

Forest Row Film Society

Programme 2007-2008



Murnau's Faust

New start time: 8pm

www.forestrowfilmsociety.org

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21st September 2007: **La Belle et la Bête**

Director: Jean Cocteau, France 1946, Colour (PG) 103 min

No wonder this is Cocteau's best-loved film, with its haunting surreal imagery. Cocteau's rendering of the familiar tale of the hideous beast (Marais) and the young woman (Day) who comes to the castle to do penance for her father's crimes, emphasizes psychology over fable, which is perhaps why so many find it emotionally moving. The fantastic sets derived from Vermeer and Dore, Alekan's creamy dreamlike cinematography, Auric's magnificent score and Jean Marais's double role as prince and beast have all made the film famous: "Perhaps the most sensuously elegant of all filmed fairy tales" (Pauline Kael).

"A magnificent piece of screencraft, shot through with beauty" – *Sunday Times*

5th October 2007: **Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould**

Director: Francois Girard, Portugal/Canada 1993, Colour (U) 93 min

Eschewing the narrative conventions of the Hollywood biopic, Francois Girard's study of the virtuoso Canadian pianist Glenn Gould is structured as a series of thirty-two short films, mirroring the composition of Bach's Goldberg Variations. The cumulative effect of this stratagem is to paint a wonderfully multifaceted and rounded portrait of a deeply complex individual, without ever falling prey to either pretentiousness or simplistic cliché.

Girard intersperses real-life testimony from Gould's friends and fellow musicians with fictionalised scenes from his life; Colm Feore's sympathetic and sensitive portrayal of Gould in these segments is particularly noteworthy. By turns warm, witty and elegiac, *Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould* garnered considerable acclaim upon its initial release thirteen years ago and arguably remains one of the decade's most original and inventive pieces of cinema.

6th October 2007, 1pm: Silent films

USA 1920-7, B&W (U) c. 60 min

For the Forest Row Festival this year we will again be screening some great silent comedies with live music. There will be several Laurel and Hardy shorts, including *Big Business*; *The Finishing Touch*; and *From Soup to Nuts*. The programme will also include the animation *Felix Wins and Loses*.

6th October 2007, 9pm: Faust

Director: F.W. Murnau, Germany 1926, B&W (PG) 115 min

Murnau's *Faust* was one of the biggest productions in early German cinema. With a large budget, great actors (including Emil Jannings), and made by some of the best film technicians, this fantastic, expressionist version of Goethe's story includes particularly sophisticated special effects, unsurpassed until Kubrick made *2001* nearly fifty years later.

Following *Nosferatu*, *Faust* was the last film Murnau made in Germany before moving to Hollywood and producing his masterpiece *Sunrise*. The film will be screened with live piano accompaniment by Terry Davies.

19th October 2007: The Blue Kite

Director: Tian Zhuangzhuang, China/Hong Kong 1993 Colour (12) 140 min

The Blue Kite is nothing less than the attempt to show what it was like to live in times of ideological madness. The picture demonstrates how the winds of revolutionary change affect the lives of real people. In the bustling heart of Beijing in 1953 Shujuan and Shaolong, a modest young elementary school teacher and librarian express their revolutionary fervour during their marriage service by toasting a portrait of Mao Zedong and serenading their friends with a rousing song about peasants and work quotas. A year later, Shujuan gives birth to Tietou, who in this early section introduces us to the simple pleasures of these idyllic days of laughter. He remembers especially a blue kite that he treasures, and which is caught in a tree, and how his father promises to give him a new one. However, his father has been sent "far, far away," Tietou learns. Shaolong has been sent to a labour camp, and eventually is killed in an accident.

The film then traces the story of this strong mother trying to raise her child in a society where disruption seems to exist for its own sake.

If the recent films to come out of China have a common element, it's their tendency to demote the role of the personal and the psychological in their characters in favour of the social and the political. But *The Blue Kite* gets the balance of these forces right. *The Blue Kite* combines a sumptuous lyricism with fearless social critique. It's a rare accomplishment -- moving, beautiful and brave.

9th November 2007: Chocolat

Director: Claire Denis, France/Germany/Cameroon 1988, Colour (PG) 105 min

The film opens in the present: a young woman returns to her home in the Cameroons. The story is told in a flashback about her childhood as the daughter of the district governor of French West Africa at a time when colonialism was already doomed.

France Dalens lives with her father Marc, mother Aimée and their houseboy Protée with whom the girl France develops a bond, a focal point in the film. But when the husband Marc goes away on government business the silence in the compound seems charged with erotic tension between Aimée and Protée.

