

Document Citation

Title	It's (not) all true: Orson Welles
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Source	<i>Cinematheque Ontario/a division of Toronto International Film Festival Group</i>
Date	2000 Mar 09
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	6
Subjects	Welles, Orson (1915-1985), Kenosha, Wisconsin, United States
Film Subjects	F for fake, Welles, Orson, 1975 The magnificent Ambersons, Welles, Orson, 1942 Une histoire immortelle (The immortal story), Welles, Orson, 1968 The lady from Shanghai, Welles, Orson, 1948 Othello, Welles, Orson, 1952 The stranger, Welles, Orson, 1946 The trial, Welles, Orson, 1962 It's all true, Welles, Orson, 1993 Mr. Arkadin, Welles, Orson, 1955 Touch of evil, Welles, Orson, 1958

Chimes at midnight, Welles, Orson, 1966

Citizen Kane, Welles, Orson, 1941

Macbeth, Welles, Orson, 1948

Filming Othello, Welles, Orson, 1978

Journey into fear, Welles, Orson, 1942

IT'S (NOT) ALL TRUE



CITIZEN KANE

ORSON WELLES

"Every filmmaker since 1941 is, to some degree, in debt to Orson Welles." - **PETER BOGDANOVICH**

"Don't believe anything; it's all done with mirrors." - **ORSON WELLES**

Wunderkind, master conjuror, capricious genius, Orson Welles (1915-85) had what David Thomson calls "the greatest career in film, the most tragic, and the one with most warnings for all of us." Impatient with his own immense potential, unable to find an "objective correlative" for his teeming talent, Welles made the mistake of producing as his first film a work of such prodigious invention – visual, structural, psychological – that he would spend the rest of his life failing to measure up to its impossible standard. CITIZEN KANE (1941) established the thematic and visual trademarks of the Wellesian world, with its tragic/ironic tale of a self-made and self-destructive man of power – based on newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst but, according to many critics, clearly an alter ego of the director – and its conspicuous *mise en scène*, which turned deep focus cinematography, low-ceilinged sets, and showy chiaroscuro into a signature style. The cold and baroque KANE continues to top every poll, its cautionary tale of capitalist hubris enduring through eras of diverse style and politics (including our acquisitive own, in which one wonders if Xanadu, no matter how unhappy the vast mansion proves for Kane and his captive wife, can still function symbolically as an echoing temple of emptiness). Critics generally consider everything after KANE as either a reaction against or "an extension and fulfilment of" (Thomson) that towering work.

As with all matters Wellesian, the KANE canon is in dispute. Many critics claim THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS (1942) as Welles's masterpiece, and contending cases have been made for THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI (1947), TOUCH OF EVIL (1958), and CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT (1966). The often harrowing AMBERSONS, its stateliness and "calm beauty" (Cocteau) a seeming rejoinder to the extravagance of KANE, suffered the first of many mutilations that plagued the rest of Welles's career. Baffled by the boy genius, Hollywood attempted to corral his talent through stymy and stealth, by cutting great swathes from his films, ironing out some of the narrative corkscrews and taming the oddities. Welles dealt with the studios' machinations first by becoming a marionette director, on Norman Foster's JOURNEY INTO FEAR (and, some suggest, on Carol Reed's THE THIRD MAN); and then by becoming an international nomad, traipsing the wide world to cobble together projects, many of them unrealized. His career, which took him from Kenosha to Casablanca, began in the all-American precincts of CITIZEN KANE, THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS, and THE STRANGER (1946), but quickly became international, both by force and inclination. Set in Europe, North Africa, Mexico, and points between, his late films employ their "exotic" locales less for their pictorial potential than for their suggestions of moral obscurity.

It was once common to lament the decline of Welles's career, the rapid lapse into the slapdash and sordid after the studio's "abridgement" of THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS. But both the substantial restoration work done on OTHELLO (1952), MACBETH (1948), and TOUCH OF EVIL, and the critical re-evaluations by such Welles authorities as Joseph McBride and Jonathan Rosenbaum, have contributed to the elevation of many films from Welles's post-AMBERSONS period, from the once dismissed MR. ARKADIN (1955), recently called "one of Welles's most inventive and resonant films" (J. Hoberman), to the little seen IMMORTAL STORY (1968), now considered a poignant summa of Welles's central themes.

