



Registered Charity: 1156478. Patron: Jim Broadbent

Friday April 15th, 2016, 7.30pm

Three Hearts

(France 2014. Cert 12a)

dir: Benoît Jacquot

starring: Benoît Poelvoorde, Charlotte Gainsbourg,
Chiara Mastroianni, Catherine Deneuve

sponsor: Andrew Howard

That Sight and Sound has been unable to provide us with a review of *Three Hearts* is down to the fact that the film has yet to receive a cinematic release in the UK. We are only able to present tonight's screening thanks entirely to the generosity of distributors Metrodome. So how have we got into this position?

Film Societies have to work with the rules of film distribution. These mean that when a film is released, the main theatrical exhibitors - Odeon, Cineworld, Vue cinemas for example - and the bigger independent chains, such as The Broadway in Nottingham, have the right to show the film first. After a period of a few weeks, smaller independent cinemas such as The Venue can add the film to their listings. Only when it has completed its commercial run can a film normally become available to the likes of us.

In the case of tonight's film, we first came across it at the London Film Festival in October 2014. At the time it was shown there, it had already secured a distributor; but when we came to choose the programme - in April 2015 - no release date had been announced. Nonetheless we reasoned that if the film was to be included in our 2015-16 season and we placed it towards the end of the programme, there was every likelihood the film would have appeared and we would be fine.

However, by the start of this year, no release date had been announced. Aware that we had already lost *Mr Kaplan* from the programme because the distributors had not set a release date, and being concerned that we would have to find another late replacement, we made some enquiries of Metrodome. We were told that the problem lay in trying to agree a slot with cinemas for them to include it in their listings. We put our concerns to them and they gave us an assurance that, once the film had been placed, they would provide us with a copy. We are therefore delighted to be able to hold to the programme and screen the film this evening. It makes Lincoln only the third city outside London and Sheffield (where it was given a showing at an Independent Cinema Office preview weekend last July) to show the film; it also makes the Society the first to be able to present it to its members.

The film is best described as a melodrama: certainly director Benoît Jacquot sees it as such, citing the influence of the work of directors like John Stahl (*Back Street*), Leo McCarey (*An Affair to Remember*) and Douglas Sirk. Jacquot has a considerable filmography to his name but has been working in opera in recent years and it's possible to detect the influence of that art form in the way the story develops.

Having made a number of costume films, when he set out to write the original screenplay for *Three Hearts*, he was particularly keen to set the film in a French provincial town, saying that "*the provinces are conducive to developing a melodramatic argument*". He was also keen to have a man as the lead character, a man grappling with a secret romance. As he had been thinking about the idea of the effect two sisters would have on one another, combining the two themes created the genesis of the story.

Casting the film was not without its challenges. Benoît Poelvoorde was not the first person he thought of to play Marc, and while



Charlotte Gainsbourg was always in his mind for the role of Sylvie, initially Lea Seydoux had been slated as her sister. When that idea collapsed at the last minute Chiara Mastroianni was suggested - much to Charlotte Gainsbourg's approval.

Securing the services of Catherine Deneuve also presented a problem. Jacquot had it in mind that they should work together, having directed her a few months before *Three Hearts* went into production, but it was a matter of finding the right role. It was producer Edouard Weil who suggested that she be right for the part of Sylvie and Sophie's mother even though it was not a leading part. Fortunately she agreed to become involved and became not only an on-screen mother but also played a significant role behind the scenes

Synopsis: France. The present. Marc a tax inspector gets stranded in the town of Valence after missing the last train back to Paris. Looking for a hotel late at night, he meets Sylvie. There's an immediate spark of attraction between them and they spend the night walking and talking, agreeing to meet again in the capital.

Fate intervenes on the appointed day and Marc doesn't make it in time. He has no other way to make contact with her.. That seems to be that. In due course he meets Sophie, an antiques dealer, and they fall in love and marry. And then, Sylvie comes back into his life in extraordinary circumstances.

