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## The Vanishing Screenplay: Jean-Claude Carrière at BFI Southbank in July 2012



The contribution of the writer is often overlooked in cinema, yet it's inseparable from the creative process of filmmaking. This season lauds an 'invisible giant' of European cinema, screenwriter **Jean-Claude Carrière**. He is also a novelist and essayist, cartoonist and sometime director and actor, and has recently collaborated with director **Michael Haneke** on the script for **The White Ribbon** (2009) and appeared in **Abbas Kiarostami's Certified Copy** (2010).

He is probably best known for his working relationship with **Luis Buñuel**, who both co-scripted most of the titles of the great Spanish director's French period. Carrière's films for Buñuel include the erotic psycho-fairytale **Belle de Jour** (1967), the surreal **The Phantom of Liberty** (1974) and the deliciously satirical **The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie** (1972), released in cinemas nationwide on 29 June for its fortieth anniversary by Studiocanal and the ICO. It will also be screened as an extended run as part of the season. BFI Southbank is delighted to announce that **Carrière** will give an on-stage introduction to a preview screening of **The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie** on **Thursday 28 June**.

International collaborations for Carrière followed in the late-70s and 80s. These include acclaimed literary adaptations of sprawling and seemingly unadaptable works for directors like Volker Schlöndorff (**The Tin Drum**, 1979), and Philip Kaufman (**The Unbearable Lightness of Being**, 1988) and also his dream-like rendering of Proust in **Swann in Love** (1984). This last film was co-written with Sir Peter Brook, whose earlier work with Carrière included **The Mahabharata** and presaged an extended departure from screen to stage writing. Carrière

would return, however, initially to adapt the epic comic romance of the 19th-century stage play **Cyrano de Bergerac** (1990) for director Jean- Paul Rappeneau. Carrière's script for Andrzej Wajda's monumental **Danton** (1982) depicts the terror following the French revolution; it offers a timeless exploration of the corrupting nature of tyranny. In Nagisa Oshima's **Max Mon Amour** (1986), he revisited the spirit of surrealism in a jaw-dropping, absurdly funny drama in which Charlotte Rampling becomes passionately involved with a chimpanzee. With Louis Malle, Carrière then dealt with les évènements of 68 in the warmly affecting 'Chekhovian' chamber comedy **Milou en mai** (1990).

Working largely outside the Hollywood model of the film industry, he has been unconstrained by formulaic demands and as a result has produced wildly playful and highly imaginative work. With only the best of his work showing in this season, it remains a fitting testament to Carrière's extraordinary abilities that he has so deftly crossed such wide cultural divides throughout his fascinating career.

**The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie** will be released in cinemas nationwide on 29 June by Studiocanal and the ICO, and on DVD / Blu-ray on 16 July. Please contact Candy at Studiocanal for more information and interview opportunities: [candy.vincent-smith@studiocanal.co.uk](mailto:candy.vincent-smith@studiocanal.co.uk)

### **Films in the season**

**Extended Introduction by Jean-Claude Carrière before *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June at 18.10 in NFT3**

#### **EXTENDED RUN**

***The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie***

***Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* NEW PRINT**

France 1972. Dir Luis Buñuel. With Fernando Rey, Delphine Seyrig, Stéphane Audran, Bulle Ogier, Jean Pierre Cassel, Paul Frankeur. 101min. Digital. EST. Courtesy of STUDIOCANAL  
Newly restored for its fortieth anniversary, this sly, slippery comedy of bourgeois manners remains one of the finest achievements of Luis Buñuel's dazzlingly creative late period. A compelling string of set-pieces is loosely linked by the comic conceit of six well-to-do friends repeatedly frustrated, in one bizarre way or another, in their attempts to sit down and have a meal together. The film observes, with coolly detached amusement, both the group's insouciance and their absurd concern with conspicuously 'correct' behaviour in whatever strange situations chance may throw their way. Flitting with disquieting ease between 'reality' and 'fantasy', the film – scripted by Buñuel and his long-term partner-in-crime, Jean-Claude Carrière – feels at times like a cautionary parable about the human condition, though the sharp attention to detail ensures that the characters remain vivid and, however perverse, utterly plausible. Discreetly dreamlike, charmingly stylish and quite unrepentantly surreal, it's clearly the work of a master in his wickedly witty prime.

