



JANUS FILMS PRESENTS



Marcel Pagnol's MARSEILLE TRILOGY

Marcel Pagnol's epic love story hunkers down on the waterfront of Marseille, where restless young barkeep Marius is in love with the cockle monger Fanny but cannot quell his wanderlust. Their bittersweet saga, stretching over years and humming with warmth and generosity, plays out among a swirl of comically provincial characters, led by Marius's splenetic father César, who battles propriety and his own emotional tempests to keep his family, and his community, together. Directed by three different filmmakers but governed by Pagnol's distinctive voice and prescient filmmaking vision, the trilogy is an unprecedented marriage of cinematic and theatrical techniques that is saturated in piquant Provençal flavor and brimming with some of early cinema's greatest performances.

MARIUS

Marius and Fanny, two young shopkeepers on the harbor front of Marseille, always seemed destined to marry, but Marius cannot overcome his urge to break free and voyage on the open sea. His father, César, is oblivious to the crisis, as is Honoré Panisse, the aged widower who is also vying for Fanny's hand—until Fanny, knowing Marius's happiness lies in the balance, changes their lives forever.

Director: Alexander Korda
Writer: Marcel Pagnol

France • 1931 • 127 minutes • Black & White •
1.19:1 aspect ratio • In French with English subtitles •
Stereo • Screening format: DCP

FANNY

Picking up moments after the end of *Marius*, this film follows Fanny's grief after Marius's departure—and her realization that she's pregnant. Panisse continues courting her and embraces the baby's impending arrival as a gift, so long as its paternity remains a secret. Fanny and Panisse wed, but after her baby's birth, Marius returns unexpectedly and demands what he believes is still his.

Director: Marc Allégret
Writer: Marcel Pagnol

France • 1932 • 127 minutes • Black & White •
1.19:1 aspect ratio • In French with English subtitles •
Stereo • Screening format: DCP

CÉSAR

Twenty years have passed: Fanny's son, Césariot, is in a military academy, and Panisse is on his deathbed, where the local priest demands that he tell his son about his biological father. Panisse refuses and dies; Fanny then divulges the secret, sending Césariot on a search for his own identity and for Marius, whose life has been fraught with calamity and poverty. Now free to follow her love, Fanny seeks out Marius as well, and with César's help resolves their star-crossed destinies.

Director: Marcel Pagnol
Writer: Marcel Pagnol

France • 1936 • 142 minutes • Black & White •
1.37:1 aspect ratio • In French with English subtitles •
Stereo • Screening format: DCP

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BIOGRAPHIES

Marcel Pagnol

DIRECTOR: CÉSAR
PRODUCER/WRITER:
MARIUS, FANNY, CÉSAR

A virtual institution in France and an integral figure of its cultural identity, Marcel Pagnol was born in 1895 in Aubagne, on the southern edge of the Provence region, near Marseille. He was the son of an anticlerical teacher and a sweet-natured seamstress; and, as he recounts in his late-in-life memoirs, he spent a childhood soaked in Provençal sunshine, among the irascible characters of the area's colorful, rustic society. After avoiding World War I by way of a diagnosis of "frail" health, Pagnol worked for years as an English instructor. But he had harbored artistic ambitions since his early teen years, and in 1927, he finally decided to pursue playwriting full time. Five years earlier, he had moved to Paris, where he had begun collaborating with other writers—his debut production, *Merchants of Glory*, was cowritten with Paul Nivoix, in 1925. His next play, *Topaze*, a 1928 satire about greed, corruption, and nascent consumerism, was a hit; three film adaptations were produced in 1933 (in France, America, and Egypt), and it has been remade six times since.

Still pining for the Provence of his youth, Pagnol next wrote the stage play *Marius*, the first of his distinctive drama-comedies about the working-class Marseillais characters he knew so well. It was a huge hit for the stage, and he soon followed it with a sequel, *Fanny*. With the arrival of talkies, it became clear to Pagnol that film offered a way to expand his work's audience by the millions. Unsure of his own capabilities with this new medium, however, and having received financial help from Paramount, he hired traveling British expat Alexander Korda to film *Marius* in 1931, and its positive reception gave Pagnol

his first taste of cinematic success. After hiring Marc Allégret to direct *Fanny* in 1932, he formed his own production studio in the countryside around Marseille and set about learning how to operate a camera and make films himself. Rarely straying from the regional terrain and voice that he became known for, he began filming his plays—writing, producing, and directing sixteen movies over twenty years, including *Angèle* (1934), *César* (1936), *Harvest* (1937), *The Baker's Wife* (1938), *The Well-Digger's Daughter* (1940), *Manon des sources* (1952), and *Letters from My Windmill* (1954). Pagnol would often simultaneously craft his projects as both theatrical plays and film scripts—all while continuing to publish novels, memoirs, and French translations of Shakespeare's works.

Pagnol was almost always scrupulously neutral about politics. During the German occupation of France, the only film he made included a radio broadcast of a speech by Marshal Philippe Pétain. After the war, he snuck in a bit of a speech by Charles de Gaulle to replace it.

