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**Last Year in Marienbad
(L'Année dernière à Marienbad)**

Directed by Alain Resnais

with Delphine Seyrig, Giorgio Albertazzi, Sacha Pitoëff

France-Italy 1961 | 94 mins | Cert tbc

A BFI release

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Release date: 8 July 2011

Opening venues: BFI Southbank plus selected venues nationwide

Spectacularly beautiful, endlessly controversial, this landmark of post-war French cinema returns to the big screen, courtesy of the BFI, for its fiftieth anniversary. Premiered at the Venice Film Festival of 1961 where it won the Golden Lion, **Last Year in Marienbad** created a huge stir, infuriating and delighting critics in equal measure.

Last Year in Marienbad is set in a strikingly ornate Baroque mansion with geometrically designed gardens. A nameless stranger (Giorgio Albertazzi) is obsessed with a beautiful woman (Delphine Seyrig) who appears to be staying there with a man (the gaunt and sinister Sacha Pitoëff) who may or may not be her husband. The stranger insists that they met there a year ago and had a passionate love affair, but that she then refused to go away with him, suggesting instead that they meet in a year's time, when she would let him know her decision. The year is now up, but the woman seems not to recognise her former lover and denies all knowledge of their previous encounter.

A feast for the senses, **Last Year in Marienbad** featuring Sacha Vierny's ravishing black-and-white 'Scope photography, the dazzling décor of Jacques Saulnier, exquisitely elegant costumes by Coco Chanel, and the richly sombre organ music of Francis Seyrig (student of Messiaen and brother of Delphine). The hypnotic script of avant-garde novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet is – in the words of Resnais himself – 'like an opera libretto with very beautiful and very simple words, which are endlessly repeated.'

Resnais and Robbe-Grillet intended the film to be capable of interpretation in an infinite variety of ways, leaving it to the viewer to decide what is fantasy or lies, and what, if anything, is fact. Accused of being wilfully obscure, they pointed out that people are prepared to accept uncertainty, ambiguity and irrationality in everyday life but are highly intolerant of the

same qualities in art. For Robbe-Grillet, **Marienbad** dealt in a new kind of realism: ‘Marienbad is as opaque as the moments we live through in the climaxes of our feeling, in our loves, in our whole emotional life. So to reproach the film for its lack of clarity is really to reproach human feelings for their obscurity.’

A major influence on later film styles, Resnais’ enigmatic, intoxicating film remains a source of inspiration. Most recently, Karl Lagerfeld’s show for Chanel’s Spring-Summer 2011 collection was peopled by a dream-like crowd wandering through a black-and-white garden. To quote the designer himself: ‘It’s this year in Marienbad ...’

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Last Year in Marienbad plays at selected cinemas nationwide from 8 July.

Last Year in Marienbad plays as part of the **Curiouser and Curiouser: The Films of Alain Resnais Season** at BFI Southbank from July 1st

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- 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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