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L'ANNONCE FAITE A MARIE (THE ANNUNCIATION OF MARIE) (FRENCH-CANADIAN)

Variety 3-16-92

A Desmichelle Prods.-La Sept-Sofica Lumière (France)-Pax Films Intl. (Canada). Produced by Hugues Desmichelle, Frederic Robbes, Jean-Marc Felilo, Mychel Arsenault. Directed, written by Alain Cuny, from Paul Claudel's play. Camera (color), Caroline Champetier de Ribes, Denis Clerval, Serge Dalmas; editor, Françoise Berger-Garnault; music, sound, François-Bernard Mache; production design, Herve Baley, Bernard Lavoie, Jacques Mizrahi; costumes, Anne Le Moal, Elaine Ethier. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (Forum), Feb. 14, 1992. Running time: **91 MIN.**

Pierre de Craon . . . Roberto Benavente
Mara Vercors Christelle Challab
Vercors Alain Cuny
Violaine Vercors Ulrika Jonsson
Jacques Hury Jean des Ligneris
Elisabeth Vercors Cecile Potot
Mayor Ken Mackenzie

At age 83, French actor Alain Cuny has directed his first film, a rigorously stylized pic based on a 1912 play by Paul Claudel (brother of sculptor Camille Claudel). Cuny, over the years, has been the most important interpreter of Claudel, and the playwright himself requested many years ago that the actor bring this particular play to the screen.

This is specialized fare, slow and deliberate, with artificial, theatrical perfs. It should be of enormous interest to students of French theater, and wider exposure is indicated on the originality of the treatment and the placid beauty of the material.

During the Crusades, beautiful Violaine (Ulrika Jonsson) is betrothed to Jacques (Jean de Ligneris) by her father (Cuny himself).

But Violaine is unable to marry Jacques because she's contract-

ed leprosy, and instead the young man marries her sister, Mara (Christelle Challab). The child of this union dies soon after it's born, and Mara begs her sister to return from the isolated seclusion in which she's been living to restore the child to life.

Cuny seems the ideal interpreter for Claudel's intensely poetic and spiritual material. The actor stages the drama in a series of stunningly filmed tableaux. Location shooting in Quebec provides some glorious snowscapes against which several scenes unfold.

The film was awarded the Georges Sadoul Prize last year.

— *David Stratton*