

## A PINEWOOD DIALOGUE WITH FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA

Francis Ford Coppola's 1982 film *One from the Heart*, a romantic fantasy set in Las Vegas, was intended as a light, frothy venture to follow the grueling, tortured production of *Apocalypse Now*. Instead, the movie was a commercial and critical disaster that received inordinate negative publicity and bankrupted Coppola's Zoetrope Studios. Twenty years after its release, the movie holds up extremely well as a charming and playful reinvention of the old-fashioned musical. Coppola was in a playful mood himself, even bursting into song, when he presented the New York premiere of a restored print at Museum of the Moving Image.

### **A Pinewood Dialogue following a screening of *One from the Heart*, moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (October 21, 2003):**

SCHWARTZ: [Introducing screening] My name is David Schwartz. I'm the Chief Curator of Film here at the Museum of the Moving Image. And I want to welcome you to this very special evening. There was a legendary preview screening of *One from the Heart* on a winter night in 1982, at Radio City Music Hall, where Francis Ford Coppola rented out the theater and actually fed the audience. He got split-pea soup with sausage for the entire audience. And he did the same thing tonight. He fed you, and now is going to show you this wonderful movie, which has been beautifully restored, and this is the New York premiere of its restoration. (Applause)

[Screening of *One from the Heart*]

SCHWARTZ: Please welcome Francis Ford Coppola. (Applause)

COPPOLA: Thank you. How many folks in the audience actually were there on that fateful night at Radio City Music Hall? Well... (Laughter) Yeah, it was cold. And in fact, the soup was really passed out on the lines to people who were waiting to get in. So they were freezing, and we thought, Well, if we give them hot soup, they won't freeze. So that was the reason that we passed that out. At any rate, thank you so much for this invitation, and congratulations on the museum, which I just... I have most of that stuff in my garage, actually. (Laughter) Because I would buy it every year that it came out, you know; I didn't have the heart to sell

it. But thanks so much for this kind invitation, and to come and see *One from the Heart*.

Very briefly, as you probably know, *One from the Heart* really, in my mind, was an experiment. We had bought a new studio, and we had made it a new electronic studio, because in those days, I was sure that the cinema was going to become an electronic medium. And I was very interested in the idea of live cinema—which is to say, what if you rehearsed the piece, and you built all the sets so that they followed the continuity of the story, and then you just said to the actors, "Go," and the actors would perform the entire film (as they used to in the golden age of television, [as] those of you [know] who were fortunate enough to have seen some of the great live TV, especially done by John Frankenheimer)? That was the idea behind *One from the Heart*: that we were going to try to make live cinema. And it was to combine a lot of elements of theater and television and cinema, but coupled with live performance.

In the end, for lots of technical reasons, we sort of had to back off a little bit, with the necessary amount of multiple cameras, so that you could really—I always wanted to sit in the control room and say, "Three. Two. Four," and edit it while you go. I didn't quite get to do it, but you'll see some of that in it. As you know, it was all shot on the studio, even scenes in Las Vegas. And people said, "Well, why did you build Las Vegas over? It's just right around the block; just go to Las Vegas." It was because of this idea of shooting live cinema.

So, as you watch it, it's just a simple fable. And it was a musical fable. In those days, it wasn't really feasible to think about doing a musical again; musicals were out. And so I thought: Well, what if we had songs of a male and female singer, sort of like the characters in the story commenting on the story—sort of like Zeus and Hera, we used to say—the perennial issues between men and women, but sung in songs (even though the main characters didn't sing). And to do this, I had the great foresight to hire Tom Waits. At that time [he] was not the—didn't have the incredible regard we all have for him now. And he came on and wrote these songs and sang them, along with Crystal Gayle. Tom couldn't be here, or hasn't... Well, we don't know where he is, exactly, but... (Laughter).

One little thing I ask you to note is that this is one of the few movies you'll ever see in a screening room again with the classic 1.33:1 aspect ratio—unless you're seeing films made before the fifties, which were all made that way. It was notably nice because when you photograph[ed] actors in closer shots, you could see their hands. Today it's like that: you don't see any hands, just a great big face. So this was shot—it was my vain attempt to maybe bring back what I thought was a beautiful aspect ratio. So it's a simple film. It was, as I said, an experiment to try to use styles of theater and television and cinema all mixed up together.

**SCHWARTZ:** There are some directors who just won't look back at their films. Not only do you look back, but you work with them, do a little tinkering, bring them out again.

**COPPOLA:** Well, in this case, I look at this tonight and I think, Well, what else was I going to do after *Apocalypse Now*? (Laughter) Definitely, for my own sanity, I wanted to do something, I realized, more in the vein of the college musicals I had come from. *Apocalypse* was such a distressing film to work on; we began the practice of financing the films ourselves. It's very terrifying to be involved in a motion-picture production with costs spiraling and stuff, and realizing you're on the hook.

