

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel: 212-708-9400 Cable: MODERNART Telex: 62370 MODART ENTRANCE at 18 W. 54
#58 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. PREMIERE OF VISCONTI'S EPIC LUDWIG
TO BE HELD AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART NOVEMBER 3

One of the most ambitious projects of the master filmmaker Luchino Visconti, his 1972 evocation of the life of the last King of Bavaria, will be seen for the first time in the United States in its full-length, Italian-language version when The Museum of Modern Art presents Ludwig on November 3. Two screenings--at 1:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.--will be held in the Museum's Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2.

Visconti's long-time collaborator Suso Cecchi d'Amico will introduce the 6:30 screening. One of the Italian cinema's most distinguished screenwriters, she collaborated with de Sica on The Bicycle Thief and Miracle in Milan, with Zeffirelli on The Taming of the Shrew, and with Visconti on such films as Rocco and His Brothers, Death in Venice, and The Leopard. Also noted as a translator for the theater, she first worked with Visconti on his stage productions of Hemingway's Fifth Column and Caldwell's Tobacco Road. The screenplay for Ludwig is by Luchino Visconti and Enrico Medioli in collaboration with Suso Cecchi d'Amico.

Of Visconti, Andrew Sarris has written that "He is the most dramatic, the most flamboyant, the most spectacular of all directors on his high level of taste and intellect. Indeed, he is probably the most grandly operatic director who ever lived." In the life of Ludwig of Bavaria, Visconti found a subject to match his talents. Crowned in 1864 at the age of twenty, Ludwig was an enigmatic, romantic youth who withdrew from his duties of state to build fairy-tale castles high in the mountains (which remained uninhabited) and to patronize a series of artists, including Richard Wagner (all of whom used him cynically). Ludwig stars Helmut Berger as the doomed monarch, with Romy Schneider as his cousin Elisabeth, Empress of Austria, and Trevor Howard as Richard Wagner.

Originally released in a three-hour, English-language version imposed on Visconti by his producers, Ludwig now has been restored to the director's original conception due to the persistence of his closest

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collaborators--primarily Suso Cecchi d'Amico and Visconti's editor, Ruggero Mastroianni--and through the interest of RAI (Radio-Televisione Italiana). The restored, 257-minute version of Ludwig premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 1980; in its first theatrical release in Paris in summer 1983, the film drew extraordinary popular and critical acclaim. Its U.S. premiere at MoMA follows on the Museum's recent New York premiere of the restored version of Visconti's The Leopard.

Ludwig features photography by Armando Nannuzzi, costumes by Piero Tosi, sets by Mario Chiari and Mario Scisci, and music by Wagner, Schumann, and Offenbach conducted by Franco Mannino. The film is being shown at MoMA through the courtesy of RAI (Radio-Televisione Italiana) and SACIS.

For further information, the public may call (212) 708-9500.

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For further PRESS information, please contact Stuart Klawans, Film Press
Representative, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York,
New York 10019 (212) 708-9752.

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