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André Bazin, in his unfinished study of Jean Renoir, described *Une partie de campagne* as a "perfectly finished work," one that is not only faithful in letter and spirit to the Maupassant story from which it was adapted but also actually improved by Renoir's additions and refinements to the original tale. This is high praise, indeed, when one realizes that the film's completion was highly problematic. Many of Renoir's films have had checkered careers, but none was quite so confusing as *Une partie de campagne*. Renoir originally intended to shoot a 35- or 40-minute story which he would make, he wrote later, just as if it were a full-length film. Renoir chose a gentle, 19th-century tale and planned to spend a relaxed summer filming along the banks of the Loin near Marlotte, an area he knew extremely well. The entire experience should have provided him, as Alexander Sesonske has described it, with a "brief and pleasant respite in mid-career." Despite the rainiest summer in memory, an extremely volatile political climate, tensions on the set and the fact that the film sat for nearly 10 years waiting for its final editing, *Une partie de campagne* is a remarkably fine film, some say a masterpiece; Sesonske thinks that no Renoir film seems "more unstudied, more a pure flow of life caught unaware."

There are sound reasons for the film's critical success: it is a film of uncommon gentleness and beauty, and it forms less of a "respite" in Renoir's career than a concentration of his most important themes and images: the river, the countryside, the loving scrutiny of bourgeois life. *Une partie de campagne* forms a poetic centre for Renoir's French films. Rather than a sense of diversion, the film reflects a completeness. Renoir's rendering of his subject matter is incisive, his style mature, his vision complete; it is a seamless work of art. Many critics have called attention to the film's impressionistic quality, suggesting that it is a homage to the director's father, the painter Pierre Auguste Renoir. Indeed, impressionistic moments do grace the film—but for one to try to understand it as an attempt by the son to do what the father had already done with paint and canvas is to sadly underestimate the qualities of the movie. The "painterly" look of the films of Renoir *films* have done much to strengthen his popular image as a director of surfaces, much to the detriment of his standing as a filmmaker of depth and perception.

The shortness of the film also has strengthened the perception of Renoir as an impressionistic filmmaker, and many critics today still respond to the film as incomplete, an interesting but unfinished experiment. The fact that Renoir left two scenes from the Maupassant story unshot has been used as evidence for regarding the film as a fragment, and considering Renoir's relative fidelity to the events of

Maupassant's tale, it is an understandable, if mistaken, conclusion. Published versions of the screenplay for those "missing" scenes have further confused the issue. However, closer examination of the relationship between the story and the film will dispel such misconceptions. Renoir wrote in his autobiography, *My Life and My Films*, that when he was asked to increase the original footage to feature length, he refused because he felt that it would have been contrary to the intent of Maupassant's story and to his screenplay to lengthen it. Moreover, what many critics have failed to notice is that Renoir, although he adapted the events of the fiction faithfully, greatly altered the story's tone, which allowed him to drop the final scenes from the completed film without leaving the project incomplete.

Maupassant's tantalizingly brief tale is largely satiric in tone. He makes fun of the pretensions and foibles of his bourgeoisie often rather harshly; the natural setting is kept in the background; and the atmosphere of the country is diminished. Renoir not only places greater emphasis in the rural atmosphere and setting but also makes a film that by bringing such natural elements into the foreground turns Maupassant's rather strident attack on the Dufort family into a compassionate and understanding film about unrecoverable moments and the inevitable sadness of the loss of innocence and love. As André Bazin has noted, such changes do improve the original. The story is given a resonance, the characters motivation, and the ending a poignance lacking in the fictional source. As Pierre Leprohon has described it: "there is an overflowing tenderness, and extraordinary responsiveness to the existence of things, and a transformation of the commonplace into the sublime." In *Une partie de campagne*, Renoir has created a poetic compression of those things that he holds dear, which is one of the reasons the film evokes such fond memories and responses from its viewers. Although unhappy and somewhat ironic, the ending is nevertheless not unhopeful. Life and the river will both flow on and be renewed.

—Charles L. P. Silet

## THE PASSENGER

See PROFESSIONE: REPORTER

## LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC

(The Passion of Joan of Arc)

France, 1928

Director: Carl Theodor Dreyer

Production: Société Générale des Films (Paris); black and white, 35mm, silent; running time: originally 110 minutes, later 86-88 minutes; length: 2400 meters. Released 21 April 1928, Paladsteatret, Copenhagen. Re-released 1952 in sound version produced by Gaumont Actualité and supervised by Lo Duca, musical accompaniment from works by Scarlatti, Albinoni, Gemianani, Vivaldi, and Bach. Filmed May-October 1927 in Paris.

Screenplay: Carl Theodor Dreyer and Joseph Delteil, from a book by Joseph Delteil; titles: Carl Theodor Dreyer; photography: Rudolph



*La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc*

**Maté; editor:** Carl Theodor Dreyer; **art directors:** Hermann Warm and Jean Hugo; **costume designer:** Valentine Hugo; **historical consultant:** Pierre Champion; **assistants:** Paul la Cour and Ralph Holm.

