

THE 6TH ANNUAL
SAN FRANCISCO

SILENT

FILM FESTIVAL

July 8th 2001 · Castro Theatre

AmericanAirlines

PROGRAM ONE · 11:00AM

PETER PAN

Introduction Stephen Salmons, The San Francisco Silent Film Festival
Orchestral Accompaniment by The Flower City Society Orchestra Philip Carli Conductor

AUTHOR SIGNING · 1:25PM

John Bengtson *Silent Echoes*

PROGRAM TWO · 2:00PM

WITHIN OUR GATES

Introduction Stephen Salmons, The San Francisco Silent Film Festival
Special Guest George Tribble, Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame
Piano Accompaniment by Michael Mortilla

AUTHOR SIGNING · 4:00PM

Joseph McBride *Searching for John Ford*

PROGRAM THREE · 4:30PM

MACISTE ALL'INFERNO

Introduction Richard J. Meyer, President The San Francisco Silent Film Festival
Special Guests Amelia Antonucci, Istituto Italiano di Cultura
Piero Colussi, Livio Jacob and Piera Patat, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto
Piano Accompaniment by Michael Mortilla

PROGRAM FOUR · 8:30PM

IT

Introduction Stephen Salmons, The San Francisco Silent Film Festival
Special Guest David Stenn *Clara Bow Runnin' Wild*
Organ Accompaniment by Chris Elliott
AUTHOR SIGNING · 8:00PM
David Stenn *Clara Bow Runnin' Wild*

The Nob Hill Hotel



PETER PAN (1924)

Orchestral Accompaniment by The Flower City Society Orchestra Philip Carli Conductor

CAST Nana the dog (George Ali) Mrs. Darling (Esther Ralston) Mr. Darling (Cyril Chadwick) Wendy Moira Angela Darling (Mary Brian) John Napoleon Darling (Jack Murphy) Michael Nicholas Darling (Philippe De Lacy) Tinker Bell (Virginia Brown Faire) Tiger Lily (Anna May Wong) Peter Pan (Betty Bronson) Captain James Hook (Ernest Torrence) DIRECTOR Herbert Brenon PHOTOGRAPHY James Wong Howe SCREENPLAY Willis Goldbeck from the play by James M. Barrie SETTINGS Edward Smith SPECIAL EFFECTS Roy Pomeroy PRODUCTION COMPANY Famous Players-Lasky Corporation DISTRIBUTOR Paramount Pictures PRINT SOURCE Kino International

Sir James Matthew Barrie wrote 1860, he began his writing career numerous books and plays, but he is as a journalist, and by the turn of best remembered for *Peter Pan*. Born the century he was a well-known in Kirriemuir, Scotland on May 9, playwright. *Peter Pan*, or *The Boy who*

GUARDIAN

would not *Grow Up*, premiered on the London stage on December 26, 1904, and was an instant success. Barrie had written the play for the Christmas pantomime, a traditional English entertainment which consisted of a fairy tale with elaborate special effects designed to wow the audience. The characters included fairies and other mythical creatures, and the principle character was generally a young boy played by a girl. The reason for this gender-switching was purely practical; girls were lighter in the harnesses that were required to lift them up into the air for the flying effects.

Movie studios recognized the potential of *Peter Pan* and pursued Barrie for twenty years before he finally sold the film rights to Jesse Lasky at Paramount. Barrie was enthusiastic about the possibilities film offered his play, and he wrote a new treatment which included scenes of a fairy wedding and a game of football in the treetops of Never Never Land. Director Herbert Brenon opted instead to follow the stage directions to the letter; almost all of the intertitles are taken directly from the play.

George Ali, who played the Crocodile and Nana the Dog in the original stage production, reprised his roles for the film, and Tinker Bell was played alternately by a light on a fishing line

and Virginia Brown Faire, "a dainty, delightful bit of femininity." Barrie personally selected the 17 year-old Betty Bronson, who had only appeared in a few films as an extra, for the much-coveted role of Peter Pan. "I feel like a new Cinderella," she telegraphed Barrie. Her expressive features, exuberant acting style and radiant childlike innocence contributed significantly to the film, and *Peter Pan* made her an overnight success. She went on to roles in *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1925), based on another play by Barrie, and *Ben-Hur* (1925), appearing in 33 films until her death in 1971.

