

# UWM Union Theatre presents

## The 15th Annual Festival of Films in French

February 3-12, 2012

### In Memory of Dr. Sheldon Stone

All films are in French and other languages w/English subtitles.  
All films are **FREE** and open to the public!

The 14th Annual Festival of Films in French celebrates the diversity and global reach of French-language cinema. The twelve films, all Milwaukee Premieres, explore Canada's Far North, Quebec, Haiti, French Guiana, Tunis, Monaco, the French provinces, Paris, and more. The Festival opens with *Ce qu'il faut pour vivre*, the saga of an Inuit hunter lost in a Quebec sanatorium, a beautiful ode to human resilience. Migration, exile and return are themes of several films, from the documentary on novelist Dany Laferrière, who returns from Quebec to his native Haiti, to the struggles of a Kurdish teenager, an illegal alien, in France. The festival highlights strong films by women filmmakers Karin Albou, Josiane Balasko, and Ursula Meir exploring cultural differences, sexuality, family and the environment. There is plenty of comedy as well, from the children's classic *Petit Nicolas* to the sophisticated *Arnacoeur* (Heartbreaker) on Valentine's Day weekend. The festival includes Marcel l'Herbier's *L'Argent* (Money), a recently restored masterpiece of the silent film era on the very relevant theme of financial speculation, greed and corruption. Milwaukee audiences will also view for the first time a masterwork of the film noir, never released but recently reconstituted, Clouzot's *Inferno*.

In addition to the 12 films, Union Programming is screening pre-and-post festival French-language films: *Heartbeats*, to be presented by the Milwaukee LGBT Film/Video Festival, and an evening with French filmmaker Rose Lowder.

This program is made possible with the generous support of French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Centre National de la Cinématographie, the Grand Marnier Foundation, the Florence Gould Foundation, and highbrow entertainment for the *Tournées Festival* films, the French Consulate in Chicago, the Québec Government Office in Chicago, and Dr. Richard Stone. We are also grateful to many UWM co-sponsors: Union Programming, the Center for International Education (CIE), the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS), Middle East and North African Studies Certificate program, LGBT Film and Video Festival, the Jewish Studies Program, the Women's Studies Program, the Cinema and Media Studies Program, the Film Department, the Department of French, Italian, and Comparative Literature, the MA in Language, Literature and Translation, with community co-sponsorship from SWAAF (Southeast Wisconsin Academic Alliance in French) and the Alliance Française of Milwaukee.



College of Letters & Science

## Ce qu'il faut pour vivre (Inuujuutiksaq) (Necessities of Life)

Special Grand Prize of Jury of the Montreal World Film Festival

Friday, February 4, 7PM

Sunday, February 6, 5PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** During the 1950s-era tuberculosis epidemic in Canada's Far North, Inuit hunter Tiivii (played by Natar Ungalaaq, Best Actor, 29th Genii awards) is taken to a sanatorium in Quebec City. Uprooted and faced with a completely alien world, he finds himself unable to communicate with anyone. Tiivii finally gets a little help from a nurse who has a sick Inuit orphan transferred to the hospital.

The boy acts as a translator and cultural ambassador, but also gives Tiivii a reason to get better: he hopes to adopt the boy and bring him into his Inuit family. Avoiding sentimentality and ideology, documentary director Pilon lets the performances do the work, and the results are moving.

Co-sponsored by the Québec Government Office in Chicago

Benoît Pilon, Québec, 35mm, 102min, 2008



## Le chant des mariées (The Wedding Song)

Friday, February 4, 9PM

Saturday, February 5, 7PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** Set in Nazi-occupied Tunis in 1942, *The Wedding Song* focuses on the friendship between teenagers Nour, a devout Muslim celebrating her engagement to Khaled, and her neighbor Myriam, a secular Jew forced into an arranged marriage to a wealthy older man. Hired as an

informer by the Nazis in order to gain financial stability, Khaled will soon threaten to destroy the bonds between the two heroines. *The Wedding Song* plays close attention to the social and cultural spaces women carved out for themselves in restrictive societies, like the *hammam* spas.

