

La Belle et la bête

(Beauty and the Beast, 1946)

Director Jean Cocteau
Writer Jean Cocteau
Story Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont
Produced André Paulvé
Original music Georges Auric
Cinematography Henri Alekan
Film Editing Claude Ibéria
Makeup Hagop Arakelian
Set Decoration Lucien Carré
Production Design Christian Bérard
& Lucien Carré
Jean Marais Avenant/The Beast/The Prince
Josette Day Beauty
Mila Parély Felicie
Nane Germon Adelaide
Michel Auclair Ludovic
Raoul Marco The usurer
Marcel André The Merchant (father)
Jean Cocteau voice of the magic objects



JEAN COCTEAU (5 July 1889, Maisons-Laffitte, France---11 October 1963, Milly-la-Forêt, France). Wrote 19 films and directed 9. The films in which he did both are *Orphée* (Orpheus, 1949), *Les Parents terribles* (The Storm Within, 1948), *L'Aigle à deux têtes* (The Eagle Has Two Heads, 1947), *Le Sang d'un poète* (The Blood of a Poet, 1930).

JEAN MARAIS (11 December 1913, Cherbourg— 8 November 1998, Cannes) appeared in almost 80 movies, starting with *Dans les rues* (Song of the Street, 1933) and ending with Carlo Lizzani's 1999 documentary, *Luchino Visconti*. His last feature role was in *Stealing Beauty* (1996). Some of his other films are *Les Misérables* (1995), *Fantômas* (1964), *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960), *Princesse de Clèves* (1960), *Napoléon* (1955), *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1955), *Orphée* (1949), *Le Secret de Mayerling* (1948), and *Éternel retour* (1943)

JOSETTE DAY (néé Josette Dagory, 1914, Paris— 29 June 1978, Paris) acted in nearly 40 films, but never in a role as perfectly suited to her as Cocteau's Beauty. Some of her other films are *Les Parents terribles* (1948), *Arlette et l'amour* (1943), *Le Patriote* (1938), *Soeurs d'armes* (1937), *Club de femmes* (1936), *Lucrece Borgia* (1935), and *Le Barbier de Séville* (1933).

GEORGES AURIC (15 February 1899, Lodève, France – 23 July 1983) composed the scores of for well over 100 films, among them *The Poppy is Also a Flower* (1966), *The Innocents* (1961), *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960), *Princesse de Clèves* (1960), *Bonjour tristesse* (1958), *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* (1957), *The Story of Esther Costello* (1957), *Lola Montès* (1955), *Le Salaire de la peur* (The Wages of Fear, 1953), *Roman Holiday* (1953), *Moulin Rouge* (1952), *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), *Orphée* (1949), *L'Aigle à deux têtes* (1947), *L'Éternel retour* (1943), and *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930).

JEAN COCTEAU, from *Beauty and the Beast: Diary of a Film*

The postulate of the story requires faith, the faith of childhood. I mean that one must believe implicitly at the very beginning and not question the possibility that the mere picking of a rose might lead a family into adventure, or that a man can be changed into a beast, and vice versa. Such enigmas offend grown-ups who are really prejudiced, proud of their doubt, armed with derision. But I have the impudence to believe that the cinema which depicts the impossible is apt to carry conviction, in a way, and may be able to put a “singular” occurrence into the plural.

It is up to us (that is, to me and my unit—in fact, one entity) to avoid those impossibilities which are even more of a jolt in the midst of the improbable than in the midst of reality. For fantasy has its own laws which are like those of perspective. You may not bring what is distant into the foreground, or render fuzzily what is near. The vanishing lines are impeccable and the orchestration so delicate that the slightest false note jars. I am not speaking of what I have achieved, but of what I shall attempt within the means at my disposal.

My method is simple: not to aim at poetry. That must come of its own accord. The mere whispered mention of its name frightens it away. I shall try to build a table. It will be up to you then to eat at it, to examine it or to chop it up for firewood.

I'm finding it very difficult to make the artists understand that the style of the film needs a luster and a lack of naturalness that are supernatural. There is not much dialogue. They cannot permit the least fuzziness.

I am not a real director and probably never shall be. I get too interested in what is happening.

This film must prove that it's possible to avoid camera movement and keep to a fixed frame.

With this postponement I have come to realize that the rhythm of the film is one of narrative. I am telling the story. It is as if I were hidden behind the screen, saying: “Then such and such a thing happened.” The characters don't seem to be living a life of their own, but a life that is being narrated. Perhaps that's how it should be in a fairy tale.

I told Alekan off after the run-through. His mania for plotting his shots, yet at the same time making them appear diffuse, revolts me. It's all too “artistic”. Nothing is equal to the sublimation of the documentary style. It is this style I want from him.

People have decided once and for all that fuzziness is poetic. Now, since in my eyes poetry is precision, number, I'm pushing Alekan in precisely the opposite direction from what fools think is poetic. He is slightly bewildered.

M. asked Paul: “Why is Jean making a film? They don't last.” An amazing statement, As if anything at all was lasting, beginning with the world!

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Cocteau began this project with a story by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711-1780), “Le Magasin des enfants” (1756). There's a good web site on her with a link to the story in French and a few good stills from the film:

www.fh-augsburg.de/~harsch/gallica/Chronologie/18siede/Leprince/lep_intr.html.

You'll find Info on Cocteau's films at www.scf.usc.edu/~pkon/Cocteau.html. For an excellent web site on Cocteau in French go to

www.multimania.com/ericd/Mylene/Beyond2/JeanCocteau/CoctBio.html. And for a good bio note and listing of his works in English visit www.kirjasto.sci.fi/cocteau.htm.

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