True art transcends time.

San Francisco SILENT Film Festival

May 28 - June 1, 2015

The CASTRO THEATRE

SAN FRANCISCO SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

It's our 20th anniversary festival and we welcome you to celebrate with us for five enchanted days in a darkened movie palace—with beautiful images projected on the big screen and set to glorious live music. The San Francisco Silent Film Festival is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public about silent film as an art form and as a valuable historical and cultural record. Throughout the year, SFSFF produces events that showcase important titles from the silent era, often in restored or preserved prints, with live musical performances by some of the world's finest practitioners of silent film accompaniment. Each presentation exemplifies the extraordinary quality that Academy Award-winning film historian Kevin Brownlow calls "live cinema."

Silent-era filmmakers produced masterpieces that can seem breathtakingly modern. In a remarkably short time after the birth of movies, filmmakers developed the techniques that made cinema its own art form. The only technique that eluded them was the ability to marry sound to the film print. Yet these films were never meant to be viewed in silence and music was often a part of the production as well as the exhibition. The absence of recording on the set meant that the camera was free to move with a grace and an intricacy that allowed visual storytelling to flourish and made motion pictures more than merely filmed theater. It is through these films that the world first came to love movies, as entertainment and art. They have influenced each subsequent generation of filmmakers and continue to astonish audiences nearly a century after they were made.

THURSDAY MAY 28

7:00 PM ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT
Musical accompaniment by the Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra
Underwritten by Friends of the Festival
Sponsored by Universal Studios
Introduction by Mike Mashon

FRIDAY MAY 29

10:00 AM AMAZING TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES
Guest Presenters: Serge Bromberg, Robert Byrne, Bryony Dixon, Jennifer Miko
Musical accompaniment by Donald Sosin

1:00 PM CAVE OF THE SPIDER WOMEN
Musical accompaniment by Donald Sosin and Frank Bockius
Introduction by Tina Anckarman

4:00 PM WHEN THE EARTH TREMBLED
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne
Introduction by Robert Byrne

7:00 PM THE LAST LAUGH
Musical accompaniment by the Berklee Silent Film Orchestra
Introduction by Sheldon Mirowitz

9:30 PM THE GHOST TRAIN
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne and Frank Bockius with live narration by Paul McGann
Introduction by Bryony Dixon

SATURDAY MAY 30

10:00 AM SPEEDY
Musical accompaniment by the Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra
Introduction by Suzanne Lloyd and John Bengtson

1:00 PM VISAGES D'ENFANTS
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne
Underwritten by Montine Hansl
SFSFF 2015 Award presentation to Serge Bromberg

SATURDAY MAY 30 *continued*

4:30 PM THE DONOVAN AFFAIR
A movie and live theater event produced by Bruce Goldstein and performed by the Gower Gulch Players
Sponsored by Fratelli Orsini/Leather Gloves Online

7:00 PM FLESH AND THE DEVIL
Musical accompaniment by the Matti Bye Ensemble
Sponsored by McRoskey Mattress Company
Special support provided by the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation
Introduction by Kevin Brownlow

9:30 PM PAN
Musical accompaniment by Guenter Buchwald
Sponsored by Fandor
Introduction by Bent Kvalvik

SUNDAY MAY 31

10:00 AM THE AMAZING CHARLEY BOWERS
Musical accompaniment and presentation by Serge Bromberg

12:30 PM AVANT-GARDE PARIS
EMAK-BAKIA with musical accompaniment by Earplay
MÉNILMONTANT with musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne

2:30 PM WHY BE GOOD?
Musical accompaniment by the Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra
Underwritten by Kenneth and Marjorie Sauer
Introduction by Leonard Maltin

4:30 PM NORRTULLSLIGAN
Musical accompaniment by the Matti Bye Ensemble
Special support provided by the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation

7:00 PM SHERLOCK HOLMES
Musical accompaniment by the Donald Sosin Ensemble
Underwritten by Glen and Cathy Miranker
Special support provided by contributors to the Baker Street Circle
Introduction by Robert Byrne and Russell Merritt

9:30 PM THE SWALLOW AND THE TITMOUSE
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne and Diana Rowan

MONDAY JUNE 1

1:00 PM SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW SILENTS
A trivia quiz hosted by Bruce Goldstein with musical accompaniment by Steve Sterner

3:00 PM THE DEADLIER SEX
Musical accompaniment by Guenter Buchwald
Introduced by Josef Lindner

5:00 PM 100 YEARS IN POST-PRODUCTION: RESURRECTING A LOST LANDMARK OF BLACK FILM HISTORY WITH BERT WILLIAMS'S LIME KILN CLUB FIELD DAY
Presentation by Ron Magliozzi
Musical accompaniment by Donald Sosin

7:00 PM BEN-HUR: A TALE OF THE CHRIST
Recorded soundtrack scored by Carl Davis
Preceded by Kevin Brownlow on stage in conversation with Serge Bromberg

Special support for the French programming at the festival provided by the French American Cultural Society and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States

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Photo by Pamela Gentile ©2014

MUSICIANS AT THE FESTIVAL

THE BERKLEE SILENT FILM ORCHESTRA is dedicated to composing and performing new, original scores for silent classics. Based at Boston's Berklee College of Music, which houses the world's only undergraduate degree program in film scoring, this all-student orchestra works under the leadership of three-time Emmy nominee Sheldon Mirowitz. Making its first appearance at the Silent Film Festival, the orchestra performs an original score for THE LAST LAUGH written by the program's current student composers: Xiaoshu Chen, Amit Cohen, Emily Joseph, Eiji Mitsuta, Shotaro Shima, and Gabriel Torrado.

Versatile percussionist **FRANK BOCKIUS** has played many years for dance and theater companies as well as in his own bands, including the jazz quintet Whisper Hot and the percussion ensemble Timpanicks. He joined the Silent Movie Music Company twenty years ago and has since performed for silent films at festivals in Kyoto, Pordenone, and Sodankylä, Finland. Last year he made his first appearance at the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, playing with Guenter Buchwald and Donald Sosin.

