

## Document Citation

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## Tuesday

Ingmar Bergman's **The Magician** (1958), from his screenplay, with Max von Sydow, Ake Fridell, Naima Wifstrand, and Gunnar Björnstrand, brought to a close the grandiose triptych begun with *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*. It was a period when Bergman was successfully bewitching the art film as the dark prophet of Western Civilization. These wintry abstractions can still work powerfully for the guileless, though they can also be seen in retrospect as glumly metaphysical propositions, laying out the "larger questions" as baldly and earnestly as Ph.D. theses. Each is distinguished by the gothic pretensions and stark black-and-white cinematography of Gunnar Fischer. The director put these films behind him during his Sven Nykvist period, and every serious film lover has to do the same sooner or later. *The Magician* is the most gimmicky of the trio and indulges Bergman's childhood passion for magic lanterns and mystifying poses. In a tense acting duel, Björnstrand's man of reason is counterposed against von Sydow's flaming mystic, whose portrait of the domineering artist as a charlatan reflected Bergman's own self-doubts at the time. The men clash titanically over issues of reputations and the existence of the supernatural, but frequently the minor subtexts, especially scenes featuring such icons of Bergman sensuality as Ingrid Thulin and Bibi Andersson, contribute even more flavorsome dramatic material. **Museum of Modern Art: 3 and 6:30 p.m.** ■

*Research: Eric Monder*