

Three Colors: Blue

NINTH ANNUAL ROBERT
CLASSIC FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL

Presented by **TV5MONDE** HD

March 10-26, 2017

Sponsored by the Jane M. & Bruce P. Robert Charitable Foundation
A co-production of Cinema St. Louis and Webster University Film Series

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Centre Francophone at Webster University

An organization dedicated to promoting Francophone culture and helping French educators.

Contact info: Lionel Cuillé, Ph.D., Jane and Bruce Robert Chair in French and Francophone Studies, Webster University, 314-246-8619, francophone@webster.edu, facebook.com/centrefrancophoneinstlouis, webster.edu/arts-and-sciences/affiliates-events/centre-francophone



Alliance Française de St. Louis

A member-supported nonprofit center engaging the St. Louis community in French language and culture.

Contact info: 314-432-0734, bonjour@alliancestl.org, alliancestl.org



American Association of Teachers of French

The only professional association devoted exclusively to the needs of French teachers at all levels, with the mission of advancing the study of the French language and French-speaking literatures and cultures both in schools and in the general public.

Contact info: Anna Amelung, president, Greater St. Louis Chapter, annaamelung51@gmail.com, www.frenchteachers.org



Les Amis ("The Friends")

French Creole heritage preservationist group for the Mid-Mississippi River Valley. Promotes the Creole Corridor on both sides of the Mississippi River from Cahokia-Chester, Ill., and Ste. Genevieve-St. Louis, Mo. Parts of the Corridor are in the process of nomination for the designation of UNESCO World Heritage Site through Les Amis.

Contact info: 314-454-3160, info@les-amis.org, les-amis.org



La Société Française de Saint Louis

An organization dedicated to the survival of the language, culture, and traditions of the French in St. Louis. *Contact info: sfinfo@societefrancaisestl.org, societefrancaisestl.org, facebook.com/Société-Française-de-Saint-Louis*



St. Louis-Lyon Sister Cities

St. Louis-Saint-Louis, Sénégal Sister Cities

The Sister Cities program encourages meaningful and mutually satisfying personal contact between the people of the two cities.

Contact info: Susan Powers at smplyon@yahoo.com (Lyon), Renee Franklin at renee.franklin@slam.org (Saint-Louis), worldtradecenter-stl.com/st-louis-sister-cities-program



**The Jane M. &
Bruce P. Robert
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Cinema St. Louis offers French programming at the annual Robert Classic French Film Festival and the Robert French and French-Language Focus at the Whitaker St. Louis International Film Festival (held Nov. 2-12, 2017).



The Ninth Annual Robert Classic French Film Festival — co-presented by Cinema St. Louis and the Webster University Film Series — celebrates St. Louis' Gallic heritage and France's cinematic legacy. The featured films span the decades from the 1920s through the mid-1990s, offering a revealing overview of French cinema.

The fest is annually highlighted by significant restorations, which this year include films by two New Wave masters: Jacques Rivette's first feature, "Paris Belongs to Us," and François Truffaut's cinephilic love letter, "Day for Night." The fest also provides one of the few opportunities available in St. Louis to see films projected the old-school, time-honored way, with both Alain Resnais' "Last Year at Marienbad" and Robert Bresson's "Au hasard Balthazar" screening from 35mm prints. Even more traditional, we also offer a silent film with live music, and audiences are sure to delight in the Poor People of Paris' accompaniment for Jean Renoir's classic "Nana." The schedule is rounded out by such diverse but enduring works as "Au revoir les enfants," "Blue," "Cleo from 5 to 7" and "Eyes Without a Face."

Every program features introductions and discussions by film scholars and critics. The discussions will place the works in the contexts of both film and French history and provide close analyses.

All films are in French with English subtitles.

VENUE

Webster University's Winifred Moore Auditorium
470 E. Lockwood Ave.



ADMISSION

\$13 general admission; \$10 for students and Cinema St. Louis members; free for Webster U. students. Advance tickets can be purchased through Brown Paper Tickets at brownpapertickets.com. In the "Find an Event" search box, type "Classic French." A service charge will apply, and only full-price \$13 tickets are available in advance.

