Satyajit Ray, PATHER PANCHALI (1955, 119 min)

Directed by Satyajit Ray
Written by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (novel) & Satyajit Ray (screenplay)
Music Ravi Shankar
Cinematography Subrata Mitra
Film Editing Dulal Dutta

Kanu Bannerjee…Harihar Ray
Karuna Bannerjee…Sarbojaya Ray
Chunibala Devi…Indir Thakrun
Uma Das Gupta…Durga
Subir Banerjee…Apu
Runki Banerjee…Little Durga
Reba Devi…Seja Thakrun
Aparna Devi…Nilmoni’s wife
Tulsi Chakraborty…Prasanna, school teacher
Haren Banerjee…Chinibas, Sweet-seller
Nihhanani Devi…Dasi Thakurun
Rama Gangopadhyaya…Ranu Mookerjee
Roma Ganguli…Roma
Binoy Mukherjee…Baidyanath Majumdar
Harimohan Nag…Doctor
Kshirod Roy…Priest


BIBHUTI BHUSHAN BANDOPADHYAY (b. September 12, 1894 in Ghoshpada-Muraripur, Kanchrapara, Bengal Presidency, British India—d. November 1, 1950, age 56, in Ghatshila, Bihar, India) is best known for the autobiographical novel Pather Panchali (The Song of the Little Road), which was later adapted (along with Aparajito, the sequel) into The Apu Trilogy of films directed by Satyajit Ray. Ray referred scriptwriting students to the author with the following line of praise for the author's skill with written dialogue: "His lines fit the characters so well, they are so revealing that even when the author provides no physical description, every character presents itself before us simply through the words it speaks." The 1951 Rabindra Puraskar, the most prestigious literary award in West Bengal, was posthumously awarded to Bibhutibhushan for his novel Ichchhamati. Banerjee's writing has been used in 12 films, which are Mountains of The Moon (2013), Alo (2003, novel), Fuleswari (1974, based on a story by), Ashani Sanket (1973, novel), Amar Prem (1972, story), Nimantran (1971, story), Baksad Badal (1970, story), Nishi Padma (1970, story), The World of Apu (1959, original story "Aparajito"), Adarsha Hindu Hotel (1957, novel), Aparajito (1956, novel "Aparajito") and Pather Panchali (1955, novel).


SUBRATA MITRA (b. October 12, 1930 in Calcutta, India—d. December 7, 2001, age 71, in Calcutta, India) is often considered one of the greatest of Indian cinematographers. At the age of 21, Mitra, who had never before operated a motion picture camera, began his career as a cinematographer with Satyajit Ray for Pather Panchali (1955). He continued to work with him for many of Ray's later films. He is known for pioneering the technique of bounce lighting, while filming Ray's later films. He is known for pioneering the technique of bounce lighting, while filming Ray's later films.


KARUNA BANERJEE (b. 1919 [specific date and city unknown] in India—d. November 13, 2001, age 82, in Kolkata India) had an acting career of more than two decades in Bengali cinema and theatre. She is best known for her memorable performance as Sarbajaya, the mother in the first two parts of Satyajit Ray's The Apu Trilogy: Chunibala Devi (b. 1872 [specific date and city unknown]—d. 1955, age 83 in Calcutta, West Bengal, India). When the film opened in New York in 1958, Bosley Crowther, the critic of the New York Herald Tribune, raved about Chunibala Devi, "fantastically realistic and effective as the ageing crone". He wasn't the only one moved by the octogenarian's creased face, creaking joints, croaking lullaby and zest for life. Ray was often asked where he had discovered the actress. In Marie Seton's Portrait of a Director: Satyajit Ray we learn that he found the retired stage actress in a house in Kolkata's red-light district, after Reba Devi, who played the rich neighbor Mrs Mukherjee, recommended her to him. Surprised and delighted, Chunibala Devi brought out old handbills of the plays she had acted in, bit parts that had got her little notice. She had made her film debut with Bigraha in 1930 and after one more film, Rikta, nine years later, retired from cinema. Pather Panchali brought her back in front of the camera and she finally won over the world. Devi only acted in two early films Rikta (1939) and Bigraha (1930).

CHUNIBALA DEV (birth information unknown) successfully auditioned to become Durga, with her irresistible smiles, mercurial moods and devil-may-care dares only acted in this one film. She is now a retired primary school teacher who, like the actor who played her brother, shies away from public gaze.

UMA DAS GUPTA (birth information unknown) successfully auditioned to become Durga, with her irresistible smiles, mercurial moods and devil-may-care dares only acted in this one film. She is now a retired primary school teacher who, like the actor who played her brother, shies away from public gaze.

SUBIR BANERJEE (b. [specific date and place unknown] 1948) was only 8-years old when he played Apu in Pather Panchali, his one and only acting role. During the pre-production of the film, Satyajit Ray advertised in newspapers seeking boys between five and seven years of age for the role of Apu. Several boys arrived for audition, but none of them met the expectation of the director. Finally, Ray's wife Bijoya Ray spotted a boy playing on the roof of a neighboring building of their apartment. This boy,
Subir Banerjee, was eventually cast for the role of Apu. Andrew Robinson, in his book *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye*, describes that at the beginning of the shooting of *Pather Panchali* in 1952, Subir Banerjee was a "decidedly unresponsive actor". The first scene that the crew shot was a scene involving Apu and his elder sister Durga, played by another young actor Uma Dasgupta, walking through a field of kash (Saccharum spontaneum) and catching a glimpse of a train. The scene required that Apu walk haltingly, looking for his sister, who had gone ahead. However, Banerjee, without any acting experience, could not enact the halting walk. So the crew had to improvise and place small obstacles in Banerjee's path; also some crew members hid in different parts of the kash field and called Banerjee at pre-arranged times so that Banerjee looks in those directions at times, thereby giving his walk a halting and searching appearance. On the 25th anniversary of the film, "India Today" reported in its article "Pather Panchali: An Odyssey Revisited", March 31, 1980, that Banerjee, then 33, had spent his adult career as a millhand at an engineering factory in the suburbs. In another follow-up, on July 3, 2006, "India Today" reported that Banerjee, then 60, had retired 5 years previously from his job as a "provident fund officer" at an engineering firm. Banerjee’s two acting credits are *Achal: The Stagnant* (2012) and *Pather Panchali* (1955). In 2013 *Apur Panchali*, a film paralleling the similarities between Banerjee and that of the fictional character he played, Abu.