Peter Pan fascinates as much today as it did in 1904 for the way it explores deeply meaningful ideas; there's a lot going on beneath the surface of this seemingly simple children's story. At the age of 60, Barrie himself admitted "It is as if long after writing *Peter Pan* its true meaning came to me: desperate attempt to grow up but can't." Whether he was familiar with the writings of Freud or not, there are definite parallels between the new psychology of Barrie's day and *Peter Pan*. Wendy and Peter have a flirtatious relationship which incites Tinker Bell to jealousy, yet at the same time Peter Pan and the Lost Boys long for a mother, a role they eagerly assign to Wendy. Mr. Darling and Captain Hook were



originally played by the same actor, establishing a classic Oedipal scenario that allows Peter Pan to do to Captain Hook what Freud claimed all small boys dream of doing to their fathers.

One particular incident from Barrie's own life illuminates his closeness to *Peter Pan*. An older brother was accidentally killed when Barrie was still quite young, and the traumatic effect this incident had on his mother made a great impression on him. He determined to remain an eternally

youthful substitute for his brother, both to console his mother and to assuage the jealousy he felt at the knowledge that he was not his mother's favorite son. This tragedy was to affect him throughout his life; the last play he wrote before his death in 1937 was *The Boy David*—his brother's name.

Despite its popularity, *Peter Pan* vanished from the public eye in 1929, when studios were destroying silent films by the thousands to make way for sound. In 1971, a 35mm nitrate color print of *Peter Pan* was discovered at the Eastman Theater in Rochester, New York. In 1995 a full restoration was made possible with funding from the Walt Disney Corporation, and the restored *Peter Pan* premiered at The Pordenone Film Festival in 1996. Complicated rights issues made public screenings impossible for several years, and it is only thanks to the perseverance of David Pierce that all legal problems have now been resolved, making it possible for *Peter Pan* to be seen by new generations of moviegoers.

—HEIDI DEVRIES



WITHIN OUR GATES (1919)

Piano Accompaniment by Michael Mortilla

CAST Sylvia Landry (Evelyn Preer) Alma Prichard (Flo Clements) Conrad Drebert (James D. Ruffin) Larry Prichard (Jack Chenault) Philip Gentry (William Smith) Dr. V. Vivian (Charles D. Lucas) Mrs. Geraldine Stratton (Bernice Ladd) Mrs. Elena Warwick (Mrs. Evelyn) Jasper Landry (William Stark) His wife (Mattie Edwards) Philip Gridlestone (Ralph Johnson) Efreem (E.G. Tatum) Emil Landry (Grant Edwards) Armand Gridlestone (Grant Gorman) WRITER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER Oscar Micheaux
PRINT SOURCE The Library of Congress

"I have always tried to make my photoplays present the truth, to lay before the Race a cross-section of its own life, to view the Colored heart from close range. It is only by presenting those portions of the Race portrayed in my pictures, in the light and background of their true state, that we can raise our people to greater heights."

—Oscar Micheaux. Jan. 24, 1925



Black Filmmakers
Hall of Fame, Inc.

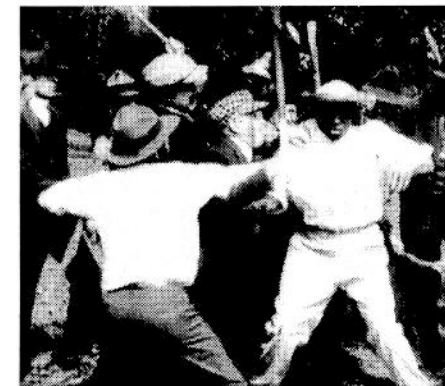
At the age of 17 Oscar Micheaux took a job as a Pullman porter, and he saved enough money to purchase land in Gregory County, South Dakota, where he was the first black homesteader. It was here that he began writing autobiographical novels, publishing and distributing them himself. Sales from his first book *The Conquest* financed the writing of his second, *The Forged Note*. He soon abandoned homesteading to embark on a second career as an author.

