

THE 4TH ANNUAL  
SAN FRANCISCO

# SILENT

FILM FESTIVAL

July 11th 1999 · Castro Theatre

PROGRAM ONE · 11:00AM

## ANIMATION RARITIES

Piano Accompaniment by Michael Mortilla  
Special Guest Jere Guldin  
UCLA Film & Television Archive and ASIFA-Hollywood

12:50PM

### AUTHOR SIGNING

Russell Merritt *Walt in Wonderland*

PROGRAM TWO · 1:30PM

## LOVE

Dennis James on the Mighty Castro Wurlitzer

3:25PM

### AUTHOR SIGNING

Frederica Sagor Maas *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim*

PROGRAM THREE · 4:00PM

## PO ZAKONU

Piano Accompaniment by Michael Mortilla  
Special Guest Dmitri Poletaev  
WMNB-TV *Good Evening, America*

7:30PM

### AUTHOR SIGNING

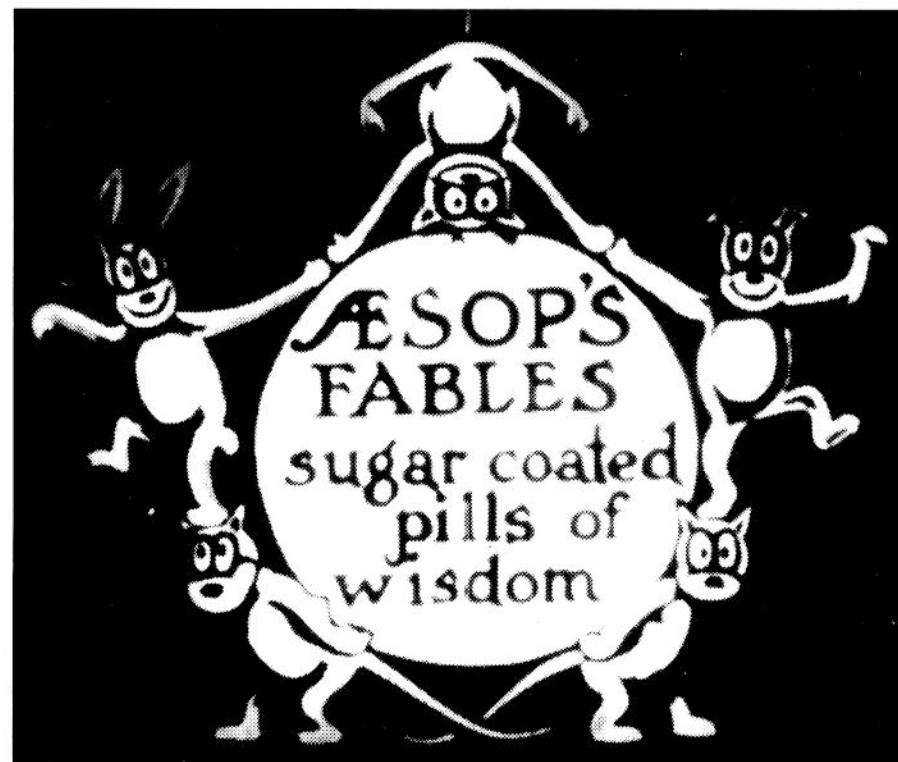
Emil Petaja *Photoplay Edition*  
Allan R. Ellenberger *Ramon Novarro*

PROGRAM FOUR · 8:00PM

## WINGS

Dennis James on the mighty Castro Wurlitzer  
Special Guest Richard J. Meyer  
President of The San Francisco Silent Film Festival

Michael Mortilla's appearance is supported by funding from Meet the Composer, Inc.,  
provided by ASCAP and the National Endowment for the Arts



## ANIMATION RARITIES

Piano Accompaniment by Michael Mortilla  
PRINT SOURCE: UCLA Film & Television Archive