**Cast:** Maria Falconetti (*Joan*); Eugène Silvain (*Pierre Cauchon*); André Berley (*Jean d'Estivet*); Maurice Schutz (*Nicolas Loyseleur*); Antonin Artaud (*Jean Massieu*); Michel Simon (*Jean Lemaître*); Jean d'Yd (*Guillaume Evrard*); Ravet (*Jean Beaupère*); André Lurville; Jacques Arma; Alexandre Mihalesco; R. Narlay; Henri Gaultier; Paul Jorge.

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Carl Dreyer's last silent film is one of the most famous films in the history of cinema. It is seldom missing on "World's Ten Best Films" lists. Few films have been studied and analyzed as thoroughly in articles and books, and one sometimes feels that the real film is buried in the theory and aesthetics. But, a true classical work of art, *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* appeals to and moves the spectator with its beautiful simplicity. It is a pure tragedy of a young suffering woman fighting in a hostile world. The finest homage to the film is perhaps that of Jean-Luc Godard: in his film *Vivre sa vie* the prostitute (played by Anna Karina) is deeply moved by Dreyer's portrait of the legendary heroine when she sees the film in a Paris cinema in the 1960s. She can identify with the tormented young woman in this timeless film.

From the time he started his script in October 1926 until the film was finished, Dreyer worked on it for a year and a half. The historical trial of Jeanne lasted for more than a year. Dreyer concentrated the actual 29 interrogations into one long interrogation, and in the film it takes place on 30 May 1431, the last day of Jeanne's short life; Dreyer thus keeps to the unities of time, place and story.

The style of the film, which has been called a film in close-ups, is derived directly from his sources and evokes the protocol of the trial. When the film was released, the close-up technique was regarded as shocking. Dreyer defended his method by stating: "The records give a shattering impression on the ways in which the trial was a conspiracy of the judges against the solitary Jeanne, bravely defending herself against men who displayed a devilish cunning to trap her in their net. This conspiracy could be conveyed on the screen only through the huge close-ups, that exposed, with merciless realism, the callous cynicism of the judges hidden behind hypocritical compassion—and on the other hand there had to be equally huge close-ups of Jeanne, whose pure features would reveal that she alone found strength in her faith in God." As in all of Dreyer's major films the style grew out of the theme of the film. In *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* Dreyer wanted "to move the audience so that they would themselves feel the suffering that Jeanne endured." It was by using close-up that Dreyer could "lead the audience all the way into the hearts and guts of Jeanne and the judges."

The close-up technique is the core of the film, because it lifts the drama above a given place and a given time. It is a satisfactory way of abstracting from an historically defined reality without abandoning a respect for authenticity and realism. But this striving for timelessness is reflected in all the components of the film. And there is more to the film than close-ups. Dreyer uses medium close-ups, tilts, pans, travelling shots and intricate editing. Cross-cutting is used to great effect, especially in the last part of the film, and the hectic rhythm and swiftly changing shots towards the end of the film are as masterfully controlled as the close-ups. The visual language is very complex and

not in the least monotonous. The sets and the costumes were consciously created in a way that furthered the balance between the historical and the modern. The lighting, the overall whiteness of the images, contributes to the film's emphasis on the simple and the lucid.

Dramatically, *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* is composed as one long scene. This is Jeanne's last struggle, and the battle is for her life and her soul. The film is dramatically and psychologically intensified in two scenes. The first when Jeanne breaks down mentally and, to save her life, signs a confession as a heretic. The second is the scene in which she regrets what she has done and withdraws the confession. She knows then that her death is certain, but she saves her soul, and she triumphs in her faith.

*La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* is an intense description of the suffering of an individual, the drama of a soul transformed into images. It is a "cool" look, and Dreyer called his method "realized mysticism." With his sober objectivity Dreyer succeeded in making the difficult understandable and the irrational clear. The film is about the necessity of suffering for the liberation of the individual human being. As do all of Dreyer's heroines, Jeanne suffers defeat, but for Dreyer defeat or victory in this world is of no importance. The essential thing is the soul's victory over life. Dreyer's view of the historical facts is, of course, not a balanced one. Jeanne is the heroine, and Dreyer is on her side in a struggle against a cruel, official world.

In Dreyer's oeuvre *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* brings together all the resources of the cinema at that time, and is the most pure and perfect expression of his art. Of none of his films is his own statement more fitting: "The soul is revealed in the style, which is the artist's expression on the way he regards his material."

The film was well received when it was released, but it was not a commercial success. Since then the film's reputation has grown, and for many years it has been continuously shown in film archives and film clubs all over the world. The original negative of *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was destroyed in a fire in 1928 at UFA in Berlin. Film archeologists are still working on a restoration of the film, which has survived in many slightly differing versions—but even a definitive version should not drastically change our impression of this masterpiece.

—Ib Monty

## PASSPORT TO PIMLICO

UK, 1949

Director: Henry Cornelius

Production: Ealing Studios; black and white, 35mm; running time: 84 minutes. Released April 1949.

Producer: Michael Balcon; associate producer: E. V. H. Emmett; screenplay: T. E. B. Clarke; photographer: Lionel Baner; art direction: Roy Oxley; music: Georges Auric; editor: Michael Truman.

Cast: Stanley Holloway (*Arthur Pemberton*); Betty Warren (*Connie Pemberton*); Barbara Murray (*Shirley Pemberton*); Paul Dupuis