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FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 7:30 P.M.

Au revoir les enfants

Louis Malle, 1987, 105 min., color, Blu-ray projection source

"Au revoir les enfants" tells a heartbreaking story of friendship and devastating loss concerning two boys living in Nazi-occupied France. At a provincial Catholic boarding school, the precocious youth enjoy true camaraderie — until a secret is revealed. Based on events from writer/director Louis Malle's own childhood, the film is a subtle, precisely observed tale of courage, cowardice, and tragic awakening.

Calling the film "Louis Malle's quasi-autobiographical masterpiece," the Guardian's Peter Bradshaw writes that the film "remains breathtakingly good. There is a miraculous, unforced ease and naturalness in the acting and direction; it is classic movie storytelling in the service of important themes. As an evocation of childhood it is superb, comparable to Jean Vigo's 'Zéro de Conduite' and François Truffaut's 'The 400 Blows' — perhaps better. Every line, every scene, every shot, is composed with mastery. It has to be seen." The New York Times is equally laudatory: "It has taken Mr. Malle more than 40 years to make 'Au revoir les enfants.' Every film that Mr. Malle made in those intervening years has been preparation for 'Au revoir les enfants.' Like 'The Dead,' which it resembles in no other way, it's a work that has the kind of simplicity, ease and density of detail that only a filmmaker in total command of his craft can bring off, and then only rarely."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Jean-Louis Pautrot, professor of French and international studies at Saint Louis University.



SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 7:30 P.M.

Three Colors: Blue/ Trois couleurs: Bleu

Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1993, 100 min., color, Blu-ray projection source

In the moving first film of Krzysztof Kieslowski's "Three Colors" trilogy — each part tells a stand-alone story — Juliette Binoche gives a tour-de-force performance as Julie, a woman reeling from the tragic death of her husband and young daughter. But "Blue" is more than just a blistering study of grief; it's also a tale of liberation, as Julie attempts to free herself from the past while confronting truths about the life of her late husband, a composer. Shot in sapphire tones by Sławomir Idziak, and set to an extraordinary operatic score by Zbigniew Preisner, "Blue" is an overwhelming sensory experience.

In the LA Times, Kenneth Turan observes: "It is a mark of the virtuosity with which director Krzysztof Kieslowski has made 'Blue' that it is possible to envision its intensely emotional story of a woman's search for meaning after tragedy unhinges her life becoming, with slight tinkering, the plot for a standard-issue Bette Davis 'women's picture' of the 1940s." But he quickly adds that there is "nothing ordinary or banal" about Kieslowski's film: "Though he starts with conventional story elements, he conveys them with a striking combination of focused acting, unexpected images, music strong enough to be a physical presence, and a sensitivity to light, color (blue, not surprisingly, is a visual leitmotif) and textures." Of actress Binoche, the critic writes: "It is always startling to re-experience the glass-shattering honesty and intensity of her performance. The idea of simply walking through a scene is alien to her, and in that sense she is perfect for this artfully made film, dense with feeling, in which no shot is ordinary and no moment taken for granted."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Calvin Wilson, film, jazz, art, and dance critic for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.



SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 7 P.M.

Nana

Jean Renoir, 1926, 150 min., B&W, silent, DVD projection source

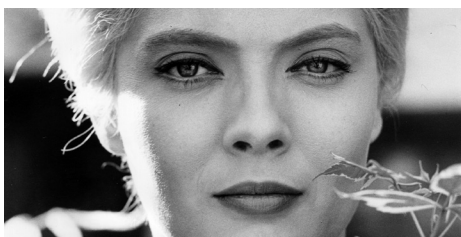
With live accompaniment by the Poor People of Paris

Elsie Parker and the Poor People of Paris provide live musical accompaniment to Jean Renoir's silent "Nana," the famed director's second feature. A condensed but largely faithful adaptation of the classic novel by Emile Zola (the author's daughter, Denise Leblond-Zola, was even hired to write the titles), the film stars Renoir's wife, Catherine Hessling, as the flawed title character, a middling stage actress who becomes the kept woman of a married man, the hopelessly infatuated Count Muffat. Influenced by the extravagant work of Erich von Stroheim ("Foolish Wives," "Greed") — whom Renoir greatly admired — the film features a pair of grand set-pieces, at a horse race and an open-air ball.

