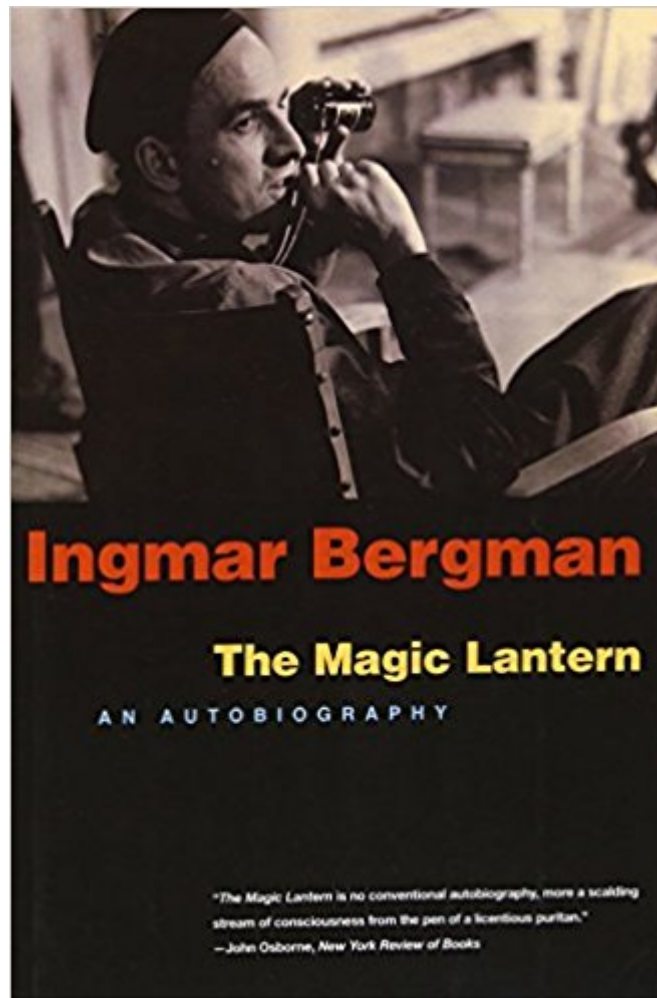




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The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography



Synopsis

“When a film is not a document, it is a dream. . . . At the editing table, when I run the strip of film through, frame by frame, I still feel that dizzy sense of magic of my childhood.” • Bergman, who has conveyed this heady sense of wonder and vision to moviegoers for decades, traces his lifelong love affair with film in his breathtakingly visual autobiography, *The Magic Lantern*. More grand mosaic than linear account, Bergman’s vignettes trace his life from a rural Swedish childhood through his work in theater to Hollywood’s golden age, and a tumultuous romantic history that includes five wives and more than a few mistresses. Throughout, Bergman recounts his life in a series of deeply personal flashbacks that document some of the most important moments in twentieth-century filmmaking as well as the private obsessions of the man behind them. Ambitious in scope yet sensitively wrought, *The Magic Lantern* is a window to the mind of one of our era’s great geniuses. “[Bergman] has found a way to show the soul’s landscape Many gripping revelations.” • “New York Times Book Review” • Joan Tate’s translation of this book has delicacy and true pitch *The Magic Lantern* is as personal and penetrating as a Bergman film, wry, shadowy, austere. • “New Republic” • “[Bergman] keeps returning to his past, reassessing it, distilling its meaning, offering it to his audiences in dazzling new shapes.” • “New York Times” • What Bergman does relate, particularly his tangled relationships with his parents, is not only illuminating but quite moving. No “tell-all” book this one, but revealing in ways that much longer and allegedly “franker” books are not. • “Library Journal”

