

The Recordatio Yearbook

-2014-

BY JEREMY AMBROSE

THE FIRST YEAR OF RECORDATIO

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If watching a film is an experience that an audience enters into, as if entering into another world, encountering its inhabitants and accompanying them on their journeys, then what a year it has been for the Recordatio Cinema Club...

We have travelled from the trenches of WWI, to the stadiums of Ancient Rome, from the streets of Depression era America to the theatres of occupied Poland, from the horrors of a French boarding school to the mob infested wa-

terfront. We have encountered corrupt army officers and demonic school teachers, socialites and tramps, Polish actors and Jewish royalty, galley slaves and Catholic priests. We have been enchanted by beautiful people, we have been beaten black and blue by the mob, we have been tried and executed for cowardice, we have impersonated Adolf Hitler, we have been given water by Christ, we have used water to hide our sins, we have seen with the eyes of a tramp, and we have suffered with the

hearts of the elderly. And in each of these films, we have learned something about our world, morality, and the human condition. Above all, we have been entertained.



To Be Or Not To Be (1942)

In 2014, we watched these 8 films, and this is what we experienced...

On The Waterfront (1954)

This was the perfect film to launch the cinema club, full of standout performances telling a great story, and one that is faithful to the true life experiences of the waterfront workers of the time and what they were forced to endure. Marlon Brando

does not just act the role, but he lives it and breathes it, inhaling each scene and exhaling with such volatile energy and yet, an underlying sensitivity that captures us, as we are brought right into the depths of his moral dilemma. Though he has slid

into the moral indifference of belonging to the wrong side, he is faced with a challenge to choose what is right, even if it means the loss of everything he has. There to guide him is one of the greatest screen priests of all time, actor Karl Malden



playing a character based on a true dockside priest. The priest is the moral compass of the film, a man of integrity and strength, who stands up to face the mob and proclaims to all the dignity of the human person. We witness him suffering degradation but standing firm to speak for the persecuted.

The film, in a sense, is about community, the “Body of Christ,” as the priest reminds them; that Christ is there on the dockside suffering with each of them. If each individual makes the choice and if they all stand together as one Body, then there cannot be defeat for them. Together, they cannot be intimidated into submission. This theme makes it a fitting first film for *Recordatio*, as it seems to mirror



the purpose of this cinema club, where individuals come together as one Body, encounter a film, to be formed by it, and to likewise stand together in forming and transforming the culture of our world.

“The tramp, like a little child, is the closest to seeing with the eyes of the Divine, and therefore of loving with that same heart.”

The second film shown was something completely different; a Charlie Chaplin silent film, featuring his famous tramp falling in love with a blind girl who mistakes him for a millionaire. The film was riotous slapstick and is hilarious, yet is simultaneously heart wrenching, as we see the great sacrifices and purity of heart in the tramp as he seeks to love. Chaplin combines the funny and the tragic to give us

City Lights (1931)



pathos, and the effects are revolutionary for filmmaking. Chaplin challenges notions of blindness and we are left wondering who in the film is

really blind and who has the eyes to see. It is a lesson ever relevant to each person in the world, as we all have the capacity to slip into a type of blindness, where we fail to see ourselves or others as they truly are. The tramp, like a little child, is the closest to seeing with the eyes of the Divine, and therefore of loving with that same heart.



Ben-Hur (1959)

An astounding and epic spectacle that is still as impressive today as it ever was. It’s a film that demands being seen on the big screen, as was originally intended, and yet even on a little screen, one cannot fail to witness its glory, its beauty and its sheer magnitude. It is a good lesson for us to realise that even with all the technological advancement and special effects of today, perhaps we are lacking something that is essential to making a truly great movie. What took an incredible amount of hard work and talent to accomplish cannot be easily thrown away and so we are given time to soak up what is presented and to be immersed into the story. The pacing and 4 hour plus duration does not crush with its



weight, but rather invites an audience to invest themselves so that we can truly be a part of the world presented. Even the action scenes do not rush us, unnecessarily battering our senses as happens all too often nowadays... Rather, we are allowed to spend quality time in the moment so that we can gain an authentic thrill from the action. The famous chariot scene begins with the horses marching slowly around the stadium and the audi-

ence is allowed to witness the grandness of this, and become familiar with the size and shape of it all, with the beauty and largeness presented, so that when the action does come, we can be present in its midst. But this is all secondary to the fact that the film successfully tells a great story – one where we find Jesus Christ at the very centre, and it is these smaller moments

that are the most powerful. A film with groundbreaking chariot races and galley battles, and yet, it is Christ offering a cup of water that truly has the power to overwhelm – this effectiveness and essence of the film almost becomes an allegorical image of what Christianity is about. Might, strength and power can impress but it is the simple presence of Christ that trumps all of these in the end.



Make Way For Tomorrow & The Awful Truth (1937)

In the year 1937, Leo McCarey directed two films. One flopped and disappeared for seventy years. The other won him the Academy Award for Best Director. When receiving the Oscar, he said “Thanks but you’ve given it to me for the wrong film...”