Preservationist, entertainer, filmmaker, and founder of Lobster Films, **SERGE BROMBERG** has delighted audiences around the world for twenty-five years with his rare film discoveries. A frequent performer and presenter at the festival, he receives this year's Silent Film Festival Award at the screening of the restored VISAGES D'ENFANTS as well as presents Maurice Tourneur's FIGURES DE CIRE at Amazing Tales and accompanies the Charley Bowers films. (See Monica Nolan's interview with Bromberg on page 50.)

Conductor, composer, pianist, and violinist **GUENTER BUCHWALD** is a pioneer of the renaissance in silent film music and has provided live accompaniment for more than three thousand titles. Acclaimed as a virtuoso improviser, he has appeared at film festivals from Berlin to Tokyo. He is musical director of Bristol's Slapstick Silent Film Festival in England, resident conductor of the Freiburg Philharmonic Orchestra for Silent Film in Concert, and lecturer at the University of Zurich's Film Science Institute.

The **EARPLAY** chamber music ensemble displays their lyrical and ferocious style performing a newly commissioned score written expressly for Man Ray's avant-garde film EMAK BAKIA by Paris-based composer Nicolas Tzortzis. The ensemble, a project of the San Francisco nonprofit Earplay dedicated to new chamber music, consists of Mary Chun, conductor; Tod Brody, flute and piccolo; Peter Josheff, clarinet and bass clarinet; Terrie Baune, violin; Ellen Ruth Rose, viola; Thalia Moore, cello; and Brenda Tom, piano.

Named for the famed Hollywood studio, the **GOWER GULCH PLAYERS** were hand-picked by Rialto Pictures founder Bruce Goldstein for their affinity to the acting style of the early talkie era. Glenn Taranto, Rick Pasqualone, Hannah Davis, Ashley Adler, Steve Sterner (also on piano), Yelena Shmulenson, Allen Lewis Rickman, and Goldstein are joined by Silent Film Festival board member Frank Buxton to perform a live soundtrack for Frank Capra's THE DONOVAN AFFAIR.

Based at London's BFI Southbank, **STEPHEN HORNE** has long been considered one of the leading silent film accompanists. Principally a pianist, he often incorporates other instruments into his performances, sometimes playing them simultaneously. He has recorded for DVD and television and his recent live accompaniments have been met with acclaim at film festivals worldwide. For this year's screening of THE SWALLOW AND THE TITMOUSE, he is joined by the world-renowned Celtic harpist Diana Rowan.

Constantly seeking that magical, emotional alchemy between the music and the images, the **MATTI BYE ENSEMBLE**–Matti Bye, Kristian Holmgren, and Lotta Johansson–perform both composed and improvised scores on a variety of instruments that include the piano, glockenspiel, violin, and musical saw. Award-winning composer Bye has written scores for several Swedish silent-era classics and has been an accompanist at the Swedish Film Institute since 1989.

Formed in 1989, the **MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA** culls historic libraries of musical scores for its accompaniment, reviving the tradition of silent-era film orchestras. Rodney Sauer, Britt Swenson, David Short, Brian Collins, and Dawn Kramer have recorded and toured widely, creating vibrant, emotional, and historically appropriate music for more than a hundred twenty films. This year the orchestra is joined by musician Darren Kramer on trombone.

For more than thirty years, pianist **DONALD SOSIN** has been creating and performing scores for silent films both live and for DVD releases. He is the current resident accompanist at New York's Film Society of Lincoln Center, the Museum of the Moving Image, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In addition to solo piano, he also leads the Donald Sosin Ensemble, which this year includes fellow musicians Guenter Buchwald, Frank Bockius, and bassist Sascha Jacobsen.

California Welcomes the World: The Centennial of the

Panama-Pacific International Exposition

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a golden age for world fairs, and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, held in San Francisco in 1915, is among the most celebrated. Officially, the exposition commemorated the completion of the Panama Canal and all that this new trade route would mean for commerce on the Pacific Coast. Accordingly, on display was all manner of industry and culture, including an oil derrick and working auto assembly line, as well as the peoples and pavilions of twenty-one nations.

Just as important, the P.P.I.E. was an opportunity for California to showcase San Francisco's recovery from the ruinous 1906 earthquake and fire. The fair cost some $50 million, with many elaborate structures built on the 635-acre site in what is now the Marina District. Remarkably, more than 255,000 people visited the fair on opening day, with nearly nineteen million passing through its gates during its nine-month run.

It seemed to have everything, and everything new. There was a glittering 435-foot Tower of Jewels, military and industrial machinery, livestock, gardens, auto races, daredevil flyers, light shows, and the introduction of an instrument from the Hawaiian Territories, the ukulele. Also on display was the Liberty Bell. The iconic symbol of American independence was brought west from Philadelphia after fifty thousand California school children signed a petition to have it displayed at the fair, where some two million attendees took the opportunity to kiss the relic.

The P.P.I.E. boasted the world's largest wood and steel building, as well as an exhibition of modern art displayed at the Palace of Fine Arts (the only surviving structure, which was rebuilt in the 1960s). Most of the buildings were constructed with temporary materials, intended to be torn down or left to decay because, as one of the architects said, all great cities have ruins.

IT SEEMED TO HAVE EVERYTHING, AND EVERYTHING NEW.

There was a functioning fourteen-ton typewriter used to write news reports, one of the world's largest refracting telescopes, and a Santa Fe Railroad exhibit that included Native Americans brought from New Mexico. Alexander Graham Bell placed the first ever transcontinental telephone call to the P.P.I.E. and, during the fair, astonished attendees could talk to the East Coast.

People from all walks of life across California, the United States, and the world attended. Along with those hoping to experience something new and thrilling, many saw the fair as a platform for social and political change. Progressives, suffragettes advocating for women's right to vote, labor unions, and Prohibitionists known as "dry crusaders" all made their presence felt. Members of the African American, Chinese American, and German American communities gave speeches and staged pageants and parades that proclaimed their status as Americans and, more importantly, equal participants in public life.

They, along with mixed-race Hawaiians, Japanese Americans, and Native Americans, challenged the dominant, sometimes racist views of the day.

