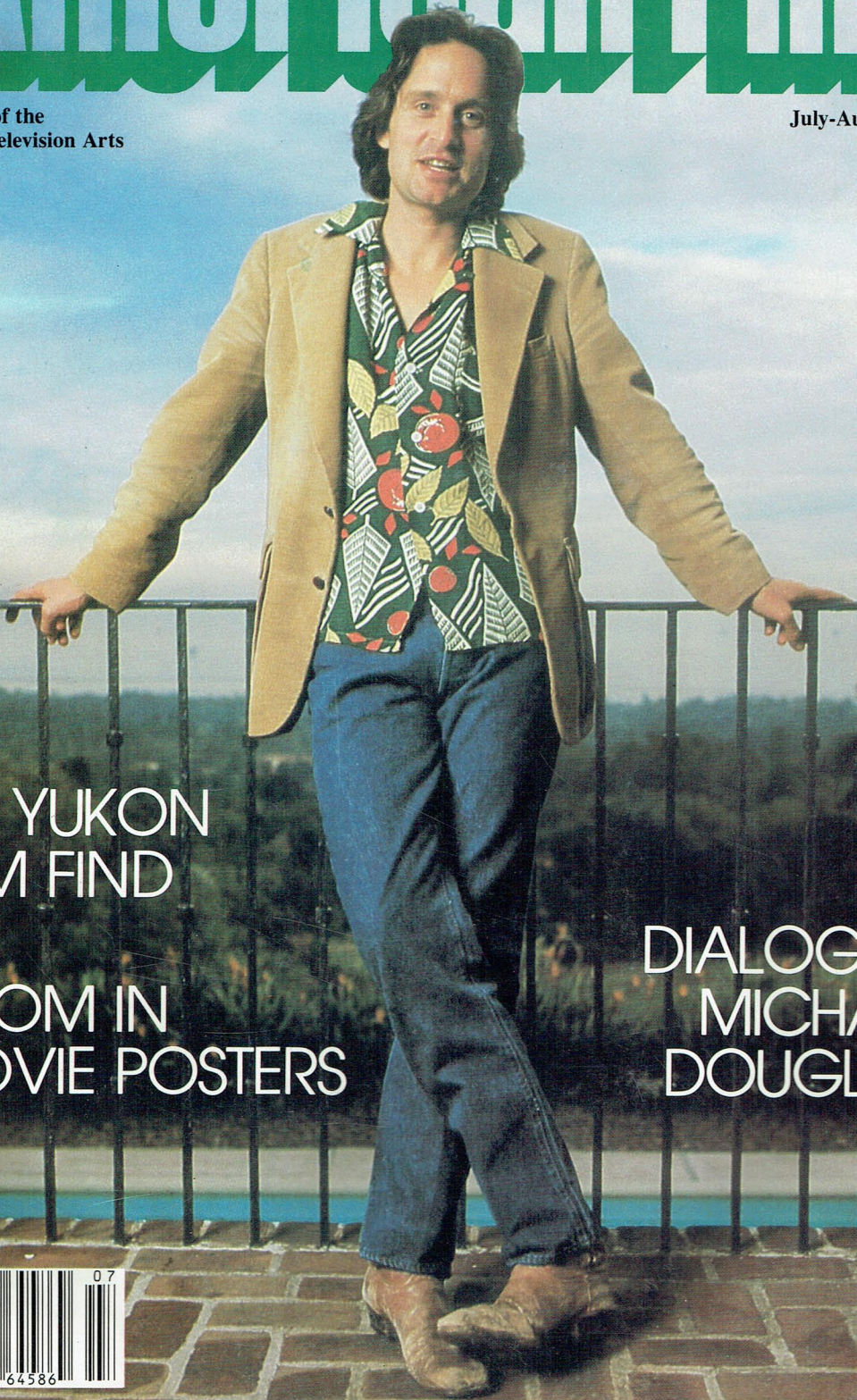




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THE BIRTH OF
*C*HILDREN OF
*P*ARADISE

EDWARD BARON TURK

Marcel Carné's grandly romantic work has been honored as the greatest sound film made in France. How it was made—during the darkest days of the Nazi occupation—is an eloquent story of talent, courage, and Gallic perseverance.



