The VCU French Film Festival
Welcomes special guest, French actor Thierry Lhermitte

Program
March 23 and 24, 1996
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Visit the VCU French Film Festival Internet Site at: http://www.fln.vcu.edu/dept/fff.html
### Saturday, March 23, 1996

- **12 noon** “Le Souper” (Directed by Edouard Molinaro and starring Claude Rich and Claude Brasseur).
- **1:30 pm** Teleconference with Claude Rich in the cinema.
- **2:30 pm** A Series of French Short Films
  - “Marielle et Barnabé aimeraient bien en avoir un”
  - “Se pendre à son cou”
  - “La vie à rebours”
  - “Manivelle”
  - “Deux ex machina”
  - “La vis”
- **4:30 pm** “Les Millés” (Directed by Sebastien Grall and starring Jean-Pierre Marielle, Thérèse Marciani, Ticky Holgado, Rudiger Bogler and Philippe Noiret)
- **7:00 pm** Official Festival Reception with French actor Thierry Lhermitte at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Friends of the Festival VIP Pass required—see last page of program)
- **8:15 pm** Gala Dinner in the Members Suite of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Friends of the Festival VIP Plus Pass required—see last page of program)
- **Midnite** “Dames Galantes” (Directed by Jean-Charles Tacchella and starring Richard Bohringer, Isabella Rossellini and Robin Renucci)

### Sunday, March 24, 1996

- **11:00 am** Teleconference in the Byrd Theatre with directors Laurent Bénégui, Gali Morel and Jean-Luc Gaget.
- **11:30 am** Teleconference in the Byrd Theatre with director Vincent Mayrand.
- **12 noon** “X,Y” (Directed by Jean-Paul Lilienfeld starring Patrick Braoudé and Clémentine Galiari)
- **2:00 pm** “Le Zèbre” Presented by French actor Thierry Lhermitte (star of “My New Partner/Ripoux” and of the new film “Un Indien dans la ville”) Directed by Jean Poiret and starring Thierry Lhermitte and Caroline Cellier.
- **4:00 pm** “Les Misérables” (Directed by Claude Lelouch and starring Jean-Paul Belmondo, Michel Boujenah, Philippe Léotard, Jean Marais, Ticky Holgado, Clémentine Galiari and Annie Girardot)
- **6:30 pm** Drawing for two Air France tickets to Paris at the end of the 4:00 pm Sunday showing.

### Monday, March 25, 1996

- **2:00 pm** Teleconference with actor/director Patrick Braoudé at Cabell Library (VCU Campus) in room B41.
- **2:30 pm** Teleconference with director Sebastien Grall at Cabell Library (VCU Campus) in room B41.

### Wednesday, March 27, 1996

- **12 noon** Teleconference with director Jean-Paul Lilienfeld at Cabell Library (VCU Campus) in room B48.

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### All Films Have English Subtitles

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**Theater**

Byrd Theater is located on 2908 W. Cary Street in Richmond. There is a parking deck located directly behind the theater.

**Official Festival Reception and Dinner**

These special events for Friends of the Festival passholders will be held at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, located at the corner of Grove Avenue and the Boulevard, a short two blocks away from the Byrd Theater. The Museum’s parking entrance is on the Grove Avenue side.

**Lodging**

For those who will be coming to Richmond for the weekend, a special Festival rate has been arranged with the historic Linden Row Inn located at the corner of First and Franklin Streets. For Festival rates and reservations call 1-800-348-7424.
Paris, three weeks after Waterloo, during the night of July 6, 1815

France is invaded, defeated, Napoléon is fleeing and Paris is occupied by allied (English, Prussian and Russian) troops. The people are anxious. What is to become of France, who will offer new leadership and what type of regime will be set up?

These essential questions can only be answered by two men - both as equally powerful, intelligent and unscrupulous as the other - Talleyrand and Fouché.

Dining that night behind closed doors in Talleyrand's Palace, and while impatient citizens await outside, the two men enter a verbal, violent, ironic and ferocious duel to battle out France's fate as well as their own political careers.

But in this implacable confrontation, neither Talleyrand nor Fouché forget that they need one another. Talleyrand needs Fouché to control the disgruntled public in order to allow the return to Paris of Louis XVIII, who is waiting at Saint-Denis. Fouché is dependent upon Talleyrand who can obtain a Royal pardon for him (Fouché having voted for the death of Louis XVI in 1793).

Political power is certainly the objective of the duel, but it is during this conquest that one can observe and discover these two ruthless men who, beneath their gilded and brocaded clothes, unmask their true, sinister and bloody character.

