

Cœurs / Private Fears in Public Places (2006)

Director: Alain Resnais

Screenplay: Alan Ayckbourn & Jean-Michel Ribes

Cast: Arthur (voice): Claude Rich; Charlotte: Sabine Azéma; Dan: Lambert Wilson; Gaëlle: Isabelle Carré; Lionel: Pierre Arditi; Nicole: Laura Morante; Thierry: André Dussollier

Awards: Silver Lion Award and Pasinetti Award Prize (Laura Montante), Venice Film Festival (2006)



Cœurs stands out as one of the European masterpieces of 2006. According to *Le Monde*, Alain Resnais, award-winning director of such films as *Night and Fog* (1955), *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959) and *Smoking/No Smoking* (1993) “has achieved the pinnacle of his art” with this film. Based on British director Alan Ayckbourn’s play *Private Fears in Public Places*, the film is reminiscent of its theatrical origins in the lighting and acting. Having already adapted an Ayckbourn piece, Resnais effortlessly molds the original screenplay to suit and reflect French cosmopolitan culture.

Dan and Nicole, an engaged couple on the brink of a breakup, search for the perfect apartment in Paris. Thierry and Gaëlle, a brother-sister duo, live together while each seeks a romantic connection. Charlotte and Lionel bond over the latter’s sick father (Arthur). These intertwining stories of seven characters, struggling to build and maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships, propel the film as characters attempt to find companionship and end the solitude which plague them. Ironically, the intricacies of the human heart lead both to a need for companionship and, inevitably, to emotional alienation.

Both comedic and heart wrenching, this bittersweet account of the complexities of the human psyche is wonderfully pulled together due not only to Resnais’ personal talent but to the outstanding performances of his cast. Humorous passages, the beautifully crafted *mise-en-scène* and the choice of music balance out the film’s heavy emotional feel. The snow falling on Paris, acting as the subtle yet beautiful backdrop, brings an almost surreal, magical quality to the film. Despite the beautiful cinematography characteristic of Alain Resnais's œuvre, the complexity of human emotion is largely conveyed through what remains off camera, out of view, suggesting the inability to fully connect. There is something for everyone in Resnais’s art.

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