

THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GREAT FILMS WITH BRUCE JACKSON & DIANE CHRISTIAN

PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO AND THE MARKET ARCADE FILM AND ARTS CENTER

FEBRUARY 27, 2001 (III:7): LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS/THE CHILDREN OF PARADISE

LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS (Pathé Pictures, France, 1945, 187 minutes; *THE CHILDREN OF PARADISE*, US, 1946)

Director Marcel Carné

Screenplay Jacques Prévert

Producers Raymond Borderie, Fred Orain

Original music Joseph Kosma, Maurice Thiriet

Cinematographers Marc Fossard, Roger Hubert

Film Editors Madeleine Bonin, Henri Rust

Production Designer Alexandre Trauner

Art Director Léon Barsacq

▪ **Costume Designer** Antoine Mayo

Arletty...Garance

Jean-Louis Barrault...Baptiste Debureau

Pierre Brasseur...Frederick LeMaitre

Pierre Renoir...Jericho

Maria Casarès...Nathalie

Gaston Modot...Fil de Soie

Fabien Loris...Avril

Marcel Pérès...Director

Palau...Stage master

Etienne Decroux...Anselme Debureau

Jane Marken Madame Hermine

Marcelle Monthil Marie

Louis Florencie Policeman

Habib Benglia Arab Attendant

Rognoni Director, "Grand Theatre"

Jacques Castélot George

Paul Frankeur Police Inspector

MARCEL CARNÉ (18 August 1909, Paris—31 October 1996, Clamart, France), ‘the son of a cabinet maker, entered the movies as the assistant of Jacques Feyder. At the age of 25 he directed his first movie *Jenny* (1936). Collaborating with the writer Jacques Prévert, the decorator Alexandre Trauner, the musician and composer Maurice Jaubert and the actor Jean Gabin he became the great director of the pre-war era of the French cinema with the poetic realism style (e.g. *Hôtel du Nord* (1938)). During the occupation of France by Nazi-Germany he worked in the zone of the government of Vichy making *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945), ...an all-time classic of French cinema. After having been confronted with a purge trial he went on filming but none of his later movies could catch up with his former works.’ (IMDB)

JACQUES PRÉVERT (4 January 1900, Neuilly-sur-Seine, Hauts-de-Seine, France—11 April 1977, Omonville-la-Rogue, Manche, France) is best known as a surrealist poet, but he also wrote the scripts for more than two dozen films, among them Carné’s *Le jour se lève* (*Daybreak*), which also starred Arletty. Two good pages on him (in French): <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/jacques.prevert/prevert.htm> and <http://xtream.online.fr/Prevert/>

ARLETTY (Léonie Marie Julie Bathiat, 15 May 1898, Courbevoie, Hauts-de-Seine, France—24 July 1992, Paris) appeared in 63 films between 1930 and 1967. “She made her music-hall debut in 1918 and continued to appear on the stage until the early 1930’s. Arletty rarely received top billing although she outshone the lead actors in most of her films, notably the popular classics *Hôtel du Nord* (1938) and *Le Jour se lève* (1939). She always illuminated the screen with an unusual mixture of Parisian working-class sense of humour and her romantic beauty, qualities perfectly illustrated by her portrayal of Garance in *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945) directed by Marcel Carné. After the Liberation, her career suffered a severe drawback owing to a liaison with a German Officer during the Occupation. For liberated France, she became the symbol of treason or what was called “horizontal collaboration,” and for that she had to pay. And the price proved to be very high indeed. She was arrested and sent to Drancy concentration camp then to Fresnes prison (near Paris) where she spent 120 days. In December 1944, she was put under house arrest for another two years and condemned to three years work suspension. She was not invited to the premiere of *Les enfants du paradis* in March 1945 which led French critic Jean Sadoul to write: “Arletty bid farewell to the screen with the best role of her career.” Once her work restriction lifted, however, she did return to the screen, notably in *Portrait d’un assassin* (1949), *Huis clos* (1954) and *L’Air de Paris* (1954) and also acted on stage before blindness forced her to retire in the early Sixties....” (IMDB bio by Christophe Gressequé)

PRODUCTION began 16 August 1943 in Nice at the Victorine Studio where the huge set was constructed. After only a few weeks work halted because of a rumor that the Americans had landed at Genoa. When Italy signed an armistice with the Allies in Sept. 1943 the film’s Italian co-producers withdrew and a 2-month hiatus ensued. Carné and team returned to Paris from Nice to find the French producer Paulvé under Nazi investigation and pulling out. Pathé agreed to take over and production resumed in their Paris studio. Crew returned to Nice in February 1944, by which time sets had

been damaged by weather and required further investment (Trauner's reconstruction of the 1840 Boulevard de Crime cost 5 million francs.) ...As balance tipped to Allies, Nazi supporters ran scared. Robert LeVigan, the actor for whom *Jéricho*, the old clothes seller part, was written and who made many anti-semitic and pro-Nazi radio broadcasts, fled in 1944 to join Vichy members in Sigmaringen. *Jéricho* part is played by last-minute substitute Pierre Renoir (son of the painter, brother of the director).