Above, Marcel Carné, director of Children of Paradise. Opposite, the mime Baptiste (Jean-Louis Barrault) in performance with the demimonde beauty Garance (Arletty).

In the forest of Compiègne on June 22, 1940, France signed an armistice with Germany that shook the imagination of the entire world. The demise of the Third Republic, the spectacular collapse of France as a fighting force, and its unconditional acceptance of Hitler's ignominious terms for a truce seemed like a perversion of history. The nation that had best stood for the embodiment of Western civilization had fallen.

With the northern sector of France under German occupation, Marshal Pétain's Vichy government sought to survive enemy occupation of the southern zone—at least until 1942—through active collaboration with the German New Order. Despite its goal of national regeneration via the basic values of *travail, famille, et patrie*, Vichy's police assisted the German police, and Vichy's administration and courts progressively adapted to the demands of the occupiers. All of France became a police state as well as an occupied country.

The Nazis were especially sharp-eyed concerning the French film industry. Joseph Goebbels immediately flooded the market with mediocre comedies, insipid period pieces, and uninspired detective stories made in Germany. But he also invested German capital in French production, distribution, and exhibition. Two hundred twenty films were made in France during the four years of occupation. But because all scripts required the approval of both the German *Propaganda-staffel* and the Vichy censors, the golden age of French realism that flourished vigorously in the thirties was brought to a halt. Under Goebbels's tutelage only innocuous escapist entertainment was regarded as a suitable replacement for the now banned productions of Hollywood and Great Britain.

The picture was bleak. The prospect of France's reasserting its international position as an unassailable creative force in film seemed as inconceivable as the hope that Charles de Gaulle might engineer the Free French movement from London. History was to prove, however, that both were possible.



On a January evening in 1943, France's most renowned director-scriptwriter team was strolling along the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. By a coincidence that would prove to be as momentous as the fateful encounters of characters in their films, Marcel Carné and Jacques Prévert ran into their old friend Jean-Louis Barrault. Little did they know that this fortuitous meeting was about to trigger a chain of events that would culminate in *Les Enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*), the movie which the French Academy of Cinema Arts and Techniques designated this year as "the best film in the history of talking pictures in France."

Barrault had not worked with Carné and Prévert since his role as the tenderhearted assassin in their 1937 comedy *Drôle de drame*. The three men seized this unexpected reunion to catch up on news and gossip while sipping aperitifs at a café on the promenade. Barrault, as usual, entertained the others with colorful anecdotes about theater life. One story was about the famous nineteenth-century Parisian mime Jean-Baptiste Gaspard Deburau. Walking one day with his sweetheart in the popular theater district known as the "Boulevard du Crime," Deburau was approached by a drunken rogue who repeatedly insulted his companion. Deburau attempted to contain his anger, but finally

Children of Paradise is a film about seeing and being seen in a world where the common distinctions between street life and theater, audience and actor, reality and illusion crumble.

could no longer tolerate the abuse. He brandished his walking stick and hit the drunk on the head so violently that he fell dead. More remarkable than this event, however, was its aftermath. For all of Paris tried to gain entrance to the murder trial in order to hear—for the very first time—their great mime speak.

On hearing the story, Carné and Prévert vibrated with enthusiasm. After completing their medieval morality tale *Les Visiteurs du soir* the year before, they had hoped their next project would be a new adaptation of *Nana*. But producer André Paulvé had failed to acquire the rights to Emile Zola's story of profitable vice during the Second Empire. Since it was no longer feasible in German-occupied France to treat freely the contemporary themes that had characterized much of their prewar production, Carné and Prévert had been on edge for months while a suitable idea for a new film kept eluding them.

The Deburau story roused new hope. The subject had already proved successful in a 1918 play by Sacha Guitry. But as with every stage in the two-year making

of *Children of Paradise*, a formidable snag was struck even at the point of conception. For if Barrault were to play Deburau, the full impact of the ending—the mime talks!—would be lost on an audience already familiar with the voice of France's leading man of the theater. If, on the other hand, an unknown were cast in the role, would the public patiently await the film's end simply to hear this actor speak?

