

Press release
12.12. 2017
Press Office
press@pardo.ch
www.pardo.ch
t + 41 91 756 21 21



The genius of Leo McCarey at Locarno71

The Locarno Festival's major Retrospective will be dedicated to three-time Oscar winner Leo McCarey (1898 – 1969), a director who left his indelible mark not only on comedy (with Laurel & Hardy, the Marx Brothers and Harold Lloyd) but also on classic drama (Cary Grant, Charles Laughton, Bing Crosby). The Retrospective follows on from the Festival's tributes to other masters of the genre in recent years, such as Lubitsch, Minnelli and Cukor. In the words of Artistic Director Carlo Chatrian, this event *"will be an inspiration and a stimulus for new generations of viewers and filmmakers"*.

McCarey learned his trade during the 1920s at the Hal Roach Studios, initially as a gag writer before directing films. Roach and McCarey were key figures in the golden age of silent comedy in America, launching the successful careers of comedians such as Charley Chase and Max Davidson, as well as the insuperable stardom of Laurel & Hardy. Determined to create a more modern style for slapstick, McCarey established his hallmarks of sophisticated writing, innovative gestures and elegant choreography.

Graduating to full-length features as the sound era dawned, McCarey became a master of the screwball comedy, launching the career of Cary Grant in *The Awful Truth* (1937) and helming films hailed as milestones of the genre and starring some of its biggest names: Harold Lloyd and Mae West, Charles Laughton and Eddie Cantor, plus the Marx Brothers, who chose him to direct their masterpiece *Duck Soup* (1933).

In the late Thirties and after the war, McCarey toned down the humorous element in his work and turned increasingly to drama, in movies that ranged in subject from romance to the religious life. Once again, in his late period, McCarey brought out the finest in his stars – Ingrid Bergman and Paul Newman, Bing Crosby and Deborah Kerr – and also rejoined forces with Cary Grant in such memorable pictures as *Good Sam* (1948) and *An Affair to Remember* (1957).

Carlo Chatrian, Artistic Director of the Locarno Festival, comments: *"Dedicating a Retrospective to Leo McCarey means first and foremost paying homage to a master of a genre that today has become increasingly rare. His films were big hits at the box office but were also well received by the critics and are now recognized, somewhat belatedly, as more complex and multi-layered than simple genre pieces. It is time for McCarey's name to be awarded the status he deserves: we are fully convinced that his art, elegance and sense of timing will be an inspiration and a stimulus for new generations of viewers and filmmakers. Lastly, on a more personal note, this Retrospective is also a tribute to a period of our own childhood which we all lived through, but perhaps have sometimes since forgotten: laughing with Laurel & Hardy does not just offer the sweet taste of nostalgia, but will also remind us of the visionary and beneficial power that comedy has always possessed."*

Curated by Roberto Turigliatto, the Retrospective will be organized in partnership with the Cinémathèque suisse and the Cinémathèque française, with additional input from the Pordenone Silent Film Festival. It will be accompanied by a volume in English and French to be published by Capricci.

Roberto Turigliatto, curator of the Locarno Festival Retrospective, describes McCarey as *"A man of many talents who began as assistant to Tod Browning and became a director at the peak of the studio system, but also a secret personality still requiring critical assessment. He remains unparalleled in film history for the sublime alchemy of feelings and refined practice of comedy and melodrama that he brought to his great masterpieces such as Love Affair (1939). Make Way for Tomorrow (1937) was his personal favorite despite its failure with the public and can even be regarded as an astonishing precursor of Tôkyô monogatari (1953) by Yasujirô Ozu.*

The project will involve other major institutions in Switzerland and abroad, ensuring that the Retrospective will travel a circuit of prestigious venues worldwide until 2019. Partners already confirmed include: in Switzerland, the Cinémathèque suisse, Filmpodium in Zurich, Kino REX in Berne and Les Cinémas du Grütli in Geneva; in Italy, the National Cinema Museum in Turin and the I Milleocchi Festival in Trieste; in France, the Cinémathèque française.

The 71st Locarno Festival will be held from 1st to 11th August 2018.

www.pardo.ch