From an interview with Alexandre Trauner:

In planning we understood that everything had to happen on the Boulevard of Crime, the former Boulevard of the Temple which had been so renamed in the middle of the 19th century because it numbered so many theaters where so many dramas played that someone was killed onstage at every door. All our history happened on this boulevard. It was there at the dramatic theater where Frédéric Lemaître ruled, but also there where the fantastic theater, the theater of the Funambules [tight-rope walkers, grotesques, mimes], the poor, was—they were those who, lacking royal privilege did not have the right to speak and they invented from that constraint the most beautiful stories. It is there that the story took place, there where people met and were lost. It had to be constructed, that was certain.

My principle problem was the blue sky of the Midi, the most unphotographable there is. The exposure was so intense in the blue that you could only get an image of extreme contrast. To light characters or soften the light was terribly difficult. You could succeed but it was always difficult. You could shoot only in good conditions for certain hours and it was better to have a set built for sunrise to sunset.

from the Pacific Cinematheque notes: "In Memoriam: Marcel Carné (1909-1996)"

Marcel Carné, one of France's greatest directors, died in late October, at the age of 87. His career spanned some four decades, from the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s, but it is for his amazing early work in partnership with celebrated surrealist poet and screenwriter Jacques Prévert (1900-1977) that he will be best remembered. Carné and Prévert stand as one of the most significant collaborative teams in cinema's history, and together produced some of the most remarkable French films of the late 30s and early 40s, including *Quai des brumes* (1938) and *Le Jour se lève* (1939) --works whose blend of realism, lyricism, and romantic fatalism came to define the hugely influential style known as French "poetic realism." The monumental, miraculous *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945) is widely considered their greatest achievement....Recently voted "Best French Film of the Century" in a poll of 600 French critics and film professionals, *Les Enfants du paradis* is one of world cinema's most cherished masterpieces, and one of French cinema's crowning glories. <http://www.cinematheque.bc.ca/archives/carne.html>

Gio MacDonald in the Edinburgh University Film Society Programme 1994-95:

Set in 1840s Paris and centred around the Funambules Theatre on the Boulevard du Crime, the story follows the fortunes of four men whose lives are interwoven by their love for the same woman, the beautiful actress Garance (Arletty).

Baptiste Debureau (Jean-Louis Barrault), boyish and love-lorn, might become the greatest mime of his day (and Barrault was); ebullient Frederick Lemaître (Pierre Brasseur) aspires to be the greatest actor; and fiery Lacenaire (Marcel Hemand) could transcend his criminal past to be a great playwright.

These three really existed, but the story is fictional, as is the fourth character - the icy Count Edward de Montaroy (Louis Salou) who requires exclusive patronage of Garance. For her part; she fully loves only one of them.

...The theatre and a quarter of a mile of street fronts were built. Trauner, a designer and Kosma, a composer, worked secretly [both were Jews and in hiding from the Nazis], and many of the 1,800 extras were in the Resistance, using filming as daytime cover. Special permission was needed for a wartime film of such magnitude (its two parts total over three hours) and production was stalled several times, sometimes by director Marcel Carné who was determined it should be premiered after the Liberation.

From *World Film Directors, V.I.*, Ed. John Wakeman, 1987

All of Carné's films except his first documentary were shot entirely in the studio. At the beginning of his career he had been one of the most vocal advocates of location shooting. In 1932 he could not see "without irritation the current cinema shutting itself away, fleeing from life in order to delight in sets and artificiality." ...Probably his desire for complete artistic control won him to studio filming where he could plan camera movements and lighting effects with absolute confidence....