So the answer to your comment about why one would tinker with it is: the truth of the matter is, we owned the film. You notice at the end it said, "Copyright Zoetrope." And very rarely does a filmmaker—really, a handful of filmmakers have

ended up actually owning their film. So this was an in-the-garage kind of thing. And I thought, Gee, it would be nice to make a print that was in the spirit of what we were trying to do, and have a definitive version. Because the end of working on this was such a chaotic experience—for reasons which we'll probably talk about momentarily—but the whole production was sort of falling apart around my ears. I don't know that we really ever really quite finished it, to be honest. So all these years later—twenty years later—we owned the film, so we had the rights to be able to try to make a definitive version and restore it, and then preserve it, both in the print that you saw tonight and in a DVD, which will be this version.

**SCHWARTZ:** And it was a true independent film, in the sense that you put yourself on the line. You mortgaged the studio; I believe, at one point, you didn't even have a home phone line...

**COPPOLA:** Well, it's sort of funny to think—it sounds really ridiculous when I say this, but I was sure that *Apocalypse Now* was going to wipe us off the face of the earth. I had financed it, and all of my home and everything else I had was up as the guarantee to the bank for *Apocalypse*. And I began to think, Well, gee, maybe I'll make a little kind of simple film that'll save us. (Laughs)

**SCHWARTZ:** Make a lot of money, right? Yeah. (Laughter)

**COPPOLA:** Yeah, just a simple little love story or something; maybe it'll save us. And of course, the irony is—and there's some wisdom for all of you out there who are involved in the creative arts—is that *Apocalypse* turned out to be very successful, and over the years did very well, and *One from the Heart* wiped me out. So I don't know, there's a moral of that. (I'm not sure exactly what it is, but...) This film was made in a very interesting period because, number one, it was the aftermath of *Apocalypse Now*, so certainly my mood was... *Apocalypse* had been a very traumatizing film, and I desperately wanted to do something that was simple and sweet.

**SCHWARTZ:** The decade before this, your films were *The Godfather*, *The Godfather: Part II*, *The Conversation*, and *Apocalypse Now*. So I don't think people knew what to do with this.

**COPPOLA:** Well, one thing is true, that when I was a young guy, I went on an interview to do the screenplay for the life of General Patton. And they asked me, "Well, do you have any military experience?" I said, "Yes, of course." (And of course, that was that I had gone a year to New York Military Academy.) So then all I would do was get offers to do military movies. Then, of course, with *The Godfather*, all my main opportunities were to get to do gangster movies. I was very anxious to do lots of different kinds of things—make films that were different from each other, and to learn from people or to be able to experiment. I was convinced that the cinema was going to become digital cinema. And we had bought a movie studio in L.A. in this mad period, and we had equipped it to be really a production facility that could make thirty movies a year. We had these facilities, and the only problem was we didn't have a first movie, a script. I was hoping that *Tucker* [*Tucker: The Man and His Dream*] would be the first movie, and then that's when we came upon this story, *One from the Heart*, by Armyan Bernstein, which—"Well, we'll make that the first film; just to get us started." And of course, there was only one film. So there was the whole story of the studio going on; the aftermath of *Apocalypse Now*; and, of course, the desire to do a musical.

**SCHWARTZ:** Yeah. And this impulse to do musicals is something that seems really deeply rooted. You mentioned the musicals that you did at Hofstra [University]. But also, I read an account of you as an eight-year-old, I believe, doing puppet shows in your room using tape recorders and record players. And so this idea that theater means sort of playing around with technology...

**COPPOLA:** Yeah, well, all art is technology. From the beginning, if they were painting pictures they had to figure out how to make the oil paints. So technology goes hand-in-hand with the arts. Yes, I was a child, also, of television. I was paralyzed as a kid when I was nine years old, so all I did was watch television—because I couldn't walk, I couldn't get out of the bed. I was surrounded with puppets, and I had this television. This was before the remote control; you can imagine how frustrating that must be, when... And I just loved television. I loved live television. I just thought that was the most wonderful thing, to be able to just have a performance. Of course, my background in college

was in theater. So I was really a child of all those influences, and I very much wanted to experiment—and really not just make *One from the Heart*; I was hoping that the studio could just make, as I said, thirty films. Because we had the magic machine that could do it. And many things went wrong, and not the least of [the] mistakes I made, I'm sure.

We were losing the studio while we were making the movie; it was a pretty—why I said it was an unusual period. We were making the film with great enthusiasm and what have you. And there's a thing called a blind bidding law, which basically requires—state governments require that you show the movie to theater owners six months before they are going to have the chance to bid on them. So we didn't have it ready and we were still working on it. And ultimately, a review was written. It's sort of a no-no for a review to come out on a blind bidding screening, because it's supposed to be an understanding. But of course, it did. And once that happened, after all the negative controversy about *Apocalypse* going on, then it started with this, and our source of money left us, and the crew all agreed and the cast agreed to work for half-salary. So it was like one of those Andy Hardy movies right there on the set. I remember Teri Garr said a great thing: When they all agreed that they would work without getting paid, she says, "You know," she says, "They say that time is money. But now time is just time." (Laughter)

**SCHWARTZ:** In terms of your love of old musicals, one of the names that we didn't see in the credits, but who I think was involved with the film, is Gene Kelly.

