **Andrès Ducaud** and **Diógenes Taborda**, beat Disney to it by twenty years with ‘El apóstol’ (The Apostle) a political satire, with President Yrigoyen ascending to the heavens to use Jupiter's thunderbolts to cleanse Buenos Aires of immorality and corruption. For this first film Cristiani used his own technique of drawing and cutting cardboard figures, a technique perfected in his next production and then patented.

Its producer and one of its authors, **Federico Valle**, originally from Asti, Piedemonte, emigrated to Argentina in 1911. He was an important pioneer of Argentine cinema. To complete ‘El apóstol’ Valle had to overcome many technical problems before it was finally released in the cinema ‘Select Lavalle’ on November 9, 1917. It was on the bill in theatres for one year and impressed the audience but not in the magnitude correlative to the effort demanded to realize it. Far from discouraged, Valle embarked on another film, this time with dolls. This production, which was in the same line of humor, imagination and yrigoyenista satire as ‘El apóstol’. The action in ‘Una gala de noche en la Colón’ 1918 (‘A Gala evening in the Colón also known as ‘Creole Carmen’) takes place in the Colón Theatre during gala performance of the opera Carmen by Bizet. The first part of the film is enacted by animated dolls and begins in the lobby, with the arrival of the characters and formation of cliques, it continues with the entrance to the auditorium and ends when everyone is seated. The second is the representation of the opera in drawings, with Yrigoyen playing Carmen and ministers and friends playing other characters accompanied by an orchestra composed of cats. **Diógenes Taborda** who made the drawings for “El apóstol’’ opted to dispense with the cartoonish exaggeration and conform more to reality than in the previous film. For ‘Una gala de noche en la Colón’ a sculptor made in plasticine based on Taborda’s drawings; after corrections moulds were made and the final dolls painted. To allow the characters had to speak, several heads were made with the lips in different positions and arching eyebrows, so that when photographed they gave the illusion of talking. The ambiance of the Colón Theatre was reproduced by a detailed model constructed Ducaud by the French technician **Andrés Ducaud**.

In 1926 a fire at Suipacha 750 destroyed many of Valle’s silent films and much of the newscasts ‘Film Revista Valle’were lost. In 1928 a sale of the celluloid copies that remained were bought the brothers Julio and Roberto Irigoyen for making combs and the tips of shoelaces.

In 1930 Valle engaged **Carlos Gardel** to make a series of short films that were shot in ‘Estudios Valle’ on the Calle Mexico between the 23rd October and the 3rd November that year. The filming featuring Gardel with his guitarists, Barbieri, Aguilar and Riverol amongst others, were carried out between October 23 and November 3, at night; filming in batches of two or three shorts per day. According to the director **Eduardo Morera** about fifteen shorts were filmed but some discarded for technical reasons. The remaining ten were presented as a collection entitled ‘Encuadre de Canciones’. Of these the most important is thought to be ‘Viejo Fumando’ by **Celedonio Flores** and **Guillermo Barbieri** in which Gardel acts with **Inés Murray** and **César Fiaschi** before performing the song, accompanied by the **Francisco Canaro Orchestra.**

However, Valle was all but ruined by 1930 having invested almost all his resources in an ambitious education through films in schools, which was canceled by the government of Uriburu and bankrupt and impoverished he abandoned filmmaking. In 1958, the government gave him a temporary position at the National Film Institute and in 1959 Congress gave him a pension. In addition to the 657 editions of the ‘Film Revista Valle’ Federico Valle produced more than a thousand documentaries.

On October 25, 1960 Federico Valle died in the city of Buenos Aires.

Cristiani went on to make a second feature-length animated film, ‘Peludópolis’ in 1931, was the first of its kind to use synchronized sound. Sadly, two fires in 1957 and 1961 destroyed the majority of Cristiani's work, including the only prints of Peludópolis. He died in Bernal, Argentina, on August 2, 1984.