Reviewing a restoration of the film that screened at the 1976 New York Film Festival, Times critic Vincent Canby described "Nana" as "an extraordinary achievement that now seems to fit perfectly into the Renoir oeuvre, though at the time of its release in France it was a financial and critical disaster. For us today, with hindsight illuminated by all the remarkable Renoir films that came after, seeing 'Nana' is like discovering a long-lost diary. It's not difficult to understand why early audiences were confused and turned off by this immensely elaborate screen incarnation of the Zola novel about the Second Empire bit actress who became the most famous courtesan of her day. It moves from realism to expressionism to romanticism, all the while being somewhat comic and cool."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Lionel Cuillé, the Jane and Bruce Robert professor of French and Francophone studies at Webster University.

Sponsored by Jane M. & Bruce P. Robert Charitable Foundation



FRIDAY, MARCH 17, 7:30 P.M.

Cléo from 5 to 7 / Cléo de 5 à 7

Agnès Varda, 1962, 89 min., color and B&W, DCP projection source

Agnès Varda eloquently captures Paris in the '60s with this real-time portrait of a singer (Corinne Marchand) set adrift in the city as she awaits the test results of a biopsy. A chronicle of the minutes of one woman's life, "Cléo from 5 to 7" is a spirited mix of vivid *vérité* and melodrama, featuring a score by Michel Legrand ("The Umbrellas of Cherbourg") and cameos by Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina.

Roger Ebert, who included "Cléo from 5 to 7" in his selection of "Great Movies," writes that "Varda is sometimes referred to as the godmother of the French New Wave. I have been guilty of that myself. Nothing could be more unfair. Varda is its very soul, and only the fact that she is a woman, I fear, prevented her from being routinely included with Godard, Truffaut, Resnais, Chabrol, Rivette, Rohmer and for that matter her husband Jacques Demy. The passage of time has been kinder to her films than some of theirs, and 'Cléo from 5 to 7' plays today as startlingly modern. Released in 1962, it seems as innovative and influential as any New Wave film. Unlike most of the New Wave directors, Varda was trained not as a filmmaker or as a critic, but as a serious photographer. Try freezing any frame of the scenes in (Cléo's) apartment and you will find perfect composition — perfect, but not calling attention to itself. In moving pictures, she has an ability to capture the essence of her characters not only through plot and dialogue, but even more in their placement in space and light. While many early New Wave films had a jaunty boldness of style, Varda in this film shows a sensibility to subtly developing emotions."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Kathy Corley, professor of film in the Electronic and Photographic Media Department at Webster University.

Sponsored by Webster University's Centre Francophone



SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 7:30 P.M.

Last Year at Marienbad / L'année dernière à Marienbad

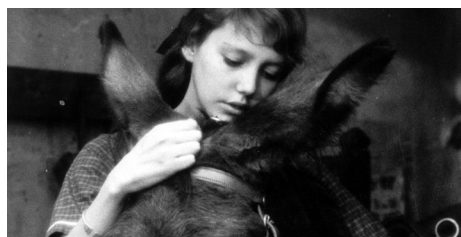
Alain Resnais, 1961, 94 min., B&W, 35mm projection source

Not just a defining work of the French New Wave but one of the great, lasting mysteries of modern art, Alain Resnais' epochal "Last Year at Marienbad" has been puzzling appreciative viewers for decades. Written by Alain Robbe-Grillet, the radical master of the Nouveau Roman (New Novel), this surreal fever dream, or nightmare, gorgeously fuses the past with the present. The film tells the deliberately ambiguous story of a man and a woman (Giorgio Albertazzi and Delphine Seyrig) who may or may not have met a year ago, perhaps at the very same cathedral-like, mirror-filled château they now find themselves wandering. Unforgettable in both its confounding details (gilded ceilings, diabolical parlor games, a loaded gun) and haunting scope, Resnais' investigation into the nature of memory is simultaneously disturbing and romantic.