"Before shooting a film I prepare my palette then I see to it that everything is done in the same shade, always bearing in mind the main idea of the work. . . . One must compose images as the old masters did their canvases, with the same preoccupation with effect and expression. Cinema images have the same needs."

from *LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS*, by Jill Forbes, BFI, 1997

Les Enfants du paradis is a work of incomparable richness and complexity, a deliberately playful text in which fiction and reality, film and theatre, are artfully intertwined and their boundaries confused. It is a film of immense scope and ambition, made at a crucial time in the history of France and of its cinema, which triumphantly surmounted all the constraints and restrictions of wartime, and which even today, half a century after it was first released, continues to be considered 'the greatest

film ever made.'

...the production was nearing completion as the year 1944 drew to a close. But at this point Carné slowed proceedings down. The approaching end of the war opened up the possibility that instead of being the last film of the Occupation *Les Enfants du paradis* could be the first film of the Liberation. Chronologically, this is how things turned out. But as will become apparent, *Les Enfants du paradis*

remains, in all other respects, a film of the Occupation years...

With its action set in the 19th century, and in the world of theatre and entertainment, *Les Enfants du paradis* might hope to get past the censors with little difficulty. But does this setting mean that *Les Enfants du paradis* should be interpreted as an escapist fantasy with little or no relation to the sociopolitical context in which it was made? Or is it rather, as is frequently suggested, an allegory in which Arletty stands for the spirit of resistance and Nathalie compliance with the values of the Vichy regime? Or is it, perhaps, rooted in the Vichy experience in ways that are not immediately obvious?

...One of the most significant meanings of *Les Enfants du paradis* is that it contributes to a nationalistic project. It is a work which was designed to fulfil the ambition, nourished by film-makers, Vichy sympathizers and French patriots alike, to beat the Americans at their own game by producing a spectacular film which was distinctively French. Its scale and ambition were marks of the vitality of French culture, politically important statements that French individuality would survive assaults, both from elsewhere in Europe and from across the Atlantic.

...*Les Enfants du paradis* is presented as a historical reconstruction in which the setting, characters and events for the most part really existed. Indeed, much of our pleasure as viewers derives from the sense of authenticity procured by the film, a sense which director and set designer were at great pains to achieve. At the same time, the film promotes an ambiguous relationship between history and fiction by leading the viewer in to a world committed to total unreality, to fantasy, pretence, disguise and make-believe, the world of the nineteenth century theatre and entertainment.

...The set of *Les Enfants du paradis* is the principle means by which a sense of authenticity is created and by which we are convinced the film is a historical reconstruction. It was the largest and most elaborate to have been built in a French studio, and the crowning achievement of Alexandre Trauner's career. Its size and magnificence were clearly a way of showing the world what France could do even when the odds were stacked against her, an act of defiance against the Germans and, more distantly, Hollywood. The set frames the two halves of the film, generating the actors at the beginning and swallowing them up at the end. Becoming, as Carné was to emphasise in his autobiography, a significant actor in the film.

...Carné wrote two articles for *Cinémagazine* which go some way toward explaining how he conceived the function of the cinema and what he sought in *Les Enfants du paradis*. In 'La Caméra personnage du drame' (The camera as a character in the play), written in 1929, he discusses Murnau's use of the tracking shot, a technical advance which Carné believed transformed the psychology of the cinema, changing the relationship between actors and space, allowing them to be, as it were, surprised in their environment by the inquisitive camera. This lesson is put to good effect in the opening sequence of *Les Enfants du paradis* and in the series of 'revelations' throughout the film, which allow the spectator to embark on a journey of discovery, peering through the 'keyhole of life.'

In 'Quand le cinéma descendra-t-il dans la rue?' (When will the cinema go out into the street?) Carné investigates how sound cinema, by forcing film-making off the streets and into the studios, has deprived film of its capacity to record reality, and divorced it from its roots in popular entertainment by persuading it to imitate the bourgeois theatre in its dialogue and *mise-en-scène*. This is why *Les Enfants du paradis* is profoundly nostalgic for the freedom of the silent cinema whose aesthetics are constantly evoked in the film's emphasis on gesture and mime.

...In *Les Enfants du paradis* the theatre is used to pose the central questions of truth and identity, through repetition, re-enactment and memory. At the beginning and at the end of the film we enter and leave the diegetic space on the Boulevard du Temple and there is an obvious tension between our knowledge of its artificiality

and the brilliance of the reconstruction. How seriously are we to take the events enacted within this set? What kind of realism is offered to our view within this set? What kind of realism is offered to our view within this theatre? The question of veracity is posed at the outset. 'Truth' is already posited as relative and contingent, one of the many attractions available in a booth on the Boulevard. This is when we encounter Arletty sitting three-quarters submerged in a barrel of water with her naked exposed to view. The appeal of this attraction waned, as we later discover; audiences were disappointed because this was not the whole or the 'naked' Truth but only Truth 'shoulder deep' (not reaching the heart, perhaps). And so Truth emerges from her barrel and mingles with the crowd where she becomes Garance' whose various encounters throughout the length of the film, provide the narrative thread. It is as though, dissatisfied with partial revelation, Truth has gone in search of more artistically and poetically satisfying narratives—different truths and compromised truths—which are exposed to our view.