Among the well-known individuals attending the fair were author and activist Helen Keller, educator Maria Montessori, western legend "Buffalo Bill" Cody, illusionist Harry Houdini, and former president Theodore Roosevelt. Major General George Goethals, chief engineer of the Panama Canal, was feted at the fair, as were inventor Thomas Edison, industrialist Henry Ford, aviator Lincoln Beachey, and race car driver Eddie Rickenbacker (soon to become America's leading flying ace in World War I). Other attendees and performers included the popular Gold Rush-era actress Lotta Crabtree, Italian opera star Luisa Tetrazzini, and Loïe Fuller, famous for her "Serpentine Dance."

French composer Camille Saint-Saëns wrote "Hail, California" for the exposition. On opening day, a three hundred-voice chorus sang the piece accompanied by the P.P.I.E. orchestra, a massive pipe organ, and a band led by John Philip Sousa. Laura Ingalls Wilder, future author of *Little House on the Prairie*, visited and wrote about the fair, as did Sonoma County resident Jack London, who penned one of his last stories set at the event.

Along with aviation, automobiles, radio, and the telephone, motion pictures were an emerging industry with something to prove. The Motion Picture Exhibitors Association held a conference at the fair, and one participant pointed to the pace of change by noting the first screening at a world's fair took place in Chicago in 1893 using a crude machine showing a film lasting only a few seconds.

The conference keynote speaker was director D.W. Griffith, then embroiled in controversy over his recently released *The Birth of a Nation*. Though praised as a great achievement in storytelling, the film was a racist depiction of African Americans that told a false history of Reconstruction and it faced censorship challenges across the country. Griffith's address, given not long after the Supreme Court ruled movies were not protected under the First Amendment, argued against the censoring of his film.

A day honoring Metro Pictures took place on July 15. The studio's popular leading man Francis X. Bushman attended and received a gold medal. The following evening, a grand ball closed the convention, where fans were able to dance with favorite stars Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Geraldine Farrar, Blanche Sweet, and Mae Marsh, among others. Directors Mack Sennett and Cecil B. DeMille were also on hand. Charles Chaplin, then filming in the East Bay, visited the fair. So did fellow comedians Mabel Normand and Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, who made the short film *Mabel and Fatty Viewing the World's Fair at San Francisco*.

"American Venus" Audrey Munson, whom sculptor Alexander Stirling Calder (father of the Calder famed for his mobiles) chose as the artist's model for the P.P.I.E., parlayed her newfound fame posing for three quarters of the fair's sculptures—as well as paintings and murals—into a brief film career. Her starring role in *Inspiration*, the story of a sculptor's model, caused a stir for featuring a woman fully nude.

The following year, the P.P.I.E. published *The Legacy of the Exposition: Interpretation of the Intellectual and Moral Heritage Left to Mankind by the World Celebration at San Francisco in 1915*. The book excerpted some of the many letters received by the fair. Included were comments from attendees both known and unknown, among them orator William Jennings Bryan, media magnate William Randolph Hearst, and radio pioneer David Sarnoff. Robert C. Lanphier, general manager of the Sangamo Electric Company in Springfield, Illinois, summed up the fair's overall optimism: "The Panama-Pacific International Exposition symbolized, in its wonderful beauty and completeness, all that the Twentieth century has brought to the comforts and service of mankind, and, even more, what we may look forward to in the coming years through the development of the arts, manufactures and commerce."

With the outbreak of war in Europe, the world was perched on the cusp of change. As Laura A. Ackley notes in her recent book, *San Francisco's Jewel City: The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915*, a child in the crowd (like California youngsters Ansel Adams or William Saroyan) might be seated near a Gold Rush forty-niner, Civil War veteran, or survivor of the Donner Party. That same child, decades later, grew up to witness a second world war, the birth of the atomic age, television, and man walking on the moon.

—Thomas Gladysz

Snippets of footage from motion pictures shot at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition will be shown throughout the festival.

1915: The Year in Motion Pictures

BY AIMEE PAVY

ESSANAY SNAGS CHAPLIN

Charles Chaplin had started his career the previous year at Mack Sennett's Keystone studio but moved to the Essanay Film Manufacturing Company in January with a significant pay hike from $125 a week to $1,250. He made fourteen films with Essanay, many of which were filmed around the San Francisco Bay Area, including 1915's *The Tramp*.

EXHIBITION AT THE EXPOSITION

At the San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition, which opened on February 20 and ran through December 4, all but one of California's exhibits on education featured motion pictures of school activities, and films were part of many fair exhibits, including industrial exhibits on copper mining, radium refining, shoemaking, the Railway Mail Service, and the California wine industry, at a peak before the 1920 enactment of Prohibition, which pruned production to grape juice and sacramental wines.

NAKED TRUTH CHALLENGED IN COURTS

A battle over censorship raged all year over the actions of the two-year-old Ohio Censor Board. In a lawsuit filed by the Mutual Film Corporation, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on February 23 that the free speech protections in the Ohio Constitution did not apply to motion pictures. The same censor board banned Lois Weber's film *Hypocrites*, while Boston censors demanded that the full-frontal nudity of one of the film's characters, called "Truth," be painted over.

UNIVERSAL CITY'S GRAND OPENING

On March 15, Carl Laemmle inaugurated the Universal City complex, which housed complete facilities to produce films for his distribution company. The groundbreaking had been delayed until June 1914 in order to accommodate the final harvest of oats and barley on the ranch still occupying the 230-acre site. By the end of 1915, Los Angeles was home to sixty percent of U.S. film production.

NAACP SCHOOLS GRIFFITH

D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* had premiered in Los Angeles in early February, but the outrage over the film's racism came to a head in April when crowds swelled to two thousand in front of Boston's Tremont Theatre at a protest organized by newspaper editor W. Monroe Trotter. The campaign to have the film banned or censored largely failed, so the NAACP responded by publishing the forty-seven-page educational pamphlet "Fighting a Vicious Film: Protest Against 'Birth of a Nation,'" which corrected the film's gross falsehoods. In one of the pamphlet's statements, biographer John T. Morse wrote, "No one respects history more than I do … but the more I respect it, the more I resent its misuse."