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Customer Reviews

Ingmar Bergman is perhaps the greatest living filmmaker, having written and directed the masterpieces "The Seventh Seal," "Wild Strawberries," "Through a Glass Darkly," "Cries and Whispers," "Scenes From a Marriage," "Fanny and Alexander" and many others. In this autobiography, Bergman focuses more on his personal than his professional life, offering the reader an unusually intimate portrait of a troubled and prolific artistic psyche. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Director Bergman's memoir explores his relations with his parents and older brother, his introduction to the theater, his successes and failures and his decision to stop making films. "A reader's disappointment over the paltry detail and characterization of Bergman's wives, children and lovers--and of his films--is somewhat dissipated by the inclusion of numerous anecdotes about Chaplin, Garbo, Karajan, Olivier and especially Ingrid Bergman," reported PW. Photos. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Woody Allen was asked by Public Radio's Terry Gross on "Fresh Air" what were the movies he had most watched in his life. One of the three he named was Ingmar Bergman's classic "The Seventh Seal." Bergman has exerted a powerful filmic influence on Allen and other directors. He is one of the most important directors in the history of film so all we can learn about him is of importance. The Magic Lantern is Bergman's autobiography published in 1986. Bergman(1918-2007) was born to a devout, strict and dour Lutheran clergyman and his wife. The parents were cold with many marital problems and conflicts in their over fifty years of marriage. His father rose to high prominence in the Swedish church hierarchy while the mother became emotionally withdrawn from the marriage. Bergman was loved by his parents but they were strict with him, his brother and sister. Bergman was a sensitive boy who was plagued by various illnesses. He loved to read, listen to music, walk and watch movies on his magic lantern projector received as a Christmas present. Bergman attended the University of Stockholm, heiled Hitler while on a visit to a chum in Germany and did not serve in World War II. He rose in the Swedish film industry making such masterpieces of cinema art as "Wild Strawberries"; "Persona"; "The Seventh Sign"; "Scenes from a Marriage; "Autumn Sonata" "Fanny and Alexander" and other films popular in American art houses and throughout the world. Bergman's personal life was a mess! He was married five times; had several children and was an unfaithful husband. Bergman was a complex artist who was egocentric and often selfish in his

relationships with other human beings. His forbidding childhood in a religious home led to his spiritual rebellion. He was an atheist who was haunted by the austere God of Swedish Lutheran piety. He feared death and was flummoxed at his inability to explain it to himself. Bergman's films deal with such themes as death, love, family, isolation and fear. He was a perfectionist who developed the art of film directing to a collaborative art. Bergman complains too much and in too much detail about his stomach and bowel problems. Does he think we are interested in his gustatory woes? He comes across as a complex, argumentative, intellectual and difficult man to know and love. I do admire him for his honesty and willingness to share his many faults, fears and phobias with the reading audience. The book is well written evoking the beauties of the Swedish countryside; the mystery of love and death and the poignant memories of his lost childhood. Ingmar Bergman was a great filmmaker, a flawed human being and a seeker to answers for the drama of living life on earth.

One Christmas, when Ingmar Bergman was 10 years old, a wealthy aunt gave his older brother a magic lantern--a low tech projector. Little Ingmar was overwhelmed by the contraption, and he traded 100 tin soldiers for it from his rather indifferent brother. That night he crept into a closet with the lantern, fired it up, and gazed in wonderment at the images flashed against the closet wall. He was enchanted, and in his memoir, aptly titled after that memorable experience, he tells us that he still is. *The Magic Lantern* is as intriguing as Bergman's films. Anyone who has seen his films will immediately appreciate just how many scenes in them are pulled from Bergman's own life--or at least his memories, accurate or not, of his life: the spanking scene in "Fanny and Alexander," the locked-in-a-closet scene in "Hour of the Wolf," the infidelity in "Faithless" (Liv Ullmann directed, but Bergman wrote the script), the death fear in "Seventh Seal," and so on. Bergman truly is a confessional artist. As both writer and director, his personal life, both inner and outer, is the raw material for his films. *The Magic Lantern* isn't written in a linear style. Memories of childhood dance with more recent ones--e.g., rehearsing Strindberg's "Dream Play" or being arrested on false charges of tax evasion. What's important for Bergman throughout is his inner life: the incredibly rich psyche that serves as the magic lantern that projects his art into the world, both on the screen and the stage. Bergman wrote his memoir after he'd "retired." He still had several films ahead of him, including what I think turned out to be one of his best, "Saraband." The themes that haunted him throughout his life, including ones that he thought he'd laid to rest involving God and death, and which he wrote about in *The Magic Lantern*, remained with him for the final two decades of his life. Like his movies, there is no final resolution. Perhaps that's simply the human condition.

I was somewhat disappointed after completing Mr. Bergman's autobiography. While he is very candid and confronts many of the problems we all face growing into adulthood, I found the structure of the book a bit disorienting. In one chapter he's talking about a period in the 1940's, then he jumps into a discussion that took place in the 70's. A few times I found myself questioning what period of his life he was specifically referring to. Regardless, it is worth reading!

An amazing glimpse into Bergman's mind and his influences. Paradoxically, he considered his films his "lesser" works and hoped that his stage plays would be among the great theatre pieces.

It is an excellent honest and stimulating self-portrait of a fascinating man. I would have liked images of the different personages and a more complete CV at the back. I enjoyed the fact that it was not written chronologically. It is a wonderful companion to the film Fanny and Alexander.

This book is an absolute treasure. So happy to own it.

Great biography, extraordinary man. Thank you, PAC

Very happy.

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