...it juxtaposes a group of male actors who are cast 'true to type' with a female star who is not. Garance's cool irony contrasts with Arletty's wit and repartee in the earlier films, the distant *femme du monde* with the earlier tarts with hearts of gold. And although she is beautiful she is emphatically not a *jeune première* (Arletty was age 44 when shooting began); she has an agelessness which is modified by her various costumes in the film, and which is a crucial component of her enigmatic quality. ...She thus embodies the tension between innocence and experience that is set out in the film.

...Garance's uncertain or unknowable identity, her capacity to play the parts others give her, foregrounds the central theme of the film. Virtually all the characters are masters of disguise, swopping roles at will, making their living by pretending to be someone else, or like Monray, playing a social role to the hilt. ... But Garance is not a person who reinvents herself: she is a fiction or projection of other people's invention, so that when summoned by police to say who she is she replies 'They call me Garance.' It is an alias that others have invented.

Garance has the capacity to incarnate the projections of other imaginations [*grisette* Mimi in Musset's story or *Bohème*; *jeune ingénue*; nude moon goddess Artemis; Indian queen; Dietrich in *The Devil is Woman*; Merle Oberon as Anne Boleyn; *femme fatale*]. Each of these is a partial truth, 'shoulder deep' as the fairground barker put it; each presents Garance as increasingly cold, distant, narcissistic and self-sufficient, exploiting the impression first created by the self-contained circular movement of the barrel in which she sits as Truth, emphasised by her hieratic untouchability on the pedestal in *L'Amoureux de la lune*. Many of these images also film her slightly from below and appear increasingly two-dimensional, framing her face as though in a picture without perspective, placing her flatly against the back of the carriage, or in the box of the theatre, these of the pantomime, or the circus tent, so as to emphasise her iconic status. She is, as Anne Freadman put it, 'a sign of herself designating her own absence in the frame and separate image of art.'

Perhaps, however, we can best understand Garance from what must surely be the major intertextual reference of the film, Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind* (1939). [Both set in time of civil war, a defining moment of national history, both represent the most ambitious and spectacular productions of their generation. Many resemblances of detail too: Garance is glossed as 'the name of a flower as red as your lips' Scarlet is color of soldiers' trousers in 19th c.] By the same token, Garance is surely a French Scarlett O'Hara, a woman similarly buffeted by war, torn between two men, one who is swashbuckling and the other sensitive, obliged to prostitute herself to survive.

The comparison with *Gone with the Wind* can help to understand *Les Enfants du paradis* as a melodrama in which the star-crossed lovers lose each other at the end in a scene guaranteed to bring tears to the eyes. But as we attempt to read it as a melodrama, we inevitably notice significant variations from the genre developed by Selznick in Hollywood, so much so

that it can be understood as an ironic interrogation of the Hollywood conventions. Unlike most melodramas, at least of the Hollywood variety, *Les Enfants du paradis* is not a 'woman's film' of the kind Selznick specialised in. The female viewer, to whom such movies were primarily addressed, invests in Scarlett, just as she desires the satanic lover incarnated by Clark Gable. But the key sensibility in *Les Enfants du paradis* belongs not to Garance but Baptiste. It is not Garance we feel for, as she departs in her carriage at the end, but Baptiste, the sad clown, whose brief night of passion is destined to be his last. In other words, in *Les Enfants du paradis* the dispositions of the melodramatic imagination, as we have been led to expect them in Hollywood cinema, are turned on their head.

What this means can be understood if we recall how closely the thematics of the mirror are associated with Garance. The mirror emphasises her solipsism and explains why, as a character, she is strangely lifeless, a montage of iconic images, memories of women culled from the repertoire of American and European cinema. She is depicted, from the outset, as a distant and self-absorbed 'moon goddess' and she becomes progressively colder as the film advances, refusing to say the words 'I love you' to the Comte de Monray. Indeed, the only time she lets her hair down—literally—is when she tells Monray her heart belongs to Baptiste. But this message is visually challenged, even as she confides it, since it is accompanied by an image which shows her contemplating her own face in the mirror.

