Directed by Jean Cocteau
Music by Georges Auric (composer)
Cinematography by Nicolas Hayer
Film Editing by Jacqueline Sadoul
Costume Design by Marcel Escoffier
Music Department Jacques Métchen (conductor)
A Film Dedicated To Christian Bérard

Jean Marais ... Orphée
François Périer ... Heurtebise
Maria Casares ... The Princess - Death
Marie Déa ... Eurydice
Juliette Gréco ... Aglaonice
Jean-Pierre Melville ... Le directeur de l'hôtel (uncredited)


Pierre Grumbach, October 20, 1917 in Paris, France


French director and scenarist, poet, novelist, dramatist and illustrator—one of the most diversely talented creators of the twentieth century—was born into a rich middle-class family in Maisons-Lafitte, near Paris. He was brought up in Paris, where his maternal grandfather owned a house in the vicinity of Pigalle, on the Rue de Bruyère. He thus belonged to Montmartre, though to the bourgeois rather than to the artistic part of it. His father, Georges Cocteau, spent all his life working as a stockbroker, though his only real passion was painting. Cocteau’s mother. Eugènie was the daughter of Eugène Lecompte, who owned the brokerage house where Georges worked, the family houses, and a rich collection of art objects, including several Stradivarius violins that were regularly used by visiting virtuosi at the Lecomptes’ weekly chamber music concerts.

Jean Cocteau was educated at the Lycée Condorcet and later insisted (characteristically) that he was *le cancre par excellence* there—the prize booby of his class. His school reports contradict that. He was undeniably an enfant terrible (and was expelled from the school in the spring of 1904), but one who showed signs of a lively mind and a precocious talent for sketching and versifying. It was at Condorcet that Cocteau had his first homosexual infatuation, with a boy called Pierre Dargelos whose haunting reincarnations appear throughout Cocteau’s work—the shameless untutored faun whose mouth and eyes can kill.
Frederick Brown argues from this “that Cocteau was already at odds with the ideal double that he would spend his life pursuing. Dargelos is a real name—it may be found on yellowing rosters—but its is equally Cocteau’s pseudonym for his primal malediction, for the angelic offspring of his catastrophe. A decade after leaving Condorcet he wrote: ‘At an age when gender does not yet influence decisions of the flesh, my desire was not to reach, not to touch, nor to embrace the elected person, but to be him....What loneliness!’ This original forfeiture, placing the locus of Being outside himself, would make solitude intolerable and anonymity a form of death. He was fated to crave love in order to be.” This hunger for love and recognition accounts well enough for Cocteau’s constant striving to be in the forefront of the social, artistic, and literary avant-garde, and his ardent pursuit of friendship with all the other leaders of artistic Paris.

...By the middle of World War I, Cocteau was writing for the Ballets Russes, obeying Diaghilev’s famous injunction “Astonish me” with the ballet Parade (decor by Picasso, music by Eric Satie), the great succès de scandale of 1917. Cocteau was exempted by ill health from military service but made his way to the battlefront with an ambulance unit, met and flew with the aviator Roland Garros, and encountered the problems and adventures imaginatively recalled in his novel Thomas l’imposteur (1923).

Cocteau’s star rose rapidly after the war....There were modernistic adaptations of Sophocles’ Antigone (1922, with scenery by Picasso) and of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet (1924), and an original one-act play, Orphée (1926). Not content to seem merely a universal man of letters, Cocteau painted and drew, designed tapestries, tinkered with typography, wrote program notes for avant-garde composers, and championed American jazz and Charlie Chaplin....He knew everyone of interest or social importance, from Picasso to the Prince of Wales. He also formed a close emotional and creative liaison with the younger writer Raymond Radiguet, whose death at the age of twenty-three temporarily shattered Cocteau. He sought solace in opium, then in religion, but before long thumbed his nose at Jacques Maritain, his spiritual counselor, and resumed his old life.

...For Cocteau, poetry was the supreme art and the poet the supreme being, uniquely in touch with ultimate realities, especially death, which in his works is not the end but a gateway to self-realization. This is the theme of virtually all of his films, including the first, Le Sang d’un poète (The Blood of a Poet, 1930-1932). In this silent allegory the poet recognizes and tries to escape his muse, wrestles with his past, dies and is resurrected. These incidents, recounted in narcissistic images of mirrors and self-portraits that speak, are framed by a shot of a collapsing building to show that they take place in only a moment of “real” time.

