

Document Citation

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|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Title | 'Don Quixotte' by Orson Welles |
| Author(s) | Oja Kodar |
| Source | <i>Publisher name not available</i> |
| Date | |
| Type | speech script |
| Language | English |
| Pagination | |
| No. of Pages | 3 |
| Subjects | |
| Film Subjects | Don Quixote, Welles, Orson, 1954 |

"DON QUIXOTTE"

BY ORSON WELLES

OJA KODAR

Orson was born on a 6th of May and, of course, it can only be coincidence if his birthday and the tribute being paid to him today by the Cinémathèque of France and the International Film Festival of Cannes follow each other within a few days.

Orson had a principle : he did not wish to receive any presents on that special day. He thought it was up to him to give presents to all the people he loved, and God knows he loved the people of France. I know the feeling was mutual.

I remember a particularly significant anecdote : we were stuck in the usual traffic jams in the Place de la Concorde- a man on a bicycle stopped level with our car door, leaned over towards the window, made a "thumbs up" sign and with a big smile said :

" BRAVO FALSTAFF ! "

Orson was delighted and turning to me said : "It was really worth making THAT film, if only for THAT man there !".

Today -in Orson's name- I bring a present to "that" man, to "that" friend, to "that" unknown spectator who -I know- is out there waiting in this theatre.

I would like to thank him from the bottom of my heart for his gesture of appreciation and encouragement.

Of course, I do not know his name or his profession, but I doubt if he is in the cinema profession.

That is why -with your permission- I owe him two or three explications on what we shall be seeing in a few minutes.

I am a little worried about having accepted to show some extracts of Don Quixotte which Orson never wished to show anybody before it was finished.

It was easy for me -thanks to the warm and friendly presence of Costa-Gavras to give the Cinémathèque -which Orson liked and respected- the negative of Don Quixotte. It was much more difficult for me to accept that certains portions of the developed film should be shown on the occasion of this tribute -portions which I was able to find quickly- in our place in Los Angeles.

But I understand why the Festival and the Cinémathèque should ask me to do this.

In fact, Don Quixotte has been a mystery and a myth for more than 30 years. Many people who considered themselves Orson's close friends even doubted its existence. But, in fact, whenever it was financially possible -all alone- without real technical means -without synchronised sound- he would make some more bits. Sometimes months and years would go by, but he always came back to it.

For Orson, making a film held the excitement of the painter's first brush strokes on a canvas... But, for him, the final gesture could only be accomplished during the editing of the film ; here lay the essence of his creation.

For this reason, I hope you will feel a sense of discovery when you see these pictures, for this is not even a first editing.

At times, you will see rushes where Orson had not yet made his final choice. It is a sketch -a quick study- a rough of a working copy -old and well used- scratched -not even marked off.

In this work, you will see scenes between Don Quixotte and Sancho Pança wonderfully played by FRANCISCO RIGUERA and AKIM TAMIROFF, where Orson wished to dub the voices himself.

Forgive me for repeating myself... but this is only a fragmented view where -in spite of everything- flashes of his genius -of his humour- of his incredible appetite for life - will be apparent to those who loved Orson. And I know many of them are here in this theatre.

All I hope is that in this work you will be able to recognize -as does any cutter of precious stones- the diamond in all its brilliance...

In effect, Don Quixotte is a dream which Orson never finished, a dream from which he was never able to rouse himself.

THANK YOU

OJA KODAR