His next novel *The Homesteader* caught the eye of George P. Johnson of the black-owned Lincoln Motion Picture Company. He offered to pay for the rights to *The Homesteader*, but Micheaux had his own plans: he would sell only if he could direct the picture himself. Johnson balked, thus convincing Oscar Micheaux to become a motion picture producer-director.

One of the earliest known films by an African American is *The Pullman Porter* (1910) by William Foster, and Peter P. Jones made newsreels on such subjects as Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. But it was not until the release of *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), originally titled *The Clansman*, that blacks sought to forge a strong independent film movement. *The Birth of a Nation* glorified the Ku Klux

Klan, inciting riots and demonstrations all across America, and the NAACP, founded in 1909, advocated the prohibition of further screenings. Its fears were not unfounded; in the four years between the release of *The Birth of a Nation* and *Within Our Gates*, there were 278 documented mob lynchings of blacks in America. Such films as Peter P. Jones' *The Re-Birth of a Nation* (1916), and Emmett J. Scott's *The Birth of a Race* (1918) were conceived as direct responses to D.W. Griffith, but it was not until Oscar Micheaux's first film *The Homesteader* (1919), that a feature-length motion picture by blacks, for blacks and about blacks could be seen in theaters.

Making films for a black audience, and making sure a black audience could see them, were two separate but equally difficult challenges. In the tradition of black filmmakers that



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CITIZEN CAKE

preceded him, Micheaux convinced white owners of segregated theaters to book special midnight screenings for black audiences—later known as Midnight Rambles—and he showed his films at community centers and churches, often referred to as the Chitlin Circuit.

Within Our Gates was produced on a \$15,000 budget from an original screenplay written by Micheaux himself, and it was photographed in friends' homes using borrowed props and costumes. There was no money for retakes. There are few records of his working method, but he was known as a charming and flamboyant artist with a keen business sense. Lawrence Chenault, who appeared in many of his films, described Micheaux as someone who "stepped out of cars as if he were God about to deliver a sermon."

Micheaux met with opposition throughout his career from both the white community and black leaders for depicting interracial relationships, perpetuating stereotypes regarding light-skin blacks and dark-skin blacks, and for portraying the clergy in a negative light. Even when Micheaux allowed his films to be cut he did so only under protest, as is illustrated by a statement he made in reply to the Virginia Board of Censors in 1925:

"There has been but one picture that incited the colored people to riot, and that still does; that picture is *The Birth of a Nation*."

Oscar Micheaux is still relatively unknown to modern audiences, and it has only been in the last ten years, with the rediscovery of *Within Our Gates* and *The Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920), that it has become possible to reexamine his early career. In 1986 he was posthumously admitted to the Director's Guild of America, and the following year he was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. 2001 marks the 50th anniversary of his death, and for the American film industry, whose early milestones—*The Birth of a Nation* and the *The Jazz Singer*—are marred by prejudice and racial caricature, resurrecting Oscar Micheaux represents a small step toward correcting gross imbalances in historical representation.

—SHARI KIZIRIAN



MACISTE ALL'INFERNO (1926)

Piano Accompaniment by Michael Mortilla

CAST Maciste (Bartolomeo Pagano) Graziella (Pauline Polaire) Proserpina (Elena Sangro) Luciferina (Lucia Zanussi) Barbariccia/Dotter Nox (Franz Sala) Pluto (Umberto Guarracino) Gerione (Mario Sajo) Giorgio (Domenico Serra) DIRECTOR Guido Brignone PHOTOGRAPHY Massimo Terzano, Ubaldo Arata SCREENPLAY Giulio Lombardozzi SPECIAL EFFECTS Segundo de Chomon PRODUCTION COMPANY Fert-Pittalugo, Torino PRINT SOURCE George Eastman House

Between 1909 and 1914, the Italian film industry produced an average of 500 films per year. In contrast to the self-made moguls of American studios, Italian production companies were headed by cultivated members of the aristocracy, who made films based on historical, biblical or mythological

subjects in keeping with the literary and dramatic tradition of grand opera. As a result, costume films were one of the earliest genres of Italian cinema. One of the most famous examples is *Cabiria* (1914), directed for the Itala company of Turin by Giovanni Pastrone. A truly monumental film in



Roman child who is repeatedly saved from danger by a loyal slave of tremendous physical strength named Maciste. To portray this superhuman character, Giovanni Pastrone selected a nonprofessional he had discovered in Genoa who was employed as a dockworker, Bartolomeo Pagano. The tremendous success of *Cabiria* swept both Bartolomeo Pagano and Maciste to international stardom.