Prévert was discouraged. Carné agreed that they might have to abandon the original anecdote. But he was intoxicated by the idea of re-creating on film the acrobatics, sideshows, vaudevilles, and melodramas that were performed along the crowded Boulevard du Crime during the monarchy of Louis Philippe. While Prévert remained on the Riviera to conjure up a new story, the more impetuous Carné rushed to the Musée Carnavalet in Paris. He dug deep into its superb collection of etchings, costumes, and curios that trace the capital's history. What he discovered surpassed his fondest expectations. He had found all the raw material from which to fashion the lavish, teeming street life that inundates the screen in the breathtaking opening sequence of *Children of Paradise*.

Upon his return to the coast, Carné learned that his scriptwriter, too, had been unable to keep from mulling over Barrault's idea. Prévert had even begun to research other historical figures of the period, such as the great romantic actor Frédéric Lemaître and the notorious dandy assassin Lacenaire. Determined to sustain this long-awaited pitch of excitement, Carné moved into Prévert's farmhouse at Tourette-sur-Loup, near Nice, where they worked assiduously on the screenplay for six months.

From the outset the filmmakers sensed that the length of their film would exceed conventional standards. Bent on amplifying the plot convention of their earlier serious works (*Jenny*, *Port of Shadows*, *Le Jour se lève*), in which the separate lives of individuals suddenly become inextricably joined, they sought a cinematic equivalent to the narrative shape, fullness of scope, and profusion of detail found in the monumental novels of Balzac and Eugène Sue. But they also wanted to depict each of their performer-protagonists in the very act of displaying his talent. The true originality of *Children of Paradise* would lie in its treating the usual Carné-Prévert themes of bitter love, morality, and fate within the framework of art—art as the object of supreme love, art as supreme destiny.

The original title of Prévert's script was "Funambules." Much of the film does, in fact, deal with the Théâtre des Funambules, the home of acrobats and tightrope walkers, as well as the showplace for Deburau's new brand of pantomime. The movie's very first image of a funambulist going his perilous way on a tightrope pointedly condenses the film's primary message of life as a risky adventure played out along a tenuous wire of destiny. But by focusing attention primarily on the performer, the title "Funambules" fails to convey the fusion of the two essential presences of performer and spectator that encompasses every component of the film. *Children of Paradise* was conceived as a film spectaculaire in the fullest sense of the term. It is a film about seeing and being seen in a world where



On Paris's infamous *Boulevard du Crime*, Garance is accused of picking a man's pocket. Her eventual rescue by Baptiste leads to their romance.

the common distinctions between street life and theater, audience and actor, reality and illusion crumble as each crosses over and feeds upon the other, each finding itself reflected in the other.

Remarkably similar to what takes place in the film were the preproduction activities at Tourette-sur-Loup. Much ink has been spilled in determining the true auteur of *Children of Paradise*. But, in fact, the elaboration of Prévert's scenario and Carné's shooting script were not at all independent activities, with one occurring prior to the other. As Prévert would write, Carné would comment, and an exchange of ideas imbued each man with the perceptions of the other.

The collaboration was heightened by the constant presence at the farmhouse of a third long-standing co-worker, designer Alexandre Trauner. In December 1940, the Vichy government created the Comité d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique (COIC) to reconstruct the French film industry "on a rational and solid basis." This meant, above all, the elimination of Jews, who "polluted" the industry. Trauner, a Hungarian-born Jew, was to serve as the film's art director, designing both sets and costumes. But since he could work only clandestinely, fronts had to be found. Fortunately, this was a period of selfless devotion to the industry. Without hesitation, Léon Barsacq, the renowned set designer responsible for Renoir's *La Marseillaise*, volunteered his name and

services to help his friend Trauner. Likewise, painter Antoine Mayo (who himself later became one of France's leading art directors through such films as *Gates of the Night* and Jacques Becker's *Casque d'or*) was chosen to be credited with the film's costumes—he did, in fact, execute Trauner's designs.

An ideal cast of actors was agreed upon early enough to tailor the script to their talents and personalities. The film would bring together some of the most seasoned luminaries of the stage and screen, including Arletty, Barrault, Pierre Brasseur, Louis Salou, and Marcel Herrand. The sole newcomer was Spanish-born Maria Casarès. Absolute stage fright accounts for the jumpiness of manner and vocal flutter which she brought to her screen debut as Nathalie, the self-effacing yet obstinate wife who wrecks her husband's chance for happiness. At first her quirkiness on the set was viewed as a possible liability for the entire production. But as with Nora Gregor's Christine in Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*, the director managed to have the actress's insecurity contribute to the emotional power of the part. Casarès would build upon this stratagem in her subsequent roles in *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*, *Orpheus*, and *Testament of Orpheus*.