Complete opposites: social origins, personal characters, visions of History, but they understand, however, that they are condemned to reach an agreement in order to spare Paris from even harder times.

The following night at Saint-Denis, Chateaubriand will see the two accomplices enter, walking together in stride, into the King's Chamber, "Monsieur de Talleyrand supported by Fouché... vice leaning on the arm of crime".

The Monarchy having therefore been re-established, Talleyrand and Fouché are going to find themselves at the head of State affairs.

France est envahie, vaincue, Napoléon en fuite, et dans Paris, occupée par les troupes alliées (anglaises, prussiennes et russes), le peuple est anxieux. Que va devenir le pays, quels hommes mettre à sa tête et quel régime lui donner?

A ces questions essentielles, seuls deux hommes également puissants, intelligents et sans scrupules sont en mesure de répondre: Talleyrand et Fouché.

Souplant ce soir-là à huis-clos dans le Palais de Talleyrand, et tandis que le peuple en rumeur gronde sous les fenêtres, ils vont donc se livrer à un duel verbal tour à tour violent, ironique et féroce, dont l’enjeu est le sort de la France et leur propre avenir politique.

Mais dans cet implacable affrontement, aucun des deux n’oublie qu’il a besoin de l’autre: Talleyrand de Fouché pour juguler le peuple menaçant et permettre à Louis XVIII, qui attend à Saint-Denis, de pouvoir rentrer sans danger dans la capitale - et Fouché de Talleyrand pour obtenir du Roi le pardon de son vote régicide en 1793.

Le pouvoir politique est certes l’enjeu de ce duel, mais au-delà de sa conquête, on voit ces deux hommes terribles se démasquer et apparaître, sous les dorures et le brocart, leur vrai visage, noir et sanguin.

Tout les oppose: origine sociale, caractère, vision de l’Histoire, mais ils savent pourtant qu’ils sont condamnés à s’entendre, et en effet, au terme de leur joute, alors que dans le ciel, l’orage éclate sur Paris, ils parviendront à un accord.

Et c’est la nuit suivante que Chateaubriand, tapi dans l’ombre à Saint-Denis, verra les deux complices entrer du même pas dans la chambre du Roi, "M. de Talleyrand soutenu par Fouché ... le vice appuyé sur le bras du crime".

La Monarchie ayant donc été rétablie, Talleyrand et Fouché vont se retrouver ensemble pour quelques temps à la tête de la France.

Directed by
Edouard Molinaro
Starring
Claude Rich
Claude Brasseur
Ticky Holgado
Alexandra Vandernoot
Produced by
Yves Rouset-Rouard

Based on the play
by Jean-Claude Brisville

The Linden Row Inn is proud to sponsor this North American AVANT-PREMIERE screening.

Screening: Saturday, March 23, Noon
Teleconference: A teleconference with Claude Rich will be held at 1:30pm in the Byrd Theatre directly following the screening of “Le Souper.”
### Claude Brasseur

**(Selection of Films)**

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<td>LES GRANDES MANOEUVRES</td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>LE FIL DE L'OMBRE</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>NI VU, NI CONNU</td>
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<td>LA CHAMBRE ARDENTE</td>
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**Actors Claude Brasseur**

(Fouché, left, and Claude Rich (Talleyrand), right, deciding France’s fate in “Le Soupeur.” A film for which Claude Rich received a Cesar for best actor.)
Directed by Laurent Bénégui (Director of Au Petit Marguery)

**“Marielle et Barnabé aimerait bien en avoir un”**
A couple, some toys and a child.

Directed by Jean-Luc Gaget

**“Se pendre à son cou”**
Marie has left Jean-Loup; she no longer wants to hang her arms around his neck. So Jean-Loup decides to hang himself by his own neck. But life quickly brings him back to life.

Directed by Gaël Morel

**“La vie à rebours”**
A son’s inability to tell his father of his brother’s death.

Directed by Daniel Cattan

**“Manivelle”**
The famous actor Jean Blondel is driving his gleaming red sports car along a deserted road in the Camargue. He stops in an isolated, old service station. There he meets an attendant in love with the cinema who looks strangely like him.

Directed by Vincent Mayrand

**“Deux ex machina”**
A futurist machine like no other.

Directed by Didier Flamand

**“La Vis”**
Mr. K is very good with his hands. Kept busy building a UFO when he suddenly notices that his screwdriver does not fit into a screw that is missing its slot. How horrible and disappointing. After an unforgettable fight with his wife, he decided to go give a piece of his mind to the Agency for State Department Stores of Non Ferrous Metals.