Satyajit Ray

from *World Film Directors V.II*, ed. John Wakeman. The H.W.Wilson Co. NY 1988, entry by Philip Kemp

Indian director, scenarist, composer, was born in Calcutta into an exceptionally talented family prominent in Bengali arts and letters.

The ground floor of the large family house was occupied by the printing firm founded by Ray’s grandfather, Upendrakishore Ray, a writer, artist, musician, and publisher. His eldest son, Sukumar, Ray’s father, was also famous as a writer and artist; the nonsense verses that he wrote for children, with his own illustrations, have become much-loved classics. Ray’s mother, Suprabha Das, was a noted amateur singer. Both parents were members of the Brahmo sect, a liberal and reformist version of Hinduism which rejected the caste system.

On his father’s death in 1915 Sukumar, Ray’s father inherited the printing and publishing business, but he lacked financial acumen. When he himself died in 1923 of blackwater fever, the company was near collapse. It was liquidated three years later, and Suprabha Ray took Satyajit, her only child, to live in the house of her younger brother, P. K. Das. The Das household was comfortably off, not particularly literary but highly musical. Ray developed an abiding love of classical music, both Indian and western. He also became a keen cinemagoer. “I was a regular film fan. But I don’t know when it became serious. At some point, I began to take notes in the dark on cutting.” The movies he watched were almost exclusively western. “The cinemas showing Indian films…were dank and seedy...The films they showed us, we were told by our elders, were not suitable for us.”

Ray grew up in Calcutta, where he was educated at Ballygunj Government School and then from 1936 to 1940 at Presidency College, majoring in science and economics. After graduating, he attended the “world university” founded by Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan, some 130 miles from Calcutta. Tagore, the dominant figure of the Indian cultural renaissance, prolifically gifted as writer, painter and composer, had been a close friend of Ray’s father and grandfather, “though by 1940 (the year before his death) he had become a venerable figure whom Ray was too diffident to approach. His influence, though, was all-pervasive, especially in the teaching of all the arts as closely interrelated.”

At first, Ray “wasn’t particularly keen to leave Calcutta. I was too much of a city person, and Santiniketan was…miles from nowhere. But…the professors I studied under were great artists. Not just painters, but people with vision, with understanding, with deep insight. I think everything [they taught me] has gone into my work...I read a tremendous lot, novels, Indian literature, western literature, everything.”

After two and a half years at Santiniketan, “my most important formative years,” Ray left abruptly in 1942 to return to Calcutta, when news came the Japanese had bombed the city. He found work as a layout artist with a British-run advertising agency, D. J. Keymer & Co. He stayed with the firm for ten years, rising to senior art director. Increasingly, though, cinema overrode his other interests. “While I sat at my office desk sketching out campaigns for tea and biscuits, my mind buzzed with thoughts of the films I had been seeing…By the time the war ended, I had taken out subscriptions to most of the film magazines in the English language and snapped up every
film book I could lay my hands on.”

As an exercise, he began writing scenarios based on books that were about to be filmed, so as to compare his ideas with the treatment that later appeared on the screen. He also prepared an adaptation of one of his favorite novels, Tagore’s Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World), which he offered to a film producer. It was liked and plans for production were initiated. They soon foundered, however, for Ray adamantly rejected all the producer’s suggestions for changes aimed at increasing the film’s popular appeal. “I felt like a pricked balloon at the time, but I can now say...that I consider it the greatest good fortune that the film was not made. Reading the screenplay now I can see how pitifully superficial and Hollywoodish it was.” He never abandoned his plan to film the Tagore novel, though it would be nearly forty years in reaching the screen.

In terms of quantity, India had for years ranked as one of the world’s major filmmaking countries, along with the United States and Japan. The studios in Bombay (center of Hindi-language cinema), Calcutta (Bengali), and Madras (the Dravidian languages of the South) churned out several hundred movies a year for a huge and appreciative audience. Quality, though, was another matter. To most cultured Indians, their country’s films were a joke or a source of embarrassment. Few Indian films were shown abroad, except to expatriate communities; on the rare occasions they were, as Ray wrote in a 1948 article, “even out best films have to be accepted with the gently apologetic proviso that it is ‘after all an Indian film.’”

The typical Indian movie, whether comedy, romantic melodrama, or “mythological,” was constructed to a rigid formula, often summed up as “a star, six songs, three dances.” Heroes, heroines, and villains were stereotyped and unambiguous; plots were crude, and acting cruder; settings were stilingly studio-bound; and the action, with blithe disregard of dramatic logic, would be regularly halted for lavish musical interludes, sung or danced. Eroticism featured heavily, but could be expressed only by languishing looks and voluptuous movements, since censorship (and popular morality) forbade any depiction of sexual contact more torrid than a handclasp. Dramatic conflict, as Ashoke Memmen noted, was “organized around a fairly elementary dualism and resolved...by means of a happy ending in which wealth, physical and moral beauty, and political power are fused into one exemplary state of being.”

A few directors, such as Mehboob Khan, Bimal Roy, and R.V. Shantaram, had from time to time tried to make more ambitious films, either by breaking away from the standard formula or by subverting it from within, and some of their work had been shown at international festivals. But in the forty years of its existence Indian cinema had yet to produce a single director, or even a single film, of unequivocal world stature. Ray ascribed this failure to two major factors. First, that Indian filmmakers had never grasped the essential nature of cinema: “It would seem that the fundamental concept of a coherent dramatic pattern existing in time was generally misunderstood.” Secondly, misguided attempts to emulate foreign movies, especially those of Hollywood: “What our cinema needs above everything else,” Ray proclaimed, “is a style, an idiom...which would be uniquely and recognizably Indian.”

His ambition was to create, singlehandedly if necessary, this uniquely Indian style and idiom. In 1947, the year of independence, Ray and his friend Chidananda Das Gupta had founded Calcutta’s first film society, “thereby shackling ourselves willingly to the task of disseminating film culture among the intelligentsia.” He also began writing articles in an iconoclastic vein: “I had thought my explosive piece would shake the Bengali cinema to its foundation and lead to a massive heart-searching among our filmmakers. Nothing of the sort happened. The piece was simply shrugged off...as yet another piece of tomfoolery by some arrogant upstart who...knew nothing of local needs and local conditions.”