Casting was more genuinely imperiled by the state of affairs surrounding Barrault. The Comédie Française had already signed him to direct Paul Claudel's *Le Soutier de satin* in a new, shortened version with music by Honegger. The director of the Comédie was no

friend of the cinema, and he did his best to prevent arrangements for a mutually agreeable work schedule. Carné seriously flirted with the idea of offering the role to Jacques Tati, who at this point in his brilliant career was associated more with satiric music hall mimes than with the film world. One's mind whirls in trying to imagine just how much the role of Baptiste would have been altered if played by Tati. It is also tantalizing to envision the impact such a performance might have had on the subsequent film career of the director and star of *Mr. Hulot's Holiday*.

The Barrault contract was finally settled, and today one can only reiterate James Agee's opinion that Barrault's Baptiste remains the only screen depiction of an artist that is fully convincing of the genius he was supposed to have. By executing the finest mime work ever filmed, Barrault confirmed that, like his idol Debureau, he could be as successful with mass audiences as with critics and sophisticated connoisseurs. This becomes all the more moving in light of the fact that Baptiste's cantankerous father, Anselme, is portrayed by the great French actor Etienne Decroux. Like Debureau in the nineteenth century, Decroux was single-handedly responsible for this century's revival of pantomime. His two most notable pupils were Jean-Louis Barrault and Marcel Marceau.

Filming began on August 16, 1943. The original shooting plan called for three clearly defined stages. The outdoor Boulevard du Crime sequences and most of the interior sequences would be shot, in that order, at La Victorine studios in Nice. Certain additional scenes would be shot, near the end of production, in the Paris studios of Joinville and Francoeur. Minor delays in the completion of the elaborate exterior set, however, caused filming to begin with some of the indoor scenes. Shortly thereafter, Trauner's boulevard was ready, and the crew reverted to its original schedule. But after only three days' shooting, the entire production was called to a halt. The successful invasion of Sicily by American troops in July and August had so alarmed the Vichy government that it ordered cast, crew, and equipment back to Paris indefinitely.

Director Carné worked feverishly to obtain permission from Paul-Louis Galey, the head of COIC, to shoot just one week longer—the time needed to complete the opening street sequence. His effort proved futile. But this setback was minor compared with what happened several days later. Because of a few drops of Jewish blood discovered among his lineage, producer André Paulvé was sentenced by the Nazis to professional inactivity. In all likelihood, this was the work of Alfred Greven, the Paris representative of Goebbels's propaganda ministry and director of the Nazi-controlled production company Continentale Films. Greven was determined to control the best of French film production. He had already signed directors Henri Decoin, Christian-Jaque, André Cayatte, and Henri-Georges Clouzot to Continentale. The huge success of Paulvé's *Les Visiteurs du soir* had infuriated him. Purgings the producer was essentially a belated expression of Greven's vindictiveness.

Unknown to anyone at the time, the film's production manager was also an important Resistance leader. One day, after learning about "official" inquiries about him, he fled the studio, never to return.

For two months *Children of Paradise* seemed doomed. But after some very complicated negotiations, Pathé agreed to take over the production. Shooting resumed in Paris on November 9 and was to last for a year. Because of contract extensions, added insurance costs, and indemnification penalties for unused studios, the politically caused hiatus added at least ten million francs to a production budget that would eventually reach the unprecedented figure of fifty-eight million francs. But much more imposing than the financial toll were the human dramas among cast and crew precipitated by political events.

Conspicuously absent from the reassembly of the company in November was Robert Le Vigan. Le Vigan is best remembered today for his poignant portrayals of the morbid painter in *Port of Shadows* and of Goupi Tonkin in Becker's *Goupi mains rouges*. He had been cast in *Children of Paradise* as Jéricho, the shifty old clothes man who functions as a Prévertian figure of destiny, lurking at every twist of the film's plot. With the American invasion of Sicily, Le Vigan—who had repeatedly voiced in public his anti-Semitism and his complete support for the Vichy government—fled to Sigmaringen in Germany. He was later sentenced by default for collaboration with the enemy. Fortunately, only one of his scenes had been shot. Without undue difficulty, he was replaced by the distinguished stage and screen actor Pierre Renoir, the brother of Jean Renoir.