**COPPOLA:** Gene Kelly, very much so, and Michael Powell. But as the film changed from this exciting thing that was happening to, like, "Uh-oh, they're in trouble," and stuff, a lot of people began—and the banks as well—to distance themselves from it. So it was a really interesting period. There are some documentaries that Kim [Aubrey] has—because Zoetrope always was interested in electronic cinema, so we had all those videotapes and, basically, coverage of what was going on. He made several documentaries that tell the story—just like the one with Tom Waits [that was shown at this screening prior to the feature *One from the Heart*] that tell the story of how we bought the studio.

The studio was across from a junior high school. I was basically a drama counselor when I was young, and I love kids. And I went to speak at a big—much bigger auditorium than this, and was telling the kids how they all have to have careers in creativity and stuff. Then I said, “Oh, you want to see the studio?” There was like, I don’t know, seven hundred little thirteen-year-olds, and they said, “Yeah!” And I led them out across the street (Laughter) and into the studio. Suddenly the studio is overrun by thirteen-year-olds. We adopted the school, and we took on—officially, I think it was 25 or 30 apprentices.

So the studio was an interesting place, because on one hand, it had Gene Kelly there and Michael Powell, and then it had these little thirteen-year-olds. Like two apprentices working as Nastassja’s [Kinski] assistant or in the art department. So it was really a kind of utopian place, the studio. It was just like a movie, really, when we lost the money and we didn’t know if we could go on, and what have you. So when I see it, it brings back both the memories of what we thought we were trying to do and the moment when we realized we couldn’t really make it live the way I had intended to; and then at the same time, this financial debacle going on.

**SCHWARTZ:** It’s amazing how much was written about this film. I went to look at the clippings at the Museum of Modern Art Film Study Center. The thick files of articles, all about the business. Now we’re sort of used to everybody knowing how much films make and knowing about the business of film, but I don’t think that was true at that time.

**COPPOLA:** Not at all. I was really offended when I first saw that they were going to publish the box-office results of films. I thought it made it like sports—where every week you saw the score—and it did. It did. And it was wrong. But I’m happy—there’re a lot of aspects to this film, I mean, some that directly relate to the film and why it is as it is, and then what was surrounding it, and I’m really happy to discuss any aspect of it.

In those days, I very much wanted to experiment. I wanted to learn about—I thought the cinema was a form that had gone through its great period of creativity during the silent era, when they really invented the language, when they came up with the things that we now take for granted: the close-up,

and parallel editing, and montage. And then once it became both the sound period and then the studio control and business control, cinema never invented anything much more—maybe Jean-Luc Godard and some of the Europeans—but I always felt that cinema’s only a hundred years old, and we’ve only learned maybe five percent of what it will be like. I felt it was really important that we should just experiment a lot, so that we can enlarge and develop the language, which was what I was playing with.

**SCHWARTZ:** So tell us about the process. Part of, I think, what you did early on in the process was have sketches that you started with, and then have the actors do a radio play. I mean, like, you literally...

**COPPOLA:** Well, you know, nowadays, that’s pretty common. But we had this idea that there was something called “pre-visualization”: that since it was going to all be live and therefore all the sets were going to really be the movie—in effect, that—much as you see now when they do a Pixar film—or any of the films today use those techniques, and they even call it pre-visualization. I used to take a lot of heat because I called it “pre-visualization”. They said, “Well, how can it be “pre-visualization”? “Visualization” is when you visualize it.” And I said, “Yeah, but this is *pre* that,” you know? But those techniques are used and...

Oh, we did a lot. Everyone was there right during the scenes, the sound mixers and everyone. You see some of the reels where it’s just ten minutes at a clip and there isn’t a cut in it, and it’s more like live television. But the sound was being mixed into it at the time. It was quite a machine. That studio, if it had remained intact, they could’ve made a hundred movies in the time that has elapsed—instead of game shows, which is what they ended up doing there.

**SCHWARTZ:** And the impulse for the story? It is a very touching story about people who lead sort of ordinary lives. They have these fantasies that they cull from movies and music and songs. Just where did that impulse come from? Where do you start?

**COPPOLA:** Well, if I told you the *real* landscape of that, you’ll really think I’m a pompous idiot. But in those days, after *Apocalypse Now*, I had imagined

that I was going to do this great work, which was going to be a series of four films loosely inspired by the [Johann Wolfgang von] Goethe novel *Elective Affinities*. Those of you who know *Elective Affinities* know it's one of the first modern novels and it's a very simple story about a man and his wife. They're living in an absolutely wonderful place, and the man suggests, "Oh, my friend the captain, he's an architect, and I thought it would be nice if he came and lived with us for a while, and he could plan the gardens and stuff." And the wife says, "Well, you know, I really... We're so perfect and happy here that, I was going to say, my niece is—her mother has died, and I was going to invite the niece to come live." And they said, "Well, let's have the captain and the niece." So you have the basic setting of the man, the woman, the other man, the other woman. In Goethe's mind, he was working on a chemical formula. A, B, A-prime, B-prime. And I had a concept to make an ambitious film on that theme. So that when I saw this *One from the Heart* idea that I could do in the studio, I thought: Gee, that's the man, the woman, the other man, the other woman.