By 1948 Ray’s increasing salary at Keymer’s enabled him to provide an independent home for himself and his mother. In March of the next year he married his cousin, Bijoya Das. They had grown up together and shared many of the same interests, including a love of cinema. Their son Sandip was born in 1953. In addition to his advertising work, Ray, by now considered one of Calcutta’s leading graphic artists, was often commissioned to illustrate books. One such commission, in 1946, was for an abridged edition of a modern classic, Bibhutibhushan Banerjee’s novel Pather Panchali (Song of the Little Road). Ever since, he had been considering turning this story into a film that he would both script and direct. Two events helped push his ideas into reality.

In 1949 Jean Renoir arrived in Calcutta to make The River. Overcoming his shyness, Ray called on him and found him “not only approachable, but so embarrassingly polite and modest that I felt if I were not too careful I would probably find myself discouraging on the Future of Cinema for his benefit.” Ray helped Renoir scout locations,
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watched him filming whenever possible, and eventually mentioned his own plans. Renoir was full of encouragement. If only, he said, Indian filmmakers “could shake Hollywood out of your system and evolve your own style, you would be making great films here.”

In April 1950 Keymer’s sent Ray and his wife on a six-month trip to London, where the company had its head office. “Doubtless the management hoped that I would come back a full-fledged advertising man….What the trip did in fact was to set the seal of doom on my advertising career. Within three days of arriving in London I saw Bicycle Thieves. I knew immediately that if I ever made Pather Panchali . . . I would make it in the same way, using natural locations and unknown actors.”

Back in Calcutta, Ray began trying to set up his project. Scenario in hand he visited every producer in the city. Not all of them laughed at him. A few expressed genuine interest: given a reputable director, some well-known stars….Ray realized that to make the film he wanted, he would have to finance it himself. He scraped together all his savings, borrowed from his relatives, raised a loan on his life insurance, and hired some equipment, including “an old, much-used Wall camera which happened to be the only one available for hire that day.” With this, and a group of friends as crew, he began shooting.

Ray’s lack of experience was shared by most of his collaborators. All but a few of the actors were non-professionals, and those few had rarely worked in films. The cinematographer, Subrata Mitra, had never shot a film before; Bansi Chandragupta, the art director, had worked only on The River, the editor, Dulal Dutta, was a veteran of two films’ experience. None of them owned a car and they could rarely afford taxis; the equipment was transported by bus or train to the locations, some of which were sixty miles from Calcutta. Since all of them had regular jobs, filming proceeded on weekends and over vacations.

The plan was to shoot enough footage to have something to show potential backers. Some 4,000 feet of film was edited, assembled and shown around but there were still no takers. Ray sold off his precious books and classical records, and Bijoy pawned her jewelry but to no avail. Some eighteen months after filming had started, Ray sadly disbanded his team. There seemed little hope that the picture would ever be completed.

Around this time Monroe Wheeler curator of the Museum of Modern Art visited Calcutta seeking material for an exhibition of Indian art. He heard about Ray’s project, saw some stills and suggested that the film, if finished in time, might form part of his exhibition. Ray was highly gratified but Wheeler could offer no financial support. Six months later John Huston turned up, scouting locations for his Kipling movie, The Man Who Would be King, and was shown the edited footage. He was favorably impressed and reported as much to Wheeler.

Meanwhile, through a contact of his mother’s, Ray had gained access to the Chief Minister of the West Bengal government, Dr. Roy. News of foreign interest in this eccentric project had filtered through. Roy viewed the footage and agreed that the state government would purchase the film outright, taking in return any profit accruing from domestic exhibition. (According to some accounts, the funds came from the Department of Roads, who believed, taking the title literally, that Ray was making a documentary about road-building.) With this backing and a six-month leave of absence from Keymer’s, Ray was able to resume shooting, now on a full-time basis. Working against time—Ravi Shankar’s evocative score was composed in eleven hours—Ray and his team completed the film in time for Wheeler’s exhibition in April 1955.

Pather Panchali (1955) is the story of a boy, Apu, growing up in a poor Brahmin family in a Bengali village early in the century. The father, Harihar, an underpaid priest, dreams of fame as a playwright, while his wife, Sarboyjaya, struggles to keep the family alive. Apu’s older sister, Durga, a wizened and mischievous old woman known as “Auntie” complete the family.

“The cinematic material,” Ray wrote later, “dictated a style to me, a very slow, rhythm determined by nature, the landscape, the country…. The script had to retain some of the rambling quality of the novel because that in itself contained a clue to the feeling of authenticity: life in a poor Bengali village does ramble.” Affectionately, and never condescendingly, Pather Panchali offers us a series of events, not seen through Apu’s eyes but rather reflected in his wide-eyed, responsive gaze. “Instead of simply identifying with the child’s view. “Robin Wood observed, “Ray makes us increasingly sensitive to the child’s reactions to what he sees.”

There are two deaths. Auntie, finally throw out by the exasperated Sarboyjara, dies huddled resignedly beside a forest path where Apu and Durga come upon her body. And later Durga dies of fever, during a night of furious monsoon storm. But the events of village life are mostly undramatic: a traveling theatre company visits the village; Apu is taught by a pompous schoolmaster, a band plays (“Tipperary” excruciatingly off-key) at a wedding; butterflies dance over the surface of a pond; a wealthy neighbor accuses Durga of stealing a necklace; a peddler
comes selling sweetmeats; kittens play in the dusty yard. “However wayward the detail may seem, it is controlled by a strict criterion of relevance,” wrote John Russell Taylor, noting that in all three Apu films “to counteract the danger of shapelessness Ray devised a whole network of subtle pictorial and aural reference to articulate his clear understanding of what each film is about.” One classic moment, central to the overall narrative scheme, is Apu’s first sight of a train—glimpsed distantly, as he and Durga run toward the approaching plume of smoke through a field of fluffy white kaash flowers; then in thundering proximity. Instead of crosscutting conventionally between the train and a close-up of Apu’s wondering face, Ray pulls back beyond the tracks, showing the diminutive figure intermittently visible behind the speeding wheels, unifying the whole overwhelming experience within the frame.

From the first Ray proved an outstanding director of actors, eliciting astonishingly relaxed, natural performances from his largely amateur cast. One of the few professionals was Chunibala Devi, who played Auntie. Eighty years old, a former stage actress, she had not performed for thirty years when Ray found her, an opium addict living in a squalid red-light district in Calcutta. She died not long afterwards, but not before enjoying the acclaim that greeted her first and last screen role.