With its dreamlike atmosphere and mysterious imagery, this autobiographical film-poem resembles such surrealist pictures as Buñuel’s L’Age d’or, made at the same time and for the same patron, the Vicomte de Noailles. (Cocteau, who regarded the surrealists as rivals, denied the resemblance.)...

Cocteau’s second film as director was La Belle et la Bête (Beauty and the Beast, 1946). To save her father from the Beast’s wrath, Beauty (Josefle Day) allows herself to be incarcerated in the monster’s magic castle, which is lit by candelabra held by disembodied arms and decorated with living statues. Gradually she comes to recognize the Beast’s essential gentleness and melancholy, and warms to him when he allows her to visit her sick father. But she stays too long, and when she returns the heartbroken Beast is dying. Her disolute admirer Avenant arrives to rescue her and to steal the Beast’s treasure. He fails, and dies at the same moment as the Beast. Avenant becomes the dead monster and the Beast, transfigured by Beauty’s look of love, is reborn as a more princely Avenant.

In Cocteau’s hands the story becomes an illustration of his central theme: “To live you must die.” To this paradox he adds thought-provoking ambiguity by casting Jean Marais as both Avenant and the Beast. There was great praise for Cocteau’s handling of tone and pace in the film, from the broad humor of Beauty’s rustic homelife to the dreamlike slow motion of her entry into the castle. He and his designer Christian Bérard rigorously eschewed the kind of misty effects usually employed to suggest magic and the supernatural—Cocteau said of Bérard that “he was the only one to understand that vagueness is unsuitable to the world of the fairy tale and that mystery exists only in precise things.” Bérard’s gorgeous costumes and Henri Alekan’s camera style are both said to have been inspired by Dutch paintings, especially the works of Vermeer. The score was by George Auric, who provided the music for all of Cocteau’s films except the last. La Belle et la Bête, “one of the great works of poetic cinema,” was made in the face of a daunting succession of difficulties and afflictions, described in Cocteau’s Diary of a Film.

There followed two pictures which Cocteau adapted from his own plays. L’Aigle à deux têtes (The Eagle has Two Heads, 1947)... and Les Parents terribles (1948)... The picture was directed by Jean-Pierre Melville, reportedly in close collaboration with Cocteau, who is credited only as a scenarist and adapter (of his own novel).
Central to Cocteau’s work in the cinema are three intensely personal films in which he explores through the figure of Orpheus his obsession with the role of the poet, torn between the familiar and the unknown. This trilogy, which began with Le Sang d’un poète, continued with Orphée (Orpheus, 1950), developed from his 1925 play, and universally recognized to be his masterpiece. Orpheus (Jean Marais) is a celebrated poet living in Paris, where one day he sees a younger poet, Cégeste, run down and killed by two motorcyclists. They are the emissaries of a beautiful Princess (Maria Casarès), who is Death. The Princess drives with Orpheus out of the city into an unfamiliar countryside, where her radio announces a strange poetry that Orpheus finds obsessively fascinating: “L’oiseau chante avec ses doigts. Je repète. Deux fois. L’oiseau chante avec ses doigts.” [The bird sings with his fingers. I repeat. Twice. The bird sings with his fingers.”] It is the dead Cégeste, we learn later who is broadcasting this surreal litany.

Eurydice, Orpheus’s wife, is the next to die. Orpheus follows her into the Underworld, partly in an attempt to save her, partly because he is fascinated by the Princess—by death itself. He saves Euridyce, who journeys back to daylight in an oddly farcical scene but then voluntarily returns to the Underworld, believing that her husband no longer loves her. Orpheus is attacked by the Bacchantes—militant feminist poets who believe him responsible for Cégeste’s death. He is killed, but the Princess, who loves him, returns him to life and reunited him with Euridyce before going off to face some unthinkable punishment. Through death the poet is reborn, renouncing the influence of Cégeste’s poetry (which is the poetry of death) and recovering his own vision.