With music by Abdullah Ibrahim, *Chocolat* is a film of great delicacy and sensibility, touching on issues of race and power. "This is one of the best films of the year" – Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*

23rd November 2007: Intimate Lighting

Director: Ivan Passer, Czechoslovakia 1966, B&W (PG) 72 min

The award winning first film of this great Czech New Wave director is a delightful subtle comedy, catching the meandering vagaries of every day life. Bambas is a violinist in a small provincial orchestra and his old friend Petr comes to visit, as soloist, bringing with him his pretty girl friend.

"One of those very special movies ... it loses none of its charm to age or repeated viewing" – *New York Times*

7th December 2007: An Autumn Tale

Director: Eric Rohmer, France 1998, Colour (U) 111 min

The final instalment in the "Tales of the Four Seasons" is a detached and respectful observation of two "mature" characters: Magali, a lonely wine-maker in Alsace, and her best friend Isabelle. Isabelle secretly places a lonely hearts ad, and interviews the applicant on Magali's behalf, while her son's girlfriend, Rosine, tries to pair Magali with her professor ex-lover.

This charming comedy is a lyrical exploration of the uncertainties, fears and restlessness of middle age.

15th December 2007, 2.30pm: Black Beauty

Director: James Hill, UK/West Germany 1971, Colour (U) 106 min

Beautifully photographed in locations in Ireland and Spain, Anna Sewell's classic *Black Beauty* is an eloquent plea for the humane treatment of animals in an era before there were any laws against animal abuse, when horses were routinely worked to death and subjected to brutal treatment. The film opens with Black Beauty's birth and life as a young horse, cared for by his devoted young owner, Joe. The opening is quite impressive and educational for young viewers, as the film captures the actual birth of a foal. But circumstances result in Black Beauty being sold, and the main part of the film follows him through a variety of situations: as a carriage horse for an abusive "gentleman," a circus performer, a lady's riding horse, a soldier's horse in India, and a workhorse in a coal mine.

The general structure of Black Beauty's adventures will be easy for even fairly young viewers to follow and enjoy. The 1971 version of *Black Beauty* is only loosely based on Anna Sewell's classic children's book, but it has quite a bit of charm of its own. While it has enough "scary" moments to be perhaps a bit unnerving for the youngest viewers, the film's story of Black Beauty's colourful adventures is sure to appeal to children while also being entertaining enough for adults to enjoy along with them.

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11th January 2008: **Le Jour se Lève**

Director: Marcel Carné, France 1939, B&W (PG) 90 min

In the course of a long night, holed up in his flat, watched by the police, François (Jean Gabin) reflects on the events which made of him, a decent chap, a killer. Through flashbacks (which became a new feature of the cinema of the time), he lives again through the times of his love for Françoise and how he tried to protect her from the attentions of untrustworthy Valentin.

The moody atmosphere through music, lighting and vaguely dreamlike sets typifies the poetic realism which became the hallmark of Carné's work; Prévert, who contributed to the incisive dialogue, became the iconic French poet for a whole generation.

"One of the masterpieces of the French screen. There is poetic beauty – and the characters are brilliantly etched. With effortless power and superb treatment, Carné's film keeps its grip to the last moment." – *Daily Telegraph*

1st February 2008: **A Taste of Cherry**

Director: Abbas Kiarostami, Iran 1997, Colour (PG) 98 min

Kiarostami's justly feted masterpiece is a philosophically inquisitive study of Mr Badii, a man on the verge of committing suicide, who drives around the dusty suburbs of Teheran seeking someone to secretly bury him once he has done so. Reflective in tone, languidly paced and exquisitely acted, *A Taste of Cherry* never succumbs to an excess of pathos or of moral sermonising, instead allowing the viewer to draw their own conclusions from the conversations between Mr Badii and the various strangers he picks up in order to persuade them to help him. It is in this series of interactions that Kiarostami delicately explores universally relevant religious, social and personal conceptions, perceptions and attitudes towards life and death, whilst ultimately conveying a message of optimism through the words of the elderly museum worker who is the sole person to agree to Mr Badii's request.

15th February 2008: La Lectrice

Director: Michel Deville, France 1988, Colour (18) 98 min

A young woman, who likes reading to her boy friend in bed, needs to find employment and advertises to read aloud to people. Four people take up her offer and while reading to them she begins to enter their lives. The different books reflect each client's character but whilst she reads it becomes clear that these people are after attention of a different kind.

With music by Beethoven this is a thoroughly erotic film set amidst the wintry background of Arles. It teases the imagination causing us the audience to become participants.