The Bengal government found itself somewhat embarrassed by its purchase. Many officials disliked the film, taking particular exception to the ending, in which Harihar, devastated by his daughter’s death, decides to move to Benares. Rather than giving up, it was suggested the family should have stayed and joined a Community Development Project. Pather Panchali was finally released with minimal publicity, but word of mouth soon spread; within two weeks it was playing to packed houses. As Adib, film critic of The Times of India, recognized, something revolutionary had appeared in Indian cinema: “it is banal to compare it with any other Indian picture—for even the best pictures produced so far have been cluttered with clichés. Pather Panchali is pure cinema. There is no trace of the theatre in it. . . . The countryside lives in the quiver of every leaf, in every ripple on the surface of the pond, in the daily glory of its mornings and evenings. The people live in every nerve and we live with them. . . . If sequence after sequence fixes itself in the mind of the audience, it is because every scene has been intensely conceived.”

With some reluctance, since it was felt to give an adverse impression of India, Pather Panchali was chosen as official Indian entry for the 1956 Cannes Festival. Many critics stayed away, convinced by past experience that no Indian film could be worth watching, but almost all who attended the screening hailed the debut of a major new director, and the revelation of an unprecedented maturity in the Indian cinema. (A dissenting voice came from François Truffaut, who walked out after two reels, announcing that the film was “insipid and Europeanized,” and that in any case he was not interested in Indian peasants.) Pather Panchali was awarded the prize as Best Human Document and went on to win a fistful of other awards including the Selznick Golden Laurel at Berlin, and received wide international release. In Sight and Sound Lindsay Anderson described it as “a beautiful picture, completely fresh and personal,” in which Ray’s camera “reaches forward into life, exploring and exposing, with reverence and wonder.” Time’s reviewer found in it “a radiant beauty [that] continually lifts the spirit.” Not quite everyone was so enthusiastic; in the New York Times Bosley Crowther damned the film as so amateurish “it would barely pass for a rough cut in Hollywood.” Howls of protest from readers and fellow reviewers induced him to recant, although Ray later conceded that Crowther’s view was not wholly unjustified. “Judged on the level of craftsmanship, there was much that was wrong with my film….The early part clearly shows we were groping with the medium. Shots are held for too long, cuts come at the wrong points, the pace falters, the camera is not always placed in the right position.”

Seeing the film again after an interval of fifteen years, Raphael Bassan (Revue du Cinéma, May 1982) admitted to some disappointment, but suggested that Pather Panchali might be best regarded as “the matrix of Ray’s subsequent work….Not in itself a masterpiece…(it) can be seen as the crucible from which emerged many of the themes that the director later developed.

Had he achieved nothing else, Ray would have deserve the gratitude of other Indian filmmakers for having established with Pather Panchali not only an artistic but a financial precedent. The West Bengal government recouped its investment in the film fifteen or twenty times over—an outcome that led in due course to the setting up of a national Film Finance Corporation. Not that any of this profit reached Ray. A verbal agreement, promising him a
lot of the foreign revenue, was conveniently omitted from the final contract. (“They got the money—I got the fame,” Ray dryly recalled.) Nor would they back him a second time, arguing that “a director whose first film is a success is bound to be a failure in his second film.”

By then, Ray had resigned from Keymer’s (rather to his mother’s alarm) to devote himself full-time to filmmaking. Fortunately, he had earned so much prestige that, as he says, “I’ve had my freedom to do just what I liked.” Indeed, he has been able to choose his own subjects, cast them as he pleased, and film them, free from outside interference, with his own team of trusted collaborators, most of whom have worked with him for years. All Ray’s films, though, have to be considered in the context of their prime audience, and the conditions in which they were made—both of which have imposed their limitations.” At the beginning, this [Bengali] audience was extremely unsophisticated….You had to take them along slowly. Sometimes you took a leap as in Kanchanjungha or Days and Nights in the Forest, and lost touch with them…. I am forced to keep my stories on an innocuous level. What I can do, however, is to pack my films with meaning and psychological inflection and shades, and make a whole which will communicate a lot of things to many people.”

As for the preposterous balancing act of filmmaking in Bengal, and particularly at Calcutta’s antiquated Tollygunge studios: “Here when a shot is being taken, one holds one’s breath for fear the lights might dim in the middle of the shot, either of their own accord or through a drop in the voltage; one holds one’s breath while the camera rolls on the trolley, lest the wheels encounter a pothole on the studio floor…; one holds one’s breath on location for fear of a crowd emerging out of the blue, come to watch the fun; one holds one’s breath, too, while the film is being edited because one never knows when the ravaged Moviola might turn back on the editor in revenge and rip the precious film to ribbons. No wonder filmmakers are prone to heart disease.”

Originally Ray had planned only one film about Apu. Now, however, he decided to draw on Banerjee’s work for a sequel (to which a third film was eventually added, making up a trilogy….

Many critics found Aparajito a disappointment after Pather Panchali. “The film is neither realistic nor symbolic: it is merely awkward,” wrote Eric Rhode….Stanley Kaufmann, on the other hand, who had dismissed Pather Panchali as “rewarding if taken as a dramatized documentary,” now realized that Ray was “in process of creating a national film epic unlike anything—in size and soul—since [Donskoi’s] Maxim trilogy.” In Film (March-April 1960), Douglas McVay considered it “the most profoundly sensitive panel of the triptych,” singling out the moving scene of Sarojaya’s lonely death: “Through the gathering dusk, the sick woman glimpses the approach of one more locomotive on the skyline….She stumbles to her feet and gazes eagerly out into the darkness….Only the light of the fireflies twinkles back at her.”

Aparajito was awarded numerous prizes, including the Golden Lion at the 1957 Venice Festival. The theme of change, of the countervailing gains and losses attendant on the forces of progress, has often been identified as the central preoccupation of Ray’s films. This theme, underlying much of the Apu trilogy, finds its most overt expression in Jalsaghar (The Music Room, 1958) The hero, an aging zamindar (feudal landlord), lives amid the crumbling grandeur of his vast palace, idly puffing his hookah as watching the last of his ancestral wealth trickle away. Out in the fields a solitary elephant, survivor of a once extensive herd, pads morosely about, intermittently obscured by dust raised by the trucks of the upstart village money lender, whose star has risen as the zamindar’s has sunk. Further off, an estuarial river flows sluggishly past mud flats; the very landscape seems gripped by terminal lethargy.