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Marielle et Barnabé aimerait bien en avoir un

Jean Reno in “La vis”

“La Vie à rebours”

“Marielle et Barnabé aimerait bien en avoir un”

5

The VCU French Film Festival
1996
Les Milles

Ellwood Thompson's Natural Market is proud to sponsor this North American AVANT-PREMIERE screening.

Directed by
Sebastien Grall

Starring
Jean-Pierre Marielle
(Commandant Perrochon)
Ticky Holgado
(Capitaine Moinard)
Rudiger Vogler
(Lion Feuchtwanger)
Philippe Nizet
(Le General)
Kristin Scott-Thomas
(Mary-Jane Cooper)
Wladyslaw Kowalski
(Max Ernst)

Produced by
Raymond Blumenthal

Description
Les Milles is the name of a village in Provence where a disused brick factory was converted into an internment camp in June 1940.

The internees are German, Austrian and Polish civilians from 18 to 65 years in age. Some are Jews, some Communists, others are simply anti-Nazis. They include two Nobel prize-winners, artists and intellectuals, some are famous, as Max Ernst, some obscure.

The Commandant of “Les Milles” camp is a Frenchman, Charles Perrochon. He doesn’t care what happens to his prisoners. To him, they are the enemy.

Then France is defeated by the Germans' lightning invasion.

An idea takes seed in Perrochon's mind, a crazy idea: without telling his superiors, he charters a train from a depot in Marseilles and has it run into the camp to evacuate anyone who wants to leave. The plan is to take them to Bayonne, where his cousin Jean, captain of a merchant ship, has agreed to embark the men and sail them to Casablanca in Morocco.

Directed by
Sebastien Grall

Starring
Jean-Pierre Marielle
(Commandant Perrochon)
Ticky Holgado
(Capitaine Moinard)
Rudiger Vogler
(Lion Feuchtwanger)
Philippe Nizet
(Le General)
Kristin Scott-Thomas
(Mary-Jane Cooper)
Wladyslaw Kowalski
(Max Ernst)

Produced by
Raymond Blumenthal

Description
Les Milles, c'est le village provençal d'une ancienne briquerie transformée en camp d'internement en juin 1940.

Ici, on y interne des civils allemands, autrichiens, polonais. Ils ont de 18 à 65 ans: ils sont juifs, communistes, ou simples opposants au nazisme. Il y a deux prix Nobel, des artistes, des intellectuels célèbres, comme Max Ernst, ou obscurs.

Charles Perrochon est le commandant français des “Milles” indifférent au sort de ses prisonniers qu'il considère comme l'ennemi.

Mais la France subit la défaite d'une guerre éclair. Et l'idée germe dans sa tête, folle: à l'insu de sa hiérarchie, il affrète un train à partir d'un dépôt de Marseille, train qu'il fait venir dans l'enceinte du camp pour évacuer tous les volontaires jusqu'à Bayonne où son cousin Jean, capitaine de marine marchande, accepte de prendre ces hommes à bord de son cargo, qui appareille pour Casablanca au Maroc.

Jean-Pierre Marielle plays a career military man who, with the help of Mary Jane Cooper interpreted by Kristin Scott-Thomas, becomes a hero during the trying times of the Vichy regime.

Screening: Saturday, March 23, 4:30 pm
Teleconference: Teleconference with Sebastien Grall, Monday, March 25th at 2:30pm in Cabell Library (VCU Campus) room B41.
Jean-Pierre Marielle playing the part of Commandant Perrochon in a film which recounts the true story of thousands of foreign artists and intellectuals imprisoned in June 1940 although they came to France to seek asylum.

Interview with Jean-Pierre Marielle

What was your reaction when you read the scenario?

We are living in a period today where everyone talks a big game but no one dares do anything. But here the scenario tells the story of a man who was probably not cut out for this, yet he takes risks. There is the collapse of France, ambiant cow- ardness, a big mess! And in the middle of all that, there is a guy who does the right thing! Commandant Perrochon is a modest man, a hat maker, a man who fought in the First War and who has a certain idea of established order, an average Frenchman trapped by preconceived ideas, a reactionary a little soft... Then, all of a sudden, under exceptional circumstances, he acts like an exceptional man.

In your opinion, why does Perrochon become this «hero despite himself»?