How to pry Welles from the tomb of myth, legend, the half-truths, inaccuracies, and confabulations that he manufactured and maintained all his life? From what Borges called the "centreless labyrinth" of his first film, CITIZEN KANE, through the frauds, facsimiles, and forgeries that were the subject of his last (the tellingly titled F FOR FAKE, 1973), Welles's career is strewn with events, images, and metaphors that emphasize the unreliability and impenetrability of truth: KANE's "Rosebud" enigma and the film's interlocking set of self-serving tales about the protagonist; the famous "War of the Worlds" scare; the investigative structure of MR. ARKADIN that collapses in the confessional line, "I do not know myself"; the funhouse hall of mirrors in THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI; the narrative gyres of SHANGHAI and JOURNEY INTO FEAR; the visual distortions and narrative contortions of THE TRIAL and TOUCH OF EVIL. When Welles announced "I am a charlatan" in F FOR FAKE, he was being neither dismissive nor derisive; charlatanism was for him as much essence as art. In this, he is oddly akin to Cocteau. As Cocteau's biographer Alen Brien has pointed out, "like Cocteau, part of [Welles's] appeal lies in the image of the arrogant, awful monster, part conjurer, part show-off, all irrepressible self-publicist." (In a characteristically poetic tribute to the master myth-maker, Cocteau described Welles as "a giant with a child's face, a tree inhabited by birds, a dog who has broken his chains to sleep on a bed of flowers. He is a creative idler, a wise fool, loneliness haloed with humanity.")

For every claim about Welles, there is a counter-claim, polarities of opinion that dialectics cannot dissolve. Personal and critical camps have grown up around the various versions of Welles, their fractiousness compounded by growing debate about his politics and sexuality. As Andrew Sarris has suggested, his career appears to us as "the enormous jigsaw puzzle bequeathed to posterity by George Orson Welles," a puzzle missing many pieces: the lost footage from THE



CITIZEN KANE

MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS and IT'S ALL TRUE, the aborted or unfinished or dream projects, including THE DEEP, DON QUIXOTE, and THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WIND. (A recent international conference, organized by the Munich Filmmuseum, focused on "The Unseen Orson Welles," hours and hours of fragments, sketches, television shows, and assorted arcana.) Welles's capacious self housed many personae, with multiple talents; little wonder that he has been dubbed a "one-man band." "Indeed," Sarris continues, "it often seemed as if the man were entombed in the myth. And not just one myth, but many – the burned-out prodigy, wastrel, unappreciated visionary, trickster, Renaissance man for cinema, theatre, radio and television, egomaniac, compulsive storyteller, persecuted liberal, raging sexist, baroque mannerist, man who scared a nation, man who 'stole' CITIZEN KANE from Herman J. Mankiewicz, huckster, public clown, martyr to Hollywood philistinism, 20th-century incarnation of Freud's da Vinci, Oedipally crippled artist congenitally inhibited from finishing his projects. The problem is that Welles was all these things and more. No single tag line was adequate. His 'genius,' if it existed, was in recognizing his own complex personality, and in projecting it artistically."

Sarris's catalogue could be added to, endlessly, with a proliferation of paradox: elegist and imp; *bon vivant* and malcontent; brilliant bully and tender poet (of things lost, destroyed, unattainable); tale-spinner whose solemn, orotund tones imply the tragic, but can be read as stentorian irony; idealist and perfectionist, artist of grandeur and pageantry, increasingly drawn (or driven?) to pulp artifice, to the cheap and sleazy. Ever the restive shape-shifter, absolute in his insincerity – "Don't believe anything. It's all done with mirrors." – Welles has predictably been interpreted as an outlier for postmodernism. But one wonders how many of the qualities that serve this appraisal, particularly Welles's nomadism (of both spirit and place) and hucksterism, were dictated by a commercial system that could not accommodate his vast, visionary talent.

