

ely
film
society

march
2018

the
notes

coming up @ kings lynn

APRIL

- FILM Thursday 5th 7.30pm
HOTEL SALVATION
- FILM Thursday 26th 7.30pm
MY LIFE AS A COURGETTE

MAY

- FILM Thursday 10th 7.30pm
THE PARTY
- CLOSE-UPS EVENT
Thursday 17th 7.30-9.30pm
Weimar Era

further details klccc.uk

Wild Strawberries

Ingmar Bergman, Sweden 1957

Script by Ingmar Bergman

Victor Sjöström ...

Dr. Eberhard Isak Borg

Bibi Andersson Sara

Ingrid Thulin Marianne Borg

Gunnar Björnstrand ... Dr. Evald Borg

Jullan Kindahl Agda

Folke Sundquist Anders

Björn Bjelfvenstam Viktor

Naima Wifstrand ...

Mrs. Borg - Isak's Mother

Gunnel Broström Berit Alman

Gertrud Fridh ...

Karin Borg - Isak's wife

Sif Ruud Aunt Olga

Gunnar Sjöberg ...

Sten Alman / The Examiner

Max von Sydow Henrik Åkerman

Åke Fridell Karin's lover

Yngve Nordwall Uncle Aron

Per Sjöstrand Sigfrid Borg

Gio Petré Sigbritt Borg

Gunnel Lindblom Charlotta Borg

Maud Hansson Angelica Borg

Ann-Marie Wiman Eva Åkerman

Eva Norée Anna Borg

Cinematography..... Gunnar Fischer

Film Editing Oscar Rosander



Wild Strawberries (1957), while scarcely a bag of laughs, has a compassionate view of life that best illustrates the more optimistic side of Bergman's puzzled humanity.

At its centre is 76-year-old Professor Isak Borg, a distinguished medical scientist who travels from Stockholm to Lund with his daughter-in-law to receive an honorary doctorate. On the 400-mile car journey the old man

remembers his past - the girl he loved who married his brother instead, and his own bitterly unsuccessful marriage. Despite his benevolent exterior, to which everyone pays tribute, he recognises in himself something arid and distant.

The film opens with a dream sequence that has been stolen from ever since. Borg arrives at a house with boarded up windows in the old

quarter of Stockholm. He sees a clock with no hands and an old hearse approaching. One of its wheels gets caught up on a lamppost and a coffin falls out. The outstretched hand of the corpse within tries to pull Borg inside.

There are other Expressionist and certainly Freudian dream sequences in the picture, almost always with the old man appearing in them as his present self. And some of these, largely because so many have badly copied, now look a little self-conscious-arty even. But the film's ability to engage the emotions makes it notable for more than just technique.

One of the prime reasons is what can only be described as the transcendent performance of Victor Sjöström as Professor Borg. Sjöström was the great Swedish silent-era director, who died aged 80, not long after the film was completed and whose *The Phantom Carriage* had so influenced Bergman. It was he who made the final scene one of the most serene of all Bergman's endings. "Sjöström's face shone", said the director. "It emanated light - a reflection of a different reality, hitherto absent. His whole appearance was soft and gentle, his glance joyful and tender. It was like a miracle".

Later, Bergman admitted that the character of Borg was an attempt to justify himself to his own parents, but that Sjöström had taken his text, made it his own and invested it with Sjöström's often painful experiences. It is still, however, chiefly concerned

with forgiveness between parents and children and the lost possibilities of youth.

The other often neglected aspect of *Wild Strawberries* is that most of it was shot deep in the Swedish countryside so that its characters pass through a natural world that seems at odds with their own impermanence but whose beauty also seems somehow to instruct them.

If the theme of *Wild Strawberries* is how life can become atrophied and sterile - often repeated from generation to generation - Bergman's working out of his argument is

extraordinarily detailed, since almost all those in the film to whom this applies have no idea what is happening to them.

Isak's admired and respected mother, for instance, is slowly revealed as hard and mean-spirited, though not to herself. And it is only when his daughter-in-law Marianne (Ingrid Thulin) speaks honestly to him in the car that Isak begins his journey of self-recognition.

What makes the film great is its nearness to each of us. And its almost Christian insistence on the possibility of reconciliation and redemption.



Bergman on Bergman

“ I am so 100 percent Swedish... Someone has said a Swede is like a bottle of ketchup — nothing and nothing and then all at once — splat. I think I'm a little like that. And I think I'm Swedish because I like to live here on this island. You can't imagine the loneliness and isolation in this country. In that way, I'm very Swedish — I don't dislike to be alone .

I want very much to tell, to talk about, the wholeness inside every human being. It's a strange thing that every human being has a sort of dignity or wholeness in him, and out of that develops relationships to other human beings, tensions, misunderstandings, tenderness, coming in contact, touching and being touched, the cutting off of a contact and what happens then.

I make all my decisions on intuition. I throw a spear into the darkness. That is intuition. Then I must send an army into the darkness to find the spear. That is intellect. ”

NEXT MONTH'S FILM IS
THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY
(John Mackenzie, UK 1980)
Monday 16 April

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