TECHNICOLOR BEGINS

Through their industrial design consulting firm, Herbert Kalmus, Daniel F. Comstock, and W. Burton Wescott were among several companies already experimenting with a "natural color" photography process. "Technicolor" began its slow seep into the lexicon with the incorporation in 1915 of the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation, named after Comstock and Kalmus's alma mater MIT. By the end of the following year, the trio obtained a patent for their first two-color process and, in 1917, showed their short color film *The Gulf Between* to the public.

LUSITANIA TORPEDOED

Despite warnings to American citizens against sea travel issued by the German Embassy, 128 Americans died on May 7, 1915, when a German submarine attacked and sank British passenger liner RMS *Lusitania*, killing a total of 1,198 people. British Pathé released newsreel footage of the ship leaving the New York harbor along with reenactment scenes of the disaster and footage of the wreck and survivors. A print of *The Carpet from Bagdad*, which had opened earlier in the month was onboard, probably as cargo on its way to a distributor's preview. A single reel of this lost film was recovered from the wreckage in 1982.

THIRD DIMENSION ACHIEVED

Inventors had been testing ideas to project 3D images beginning in the mid-1800s. Edwin S. Porter and W.E. Waddell presented their own "stereoscopic" motion picture demonstration at the Astor Theatre in New York City on the morning of June 10, 1915. The next week *Motion Picture World* reported: "[T]he long sought after third dimension in photography had been gained … Each member of the audience was provided with glasses, green for the right eye, and red for the left."

"LONESOME LUKE" BREAKS OUT

Harold Lloyd's first Lonesome Luke film, *Spit-Ball Sadie*, was released July 26, 1915. Lonesome Luke was an imitation of Charlie Chaplin's popular "Little Tramp" character. Lloyd went on to make more than sixty more of these one- and two-reel films before creating his breakout "glasses" character in late 1917. Lloyd biographer Jeffrey Vance writes that the Luke films were so rowdy that the production company had trouble securing insurance to cover the actor.

EDISON TRUST BUSTED

Another court case marked a milestone in film history—the United States vs. Motion Picture Patent Company. Known widely as the Edison Trust, the Motion Pictures Patents Company collected fees for use of their patented equipment, inhibiting the growth of independent producers and exhibitors. The court ruled on October 1, 1915, that the company presented an "unreasonable and undue restraint of trade and commerce" and levied a fine of $20 million.

MATINEE IDOL DEBUTS

John Gilbert was just beginning his screen career with a minor role in Thomas H. Ince's film *The Coward*. Eleven years later, he headlined in 1926's *Flesh and the Devil*, opposite Hollywood newcomers Greta Garbo and Lars Hanson. At the time of Gilbert's debut on November 14, Garbo was still a ten-year-old named Greta Gustafsson attending school in a working-class district of Stockholm.

SELIG'S WAR

In December, Selig Polyscope Company released *A History of the World's Greatest War Told in Five Reels of Motion Pictures*. While most WWI footage was staged or merely pictures of troop movements, industry magazine *Moving Picture World* reported about the footage shot by Hearst cameramen in the field: "These intrepid news-picture gatherers photographed the scenes from dangerous positions, along the battle lines in Belgium, East Prussia and other places. Many of the scenes were photographed in the fighting trenches with the allies and with the Germans."

The Great Cast Contest of 1915

"An Opportunity to Vote for All Your Favorites and Do Them All Justice"

With that announcement, the editors of *Motion Picture* magazine launched a new popularity contest for actors. They asked readers to vote for the best performers in twelve categories, creating a dream cast of the best stars. The contest shined the spotlight on comedians, mature performers, and character actors who had all been neglected in previous polls. Readers voted from January to September, and the final results appeared in the November 1915 issue. The top ten winners are a blend of the famous and the forgotten and make for a fascinating time capsule for modern viewers.

1. Mary Maurice

The overall winner, Maurice was known as "The Screen Mother" or "The Vitagraph Mother" and swept the Old Lady category. According to interviews, she played that part offscreen and on, mothering the younger players of the company. Her fans praised her as refreshing counterprogramming to the then-stylish vamps and serial queens. She continued to act until her death in 1918.

2. Charles Chaplin

Chaplin had left Keystone and signed with Essanay, where he perfected his Tramp character and teamed with Edna Purviance. The world was gripped with Chaplinitis and he easily topped the male comedian category, though Ford Sterling made a respectable showing in second place.

3. Bobby Connelly

Bobby Connelly was the victor in the Child category. Another Vitagraph player, he was just shy of his fifth birthday when he began the Sonny Jim series, in which he played a mischievous but good-hearted boy. Connelly made twenty Sonny Jim shorts from 1914 to 1915. He went on to win roles in Frank Borzage's *Humoresque* and the Olive Thomas vehicle *The Flapper.* Like Thomas, Connelly's life was cut short. He was only thirteen when he died of bronchitis in 1922.

4. W. Chrystie Miller

Miller was dubbed the "Grand Old Man of the Movies" in *Motion Picture* magazine. A stage veteran, he spent his entire film career at Biograph under the direction of D.W. Griffith. By the time the voting began, Miller had made his final film appearance in *Judith of Bethulia* and had retired to the Actors' Fund Home on Staten Island. He died in 1922.

5. Mabel Normand

Normand was at the height of her popularity and talent as a star, director, and "the sugar on the Keystone grapefruit." Flora Finch was her closest rival in the female comedian category but Mabel managed to win by a healthy margin. Other runners-up included Florence Lawrence and both Constance and Norma Talmadge. In fact, Norma placed above Constance in this category.

6. Antonio Moreno

Moreno was described as having "IT" in the 1920s but in 1915 he was a popular romantic lead at Vitagraph. He joined the studio in 1914 and had spent most of that year acting opposite Norma Talmadge. Moreno was versatile and his roles included a newspaper editor, a cowboy, a shipwreck survivor clad only in palm leaves, and, yes, the occasional Latin lover.

7. Mary Pickford

The lone representative of Famous Players in the top ten, Pickford continued her reign of popularity, easily besting all comers in the Leading Woman category. She had scored a hit that year with *Rags*, in which she played one of her signature cute spitfires. Studio executives did not find her so adorable at the bargaining table, where she managed to negotiate, among other things, being paid half the profits from her films.