The zamindar’s only passion are the jalsas (recitals of classical music) held in his music room. When the money lender builds a music room of his own, the old man’s pride is aroused. The palace’s faded splendors are dusted off, the most expensive dancer is hired, the money lender is invited and, when he attempts to offer financial tribute, publicly snubbed. “That is the host’s privilege,” the zamindar reminds him as, with a fatuous but splendid gesture, he tosses his last few gold coins to the dancer. Next morning he meticulously dons his riding costume, mounts his sole remaining stallion, rides madly towards the river, and is thrown to his death.

John Coleman, writing in the New Statesman compared The Music Room to the best of Renoir: “It doesn’t so much duck taking sides, as animate both of them with an indigenous sympathy.” The zamindar—played with magisterial torpor by the eminent stage and screen actor Chhabu Biswas—is effete, indolent, patently absurd and yet, in his genuine devotion to music, in the doomed
extravagance of his final gesture—perversely magnificent. Ustad Vilyat Khan, whose own family had been generously supported by a zamindari household, tended in his score to emphasize the nobler aspects of the protagonist: had Ray composed his own score, as he was later to do, “I would have given an ironic edge to it….but for him it was all sweetness and greatness.”

Marie Seton maintained that, far from pandering to popular taste by incorporating long musical episodes, Ray “challenged the whole convention of songs and dances in Indian cinema. Audiences…conditioned to the introduction of songs and dances as entertainment interludes and [as] dramatic and romantic stresses, had never before been confronted with…classical singing and dancing as integral focal points of realistic sequences.” At all events, both critical and public response was puzzled and lukewarm, though the film gained a Presidential Award at New Delhi. (Very few of Ray’s films have not won an award of some kind; he must rank among the world’s most honored directors.) Internationally The Music Room was more warmly received. John Russell Taylor described it as “one of Ray’s most masterly films, exquisitely photographed and directed with a complete, unquestioning mastery of mood….For those willing to place themselves under its hypnotic spell it offers pleasures of unique delicacy.”

With the completion of the Apu trilogy, Ray was widely acclaimed as one of the great masters of humanist cinema, comparable with Renoir, Flaherty and de Sica. As far as the rest of the world was concerned he stood as the dominant figure in Indian cinema, sole representative of his country’s vast movie industry. Within India his status was more ambiguous. Although he enjoyed huge prestige as the only Indian director to have achieved international respect, he was also the object of considerable resentment, especially in Bombay; and his work—then as now—was limited to a relatively restricted audience: the intellectual middle classes of the Bengali-speaking minority. (Ray always refused to have his films dubbed into Hindi or other languages)…. 

Some critics, following Truffaut, have accused Ray of tailoring his films to European tastes, of making—as one of them put it—UNESCO cinema.: Ray has consistently rebutted such attacks (“All my films are made with my own Bengali audience in view”), pointing out that even the most sympathetic western viewer, unless extraordinarily well-versed in Bengali language and culture, will find much in his films alien and incomprehensible.

…One film which Ray thought so esoteric that it would scarcely be worth releasing abroad was Devi (The Goddess, 1960), a study of religious fanaticism in nineteenth-century rural Bengal…. “Villains bore me,” Ray has remarked….To Ray’s surprise, foreign audiences were in general highly appreciative of Devi, although for a time it seemed they might never have the chance to see it. The film caused widespread controversy in Bengal, being taken in some quarters as an impious attack on Hinduism, and was initially refused an export license on the grounds that it portrayed India as sunk in primitive superstition. The order for its release is said to have come from Nehru in person….

In all Ray’s films, even Pather Panchali, interiors are shot in the studio, although so subtly are the sets constructed and lit that we are rarely aware of artifice.

“Calm without, fire within,” the title of Ray’s essay on the Japanese cinema, could well, as Chadanda Da Gupta noted, describe Charulattra.

Outside the avant-garde, there is perhaps no filmmaker who exercises such control over his work as Satyajit Ray. Scripting, casting, directing, scoring, operating the camera, working closely on art direction and editing, even designing his own credit titles and publicity material—his films come as close to wholly personal expression as may be possible in mainstream cinema. Not that his working methods are in the least dictatorial; those who have worked with him pay tribute to his patience, courtesy, and unfailing good temper in the face of all the setbacks and disasters inherent in moviemaking. “I make films for the love of it,” he once wrote. “I enjoy every moment of the filmmaking process,” from the first draft of the scenario to final cut. This enthusiasm is evidently communicated to his collaborators; Ray’s direction, Soumitra Chatterjee told an interviewer, “is inspired, and it’s an inspiration that is contagious and spreads to the entire crew.” Actors have been known to pass up three lavishly-paid Bombay spectacles to work on one of his low-budget productions.

…Hitherto, all Ray’s films had been based on novels or stories by others, although he had often altered the originals considerably in his scripts—and, especially with Teen Kanya, been censured for doing so by literary purists. As he explained, “I don’t have enough experience of life to write about peasants or even nawabs,,,,My
experience is all middle-class and that’s rather a limited field. So I turn to others.” His first original script was for 
*Kanchanjungha* (1962), which was also his first picture in color…”Chekhovian,” an epithet often applied to Ray’s work, was used with particular frequency about 
*Kanchanjungha*, within whose quiet microcosm the social conflicts of a nation are clearly mirrored….

*Kanchanjungha* was also the first film for which Ray composed his own score. Though he had received no formal musical training, he had grown up in an intensely musical household, acquiring an extensive knowledge of Indian and western classical music…Finding it increasingly frustrating to work with professional composers, whose ideas often ran contrary to his own, he has since *Kanchanjungha* composed all his own film scores, as well as those for James Ivory’s first two features, *The Householder* and *Shakespeare Wallah*.

From [Mahanager/The Big City 1963] on Ray took personal control of yet another filmmaking function, operating the camera himself. “I realized that, working with new actors, they are more confident if they don’t see me, they are less tense. I remain behind the camera. And I see better and can get the exact frame.”

“Ray’s admirers,” Richard Roud observed, “often quarrel a to which are his best films.” Few of them, though, would disagree in placing *Charulata* (*The Lonely Wife*, 1964) among the very finest. Ray himself rates it his favorite: “It’s the one with the fewest flaws.” The script is taken from a novel by Tagore….