In the scene where the General, played by Philippe Noiret, arrives with his load of prisoners, one can sense all the foolishness, cowardness and insignificance of these men who wear out their trousers on officer chairs. Perrochon snickers with the General: he is completely in the system. At that time, he wants more reinforcement troops so his camp will be clean and his superiors, in turn, will say to him: «Great job, Perrochon, we’ll give you another cluster. You have done an outstanding job!»

And then, all of a sudden, he sizes up the human condition. On one side, fellow officers playing darts, drinking drinks and telling dirty jokes. On the other side, prisoners, with whom he has a difficult, yet deep and meaningful relationship. On one side, the incompetence of the government upon which he depends and on the other, the real distress of the people he is supposed to protect.

Suddenly, Perrochon is taken by his responsibilities and by the way that his prisoners and an American woman reporter look at him, especially since he has never been looked at that way before. In his mature and elderly mind, the slight possibility of a love story surfaces: the reporter, she is a little like the woman Brassens saw passing by but did not dare to follow in his song «Les Passantes». This gives him the drive and motivation that may not have existed otherwise.

When a narrow-minded bureaucrat, a cop or a soldier is transformed into a hero, that is beautiful! Especially since some people whose job is to understand, to be open-minded, to be attentive, to be responsible, handle themselves very poorly. The film has a wonderful theme.

Interview with Jean-Pierre Marielle

Quelle a été votre réaction à la lecture du scénario?

Nous vivons aujourd’hui une période où tout le monde parle mais personne ne prend aucun risque. Or, justement, ce scénario raconte l’histoire d’un homme qui n’était probablement pas fait pour ça, et qui prend des risques. C’est la débâcle, la lâcheté ambiante, le grand bordel, quoi. Et au milieu de tout ça, il y a un type qui se conduit bien. Le Commandant Perrochon est un homme modeste, un chapeauier, un homme qui a fait la guerre 14 et qui a une certaine idée de l’ordre établi, un Français moyen prisonnier d’idées reçues, un réactionnaire un peu mou... Et puis, brusquement dans des circonstances exceptionnelles, il se conduit comme un homme exceptionnel.

Selon vous, pourquoi devient-il ce héros malgré lui?

Dans la scène où le Général interprété par Philippe Noiret arrive avec ses «charge- ments» de prisonniers, on sent toute la connerie, la lâcheté et la petitesse de ces hommes en culottes de peau usées sur les chaises de l’Etat major. Perrochon ricane avec le Général: il est totalement dans le système. Ce qu’il veut, à ce moment-là, c’est des renforts. Pour que son camp soit propre et que son supérieur lui dise: «Là, Perrochon, brave, on vous rajoute une palme, vous avez fait un beau travail!»

Et puis, il prend soudain la mesure des êtres humains. D’un côté les militaires qui jouent aux fléchettes en buvant l’apéro et lâchant de grosses plaisanteries. De l’autre, les prisonniers, avec lesquels il a des rapports très violents –et en même temps très profonds. D’un côté, l’impératrice de ce gouvernement dont il dépend, de l’autre la détresse réelle de gens qu’il est sensé protéger.

Soudain, Perrochon est sublimé par sa fonction et par la façon dont les prisonniers et la journaliste américaine le regardent. Parce qu’on ne l’a jamais compris, il y a comme une histoire d’amour qui aurait pu exister. La journaliste, c’est un peu la femme qu’a vue passer Brassens et qu’il n’a pas suivie, dans la chanson «Les Passantes». Ça lui transmet une force qu’il n’aurait certainement pas eue autrement.

D’un fonctionnaire borné, un flic ou un militaire se transforme en héros, ça c’est beau! Alors qu’il y a des gens dont le métier est de comprendre, d’être ouvert, d’être à l’écoute, de bien se conduire, mais qui se conduisent mal. C’est un thème magnifique!
Dames Galantes

North American AVANT-PREMIERE screening.

Description
1575: for thirteen years, bloody religious wars have been ravaging France. Brantôme, a provincial gentleman, with no personal wealth, decides, having reached the age of 40, to bid a final farewell to war. Henceforward, he refuses to combat the Huguenots, among whose ranks he has many friends. He wishes to devote all his energy to what has always been his “raison d’être”: women.

As he writes and describes them all (a testimony to the customs of his generation they hover about him, everpresent, sharing forever his days and nights: Victoire, Marguerite, Jeanne, Madame de Saint-Luc and all the others.

They, along with him, will pass into posterity.