Animated cartoons were a regular attraction at movie theaters in the silent era, yet they were appreciated for the most part as disposable novelty items of little artistic value. The vast majority of animated films produced in the first thirty years of the 20th century have been lost due to deterioration and neglect. In an effort to promote greater awareness of silent animation as a unique art form in need of preservation and exhibition, The San Francisco Silent Film Festival is proud to present a selection of animated short subjects featuring the work of such familiar names as Walt Disney, Friz Freleng and



Black Cat

P I X A R  
ANIMATION STUDIOS

the Fleischer Brothers, along with films by lesser-known artists Tony Sarg, Segundo de Chomon and Harry S. Palmer. *Films are listed in order of appearance.*

**I'M INSURED** (1916) from the *Kartoon Komics* series produced, directed, written and animated by Harry S. Palmer and released by Gaumont Studios in 1916. Gaumont terminated the series the following year when Palmer left to produce patriotic-themed cartoons for Educational Pictures.

**SCRAMBLED EAGLES** (1921), a *Jerry on the Job* cartoon produced by John R. Bray and directed by Vernon Stallings for International Film Service. The *Jerry on the Job* series was derived from a daily cartoon by Walter Hoban that appeared in the *New York Journal*. The series is notable for the debut of Walter Lantz, who attained renown as the creator of Woody Woodpecker.

**MARVELS OF MOTION** Issue J (1926), the only surviving episode in the series, produced by Max and Dave Fleischer for Inkwell Films. The Fleischer Brothers are particularly remembered for the cartoons they produced featuring Betty Boop and Popeye the Sailor. The *Marvels of Motion* series used reverse photography, freeze frames and a special slow-motion process developed by The Novagraph Company to

explore aspects of movement.

**ANIMATED HAIR** (1925) written, directed and animated by Marcus and produced by Max Fleischer for Inkwell Films. Marcus was the pen name for a cartoonist whose work regularly appeared in *Life Magazine*, and *Animated Hair* is an excellent example of the off-beat experimentation that went on in the silent era. Funding for the preservation of *Animated Hair* was provided in part by The San Francisco Silent Film Festival.

**BOB'S ELECTRIC THEATRE** *Le Petit Theatre du Bob* (circa 1906) produced, directed and animated by Segundo de Chomon, Ferdinand Zecca and Gaston Velle for Pathe Freres. Chomon invented a camera mechanism for exposing film one frame at a time, thus paving the way for the development of the animated film. *Bob's Electric Theatre* uses a combination of live action and stop-motion photography to tell the story of a little boy and his puppet theatre.

**BARON BRAGG & THE DEVILISH DRAGON** (1922) produced by Herbert M. Dawley, directed by Tony Sarg and Herbert M. Dawley for *Tony Sarg's Almanac*. Between the years 1920 and 1926 Tony Sarg created 18 silhouette animation films for his *Almanac* programs. Based in part on Chinese shadow puppetry, Sarg used

stop-motion animation and marionettes to create his intricate and colorful shadowgraphs.

**LES METAMORPHOSES COMIQUES** (1912) a rediscovered film by Emil Cohl, generally considered the founding father of the animated cartoon. Long considered lost, *Les Metamorphoses Comiques* has been found and preserved by the UCLA Film and Television Archive due to the detective work of Jere Guldin, UCLA Film Preservationist and director of the Animation Preservation Project at ASIFA-Hollywood.

**ALICE'S WILD WEST SHOW** (1924) produced by Walter E. Disney and Roy Disney, directed by Walter E. Disney and Ub Iwerks and starring Virginia Davis. In 1923 Walt Disney was making cartoons for Laugh-O-Gram Productions in Kansas City, Missouri. Having seen the popular Fleischer Brothers *Koko the Clown* cartoons, in which an animated clown inhabits a live-action world, Disney decided to produce a series with a live-action girl in a cartoon world. *Alice's Wild West Show* is the fourth film in the series.

**HOMELESS HOMER** (1928) produced by Margaret Winkler, directed by Rudolf Ising and Isadore "Friz" Freleng. Before the creation of Mickey Mouse,

Walt Disney received great acclaim with a series of cartoons featuring Oswald the Lucky Rabbit for Universal Pictures. After Disney left Universal over a salary dispute the series was continued by Rudolf Ising and "Friz" Freleng, who would soon achieve fame producing *Looney Tunes* and *Merrie Melodies* for Warner Bros. Studios.