Responding to the film's formidable reputation, the Chicago Reader's Jonathan Rosenbaum laments: "It's too bad 'Last Year at Marienbad' was the most fashionable art-house movie of 1961-'62, because as a result it's been maligned and misunderstood ever since. The chic allure of Alain Resnais' second feature — a maddening, scintillating puzzle set in glitzy surroundings — produced a backlash, and one reason its defenders and detractors tend to be equally misguided is that both respond to the controversy rather than to the film itself. 'I am now quite prepared to claim that "Marienbad" is the greatest film ever made, and to pity those who cannot see this,' proclaimed one French critic, even as others ridiculed what they perceived as the film's pretentious solemnity — overlooking or missing its playful, if poker-faced, use of parody as well as its outright scariness."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Robert Garrick, attorney, board member of the French-preservation nonprofit Les Amis, and former contributor to the davekehr.com film blog.

Sponsored by Les Amis



SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 7 P.M.

Au hasard Balthazar

Robert Bresson, 1966, 95 min., B&W, 35mm projection source

A profound masterpiece from one of the most revered filmmakers in the history of cinema, director Robert Bresson's "Au hasard Balthazar" follows the donkey Balthazar as he is passed from owner to owner, some kind and some cruel but all with motivations beyond his understanding. Balthazar — whose life parallels that of his first keeper, Marie (Anne Wiazemsky) — is truly a beast of burden, suffering the sins of man. But despite his powerlessness, he accepts his fate nobly. Through Bresson's unconventional approach to composition, sound, and narrative, this seemingly simple story becomes a moving parable of purity and transcendence.

Legendary critic Andrew Sarris writes in the Village Voice: "'Au hasard Balthazar' plucks out the roots of existence and presents us with a very morbidly beautiful flower of cinematic art. Bresson's vision of life and his cinematic style may seem too bleak, too restrictive, too pessimistic for some, perhaps for many. And yet, all in all, no film I have ever seen has come so close to convulsing my entire being as has 'Au hasard Balthazar.'" In the Chicago Reader, Dave Kehr provides this equally ecstatic summation: "'Everyone who sees this film will be absolutely astonished,' Jean-Luc Godard once said, 'because this film is really the world in an hour and a half.' Robert Bresson's 1966 masterpiece defies any conventional analysis, telling a story of sin and redemption by following Balthazar, a donkey, as he passes through the hands of a number of masters, including a peasant girl, a satanic delinquent, and a saintly fool. Perhaps the greatest and most revolutionary of Bresson's films, 'Balthazar' is a difficult but transcendently rewarding experience, never to be missed."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Pier Marton, video artist and unlearning specialist at the School of No Media. Marton has lectured with his work at the Museum of Modern Art, the Carnegie Museum, and the Walker Art Center and has taught at several major U.S. universities.

Sponsored by Renée Hirshfield



FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 7:30 P.M.

Day for Night/ La nuit américaine

François Truffaut, 1973, 116 min., color, Blu-ray projection source, new restoration

This affectionate farce from François Truffaut about the joys and strife of filmmaking is one of his most beloved films. Truffaut himself appears as the harried director of a frivolous melodrama, the shooting of which is plagued by the whims of a neurotic actor (Jean-Pierre L  aud), an aging but still forceful Italian diva (Valentina Cortese), and a British ingenue haunted by personal scandal (Jacqueline Bisset). Both an irreverent paean to the prosaic craft of cinema and a delightful human comedy about the pitfalls of sex and romance, "Day for Night" is buoyed by robust performances and a sparkling score by the legendary Georges Delerue.

Describing "Day for Night" as "a hilarious and informative movie," Time Out asserts that "in the pantheon of films about filmmaking, it strikes a neat balance between the operatic neuroses of '8 1/2' and the warm, pastel-hued nostalgia of 'Singin' in the Rain.'" Philip French in the Guardian writes: "Set in Nice's Victorine Studios, where it was filmed, 'Day for Night' is a touching, funny and accurate account of the travails (accidents, disputes, affairs, imbroglis, death) involved in the making of an all-star international picture called 'Je vous pr  sente Pam  la.' It is a Pirandellian affair, an elegiac celebration of a dying kind of cinema, a meditation on the connection between film and life by Truffaut, who plays Ferrand, the film's constantly troubled yet dedicated director, a man much like himself. Ferrand compares the process of filmmaking to 'a stagecoach journey into the far west. At the start you hope for a beautiful trip. But shortly you wonder if you will make it at all.'"

