

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

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

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 17, 2019
2 PM • WHITNEY
HUMANITIES CENTER

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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



"Float. Just float." That's what Claudia Larson tries to do, in dealing with the annual Thanksgiving reunion back home. It's difficult, though: she has a bad cold, is fired from her job, is informed by her 16-year-old daughter that she plans to lose her virginity that weekend, flies from Chicago to Baltimore stuck next to a non-stop talker, leaves an answering machine message that she instantly regrets, loses her winter coat, and is welcomed at the airport by camcorder-in-her-face parents and at home by a cat that greets her with a hair ball. And that's just in the film's first ten minutes, before the holiday even begins.



Welcome to the proverbial Thanksgiving from hell. Claudia (Holly Hunter) could easily have predicted much of it. As with many family gatherings, the national rituals (carving-overeating-complaining-arguing) are supplemented by this dysfunctional family's idiosyncrasies: dessert-craving dad dipping his finger in the pumpkin pie, up-tight sister bringing a second turkey because it's better than mom's, yuppie brother-in-law pontificating on society to non-listening relatives, frenetic brother outdoing himself in offensiveness, and loopy aunt saying something excruciatingly embarrassing.

All of it makes for a lively, if often over-the-top, screwball comedy, which director Jodie Foster (Yale College, 1985) handles with immense skill. As an actor, Foster had transitioned remarkably from childhood through adolescence to adulthood, her reputation coming primarily from three disturbing films: TAXI DRIVER (1976: Oscar nomination, Supporting Actress), THE ACCUSED (1988: Oscar, Actress) and THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991: Oscar, Actress). Her directorial debut, LITTLE MAN TATE (1991), was a far less gritty but still serious drama about a mother (played by Foster) coping with challenges in raising a gifted child. But Foster also had a long-standing flair for comedy, from late 1960s-early 1970s sitcoms such as MY THREE SONS and PAPER MOON to films such as BUGSY MALONE and FREAKY FRIDAY. Two years before TAXI DRIVER, she had an amusing turn in Scorsese's ALICE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE as Audrey, a tomboy delinquent who proclaims everything and everyone as "weird." Audrey would have enjoyed observing the Larson family. Now, Jodie Foster does it for her.

Amidst HOME FOR THE HOLIDAY's raucousness there are subdued scenes that reveal hidden layers of sentiment. Claudia and mom (Anne Bancroft) have a respite that begins with cynicism (Claudia: "Nobody means what they say on Thanksgiving, mom. It's what the day's supposed to be about, right? Torture." Mom: "That and giving thanks that we don't have to go through this for another year. Except we do, because those bastards went and put Christmas right in the middle, just to punish us.") and ends with mom's partial recognition of challenging realities. And there's a poignant scene when, after all the commotion, dad (Charles Durning) is in the basement viewing home movies and expressing regrets about missed opportunities. He glows when he tells Claudia about a magical moment from her childhood not captured on film. That incident lasted only ten seconds, and she doesn't remember it, but it stayed with him for the rest of his life. The basement scene lasts only about three minutes, but, thanks to Durning's evocative performance and Foster's staging, we will remember it.

Hunter, Bancroft, and Durning are part of an impressive ensemble: collectively the cast has 14 Oscar nominations (2 wins), 35 Golden Globe nominations (13 wins), and 33 Emmy nominations (8 wins). Standouts are Robert Downey Jr. as Claudia's brother Tommy (his obnoxious character is cringe-worthy, but he gives the role some nuance); Geraldine Chaplin as Aunt Gladys (in 1992's CHAPLIN, with Downey in the title role, she had played Charlie Chaplin's mother: her own grandmother); and David Strathairn, who shows up in just one scene and nails it as the quintessential "sad sack."

DIRECTED BY **JODIE FOSTER**
SCREENPLAY BY **W.D. RICHTER**
FROM A SHORT STORY BY **CHRIS RADANT**
PRODUCED BY **PARAMOUNT AND EGG PICTURES**
(1995) 103 MINS.
STARRING **HOLLY HUNTER, ANNE BANCROFT, ROBERT DOWNEY, JR., CHARLES DURNING, DYLAN MCDERMOTT, GERALDINE CHAPLIN, STEVE GUTTENBERG, CYNTHIA STEVENSON, CLAIRE DANES, AUSTIN PENDLETON, AND DAVID STRATHAIRN**

DID YOU KNOW: FOR THE THANKSGIVING DINNER, WHICH TOOK TEN DAYS TO FILM, THE PRODUCTION USED 64 TURKEYS, 20 POUNDS OF MASHED POTATOES, 35 POUNDS OF STUFFING, 30 POUNDS OF SWEET POTATOES, 18 BAGS OF MINI-MARSHMALLOWS, 50 GALLONS OF JUICE THAT STOOD IN FOR WINE, AND 44 PIES (NOT KNOWN: HOW MANY OF THOSE WERE KEY LIME PIES WITH M&M TOPPINGS).

NEXT UP: TREASURES' CELEBRATION OF 50/150 YEARS OF COEDUCATION AT YALE CONTINUES WITH **CHOCOLAT**, FROM LEGENDARY FRENCH DIRECTOR CLAUDE BERRI. THE FILM, ABOUT A FRENCH FAMILY THAT LIVES IN COLONIAL CAMEROON, STARS ISAACH DE BANKOLE AND FRANÇOIS CLUZET. CHOCOLAT SCREENS **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8 AT 2PM.**