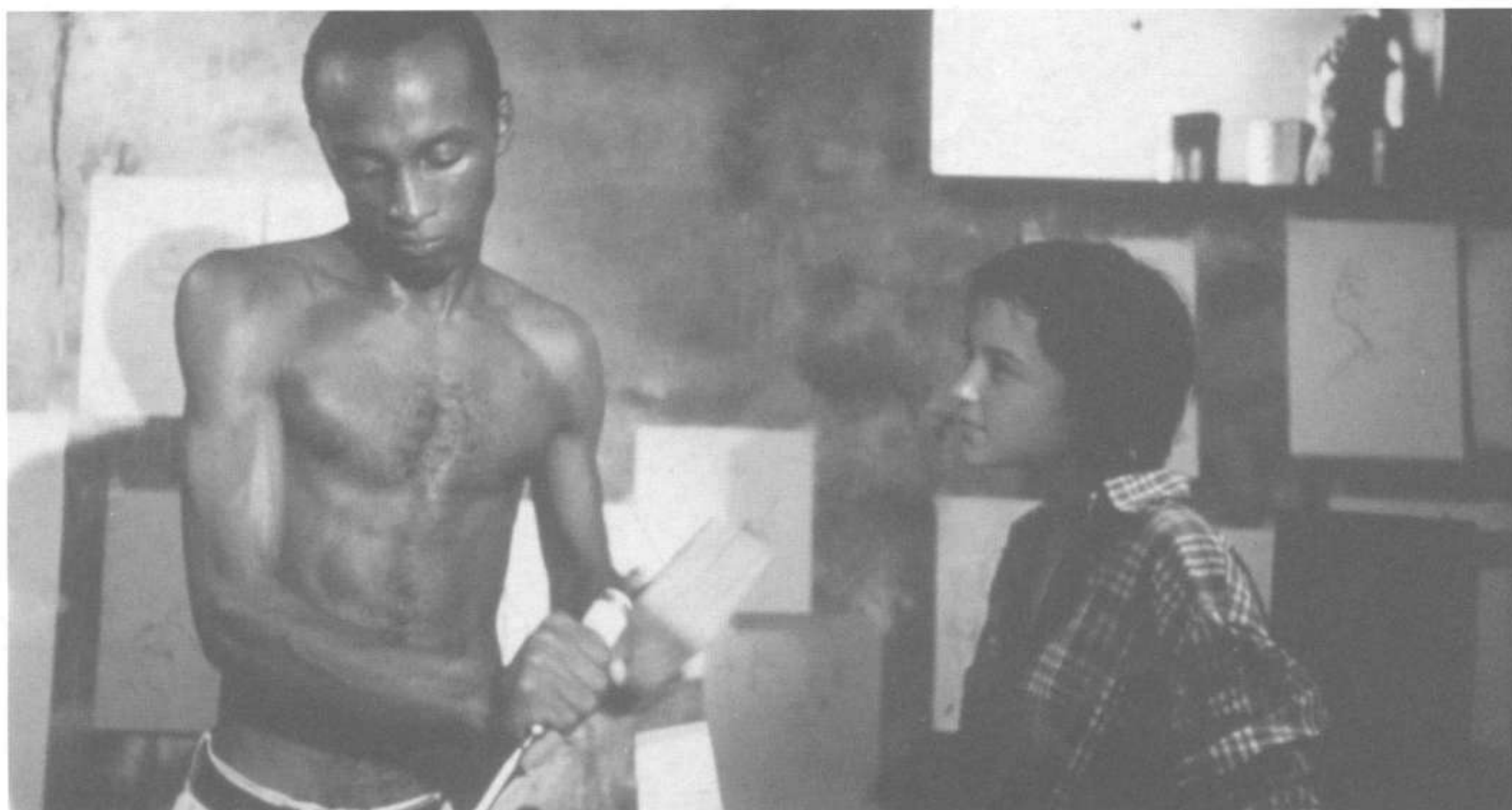


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1998



A la place du cœur

Robert Guédiguian

FRANCE, 1998

113 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **AGAT Films/Cie**

Producer: **Gilles Sandoz**

Screenplay: **Robert Guédiguian, Jean Louis Milesi**

Cinematographer: **Bernard Cavalie**

Editor: **Bernard Sasia**

Production Designer: **Michel Vandestien**

Sound: **Laurent Lafran**

Principal Cast: **Ariane Ascaride, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, Gérard Meylan, Jacques Boudet, Laure Raoust, Alexandre O Gou**

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Like his affecting *Marius et Jeannette*, Robert Guédiguian's *A la place du cœur* is set amidst the working-class neighbourhoods of Marseille, where people from a variety of races and creeds have come to live: blacks, whites, Arabs, Jews. It is a true ethnic stew of tensions, pregnant with violence and hatred, all stirred by those divisions which inform society but which many have chosen to transcend. Guédiguian's project is a social realist one, much like Ken Loach's with a romantic sensibility appended, a combination which makes his work accessible and appealing to all.

The story of this film revolves around the love that a young couple of different racial origins feels for each other. Clim, a slight, doll-faced brunette, has loved François since she was a young girl and the two of them went swimming together in their native Mediterranean. However, Clim is white, and François, whom everyone knows as Baby, is black and adopted. Deciding to marry now that they are of age, their impending happiness is brutally dashed when a racist police officer accuses Baby of raping a white woman, a Bosnian who returns to Sarajevo after filing charges. Clim is pregnant, and instead of planning for her child's birth she finds herself visiting Baby in prison and seeing a lawyer who will defend her lover.

Melodrama of this kind needs a deft touch, and Guédiguian proves that he is up to the task. His film never lapses into cliché. Instead it is full of wonderfully warm and real

moments between people, parents, their children, lovers, friends, total strangers. In their gracious acceptance of Baby and of their daughter's decision to marry him, and in the way they must draw on all their resources to fight for his freedom, there is an almost Renoiresque quality to Clim's family. In the end this film is a celebration of the indomitable human spirit, told through the eyes and lives of a working-class family with steely resolution.

■ Piers Handling

Robert Guédiguian was born in Marseille, France, in 1953. He has been directing films since 1980. Filmography: *Dernier été* (80), *Rouge midi* (83), *Ki lo sa?* (85), *Dieu vomit les tièdes* (89), *L'argent fait le bonheur* (92), *A la vie, à la mort!* (94), *Marius et Jeannette* (96) and *A la place du cœur* (98).

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