Popular response to Maciste prompted Pastrone to launch his new discovery – often described as ‘the good giant’ – in a series of strongman films, spawning a whole genre featuring such Olympian heroes as Ajax, Saetta and Samson, among others. Their names were derived from classical mythology, but unlike the rarefied *divi* of most Italian films, they were populist icons whose strength stood in opposition to the decadence and languor of aristocratic figures. They were essentially men of action, whose heritage was the circus and variety show, not the opera. Thirteen wildly successful Maciste films were produced between 1915–1926, including *Maciste il fuoco* Maciste the Fire (1915); *Maciste alpino* Maciste in the Alpine Regiment (1916); *Maciste atleta* Maciste the Athlete (1918); *Maciste contro la morte* Maciste Against Death (1919); a trilogy from 1920: *Maciste innamorato* Maciste in Love, *Il viaggio di Maciste*

every sense of the word – the original version is approximately three hours long, an unheard-of running time for a film made in 1914 – news of its existence captured the imagination of the world long before it was actually exported. Among those for whom the ground trembled was D.W. Griffith, who reportedly was inspired to create *Intolerance* (1916) after seeing *Cabiria*. At an equally significant and no less momentous level, *Cabiria* also launched the career of a character who would become an international pop hero: Maciste the Strongman.

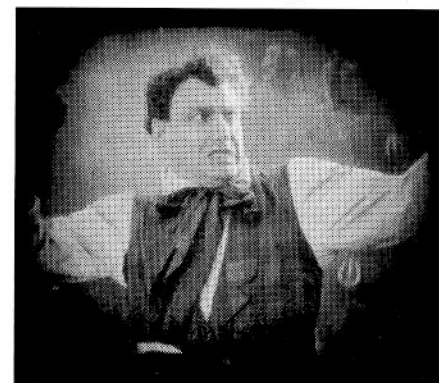
Cabiria tells the story of an aristocratic

Maciste’s Journey and *Il testamento di Maciste* Maciste’s Testament; *Maciste in vacanza* Maciste on Holiday (1921); *Maciste imperatore* Maciste the Emperor (1924); and even *Maciste e il nipote d’America* Maciste and His Nephew from America (1924). Though tested by spectacular challenges in many different settings and historical periods, Maciste was essentially the same in every film. The French critic and filmmaker Louis Delluc called Pagano “the Guitry with the biceps.”

The last Maciste film produced in the silent era was *Maciste all’inferno* Maciste in the Underworld. The screenplay by Riccardo Artuffo provided director Guido Brignone with a scenario rich in fantastic and bizarre humor. Completed in 1925, *Maciste all’inferno* ran afoul of the censors – reputedly due to charges that its depictions of Hell and Lucifer were blasphemous, which may explain why The Devil is now referred to as Lord Pluto – and the film was released in Sweden three months before it premiered in Italy in March of 1926. *Maciste all’inferno* was rereleased in the early forties with a synchronized music and sound effects track, and the Maciste character surfaced again in the fifties and sixties during a revival of the muscleman epic alongside such stalwarts as Hercules, Goliath, Colossus, Samson, Atlas and ‘The

Strongest Man in the World.’

Maciste all’inferno occupies a very special niche in Italian cinema as the film that inspired Federico Fellini to get into the movies. He spoke of the film as a sort of *scena primaria* in his personal cinematic subconscious: “I’m sure that I remember it well because the image has remained so deeply impressed that I have tried to re-evoked it in all my films. I saw it standing with my father’s arms around me amidst a crowd of people in wet overcoats because it was raining outside. I



remember a large woman with nude belly, her belly button, her eyes darkened with make-up, blazing. With an imperious movement of her arm she created a circle of flames around Maciste, he also half-naked and with a dove in his hand.”