8. Earle Williams

Williams was a major star at Vitagraph where he was paired with Number 10 Anita Stewart. Williams was the overall winner in the Leading Man category but it was a close three-way race between Williams, Francis X. Bushman, and the perennially popular J. Warren Kerrigan, who had placed in the top five in both the 1913 and 1914 contests.

9. Beverly Bayne

One of the top stars of Essanay, Beverly Bayne was famously teamed with leading man Francis X. Bushman. She came in second to Mary Pickford in the Leading Woman category, barely scraping ahead of Edith Storey. Other runners-up included Florence La Badie and Alice Joyce.

10. Anita Stewart

Vitagraph personality, accomplished pianist, and proud owner of an electric coupe, Stewart was first in the Beautiful Young Woman category. She had played the victim of a guerrilla social experiment in *The Goddess*, a serial that also featured Earle Williams and Mary Maurice. She later headed her own production unit under Louis B. Mayer.

—Fritzi Kramer


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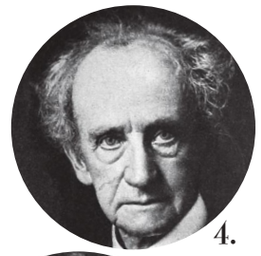
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FACES IN THE DARK

FOUNDERS MELISSA CHITTICK AND STEPHEN SALMONS LOOK BACK AT THE EARLY DAYS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

INTERVIEW BY MARGARITA LANDAZURI

It takes more than a passion for silent film to put on a festival. Melissa Chittick had a film degree from UC-Santa Barbara, and Stephen Salmons had been making Super-8 silent films for years, but although Chittick volunteered at the Red Victorian movie theater, neither was working in film-related jobs when they decided to launch a silent film festival. From a stack of Nolo Press books, they learned the fundamentals of establishing a business and setting up a nonprofit. Next came a warm-up program at Frameline's 1994 festival, Ernst Lubitsch's *I Don't Want to Be a Man* (1919). Then came two years of fundraising, developing the right mix of films, musicians, and razzmatazz (silent stars Fay Wray and Baby Peggy in person) to entertain and enlighten audiences—and resisting well-meaning supporters who urged them to hurry up and get started.

STEPHEN SALMONS When we started the festival, we didn't know anybody in the film community. The only contact I had was my uncle, who was a professor of film at the University of Iowa, Richard Dyer McCann. He was kind of surprised when I told him what we wanted to do. But he said, "Well, the one thing I can do is share Kevin Brownlow's phone number. I just ask that you use this responsibly." I think he was afraid that we would call him up and embarrass him. We did a five-year business plan. Then it took months and months to figure out.

MELISSA CHITTICK One of the first press notices we ever got, we sent out a press kit, and somebody at the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote, "From the 'Who-Needs-Another-Film-Festival' department." We thought it would be important to start with a small event, to learn how it's done. From that we learned a lot about how much it cost to do one show—and then it was a year or two where we started to build up the money. That's when people started getting frustrated with us. People from other festivals said "Why don't you show them at the Red Vic, why don't you show them in sixteen-millimeter, why are you raising money, why are you building a board, you don't need to do that."

SALMONS We were never part of the network of film programmers.

CHITTICK We had this weird product, so we couldn't share with them in the same way. We didn't have new filmmakers, we didn't have new directors, we weren't the same thing. I always thought it was more like opera, or a museum.

SALMONS We had done demographic surveys. Overwhelmingly, people said we should do it at the Castro, so it took years to raise the money.

CHITTICK You have to look really professional if you want people to take you seriously. And I think that's why for the very first festival [in 1996] we got half a page in the Datebook section of the *Chronicle*. But that's the thing about admitting your dream in public. Once you tell people, you have to do it because it would be way too embarrassing not to.

SALMONS But I do remember that we did not necessarily think there would be a second silent film festival.

CHITTICK Another thing is, we never put anything on credit cards, ever.

SALMONS Because of her financial planning, we were never in the red once.

CHITTICK And that's why we got so many grants.

SALMONS You could see right from the first year, we were trying to do a different kind of programming than someone who knows silent film would expect. We definitely wanted to send a message that this isn't traditional programming, this is a unique perspective on silent film programming.

CHITTICK We were really conscious of trying to make it as entertaining as possible, not to make it too scholarly, not make it too dry.

SALMONS I remember early on, this thing that happened at the beginning of a screening, a little bit of restlessness. Somewhere around fifteen or twenty minutes in, people lock in, and suddenly, they're completely on track with the art form. The first year, we sold a total of eighteen hundred tickets for three programs, *Gretchen the Greenhorn*, *Lucky Star*, a little bigger, and *Ben-Hur* sold out.

CHITTICK That first year, Randy Haberkamp of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences introduced the very first program. He presented us onstage with two Lubin film cans with one-minute film reels inside. We still have them, with the original ribbon that tied them together. He said he hoped that the festival would be a success and last for years and years.

SALMONS And whatever we had learned that year we incorporated into our knowledge going forward. I think that's what makes [Melissa] so smart. She's not just the person who wants to show movies because she "just *looves* them!" She's serious about making something happen. We spent most of the time doing nuts and bolts stuff. But having Fay Wray attend was very exciting—that was meeting Hollywood royalty.

CHITTICK We had dinner with her, and she talked about "Mr. Stroheim"—how Mr. Stroheim had a thing for her.

SALMONS She really appreciated that it was *The Wedding March* that we wanted to have her here for, not *King Kong*. She said, "I've had enough of *King Kong*. Stroheim was a genius, and it's great to have a chance to celebrate him."

CHITTICK What I'm thinking of is John Gilbert's grandson. He had the manner of John Gilbert …

SALMONS [Melissa] flipped for him! Gilbert's daughter Leatrice and King Vidor's daughter Belinda met each other for the first time at the festival, and they loved each other. And [former San Francisco Supervisor] Bevan Dufty, whose father was married to Gloria Swanson, told a funny story about Swanson.