One of the big problems in my career is that I always wanted to write my own stuff. And writing a script, an original script, takes so long that you're always stuck: "Well, we got to do something this year." So I thought the *One from the Heart* piece, the fable, sort of fit in that general theme. I even saved the sets, because in my story, the man and the woman—the man was a director, like myself, and perhaps the woman was like my wife. And I planned to one day take the sets and do the other scenes on the other side of the set. In other words, if you had the neon set with Teri Garr and Freddy [Frederic] Forrest, I was going to save those sets, and when the darker part of the story, which was the same theme, was done, I had planned to have echoes. In other words, as though they were working on *One from the Heart* with those same sets and stuff. And of course, the idea for that script—I never was able to really tackle it or land it. But that was why I was interested in this theme. If no one's ever read *Elective Affinities*, it's a beautiful, beautiful novel. It sounds scary because it's Goethe, but it's very, very passionate and very beautiful.

**SCHWARTZ:** And then, in terms of style, the idea that every element becomes expressive and is sort

of out there. The lighting, production design is made apparent.

**COPPOLA:** Well, also at that time, my *Elective Affinities* [project] I was talking about was going to be set in Japan. I was going to set it in Japan because I even then wanted to examine America and Japan as the man, the woman, in a way, so that even within the culture is that same story. You can fail as easily by making your goals too high as by making them too low. (Laughter) That's something I've learned. So I was very interested in Japan, and we had gone through Japan a lot with my family during *Apocalypse Now*, going back and forth. So I was interested in Kabuki, in that Kabuki is a form in which all the elements—the acting, the scenery, the lighting, the costumes, the dance, what have you—is not as linked as in Western theater, where the scenery is always the background. In Kabuki, sometimes the scenery becomes the foreground. It's almost as though each element tells the part of the story that it's best prepared to tell. And I was interested in experimenting with that in this film, in that there would just be a song and you'd just see, say, Freddy Forrest doing nothing, but the song would be expressing or a dance would suddenly express it. So I was also trying to experiment with the idea of the different elements stepping out of their preordained order and take [taking] the star role, so to speak.

**SCHWARTZ:** I want to ask Kim Aubry to join us. And as he's coming up, I'll just say that he is in charge of postproduction at American Zoetrope. His title—he's in charge of postproduction and film science.

**COPPOLA:** And all technology. Because we're always cooking up some mad invention, and ultimately, it's put on his back. (Applause)

[Kim Aubry joins discussion]

**SCHWARTZ:** And Kim produced not only the DVD of this, but the wonderful *Godfather* triple-disk DVD.

**COPPOLA:** Yeah, we make all our own DVDs... We had this film, and I said, "Gee, can't we get *One from the Heart*? We own it." Those of you who work in this field know how tough rights are; that you can't do anything, because somebody owns the rights or controls the rights, or their heirs [do]. So

here was a case where there was a movie we just owned lock, stock, and barrel, and that's why we wanted to renovate it and make a DVD of it.

**AUBRY:** Yeah, who knew that it was going to take three years? It's really true that when Francis mentioned, "Gee, we own *One from the Heart* and there's this new format coming out, DVD. What do you know about it, Kim? Is this something that we could do ourselves?" And at that time, the idea seemed very alien to us because we were mostly involved in film postproduction, and the idea of, I don't know, video distribution seemed separate, and maybe even not that interesting. But we studied it and we got very interested in it, because it's really just a part of the same thing: it's presentation. And as we studied what we had available to us in terms of *One from the Heart* film elements, that became a big project. It wasn't something we were just going to crank out in six months and put on DVD. It became something that turned into some re-editing and looking for lost film elements (which took quite a bit of time) and remastering. Meanwhile, we did build a DVD facility and we started with *Apocalypse Now*, and then *The Conversation*, *Tucker*, and then *The Godfather* DVD collection. And now...

**COPPOLA:** We're now making *Lost in Translation*. DVD. (Applause)

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) How long was the filming process?

**COPPOLA:** It was supposed to be that we were going to do ten minutes in a day, because the actors were just going to run through it, and we were going to have multiple cameras. All the sets were built so if you just did it, you could do it. But the photographer—about three, four weeks before we did it—really didn't want to shoot with multiple cameras, and [he] came to me and said, "Well, if I shoot one camera at a time, I can light it much better, and we'll do it just as fast." Well, we didn't do it just as fast, and, financially, we had spent all the money to be able to do it live, and then we didn't. Then we spent all the money to edit it together. So we had the worst of two worlds. There were even some phases, we'd run out of money, and stuff like that.