The first draft of Jacques Prévert's scenario called for Baptiste, at the film's frenetic close, to kill Jéricho, just as Pierrot kills Jéricho's look-alike in the onstage pantomime *'Chand d'habits*. Such an ending would have brought the film very close to Barrault's original anecdote. More directly, it would have affirmed that deceit and evil are not an inevitable part of the order of things, but can be destroyed by the forces of goodness. Had this ending been filmed and had the collaborator Le Vigan remained with the production, *Children of Paradise* would have acquired with hindsight an allegorical meaning very similar to that often ascribed to *Les Visiteurs du soir*.

In the latter film the devil (Jules Berry) attempts to destroy the pure love of Gilles and Anne by metamorphosing them into a joint stone statue. To his distress and anger, the lovers successfully resist complete ruin as their unpetrified hearts continue to beat in unison. Many have interpreted this as an eloquent image of captive France herself, mustering the internal, collec-



Arletty embodied the disenchanted courtesan of the period. Here, she is seen as the mistress of a wealthy count (*Louis Salou*).

In *Jean-Louis Barrault*, the film found the perfect combination of great actor and great mime.



Museum of Modern Art/Film Still

tive strength necessary to withstand Hitler's frenzied diabolism.

Numerous real-life "envoys of the devil" managed to infiltrate the Paris sets of *Children of Paradise*. Whenever extras were required, a handful of German officials accompanied by uniformed soldiers would appear to make certain that a specified percentage of those hired belonged to union locals known to be pro-Nazi. Despite the threat of denunciation, the casting office often deceived the Nazis by establishing phony personnel lists. When accused of tampering, Carné would intercede with trumped-up aesthetic justifications to explain why such and such a scene called for such and such a face or build—which, invariably, he simply could not find among the pool of known sympathizers.

Much less droll, however, was the reality of crew members being hunted down by gestapo agents. This was the case with the film's original production manager, who, unknown to anyone at the time, was also an important Resistance leader. One day, after learning of "official" inquiries about him in the front office, he precipitately fled the studio through a rear costume room. He never returned.

As shooting continued in Paris, a hurricane swept across the Riviera and seriously damaged the Boulevard du Crime set. Not since Lazare Meerson's reconstruction of village life in seventeenth-century Flanders for Jacques Feyder's *Carnival in Flanders* (1935) had such an enormous set been built for a French film. It was erected on the lot adjacent to La Victorine studios that had been the site of the gleaming white castle in *Les Visiteurs du soir*. But because this lot sloped, eight hundred cubic meters of earth had to be dug and redistributed before labor could begin. Thirty-five tons of scaffolding, three hundred fifty tons of plaster, and five hundred square meters of glass were needed for the nearly fifty theater and building facades. During a three-month period, an estimated 67,500 man-hours were devoted to the construction of this boulevard. The eight hundred thousand francs required to repair the autumn hurricane damage brought the total cost to a staggering five million francs.

Carné had planned to shoot several night sequences with the entire Boulevard du Crime set brightly lighted. But in this time of strict curfew, and well before day-for-night filter techniques became common practice among French cinematographers, special permission had to be granted by the German authorities. Once again, the request was denied. Most of these scenes had to be sacrificed. But two were deemed essential to the film: the one in which Baptiste arrives at the entrance to the Grand Théâtre while Lemaître's *Othello* is in progress, and the earlier scene in which Baptiste and Lemaître stop to drink at a squalid little stall on a dark street adjoining the boulevard. These had to be shot months later at a Paris studio in which illuminated, scaled-down models of Trauner's boulevard facades were mounted.

The complete boulevard set was put to its most superb use in the film's closing carnival sequence, undoubtedly one of the most lyrically eloquent in film history. The scores of swirling white-faced merry-mak-

ers who obstruct Baptiste's attempt to reach his fleeing mistress are a powerful embodiment of the mime's internal state of spiritual and emotional alienation. As the entire universe seems to turn into one overflowing spectacle, the film's all-the-world-is-a-stage theme attains nothing less than paroxysmic heights.