“I have not often been praised or blamed for the right reasons,” Ray has remarked. One surprisingly persistent view of him, apparently based on *Pather Panchali* and not much else, is as the gifted natural, an untutored primitive of the cinema, adept at semidocumentary studies of simple peasant life but sadly out of his depth with more sophisticated subjects….Most critics, though, would more likely concur with Penelope Houston’s assessment of him as “obviously a highly sophisticated artist. Like Renoir he looks, and looks, and looks again; builds his films through painstaking observation; assists his players…to act with that suggestion of unforced naturalism which looks spontaneous and means hour of the most concentrated patience. Ray is no peasant, and the limpid clarity of his style is not achieved by luck or chance.”

Allegations of the “un-Indianness” of Ray’s films often seem to stem mainly from their wide appeal to foreign audiences—an argument rarely used to adduce a lack of national character in the films if, say, Fellini or Bergman….

He succeeded in making Indian cinema, for the first time in its history, something to be taken seriously, and he presented his fellow Indian filmmakers with an unprecedented opportunity to make worthwhile pictures. He has also created a body of work which, for richness and range, will stand comparison with that of any other director. At their finest—in *Charulata, Days and Nights in the Forest, The Middleman*—Ray’s films move to their own inner rhythm, individual and wholly satisfying, full of warmth, humor and a constant sense of discovery.


**Satyajit Ray**

“First it’s finding a story which excites you. Second, it’s converting it into the terms of a screenplay. Third, it’s casting, which I do myself. People just come to my house. There’s a knock on the door, and there’s somebody waiting outside with acting ambitions.”

“I try to pack my films with meaning and psychological inflections and shades,” he said, “and make a whole which will communicate a lot of things to many people.” Ray’s cinema flows with the serenity and nobility of a big river,” said Akira Kurosawa. “People are born, live out their lives and then accept their deaths. There is nothing irrelevant or haphazard in his cinematographic technique.”

April 13, 1978 You have been making films for more than twenty years. The subjects have varied widely—the rural poor, commercial urban life, the British presence—but all the films have been set in India. Do you have any interest in directing outside your country?
Not really. I have turned down many offers from here, though wouldn’t mind working with American actors. In fact, I came to Hollywood about ten years ago for a project that would have been filmed in Bengal and that needed an American actor. But I wouldn’t want to work outside of India. I feel very deeply rooted there. I know my people better than any other. I would like to narrow it down even further and say, things Bengali, because I think of India as a continent, and every state has its own topography, language and culture. There is an underlying link of Hinduism perhaps, but on the surface the states are very different. You can move from the Himalayas to a desert.

You’ve acknowledged Jean Renoir as one of your earliest influences. How did that come about?

In the forties, I saw the American films of Jean Renoir. The first one was The Southerner. Eventually I saw The Diary of a Chambermaid and a few others. I also read about his French work, and I was familiar with his father’s paintings. Then, in 1949, Renoir came to Calcutta to look for locations for The River. ...I just went and presented myself as a student of the cinema. I got to know him quite well. He was comparatively free in the evenings and I would often just drop in. Later I accompanied him on his location hunts because I knew the countryside quite well.....

He talked about the difficulties he had had in Hollywood trying to convince people that the film ought to be shot on location and not in the studio. He dropped occasional remarks which I found very illuminating. For instance, he said that a film does not have to show many things, but the few that it shows have to have the right kind of details. He kept insisting on details and the value of details in films. We would drive through the countryside, and he would say, “Look at that!” and point to a clump of bananas or plantains. “That is Bengal. That little palm, that is quintessential Bengal for me.” He was always trying to find in the landscape details that he felt were characteristic of the place and that he was eventually hoping to use in the film. That left an impression, because I myself was very interested in details. ....

Has censorship affected your films?

Not to a very serious extent, because I have always been oblique in my statements, even on human relationships. In any case, we can’t afford to be too permissive. And I’m not particularly anxious to be too permissive, because I think there has to be some room left for suggestion and obliqueness. In the cinema there is, I believe, a strong political censorship of violence. There’s a lot of fighting in the new commercial cinema, but there’s no blood shown. Apparently you are free to show a lot of bashing about. But if you show catsup, then you are in for it....

What form do your scripts take?

My scripts are in visual form. They are not written documents which can be duplicated and passed out to the members of the crew. They’re just little framed sketches with directions down the right-hand side, and little notes on dialogue and camera movements. I don’t think it’s a literary medium anyway, so why waste work? It’s only when the question of publication comes that you have to devise a part-novel, part-drama form. But I’ve never wasted time in being literary.

What led to your approach?

Well, I was trained as a painter; I did illustrations. But I’m not the only one who works this way. I once saw a script by Kurosawa which looks exactly like mine. I know of some other directors who use a visual form.

Music seems to have a special importance in your films. What do you see as its use?

I’ve been using less and less music in my films of late because I’ve always had the feeling that background music was one element that was not part of pure cinema. It was an admission of inadequacy on the part of the screenplay writer—or the director, perhaps—to have to use music to underline certain things. Perhaps it was out of a lack of confidence in the audience. Of course, I was quite surprised to see some of the American films of the thirties, for example, Scarface, which had no music at all. It’s later—late thirties and early forties—that music really came into its own. Then you had big composers like Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Alfred Newman writing symphonic scores which run right through the film almost. I find that those are the films which have dated most now.
I personally prefer a slightly drier approach, but I realize that one cannot do without music. In the trilogy I did not write my own music. I used Ravi Shankar, as you probably know. The film without the music would have seemed slower, I’m afraid. I think what music does is to provide the audience with something to react to so that they are kept occupied. At least their ears are kept occupied. With that, there is something happening.

What do you think about using music as counterpoint?

Yes, fine. That’s one of the recommended uses, certainly. Kubrick has done that in his films, using “The Blue Danube” for 2001: A Space Odyssey. I think it’s better to do it that way, because the other way would be totally logical. It would be saying the same thing in terms of music as is being expressed in rhetorical terms. In any case, I don’t like the Mickey Mousing of music by providing songs with every action. That’s very bad.

I watch my films with the audiences. Certainly on the opening night, but I also go just to see how the audience is reacting. I’ve often found that the audience’s reaction in a way changes the film for me. Often, during the passages which have very little dialogue, or just subtle things on the soundtrack, and no music, I felt terrified. I wanted to walk out of the theater. I would think, now why didn’t I use music here, which would pacify the public who are being restive and fidgety? It remains a very acute problem, I think, whether to use music or not. I would ideally not like to use music at all. I certainly do not approve of well-known pieces of classical music used in the background. What happens is that the film is rarely able to come up to the level of the music. What really happens is that the music is brought down to the level of the film, which is upsetting.