Gavin Lambert wrote that Orphée is first of all “an unmatched achievement in the telling of a magical adventure. The balance of the real and the magical is marvelously sustained…[and] the narrative is so full of invention that it never ceases to be dramatic.” The film “reasserts wonder, ritual, the power of illusion and magic, reinterpreting them in a contemporary setting which brings the myth closer, gives it a disturbing edge of reality.” Many of the images and devices introduced in Le Sang d’un poète are used here with a new delight in the cinema’s capacity for illusion. The way into the Zone—the limbo between this world and the next, filmed in the bombed-out ruins of the Saint-Cyr military academy—is through a mirror; a vat of mercury was used to make it appear that Orpheus’s hands are passing through glass. Other astonishing effects were obtained by substituting plain glass for mirrors, and by the use of duplicate rooms, doubles, reverse projection, and false perspective. The theme is the autobiographical one of Le Sang d’un poète but, Cocteau said, “then I strummed it with one finger, now I orchestrate it.” Orphée won the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival.

It was nine years before Cocteau completed his Orphic trilogy with his Le Testament d’Orphée, which he clearly intended as his own testament as well as Orpheus’. It is a fable in which the director himself (then seventy) appears as a time-traveler. He enters our world and is led by a centaur to a cave. There he finds Cégeste (played as in Orphée by Cocteau’s adopted son Edouard Dermit), who gives him a flower. Cocteau tries to draw the flower but succeeds only in producing his own likeness. He is ordered to take the flower to the goddess Minerva and, after various ordeals and encounters, he finds her. She scorns his gift and strikes him dead. Resurrected, the poet continues his wanderings, finally vanishing together with Cégeste. The film is in effect and account of Cocteau’s life as an artist and a manifesto of his theories and beliefs, crowded with his lovers and friends, including Marais, Dermit, Picasso, Yul Brynner, the bullfighter Dominguín, and Brigitte Bardot. Serene and often witty, it has been dismissed by some critics as a facetious coda to his work and hailed by others as one of the cinema’s greatest confessional documents.

In 1955 the enfant terrible Cocteau became one of the “Immortals” of the Académie Française. “It is not up to us to obey the public, which does not know what it wants,” he said once, “but to compel the public to follow us. If it refuses us we must use tricks: images, stars, decors, and other magic lanterns, suitable to intrigue children and make them swallow the spectacle.”

Jean Cocteau. Beauty and the Beast: Diary of a Film. Dover, NY, 1972

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.

Sunday, August 26, 1945

After a year of every sort of preparation and difficulty, I am going to start shooting tomorrow. It would be stupid to complain of the type of difficulties inherent in such a task, for I think that our work compels us to indulge in daydreams, to dream the most beautiful dreams. And what’s more, it will give us the opportunity to do what we like with human time, which is normally so painful to live through minute by minute, in order.
To break time up, turn it inside out and upside down, is a real triumph over the inevitable.

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. . . .

A film is a monument, but built neither in the present, last.” An amazing statement, As if anything at all was lasting, beginning with the world!

Jean Cocteau: Orpheus

When I make a film, it is a sleep in which I am dreaming. Only the people and places of the dream matter. I have difficulty making contact with others, as one does when half-asleep. If a person is asleep and someone else comes into the sleeper’s room, this other person does not exist. He or she exists only if introduced into the events of the dream. Sunday is not a real day of rest for me, I try to go back to sleep as quickly as possible.

Realism in unreality is a constant pitfall. People can always tell me that this is possible, or that is impossible; but do we understand anything about the workings of fate? This is the mysterious mechanism that I have tried to make tangible. Why is Orphée’s Death dressed in this way, or that? Why does she travel in a Rolls, and why does Heurtebise appear and disappear at will in some circumstances, but submit to human laws in others? This is the eternal why that obsesses thinkers, from Pascal to the least of poets.

I wanted to touch lightly on the most serious problems, without idle theorizing. So the film is a thriller which draws on myth from one side and the supernatural from the other.

I have always liked the no man’s land of twilight where mysteries thrive. I have thought, too, that cinematography is superbly adapted to it, provided it takes the least possible advantage of what people call the supernatural. The closer you get to a mystery, the more important it is to be realistic. Radios in cars, coded messages, shortwave signals and power cuts are all familiar to everybody and allow me to keep my feet on the ground.

Nobody can believe in a famous poet whose name has been invented by a writer. I had to find a mythical bard, the bard of bards, the Bard of Thrace. And his story is so enchanting that it would be crazy to look for another. It provides the background on which I embroider. I do nothing more than to follow the cadence of all fables which are modified in the long run according to who tells the story. Racine and Molière did better. They copied antiquity. I always advise people to copy a model. It is by the impossibility of doing the same thing twice and by the new blood that is infused into the old frame that the poet is judged.