**Sun 1 - Thu 12 July**

**[Seniors' matinee, with intro by Geoff Andrew, Fri 6 July 14:00 NFT2]**

***Carrière, 250 metros***

Mexico 2011. Dir. Juan Carlos Rulfo. 88min. Some EST

A charming and thoughtful 'road' documentary portrait of Jean-Claude Carrière in which he travels, observes and reflects on the cultural landmarks in his life. His journey takes in Spain and Buñuel's Toledo; France, where he tracks down his friend, the clown, comedian and filmmaker Pierre Etaix; India, the birthplace of perhaps his most ambitious work, an adaptation of the ancient Hindu epic The Mahabarata; and New

York, where he visits director Milos Forman and reflects on the utopian rebellion of the 60s.

**Wed 4 July 20:50 NFT1**

**Thu 12 July 20:45 NFT2**

### **Viva Maria!**

France-Italy 1965. Dir Louis Malle. With Brigitte Bardot, Jeanne Moreau, George Hamilton. 114min. EST. 12A

Banned in Dallas, Texas for being too racy, this comedy-adventure pairs carefree Bardot and Moreau as the daughter of an Irish Republican and a circus singer who together invent striptease and inspire Latin American revolution in the 1900s. There are gags aplenty in this early collaboration between Carrière and Malle, and its inversion of the buddy movie (Vera Cruz was a favourite of both) was allegedly admired by Fassbinder. Filmed in Eastmancolor; its credits also include a young Volker Schlöndorff, a later collaborative partner for Carrière.

**Sun 1 July 16:00 NFT1**

**Mon 9 July 20:40 NFT2**

**Tue 24 July 18:10 NFT3**

### **Belle de Jour**

France-Italy 1967. Dir Luis Buñuel. With Catherine Deneuve, Jean Sorel, Michel Piccoli. 100min. EST

In this adaptation of Joseph Kessel's 1928 novel, Deneuve plays Séverine, a distracted housewife in a passionless marriage who whiles away her afternoons in a discreet and luxurious Parisian brothel. Inner and outer worlds blend faultlessly into one another and a rich association of images and ideas transcends any conventional linear narrative. Looking beyond its outstanding style and sophistication, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan was alleged to have encouraged his students to study its complex insights into sexuality.

**Sat 21 July 18:00 NFT1**

**Wed 25 July 18:00 NFT1**

**Sat 28 July 20:45 NFT1**

### **The Phantom of Liberty**

#### **Le Fantôme de la liberté**

France-Italy 1974. Dir Luis Buñuel. With Bernard Verley, Jean-Claude Brialy, Monica Vitti, Michel Lonsdale. 104min. EST. 15

In this unique work in the history of cinema, a series of anarchic and surreal episodes begin with a historical reconstruction as French firing squads execute rebels in Toledo in 1808. Moving into the 20th century, it mocks a complacent and aimless society through a series of unforgettable images and situations. In Buñuel's penultimate film, Carrière believed that the director had such prestige that it was possible to open a new door at every given opportunity; at the same time rising to the immense challenge of such freedom.

**Thu 5 July 20:45 NFT2**

**Sun 8 July 18:20 NFT2**

### **The Tin Drum**

#### **Die Blechtrommel**

West Germany-France 1979. Dir Volker Schlöndorff. With David Bennent, Mario Adorf, Angela Winkler. 142min. EST. 15

WW2, as seen through the eyes of Oskar, an incredible child drummer who has decided to remain small among the 'giants'. Schlöndorff described Carrière criticising an early script as 'Protestant and Cartesian', demanding both more hard realism and, simultaneously, more courage in the unreal. The result is both a realist film, deeply rooted in the fears, dreams and pettiness of the Danzig lower-middle class, but also 'a fantastic, barbarous film in which shafts of black light' suddenly disrupt the everyday.

**Sat 7 July 20:15 NFT1**  
**Fri 13 July 20:15 NFT1**  
**Sat 21 July 20:10 NFT1**

**Danton**

France-Poland 1982. Dir Andrzej Wajda. With Gérard Depardieu, Wojciech Pszoniak. 136min. EST. 12A

Carrière's masterly script for the great Polish director confronts the terror of the French Revolution but illuminates political tyranny throughout history. Danton returns to Paris from his country retreat upon learning that his former ally Robespierre has begun a massive series of executions. Confident in the people's support, Danton clashes with him, but Robespierre soon rounds up Danton and his followers, and tries them before a revolutionary tribunal. Beyond the confines of period, this is a timeless exploration of the corrupting nature of power and its distortion of the language of liberation.

**Sat 7 July 18:00 NFT2**  
**Fri 13 July 18:00 NFT2**

**Swann in Love**

**Un Amour de Swann**

France 1984. Dir Volker Schlöndorff. With Jeremy Irons, Ornella Muti, Alain Delon. 111min. EST

Following in the footsteps of other great names in cinema, not least Pinter and Losey, Carrière adapts the hallowed Marcel Proust, once again in collaboration with Peter Brook. The result is a sumptuous and absorbing tale of obsessive love set against the colourful backdrop of Paris in the 1890s. Swann (Irons) falls passionately in love with a young courtesan, and soon finds himself tormented by his unrelenting sexual desire and resulting uncertain social status.

