

NOVEMBER

FESTIVAL FILM
Tuesday 21st 2.30pm

MR. PIP

CLOSE-UPS EVENT
Thursday 23rd 7.30-9.30pm
Keep the Home Fires Burning

FESTIVAL FILM

Wednesday 29th 2.30pm

RESTORATION

DECEMBER

Thursday 14th 6.30pm

Christmas Party

Mulled wine & mince pies in Crofters

FILM

Thursday 14th 7.30pm

TRADING PLACES

www.klccc.uk

Carmen

Carlos Saura,
Spain 1983

Script by Carlos Saura and Antonio Gades, from the novel by Prosper Mérimée

Antonio Gades Antonio
Laura del Sol Carmen
Paco de Lucía Paco
Marisol Pepa Flores
Cristina Hoyos Cristina
Juan Antonio Jiménez Juan
José Yepes Pepe Girón
Sebastián Moreno Escamillo
Compañía Antonio Gades Dancers

"Don't run! **DON'T RUN!!!**" bawls the angry choreographer. The camera tracks back and forth across a bare wooden stage as dancers with impossibly long legs and muscular ankles hammer and stamp out a repertoire of flamenco rhythms before collapsing in sweaty exhaustion. Cultural re-appropriation is under way, and it's rough work.

Time Out's snarky reviewer described *Carmen* as "the story which did



for Spain what the Hovis ads did for Yorkshire". A potboiler novella written in 1845 by Prosper Mérimée, a Frenchman who had visited Spain for six months fifteen years previously, it was turned into a lush opera in 1875 by Georges Bizet, a Frenchman not known to have visited Spain at all. Its lurid tale of a proud army captain brought down by a wild temptress was considered scandalous when it opened, and Bizet dropped

dead suddenly after thirty-three performances, aged 36, convinced he had misjudged the public mood and penned a failure. But it went on to be a huge favourite, rarely off the stage since. It portrays the Spanish as quarrelsome, vain and promiscuous peasants, but the characters are strongly-drawn, the plot taut and the richly-orchestrated showtunes (of doubtful Spanish tonality) are easy to hum and thrilling to hear. For over a

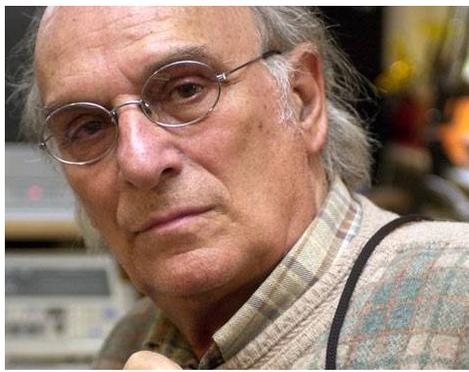
century it has represented “the spirit of Spain” to the world, and a proud Spaniard is entitled not to like it much.

Carlos Saura scripted and directed three films, the “Flamenco Trilogy”, with the renowned choreographer Antonio Gades, all featuring Gades, his long-term collaborator Cristina Hoyos and his dance company. *Blood Wedding / Bodas de sangre* [1981] is based on a 1932 play by Federico García Lorca, while *Love The Magician / El amor brujo* [1986] is an elaboration of Manuel de Falla’s 1915 ballet or “play for orchestra”: both soundly Spanish texts. But in the middle comes this awkward cuckoo-chick, and the film is about the struggle to teach it some local manners.

Beginning with the music: Paco de Lucia doggedly tries to bend the *habanera* into the augmented tunings and clipped rhythms of flamenco. “I don’t think the tune will do for dancing... you’re going to be left standing on one leg like a stork”. But this is about the last time where the men are in charge of anything here: the search to cast a young Carmen (younger than the furious Hoyos) is what propels the narrative. From here on in, the men are kidding themselves, and the women are not fooled for a moment.