Orphée’s Death and Heurtebise reproach Orphée for asking questions. Wanting to understand is a peculiar obsession of mankind. There is nothing more vulgar than works that set out to prove something. Orphée, naturally, avoids even the appearance of trying to prove anything. “What were you trying to say?” This is a fashionable question. I was trying to say what I said.

All arts can and must wait. They may even wait to live until after the artist is dead. Only the ridiculous costs of cinematography force it to instant success, so it is satisfied with being mere entertainment. With Orphée, I decided to take the risk of making a film as if cinematography could permit itself the luxury of waiting—as if it was the art which it ought to be. Beauty hates ideas. It is sufficient to itself.

Our age is becoming dried out with ideas. It is the child of the Encyclopaedists. But having an idea is not enough: the idea must have us, haunt us, obsess us, become unbearable to us. Le Sang d’un poète was based on the poet’s need to go through a series of deaths and to be reborn in a shape closer to his real being. There, the theme was played with one finger, and inevitably so, because I had to invent a craft that I did not know. In Orphée, I have orchestrated the theme, and this is why the two films are related, twenty years apart.

I have often been asked about the figure of the glass-vendor: he was the only one able to illustrate the saying that there is nothing so hard to break as the habit of one’s job; since, although he died very young, he still persists in crying his wares in a region where windowpanes are meaningless.

Once the machinery had been set in motion, everyone had to go with it, so that in the scene when he returns to the house, Marais succeeded in being comical without going beyond the limits of taste and with no break between lyricism and operetta.

The same is true of François Périer, whose mockery never becomes unkind or makes him seem to be taking advantage of his supernatural powers. Nothing was more demanding than the role of Orphée, grappling with the injustices of the youth of literature. He does not seem to me to have secrets which he divines and which deceive him. He proves his greatness only through that of the actor. Here again, Marais illuminates the film for me with his soul.

Among the misconceptions which have been written about Orphée, I still see Heurtebise described as an angel and the Princess as Death.

In the film, there is no Death and no angel. There can be none. Heurtebise is a young Death serving in one of the numerous sub-orders of Death, and the Princess is no more Death than an air hostess is an angel.

I never touch on dogmas. The region that I depict is a border on life, a no man’s land where one hovers between life and death.

When Marais is praised for his acting in Orphée, he replies: “The film plays my parts for me.”

The three basic themes of Orphée are:

1. The successive deaths through which a poet must
pass before he becomes, in that admirable line from Mallarmé, tel qu'en lui-même enfin l'éternité le change—changed into himself at last by eternity.

2. The theme of immortality: the person who represents Orphée’s Death sacrifices herself and abolishes herself to make the poet immortal.

3. Mirrors: we watch ourselves grow old in mirrors. They bring us closer to death.

The other themes are a mixture of Orphic and modern myth: for example, cars that talk (the radio receivers in cars).

Orphée is a realistic film; or, to be more precise, observing Goethe’s distinction between reality and truth, a film in which I express a truth peculiar to myself. If that truth is not the spectator’s, and if his personality conflicts with mine and rejects it, he accuses me of lying. I am even astonished that so many people can still be penetrated by another’s ideas, in a country noted for its individualism.

While Orphée does encounter some lifeless audiences, it also encounters others that are open to my dream and agree to be put to sleep and to dream it with me (accepting the logic by which dreams operate, which is implacable, although it is not governed by our logic).

I am only talking about the mechanics, since Orphée is not at all a dream in itself: through a wealth of detail similar to that which we find in dreams, it summarizes my way of living and my conception of life.

The Opheus myth (from Wikipedia)
Orpheus was a legendary musician, poet, and prophet in ancient Greek religion and myth. The major stories about him are centered on his ability to charm all living things and even stones with his music, his attempt to retrieve his wife, Eurydice, from the underworld, and his death at the hands of those who could not hear his divine music. As an archetype of the inspired singer, Orpheus is one of the most significant figures in the reception of classical mythology in Western culture, portrayed or alluded to in countless forms of art and popular culture including poetry, opera, and painting.

For the Greeks, Orpheus was a founder and prophet of the so-called "Orphic" mysteries. He was credited with the composition of the Orphic Hymns, a collection of which survives. Shrines containing purported relics of Orpheus were regarded as oracles. Some ancient Greek sources note Orpheus' Thracian origins.