Welles's films often centre on a mystery of character that seems to be solved at the end – the most famous instance being the Rosebud "revelation" – but whose solution is illusory, a ruse or jape that perpetuates rather than penetrates the mystery. This enigma of being has often been employed to "explain" Welles's powers of self-invention, the conundrums he invented to confound analysis of his protean personality. Ironically, the elaborate devices he employed to that purpose resulted in a narrative and visual style that has exerted a powerful and enduring influence on world cinema. Truffaut's assertion that "everything that matters in cinema after 1940 has been influenced by CITIZEN KANE" is perhaps hyperbole – one can think of many contrary examples – but certainly admissible. The fabulism of Ruiz, the back street baroque of Van Sant's MALA NOCHE, the circular, spiralling narrative of Bertolucci's THE SPIDER'S STRATAGEM, the "dream of death" denouement of Erice's EL SOL DEL MEMBRILLO, the turvy visuals of von Trier's ZENTROPA, and the back-projected, "world in a snowball" artifice of Syberberg's OUR HITLER are a few of countless examples of Welles's effect on geographically and formally disparate directors. As with most things in the realm of Welles, this pervasive influence can be assigned a value (the potency and authenticity of a self-made aesthetic) whose opposite (the allure of ostentation) might also be true. Or not. – **James Quandt**

Acknowledgements: We are immensely grateful to David Schwartz at the American Museum of the Moving Image, New York, for his collegial assistance; also to Bruce Jenkins and Steffen Pierce, Harvard Film Archive, Cambridge; Charles Hopkins, UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles; Gary and Jillian Graver, The Orson Welles Archives, Los Angeles; Mike Thomas, Rialto Pictures, Los Angeles; Sue Jones, BFI Distribution, London; and the Munich Filmmuseum.

*Cinemathèque
Spring 2000*

IMPORTED 35MM PRINT!

CITIZEN KANE

Director: Orson Welles

USA 1941 119 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten

CITIZEN KANE is impossible to extricate from its reputation as the most impressive directorial debut, the most influential film, the greatest movie – period – in the history of cinema. Nevertheless, Welles's masterpiece withstands, demands, rewards repeated screenings and detailed analysis, especially when presented as it is here in a 35mm print. A complex series of interlocking and overlapping flashbacks, newsreels, and reminiscences chronicles the rise of a ruthless newspaper tycoon (modelled on William Randolph Hearst) whose power is won at the cost of his growing, then total, isolation. "Everything that matters in cinema since 1940 has been influenced by CITIZEN KANE" (François Truffaut).

preceded by:

HEARTS OF AGE

Director: Orson Welles

USA 1934 8 Minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, the students of Todd School

Welles's legendary amateur short film, made when he was 19, in which he plays Death. "It is typical in its combination of facetiousness, prankish high spirits, and an obsessive fascination with images of mortality" (C. Higham).

Saturday, March 18 2:00 p.m.

(Saturday Matinee – shown without HEARTS OF AGE; see page 41)

Saturday, March 18 6:30 p.m.

10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EVENT! AN AFTERNOON OF UNSEEN ORSON WELLES!

We welcome Gary and Jillian Graver, directors and curators of the Orson Welles Archives in Los Angeles, to present an eye-opening programme of "The Unseen Orson Welles." A close collaborator of Orson Welles since 1970, Gary Graver worked on many of the master's films, including THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WIND, FILMING OTHELLO, and F FOR FAKE. (He was also cinematographer on dozens of other films, including many exploitation classics.) In 1993 Graver made WORKING WITH ORSON WELLES, a documentary about their collaboration. Renowned for their informed, personal and fascinating presentations on all aspects of Welles's career, the Gravers have appeared at festivals, cinémathèques, and film institutes around the world with similar programmes. No Wellesian can afford to miss the chance, not only to see rare footage, including the 1955 Faust-themed film FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH, I LOVE LUCY MEETS ORSON, Welles's Japanese whiskey commercials, trailers for CITIZEN KANE and TOUCH OF EVIL, but also to share an afternoon with the man who worked most closely with Welles for the last 15 years of his life.

Sunday, March 19 1:00 p.m.