**A BUGGY RIDE** (1926) is from the popular *Aesop's Fables* series created by Paul Terry in 1923. The series proved so successful that it continued into the 1930's – one of the few cartoon series to survive the transition to sound. Paul Terry went on to produce the long-running *Terrytoons* series and is best remembered as the creator of Mighty Mouse.

**KOKO'S EARTH CONTROL** (1928) an *Inkwell Imps* cartoon produced by Max Fleischer and Alfred Weiss and directed by Dave Fleischer. When the idea of placing a cartoon clown in the real world first occurred to the Fleischer Brothers they began by imitating real life. Dave put on a clown suit and traditional clown make-up and Max sketched him. *Koko's Earth Control* is one of the most famous – and apocalyptic – episodes in the series, featuring a memorable performance by Fitz the Dog.

– Corina Rios



## LOVE (1927)

Dennis James on the Mighty Castro Wurlitzer

CAST John Gilbert Count Vronsky Greta Garbo Anna Karenina George Fawcett Grand Duke Emily Fitzroy Grand Duchess Brandon Hurst Karenin Phillippe de Lacy Serezha PRODUCED BY Irving Thalberg DIRECTED BY Edmund Goulding PHOTOGRAPHY William Daniels SCREENPLAY Frances Marion adapted from *Anna Karenina* by Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy TITLES Marion Ainslee and Ruth Cummings ART DIRECTION Cedric Gibbons and Alexander Toluboff PRODUCTION COMPANY Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer PRINT SOURCE Warner Bros. Classics

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877) was retitled *Love* when it reached the screen in November of 1927, but it's possible that any story starring John Gilbert and Greta Garbo would have been given this title by studio executives. What better way to capitalize on the movie magazines, which were

breathlessly reporting that Garbo was on the verge of marrying her co-star. *Love* was highly profitable (costing MGM \$488,000, it earned over \$1,600,000 in rentals worldwide) with reviews to match. *Time* wrote in December 1927 "It isn't Tolstoy, but it is John Gilbert and Greta Garbo, beautifully presented and magnificently acted," and *Variety* added, "They are in a fair way of becoming the biggest box office team this country has yet known."

John Gilbert was born John Pringle, the son of stock company parents, on July 10th, 1899 in Logan, Utah. He spent most of his childhood backstage and in boardinghouses, lonely and ignored, while his beautiful if unmaternal mother toured with one stock company after another following her early divorce. This itinerant lifestyle resulted in Gilbert becoming almost completely self-educated; he was a voracious reader. But at age 14 his mother died and he was completely on his own. The future matinee idol was an extremely likeable if near-starved teenager (115 lbs. at almost six feet tall) when he entered films in 1915 as a \$15-a-week extra in westerns being filmed in the wilds of Santa Monica. Within a few years directors began to notice the eager young bit-player's growing photogenic qualities and gradually cast him in featured roles, some of them

unsympathetic character parts which Gilbert welcomed.

In 1924 Gilbert rose from leading man to star at the newly-formed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio in their first production *He Who Gets Slapped* with Lon Chaney and Norma Shearer. One hit soon followed another: *The Big Parade* (for which Gilbert won *Photoplay's* Best Performance medal, a forerunner to the Academy Award) and *The Merry Widow* in 1925; *La Boheme* and *Bardelys the Magnificent* in 1926. Gilbert was second only to Rudolph Valentino as reigning 'Great Lover of the Screen' in publicity parlance. Indeed, he was actually better accepted by both male and female American audiences than Valentino and played a wider range of roles, still welcoming opportunities for offbeat or unromantic casting, as in *The Snob* (1924) and *Man, Woman and Sin* (1927). But the 'Great Lover' sobriquet was hard to shake and rankled him as it led to increasingly formulaic film stories.