The earliest literary reference to Orpheus is a two-word fragment of the sixth-century BC lyric poet Ibycus: onomaklyton Orphên ("Orpheus famous-of-name"). He is not mentioned in Homer or Hesiod. Most ancient sources accept his historical existence; Aristotle is an exception.

Pindar calls Orpheus "the father of songs" and identifies him as a son of the Thracian king Oeagrus and the Muse Calliope: but as Karl Kerényi observes, "in the popular mind he was more closely linked to the community of his disciples and adherents than with any particular race or family".

Greek myths of the Classical age venerated Orpheus as the greatest of all poets and musicians; it was said that while Hermes had invented the lyre, Orpheus perfected it. Poets such as Simonides of Ceos said that Orpheus's music and singing could charm the birds, fish and wild beasts, coax the trees and rocks into dance, and divert the course of rivers. He was one of the handful of Greek heroes to visit the Underworld and return; his music and song even had power over Hades.

Some sources credit Orpheus with further gifts to mankind: medicine, which is more usually under the aegis of Aesculapius; writing, which is usually credited to Cadmus; and agriculture, where Orpheus assumes the Eleusinian role of Triptolemus as giver of Demeter's knowledge to mankind.

Orpheus was an augur and seer; practiced magical arts and astrology, founded cults to Apollo and Dionysus and prescribed the mystery rites preserved in Orphic texts. In addition, Pindar and Apollonius of Rhodes place Orpheus as the harpist and companion of Jason and the Argonauts. Orpheus had a brother named Linus who went to Thebes and became a Theban. He is claimed by Aristophanes and Horace to have taught cannibals tosubsist on fruit; and to have made lions and tigers obedient to him. Horace believed however, that Orpheus only introduced order and civilization to savages. Strabo (64 BC – c. AD 24) presents Orpheus as a mortal, who lived and died in a village close to Olympus.…. The most famous story in which Orpheus figures is that of his wife Eurydice (sometimes referred to as Eriphile and also known as Argiope). While walking among her people, the Cicones, in tall grass at her wedding, Eurydice was set upon by a satyr. In her efforts to escape the satyr, Eurydice fell into a nest of vipers and suffered a fatal bite on her heel. Her body was discovered by Orpheus, who, overcome with grief, played such sad and mournful songs that all the nymphs and gods wept. On their advice, Orpheus travelled to the underworld and by his music softened the hearts of Hades and Persephone (he was the only person ever to do so), who agreed to allow Eurydice to return with him to earth on one condition: he should walk in front of her and not look back until they both had reached the upper world. He set off with Eurydice following, and, in his anxiety, as soon as he reached the upper world, he turned to look at her, forgetting that both needed to be in the upper world, and she vanished for the second time, but now forever.

The story in this form belongs to the time of Virgil, who first introduces the name of Aristaeus (by the time of Virgil's Georgics, the myth has Aristaeus chasing Eurydice when she was bitten by a serpent) and the tragic outcome. Other ancient writers, however, speak of Orpheus' visit to the underworld in a more negative light; according to Phaedrus in Plato's Symposium, the infernal gods only "presented an apparition" of Eurydice to him. Ovid says that Eurydice's death was not caused by fleeing from Aristaeus but by dancing with naiads on her wedding day. In fact, Plato's representation of Orpheus is that of a coward, as instead of choosing to die in order to be with the one he loved, he instead mocked the gods by trying to go to Hades and get her back alive. Since his love was not "true"—he did not want to die for love—he was actually punished by the gods, first by giving him only the apparition of his former wife in the underworld, and then by being killed by women....

Orpheus's descent to the Underworld is paralleled in other versions of a worldwide theme: the Japanese myth of Izanagi and Izanami, the Akkadian/Sumerian myth of Inanna's Descent to the Underworld, and Mayan myth of Ix Chel and Itzamna. The Nez Perce tell a story about the trickster figure, Coyote, that shares many similarities with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. This is but one theme present in a larger "North American Orpheus Tradition" in American Indian oral tradition.
The myth theme of not looking back, an essential precaution in Jason's raising of chthonic Brimo Hekate under Medea's guidance, is reflected in the Biblical story of Lot's wife when escaping from Sodom. More directly, the story of Orpheus is similar to the ancient Greek tales of Persephone captured by Hades and similar stories of Adonis captive in the underworld. However, the developed form of the Orpheus myth was entwined with the Orphic mystery cults and, later in Rome, with the development of Mithraism and the cult of Sol Invictus.

