

# TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM STUDY CENTER

FRIDAY  
JULY 17, 2015  
7:00PM • WHITNEY  
HUMANITIES CENTER

## THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM  
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



"One of the pleasures of going into a movie house is to avoid the harsh realities of life." —Woody Allen

"I want what happened in the movie last week to happen this week. Otherwise, what's life all about, anyway?"

— Audience member exiting the Jewel Theater

Indeed: "to avoid the harsh realities of life," we can safely revisit our favorite films, where characters are 100% dependable, and what happened last week happens this week. Rick will always tell Ilsa to board the plane; Dorothy will always say "There's no place like home." As Tom Baxter (a movie character) describes the reel world in *THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO*, "Where I come from, people don't disappoint. They're consistent." But what if Rick, or Dorothy, or Tom, were to exercise free will and depart from the script? In *THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO*, set in New Jersey during the Depression, movie-obsessed Cecilia (Mia Farrow) escapes the harsh realities of waitressing and a domineering husband (Danny Aiello) by repeatedly watching her current favorite—a champagne comedy also called *THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO*—until the film in which she is immersed, and Cecilia's life, take an unexpected turn.

Cecilia and her fellow audience members are not alone in their desire to escape: bored socialites in the movie-within-the-movie leave their art deco Manhattan penthouse for an exotic adventure in Egypt, where they encounter Tom (Jeff Daniels), a self-described "explorer-poet-adventurer" who also wants to escape—first, to the very city they have just left, and then...but that would be giving away too much. Suffice it to say that Allen's film, like the film within, defies our expectations, especially when ordinarily discrete worlds collide.

Cinematographer Gordon Willis (in his eighth and final collaboration with Allen) masterfully uses color and lighting to portray those worlds: drab, everyday Depression life, rendered in the subdued sepia-dominated tones Willis had perfected in Coppola's *GODFATHER* films; the silver screen, where the glittering black-and-white city is reminiscent of Willis's photography for Allen's *MANHATTAN*; and the realms that create illusions—the Jewel Theater, bathed in warmer colors than those of the outside world; the brothel, the site of the film's richest hues; and Hollywood, the gaudily-colored dream factory that provides formulaic entertainments such as the one Cecilia has been viewing.

*THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO*, which Allen has often considered his best work, is at once a sophisticated romantic/screwball comedy and a parody of that genre; a grim domestic abuse drama and a whimsical, enchanting fantasy; a Pirandellian presentation of the intricate relationships/confusions between illusion and reality; a self-reflexive meditation on the allure—and dangers—of intense spectatorship; a poignant statement about the fragility of existence; and a speculation on the nature of creation (Cecilia: "You do believe in God, don't you? The reason for everything, the world, the universe. Otherwise it would be like a movie with no point—and no happy ending!").

Allen has been directing continuously since his debut feature *TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN* (1969), with a film every year since *A MID-SUMMER NIGHT'S SEX COMEDY* (1982). This level of work was routine for directors during the Hollywood studio era—the time in which *THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO* is set—but no other major American director during the past four decades has even come close to Allen's track record. As he approaches his 80th birthday this December, Allen is still going strong: his 46th feature film, *IRRATIONAL MAN*, opens today, and he has projects in pre-production for 2016. His endurance, and enduring creativity, assure us that what happened last year—a new Woody Allen movie—will happen this year. Otherwise, what's life all about, anyway?

Nº 14

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **WOODY ALLEN**  
(1985) 82 MIN.

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **GORDON WILLIS**  
PRODUCED BY **ORION PICTURES**

STARRING **MIA FARROW, JEFF DANIELS,**  
**DANNY AIELLO, AND DIANNE WIEST**

**DID YOU KNOW:** WOODY ALLEN HOLDS THE RECORD FOR ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS FOR SCREENWRITING: 16 (ALL, INCLUDING *THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO*, IN THE ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY CATEGORY). HE WON FOR *ANNIE HALL*, *HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*, AND *MIDNIGHT IN PARIS*.

**NEXT UP:** AFTER AN AUGUST RECESS, JOIN US AS WE KICK OFF THE SECOND SEASON OF **TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE** WITH SPIKE JONZE'S TRIPPY MASTERPIECE, **BEING JOHN MALKOVICH** (1999), STARRING JOHN CUSACK, CAMERON DIAZ, CATHERINE KEENER, AND, OF COURSE, JOHN MALKOVICH! **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 AT 7:00 P.M.**