*The "Wedding Song," a seductively fluid and tactile drama from the writer and director Karin Albou, explores love and identity through the prism of the female body and the rights of its owner... Filmed with subtle eroticism and dreamy intimacy, the girls' bond becomes a compelling love story.* Jeanette Catsoulis, *The New York Times*

Presented as part of The Tournées Festival.

Co-sponsored by CIE, the Jewish Studies Program, Middle East and North African Studies Certificate program, and the Women's Studies Program .

Karin Albou, France, 35mm, 100 min, 2007



## **L'épine dans le coeur (A Thorn in the Heart)**

Saturday, February 5, 5PM

Sunday, February 13, 3PM

### **MILWAUKEE PREMIERE**

**Synopsis:** Best known for stories of whimsical dreamers desperate for love, like *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) Michel Gondry captures his most compelling protagonist yet in *The Thorn in the Heart*, a wonderfully affectionate documentary about his aunt Suzette. This

kind, resilient matriarch worked as a schoolteacher in rural villages in France from 1952 to 1986; Gondry films his beloved relative reuniting with former colleagues and students, including a repatriated Franco-Algerian Muslim she taught in a mountain refugee camp in 1963. Gondry also explores Suzette's relationship with her mentally fragile, gay son Jean-Yves, who suffered a breakdown after the death of his father - Gondry allows them the opportunity to present their version of events, which had led to decades-old hurt and misunderstanding. Presented as part of *The Tournées Festival*.

Co-sponsored by CIE and LGBT.

Michel Gondry, France, DVD, 86 min, 2009

## **Welcome (Welcome)**

Saturday, February 5, 9PM

Sunday, February 6, 7 PM

### **MILWAUKEE PREMIERE**

**Synopsis:** Both a study of a budding friendship and a compassionate look at the perils faced by illegal immigrants, Philippe Lioret's *Welcome* centers on Bilal, a 17-year-old Iraqi Kurd who is stuck in Calais, in Northern France, and Simon, a recently divorced swimming teacher.

Desperate to join his girlfriend in London, Bilal vows to swim across the English Channel if he has to, setting the stage for his meeting with Simon. *Welcome* features richly drawn, fully fleshed-out lead characters; though not perfect, Bilal and Simon strive to be good, decent people. Acting veteran Vincent Lindon and first-time performer Firat Ayverdi beautifully play off each other as Simon and Bilal slowly start to form a tender surrogate father-son connection.

*"The action takes place against a topical background, with the film offering a quietly impassioned critique of the French government's harsh policies towards illegal immigrants."* Jonathan Romney, *Screen Daily*

Presented as part of the *Tournées Festival*.

Co-sponsored by CIE.

Philippe Lioret, France, 35mm, 110 min, 2008



## La dérive douce d'un enfant de Petit-Goâve

Sunday, February 6, 1PM

Monday, February 7, 7PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** From Port-au-Prince to Paris by way of Montreal, New York and Saint-Malo, *La dérive douce d'un enfant de Petit-Goâve* follows the physical and spiritual itinerary of one of Quebec's most charismatic writers and filmmakers, Dany Laferrière. Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and raised in Petit Goâve, Laferrière worked as a journalist in Haiti before moving to Canada in 1976. In 2009, Laferrière won the prestigious *Prix Médicis* for his 11th novel, *L'énigme du retour*. Tracing a similar path as in his novel, the film touches on his exile from Haiti, his stunning first novel, *How to Make Love to a Negro Without Getting Tired*, released 25 years ago, and his friendship with other Haitian writers including Frankétienne and Edwige Danticat who appear in the documentary. Finally we view Laferrière's return to Petit Goâve 33 years after having left and his rediscovery of Haiti, where much has changed but sensual beauty still coexists with anarchic violence. A portrait of a fascinating storyteller traced with sensitivity, humor and beauty by Venezuelan director Pedro Ruiz.