**SCHWARTZ:** What was written about so much—I talked about all the press—but the van. I mean, I have to ask you about that. This mobile unit, where you were doing live editing...

**COPPOLA:** Well, that was interesting. When I was a UCLA student, I went one day to visit Paramount Pictures, when Jerry Lewis was directing *The Ladies' Man*. And I was fascinated because Jerry Lewis was the director and the star, and he had mounted television cameras on the viewfinders of his camera, and then he had a big two-inch tape thing. So after he shot, he would come down, they would play them, and he'd look at his performance. After Jerry Lewis, that wasn't really done. I always remembered that.

So with *One from the Heart*, I thought, Well, gee, what if we have fifteen cameras and they all have video viewfinders, and then they're all fed into a master control room? And that was this Airstream Trailer, which the kids of *The Outsiders* later called "The Silverfish," which stuck (even though I tried to not call it the Silverfish). You could sit in there, and then you would see all the feeds of all the cameras, and you could literally switch it, like *Saturday Night Live* is done today. And you could talk with these really great professional intercoms, like for a baseball game, and talk to all the positions—talk to Richard Beggs, who had the music. The idea was that the director could be more like a maestro of a big orchestra, and just call in things, and as you did a take, say—because film in those days was still limited by the fact that a roll of film in the camera was only ten minutes (so today you could do it really live, the way John Frankenheimer did it)... But at the time of *One from the Heart*, we'd only be able to do ten minutes at a time. My thought was that if we could do it and actually be [have] ten finished minutes, you could even do it a second time, and maybe get a better take—a better performance—like in theater.

**SCHWARTZ:** What's remarkable about the film is the fluidity and the way that everything does feel choreographed. Not just the music, but the words and the camera movement. Everything sort of feels of a musical piece. Working that way, did that help you achieve that?

**COPPOLA:** Yeah, I think the fact that we, at first, really tried to make it as live cinema, and then sort

of had to back off—still, you could see the attempt in there, the way it was staged, certainly the use of the theatrical scrimms to do two scenes going back and forth. That would be all one take in that reel that had that. So definitely, the fluidity came from the attempt to make it like live television.

**SCHWARTZ:** And of course, Jerry Lewis also had that set that he revealed in *The Ladies' Man*, where, you know...

**COPPOLA:** That was the show [movie] I saw him work on....

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) What can you tell an aspiring filmmaker?

**COPPOLA:** Well, I would say the things I always shared with my children. My children always traveled with us. Whenever we went on a film, we always took them out of school. And as they became older, they became interested in aspects of film. I think the thing I always learned was that you want to reveal your own feelings and your own biases and your own—to keep it as personal as you can, and try to avoid being forced into some genre or way of doing it that maybe you might think might be more successful, but to always—to keep it personal. That's what people want from you, if they're going to come and see your film. Part of me, as you can imagine, was like a boy scientist. So even though this film was very steeped in technology, in a sense that was also revealing something personal about me. Also, in *The Conversation*, he's a little guy with his tape recorders. And that was me. I was paralyzed, and I was—the only subject I was good in at school was science. (Laughs) And that advice about making it personal... For example, when my children made films, and Sofia's [Coppola] new film, she didn't expect any kind of real acclaim for it. She just kept saying, "Well, it's just like a poem. And I don't know if anyone will be interested in it." And I would always say, "The more"—even with [Sofia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides*, or even my boy Roman's [Coppola] film *CQ*—"The more it's you, and the more it's what you love, that's the most you can do for your audience, or your reader, or the people you're hoping to reach out to."

**SCHWARTZ:** And what was the working relationship between [cinematographer Vittorio] Storaro and

Dean Tavoularis? Because obviously, Storaro has his ideas and theories about color, which are so strong.

**COPPOLA:** Well, of course, Dean Tavoularis had been the production designer of all my films since the first *Godfather*, and Vittorio Storaro had been with us in that great adventure that was *Apocalypse Now*.

And I was in theater. I was first, in theater, involved in the technology. I had the great honor and pleasure of being one of the assistants to a man named George Eisenhow, who created the electronic lighting board, the first lighting board that was made for CBS, and [it was] done at Yale. Pre-set electronics was the work of this man, and really at an early time, in the fifties, when the personal computer was far from even being hatched. So he was working in pre-set light boards. And I was a boy scientist. He created an automated fly system for theater, which I was one of the assistants on. So I loved lighting boards and stuff like that. So when we bought the studio, I bought the biggest kind of lighting system on earth.

In the movies, they used to use dimmer boards in the black and white days, in early films, because there was no problem of color temperature. But when movies went color, they stopped using dimmers, or even fiddling with that, because when the bulb goes up to its intensity, it changes color temperature and they were frightened that that would be very... At each level of technology, sound, and color, they're, like, purists about it. So I said, "Well, what's the difference if the color temperature changes? It'll be interesting, it'll be weird." And so I bought this lighting system. Vittorio absolutely fell in love with this dimmer board. To this day, he never makes a movie without having his own dimmer guy there. But he had never seen it before. And it only came from my experience in theater, running the lights. So...

