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Babel Opera

(Babel Opéra, ou la répétition de Don Juan)

Belgium, 1985, 94 mins., Dolby
In French with English subtitles

The latest film from Belgium's best known director, André Delvaux, is, as the title suggests, built around preparations for a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the splendid old Theatre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels. As the rehearsals get underway, characters involved on the periphery of the production act out roles similar to those in the opera itself. François, who is planning an ambitious open-air production of the opera, is married to the charming Sandra, but his womanizing ways are driving a wedge between them. When he starts an attempted conquest of Stéphane, Sandra is enraged, as is François' assistant, Ben, who is in love with Stéphane himself. . . . Delvaux, through his immaculate imagery, brings an extra dimension to the piece. The misty, slightly sinister countryside north of Antwerp, where François goes to seek locations for his production, becomes a major element in the film itself. Perhaps this is a film that could only be made in Belgium, where the spreading of urban communities threatens what's left of some of Europe's loveliest and most mysterious countryside. Visually and aurally (with an excellent Dolby stereo mix), the film is impeccable. It's a mood piece. . . . Those who surrender to its style will be well rewarded.

—David Stratton, *Variety*

Directed by André Delvaux. Written by Delvaux, Denise Debbaut, Jacques Sojcher. Produced by Jean-Claude Batz. Photo: Michel Baudour. Music: Mozart. Cast: François Beukelaers, Stéphane Escoffier, Alexandra Vandernoot, Ben Van Ostade, Jacques Sojcher. Production Co./Print Source: La Nouvelle Imagerie, Brussels.

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