Directed by Jean-Charles Tacchella

Starring
Richard Bohringer (Brantôme)
Isabella Rossellini (Victoire)
Laura Betti (Marguerite, future Queen Margot)
Marianne Basler (Madame de Saint-Luc)
Robin Renucci (Henri III)
Marie-Christine Barrault (Jacquette de Bourdeilles)

Richard Bohringer in his role of Pierre de Bourdeilles, Seigneur de Brantôme who spent the second part of his life recording events and intrigues that he witnessed in the 16th century French royal court. Isabella Rossellini as Victoire.

Screening: Saturday, March 23, Midnight
Richard Bohringer

1995  LES CAPRICES D’UN FLEUVE de Bernard Giraudieu
1994  LE SOURIRE de Claude Miller
1993  LE CRI DU COEUR d’Idrisa Ouadrago
1992  TANGO de Patrice Leconte
1991  CONFessions D’UN BArJo de Jérôme Bovin
1990  VILLE A VENDRE de Jean-Pierre Mocky
1989  LA REINE BLANCHE de Jean-Loup Hubert
1988  A GAUCHE EN SORTANT DE L’ASCENSEUR de Édouard Molinaro
1987  AGENT TROUBLE de Jean-Pierre Mocky
1986  LE PALTOQUET de Michel Deville
1985  LE PLACE de Jean-Pierre Mocky
1984  PERIL EN LA DEMEURE de Michel Deville
1983  DEBOUT LES CRABES LA MER MONTE? de Jacques Grand-Jouan
1982  BALLADE A BLANC de Bertrand Gauthier
1981  LE GRAND PARDON d’Alexandre Arcady
1980  LA BOUM de Claude Pinoteau
1979  ALORS, HEUREUX? de Claude Barrois
1978  MARTIN ET LEA d’Alain Cavalier
1977  L’ITALIEN DES ROSES de Charles Matton

Isabella Rossellini

1995  LE DIABLE A QUATRE de Giorgio Ferrara
1994  LUDWIG VAN B de Bernard Rose
1992  INNOCENT de John Schlesinger
1991  ETAT SECOND de Peter Weir
1990  LA MORT VOUS VA SI BIEN de Robert Zemeckis
1989  SAILOR ET LULA de David Lynch
1988  COUSINS de Joël Schumacher
1987  LES VRAIS DURS NE DANSENT PAS de Norman Mailer
1986  BLUE VELVET de David Lynch
1985  SOLEIL DE NUIT de David Lynch
1984  L’ACCOMPAGNATRICE de Claude Miller
1983  DEBOUT LES CRABES LA MER MONTE? de Jacques Grand-Jouan
1982  BALLADE A BLANC de Bertrand Gauthier
1981  LE GRAND PARDON d’Alexandre Arcady
1980  LA BOUM de Claude Pinoteau
1979  ALORS, HEUREUX? de Claude Barrois
1978  MARTIN ET LEA d’Alain Cavalier
1977  L’ITALIEN DES ROSES de Charles Matton

The VCU French Film Festival

1996

Robin Renucci in the role of Henri III.
The idea is simple: I’m going on 36, I have no children and no time to find a suitable father, neither do I have any illusions about Love with a capital “L”.

Why choose Me? You don’t even know me?

Circumstances, you need to keep your factory and I need a baby

What about a ... BABY DEAL

Sandrine, en mal d’enfant, propose un marché à Eric dont elle vient de racheter l’entreprise: il lui fait un enfant et elle s’engage à le maintenir à la tête de la société. La cohabitation est difficile d’autant que Sandrine veut que l’enfant soit conçu in vitro afin d’éviter tout rapport sexuel. Eric, lui, tient à la méthode artisanale...

Directed by
Jean-Paul Lilienfeld

Starring
Patrick Braoudé
Clémentine Célarié

Produced by
Nicolas Altmayer
Erwin Provoost

Description
Patrick Braoudé, Eric, smiles about a deal he can not refuse.

Screening: Sunday, March 24, noon

Teleconferences:
Teleconference with Patrick Braoudé
Monday, March 25th at 2:00pm in Cabell Library (VCU Campus) Room B41.

Teleconference with Jean-Paul Lilienfeld
Wednesday, March 27th at 12:00 noon in Cabell Library (VCU Campus) Room B48.
Patrick Braoudé

1994  DIS-MOI OUI d’Alexandre Arcady
1993  NEUF MOIS de Patrick Braoudé
1990  GENIAL, MES PARENTS DIVORCENT de Patrick Braoudé
1987  L’OEIL AU BEURRE NOIR de Serge Meynard
1986  JE HAIS LES ACTEURS de Gérard Krawczyk
       L’ETE EN PENTE DOUCE de Gérard Krawczyk

Sandrine and Eric still negotiating the deal?
Le Zèbre

French Actor Thierry Lhermitte presents in person this special AVANT-PREMIERE screening.