FILMING OTHELLO

Director: Orson Welles

West Germany/USA 1977 90 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Hilton Edwards

A once-in-a-lifetime chance to see an extremely rare work in which Welles documented the hair-raising circumstances surrounding the shooting of OTHELLO, the most problem-plagued project of his career (screening on March 28). As urbane a raconteur as ever, Welles recounts all the disasters – physical, financial, and otherwise – of the four-year shoot. During that time, OTHELLO's international cast – one of whom called the group "a chic but highly neurotic lumber camp" – was assembled, dispersed, and reassembled in Morocco, Venice, Dublin, Rome, while Welles scrambled to find the funding to finish the film. (Two of the best stories involve his sneaking equipment away from the set of a film in which he was acting to hurriedly shoot some sequences for OTHELLO; and the impromptu decision to stage a murder in a Turkish bath when costumes didn't arrive.) More revealing than most of Welles's "self-portraits," this is as witty and intimate as Welles ever got.

Gary and Jillian Graver will introduce the screening.

Sunday, March 19 4:30 p.m.

ORSON WELLES



THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS

IMPORTED 35MM PRINT!

THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS

Director: Orson Welles

USA 1942 88 minutes • Cast: Joseph Cotten, Agnes Moorehead

The pinnacle of Welles's achievement, despite drastic abridgement by its studio. An elegiac, sometimes emotionally harrowing portrait of an aristocratic American family whose downfall is precipitated by the forces of industrialism and mercantilism, THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS is distinguished by what Cocteau called its "calm beauty," its almost Proustian evocation of times past, and by its peerless ensemble acting. (Cotten and Moorehead give performances for the ages.) Many critics, including Andrew Sarris and Vincent Canby, argue that, even in its expurgated version, AMBERSONS is a greater film than CITIZEN KANE. Some, François Truffaut foremost among them, claim that the film constitutes an utter break with the aesthetic of KANE: "This film was made in violent contrast to CITIZEN KANE, almost as if by another filmmaker who detested the first and wanted to give him a lesson in modesty." Others argue that the film continues the "romantic grandeur" of KANE, indeed suggesting that it can be seen as something of a sequel: its central character George Minafer "is Charlie Kane given a decade's reprieve" (Joseph McBride).

Tuesday, March 21 8:45 p.m.

35MM ARCHIVAL PRINT!

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

Directors: Norman Foster (and uncredited Orson Welles)

USA 1942 71 minutes • Cast: Joseph Cotten, Orson Welles, Agnes Moorehead

Welles said of this bizarre, *noir* spy thriller with mock humility, "I designed the film, but can't properly be called the director." (Critics generally agree it's Welles all the way, though the film was ostensibly directed by Norman Foster.) Joseph Cotten gives one of his best performances as an American engineer who designs guns, and who finds himself caught up in an international smuggling plot when he attends a conference in Istanbul. Spirited away to a nightclub (where Dolores del Rio does an exotic dance), Cotten is soon locked in conflict with Banat, a Nazi executioner, and Colonel Haki, the Turkish head of police, played by none other than Welles (who modelled his looks and bearing on Josef Stalin). Often wildly exciting and suspenseful, and always crazed, JOURNEY INTO FEAR features extreme cinematography, all tilts and distortions, by Karl Struss, and a vast banquet of juicy supporting roles for Everett Sloane, Agnes Moorehead, and the memorably repulsive Jack Moss as Banat. "Breathless and intense . . . To select outstanding performances would be to name practically the entire cast" (The New York Times).

Thursday, March 23 6:30 p.m.

Cinémathèque Ontario
Spring 2000 Programme Guide March 9-May 6
p. 11-14



THE STRANGER

IMPORTED 35MM PRINT!

THE STRANGER

Director: Orson Welles

USA 1946 85 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Edward G. Robinson

A beautiful imported 35mm print of this *noirish* thriller, full of delicious Welles pleasures. A dark double of Hitchcock's *SHADOW OF A DOUBT*, the film gleefully rips away the veneer of a small Connecticut village called Harper. "There's nothing to be afraid of in Harper," insists one smug citizen, though the clock on the tower runs backwards when it runs at all, an apt metaphor for the town that time forgot. Into its manicured midst comes "the stranger," a Nazi war criminal who seduces the townsfolk with his silky Old World charm. He soon marries the judge's daughter (Loretta Young, desperate in her all-American domesticity) and settles into a quiet life as a college professor, until G-man Edward G. Robinson hits town and starts to ask questions. Welles's performance as the Nazi in the dell is unconstrained by subtlety: "The film demonstrates conclusively that Welles cannot play a self-effacing character; it would be like having Mae West play a nun" (Joseph McBride). Welles dismissed *THE STRANGER* as the worst of his films, but critics beg to differ, finding it "hugely enjoyable . . . [with] terrific camerawork from Russell Metty throughout" (*Time Out*).