In 1925 MGM general manager Louis B. Mayer signed a new European 'find' to a five-year contract: nineteen-year-old Greta Garbo (b. Greta Gustafson, 1905), but the studio was perplexed as to how to best 'type' the special quality she seemed to possess. It was on her third film for MGM, *Flesh and the Devil*, that she met her new co-



star John Gilbert. He was charmed by her vulnerability, which was reminiscent of his own, and he guided her through the filming. Their mutual rapport was instantaneous and the 'chemistry' was evident onscreen. Garbo trusted Gilbert implicitly, telling *Photoplay* in 1930, "I don't know how I should have managed if I had not been cast opposite John Gilbert...If he had not come into my life at this time, I should probably have [gone] home to Sweden at once, my American career over."

The MGM adaptation of *Anna Karenina* was originally conceived as a project for Lillian Gish before it was given to Garbo as her first sympathetic role, and even then filming was begun twice; first as *Anna Karenina* with Ricardo Cortez as Vronsky, then scrapped and relaunched as *Love* with John Gilbert and director Edmund Goulding. Despite these reshufflings in cast and crew the studio decided to safeguard the new film's box office appeal against even the threat of Tolstoy: two alternate endings were scripted and filmed – one happy, one tragic – and exhibitors were given their choice, with the result that the East and West coasts opted for Tolstoy while most places in between opted for the happy ending concocted by screenwriter Frances Marion. Both were successful. Gilbert and Garbo ap-

peared in one more silent together, *A Woman of Affairs* in 1929, and one talking picture, *Queen Christina*, in 1933.

One of the regrettable and erroneous legends surrounding the end of the silent era concerns John Gilbert's demise in sound films: that his voice was 'high-pitched.' This rumor continued to circulate over the years as few of his sound films were available for reappraisal. His voice was a perfectly adequate light baritone and was quite skillful when put to use in a good film, such as the brilliant dark comedy *Downstairs* (1932), which Gilbert wrote. He was in the preproduction stages of the sophisticated jewel-thief comedy *Desire* with Marlene Dietrich when he died of heart failure in 1936. He was 35 years old.

In 1985 Leatrice Gilbert Fountain, daughter of John Gilbert and silent actress Leatrice Joy, wrote a compassionate and admirably researched biography of her famous father: *Dark Star*. The definitive biography of Greta Garbo to date is Barry Paris' equally insightful and recommended 1995 *Garbo*.

— Rebecca Peters



## По Закону

(PO ZAKONU) (1926)

Piano accompaniment by Michael Mortilla  
Live English translation by Dmitri Poletaev

CAST Aleksandra Khokhlova Edith Nelson Sergei Kamarov Hans Nelson Vladimir Fogel Michael Dennin Porfiri Podobed Harkey Pyotr Galadzhnev Dutchy PRODUCED BY The Kuleshov Collective DIRECTED BY Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Boris Svenshinikov PHOTOGRAPHY Konstantin Kuznetsov SCREENPLAY Viktor Shklovsky and Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov adapted from *The Unexpected* by Jack London ART DIRECTION Isaak Makhlis PRODUCTION COMPANY Goskino PRINT SOURCE David Shepard Film Preservation Associates

Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov was born in Tambov, Russia in 1899 and came of age in a turbulent world. Civil war gripped the country. Cinema, like the

dream of socialism, was in its infancy. As a set designer under the Tsarist filmmaker Yevgeni Bauer, the young Kuleshov was already writing about the

role of the artist in the filmmaking process. In 1917 when Bauer died while building a studio in the Crimea, Kuleshov got his big break in finishing *The King of Paris*. The following year at the tender age of 18, Kuleshov directed his first film *Project of Engineer Prite*, a detective story that was the first Russian production to use American-style montage. Under the Bolsheviks, Kuleshov was put in charge of re-editing newsreel footage and imported features. He was also sent to the front lines during the Russo-Polish War, where he shot *On the Red Front* (1920), the first film to combine documentary footage and dramatized action.

Despite his achievements, Kuleshov was considered too young and inexperienced for a position at the newly opened Moscow Film School. However he and several colleagues, among them Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Kamarov and Alexandra Khokhlova (Kuleshov's future wife and lifetime collaborator), were allowed to start an experimental group of actors and directors known as the Kuleshov Workshop. It was here that Kuleshov put his radical theories into practice. In the most famous of his experiments, Kuleshov placed a shot of well-known actor Ivan Mozhukhin, a neutral expression on his face, in juxtaposition with a bowl of soup, a young girl holding a toy bear and a woman in a coffin.