**Wed 11 July 20:30 NFT3**  
**Sat 14 July 18:10 NFT2**

**Max Mon Amour**

France-USA 1986. Dir Nagisa Oshima. With Charlotte Rampling, Anthony Higgins. 97min. EST  
Further evidence of Carrière's aptitude for international collaboration, this time with a radical Japanese director. When Peter, a British diplomat, suspects his wife of having an affair, he is totally unprepared for the truth. Hinging on a Buñuelian conceit, this absurdist ménage à trois between a man, a woman and a chimpanzee satirises the degree to which society will deceive itself in the pursuit of seeming normality and adherence to convention. The drama might be shocking were it not so outrageously funny.

**Thu 19 July 18:10 NFT1**  
**Mon 23 July 20:45 NFT1**

**The Unbearable Lightness of Being**

USA 1988. Dir Philip Kaufman. With Daniel Day Lewis, Juliette Binoche, Lena Olin, Erland Josephson. 172min. Print courtesy of the Academy Film Archive

Carrière's sensitive script adaptation builds on Milan Kundera's tragi-comic, existentialist and sprawling novel. The narrative follows the story of Day Lewis' womanising Czech doctor in 1968 Prague, prior to the Soviet invasion. His young wife is played by a delightfully youthful Binoche, but this doesn't hinder a passionate tie with his sometime lover (Olin). Janáček's music recreates Prague, since surrogate locations had to be used during the period of Soviet rule.

**Sun 8 July 15:00 NFT1**  
**Mon 9 July 19:45 NFT1**

### **Milou en mai**

France-Italy 1990. Dir Louis Malle. With Michel Piccoli, Miou-Miou, Michel Duchaussey, Harriet Walter. 107min. EST. 15

Once again teaming up with Malle, Carrière captures the zeitgeist of middle-class France in this charming Chekhovian chamber comedy. A family gather in idyllic surroundings in South-West France to pay respects to a deceased matriarch and share out her estate, lovingly tended by her son, the child-like and life-affirming Milou. A blissful hedonism pervades the gathering and reflects the emerging 60s counterculture. But it's 1968, and as news emerges of the barricades going up in Paris, the wider social upheaval in the country inevitably threatens to disrupt the party.

**Fri 20 July 18:00 NFT1**

**Sun 22 July 15:20 NFT1**

### **Cyrano de Bergerac**

France 1990. Dir Jean-Paul Rappeneau. With Gérard Depardieu, Jacques Weber, Anne Brochet. 138min. EST. U

Carrière's adaptation of Edmond Rostand's stage play, Cyrano's colourfully inventive script led to a gorgeous historical epic. Set in the 17th century, it tells the story of a French cavalier, poet and swordsman whose prominent nose becomes the subject of many a duel. Cyrano is madly in love with the beautiful Roxanne but assumes that she will never return his love, so uses his literary gifts to pursue his passion by proxy.

**Sat 28 July 15:30 NFT1**

**Sun 29 July 18:00 NFT3**

**Mon 30 July 20:15 NFT1**

### **PRESS CONTACTS:**

#### **BFI Southbank:**

Caroline Jones, Press Officer

Tel: 020 7957 8986 or email: [caroline.jones@bfi.org.uk](mailto:caroline.jones@bfi.org.uk)

Liz Parkinson, Assistant Press Officer

Tel: 020 7957 8918 or email: [liz.parkinson@bfi.org.uk](mailto:liz.parkinson@bfi.org.uk)

#### **About the BFI**

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- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work

- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

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**Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment**

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### **BFI National Archive**

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STUDIOCANAL is a subsidiary of the CANAL+ Group. It is one of Europe's leading companies in the market for co-production, acquisition, distribution and sale of international feature films. STUDIOCANAL is the only studio operating simultaneously in three main territories across Europe: France, the United Kingdom and Germany. The company distributes a total of more than 50 films a year throughout Europe. Additionally, STUDIOCANAL owns one of the most important libraries in the world, with more than 5,000 international titles.

STUDIOCANAL is committed to a programme of restoration and preservation on this library, and 2012 will see the release of the following titles in the UK following extensive digital restoration: *La Grande Illusion*, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *Dracula Prince of Darkness*, *Plague of the Zombies*, *The Reptile*, *The Trial*, *That Obscure Object of Desire*, *Total Recall* and *Quai des Brumes*.

**\*\*\* PICTURE DESK \*\*\***

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