Directed by Jean Poiret
Starring Thierry Lhermitte, Caroline Cellier
Produced by Thierry de Ganay
Based on the novel Le Zèbre by Alexandre Jardin

Description
Hippolyte Pécheral, la quarantaine épanouie, est notaire dans une petite ville de province.
Il a épousé, il y a quinze ans, Camille, professeur de lettres, qui lui a donné deux beaux enfants -les enfants sont toujours beaux par définition- Laurent, 13 ans et Nathalie, 10 ans. C'est ce qu'on appelle un foyer uni, et le bonheur du couple semble sans nuage.

Mais... mais...
Quinze ans de conjugalité...
Des habitudes prises...
L'installation dans une certaine tranquillité...
Un début d'essoufflement... (oh un rien!)
Le spectre, sinon de la saturation, du moins de la tendresse qui pointe son nez...
C'est la hantise d'Hippolyte, épris d'absolu et avide d'une passion éternelle, que sont état, de surcroît, met en contact quotidien avec des vies qui se font et se défont, et des contrats qui atterrissent chez les juges de divorce.

Le Zèbre, puisque c'est son surnom, a évité jusqu'à présent le piège.Par sa folie charmante, son humour. Son sens du jeu sentimental avec une épouse qu'il a su entraîner dans son univers, et qui lui donne une parfaite réplique.
Mais le mariage, comme le pouvoir, use. L'impact de son séduisant délire verbal n'est plus le même.
Il sent comme une menace diffuse se profiler.
Alors il va mettre en œuvre un plan destiné à retrouver le climat passionné et passionnel de leurs premières années, fait de dangers, de surprises, de qui-vives réciproques, qui, à son sens, entretiennent la flamme.

C'est l'histoire de ces stratagèmes, de ces jeux permanents de chat et de souris, avec une femme qui aime, mais qui parfois doute, ne comprend pas, et s'insurge, que nous racontons.
Ce qui m'a séduit, outre la belle histoire d'amour dont on meurt, d'Alexandre Jardin, c'est le caractère de ces deux personnages qui jouent et qui se jouent la comédie, qui se donnent en représentation permanente au petit monde qui les entoure et qui regarde, surpris, incompréhensif, le match de ce couple à la recherche de l'amour infini.

Jean POIRET

Screening: Sunday, March 24, 2:00 pm
Special guest Thierry Lhermitte, Le Zèbre.
Le Zèbre continued

Interview with Thierry Lhermitte

This terribly sentimental character hiding behind all sorts of clowning around pleased me. I like this form of humour. Sometimes it's laughter and factiousness that best convey the most serious things. Jean was a specialist in that department.

I was also very enthused about his adaptation of Alexandre Jardin's novel. It is very different in its chronology, but very faithful in spirit. I rejoiced with each line to discover how Jean defended the character of Le Zèbre.

Then there was the joy of shooting the movie. Very simply, I have never had as much fun except on stage in "Nuit d'Ivresse". We had the ideal conditions for making the film a success. Whenever something wasn't right, we started over as many times as necessary until we got it. Jean liked actors. He was demanding, generous, inspired. You couldn't help but accept all of his suggestions. An actor like him directing other actors couldn't not inspire confidence.

Interview avec Thierry Lhermitte

Ce personnage ultra-sentimental caché derrière toute sorte d'agitation autour de moi. J'aime cette forme d'humour. Parfois, c'est un rire et un tact qui exprime au mieux des choses sérieuses. Jean était un expert dans ce domaine.

Je me suis aussi passionné par l'adaptation d'Alexandre Jardin. Il est très différent de sa chronologie, mais très fidèle à l'esprit. Je me réjouis de chaque ligne pour découvrir comment Jean défendait le personnage de Le Zèbre.

Ensuite, il y a eu le plaisir de tourner. Très simplement, je n'ai jamais connu plus de joie que sur le plateau de "Nuit d'Ivresse". Nous avions les conditions idéales pour réussir le film. Quand quelque chose ne convenait pas, nous reprenions autant de fois que nécessaire jusqu'à ce que ça soit bien. Jean était un acteur exigeant, généreux, inspirant. On ne pouvait pas s'empêcher d'adopter toutes ses suggestions. Un acteur comme lui dirigeant d'autres acteurs ne pouvait pas ne pas inspirer confiance.
Jean's first reaction after reading the book, which he loved, was to turn it down. He didn't think it was what the public expected of him. Something burlesque. Like "The Bird Cage", for example. But the subject matter, the relationship of a couple that speaks the same language with the same sense of irony and playfulness, was so close to what he loves that he finally accepted. We've been together for twenty-two years, and we have always had a very passionate relationship. He was always taking care that our relationship didn't wind down.

