

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Partie de campagne</b>
Author(s)	David Stewart Hull
Source	<i>Dartmouth Film Society</i>
Date	
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Une partie de campagne (A day in the country), Renoir, Jean, 1946

# Dartmouth Film Society Film Notes

## PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE (1938)

*A Day in the Country*

Henriette	Sylvia Bataille	Anatole	Bordan
Henri	Georges Saint-Saens	Grand'mère	Gabrielle Fontane
Mme. Dufour	Jeanne Marken	Poulain	Jean Renoir
M. Dufour	Gabriello	Servant	Marguerite Renoir
Rodolphe	Jacques Borel		
	(Jacques Brunius)		

Photographed by Lotal. Chief technician, Claude Renoir.  
Music by Joseph Kosma, vocal part sung by Germaine Montero.  
Assistant directors, Jacques Becker and Luchino Visconti  
Directed by Jean Renoir.

PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE is undoubtedly the high point in the film career of Jean Renoir, along with the film which followed it, LA RÉGLE DU JEU, considered by many to be the greatest of all French films. Of course, PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE is unfinished, or perhaps more correctly, it is a film-essay, an outline in which Renoir used some ideas from his past films, most notably LA FILLE D'EAU, and germinated others that would appear much later, notably in his most recent film, DÉJEUNER SUR L'HERBE.

If PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE is incomplete (apparently Renoir was quite satisfied with it as it appears here), it does no harm, and what is presumably missing is supplied in the linking titles. The story, based on Maupassant, is slight, turning from comedy-satire to a bittersweet climax of the utmost sensitivity. Few directors could achieve the feat of bringing so much of the feeling of Maupassant to the screen, let alone doing it in a mere thirty-seven minutes.

Virtually everything in the film is perfect. Again and again Lotal's photography, assisted by Renoir's brother Claude, catches the spirit of the paintings of Auguste Renoir, a shadowy never-never land which was gone as surely as the world which his son could see going to pieces in 1938, a civilization whose requiem he wrote in LA RÉGLE DU JEU. It is difficult to ever forget the breathtaking images of the women in the swings, and later the simple ten shot sequence which shows the storm in its sad beauty, a visual counterpart of the end of the heroine's innocence. And the atmosphere is helped enormously by that most sensitive of French film composers, Joseph Kosma, whose sweet but never saccharine music matches the direction point for point.

The acting, of course, is marvelous; the characters appear to have stepped out of an impressionist canvas. Jeanne Marken as the mother is particularly outstanding, the closest thing the screen has seen to the kind of woman Papa Renoir immortalized on canvas. Jacques Brunius contributes the immortal vignette of the eternal Pan figure (how much better handled here than in DÉJEUNER SUR L'HERBE!), stalking his far from unwilling prey in a sort of comic slow-motion through the sun-lit fields. At one point Renoir himself steps in front of the camera, perhaps to screen-test himself for his great role as Octave in LA RÉGLE DU JEU. (Another Renoir, Marguerite, later a fine film editor, appears briefly.)

Equally important is the fact that PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE served as a lesson for two of the most important directors of our time, the late Jacques Becker, and Luchino Visconti, who worked as Renoir's assistants. Visconti went on to help Renoir with his ill-fated TOSCA film before making his great first feature, OSSESSIONE in 1942.

The print you will see today is an outrage, filled with cuts, poorly printed and with a wailing sound track. The titles are abysmal and miss every subtle point the dialogue attempts to make. And on the credits, several names are misspelled. Purely mechanical troubles aside, we feel that PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE is one of the great films of all time, and is richly deserving of its present re-discovery by American film enthusiasts.

David Stewart Hall