The mirror, however, is also a figure of inversion—the truth will be the inverted image of what is seen in the mirror. Understanding Garance as an inverted image—or an image of inversion—helps to illustrate much that is obscure or unconvincing about her role in *Les Enfants du paradis*. For though this is a melodrama, it inverts the central proposition on which Hollywood melodrama is based, that 'woman' is the site of pathos, the vessel of excessive emotion, or the embodiment of a dysfunctional society. Carné gives a different twist to this plot because he places a man at its centre. Uniquely, perhaps, in the history of the cinema, *Les Enfants du paradis* is a melodrama about men, a melodrama whose structural dispositions are inverted in relation to representations of gender.

Thus in this film Baptiste is placed in the female role, as is indicated in his first bedraggled appearance when, as the masochistic butt of paternal abuse, he sits disguised in a long wig and tailcoat, while Garance is positioned in the male role. Both, in fact, try different gender roles as appropriate: Nathalie, seeing Baptiste has been smitten by love, asks 'Is it a woman?' to which Baptiste replies 'I don't know.' When Frédérick tells Garance he preferred her first costume she replies, 'All tastes are natural.' . . . Each of them tries on womanliness or manliness, adopting it as a masquerade.

...The perception that in erotic triangles, the psychologically and sexually intense relationships may, despite folk wisdom, just as easily be homosocial or homosexual as heterosexual, and be based on 'gender asymmetry', so that there may be uncertainty about the member of the triangle who is the real object of desire, helps to elucidate events in the film. Viewed in this light, Baptiste's Orphic horror at the thought of seeing Garance undress, Nathalie's conviction that she will marry Baptiste

From Girish Shambu's article on the film in *Senses of Cinema*:

The invisible membrane between theatre and life is repeatedly ruptured in the film. . . . When Baptiste runs into a blind beggar and befriends him, he discovers when they arrive at a tavern that the man has been "acting" blind. He is assuming the character of a sightless person to improve the quality of his performance on the street of life (and improve the state of his alms!). Lacenaire the murderer is also a public scribe. He assumes the character of his client and writes a love letter from the client's point of view. (The entire article is online at <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/12/cteq/enfants.html>)

From Annette Lust, "The Origins and Development of the Art of Mime" (excerpted from her book *From the Greek Mimes to Marcel Marceau and Beyond: Mimes, Act, Pierrots and Clowns: A Chronicle of the Many Visages of Mime in the Theatre*:

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, allegorical and mythological, pageant-type ballet-pantomimes were performed at the courts and in the theatres of Europe. Among them were the Duchesse du Maine's ballet-pantomimes at Sceaux and John Weaver's staging of *The Loves of Mars*

though he does not love her and, after the interlude in which Baptiste does indeed become the father of a family, her despair at his 'reversion' to Garance, all become much more poignant as Baptiste is seen not as wrestling with a desire to leave his wife but struggling with the nature of his desire.

...In placing the rabble in the 'gods', or the 'paradis', the theatre inverted the class system of the external world. In this way the popular theatre also echoed an earlier carnival tradition, which is represented in the film's closing scenes, wherein, for the space of the play or the fair, the realities of the social hierarchy are turned upside down, the rulers are mocked, and the underdogs reign supreme. It is, of course, not certain that this tradition is truly radical or subversive. . . .

But, by the kind of ellipsis Prévert adored, these '*enfants du paradis*' are also the '*enfant(s) de Par(ad)is*' celebrated by Victor Hugo in the shape of Gavroche in *Les Misérables* and depicted on the barricades in Delacroix's famous July Revolution painting of *Liberty Guiding the People*. The '*enfants de Paris*', the street urchins who roamed Paris in ever greater numbers as the city expanded and industrialized in the early part of the 19th century were known not just as streetwise rascals but also for their radicalism. . . .

In the political context of the Occupation the mere evocation of Paris, let alone a celebration of its cultural heritage, could be seen as subversive. By placing the people of Paris centre stage, *Les Enfants du paradis* opposes the provincialism of the Vichy regime and its attempts to substitute the 'orders' of pre-Revolutionary France for the social classes of industrial society. In a counter-cultural move, the film suggests through Baptiste, that popular art is sublime, through Garance, that prostitution is truth, and through Lacenaire, that history is farce.