CHITTICK My favorite times were when I would walk up the side of the auditorium and just watch the people watching it. And it was because all the work was done, and it was going on, and they were just enjoying it. People would be laughing, or whatever, all their faces turned up to the screen.

Stacey Wisnia, Melissa Chittick, Stephen Salmons, and Frank Buxton on stage at the 2010 Silent Film Festival

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

Directed by Lewis Milestone, USA, 1930
Cast Lewis Ayres, Louis Wolheim, John Wray, Arnold Lucy, Ben Alexander, Scott Kolk, Owen Davis Jr., Walter Browne Rogers, William Bakewell, Russell Gleason, Richard Alexander, Harold Goodwin, "Slim" Summerville, and Pat Collins, with Beryl Mercer, and Edmund Breese
Production Universal Pictures Corp. **Print Source** Library of Congress

Erich Paul Remark was born a German Catholic in Osnabruck in 1898 and conscripted into the army when he was eighteen. In 1917, he saw a month's action on the Western Front before being so wounded by shrapnel he was invalided out. Thereafter, he studied to be a teacher and started writing. His first novel, *Die Traumbude* ("The Dream Room"), appeared in 1920. Eight years later, he published *Im Westen nichts Neues*, which literally translated is "In the West No News." At that point, feeling badly about the first novel, he changed his name to Erich Maria Remarque. *Im Westen* was called *All Quiet on the Western Front* in English. That title has passed into common usage to suggest an ironic or rueful sense of a false lull before the storm. We have lived in that gap ever since.

The novel sold 2.5 million copies in twenty-two languages. Immediately, it was purchased for pictures by Carl Laemmle Jr., head of production at Universal and son of the studio's founder. The father had been born and raised in Germany and both Laemmles were devastated by the war—yet confident it could make a hit movie.

The film was a triumph and you feel its sophisticated vision early on.

It was a direct but epic novel, passionate about the horrors and futility of war and haunted by the demoralization of young German soldiers. Several people worked on the screenplay, including George Abbott and Maxwell Anderson, and the direction was entrusted to Lewis Milestone, born Jewish and Russian. The film was a triumph and you feel its sophisticated vision early on: we see a man and a cleaning woman in a cramped hallway—then the man opens the door and we move onto the street outside with a busy parade of soldiers and a cheering crowd. This is a signal for the whole film where personal stories mesh with panoramas of action, with a feeling for depth and striking compositions that were new in 1930. Milestone became famous for aerial tracking shots of troops crossing no man's land; he was using them as late as 1959 in *Pork Chop Hill*, about the war in Korea.

The film was as much of a sensation as the novel: Laemmle spent $1.5 million, and audiences came in huge numbers. *All Quiet* took an Academy Award for best picture and Milestone won for director. It is still one of the best films about the Great War, from that opening hallway to … well, I won't spoil it, except to say that Laemmle and Milestone had a late idea of how to end the story. By then, Lew Ayres (he was Lewis then) was off on another job, so the hand you will see is Milestone's.

Lew Ayres and Louis Wolheim

Nearly everyone admired the film, except for the new Nazi party. They thought it was a discredit to German military resolve, and demoralizing. They burned the novel and banned the film. Remarque escaped to Switzerland, a productive career and a spectacular romantic life (he is said to have had affairs with Hedy Lamarr, Dietrich, and Garbo before marrying Paulette Goddard). But his sister Elfriede remained in Germany. She was arrested in 1943. The authorities said she had declared the war was lost already; they hated Remarque and the way he had dropped the German "Remark." Elfriede was tried, convicted, and beheaded.

Remarque wrote other novels and had a huge 1945 hit with *Arch of Triumph*. In 1948 that was filmed, too, with Milestone directing a cast that included Charles Boyer, Ingrid Bergman, and Charles Laughton. I don't know why, but it's a neglected work.

For English and American audiences (it was banned for years in France), a part of the novelty in *All Quiet* is watching "enemy" soldiers and realizing they are just like our own. Remarque used that ploy again. A later novel was called *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*, once more about young Germans, but set on the Russian front and in a shattered Berlin. This time it

The silent film is not just a measure of history or nostalgia. It is an authentic form, as natural and moving as black-and-white films.

was filmed, at Universal, in 1958, by Douglas Sirk, with John Gavin and Liselotte Pulver. Still, a big concession was made in both *A Time* and *All Quiet* for the characters spoke English—which sharpens the hypocrisy of the elderly teacher urging his students to their death; it also helps us feel the friendship developing between Paul (Ayres) and his older mentor, Katczinsky (superbly played by Louis Wolheim, who died in February 1931, before *All Quiet* won its Oscars).

Except that *All Quiet on the Western Front* was shot with two cameras, one for a sound film, and the other for a film that has music and sound effects, but no dialogue. That is the version the Silent Film Festival is showing—played instead with live music. Isn't this a film about quiet? There are other benefits. The silent version is a little longer. It has intertitles, like most silent films. But because the characters are without voices, it is easier to feel they are German, or supposed outcasts to our sympathy. Synchronized dialogue was a concession to naturalism, even though it could rise to glory in our best talking comedies (*The Lady Eve*, *His Girl Friday*). Turn off the sound for those pictures and the films are lost. They have many beautiful cinematic moments, but they are a type of radio.

That thinking can work both ways. Step back from *All Quiet* being made on the cusp of the shift in technology and narrative approach. After all, a silent film festival need not stay in the past. There has been great reward and pleasure in rediscovering and restoring silent films, and that will go on some time yet before there are few gems left to be rescued. Moreover, the silent film is not just a measure of history or nostalgia. It is an authentic form, as natural and moving as black-and-white films.

You may decide that the silent *All Quiet* is superior to the sound version, which actually ruled at the box office—you must also remember that in rural areas, the conversion of theaters for sound was gradual and sometimes reluctant, especially as it coincided with the years of crash and depression.

I am working toward a suggestion. It happens that I sometimes experiment with ways of looking at a film. For example, there is a surreal beauty in running pictures backward. I know, that was not the original intention, but what is the pursuit of old movies but a chance to let time play with them? Not long ago, I ran Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966) with the sound turned off. I could not hear the speaking voices of Liv Ullmann or Bibi Andersson, or the sounds of Swedish. But my print had subtitles, so I could follow

Lobby card courtesy of Photofest, NYC

the dialogue and what we call the story. The film had a limited music score, by Lars Johan Werle, and I was depriving myself of that. There were a few pointed sound effects. So I was losing stuff, but I was gaining, too.