How did you work with Ravi Shankar on the Apu trilogy?

Shankar was then already a very famous concert virtuoso who was constantly touring, if not outside of India, then inside India. For Pather Panchali he was available for just a day. I was able to show him half the film in rough cut. The music I wouldn’t say was composed, because there was nothing written down. He just hummed and whistled, and the musicians just performed. All the music was done in a single session. This is not the best way of doing it, mind you. I got worried, and I had him play three-minute and four-minute pieces and various ragas in various tempos. Either a solo sitar or a combination with the flute, with drums, whatever. But a lot of the work was done in the cutting room. There was considerable wrestling with the music and the images.

...Music has always been my first love.....

You operate your own camera?

I’ve been doing so for the last fifteen years. Not that I have no trust in my cameraman’s operational abilities, but the best position to judge the acting from is through the lens. Also, I’ve noticed working with nonprofessionals., that they are happier if they don’t see my face while I’m directing....

Do you have a philosophy that you care to articulate?

It’s there in my films. I’m afraid I can’t be articulate about it. I’m very bad at verbalizations. That’s why I’m not a writer; I’m a filmmaker. I’m afraid you will have to draw your own conclusions.


“Satyajit Ray: Days and Nights in the Art Houses”

I had been assigned to produce the film tribute to the greatest of “Indian Chappies,” Satyajit Ray, for the 1992 Academy Award broadcast, on which he was to receive an honorary Oscar....When I began telling people what I was working on, I discovered that it was only among my contemporaries—and, of course, the critics and film historians—that Ray was a recognizable name. And then only as a figure from our past. They, no more than I, had any sense of the size and strength of his body of work as it has developed in the last two decades or so. As for younger people, they had quite simply never heard of him.

This was a shock to me. But not as great as the dismay that came over me as I tried to get to work on my little montage, which instantly turned into the worst logistical nightmare I have ever endured in over two decades of making compilation films.

As far as I could determine, no American company held television rights (and therefore a viable print or tape) of any of Ray’s films. For that matter, I could turn up no one who held American theatrical rights in any of his pictures. There were a few scattered, battered 16mm prints of his films available in the audiovisual market, but most of them were near-unwatchable....To put the point simply, there was simply no market for Ray’s films in the United States....
Girish Shambu: “The Apu Trilogy: Behind the Universal (Criterion Notes)

Western fascination with Bollywood is a big phenomenon—but it is recent. It would be no exaggeration to say that, for decades prior, Indian cinema in the minds of Western viewers was associated primarily with Satyajit Ray. What a formidable burden to place upon a single individual—that his films stand in for the entire cinematic output of one of the most populous and diverse countries on the planet. But how did it come to be this way?

One explanation has to do with the number of Western film critics who reserved for Ray’s work a descriptor that has few equals in critical judgment: “universal.” Robin Wood, for example, thought that it was “remarkable how seldom in Ray’s films the spectator is pulled up by any specific obstacle arising from cultural differences . . . [They] usually deal with human fundamentals that undercut all cultural distinctions.” To Pauline Kael, *Apur Sansar* felt “as if it were the world’s first love story.” For Michael Sragow, “Ray’s achievement rested on moviemaking artistry that was as universal as music.”

This is high praise for an artist—and we should rightly celebrate those creative figures, rare indeed, who strike such a chord of universalism in their audiences. Still, I find myself wondering what may be downplayed or lost when this received wisdom takes hold.

Let’s start with the bigger picture of Indian cinema. It is true that Ray was something new and original, even within Indian cinema, but his originality emerged as a response to the cinematic landscape of the time. When *The Apu Trilogy* appeared in the 1950s, India was the world’s largest producer of films, made almost exclusively by the mainstream commercial industry. Cinema had come early to India, not long after the first films of the Lumière in France, and a strong studio system was in place well before Ray’s debut, *Pather Panchali* (1955). Commercial films
were made in large numbers both in Hindi and in several regional languages, but it was Hindi-language cinema, with Mumbai as its center of production, that proved to be most influential in determining the characteristics of the “typical” Indian movie of the time.

As the scholar Neepa Majumdar has noted, by the time Ray came along, a certain ruling Mumbai film “formula” was in place. This recipe produced, in large numbers, films that were “all-inclusive entertainments,” driven by stars and containing “something for everyone in the audience: songs, dances, fights, romance, stunts, and comedy packaged into a melodramatic narrative form.” This template not only reigned in Mumbai but also spread to the other regional-language film sectors, such as Bengali-language commercial cinema. And while the template was enormously fertile, giving rise to a large body of rich and inventive popular art, Ray was seeking to do something else: create a cinema that turned away from the extravagant style and genre moves of popular cinema and toward a finely textured rendering of lived life. Seven years before Pather Panchali, he staked out his position in an essay titled “What Is Wrong with Indian Films?”

Pather Panchali was produced outside of this industrial context, one of India’s earliest “independent” films, and indeed did something new in terms of subject matter and style as well, depicting rural life with a detailed, delicate realism. It, and the rest of The Apu Trilogy, went on to international acclaim; in this regard, the films were unprecedented in Indian cinema. But the trilogy also achieved great critical and commercial success in Bengal, resonating deeply with the public because of the subtlety and authenticity—the fresh familiarity—of its depictions. It is this particularity that we risk overlooking by thinking of the films simply as universal.

I can think of at least two reasons why many Western critics over the years have underemphasized Ray’s cultural specificity. The first has to do with the way his films played into Western perceptions of India. Chandak Sengoopta has argued that Ray’s early films, and The Apu Trilogy in particular, were warmly received in the West primarily because they unconsciously affirmed Western notions of India that strongly associated the country with poverty. Once Ray began to make films about middle-class and rich people—as he would with The Hero (1966), Company Limited (1971), and The Middleman (1976)—the work suddenly seemed less universal.

The second reason that Western critics have softened the culturally specific in Ray has to do with Ray himself—and his intriguingly contradictory and ambivalent statements and writings about his own cinematic work. Hailing from a renowned Bengali literary family, Ray was a writer of repute, well-known for his short stories, novellas, and poems, as well as his essays on the arts. Late in his life, in a letter to Chidananda Das Gupta, with whom he’d founded the Calcutta Film Society in 1947, Ray claimed: “I don’t think Indian art traditions have anything at all to do with my development as a filmmaker . . . If I have succeeded as a filmmaker, it is due to my familiarity with Western artistic, literary, and musical traditions.” The profound effect upon Ray of witnessing Jean Renoir shoot The River in India; the impact of seeing Bicycle Thieves for the first time (“I knew immediately that I would make [my first film] in the same way, using natural locations and unknown actors”); and his lifelong love of Western classical music: these are well-known details of his biography.

