

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FINAL PROGRAM OF THURSDAY EVENING FILM SERIES ANNOUNCED

"The Crimson Curtain," directed by Alexandre Astruc, will be the feature of the final, previously unannounced, program of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library's special Thursday Evening Film Series, held for the benefit of the Film Preservation Fund, on Thursday, December 13. "The Crimson Curtain" has been made available to the Museum for this series through the courtesy of its American distributors, Mr. William L. Snyder and Rembrandt Films.

"The Crimson Curtain," starring Anouk Aimée and Jean Claude Pascal, won, among other European prizes, the Prix Louis Delluc, 1952, a special award by the Festival Jury at Cannes, 1952, and the 1953 Prix Femina du Cinema. Of it, "Genet" wrote in The New Yorker, "In Barbey d'Aurevilly's original, the strange uncommunicativeness of the family, including the untalkative daughter, furnishes part of the dramatic chill. The film version is a silent picture in that the characters never speak, nor even move their lips, the story being related, supposedly years later, by the voice of the officer. The lyric quality of the photography and of certain speechless scenes equals the horrifying beauty of the old German film classic, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari."

Writing of the film Richard Griffith, Curator of the Film Library, says:

It is appropriate and just that The Crimson Curtain should have won the prize founded in honor of Louis Delluc, the famous French critic and theorist whose career as a director was ended by his untimely death in 1923. Alexandre Astruc, too, began as a critic, and his first film reveals how deeply he has probed the possibilities of film art. As Astruc says of the film, ' The Crimson Curtain, by Barbey d'Aurevilly, is one of those penetrating and mysterious stories of which the fictional literature of the nineteenth century was so full. With 'The Turn of the Screw' by Henry James and the admirable 'Heart of Darkness' by Conrad, it is one of the most successful examples of the art of short story writing in which the plot curls into itself as if it does not want to divulge its secret to the reader....I constructed my film around a commentary in the text of which I endeavored to preserve the original tone. The picture and the speech ran parallel and never crossed paths.... The Crimson Curtain is a film without dialogue, recounted some years after the events take place by one of the leading characters. The story would lose its mystery and the halo which surrounds the written text if precise language and the immediate presence of conversation were grafted onto the monologue. This 'indirect' style is that of the short story, and it is this that I endeavored to preserve. Mid-way between the memory and the dream, between the confession and the plot, the dramatic adventure of Albertine, is brought to the spectator, tatters of a past forever buried, but ever present in the memory of this adolescent who for a whole night struggled with a corpse.'

The plot of The Crimson Curtain [continued Griffith] is, if not outré, at least exceptional to a point which might have been fatal to dramatic conviction. It is the great merit of this film that its tricky tale becomes steadily of less interest than the people in it. Calling on the spectator's own experiences and memories, Astruc builds an increasing human involvement in which the characters and their story seem less and less specifically French, more and more compellingly, universal and timeless. The Museum is grateful to Mr. Snyder for making possible this advance showing of a beautiful and compelling as well as accomplished film.

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The American version of "The Crimson Curtain" was adapted by Maurice Valency and is told by Fritz Weaver.

Also through the kindness of Mr. Snyder, the film accompanying "The Crimson Curtain" at the December 13 showing will be Albert Lamorisse's classic WHITE MANE, about whose youthful maker a French film critic once said, "Should Lamorisse, walking down some Champs-Elysees, meet Robert Flaherty, he would have the right to say 'Bonjour.!'"

For further information contact Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. Circle 5-8900.