Friday, March 24 8:45 p.m.

NEW 35MM PRINT!

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI

Director: Orson Welles

USA 1947 87 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Rita Hayworth

Jonathan Rosenbaum recently chose *THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI* as one of the hundred greatest American films (rather than the standard choice of *CITIZEN KANE*). Salty sailor's tale and funhouse *noir*, *LADY* looks better all the time, especially in this recently struck print. The hall of mirrors that gives the film its most famous sequence is an apt visual metaphor for the impenetrable narrative: "I'll give anyone who can tell me what this film is about a hundred bucks," studio boss Harry Cohn scoffed. Welles plays an Irish sailor, complete with rolling brogue, who is lured into a murder plot by a siren "from Shanghai" (Rita Hayworth, then married to Welles, but not for long). The "exotic" locales (aquariums and Acapulco), memorable villains (Everett Sloane and Glenn Anders as slithery killers, shark-like in their ways), glamourpuss zombie heroine, and visual excess – from a stop at the Chinese opera in San Francisco to that shoot-out in a hall of shards – help make this "Welles's most purely enjoyable film" (Joseph McBride). "Baroque even by *noir* standards" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*).

Saturday, March 25 6:30 p.m.

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI



MACBETH

35MM RESTORED ARCHIVAL PRINT!

MACBETH

Director: Orson Welles

USA 1948 107 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Jeannette Nolan

We are pleased to present the version of *MACBETH* that was painstakingly restored to its original form by UCLA Film Archives preservation officer Robert Gitt. It had been cut by 21 minutes, re-recorded to Americanize the dialogue, and then rarely shown. Gitt tracked down the missing footage and original Scottish-accented soundtrack, plus the Jacques Ibert overture and exit music. Critic Stanley Kauffman wrote about the restoration: "Whatever the details of Gitt's job, Welles's *MACBETH* is now a bold, exciting, innovative film." The innovations cannot be overstated. Long-time Welles collaborator Richard Wilson considers *MACBETH* "the greatest experimental American film ever made under the Hollywood studio system," and the restored footage includes a reel-long take. The studio was driven mad by the many retakes the ten-minute scene required. Eight parts Welles to two parts Shakespeare, *MACBETH* was shot around Salt Lake City and features low budget grandiosity, plus Welles in an intense, towering performance as the tormented Scots king, "one of the best elements of the film, thrilling and a bit poignant. . . . In every one of the big moments, Welles rises to the heroic" (Kauffman).

Tuesday, March 28 6:30 p.m.

IMPORTED 35MM PRINT!

OTHELLO

Director: Orson Welles

Morocco 1952 90 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Micheál MacLiammóir

When *OTHELLO*, winner of the Palme d'or at Cannes, was restored in the early nineties, the sense of revelation was universal; Vincent Canby wrote in *The New York Times* that this "restored 40-year-old treasure may rewrite cinema history." So extravagant was Welles's visual conception of Shakespeare's tragedy that when it was first released one critic complained that "satiety sets in; so much photographic beauty becomes a drug." Vivid and atmospheric, *OTHELLO* was shot in Italy and Morocco over four years in bits and pieces with a continually shifting cast; Welles went through four Iagos, three Cassios and three Desdemonas, and some of the film's richness derives from the simple methods he devised to disguise the changes. Whether evoking the splendour of Rome or the "barbarism" of Cyprus, Welles ensured that every image, captured on the fly in various Mediterranean outposts, was densely, extravagantly composed. In blackface, Welles himself plays the Moor whose love of his blonde bride Desdemona is turned to spite and suspicion by the evil Iago. "Crowned in glory . . . breathtaking" (Canby).

Tuesday, March 28 8:45 p.m.

OTHELLO





MR. ARKADIN

ARCHIVAL PRINT!