Well, in truth, [Vittorio] Storaro was the cinematographer. But he was Italian and he was not in the American union. So even though I owned the studio, I had to hire a very lovely guy, American cinematographer [Ronald Victor García] who had to be there. And we had to double the crew, because the crew was Italian. So it was more a function of a union requirement. Interesting note for you on that

subject: In the early days, when I wanted Walter Murch to do sound for the movies, he was not in the union, and they said—we kept trying to give him credits, and they said, “Well, it cannot have the word ‘editor’ in any way, shape or form.” So we said, “Sound design.” And that’s where that term came from.

**SCHWARTZ:** That’s the first use of it.

**COPPOLA:** To avoid the fact that we weren’t allowed to call him an editor.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** [Inaudible question about the relationships between film and theater schools.]

**COPPOLA:** It’s one of the great enigmas, but it’s true. All around the world, wherever there is a film school in the same institution that has a theater school, the two never cooperate with each other. You would think, Well, the actors from the theater would certainly be wonderful to work with the filmmakers. And it never has happened. My brother was the dean of San Francisco State, and he really tried by edict to make them do it together. And it’s just something about the personality. The personality of theater students is very much like the gang. They love to work together and then go out and have coffee together, and they like to be together; whereas the film students are like loners, and they lock themselves in the room (Laughter), and they lock the editing machine so no one else can use it (Laughter). So having been both a theater student and a film student, I experienced that firsthand. But UCLA came recently and asked me if I could give them advice to the program. And I said, “Have the first-year directing students only direct one-act plays.” Because that’s the opportunity to work with writing. I mean, after all, let’s face it: cinema, theater, it’s all about where writing comes together with acting. That’s what it always was, and what I think it will always be. That’s the two—that’s the oxygen and hydrogen that come together. So I said, “Let the directors for film work with...” There’s such wonderful one-act-play literature. Plus, you can write them; plus, you can do three of them, or four, if one’s short, and give four directors a chance.” So UCLA has the program of—their cinema students must do one-act plays in the first year.

And my kids—I used to, in the summer—my children, Roman and Sofia, [and my nephew] Jason Schwartzman, and they were—Jason was, like, fourteen—I said, “Okay, this summer we’re having creative—we’re having creativity camp. And we’re going to do one-act plays.” “No, we don’t want to do one-act plays. We want to fish. Can’t we come to Napa and just be lazy and fish?” I said, “Well, no, we’re doing one-act plays.” We had a little place to do theater. So, “We don’t want to,” and blah-blah. So I said, “Okay, you don’t have to. I’m going to do a one-act play. We can have three or four in an evening; if anyone else wants to, you can. But if not...” I went ahead and did some Thornton Wilder play, all alone. And little by little, Sofia said, “Well, I want to do *Bernice Bobs Her Hair*.”

**SCHWARTZ:** Oh, *Bernice Bobs Her Hair*, right.

**COPPOLA:** She did that. Then Jason, who was thirteen, wrote some very heavy Tennessee Williams kind of play (Laughter) about three men who meet in a bar on New Year’s Eve. And it turns out a woman had died years before, and one man was the husband, one man was the lover, and one was the man driving the car that hit her when she ran out. (Laughter) And this kid was thirteen! I said... So he did that. And Roman—the last minute, he said—well, he did *Mooney’s Kid Don’t Cry*. But there was no room in the theater, because we were rehearsing, so he had to rehearse in the night. And then they all did it. And then we invited, like, a hundred neighbors and had a program, and did stuff like that. And I feel really, that as my children start to really find themselves, as we’re so moved that they are, it was from some of those things... Interestingly enough, Jason was a writer. And Sofia knew some casting person for Wes Anderson, who was looking for a play. So, “My cousin Jason really sounds perfect.” That’s how he got the part in *Rushmore*. So good things come when you get together and do theater, is what I’m saying.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) What up-and-coming directors do you respect?

**COPPOLA:** Well, I am very impressed with the young directors. I like David [O.] Russell, Spike Jonze, [Steven] Soderbergh, Alexander Payne, the guy who did *Punch-Drunk Love* [Paul Thomas Anderson]. I thought *Punch-Drunk Love* was very—I



loved it. And... *Grazie*. (Laughter) And Sofia. Sofia's movie is beautiful. Definitely.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) Okay. How did you get hooked up with Tom Waits? And how did you work together?

**COPPOLA:** Originally, my first idea was to go to Van Morrison. And I went to Van Morrison, had a very interesting meeting. He was very nice, but he basically told me right to my face that, basically, he doesn't write his music, God writes his music. (Laughter) And he couldn't possibly write a series of songs for something, because he doesn't decide what to write, it just sort of comes. I understood that—a genius, as I certainly thought he was, and think he was—I understood.