Like so many films of the Occupation, *Les Enfants du paradis* is an escapist fantasy, in which the characters would rather hold on to their dreams than subscribe to the interpretations of Jéricho, a work of the imagination whose inward-looking and repetitive structure is profoundly solipsistic. It is also a magnificent artefact, a film about heritage which time has transformed into a monument marking the end of successful large-scale studio productions and of the period when French cinema could legitimately entertain universal pretensions. But perhaps the most positive message of the film derives from its inversions of gender, genre and class. These provide the essential link which allows the visual to be understood politically and transgression to be seen as a more creative and radical act than opposition or resistance. At the end of the film, when Garance leaves, the spirit of carnival overwhelms Baptiste with its promise that in due course everything will return to 'normal', and it is perhaps the knowledge of this lost opportunity, the failure of carnival to perpetuate its inversions, which is the clue to the pathos of *Les Enfants du paradis*.

and Venus at Drury Lane in 1717. The traditional dumb show in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French and English melodramas, as well as the Elizabethan dumb shows, were also called pantomimes. In France, after the Italian Comedy was prohibited from playing in the official theatres and spoken dialogues and monologues in French were also forbidden, pantomime with commedia-type characters appeared at the Théâtres de la Foire. When staged in the English music halls at Christmas, they were called harlequinades. By the end of the nineteenth century, English Christmas pantomimes such as Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk contained spectacular scenic effects and popular music hall interludes with dialogue, acrobatics, singing, and dancing in which Clown had replaced Harlequin and Pierrot. And even though these Christmas pantomimes had almost no mime or dumb show and contained mostly dialogue, singing, and dancing, they were still called pantomimes or dumb shows because they included some element, however remote, of miming's technique and art. In nineteenth-century England and America, pantomime was incorporated into circus acts, as in clown George Fox's (1825-77) Humpty Dumpty and in the performances of the Hanlon-Lees.

Meanwhile, in France, Gaspard Deburau had immortalized the silent Pierrot pantomimes, which we today call pantomime blanche because of the whiteface the artist wears. All Paris came to applaud Deburau at the Théâtre des Funambules. His Pierrot, though inspired by the lazy, mischievous valet Pedrolino of the commedia dell'arte, soon became an essentially French character. He changed Pierrot from a cynical, grotesque rogue into a poetic fellow and brought a personal expression to the fantasy, acrobatics, melodrama, and spectacular staging that characterized nineteenth-century pantomimes. Not only did he add extempore bits of business to a given action, but he also invented his own scenarios. Just as for several centuries the commedia dell'arte, which depended on the actor's improvisational skills, had influenced European theatre, nineteenth-century pantomime, with Deburau's inventive genius, reached great heights. Other nineteenth century French mimes such as Paul Legrand, Alexandre Guyon, Louis Rouffe, and Séverin continued the Pierrot tradition. But at the turn of the century, classical pantomime had become stereotyped. It was Georges Wague who revitalized it and prepared the ground for modern mime, discovering and training mimes such as the author Colette, who performed in his company.

Mime also returned to the fore in 1923, when Jacques Copeau founded his acting school at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, where miming with a mask and doing exercises resembling those of the Noh drama helped the actor find greater corporeal expressivity. Convinced that the human body alone suffices to dress a bare stage, Copeau's student, Etienne Decroux, would endlessly research and perfect these exercises, developing them into his codified corporeal mime. His movement style was a far cry from the commedia figure from which Pierrot took his model. Unlike classical pantomime, corporeal mime was also no longer an anecdotal art that used conventional gestures to create illusions of objects or persons. The impetus Decroux's findings gave to twentieth-century mime had repercussions throughout the world, opening dimensions in technique and expression unheard of since ancient Greek mime and Roman pantomime.

By the mid-twentieth century, Paris was the place for mimes to be. It was here that several great masters gave new life to the mime art, as well as merged it with other forms. Etienne Decroux, Marcel Marceau, and Jacques Lecoq developed schools of mime that no longer represented traditional, nineteenth-century pantomime. Their schools and styles differed from one another, as much as they differed from Eastern European pantomime. It was in Paris, too, that, after studying and performing with Decroux and creating his own mimodramas, Jean-Louis Barrault brought Pierrot back to the stage in a 1946 Baptiste pantomime at the Marigny Theatre and in the role of Deburau in the film *Children of Paradise*. It was also in Paris that Barrault integrated expressive movement with speaking theatre. Meanwhile, Decroux's student, Marcel Marceau, would convert corporeal mime into an art that could be readily communicated. Through his Bip and style pantomimes he made this art known to the world.

(More at <http://www.geocities.com/Broadway/5222/history.html>.)

Join us in two weeks, on Tuesday March 13, for Robert Aldrich's Kiss Me Deadly

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