MR. ARKADIN (a.k.a. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT)

Director: Orson Welles

UK/Spain 1955 99 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Michael Redgrave

"One of Welles's most inventive and resonant films" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*), MR. ARKADIN retains the investigative structure of CITIZEN KANE – the life of a rich and powerful man is recounted by several people who knew him – but replaces KANE's tragic romanticism with a sordidness that is so far over the top that only it knows what happened to the Mars Explorer. A ruthless financier (Welles) hires a sleazy young cigarette smuggler to write a "confidential report" on his past, hoping to erase the last traces of his infamy so that his beloved daughter will never find the truth about him. Welles decks out this mock-tragic "chronicle of a death foretold" with down 'n' dirty rococo effects and tall tales, including that epitome of cynicism, the fable about the frog and the scorpion. "Irresistible" (*Time Out*).

This is an archival print of the version closest to Welles's original intentions.

Wednesday, March 29 8:45 p.m.

RESTORED 35MM PRINT!

TOUCH OF EVIL

Director: Orson Welles

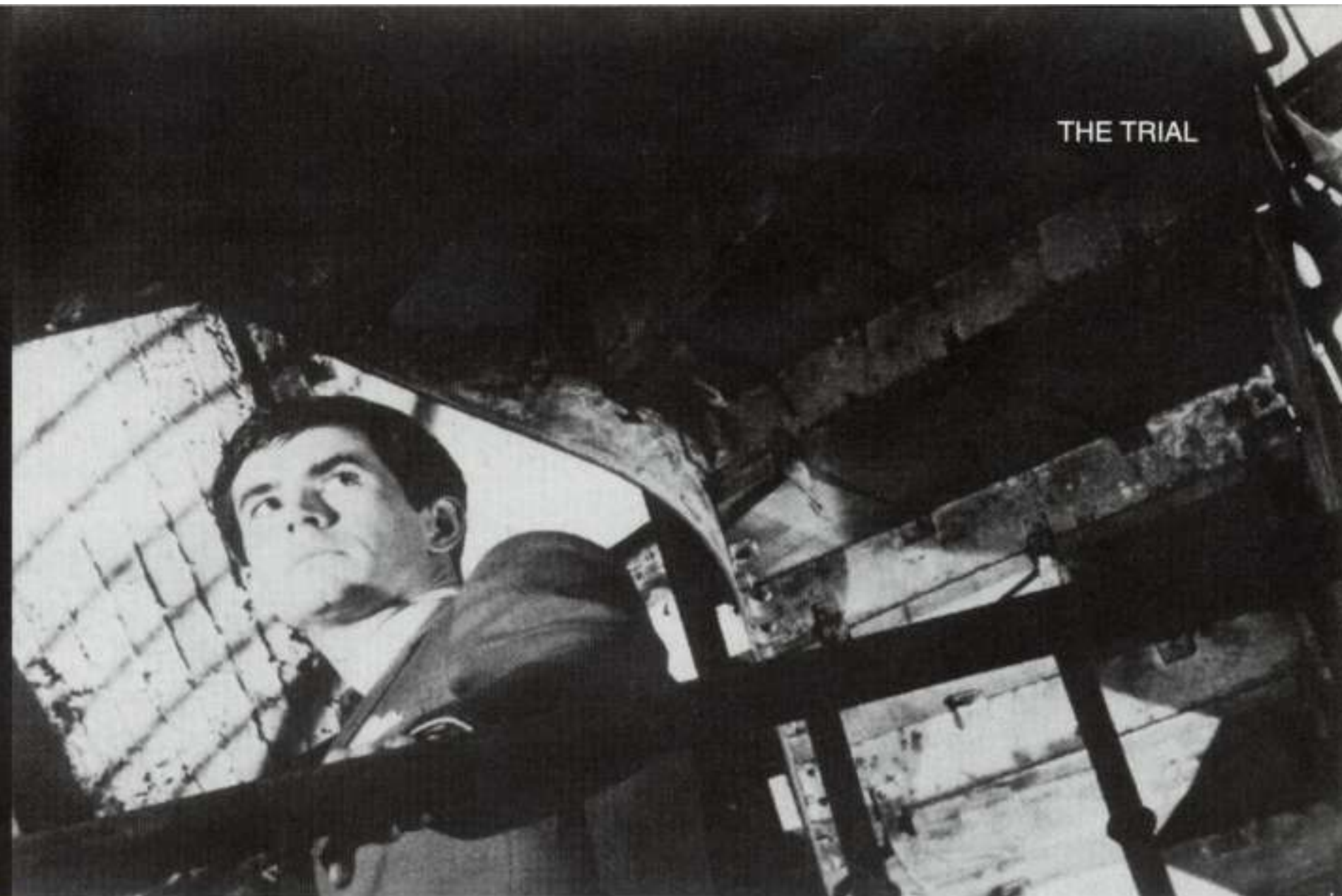
USA 1958 111 minutes • Cast: Charlton Heston, Orson Welles, Marlene Dietrich