Three Hearts plays with the conventions of storytelling and the use and abuse of coincidence. It's a love story about fate, randomness, missed opportunities and the forces of attraction

Credits

Marc	Benoît Poelvoorde	Director	Benoît Jacquot
Sylvie	Charlotte Gainsbourg	DoP	Julien Hirsch
Sophie	Chiara Mastroianni	Screenplay	Julian Boivent Benoît Jacquot
Mme Berger	Catherine Deneuve	Music	Bruno Coulais
Castang	André Marcon	Editing	Julia Gregory
Sylvie's husband	Patrick Mille	Costume	Catherine Leterrier
Gabriel	Thomas Doret		
Doctor	Francis Leplay		

France 2014. 106 mins

too, helping to produce the food required for the mealtime scenes. There is great credibility in the scenes between her, Gainsbourg and Mastroianni, though that may not seem surprising when the fact that the latter is also her natural daughter is taken into account.

Another view (Nicholas Bell, Ion Cinema)

Despite sporting the likes of Charlotte Gainsbourg and Catherine Deneuve, 3 Hearts, the latest from Benoit Jacquot often feels like a rather stilted endeavor. The follow-up to his most internationally renowned title to date, Farewell My Queen Jacquot's underwhelming love story uses a contrivance often seen in romantic comedies, only he replaces the comedy with a somber indifference that seems to work against the believability of the film.

The film seems as if it belongs to an earlier era of filmmaking, a time where repressed feelings would roil just beneath the surface until they boiled over to cause living hell for all affected parties lost amidst the unmitigated power known as love. This is the stuff of classic melodrama, and the three hearts at the center of this triangle often feel more like archetypes than actual people, though this time, Jacquot tells his tale through the perspective of a male protagonist, which isn't generally the case in his cinema of strong willed females.

Missing his last train to Paris, tax inspector Marc Beaulieu (Benoit Poelvoorde), wanders the streets of an empty suburb, Valence. Stuck for the night, he wanders into a bar for cigarettes and spies a rather unhappy looking woman, with whom he strikes up a conversation. Her name is Sophie (Charlotte Gainsbourg), and she doesn't seem prone to smiling. They commiserate well into the night even after he finds a suitable hotel. They agree to meet later that week in Paris and do not exchange numbers. Theirs is an old fashioned type of attraction, one where fate is allowed a roll of the dice. And, as fate would have it, Marc has heart complications that cause him to be late, and Sophie goes on her merry way to Minneapolis with her husband, though it hardly seems something she wants to be doing. The move causes considerable grief for her sister Sylvie (Chiara Mastroianni), who must now run their mother's (Catherine Deneuve) antique shop alone. But the finances are a mess, which brings her into contact with the kindly Marc, purely by chance. He helps her out, they fall in love and voila! During a Skype conversation between the sisters, Marc becomes aware of the situation, which makes for a tense wedding ceremony on Marc's part. Pretending they don't know each other, it's not long before Marc and Sophie's passionate feelings overrule their moral compasses.

In essence, 3 Hearts isn't doing anything that Your Sister's Sister (shown by us in May 2014) didn't already successfully execute. A guy meets one sister, feels a strong connection, but circumstances don't permit a successful permutation of coupledness. Instead, already primed, he meets an equally attractive sibling, though sister number two is completely unaware of the transaction that already took place with her family member. But Jacquot doesn't seem interested in disguising the contrived and extreme artificiality of the situation—why else spoon feed us with unnecessary omniscient narration? This is a tradition of cinematic exploration featuring nicely honed performances experimenting through a scenario. But it feels like an archaic mode of transportation, a carriage ride in a world where time and attention spans have mutated the notion of love.

