



**ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY LIVES
THE CINEMA OF MÁRTA MÉSZÁROS**

The Heiresses (Örökség)

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Based on a true story, *The Heiresses* is the first time Mészáros used a period setting. Isabelle Huppert plays Irén, a quiet Jewish shop girl employed by a rich but sterile woman (Monori) to have a baby for her. In pre-WWII Hungary their plan goes well, but as relationships change and fascism rises, further challenges are in store...

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The subject of infertility always fascinated Márta Mészáros. In 1936, the wealthy, barren Szilvia 'buys' her beautiful, intelligent but impecunious friend Irén, so that her husband, Ákos, the handsome officer, can get her pregnant and the resulting child will inherit the vast fortune. Ákos, who has his wife to thank for his career, initially wants nothing to do with the idea but eventually he cannot resist the charms and refinement of the beautiful Irén.

In 1944, with the rise of the Hungarian fascist party, Szilvia takes terrible revenge against her one-time Jewish friend.

After the world hit of *Nine Months*, Márta Mészáros had the opportunity to shoot a film with another great French film star Isabelle Huppert, in a coproduction with Gaumont. The film, which is based on a true story, was the first where the director positions her typical 'female theme' into a historical perspective.

'When Ákos, the progenitor, earlier screens the footage of a film he has shot of the three of them at a mountain retreat, Szilvia's head and torso appear on screen while Irén is shown entering the room so that the two halves make up a single woman in the frame, in a visual fusion reminiscent of Bergman's melding of two women also locked together *in extremis*, in *Persona* (1961). But in a gesture suggesting a desire for a rupture with the past, Szilvia reacts to this recording of the true lovers by throwing the can of film into the fire.'
(Catherine Portuges, *Hungarian Cinema of Márta Mészáros – Screen Memories*, Indiana University Press, 1993)

Eszter Fazekas, *Restored Films of Márta Mészáros*, National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive

THE HEIRESSES (ÖRÖKSÉG)

Director: Márta Mészáros
Production Companies: Gaumont, Hunnia Filmstúdió
Studio Head: Miklós Köllő
Production Managers: Ferenc Szohár, Evelyne July
Assistant Directors: Tibor Puszt, Mihály Sárdi, Anikó Gervai
Screenplay: Márta Mészáros, Ildikó Kóródy
Story Editor: Miklós Vásárhelyi
Cinematographer: Elemér Ragályi
Camera Operator: Géza Gonda
Editor: Annamária Komlóssy
Art Director: József Romvári
Costume Designer: Fanny Kemenes
Wardrobe: Zsuzsa Balai
Music: Zsolt Döme, Johann Strauss, Szabolcs Fényes
Sound Director: György Kovács

Cast

Lili Monori (*Szilvia*)
Sándor Szabó (*Komáromi*)
Isabelle Huppert (*Irén*)
Jan Nowicki (*Ákos*)
Zita Perczel (*Teréz*)
Piotr Skrzinecki (*Uncle Fülöp*)
Witold Holtz (*Jenő*)
Zsolt Körtvélyessy (*Tamás*)
Judit Hernádi (*Zita*)
Károly Mécs (*Szorondy*)
Szokolay, Ottó (*colonel*)
Éva Gyulányi

Hungary/France 1980
109 mins

The restorations in this season were made from the original camera negatives, original magnetic tape sounds and positive prints, supervised and presented by the National Film Institute Hungary – Film Archive. The restorations were carried out at the NFI Film Archive and Filmlab.



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Hungarian Cultural Centre, London

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The Heiresses (Örökség)

Sun 18 Jul 15:20; Tue 27 Jul 20:30

Don't Cry, Pretty Girls! (Szép lányok, ne sírjatok!)

Sun 18 Jul 18:40

Riddance (Szabad lélegzet)

Wed 21 Jul 21:00

Adoption (Örökbefogadás)

Thu 22 Jul 20:30

Diary for My Children (Napló gyermekeimnek)

Sat 24 Jul 14:10 (+ pre-recorded extended intro by Márta Mészáros);

Wed 28 Jul 17:50

Diary for My Loves (Napló szerelmeimnek)

Sat 24 Jul 17:30; Sat 31 Jul 20:30

Diary for My Father and Mother (Napló apámnak, anyámnak)

Sat 24 Jul 20:45; Sat 31 Jul 14:40

Nine Months (Kilenc hónap)

Sun 25 Jul 12:30

The Two of Them/Two Women (Ök ketten)

Mon 26 Jul 18:10

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