

IGNITE FILMS

CLASSICS FOR THE FUTURE

SAINT JOAN

1957 / 110:00 / B/W / Biography/ Drama/ Historical

Director: Otto Preminger

Starring: Jean Seberg, Richard Widmark, John Gielgud, Richard Todd, Anton Walbrook



SYNOPSIS:

Graham Greene's adaptation of the George Bernard Shaw drama features brilliant performances by the enigmatic Jean Seberg and by Sir John Gielgud. One of the most memorable of the Preminger classics and certainly one of the finest examples of theatre adapted to the screen. As Saint Joan, Jean Seberg displays qualities of "erotic elan" and "juvenile sparkle" that are difficult to learn in acting school. As Andrew Sarris remarked in Film Comment, "Shaw himself would have been fascinated by the poignant suggestion of regret in Seberg's Joan." A brilliant contrast to the naive interpretation of Joan was provided by a solid cast of thoroughly seasoned theatrical veterans: John Gielgud, Richard Widmark, Anton Walbrook, Felix Aylmer and Harry Andrews. The much-publicized talent search for the lead role resulted in the daring casting of Miss Seberg, an unknown actress from Marshalltown, Iowa, with little or no experience. No one knew at the time that she would achieve cult status with the release of Godard's "Breathless" in 1960, and go on to work with Preminger again. During the filming of the "burning at the stake" scene an anecdotal addition was made to Preminger directing lore: As the bonfire was lit for the climax Seberg's clothing accidentally caught fire, much to Preminger's delight, who kept the cameras rolling.

REVIEWS:

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"It is Sir John Gielgud who stands out with a brilliant performance as the politically-minded Earl of Warwick, determined to get Joan to the stake, though contemptuous of the Church's winded arguments of 'heretic' vs. 'witch'." 8 May 1957, Variety