Saura’s style in the Trilogy is that of the “constructed rehearsal”: in a bare studio the dancers build up the material, merging a naturalistic meta-narrative with set-piece dances. In *Carmen*, Cristina and Carmen clash raucously – “don’t go near the brambles”- in the *tabacalera* scene, the first sign of trouble. By the time Antonio fights Juan in the gambling scene (with an outrageous bait-and-switch at the end of it), it is all stamping, shadows and tense silence: he has lost the plot even as he tries to direct it. The men shrink to the edges, like the amiable costume stitcher, or powerless like the frowning boy in the castanet class, who can scarcely act on the teacher’s demand for “breasts like a bull’s horns, but full and warm”. Pose, passion and power are all here, but not all of it is on the dance floor.

Flamenco is after all a conservative



and severe artform. Antonio is trying to make it relevant and modern, rescuing it from both Bizet’s colourful syrup and the prettified version from which Carmen makes a living in a nightclub. Lurking underneath it might be the desire of 1980s Spain to drag itself out of forty years of backwardness under Franco, of dancing to please tourists, to reclaim anger and passion as wholesome things. But those primal peasant urges get in the way, and so in the end does Bizet. Sung French is the soundtrack for the moments when Spanish has nothing to say. Paco hacks away at the tunes; sticks and feet pound out stark rhythms to keep the singing away; but Bizet keeps creeping back. The celebrated *toreador* song is turned into a farce for a birthday party, (though the final encounter with the preening bullfighter himself is anything but funny) but the *habanera* slides in again and again, seeping over the ending like blood from a knife wound.

Antonio Gades died of cancer in 2004, aged 68. A lifelong Communist Party member – he was born six weeks after Franco seized power - and advocate of Catalan independence, he chose to have his ashes scattered in Cuba. Saura, also a radical – “Franco took so long to die we had time to buy champagne”, he reminisced in a *Guardian* interview – is still active, and Cristina Hoyos lives in her hometown of Seville where she runs a ballet company. Spanish cinema, as with the rest of the country, has come a long way since. Most cineastes would name Pedro Almodóvar as the face of its films today, but wisely, he keeps well away from the stern demands of flamenco and Saura’s legacy.

CARLOS SAURA ATARÉS

Born 4 January 1932

Huesca, Spain

Films as director

1955 : Flamenco (short film)
1956 : El Pequeño río
Manzanares (short film)
1957 : La Tarde del domingo
(short film)
1958 : Cuenca
1959 : Los golfos
1963 : Llanto por un bandido
1965 : La caza
1967 : Peppermint Frappé
1968 : Stress-es tres-tres
1969 : La madriguera
1970 : El jardín de las delicias
1972 : Ana and the Wolves
1973 : La prima Angélica
1975 : Cría cuervos
1977 : Elisa, vida mía
1978 : Los ojos vendados
1979 : Mamá cumple cien años
1980 : Deprisa, Deprisa
1981 : Bodas de Sangre
1982 : Sweet Hours
1982 : Antonieta
1983 : Carmen
1984 : Los Zancos
1986 : El amor brujo
1988 : El Dorado
1989 : La Noche oscura
1990 : ¡Ay, Carmela!
1992 : El Sur
1992 : Marathon
1992 : Sevillanas
1993 : ¡Dispara!
1995 : Flamenco
1997 : Taxi
1997 : Pajarico
1998 : Tango
1999 : Goya en Burdeos
2001 : Buñuel y la mesa del rey
Salomón
2002 : Salomé
2004 : El séptimo día
2005 : Iberia
2007 : Fados
2008 : Sinfonía de Aragón
(short film)
2009 : I, Don Giovanni
2010 : Flamenco, Flamenco
2015 : Zonda, folclore argentino
2016 : J: Beyond Flamenco

NEXT MONTH’S FILM IS
THE ILLUSIONIST

(Sylvain Chomet, France
2011)

Monday 18 December

www.elyfilmsociety.com

[www.meetup.com/
ely-film/](http://www.meetup.com/ely-film/)

meetup