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Ren  e Hirshfield, adjunct professor of film studies at Southwestern Illinois College.

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SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 7:30 P.M.

Eyes Without a Face/ Les yeux sans visage

Georges Franju, 1960, 90 min., B&W, Blu-ray projection source

At his secluded chateau in the French countryside, a brilliant, obsessive doctor (Pierre Brasseur) attempts a radical plastic surgery to restore the beauty of his daughter's disfigured countenance — at a horrifying price. "Eyes Without a Face," directed by the supremely talented Georges Franju, is rare in horror cinema for its odd mixture of the ghastly and the lyrical, and it has been a major influence on the genre in the decades since its release. There are images here — of terror, of gore, of inexplicable beauty — that once seen are never forgotten.

Declaring "Eyes Without a Face" as "still among the most disturbing horror films ever made," critic David Edelstein writes: "The storyline is your standard obsessed-mad-doctor saga, one step above a Poverty Row Bela Lugosi feature. But it's Lugosi by way of Cocteau and Ionesco. It's the mixture of the clinical and the poetic that gets, er, under your skin." Michael Wilmington in the Chicago Tribune asserts that the film "is one horror classic that hasn't lost its power to shock or hypnotize audiences over the years. 'Eyes' can still seduce you with beauty and stun you with terror. It's not a matter of gore or frenzied pacing. Franju's adaptation of the Jean Redon novel is classically paced and shot, filled with what Pauline Kael called images of 'exquisite dread.' 'Eyes Without a Face' is a perfect example of how cinematic poetry can transform a seemingly disreputable movie genre. The horror and the poetry intensify each other, just as the chateau's chic is set off ironically by the howling dogs, the cuts of the scalpel, the sense of death in the shadows."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Andrew Wyatt, film critic for St. Louis Magazine's Look/Listen arts-and-entertainment blog and the Gateway Cinephile film blog.

Sponsored by Ann Repetto



SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 7 P.M.

Paris Belongs to Us/ Paris nous appartient

Jacques Rivette, 1961, 141 min., B&W, Blu-ray projection source, new restoration

One of the original critics-turned-filmmakers who helped jump-start the French New Wave, Jacques Rivette began shooting his debut feature in 1958, well before that cinema revolution officially kicked off with "The 400 Blows" and "Breathless." Ultimately released in 1961, the rich and mysterious "Paris Belongs to Us" offers some of the radical flavor that would define the movement, with a particularly Rivettian twist. The film follows a young literature student (Betty Schneider) who befriends the members of a loose-knit group of twentysomethings in Paris. Suffused with a lingering post-World War II disillusionment (and already evincing the playfulness and fascination with theatrical performance and conspiracy that would become hallmarks for the director), "Paris Belongs to Us" marked the provocative start to a brilliant directorial career.

"Jacques Rivette made his first feature with little money and great difficulty between 1958 and 1960," says The New Yorker's Richard Brody of "Paris Belongs to Us." "Its plot reflects his struggles, and its tone blends the paranoid tension of American *film noir* with the austere lyricism of modern theatre. Rivette's tightly wound images turn the ornate architecture of Paris into a labyrinth of intimate entanglements and apocalyptic menace." The Chicago Reader's Jonathan Rosenbaum adds: "Though more amateurish than the other celebrated first features of the French New Wave, Jacques Rivette's troubled and troubling 1960 account of Parisians in the late 50s remains the most intellectually and philosophically mature, and one of the most beautiful. The specter of world-wide conspiracy and impending apocalypse haunts the characters. Few films have more effectively captured a period and milieu; Rivette evokes bohemian paranoia and sleepless nights in tiny one-room flats, along with the fragrant, youthful idealism conveyed by the film's title."

With an introduction and post-film discussion by Robert Hunt, film critic for the Riverfront Times and former adjunct professor of film studies at Webster U.



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