

ALBATROS / MARCEL L'HERBIER

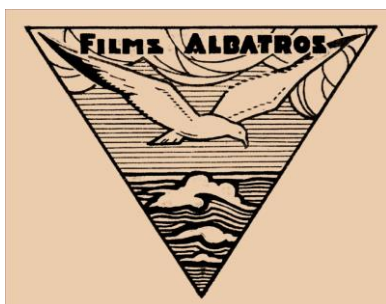
Made up of renowned artistes and technicians, the Ermolieff troupe left Russia for France in 1920. Under the direction of Alexander Kamenka, it became the Albatros production company, and in the decade of the 1920s, Albatros would produce some forty films. It actively participated in the development of French cinema, becoming close in particular to filmmakers such as Jean Epstein, Marcel L'Herbier and Jacques Feyder, and these collaborations breathed in new life and opened a breach towards avant-garde cinema.

Ivan Mosjukin, an actor already famous in Russia, had an enigmatic personality. The expressiveness of his acting and his ability to play any type of role made him a star and the emblematic figure of the Albatros studio for which he also directed a few films. *Eldorado* and *The Inhuman Woman* had already contributed to revealing the talents of Marcel L'Herbier for whom Ivan Mosjukin had unbounded admiration. L'Herbier agreed to direct and co-produce with Albatros *The Late Mathias Pascal* after Luigi Pirandello's novel, with, as assistant director, Alberto Cavalcanti, who also took on the role of art director, assisted by Lazare Meerson.

In regard to *The Late Mathias Pascal*, Henri Langlois wrote¹:

As the heroic period drew to a close, French Impressionism produced the first of these masterpieces that mark its maturity. In The Late Mathias Pascal, inspired by Pirandello, directed by Marcel L'Herbier, assisted by Cavalcanti to whom we owe the film's sets, and interpreted by the actor Mosjukin, author of several exceptional films in which the fantastic and humour intermingle, we don't know what to admire most. The perfection and elegance of the form, the intelligence and life of the acting down to the extras, and the total absence of any formal gratuitousness truly make this a work of rare exception. In this film, landscapes become arabesques and ideas, the sets themselves become less and less visible whilst remaining real; only a single description can be found for them: they are neither naturalistic, expressionistic nor stylized; they are cerebral.

Marcel L'Herbier's knowledge, his mastery of light, and Cavalcanti's, all critical spirit and taste; the former's humour, the latter's poetic fantasy; the gifts of irony, rhythm, and the peculiar wit of Ivan Mosjukin with his sense of fantastic humour make this one of those rare films that do not betray the spirit of the man of letters who inspired them. Quite the contrary, this film assimilates the art, method, sensitivity and ambiguity of Pirandello's work, enriching and going beyond it.



The Albatros collection represents one of the gems of the Cinémathèque française's collections. Alexander Kamenka was one of the first producers to entrust Henri Langlois with all his films, along with a vast number of archives as varied as they are precious: posters, drawings, documents relative to the production and marketing of the films. All these documents have been preserved and, in certain cases, restored.

Through Mary Meerson, Lazare Meerson's widow, Henri Langlois acquired a large number of the art director's sketches, drawings and models. She would become Henri Langlois's partner as well as his closest and most influential collaborator.

¹ Henri Langlois, *Écrits de cinéma*, texts collected by Bernard Benoliel and Bernard Eisenschitz, Ed. Flammarion / Cinémathèque française, 2014

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The Late Mathias Pascal / Feu Mathias Pascal

France, 1926 – 170 minutes

Director: Marcel l'Herbier

From the novel of Luigi Pirandello

Director assistant: Alberto Cavalcanti

Production: Films Albatros / Cinégrafic

Photography: Paul Guichard, Jean Letort, Nicolas Bourgassof, Jimmy Berliet

Set: Alberto Cavalcanti, assisté de Lazare Meerson

Cast : Ivan Mosjoukine, Marcelle Pradot, Loïs Moran, Marthe Belot, Pauline Carton , Irma Perrot , Barsac , Michel Simon , Isaure Douvane , Pierre Batcheff , Georges Térof, Philippe Hériat, Jean Hervé

Mathias Pascal, a dreamy young intellectual, lives with his mother. He falls in love with Romilda and marries her. But marital problems arise with, to boot, an unbearable mother-in-law and a dull job in a ramshackle library. One day Mathias simultaneously loses his mother and child and, out of his mind with grief, flees. In a hallucinatory state, he goes to Monte Carlo, gambles his last bit of money and wins a fortune. Upon returning to the village, Mathias discovers with stupefaction the public announcement of his death. As nothing more holds him back, he leaves for Rome, where he discovers freedom and falls in love with Adrienne Paléari. But how is one to exist when he is dead?

This film was preserved and restored in 2009 by La Cinémathèque française, thanks to the support of the Franco-American Cultural Fund (DGA - MPA - SACEM -WGAW). Work was carried out at the L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory of the Bologna Cineteca, starting from a duplicate made in 1964 from an original negative preserved in the collections of La Cinémathèque française. This is the export version, that is to say the longest element that exists of the film.