Co-sponsored by the Québec Government Office in Chicago, CLACS, and Union Sociocultural Programming. Pedro Ruiz, Québec, DVD, 84 min, 2009



## Le Petit Nicolas (Little Nicholas)

Sunday, February 6, 3PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** French children and Americans who have studied French know and love *Le petit Nicolas*. Published for the first time in 1959, these children's books were created by humorist René Goscinny (of *Astérix* fame) and illustrated by cartoonist Jean-Jacques Sempé. The humor of the books derives from their unique story-telling style: the adventures of Little Nicolas, his classmates, teachers and parents are told in the first person by Nicolas himself. Laurent Tirard's live-action adaptation features an all-star cast of comic actors facing a crisis of Nicolas' making.

One day, he overhears a conversation between his loving parents that leads him to believe that his life might change forever, his mother is pregnant! He panics and

envisions the worst—soon a little brother will upstage him forever!

Co-sponsored by the French Consulat in Chicago, and SWAAF.

Laurent Tirard, France, DVD, 91 min, 2009

## L'argent (Money)

Tuesday, February 8, 7PM

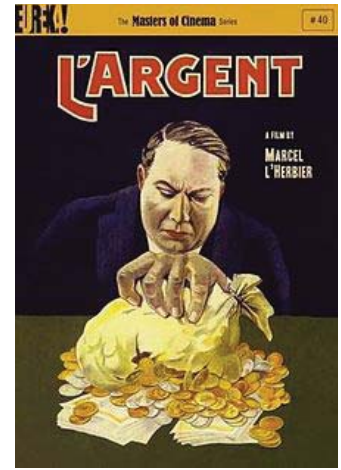
Silent Film Night with Musical Accompaniment

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** Inspired by a novel of Emile Zola, updated to contemporary France, Marcel L'Herbier's hugely original and brilliantly constructed allegory of financial speculation is now regarded as one of the true masterpieces of the silent era. Striking in sheer scale and ambition, with 1500 extras, over a dozen cameramen, and sumptuous and grandiose art deco sets (by Lazare Meerson and André Barsacq), it also was the most expensive film ever made in France at that time. Both commercial and avant-garde, it offers some of the greatest formal experiments of the era (including pendulum-like crane movements, eccentric angles, superimpositions, graphic displays of words, and musically percussive editing). Featuring an international cast, which includes Pierre Alcover as the brilliant, yet dangerously sinister villain Saccard, and *Metropolis*' Brigitte Helm, as the seductive vixen Baronin Sandorf, this gripping condemnation of world of high finance proves just as compelling and relevant today!

Co-sponsored by the UWM Cinema and Media Studies Program, Film Department, and the Department of Art History.

Marcel L'Herbier, DVD, 164 min., 1928



## Orpailleur (The Gold Forest)

Wednesday, February 9, 7PM

Sunday, February 13, 5PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** Filmed in Guiana, *Orpailleur* centers on Rod, a young Parisian originally from French Guiana who, 18 years after leaving his native country, goes back to find that his elder brother has disappeared. A childhood friend accompanies him as Rod goes in search of what has happened to his brother. They meet up with Yann, a green tourism

guide, who is enraged by the environmental destruction of illegal gold panning. Set in the majestic National Amazonian Park, this film tells a story of destruction that is not just about greed, but also about survival.

*"Guyanese director Marc Barrat's sure touch results in a well-paced action adventure not to mention a spectacular star: the landscape of the Guianas."* Georgia Popplewell, *Caribbean Review of Books*

Shown in conjunction with Union Programming's Share the Earth Environmental Film Series and co-sponsored by CLACS.

Marc Barat, France, 35mm, 90 min, 2009

## Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Inferno* (*L'enfer*)