The high-angle long shots in this sequence, necessitating more than eighteen hundred costumed extras, were scheduled to be filmed in one day. Assistant director Pierre Blondy had instructions to arrange the extras so that the tallest would always be in the foreground and the smaller ones (including many children) in the background. This would heighten the sense of perspective and would reinforce the illusion of depth and distance already built into Trauner's sets. The very first rehearsal, however, revealed that the dancing masquers unconsciously tended to bunch together toward the rear of the frame, leaving too much empty space in the front.

Carné's first impulse was to hire an additional eighteen hundred extras. This would have been in keeping with his reputation, acquired while shooting *Les Visiteurs*, as the most extravagant and excessive filmmaker France had ever produced. After a moment's reflection, however, Carné hit upon a more practical, if highly unorthodox, solution. He gave an order for every wicker basket that could be found at La Victorine studios to be transported immediately to the set. He then had each one placed at a strategic point along the boulevard. Thus was established a veritable obstacle course that, while remaining invisible to the camera, successfully prevented the actors from crowding together.

Shooting at Nice ended just days before the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944. Several more weeks of filming were still left to be done in Paris, and a shortage of available construction workers occasioned some delay. But now, contrary to custom, Carné took delight in any incident that might serve as a pretext for slowing down production. For as soon as he had learned of the landing of the Allies, his most ardent wish was that *Children of Paradise* would become the first film to be released in a fully liberated France. The inevitable electric power failures, transportation delays, and hard-to-acquire sound effects all served his purpose admirably. But the serious work of editing, synchronizing, mixing, and final cutting for a film that would run three and a quarter hours required a sizable amount of very legitimate time and effort.

By mid-January 1945 the film was completed. Three duplicate finished negatives were reportedly placed in disguised containers and hidden: one in the vaults of the Bank of France, another in Pathé's safe, and a third in the cellar of a villa in the south of France.

On March 9, with France fully liberated, a gala preview took place at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. A half hour before the film's end, many invited guests hurriedly walked out of the auditorium. For a moment the joint hearts of Carné and Prévert—less confident than those of their protagonists in *Les Visiteurs du soir*—ceased to beat. But they soon realized that the cause of this exodus was not their

film. Taxis, private cars, and gasoline reserves were still very scant in newly liberated Paris. Many of the distinguished, elegantly dressed spectators were simply running off to catch the last metro home.

The film's unprecedented length was a genuine problem for Gaumont, the distributor. Gaumont revived an idea which André Paulvé had proposed at the production's outset—that the film be exhibited in Paris in two parcels, with part one, "Le Boulevard du Crime," playing at the Madeleine-Cinéma and part two, "L'Homme blanc," at the Colisée. Carné and executive producer Raymond Borderie objected vehemently, insisting that *Children of Paradise* be shown in its entirety and without intermission in both movie houses. They concurred that even with continuous showings and omission of the customary prefeature newsreels, there could be no more than three screenings per day, instead of the usual four or five. To compensate for the potential loss of receipts from a film made on a budget of fifty-eight million francs or, at the time, one and a quarter million dollars (five times that of the average French production), they advocated a novel scheme.

Since the film's length was the equivalent of two ordinary features, the public ought not object to paying a higher than ordinary entrance fee: The usual forty-franc price would be doubled to eighty. And because the entertainment offerings in Paris were still very slim and, consequently, spectators were often forced to stand in line for nearly two hours only to be told that there were no seats left, each evening's screening would be run on an advance-booking, reserved-seat basis. Any losses resulting from the doubled price of tickets would surely be offset, reasoned Carné and Borderie, by gains from the assurance of seating at an evening performance.

Gaumont accepted this strategy, though reluctantly. The distributor's apprehensions were readily put to rest: *Children of Paradise* opened on March 15 and played for fifty-four consecutive weeks at the Madeleine-Cinéma alone. Combined receipts from the Colisée and the Madeleine totaled more than forty-one million francs.

After its release in France, *Children of Paradise* went on to enjoy international acclaim. Sir Alexander Korda bought the rights for distribution in English-speaking countries from Pathé at the rather low cost of twenty-five million francs. The film was not released in the United States until December 1946, and only after it had been cut, first to 161 minutes, and then to 144. The complete 195-minute version was not shown commercially in American theaters until 1963.