With sound, *Persona* is helplessly more naturalistic, the story of an actress who won't speak and a garrulous nurse who fills the silence. But you can't regard the film as simply a story that might have happened in life. Instead, it's a dream, a process, a ritual, a trance that attains an insight and possibility that transcend realism. As the title indicates, the film is interested in identity. So it worked well when silent, because I began to look more closely at screen life as opposed to a lifelike story.

Then something else occurred to me. Suppose live and new music was commissioned for a reappraisal of *Persona*. Isn't that what we do with new versions of *Metropolis* (which has already suffered a 1986 score by Giorgio Moroder). Suppose musicians employ some of Werle's music but then explore the mood of trance and ritual. It might not be "better." That doesn't matter. More important, the new product would command fresh attention and wondering. And we all know (without fully understanding) the interplay of a silent film on the large screen of the Castro with striving musicians at the foot of the screen so that the automatic repeated event of a movie becomes a live performance. I understand that the makers of a film strove to get the marriage of picture, talk, and music "right." But they always knew there were alternatives. When the BBC crime series *Peaky Blinders* plays on Netflix, it seems to get the 1920 period right. But then it adds a rock music score, as if to say, Don't you realize, movies are artifice and magic? Didn't *Gone with the Wind* have music fit for 1939? Imagine it new today with a score composed of blues songs, a background level of black feeling.

You're uneasy about this? Well, recall how we enjoy a new score for a silent revival: think of Carl Davis on top of Abel Gance's *Napoleon*. I want to test you one step further. Suppose we screened *Vertigo* silent? We would lose the voices of Scottie, Madeleine, and Judy; subtitles could be added, and we could do them less as natural talk from 1958 than lines of Beckett-like abstraction. (Actually some of *Vertigo* sounds like that already.) We'd lose Bernard Herrmann?! Well, no, that version will always exist. But suppose Philip Glass played a piano to *Vertigo*. I don't know what the result would be. But some of it might be electrifying and would help do what needs to be done—it would let us see the film anew, fresh and dangerous and not just a revered rerun.

—David Thomson

Director Lewis Milestone

That Boy from Odessa

by Jim Tully

Excerpted and condensed from the February 1931 issue of *New Movie Magazine*

"On the Black Sea, the home of Chekhov and Kuprin," is the way Lewis Milestone speaks of his birthplace Odessa, Russia. As a young man, the future director was sent to Germany to attend university where he remained a short time. His father sent him money for the return fare home but he suddenly decided to come to America and landed in New York with three dollars. He went to work in a raincoat factory at four dollars a week. A strike came in the factory and Milestone was thrown in jail.

With the future looking about as cheerful as Hollywood on a rainy day, he tried the various jobs in America out of which so many restless and ambitious fellows have eventually arrived. In broken English he sold chrome photographs from door to door. Unable to look longer at such monstrosities on their walls, the citizens of America decided to enter the World War. Milestone enlisted in the Photographic Division of the Signal Corps.

"Milly," as everyone calls Milestone, told me quite sincerely that his reason for enlisting in this division was because of his keen anxiety to go to the front, and that he had been promised a chance to stop real bullets.

When the World War ended Milly got a job with the nice sounding title of "assistant cutter." It paid twenty dollars a week, and he did most of the work with a broom—sweeping the cutting-room floor. Every Saturday he washed the windows in order that the cutters might look down upon the lot and see the directors meditating on the Fourth Dimension and the meaning of life and art—in motion pictures.

After six months Milly went over to the Fox Studios for more money, and a better broom. Leaving there he joined Mack Sennett and, next, to another Irishman, Thomas Ince. With a powerful mind and as keen an apprehension as any man I have ever known, Milly learned swiftly the fundamentals of films. His next job as chief cutter and writer under William Seiter, the able director-husband of Laura La Plante, held him for three years.

Milestone enlisted in the Photographic Division of the Signal Corps because he had been promised a chance to stop real bullets.

He refused offers to become an assistant director. A half-dozen years of observation as a cutter and gag man—he waited. His ability and personality had impressed the Warner Brothers, and he directed two pictures for them, "Seven Sinners" and "The Cave Man." His name at last came under the notice of the producers of "Two Arabian Nights." Milly was chosen to direct it. It was the finest work of its kind ever done on the screen, far richer with the flavor of life than all the synthetic offerings of Lubitsch and his imitators.

The film made Milly and its chief actor, Louis Wolheim. It may here be said in passing that without Milly, Wolheim would not occupy the position in the film world he does today. The best work of Wolheim's career is in three Milestone pictures.

Milly has, if I remember correctly, directed about seven films. His third, "Two Arabian Knights," was awarded the Academy of Motion Picture Science medal as the best of the year. Milestone's last film, "All Quiet on the Western Front," has received the same award this year. The night before the film was shown in Hollywood, Milly left for Europe. Upon his return he signed with Howard Hughes to direct "The Front Page" at $125,000 and, I surmise, a share in the profits.

It is safe to say that within a short time, Milly will be a producing director. He knows his Hollywood. He knows that under the present system directors can be easily discarded when their usefulness is past. But when one shares in the profits, nothing is sweeter—unless it be death at the front.

AMAZING TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES

A behind-the-curtains look at the international film preservation scene

DETECTING SHERLOCK

Preservationist and president of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival board of directors, Robert Byrne has been collaborating with the Cinémathèque Française on restoring William Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* since its fortuitous discovery in the French archive. Byrne will describe the process of returning the landmark film to a state as close as possible to the original.

TOURNEUR WAXES EXPRESSIONISTIC

Before coming to America and directing his signature lavish fantasies, Maurice Tourneur directed detective pictures and adaptions of horror stories in his native France. Serge Bromberg of Lobster Films will describe finding and restoring Tourneur's *Figures de cire*, based on a two-act drama by Grand Guignol playwright André de Lorde and featuring creepy pre-*Caligari* shadows.