Viewers of the footage assigned different emotions to the actor depending on which shot had appeared before, demonstrating that it was not the photographed reality that was of primary importance in giving meaning to films, but the sequence of shots and the audience reaction to that sequencing. This would become known as the Kuleshov Effect. He also studied Chaplin's use of close-ups and developed the actor-mannequin theories of film acting, which were in direct opposition to the popular Stanislavski method of the time. He believed that actors should use a minimum amount of gesture and movement, and he recognized that close-ups were powerful in expressing emotion.

Kuleshov directed the 1924 comedy *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* and *The Death Ray*, a science fiction film released in 1925. Both films were a departure for Soviet cinema and were roundly criticized for their experimental nature and lack of appropriate ideological content. Kuleshov was marked as a formalist and had trouble receiving funds for further projects.

Working with scriptwriter Viktor Shklovsky he decided to film Jack London's short story *The Unexpected*. London was a well-known socialist sympathizer and his stories were famil-

iar to Russian filmmakers. His novels *Martin Eden* and *The Iron Heel* and his short story *A Piece of Meat* (produced as *Gold* by the Kuleshov Workshop) had all been adapted for the silent screen. *The Unexpected*, with its small number of characters and few locations, lent itself to the C-class budget of 15,000-18,000 rubles.

*Po Zakonu* became a model of economic filmmaking. The cast and crew rehearsed action and camera set-ups in the evenings for the next day's shooting. Two small sets were built in the courtyard of First Studio near what is now Kiev Station. Three actors were paid salaries while the other two, former Workshop members Podobed and Galadzhiev (Harkey and Dutchy respectively), volunteered their time. It is still considered the lowest-budget Russian feature ever made.

The film was well received by the European avant-garde for its ability to sustain psychological tension without the use of orthodox film techniques. Joseph Freeman described the film's strength as the result of being "worked out in the spirit of an algebraic formula, seeking to obtain the maximum of effect with the minimum of effort."

Despite critical acclaim, *Po Zakonu* further isolated Kuleshov from the Bolsheviks, who were primarily inter-

ested in promoting revolutionary goals. His reputation as an artist interested in form not content persisted and with the implementation of the first five-year plan in 1927 Kuleshov was forced to recant many of his theories. He was permitted to make only a few more films and turned his attention to writing instructive texts and teaching. In 1944 on the recommendation of Eisenstein, Kuleshov was appointed head of the State Institute of Cinematography, where he remained until his death in 1970. He received recognition from Soviet officials in 1967 when he was awarded the Order of Lenin.

— Shari Kizirian





## WINGS (1927)

Dennis James on the mighty Castro Wurlitzer

CAST Clara Bow Mary Preston Charles "Buddy" Rogers Jack Powell Richard Arlen David Armstrong Jobyna Ralston Sylvia Lewis El Brendel Herman Schwimpf Richard Tucker Air Commander Henry B. Walthall David's father Julia Swayne Gordon David's mother Gunboat Smith The Sergeant Gary Cooper Cadet White PRODUCED BY Lucien Hubbard and B.P. Schulberg DIRECTED BY William A. Wellman ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Norman Z. McLeod PHOTOGRAPHY Harry Perry SCREENPLAY Louis D. Lighton and Hope Loring based on a story by John Monk Saunders TITLES Julian Johnson SPECIAL EFFECTS Roy Pomeroy PRODUCTION COMPANY Paramount Pictures PRINT SOURCE Paramount Pictures and The Library of Congress

*Wings* is best known today as the winner of the first Academy Award for Best Picture – the only silent film so honored. However, there were actually two Best Picture awards presented in 1927: a 'Best Production' award for

"the most outstanding motion picture considering all elements that contribute to a picture's greatness" – *Wings* – and an 'Artistic Quality of Production' award for "the most artistic, unique and/or original motion picture without reference to cost or magnitude" – F.W. Murnau's *Sunrise*.