But Ray also frequently acknowledged the plethora of non-Western—often uniquely Bengali—factors that helped form his artistic sensibility, and there were broad historical influences at play as well. The interaction between Europe and Bengal in the nineteenth century was deep and significant, giving rise to what came to be known as the Bengal Renaissance. Ray’s family belonged to a small, minority Hindu group called the Brahmos, who were part of this renaissance. Ray’s biographer Andrew Robinson describes how a blend of Christianity, Western literature and ideas, and Hindu social progressivism—such as a rejection of both the caste system and idolatry—came to be important for the Brahmos.

Fundamental to the shaping of Ray’s sensibility was the two-and-a-half-year period he spent at Rabindranath Tagore’s university, Santiniketan. Tagore was a Bengali polymath—a poet, composer, novelist, painter, and playwright—who was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1913. Santiniketan was intended by Tagore as an alternative to the British model of education in India; its pastoral setting and the broad aim of its educational program to connect India with the rest of the world were visionary. Having been born and raised in Kolkata, Ray thrived on urban life and was reluctant to leave the city. But once at Santiniketan, he was initiated into an entire world of Indian art and culture. Later, he would remark: “Santiniketan taught me two
things: to look at paintings and to look at nature.”

During his time at the university, Ray set out, along with two friends, on a tour of the country’s historic sites, such as Ajanta, Ellora, and Khajuraho, to see the great works of Indian classical art. Robinson believes that the expedition led to a consolidation of Ray’s understanding of the separate and distinctive qualities of Eastern and Western art. What art from China, Japan, and India had in common, Ray felt, was “a sort of symbolism and a looking for the essence rather than the surface” of things—aspects that also, interestingly, appeared in his favorite Western painters, Cezanne and Giorgione. He would write, “There’s something very mysterious and poetic in Giorgione which appeals to an Indian.”

The invocation of the “poetic” is a crucial one for Ray. When he adapted Bibhutibhusan Banerjee’s novels into the films of The Apu Trilogy, Ray’s special additions were what he referred to as poetic elements—and these were the details that audiences often remembered vividly afterward: the moment in Pather Panchali when Apu throws the necklace stolen by Durga into the pond and we watch as the weeds on the surface close in and the water slowly returns to the way it was, the secret of an impecunious but high-caste family preserved forever; Harihar’s death in Aparajito (1956), when dozens of pigeons burst into flight, as if his soul were abruptly leaving his body and ascending to the heavens; Apu’s suicide attempt on the railroad tracks in Apar Sansar (1959), when we are alarmed by the squeal of a pig accidentally perishing on the tracks—and we realize that, purely by chance, one living being has “saved” the life of another.

On the one hand, these wordless moments carry a special, affective charge due to the lyricism of “total cinema”: a potent and expressive combination of shot composition, human (and/or nonhuman) figures, setting, sound design, and movement—in other words, the “universal” language of mise-en-scène. But simultaneously, such moments also work in a culturally specific register; the “symbolic” quality that Ray associated with Eastern art can be fully apprehended and understood only through a familiarity with the culture from which the artwork springs—in this case, that of Hindu Bengal.

The “universal” appeal of The Apu Trilogy made for its quick recognition in the West as an important work of “art cinema”—but such a category did not yet exist in India. Majumdar points out that, even after the trilogy’s Western renown, Ray saw himself not as an “art filmmaker” but instead as a “serious commercial filmmaker.” It was not until the 1970s that India’s art cinema—also known as “parallel cinema”—came to be called such. This strand of films owed a great deal to Ray, but it is important to note that he was not its sole inspiration. In Bengali cinema alone, two other figures were key influences, making their first films around the same time as Ray: Ritwik Ghatak, whose sensibility was deeply influenced by Brecht and Eisenstein, and whose stylistically bold and emotionally intense melodramas are haunted by the trauma of the Partition of Bengal; and Mrinal Sen, whose openly political and socially critical films of the early 1970s are early, signal achievements of parallel cinema.

This takes us back to Tagore, the Bengali figure who was perhaps the primary influence on Ray’s sensibility. As Das Gupta points out, not only did the actor Soumitra Chatterjee (who played several important roles for Ray, beginning with the adult Apu) resemble the young Tagore but the trilogy itself represents a move away from novelist Banerjee’s view of the world—a “slightly dewy-eyed vision of ‘Golden Bengal’”—to one closer to Tagore’s. This latter view is social-reformist and modernist—even if (as Das Gupta believes) it is not one of revolutionary political engagement. Tagore’s influence upon Ray, however, extended beyond the sociopolitical. Tagore’s songs and paintings made a formative impact, and Ray adapted several of the older artist’s stories into films, including Charulata (1964) and The Home and the World (1984).

In critical discussions of art cinema, Ray is often (and too conveniently) opposed to Ghatak. Despite their differences in personality and attitude—and the tenor of their work—they nevertheless share the profound marks of Tagore’s influence. Ghatak once wrote movingly, “I cannot speak without Tagore. That man has culled all my feelings before my birth.” And in 1961, when Ray made his first documentary feature, its subject, treated with full admiration, was Tagore.

In the end, Ray and Tagore were united by a powerful bond: they were both masters of multiple forms. While Tagore’s prodigious gifts ranged across several of the arts, Ray orchestrated a fusion of art forms—and of the
universal and the close to home—in that modern medium of synthesis par excellence: cinema. And there’s no more miraculous evidence of this synthesis in Ray’s work than The Apu Trilogy.

**COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2016 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXXII:**

Feb 23 Mel Brooks *The Producers* 1967
Mar 1 Sergio Leone *Once Upon a Time in the West* 1968
Mar 8 William Friedkin *The French Connection* 1971
Mar 22 Martin Scorsese *Raging Bull* 1980
Mar 29 Akira Kurosawa *Ran* 1985
Apr 5 Spike Lee *Malcolm X* 1992
Apr 12 Claire Denis *Beau Travail* 1999
Apr 19 Ari Folman *Waltz with Bashir* 2008
Apr 26 Michael Haneke *Amour* 2012
May 3 Terry Gilliam *The Fisher King* 1991

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