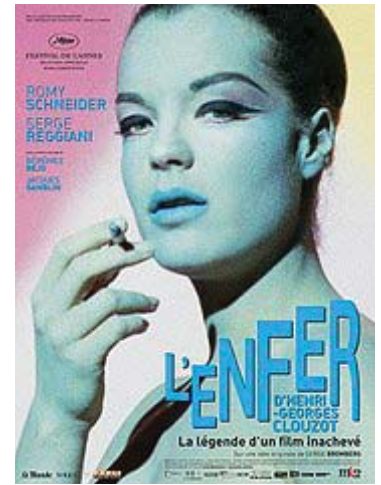
Best Documentary, 2010 César Awards

Thursday, February 10, 7PM

Classic French Cinema Night

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** In 1964, famed director Henri-Georges Clouzot (*Wages of Fear*, *Diabolique*) began work on his most ambitious film to date, *L'ENFER* (*INFERNO*), a dark psychological study of the mental disintegration of hotel owner Marcel (Serge Reggiani) consumed by jealousy at the supposed infidelity of his stunning young wife, played by Romy Schneider in her prime. The madness and obsession portrayed on camera mirrored Clouzot's own behavior on the set, and after three weeks of shooting he suffered a heart attack and the production was shut down. In 2005 nearly fifteen hours of film material was unearthed, revealing kaleidoscopic colors and experiments in camera movement that are simply breathtaking. This intriguing doc brings Clouzot's hallucinatory vision to the screen for the first time, and includes interviews with cast and crew members recounting the legendary (though ill-fated) production. Serge Bromberg & Ruxandra Medrea, France, 109 min, 2009



## Cliente (A French Gigolo)

Friday, February 11, 7PM

Saturday, February 12, 5PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** As she did in *French Twist* (1995), writer-director-performer Josiane Balasko brilliantly combines feminism and farce in *Cliente*, one of the few films from any nation that centers on the sexuality of a middle-aged woman. Sophisticated fifty-something divorcée Judith (Nathalie Baye) runs a homeshopping TV show with her sister, Irène (Balasko). While Irène dreams of finding Mr. Right, Judith favors the no-

strings attachment of paying gigolos for sex. Her preferred escort is construction worker Marco, who happens to be happily married to Fanny, a hairdresser. Balasko's movie is a refreshingly honest, adult look at the ways in which our needs for sex, love, and money are continually negotiated. Consistently funny, *A French Gigolo* is nonetheless seriously committed to exposing sexual double standards.

Presented as part of the *Tournées Festival*.

Co-sponsored by Women Studies Program.

Josiane Balasko, France, DVD, 105 min, 2007

## Arnacoeur (Heartbreaker)

Friday, February 11, 9PM

Saturday, Feb 12, 7PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** Alex, played by heartthrob Romain Duris (*Auberge espagnole*, *The Beat My Heart Skipped*), and his sister run a business designed to break up relationships. They are hired by a rich man to break up the wedding of his daughter Juliette, played by beautiful singer and star Vanessa Paradis. The problem is that they only have 10 days to do so. The task is further complicated because the couple appear to be in love and absolutely perfect for each other. Will Alex successfully complete this impossible job? Set mostly in Monaco, this romantic comedy, a huge box-office hit in France.

"Sparkles like champagne." Joe Williams, *Saint-Louis Post-Dispatch*

Pascal Chaumeil, France, 35mm, 105 min, 2010



## Home (Home)

Saturday, February 12, 9PM

Sunday, February 13, 7PM

### MILWAUKEE PREMIERE

**Synopsis:** Ursula Meier's feature debut, boosted by the expert cinematography of Agnès Godard, boldly investigates the thin line between sanity and madness, the moments when family closeness becomes claustrophobia. Living at the end of an abandoned four-lane highway, Marthe (Isabelle Huppert) and Michel (Olivier Gourmet) enjoy a blissful, if highly unconventional, existence with their three children: a daughter who spends most of her time sunbathing in a bikini; a younger teenage daughter obsessed with scientific trivia; and a rambunctious young son who appears to be the only one with connections outside the tight-knit clan. But their cocooned existence ends when the highway is reopened, becoming a major thruway for endless cars and trucks. What begins as a study of idiosyncratic domesticity seamlessly shifts into a portrait of psychological horror - and a cautionary tale about environmental disaster. *"Ms. Meier puts her characters into play so casually, with no signs of strain, that what happens in 'Home' remains surprising and pleasurable, even when the story goes dark, then darker."* Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times* Presented as part of the *Tournées Festival*.



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Ursula Meier, Switzerland, 35mm, 98 min, 2007