"The high point in Orson Welles's career, after CITIZEN KANE" (Tom Conley), this marimba-propelled mambo of mendacity turns its every improbable shot into a feat of seedy sensibility. A narcotics agent (pre-NRA Charlton Heston) honeymooning in a Mexican border town with his new bride (Janet Leigh, warming up for PSYCHO) is caught in a labyrinth of corruption, drug peddling and murder, all of it engineered by the beastly, bloated police chief Hank Quinlan (Welles). ("Your future is all used up," growls cantina queen Marlene Dietrich to the chocolate-chewing police chief, "why don't you go home?") A big pleasure machine for everyone from structuralist exegetes to people with a taste for tawdry tabloids and palpable pulp, TOUCH OF EVIL is enlivened not only by its lurid high style, but also by a game-show cast of international has-beens, wannabes, and yet-to-bes, including Zsa Zsa Gabor, Akim Tamiroff, Dennis Weaver, and, most bizarre of all, an uncredited and androgynous Mercedes McCambridge who whines "I wanna' watch!" as a gang of hopped-up leather boys circle round Heston's virginal bride in an isolated motel room. Re-edited according to Welles's original intentions, this recently restored version brings new clarity and even more virtuoso fireworks to his south of the border high fifties fandango of bras, bongos, and barbiturates. An event.

Thursday, March 30 6:30 p.m.



TOUCH OF EVIL



THE TRIAL

RESTORED 35MM PRINT!

THE TRIAL (LE PROCÈS)

Director: Orson Welles

France/Italy/Germany 1962 120 minutes • Cast: Anthony Perkins, Jeanne Moreau, Orson Welles

"A film of infernal brilliance," proclaimed *Time* magazine when THE TRIAL was released, "perhaps the most exciting picture Orson Welles ever made." Welles often referred to THE TRIAL as his personal favourite, no doubt because he retained more artistic control on it than any other of his films. (He said he was his "own boss for the first time since CITIZEN KANE.") The director transposed Kafka's novel about Joseph K., an anonymous clerk on trial for an unnamed crime (played with undulating apprehension by Anthony Perkins), to a Wellesian world of baroque evil. Welles expanded Kafka's sense of "everyday anxiety," employing a multinational cast, baffling locales (most strikingly, the then unused Gare d'Orsay and some sinister public housing in Yugoslavia), and perspective-bending settings of low-ceilinged rooms and shadowy catacombs, to evoke an atmosphere of monstrous and universal delusion. This nightmarish vision of ravenous sex and depersonalization (the famous shot of a squadron of typists) is an intensely personal work, and for many "remains Welles's finest film since KANE" (Peter Cowie). We are pleased to present a recently struck print from a restored negative of this rarely screened work.

Thursday, March 30 8:45 p.m.

RARE 35MM ARCHIVAL PRINT!

CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT (FALSTAFF)

Director: Orson Welles

USA/Spain 1966 115 minutes • Cast: Orson Welles, Jeanne Moreau, John Gielgud

"One of Welles's best and least-seen movies" (Pauline Kael), CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT ranks high in the Welles pantheon. We present it in a rare 35mm archival print. CHIMES assembles all the sections that feature Falstaff from four Shakespeare plays and Holinshed's "Chronicles," and gives them remarkable continuity and power. Though Welles plays the rotund prankster to the hilt, he does not dominate the proceedings as much as one might expect. He is matched by, among others, John Gielgud as Henry IV, Keith Baxter as Prince Hal, and Margaret Rutherford as Hostess Quickly. (Jeanne Moreau is vividly weird as Doll Tearsheet.) The infamous technical problems that plagued the film, including the out-of-synch soundtrack for the first reel, no longer impede the film's greatness. "The film is a near-masterpiece. Welles's direction of the battle of Shrewsbury is unlike anything he has ever done – indeed, unlike any battle ever done on the screen before. It ranks with the finest of Griffith, John Ford, Eisenstein, Kurosawa" (Kael).