And so I didn't know who to get. My boy Gio [Gian-Carlo Coppola] suggested Tom Waits. He gave me the record. And on the record was a song with Bette Midler. I heard that, and it was a dialogue between a man and a woman, Bette Midler and Tom. And I said, "That's what we should do. Since we can't have our protagonist actually sing (because that would be a real musical and you couldn't do that) what if we had that musical dialogue between a man and a woman?" We tried even to get Bette Midler to do it with Tom, but for some reason she wasn't able to—but that was the beginning of it. Working with Tom—and we would spend hours sitting around and, as you see, I just burst into song at any opportunity. We gave him a room at the studio with a piano, and he would stay there all night. And there was a reader from Zoetrope who was reading up the hall, and she would hear the music, and that's Mrs. Waits today, for many years. He would come up with ideas, and then we would talk about them, and he would write this poetry. All art, you kind of go step by step. You don't really know where you're going. You know maybe what the question is, but the answer you have to arrive at by working it out and following your nose.

Both music and cinema exist both in a spatial sense as well as in a narrative sense. Music has harmony, which is spatial, and then also in time. And cinema is the same. So they really go well together. And I think more experimentation is going to happen in the future. When I say future, I'm

talking three-hundred years, as the cinema really kind of finds its voice in the most amazing ways.

I was raised in a musical family. And, for example, I can sing any song from any musical show—stops at *Hair*, so that means no [Stephen] Sondheim and it doesn't go before the thirties, like, the forties.

**SCHWARTZ:** *Showboat*?

**COPPOLA:** Well, I could do *Showboat*. But if you throw out a show name, if it's not *Wildcat* or *I Do! I Do!*, I will sing you a song from it. (Laughter)

**AUBRY:** This is a real challenge. Does someone want to...?

**COPPOLA:** Well, if they want to, I don't care.

**AUBRY:** [Inaudible] song title?

**COPPOLA:** No, no, no, a show, a show.

[Inaudible voice]

**COPPOLA:** Oh, come on. (Laughter)

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** *Babes in Arms*?

**COPPOLA:** (Sings) Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-dun-ta-da! (Laughter) Rum-tum-tum-tum-tum... Fools give you reasons, wise men never try. (Laughter) *South Pacific*. (Applause) My uncle was the musical director of *New Faces of '52* and... Oh, what was the...? *The Most Happy Fella*.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** *The Boy Friend*.

**COPPOLA:** (Sings) Dan-dan-da-da-da, dan-da-da-da-da. Da... Yeah, he did many, many, many, many shows, and opera.

I think that's a big plus of the film [*One from the Heart*—is that we have Raul [Julia] in that moment. Yeah. He was just the most wonderful person. He was just a great friend, and he was just always game. We had... One little anecdote I'll tell you. I think I had my fortieth birthday during this. Basically, I spent age forty to fifty paying off this film. (Laughter) Forty to fifty is a very important decade for a man; but that's what I did. But on my fortieth birthday, we decided, all the group—

everyone—was going to have, among other things, a campout. And they all came up to Napa, and we pitched tents and we made barbecues. It was really a beautiful night. And a limousine came up through this kind of place we didn't think a car could get to. And out comes Raul Julia in a tuxedo. And his driver put together his tent for him. (Laughter) And he kind of came like Noel Coward to this campout. That's a memory that was really wonderful.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) Okay, so *Pennies from Heaven*, which came out around that time...

**COPPOLA:** Yeah, I loved *Pennies from Heaven*. I loved that dance that Chris[topher] Walken, that—I thought it was the most spectacular scene, where he kicks down the walls, and... No, it was—I thought that was a really—and Gordy [Gordon] Willis was the photographer. That was a film I had great admiration for.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) Okay, what film directors influenced you?

**COPPOLA:** Well, I was a theater student, and planning to go to the Yale graduate school in theater. And I loved musicals, so maybe I might've pursued that. But one day at the school [UCLA]—it was, like, four o'clock—I walked by what was called the Little Theater, and I saw a sign that said, "Today: Sergei Eisenstein's *Ten Days That Shook the World, or October*." And I looked, and I'd never heard of it or anything. I went, and there were six people in this thing. I think that must be, if not a four-hour movie, a two-and-a-half-hour movie or something. And I was just so overwhelmed with what I saw—it was a silent film—when I walked out, I knew I wanted to make films. It was interesting, because Eisenstein himself had been a theater director and designer, and he talked about—of course, then I read all of his books and the books about him—he talks about once they staged a play in a gas factory, called *Gas Works* or something, and he remarked how after he did that, he said, "The cart of theater broke and the driver fell into cinema." That's exactly how I felt seeing Eisenstein's film.

But then the other people in that era, which is now in the 50s, late '55, '56, of course, we knew of the young American directors, who were only, like, 21—

Stanley Kubrick and John Frankenheimer, who had made a big impression on me. If you've never seen a live television—and there are some tapes—a John Frankenheimer live television show, you will be amazed. There's one in particular called *The Comedian*, with Mel Tormé and Mickey Rooney, I think. It's just great. And it's available on video.