The decision to cut the film for American consumption contradicted a prime component of the publicity that accompanied the film's U.S. release. Following the lead of Parisian exhibitors, who hoped to lure homesick GIs to the box office, American advertisers often dubbed *Children of Paradise* "the French *Gone With the Wind*." This was not pure merchandising hype, since both films lavishly re-create a hefty slice of nineteenth-century life; both present a superlative cast of actors, many of whom gave the most memorable performances of their careers; and both share the common plot of one woman's emotional entanglement with four

very different men. The two movies also require of their viewers a considerable weakness for romanticism. But while that most beloved of American classics irresistibly sweeps us away through an appeal to nostalgic sentiment, *Children of Paradise* affects both the heart and the mind. For in addition to being a romantic movie, the French film is also a delicate poetic treatment of the relations of art and life.

Gone With the Wind (1939) was the blockbuster culmination of an extraordinary era of intense American film production. But *Children of Paradise* brought to a close a troubled period in which the French film industry had reached its lowest ebb. By the time of the occupation, France's leading directors had all fled the country: René Clair, Julien Duvivier, and Jean Renoir to Hollywood; Jacques Feyder to Switzerland. Of all the prewar luminaries, Carné alone remained to demonstrate to the Nazis and the rest of the world that French culture was not in total bondage to the enemy.

It is therefore ironic that despite the nearly universal acclaim immediately bestowed upon *Children of Paradise*, the reputation of its director suffered at the hands of a number of his peers. With the liberation, the COIC was replaced by the formerly clandestine Comité de Libération du Cinéma Français. Working closely with the many *commissions d'épuration*, the Comité sought to purge the industry of collaborators. Its most publicized activity was the blacklisting of many of those who had worked for Greven's Continentale Films. Al-

The audience in Children of Paradise. The highest and least expensive seats in theaters were known as le paradis.



though Carné had been coerced into signing a contract with the Nazi company in 1941, he managed after only a few days to break it and never produced a single film frame for Continentale. Thus, it had to be for other reasons that Comité president Pierre Blanchar coolly rebuffed Carné's offer in the summer of 1945 to join fellow filmmakers in shooting documentaries on the liberation of France.

In all likelihood, the Comité tacitly reproached Carné, first, for having made two occupation films with an actress—Arletty—whom many Frenchmen could not forgive for having had a relationship with a German officer; and second, for having achieved, despite the odds and to the envy of many a filmmaker, two successes as crowningly original as *Les Visiteurs du soir* and *Children of Paradise*.

These short-lived, politicized grumbings must not obscure the sense of the full impact exerted by *Children of Paradise* on the French public as a whole. A testimony to the perseverance, tenacity, and endurance of the artists and craftsmen who composed the French film industry, *Children of Paradise* also proclaimed an overwhelming victory for the French nation on the cultural front. All those who had experienced the outrage, humiliation, and despair of the occupation could perceive in it the infallible sign of assurance that French civilization would reestablish its position of prestige and leadership in the world.

The special César awarded this year to Carné and *Children of Paradise* pays tribute to the combination of moral courage and artistic vision that sustained a project of unparalleled scope and intricacy through an equally unparalleled period of political events. It honors a cinematic masterpiece that, despite the evolution of taste and values, does not cease to evoke pleasure and wonder. Undeniably, there is something old-fashioned about *Children of Paradise*. It achieves its beauty and power through restrained compositional decorum and a striving for stylistic perfection within existing conventions. Its unobtrusive editing and its rarely mobile camera make it nearly impervious to most of our post-New Wave notions of what cinematic greatness "ought" to be. But for all its apparent naiveté, the film is exhilarating proof that simple style and sublime effect can coexist in great motion picture art.

Le paradis was the nineteenth-century slang term for the highest and least expensive seats in the house. Its occupants were the simple, ordinary people of Paris, and its "children" were the actors whom the spectators came to see on the stage. The Carné-Prévert film brilliantly reveals that what actors seek to reinstate through their art is precisely what the common people in the galleries have never lost: emotional intensity, spiritual vibrancy, and gracelike wholeness. *Children of Paradise* first asserted this potential for collective wholeness at a time when the French populace sorely needed it. A good part of the film's enduring magic stems from its power to continue to do the same for us today everywhere. ■

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