29th February 2008: Letter from my Village

Director: Safi Faye, Senegal 1975, B&W (NR) 90 min

Safi Faye dedicated her first feature-length film to her grandfather, who appears in this drama-documentary with the other villagers. Her voice-over letter is illustrated by scenes of their harsh daily life, still steeped in tradition, as she describes the poverty, exploitation and corruption of post-colonial Senegal.

"Soberly poetic yet politically effective" said African film critic Françoise Pfaff; so effective in fact that the film was banned in Senegal.

Followed by the AGM.

14th March 2008: I Vitelloni

Director: Federico Fellini, Italy 1953, B&W (PG) 109 min

Fellini's own memories of Rimini, his native seaside town, inspired this bleakly funny study of five immature young men, adrift in a sleepy provincial resort. They pass their time in pursuit of drink, amusement and girls, sponging on their indulgent families, while nursing vague ambitions never to be fulfilled.

Beautifully shot and performed, the film won the Silver Lion at Venice.

18th April 2008: **The Whales of August**

Director: Lindsay Anderson, USA 1987, Colour (U) 90 min

Two elderly sisters, Libby (Bette Davis) and Sarah (Lillian Gish) have been bickering for years, until they have become beloved enemies. For decades, they have returned to the island off the coast of Maine where they spent summers with their husbands, now deceased. In August at twilight they watch as the whales pass by on their journeys.

Gish is the elder sister and in slightly better health; she plays opposite Davis, now bitter and blind. Gingerly, they talk around many of the issues that have divided them for years.

“A gentle interlacing of memory, comedy and pathos, this is a golden opportunity to enjoy the swansong of two giants of cinema.” – *Time Out* – During the filming, Anderson (*If... and O Lucky Man!*) told Gish that she had performed wonderfully in a closeup. “She should,” Davis declared, “she invented them.”

9th May 2008: **The Last Laugh**

Director: F.W. Murnau, Germany 1924, B&W (U) 76 min

The elderly imposing doorman, who derives his power and swagger through his impressive uniform, alcohol and wealth, is suddenly replaced by a younger man and demoted to the post of washroom attendant.

Without his uniform he is a nobody, a stooped wreck shunned by all, even his family. He even loses the habit of stroking his impressive moustaches! But then the most incredible events take place. The camera movement, smooth and emotional, had a profound effect on world cinema. Realism, fantasy, magic lead to an improbable epilogue tinged with giddy irony.

Film Society Fundraising



We are fundraising for new digital equipment to enable us to show a broader range of films on a bigger screen.

We have just received £1000 from the Heart of Community awards from Axa PPP and the *East Grinstead Courier* but still have a long way to go. If you can help in any way, please let us know.

Film Screenings in Sussex

Sign up on our website for our **email list** to receive reminders for all our films

Our website also includes listings of all cinemas within 20 miles of Forest Row and of all film society screenings in Sussex, south Surrey and west Kent

Available as an RSS feed

forestrowfilmsociety.org

Village Hall chairs



The Village Hall is considering buying new, more comfortable chairs, and is fundraising for them. Each chair costs £30. The Film Society will make a donation, and if you would like to contribute please contact a member of the committee

BEST WEBSITE



Forest Row Film Society won an award in the **Best Website** category at the recent British Federation of Film Societies ceremony

forestrowfilmsociety.org

Forest Row Film Society 2007-2008

30th year

Freshfield Hall, Forest Row, mostly Fridays at 8pm

21st September	<i>La Belle et la Bête</i>
5th October	<i>Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould</i>
6th October (1pm: all seats £2)	<i>Laurel and Hardy silents</i>
6th October (9pm: all seats £5)	<i>Faust</i>
19th October	<i>The Blue Kite</i>
9th November	<i>Chocolat</i>
23rd November	<i>Intimate Lighting</i>
7th December	<i>An Autumn Tale</i>
15th December (2.30pm: all seats £3)	<i>Black Beauty</i>
11th January	<i>Le Jour se Lève</i>
1st February	<i>A Taste of Cherry</i>
15th February	<i>A Lectrice</i>
29th February	<i>Letter from my Village</i>
14th March	<i>I Vitelloni</i>
18th April	<i>The Whales of August</i>
9th May	<i>The Last Laugh</i>

Membership for a year: £6/£4 (concessions)

Admission to each film: £4/£3.50 (concessions)

Day membership including admissions: £5/£4 (concessions)

All performances start at 8 pm and doors open at 7.30pm, except where indicated.

All foreign language films are shown in their original language with English subtitles.

Secretary and treasurer: Marie-Claire Thomson (tel: 01342 823424)

Email: forestrowfilms@yahoo.co.uk

Read more about the films at www.forestrowfilmsociety.org where you can sign up to receive an email reminder a week before each screening and receive further reading about all the films.