In 1946, Pagnol was elected to one of the forty seats in the Académie française—becoming the first filmmaker so honored. While some critics in the early sound era decried Pagnol's express commitment to using cinema simply to "record" theater, the continued vitality of his films, and their ardor for the craft of acting, became staples for

FUN FACT

About cinema, Pagnol once commented: "The silent film is the art of fixing, printing, and distributing pantomime; the talking film is the art of fixing, printing, and distributing productions of the stage."

Because of his natural settings, on-location recording, and use of local actors, however, many filmmakers and critics consider him a significant precursor to neorealism.

the generations of filmmakers that followed him. Both Vittorio De Sica and Roberto Rossellini saw in Pagnol's films the germs of neorealism, and the noted critic André Bazin cast him as a central figure in the humanist lineage of moviemaking. It's fair to say that the patient, dialogue-heavy films of Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, and Jean Eustache would have been radically different without Pagnol's precedent.

At the time of his death in 1974, Pagnol had become a beloved mandarin at home in France, where he was the esteemed author of an entire subset of French cultural tradition. His scripts are still being adapted for the screen, especially by actor/director Daniel Auteuil, as filmmakers and audiences continue to yearn for a return to the early twentieth-century Provençal wilds and docksides of his original works.

MARCEL PAGNOL FILMOGRAPHY

1931 *Marius* (screenplay only)
1932 *Fanny* (screenplay only)
1934 *Jofroi*
1934 *Angèle*
1935 *Merlusse*
1935 *Cigalon*
1936 *Topaze* (second version)
1936 *César*
1937 *Harvest* (*Regain*)
1938 *Le schpountz*
1938 *The Baker's Wife*
(*La femme du boulanger*)
1939 *Monsieur Brotonneau*
(screenplay only)

1940 *The Well-Digger's Daughter*
(*La fille du puisatier*)
1941 *La prière aux étoiles* (unfinished)
1945 *Naïs*
1948 *La belle meunière*
1951 *Topaze* (third version,
starring Fernandel)
1952 *Manon of the Spring*
(*Manon des sources*)
1953 *Carnival* (screenplay only)
1954 *Letters from My Windmill*
(*Les lettres de mon moulin*)

FUN FACT

Marcel Pagnol was born on February 28, 1895, in Aubagne, France. As he told it, on the same day, a few miles away, Auguste and Louis Lumière were immortalizing the arrival of a train in the station of La Ciotat, in one of the earliest creations of moving pictures.

BIOGRAPHIES

Alexander Korda

DIRECTOR: **MARIUS**

Hungarian-born Korda directed his first films (none of which survive) in his twenties, while in Budapest in the years before WWI. After the right-wing Horthy government took power in Hungary in 1920, he emigrated, moving first to Vienna, then Berlin, Hollywood, and France. In 1931, he finally landed in England, where he founded London Films and became one of Britain's most successful director/producers, with credits including *Things to Come* (1936), *The Four Feathers* (1939), *That Hamilton Woman* (1941), *The Fallen Idol* (1948), and *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951).

Marc Allégret

DIRECTOR: **FANNY**

A protégé of André Gide, Allégret first dabbled in filmmaking while accompanying Gide on a trip to Africa—along the way, he made the short documentary *Voyage au Congo* (1927). With the coming of sound film his directing career took off in earnest, and over the course of forty years, he earned a reputation for precision, eloquent staging, and a light touch with actors. His films include *Zouzzou* (1934), *Heart of Paris* (1937), *Le corsaire* (1939), and *Maria Chapdelaine* (1950).

Pierre Fresnay

MARIUS

On the stage from his youth, Fresnay had his debuts in film and in theater (with the Comédie-Française) in 1915, at the age of eighteen. A leading man through the silent era, Fresnay became internationally renowned only after appearing in Pagnol's trilogy; thereafter, he was a star of French film for decades, appearing most famously as the officer POW in Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion* (1937).

FUN FACT

Pagnol and René Clair started their own magazine, *Les cahiers du film*, in 1933 so that they could have a public forum to debate the nature of cinema.



Orane Demazis

FANNY

Demazis was born in Oran, Algeria, in 1894, and after training at the Conservatory of Dramatic Art in Paris, she spent years as a leading lady on the stage. She met Pagnol in 1923; soon he was writing stage parts for her—including the role of Fanny. Predominantly a doyenne of the theater, Demazis acted sporadically in films, rounding out her filmography in the 1970s with appearances in films by Luis Buñuel, Jacques Demy, and André Téchiné.

Fernand Charpin

HONORÉ PANISSE

The only local-born Marseillais among the trilogy's stars, Charpin became a music-hall star after seeing action during WWI. A fateful meeting with Raimu and Pagnol in 1928 led to his taking the role of Panisse in the trilogy. He then starred in scores of films in the years before World War II (eleven in 1938 alone), including Pagnol's *The Baker's Wife* (1938) and *The Well-Digger's Daughter* (1940). Surviving that war as well, Charpin died suddenly of a heart attack in 1944, at the age of fifty-seven, just months after the liberation of Paris.