Tuesday, April 4 6:30 p.m.



CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT



THE IMMORTAL STORY

THE IMMORTAL STORY

(UNE HISTOIRE IMMORTELLE)

Director: Orson Welles

France 1968 63 minutes

Cast: Orson Welles, Jeanne Moreau

Long unavailable in Canada – this is likely to be your only chance to see it – Welles's elegiac late work has been called "one of the most poignantly personal works in all cinema" (Charles Silver, *Film Comment*). Welles adapted a novella by one of his favourite writers, Isak Dinesen, set in 19th-century Macao, in which a merchant (Welles) uses his wealth and power to turn fiction into fact. He and his clerk conspire to have "the immortal story," about a rich old man who pays to have a young sailor impregnate his wife, acted out for him. Jeanne Moreau is the woman hired to play the wife. Some critics have found the film perverse and tacky, but many others argue that it essential Welles, a late summation – in the manner of Dreyer's *GERTRUD* or Bresson's *L'ARGENT* – of many of the director's abiding concerns and central themes (particularly the nature of story-telling). Joseph McBride, for instance, calls it "Welles's *Tempest*" and argues that it is "*CITIZEN KANE* in negative." "Wise and beautiful . . . [Its] lingering wisdom haunts the mind long after the film is finished" (Gordon Gow).

Wednesday, April 5 8:45 p.m.

35MM IMPORTED PRINT!

F FOR FAKE

Director: Orson Welles

France 1973 85 minutes

Cast: Orson Welles, Clifford Irving

Long unavailable in North America and a key work in understanding the director, Welles's last released film before his death has more currency than ever, given its focus on fakery, forgery, and frauds – a natural subject for the master of legerdemain. Described as "a vertigo of lies" (James Naremore), *F FOR FAKE* is equal parts meditation, documentary, magic act, and con game. Proceeding from two dictums – Picasso's "Truth is a lie" and Welles's own "I am a charlatan" – this dizzying examination of hoaxes, big and small, famous and infamous, interweaves several stories: Elmyr de Hory's forgeries of Picasso, Matisse, and Modigliani; Clifford Irving's "biography" of Howard Hughes; Welles's "War of the Worlds" broadcast. The film itself becomes a kind of fake, bearing the signature of its auteur, but made by many hands (as Welles acknowledges in his meditation on the Chartres cathedral). "Don't believe anything," the director intones, "it's all done with mirrors." "A charming, witty meditation . . . stylish in all its parts" (Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*).

Thursday, April 6 6:30 p.m.

IT'S ALL TRUE

Directors: Orson Welles

(assembled by Richard Wilson, Myron Meisel & Bill Krohn)

USA 1942/1993 89 minutes

"A must-see" (Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*), the ironically named *IT'S ALL TRUE* is the painstaking reconstruction of a "lost," unfinished Welles work, a three-part film made at the behest of Nelson Rockefeller and the State Department, who wanted to promote Roosevelt's Good Neighbour Policy in Latin America. Having just finished *THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS* and *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*, Welles took a journey into folly, and went to Rio to realize this project. The reconstruction brings together the recently discovered materials Welles shot before having the film, like so many others, yanked from his control (by RKO, concerned about Welles's budget overruns and "unsavoury" slums-and-samba angle in what was supposed to be a promotional movie). The first section, "My Friend Bonito" is about a Mexican boy and his bull. The second and most famous is "Four Men and a Raft," based on a true story about four fishermen from northeastern Brazil who travel down the Amazon to Rio to demand redress from the government. The last and least finished is "The Story of Samba." The reconstruction skilfully enriches this material with interviews with Welles and some of the Brazilians who participated in the film. "This documentary is a long, seductive footnote to a cinema legend" (Canby).

Thursday, April 6 8:45 p.m.

ORSON WELLES

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YYZ acknowledges the support of The Canada Council; the Ontario Arts Council; and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

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