Belgian actor Benoit Poelvoorde is well known for his impressive range, familiar as the serial killer in Man Bites Dog, as well as a regular member in the zany weirdness of films from Gustave de Kervern and Benoit Delepine. He's also quite charming in his own offbeat way in rom-com fare like Anne Fontaine's My Worts Nightmare, seducing the very married ice queen played by Isabelle Huppert. And yet his Marc Beaulieu is nearly bereft of any sort of remarkable feature in Three Hearts, beyond the fact that his actual ticker isn't working all that well. What's more telling about what the film's trying to say is noting that the script was co-written by Julien Boivent, who penned two very different and distinct titles for Jacquot, Villa Amalia (2009) and Deep in the

Woods (2010), both incredibly underrated and without distribution in the US. All three of these collaborations are dealing with people engaged in unlikely and improbable fantasies, yet relayed with such conviction it's hard not to interpret them at face value alone.

Gainsbourg's Sylvie is hardly characterized beyond being an innately unhappy person, leaving Paris for Minneapolis in a stale marriage at the film's outset. Her visits home carry with them a certain dread within the film, as we're waiting for a grand explosion that kinda sorta transpires, though it's much more entertaining to watch her blatantly reject contact with her young, clasp nephew. Chiara Mastroianni, who stepped in at the last minute to replace Lea Seydoux (don't worry, Seydoux is starring Jacquot's latest, a delicious sounding update of Diary of a Chambermaid) fares best, a sympathetic figure in the midst of a dreary drizzle. Her mother, the great Deneuve, is once again playing her mother, though it's a role that requires very little from the icon.

Coldly brooding and with a sustained tension that doesn't quite burn into the hothouse of emotional intensity one would predict, 3 Hearts treats love like a great misfortune, a missed opportunity that haunts and tears apart. It's a perspective that's worth its merit and makes Jacquot's treatment well worth examining, though these three hearts are all pretty cold.

Programme news

We have received the following suggestions for films to be included in our 2016-17 season, which will be selected in 2 weeks. Details of the final programme will be published on the notes for Rosewater, showing on April 29th.

52 Tuesdays (Australia 2015)

Cemetery of Splendour (Thailand 2015)

The Club (Chile 2015)

The Commune (Denmark 2016)

Couple in a Hole (UK/Bel/Fra 2015)

Dheepan (France 2015)

Embrace of the Serpent (Colombia/Argentina/Venezuela 2015)

Grandma (USA, 2015).

Julieta (Spain 2016)

Little Men (USA/Greece 2016)

Love and Friendship (USA 2016)

The Lobster (UK 2015)

Maggie's Plan (USA 2016)

The Measure of a Man (France 2015)

Men and Chicken (Denmark 2015)

Mountains May Depart (China/France/Japan 2015)

Mustang (Turkey/France/Qatar/Germany 2015)

Our Little Sister (Japan 2015)

The Pearl Button (Chile 2015)

Rams (Iceland 2015)

Ran (Japan 1985) Sherpa (Australia/UK 2015)

Remainder ((UK/Germany 2015)

Sherpa (Australia/UK 2015)

Son of Saul (Hungary 2015)

Tale of Tales (UK/France/Italy 2015)

Tangerine (USA 2015)

Taxi Tehran (Iran 2015)

Truman (Argentina/Spain 2015)

Victoria (Germany 2015)

A War (Denmark 2015)

Our next screening - Friday April 22nd, 7.30pm

The Lesson (Bulgaria/Greece 2014. Cert 15)

Margita Gosheva is excellent as the initially uncompromising Nadezhda, a teacher in a small Bulgarian town who's troubled by petty thefts in her classroom and is trying her best to uncover the culprit. But financial woes are stacking up in her own life, after her unemployed and hapless husband spends money they don't have, and she must utilise all her energy to ensure that their house isn't repossessed. Facing the problem largely alone, as her desperation escalates Nadezhda is forced to lower her rigorous moral standards in order to come up with the cash.

Reminiscent of the Dardennes' brothers Two Days, One Night (shown earlier this year), this is a tough and unsentimental drama; a tale of the near-impossibility of behaving well when in dire financial straits, and a parable for the contemporary economic woes faced by much of the EU.