As soon as the contract was signed, we left for Biarritz and he began working. When I came home at night, he would read scenes to me. And again, they were lovely, unforgettable moments of passion! This is how this wonderful, very personal - and at the same time very faithful - adaptation was born. Because, even if he takes us headfirst into pure comedy, little by little, the emotion makes itself felt. The process is typical of American comedies, which he loved. So, for the first time in my life on a film set, I was the director's wife. A priori, not an easy position to be in. But there was such complicity between us, that we understood one another with just a glance. He gave me two or three directions here and there, but that's all. On the other hand, back at the hotel each day after we'd finished on the set, we continued the work that we'd started in the writing stage. Between us it was more an exchange than being directed.

Thank heavens he saw the final edit. That day, he said to me, "You know, I think I'm making the film I wanted to make!" After "Le Zèbre", he still had lots of dreams and projects. In particular, to direct an opera, to write... Despite the fact he was anxious about time, he still was twenty in his mind.

Jean was youth.

Interview with Caroline Cellier

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Jean was youth.

Caroline Cellier

1994 FARINELLI IL CASTRATO de Gérard Corbiau
1993 DELIT MINEUR de Francis Girard
1990 LA CONTRE ALLEE de Isabelle Sébastien
1987 CHARLIE DINGO de Gilles Bhéat
1986 TURBULENCES de Bernard Stora
1984 GRAND GUIGNOL de Jean Marbeuf
1980 P’TIT CON de Gérard Lauzier
1983 SURPRISE PARTY de Roger Vadim
1982 MILLE MILLIARDS DE DOLLARS d’Henri Verneuil
1977 UNE FEMME, UN JOUR de Léonard Kiegl
1973 LES FOUGERES BLEUES de Françoise Sagan
1971 LES AVEUX LES PLUS DOUX d’Édouard Molinaro
1969 LA VIE, L’AMOUR, LA MORT de Claude Lelouch
1965 QUE LA BETE MEURE de Claude Chabrol
In this version of "The Misérables," Claude Lelouch focuses more on giving his own version of the text than on reconstituting the story written by Victor Hugo. 1830 gives way to December 31, 1899, marking the beginning of this version which runs up through 1945. A professional chauffeur is unjustly condemned to prison. His wife leaves Paris for Normandy, with her young son, and must accept to work as a maid at an Inn operated by the Rufus couple, modern version of the Thénardiers. The young boy, whose name is not Cosette but Henri Fortin, will learn boxing and eventually escape Rufus' greed.

Forty years later, it's wartime. The former champion boxer, now furniture mover, transports a family who is fleeing antisemitic persecutions. The price for transportation is that during the trip his passengers must read aloud Victor Hugo's text of which Henri - having seen a silent film of «Les Misérables» as a child- is so fond. Imagining the scenes read to him, he identifies himself with the main character Jean Valjean and little by little becomes him in real life. One finds Jean Marais playing a bishop who opposes the Nazis like Monsignor Myriel was advocating goodness in the original version and Philippe Khorsand as a militia member-Javert. It is the way Lelouch makes the transition from a hereditary social injustice to the «misery of the world» of the 20th century.

Michel Guilloux
Jean-Paul Belmondo who assumes two roles (father and son) in “Les Misérables” is pictured here as Henri Fortin (the son) who resembles more and more Victor Hugo’s character Jean Valjean

Interview with Director Claude Lelouch

When was the first time you came into contact with «Les Misérables»?

One night, in a train, during the Occupation. With my mother, we were wanted by the Gestapo. The train conductor noticed that we had falsified papers. He asked my mother to follow him into the corridor. In order to avoid being denounced, she gave him her watch. When she returned to the compartment, she let out: «What a Thénardier!» I was five or six years old. I did not understand what she meant. Then, she told me the story of «Les Misérables» all throughout the night, while adapting Victor Hugo’s novel to our social times.

I rediscovered the novel in the army. I was in prison for having tried to sneak out of barracks. In the prison library, I stumbled upon a copy of «Les Misérables». I devoured the book during my two days of confinement. I found that the story told me simple things about human beings, misery and injustice.