This double-header was a chance to see both films together and the cinema club audience unanimously agreed with McCarey; that while ‘The Awful Truth’ may be an entertaining comedy, it is ‘Make Way For Tomorrow’ that is the masterpiece! A film about an elderly couple was never destined to do well at the box office, however, its power should not be underestimated, because by the time the last frame melts away, don’t be surprised if you feel like your heart has



just been wrenched out of your body. It is a traumatic film, and yet a rich one, with vivid characters, pulsating with honest beauty. The film holds up a mirror to all those watching it where, although we may feel disgust at the behaviour of the grown-up children of the couple, we also feel discomfort at the fact that we understand the children and even may identify with them. The film challenges us in a way that demands a response. It is a difficult challenge, one that most would prefer to ignore, but one that invites us to look into ourselves and what we believe in to hazard

an answer. Yes, it is a powerful film...

The Awful Truth appears like fluff after such an experience, but remember, this fluff won McCarey THE Academy Award. And it is rather impressive that a screwball comedy could affirm marriage through its depiction of the lead characters’ ‘divorce’.

Witty, elegant, romantic, and funny, this seems the perfect definition for what “comedy” should be.

Leo McCarey was a practising Catholic who would later give us films like “Going My Way” and “An

Affair to Remember,” but in these two films of 1937, we already see a master at telling great stories, be they comedy or tragedy, yet in both the ability to reflect themes crucial to building a culture of life.



“It is a traumatic film, and yet a rich one, with vivid characters, pulsating with honest beauty.”

Paths of Glory (1957)



A war film that gives us one of the strongest anti war sentiments ever. If war is Hell, then we see true evil at work in the corruption of those in power and in a system that treats the human person as a mere object, as means to

the greater end of victory. It is a film that is truly shocking in its depiction of moral bankruptcy and the persecution of the powerless. Grandly crafted, its technique serves to create a bold vision and

captivating story, and then fills the frame with incredible performances from all the actors. A film that has no women until the last scene possibly speaks the loudest about the power of the female genius and its necessity in bringing man back to humanity. The spellbinding and rather strange finale offers an exploited woman as a figure of hope and a reminder of the higher nature that mankind is called to, and all too often forgets.



To Be Or Not To Be (1942)

“Hath not a Jew eyes? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die?”

With its outrageous humour, clever storytelling, finely balanced performances and permeated with the famous ‘Lubitsch touch,’ this film transcends being a comedy, but reflects a deeper and grander purpose: the use of comedy as a weapon. We see the interaction between art and reality, its power to save a culture and the humanity it brings to people. It is hard to imagine that this film was released very early in the war, and with the outcome still unknown, was not only a rallying cry, but a defiant kick to Nazi shins and a timely reminder of the human spirit triumphant through laughter. The film depicts a Polish theatre troupe, whose beloved Warsaw is bombed and occupied by the Nazis. With their theatre closed indefinitely, they find a greater mission in using all their artistic skills to rescue one of their own and escape with their lives. It is interesting to note that at the same time and place that this film was set, Karol Wojtyla, who would one day become Pope John

Paul II, was in the midst of gathering with other actors in secret to perform Polish plays as an act of cultural resistance. ‘To Be or Not To Be’ takes the very same concept of cultural resistance and furthers it, such that we see actors using their acting skills and theatricality to save their lives, and making us laugh in the process. In the midst of this comedy we also see the destruction of war and the

simple heroic acts of each individual, like that of the Jewish actor whose dream to play the character of Shylock comes true. His opportunity comes when he is captured by the Nazis and he speaks the famous words, “Hath not a Jew eyes? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die?” Art reflects truth, and in holding up the truth, becomes a form of resistance – no matter how funny that resistance happens to be.



Diabolique (1955)

A French horror film that still packs a wallop in entertainment, style and performance... It is a study of human evil and its all too real spiritual effects. Who the 'devils' of the title actually are, is debatable, but what we witness is an evil plotting that outdoes itself in psychological malevolence. The Director cleverly subverts Catholic imagery to create what is anti-Catholic, in other words, a parody



of the good. Water, thus, has great significance in this film, but from the opening shot, it is water that is dirty, murky, and unclear. Evil is made present in different levels and to different degrees within the characters but we only realise the full extent of it at the climax of the film. Along the way we are thrilled, captivated, horrified – and finally, grateful to have had the experience and even more grateful that we can leave it behind.

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Next Film: 21 February 2015

The Apartment (1960)

The 'Best Picture' winner of 1960 and a masterpiece that transcends the 'romantic comedy' genre, "The Apartment" is one of the best examples of near-perfect movie making. The film offers a perfect blending of comedy, drama and sharp insight into the sexual politics and ultimate dehumanization of the human person in the corporate world.



C.C. Baxter works for Consolidated Insurance, on the 19th floor, Section W, desk 861. He is just another clog in the wheel, a 'nobody' in a sea of 'nobodies,' except for the fact that he understands the potential of owning an apartment...

WEBSITE COMING
SOON

The Recordatio Cinema Club

Co-hosted by the Fraternas, we aim to screen some of the best films of the past, films that are in danger of being forgotten, **films that ought to be remembered and preserved in the living memory of our generation** so that they can make a difference in the culture of today and transform the world of tomorrow.

Following each film is a discussion and critique of the film, so that all can share their experience and have a fruitful "**encounter**" that can opens our eyes to something new.

Recordatio, Latin for recollection, memory or to recall, this word best describes what this cinema club hopes to achieve, bringing films from the past into the present, so that they may continue to transform and lead us into the future.

If you would like to start your own Recordatio group, or join our email list,
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(Website Coming Soon)