So, I admired those guys. Then, of course, Orson Welles. I knew everything about Orson Welles, because he came out of theater. And as a kid, I could kind of talk like—I could do, "Indeed." (Laughter) "Was that the nose that launched a thousand ships and burned the topless...?" So I was—a little bit—wanting to be like Orson Welles, and very much admired him. And of course, *Citizen Kane*—made by a 25-year-old.

Then all those great films in the fifties that we would see, the [Akira] Kurosawa films, *The Seven Samurai* and *Yojimbo*, and Federico Fellini[']s *I Vitelloni* and *The White Sheik*, and just one great movie after another. And the [Ingmar] Bergman films were out. So that was a very rich time, if you had—if the theater in your neighborhood would play those films. And so I loved Fellini, I loved... I once wrote a letter to the Nobel committee suggesting that Akira Kurosawa should be given the Nobel Prize for literature, and they wrote a letter back, saying, "We don't accept suggestions." (Laughter)

The truth is, I've been writing a script, an ambitious script, sort of like—not that *Elective Affinities* one, but one that I've damned myself with ambition again—I kind of can't do anything unless I can pull this off. I've had a lot of trouble doing it. I have never given up. I won't even tell you how many years I've been working on it. I'm always... It's sort of like just being in love with one woman, and no matter what, that's the only thing you can think of and the only thing that brings you joy. Even though I know that the script of this project I've been working on I have far from licked, I am always enthusiastic to work on it, and I really hope I can make it one day, and that I haven't made it too ambitious—that I haven't made it beyond my capabilities. I think it's good if you make something just above your capabilities, because you'll really...

Well, I'll tell you a little story about my father. When my dad was a solo flute for [Arturo] Toscanini, sometimes guest conductors would come. The

great Russian [Sergei] Prokofiev came to conduct, and my dad was playing the flute. And in one passage, it was very high, and he went [to Prokofiev] after and he said, “Maestro, please tell me, why did you...?” He was interested in composition. He says, “Why did you score that part for the flute? Because it’s in the piccolo’s range.” And he [Prokofiev] said, “Because I wanted you to strain for it.” So, if you try something above your capability, even though you probably won’t entirely pull it off, you may come close, or you may do something at the very limit of your ability.

“If a man’s reach doesn’t exceed his grasp, what’s the heavens for?” [Robert Burns] And I’ve been in that situation, because it’s—it kind of happened after a while. When *One from the Heart* came out, as you know, it was a disastrous failure. And so much so that the reason it was never shown—and they talk about, ah, it didn’t make two dollars or whatever—is because I owned the picture and I pulled it back. My feelings were so hurt at having the picture be pre-reviewed before it was done that I yanked it back, and so it was never shown. That’s one of the reasons why we’ve brought it back now. It was a very low period for me, because I’d also lost all—any and all—money I had, and I had a huge bank coming after me. And I thought, Well, the crazy thing is that I took such a risk and it wasn’t even really a script that I wrote myself. If you are going to really chuck it all and take the big gamble, it should be something very personal to you. Beyond the idea of having a studio and all that wonderful stuff we were doing, this story was someone else’s script—what have you. So in those days, and in that mood of failure, I decided, I’m going to pick a movie that I will write, and that will be my dream movie, and maybe be the last movie I ever make. All through those years, when I was doing *Peggy Sue Got Married* and whatever—all the films I made—I was always trying to work on this one. That’s the same one I’m working on now.

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SCHWARTZ: This is *Megalopolis*.

COPPOLA: *Megalopolis*, yeah. And...

SCHWARTZ: Okay, if you could tell us anything about what sort of new uses of technology—what are some of your ideas of how you’re going to approach film with that, with *Megalopolis*?

COPPOLA: Well, of course, the big news is sad news and happy news at the same time, which is the fact that we are now in the digital era, where they can make a camera that passes, really, the apogee of what film could do. I once... When Dr. [Edwin] Land, the great Dr. Land of Polaroid, was really retiring—but he was sort of kicked out of his company because he had made an instant movie camera called the Polavision. And I read about it, and I always admire those kind of people, so I went and I got a beautiful first edition of the Goethe color theory [*Theory of Colours*—Goethe also worked on a color theory; he was a scientist, too—in color, which is very hard to get. I called—I didn’t know them—and asked, “Could I see Dr. Land, and bring him a present, and commemorate his leaving?” And he received me, and he spent the whole day with me. And I gave him this book. We talked a little bit about the Polavision, and I said, “Well, gee.” I said, “You know, there’re going to be these little video cameras that are going to be able to do everything, but way beyond.” And he said, “Ah,” he says, “But photochemical film is at the apogee of its development.” I understood that film, which we all love, reached this incredible beauty—but you have to use the technology of the day, and that’s going to be the digital image, and it’s going to be beautiful. Already, it can be beautiful. I’ve been experimenting a lot with it. So in the future, they won’t—I hate to say it, but they won’t make film.

SCHWARTZ: Well, thanks for sharing this beautiful film. (Applause)