In choosing to adapt the theme of the «Misérables» to the time period of the Second World War, you give it a framework which goes beyond just social injustice...

Today, misery is multiple. During Hugo’s lifetime, misery represented the absence of financial means, whether one was warm or cold. Today, there is both cruel and moral misery. Misery has found its way into people’s minds. I ask myself if moral misery is not in fact worse because it cannot be stopped. It is a permanent and total form of gangrene.

But this film is not didactic or anything like that. «Les Misérables» is a performance. This performance demonstrates that the direction our life takes is fortuitous, that the line between becoming a good guy or a bastard is, in fact, quite narrow.

Sometimes, all it takes is just a smile, a sunray, an encounter with someone to sway to one side or the other. In fact, all one needs is good judgement. This film is a film about good judgement and tolerance.

Your film has several references to cinema in general as well as to the other versions of «Les Misérables»...

I placed homages to «Gone with the Wind», «La Traversée de Paris», «Quand passent les cigognes», «The Longest Day». Touréiffel, the character played by William Leymergie, is the same as the one played by Dustin Hoffman in «Papillon». There are several others, but I will leave it to the viewers to discover them. I wanted to pay tribute to the 100th anniversary of cinema, and it is my way of saying thanks to a trade that has given me everything.

The version of «Les Misérables» which impressed me the most was the one done in 1934 with actor Harry Baur that is why I chose to show a clip of it in this film.

Jean-Paul Belmondo

(Selected Films)

1959 A BOUT DE SOUFFLE de Jean-Luc Godard

1960 UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME de Jean-Luc Godard

1966 PARIS BRULE-T-IL de René Clément

1967 LE VOLEUR de Louis Malle

1969 UN HOMME D’UX ME PLAÎT de Claude Lelouch

1971 A TOUTE VITESSE de Claude Zidi

1974 TOUT CE QU’ON VEUT de René Clément

1976 LE CORPS DE MON ENNEMI d’Henri Verneuil

1977 L’ANIMAL de Claude Zidi

1979 LE CASSE d’Alain Resnais

1981 STAVISKY d’Alain Resnais

1983 LES MARIÉS DE L’AN DEUX de Jean-Paul Rappeneau

1984 JOYEUSES PAQUES de Georges Lautner

1985 LES MORALITÉS d’Henri Verneuil

1986 PARIS BRULE-T-IL? de René Clément

1988 LE VOLEUR de Louis Malle

1992 LE SOLITAIRE de Claude Lelouch

1995 DESIRE de Bernard Murat

1996 STAVISKY de Alain Resnais

1997 LE GUIGNOLO de Jean-Paul Rappeneau

1998 L’INNOCUUX DANS LA MAISON de Georges Lautner

A quand remonte votre première rencontre avec «les Misérables»?

A une nuit dans un train, sous l’Occupation. Avec ma mère, nous étions recherchés par la Gestapo. Le contrôleur s’est aperçu que nos papiers étaient faux. Il a demandé à ma mère de le suivre dans le couloir. Pour que nous ne soyons pas dénoncés, elle lui a remis sa montre. À son retour dans le compartiment, elle a lâché: «Quel Thénardier!» J’avais cinq-six ans. Je ne comprenais pas ce qu’elle voulait dire. Alors, elle m’a raconté «Les Misérables» toute la nuit, en adaptant le roman de Victor Hugo à l’époque.


En choisissant d’adapter le thème des «Misérables» à la période de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, vous lui donnez un cadre qui dépasse la seule injustice sociale...

La misère aujourd’hui est multiple. À l’époque d’Hugo, elle renvoyait à l’absence de moyens financiers, au fait d’avoir chaud ou froid. Aujourd’hui, elle est cruelle et morale. Elle est entrée dans les têtes. Je me demande si la misère morale n’est pas pire, car on ne peut pas la stopper. C’est une gangrène totale et permanente.

Mais ce film n’est pas un film à message. «Les Misérables», c’est un spectacle. Ce spectacle montre que notre vie ne tient à rien, que la frontière entre devenir un type bien ou un salaud est ténue. Il suffit parfois d’un sourire, d’un coup de soleil, d’une bonne rencontre pour basculer d’un côté ou de l’autre. Il suffit d’avoir du bon sens. En fait, ce film est un film sur le bon sens et la tolérance.

Votre film ne manque pas de clins d’œil au cinéma en général et aux précédentes versions des «Misérables» en particulier...


La version des «Misérables» qui m’a le plus impressionné, c’est celle jouée en 1934, par Harry Baur, que j’ai choisi de montrer dans mon film.

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