– REBECCA PETERS





IT (1927)

Organ Accompaniment by Chris Elliott

CAST Betty Lou (Clara Bow) Cyrus Waltham (Antonio Moreno) Monty (William Austin) Molly (Priscilla Bonner) Adela Van Norman (Jacqueline Gadsdon) Mrs. Van Norman (Julia Swanye Gordon) Madame Elinor Glyn (Herself) Reporter (Gary Cooper) DIRECTOR Clarence Badger, Joseph von Sternberg (scenes) PHOTOGRAPHY H. Kinley Martin SCREENPLAY Hope Loring, Louis D. Lighton from a story by Elinor Glyn TITLES George Marion, Jr. EDITOR E. Lloyd Sheldon PRODUCTION COMPANY Famous Players-Lasky Corporation DISTRIBUTOR Paramount Pictures PRINT SOURCE Killiam Collection/Kit Parker Films

Looking at Clara Bow and the era that made her famous, it seems inevitable that she would lead the life she did. The daughter of an estranged, unloving father and an abusive mother, she escaped into the dream life of a Hollywood film star at the age of 17. With the naiveté born of a 7th grade education and a world view confined to the Brooklyn tenements where she grew up, Clara Bow would go on to become the unhappy pawn of a studio

system willing to sacrifice the mental health of their star properties for the sake of a quick profit. *It* was her 37th film in five years, and her first for Paramount Studios. She would make 20 more films in the next five years before becoming a Hollywood dropout at the tender age of 28.

Clara Bow's popularity was defined by a vivacious, confident screen presence which made her a symbol of feminine sex appeal in the 1920s. With the arrival of talking pictures and the Great Depression, her unique energy was stifled by the demands of the stationary microphone, which she grew to loathe, and the death of the flapper as a symbol of youthful freedom.

Her acting style was completely natural and depended on a highly unpredictable degree of improvisation, which frustrated many a director. She could rarely be relied on to hit a mark, and cinematographers gave up on creating special lighting for her once they realized she wasn't likely to sit still for it. Clarence Badger, who was initially frustrated by her inability to take direction, watched in amazement during the filming of one particular scene as Clara ran the gamut of emotions – from love to lust to playfulness. He immediately stopped filming and demanded to know what she thought she was doing. He recalled

her explanation years later: "That first expression was for the love-sick dames in the audience, and that second expression, that passionate stuff, was for the boys and their paps, and that third expression – well Mr. Badger, just about the time all the old women in the audience had become shocked and scandalized by that passionate part, they'd suddenly see the third expression, become absorbed in it, and change their minds about me having naughty ideas and go home thinking how pure and innocent I was; and having got me mixed up with my character I'm playing, they'd come again when my next picture came out."

Clara Bow's dream of becoming a movie star was brought to life when she won a beauty contest; the prize was a small part in *Beyond the Rainbow* (1922). Her performance was consigned to the cutting room floor,



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but she was fortunate enough to get another part in *Down to the Sea in Ships* (1922). A studio talent scout saw her performance and recommended her



to B.P. Schulberg, head of Preferred Pictures. She was in the middle of making her third film, *Grit* (1923), written by a young student named F. Scott Fitzgerald, when Schulberg sent for her. She left immediately for California, and upon arrival she was rushed directly to the offices of B.P. Schulberg, without being given the opportunity to prepare, in the only dress she owned. One look at this disheveled street urchin with a Brooklyn accent made Schulberg wonder what he had been talked into. He scheduled a screen test right there and then, and he was soon won over. Her naturalness and ability to convey emotion was undeniable. He signed her to a contract that day.

It would prove to be the apex of her career. She made her last film in 1933, then retired to a Nevada ranch with husband Rex Bell, who had been her leading man in *True to the Navy* (1930). His decision to enter politics took him away from home for long periods of time, isolating Clara to raise their two sons by herself. She suffered bouts of insomnia and depression, which led to a suicide attempt in 1943. She spent the remainder of her years drifting in and out of sanitariums until resettling in Los Angeles. The girl from Brooklyn returned to the town that had defined who she was—The IT Girl—and then forgotten her with the onset of the Great Depression and the forced morality of Louis B. Mayer and the Hayes code. She died in 1965, on the eve of a new era of sexual freedom.

— MATTHEW LIPSON

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