*Wings* was one of the biggest productions of 1927, with a two-million-dollar budget and aerial sequences that thrilled a public made aviation-conscious by Lindbergh's nonstop transatlantic solo flight (made just three months before the August 1927 premiere of *Wings*). The film also featured the added attraction of Magnascope – a projection process used during the dogfight scenes which magnified the images on a greatly enlarged screen.

1927 was also a year of nervous transition within the film industry and *Wings* actually straddled the silent and sound mediums. During the first year of its release, offstage sound effects machines duplicated the rat-tat-tat of machine guns and the roar of airplane motors in the battle sequences as an adjunct to the live musical accompaniment. Following this, the effects were recorded onto a separate filmstrip using the new General Electric sound process – making *Wings* one of the first major releases with sound on film, rather

than the Vitaphone-style wax disc.

*Wings* was the creation of two ex-WWI aviators: author John Monk Saunders and director William A. Wellman. In 1926 Saunders (later the author of other WWI aviation dramas including *The Dawn Patrol*) took his idea for a film about young flyers in the American Air Service to Paramount studios, which was anxious to have a WWI epic to match the 1925 MGM smash *The Big Parade* and the 1926 Fox hit *What Price Glory*? The government willingly cooperated, supplying hundreds of planes and the services of thousands of trained soldiers and pilots. They even allowed the production to commandeer air force schools near San Antonio, Texas for the film's location work.

*Wings* was the first big assignment for its young director William Augustus Wellman, who entered films in 1919 by playing a bit-part in a Douglas Fairbanks comedy. His life however already resembled a movie script. Born in 1896 on February 29th – Leap Year day – the unconventional and brash Wellman became a daring ace pilot at the age of nineteen, flying with the famed Lafayette Flying Corps of the French Foreign Legion. Hit by German anti-aircraft fire he suffered a near fatal crash that broke his back in two places. He was awarded the coveted



Croix de Guerre for his heroic efforts during the war.

Because he knew exactly what wartime flying was like, Wellman insisted on total realism: the flying scenes had to be shot in the air and not in the safety of the studio. Richard Arlen had flown with the Royal Canadian Flying Corps in WWI, but Charles "Buddy" Rogers had to be taught to fly for the film. "They would strap a camera on the cowl of the engine, and I had a 2nd lieutenant with me who would get in the back seat and take off and get us up about four or five hundred feet...then I would shake the [control] stick and he'd have to duck down and hide because I was now the cameraman and the director and *everything*...for five hundred feet, that is!" Wellman also chose to film the aerial dogfights against banks of clouds to give the dipping and diving planes a backdrop against which their speed and scale would be apparent. Though an asset to the final film, this caused costly delays that the studio interpreted as insolence. They did not invite Wellman to the premiere or to the Academy Award ceremony.

A two-million-dollar extravaganza required a name with marquee value. Clara Bow had been a top box office draw since 1925 and the undisputed symbol of the flapper-era jazz baby; the

vibrant and liberated young woman of personal magnetism and boundless energy whose roguish eyes and irrepressible behavior were representative of the era. She hadn't yet acquired her famous nickname – this would come with the film she made next: *It*. Bow herself was as emotionally fragile as her on-screen persona was self-assured. Personal problems and poor handling by her studio cut short her stardom in the talkie era. She made her last film in 1933 when she was only 28 years old.

She worked again with Wellman and Arlen in the 1928 *Ladies of the Mob*, regrettably a lost film, and Arlen made other films with Wellman, most notably *Beggars of Life* (also 1928) starring Clara Bow's friend Louise Brooks. Sadly, *Beggars of Life* is the only other example of Wellman's silent work to have survived neglect and decomposition. As a result, Wellman's career is almost exclusively associated with the sound era (*The Public Enemy*, *A Star is Born*, *Nothing Sacred* and *The Ox-Bow Incident* among many others). Even *Wings* barely escaped oblivion; it was rescued by the Cinema Francaise in the 1950's.

— Rebecca Peters

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