Feeling spurned by Orpheus for taking only male lovers, the Ciconian women, followers of Dionysus, first threw sticks and stones at him as he played, but his music was so beautiful even the rocks and branches refused to hit him. Enraged, the women tore him to pieces during the frenzy of their Bacchic orgies. In Albrecht Dürer's drawing of Orpheus's death, based on an original, now lost, he is lettered *Orfeus der erst puseran* ("Orpheus, the first pederast").

His head and lyre, still singing mournful songs, floated down the swift Hebrus to the Mediterranean shore. There, the inhabitants buried his head and a shrine was built in his honour near Antissa; there his oracle prophesied, until it was silenced by Apollo. In addition to the people of Lesbos, Greeks from Ionia and Aetolia consulted the oracle, and his reputation spread as far as Babylon.

The Orpheus motif has permeated Western culture and has been used as a theme in all art forms. Examples include the Breton *Lais Sir Orfeo* from the early 13th century or the musical interpretations *L'Orfeo* (1607) by Claudio Monteverdi, Christoph Willibald Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Eurydice* (1762), Franz Liszt's symphonic poem (1854), Stravinsky's ballet *Orpheus* (1948) and two operas by Harrison Birtwistle: *The Mask of Orpheus* (1973-1984) and *The Corridor* (2009).

Composer Judge Smith based his songstory *Orfeus* on the ancient myth of Orpheus. The 13th studio album of the alternative rock band Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds is called *Abattoir Blues/The Lyre of Orpheus*, with the initial song of the latter album based around a satirical reworking of the legend, viewed from a more modern male/female perspective. Peter Blegvad and Andy Partridge created a music and spoken-word recording, *Orpheus the Lowdown*. Folk artist Anais Mitchell's fourth studio album *Hadestown* is loosely based on the story of Orpheus and Eurydice set in modern times.

Vinicius de Moraes' play *Orfeu da Conceição*, later adapted by Marcel Camus in the 1959 film *Black Orpheus*, tells the story in the modern context of a favela in Rio de Janeiro during Carnival. Jean Cocteau's Orphic Trilogy (*The Blood of a Poet, Orpheus and Testament of Orpheus*) was filmed over thirty years, and is also based on the story.

Baz Luhrmann, in DVD commentaries for his 2001 film *Moulin Rouge*, characterizes the film as, in part, a tale of an Orphic hero (in this case a songwriter) who embarks upon a visit to the underworld (in this case the demi-monde around Paris's Montmartre) in search of his fortune and ultimately to attempt the rescue of his doomed love. The film adapts a widely known piece from Jacques Offenbach's comedic operetta *Orphée aux Enfers* (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), identified with the once-popular "can-can" music hall dance. Offenbach's operatic work had itself parodied the classical tale of Orpheus' attempted rescue of Eurydice from Pluto (Hades).

Dino Buzzati adapted the Orpheus motif in his graphic novel *Poem Strip*. Neil Gaiman depicts his version of Orpheus in the *Sandman* comics series. Gaiman's Orpheus is the son of Oneiros (the Dream Lord Morpheus) and the muse Calliope.

Poul Anderson's Hugo Award winning novelette *Goat Song*, published in 1972, is a retelling of the story of Orpheus in a science fiction setting...

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The online PDF files of these handouts have color images

**COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2014 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS SERIES 28:**

February 11 Kenji Mizoguchi, *The Life of Oharu*, 1952, 136 min
February 18 Satyajit Ray, *Charulata/The Lonely Wife*, 1964, 119 minutes
February 25 Metin Erksan, *Dry Summer*, 1964, 90 min
March 4 Monte Hellman, *Two-Lane Blacktop*, 1971, 103 min
Spring break March 17-22
March 25 Agnes Varda, *Vagabond*, 1985, 105 min
April 1 Gabriell Axel, *Babette’s Feast*, 1987, 104min
April 8 Louis Malle, *Vanya on 42nd Street*, 1994, 119 min
April 22 Tommy Lee Jones, *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, 2005, 120 min
April 29 José Padilha, *Elite Squad*, 2007, 115 min
May 6 John Huston, *The Dead*, 1987 83 min

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