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Woody Allen's *Zelig* (1983), from his screenplay, with Allen, Mia Farrow, Garrett Brown, and Stephanie Farrow, is a *Citizen Kane* of screen spoofs in the form of a marvelously witty media probe. Allen's unifying thread is his abiding affection for that very stylized past that masquerades as "reality" in period newsreels, and thus *Zelig* is part homage to *Kane* itself and part replica of that classic's send-up of *The March of Time*. Thanks to magical editing and blending of forms, Allen not only plays a chameleon capable of changing shape, appearance, and color depending on whatever person or group he happens to encounter, but he also manages to submerge himself in the conception by becoming an almost unobtrusive detail in a majestic mise-en-scène. Allen demonstrates a scrupulous respect for the form and gravity of the newsreel illusion and for its ridiculously hammy and touchingly self-conscious rendition of the past. *Zelig* is such a tapestry of illusionist nostalgia that everyone behind and in front of the camera meshes magnificently into a curiously vicarious masterwork. Despite all the bubbling merriment, the very elongation of the illusion creates a comedy more about art than about life and one whose popularity may be perilously restricted to the cognoscenti. (Co-feature: Allen's *Annie Hall*)
Regency: also Monday, 2:15, 5:25, 8:35.