FUN FACT

Marcel Pagnol met *Fanny* actor Orane Demazis in 1923, after his arrival in Paris. She was nineteen and already acting in a stage drama by Emile Augier. She originated the character of Fanny onstage and then appeared in many of Pagnol's subsequent films. In 1933, they had a son, Jean-Pierre, together.

Raimu

CÉSAR

Born Jules Auguste Muraire in 1883, this voracious actor was already a music-hall comedy star, with roles at the Folies Bergère, when Pagnol cast him as César in the 1929 stage production of *Marius*. More or less instantly, he became one of France's most beloved thespians, whose career momentum coming out of the war years was suddenly halted in 1946, when he died of a heart attack following a minor operation. A small museum honoring Raimu's memory operates in Cogolin, France, near the town where he was born.

ABOUT THE RESTORATION

This 4K restoration was supervised by Nicolas Pagnol and Hervé Pichard of La Cinémathèque française.

The nitrate negatives were scanned in 4K resolution by immersion to preserve the photographic quality of the images and remove any surface scratches. Next, the biggest defects (stains, tears, etc.), which were caused by wear and tear to the film, were treated frame by frame. Over 400 hours of work was undertaken to obtain the final result.

The color grading, done in proxy 2K resolution, was supervised by

chief operator Guillaume Schiffman, a fan of Marcel Pagnol's films. He brought his own vision and technical skills, while respecting the contrasts and light density specific to the early 1930s, as originally created by director of photography Theodore J. Pahle.

Likewise, the Marseille Trilogy was shot using very early sound-recording processes and required careful, precise work to restore the intelligibility of the dialogue without altering the original sound. The restoration was carried out using the original soundtrack nitrate negative and an optical soundtrack print to fill in any missing audio.

THE LASTING INFLUENCE OF PAGNOL'S MARSEILLE TRILOGY

The Marseille Trilogy remains a signature achievement of cinema's first half century—a rich and leisurely exploration of human foibles and generosity that is both “stagy” and fluidly cinematic; scrupulously “local” (there was concern at first that northern French viewers would feel excluded by its accents and patois) and, it turns out, fabulously universal. As Pagnol himself often proclaimed (much to the chagrin of the medium's new proselytizers), his films were always and exclusively conceived as vehicles for preserving theater—industrializing the stage experience, as it were, so it could reach the widest possible audience. As soon as *Marius* proved a hit onstage in 1929, Pagnol only had to wait for the innovation of the talkie to make its way to France in order to produce it as a film. Nearly a year later, with funding from Paramount, that opportunity arose. A moviemaking greenhorn, Pagnol hired the itinerant, Hungarian-born Brit Alexander Korda to direct—but only after Pagnol himself had chosen and rehearsed the cast, built the sets, and laid out the staging. In the same manner, he hired Marc Allégret, an up-and-comer with a handful of credits, to helm the trilogy's second film, *Fanny* (1932). That was all the time he needed for apprenticeship—starting in 1934, Pagnol took complete control over his projects, directing five films before rounding out his Marseille Trilogy with *César* (1936), which

had not had a previous life as a theatrical production. Thus, the three films are subtly different. Korda's is the moodiest and most focused, with moments of silent poetry (the pan across Marius's bedroom boat pictures) and a deft eye for comedy (the greatest contract-bridge game scene in movie history). Allégret's is airier, more French, more relaxed, and more attuned to landscape. Finally, Pagnol's capper, *César*, is relatively Spartan, more trusting of our investment in the characters and, given that it takes place nearly twenty years after the events in *Fanny*, older-feeling, as if our experience of *César*, Marius, Fanny, Panisse, and Césariot is slowed along with the characters' aging metabolisms.

Truth be told, nothing happens in a hurry in these films—and that's an integral part of their unique personalities. Distended, ranting arguments littered with detours and misunderstandings are de rigueur; we can't understand these people by way of just a hint or a gesture, but require blocks of time spent beside them as they noisily fuss and gossip and disappoint each other. This is Pagnol's ultimate secret weapon: beginning with what might seem like buffoonish vaudeville caricatures, and then letting them reveal themselves over time, as their defenses and energies are probed and pared away, exposing their interconnectedness, mutual history, and deathless bonds. Look at how Charpin's

Panisse evolves, without really changing at all, from a scheming, selfish old fool in the first film to the community's most beloved character, for whom even his adversaries hold a place in their hearts, by the time of his death in the third.

With these films, and a few others made in the four-year gap between *Fanny* and *César*, Pagnol became—along with René Clair, Jean Renoir, Abel Gance, and Raymond Bernard—one of French cinema's sound-era giants, and unlike some of those director's films, Pagnol's have never been out of print or unavailable. This hasn't prevented filmmakers and audiences from revisiting what is famously Pagnolian. The Marseille Trilogy has been remade in its entirety four times (once as an opera), and the final third of Daniel Auteuil's massive remake is still in production.

FUN FACT

Pioneer restaurateur Alice Waters was so inspired by the Marseille Trilogy that she named her famous Berkeley, California, eatery Chez Panisse in homage to the sentiment, comedy, and informality of the films.