

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
January 1995

MARCEL PAGNOL

February 10 - 28, 1995

The Museum of Modern Art presents a comprehensive retrospective of the work of French writer, producer, and director Marcel Pagnol (1895-1974) on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth. On view from February 10 to 28, 1995, **MARCEL PAGNOL** features fifteen films created by an audacious filmmaker, who embraced the advent of sound in motion pictures.

MARCEL PAGNOL spans the Provençal filmmaker's twenty-year career, beginning with the first film he directed, *Le Gendre de Monsieur Poirier* (*The Son-in-Law of Mr. Poirier*, 1933); this film was considered lost until a subtitled nitrate print was located in the Museum's archive. A special feature of the exhibition is the acknowledged classic *The Fanny Trilogy*, including *Marius* (1931, directed by Alexander Korda), *Fanny* (1932, directed by Marc Allégret), and *César* (1933, directed by Marcel Pagnol). Additional highlights include *Regain* (*Harvest*, 1937) and *La femme du boulanger* (*The Baker's Wife*, 1938), as well as Pagnol's rarely screened comedy about competing restaurateurs, *Cigalon* (1935). Also shown are two film versions of Pagnol's immensely popular stage play, *Topaze*; one version from 1933, directed by Louis Gasnier with Louis Jouvet, and the other from 1951, directed by Pagnol with Fernandel.

Many filmmakers in the 1920s decried the coming of sound, fearing that dialogue would freeze the plasticity of the moving image. Pagnol, who enjoyed great success as a playwright in Paris at that time, saw the silent

cinema as little more than a record of pantomime, a medium with little expressive power in itself. He believed that the addition of spoken language, with all its nuances, would transform this limited means of expression into a major art form. So excited was Pagnol about theater "reborn," that within four years, the writer had become not only a prolific scenarist, but also a director and producer for whom such filmmakers as Jean Renoir worked. Pagnol went on to build his own film studio just outside of Marseilles and, in 1932, began his own magazine *Les Cahiers du Film* to expound his theories of "cinématurgie."

With his innovative use of location shooting, Pagnol influenced a generation of neo-realists, such as Roberto Rossellini. In *Angèle* (1934), considered by some to be Pagnol's finest work, the landscape of Provence is a key figure, equal to cast; and, in all of Pagnol's films, the cast is remarkable. The roster of actors includes Fernand Charpin, Josette Day, Orane Demazis, Fernandel, Pierre Fresnay, and Raimu, who infuse his films with gestures, tones, and glances that are virtually naturalistic.

MARCEL PAGNOL was organized by Laurence Kardish, Curator, Department of Film and Video, in conjunction with Nicole Jouve of Interama, New York, the Marcel Pagnol estate, and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, New York. The exhibition is supported by a grant from Société Générale.

* * *

For further information or film stills, contact Samantha Graham, Film Press Representative, Department of Public Information, 212-708-9752. No. 4