UNSINKABLE HISTORY

Marking the centenary of the sinking of the passenger liner RMS *Lusitania* by a German U-boat, curator of silent film for the British Film Institute's National Archive Bryony Dixon will show footage from BFI's vaults related to the tragedy and look beyond the propaganda to share stories of how the beautiful "Lucy" intersected with the world of silent film. Actor and authority on WWI, Paul McGann—a Liverpool native, as were many of the ship's lost crew—will narrate from contemporary accounts.

TECHNICOLOR TURNS 100

In recognition of the centennial of the Technicolor Corporation, Movette Film Transfer president Jennifer Miko will present 35mm film footage taken at La Cuesta Encantada, more commonly known as Hearst Castle. Shot in Technicolor Process II, the film is a tour of the grounds of the sprawling estate led by the architect Julia Morgan, accompanied by "The Chief" himself, W.R. Hearst.

Special Thanks to Supporters of SFSFF Film Restoration Projects:

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Maurice Tourneur's *Figures de cire*. Photo courtesy of Lobster Films

Yin Mingzhu as the Spider Queen

THE CAVE OF THE SPIDER WOMEN

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN AND FRANK BOCKIUS

Directed by Dan Duyu, China, 1927
Cast Yin Mingzhu, Jiang Meikang, Wu Wenchao, Zhou Hongquan, and Zhan Jiali
Production Shanghai Photoplay Company **Print Source** National Library of Norway

Surviving films from the silent era in China are rare. Destruction from wars, government censorship, neglect, and deterioration have taken a sizable toll, so the recent discovery of *The Cave of the Spider Women* (*Pan si dong*) from 1927 is a cause for celebration. Even missing its opening scene and a sequence in the middle, the film remains frenetic, pulpy entertainment that was a major commercial success and a career milestone for painter-turned-filmmaker Dan Duyu. Its appeal also stems from glamorous lead actress Yin Mingzhu, one of China's first major stars. The film's potent blend of costume drama, fantasy adventure, and choreographed action, as well as slapstick and irreverent sight gags have proved durable conventions in modern-day Chinese cinema.

The celebrity couple Duyu and Mingzhu are easily the most historically important example of the burgeoning movie industry in Shanghai during the early 1920s. Duyu had already established himself as a much sought-after commercial artist, famous for his fashion drawings, advertisements, and illustrated calendars, which often depicted glamorized, modern Chinese women. His interest in photography led him to filmmaking, where he quickly became proficient in every aspect of the profession. In 1920, he launched Shanghai Yingxi ("Photoplay") Company, which became a close-knit family operation. He hired Mingzhu (they married in 1926), his nephew Dan Erchun, and others from his circle of friends and family.

Like Duyu, Mingzhu was greatly influenced by both Chinese and contemporary Western culture. Educated at the prestigious McTyeire School for Girls in Shanghai, she had a fondness for film stars like Alice White and a love of foreign fashion, which earned her the nickname, "Miss F.F." Despite her mother's opposition to her becoming an actress, Mingzhu made her film debut in Duyu's *Sea Oath* (*Haishi*, 1921) and became a star overnight. *Sea Oath* (now lost) was a romantic drama whereas *The Cave of the Spider Women*, produced six years later, was an ambitious epic and an unprecedented box-office sensation.

The women are really flesh-eating spiders attended by their gleefully wicked servant.

Based on an episode in the sixteenth century Ming Dynasty fable, *Journey to the West*, by Wu Cheng'en, *Cave of the Spider Women* follows the monk Xuanzang (Jiang Meikang) and his three guardian disciples, the Monkey King (Wu Wenchao), Pigsy (Zhou Hongquan), and Sandy (Zhan Jiali), as they embark on a quest to find some holy scriptures for Emperor Tsi Tsung. While searching for food, Xuanzang accepts the hospitality of a welcoming hostess and her coterie and enters their cave dwelling where he becomes a prisoner. Disguised in human form, the women are really flesh-eating spiders attended by their gleefully wicked servant. Other passing travelers have been

cannibalized by the evil spirits, but Xuanzang is being reserved for a different fate—marriage to the spider queen. Whether this unholy union gives her immortality or special powers is unclear, but Xuanzang's companions attempt to rescue their master before all is lost. The battle between good and arachnid quickly becomes a dizzying array of magic duels, shape-shifting deceptions, and hand-to-hand combat before a fiery resolution is reached in the manner of a serial cliffhanger.

Xuanzang may be the chief protagonist but, with his passive demeanor and delicate, androgynous beauty, he is the antithesis of an action hero. Despite his moral and spiritual strength, he lacks the skills to rescue himself. As a result, the cunning Monkey King with his bag of tricks and acrobatic prowess is much more engaging, and his doggedly faithful cohorts, Pigsy and Sandy, provide comic relief in their physical confrontations with supernatural forces. But the spider women are the star attraction. It is impossible to top the seductive appeal of Mingzhu's villainess and her followers who make formidable femme fatales in the vampy style of Theda Bara, with the added attribute of being skilled warriors. Even if they are depicted as evil, their fierceness and physical prowess prefigure the positive role model of today's martial arts heroine.

As the first known attempt to adapt *Journey to the West* or any portion of it for the cinema, *The Cave of the Spider Women* spurred other filmmakers to return to the Wu Cheng'en story for inspiration, including most recently for Stephen Chow and Chi-kin Kwok's loose 2013 remake, *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons*, and Pou-Soi Cheang's *The Monkey King* (2014), with Donnie Yen. The 1967 Shaw brothers fantasy-adventure, *The Cave of the Silken Web*, is probably the best-known adaptation, with its bold color schemes, set design, and choreography that resemble a Vincente Minnelli musical gone wild. But it was director Duyu who created the template that was refined and stylized by later filmmakers.

Jiang Meikang as the monk, surrounded by spider women

The special effects, most of which are accomplished through simple camera tricks, may seem quaint by today's standards, but they must have astonished audiences at the time, especially when the spider women revert to their original form en masse—a nightmare scenario for even the mildest arachnophobe. Under Duyu's inspired art direction, the spider clan's lair becomes a forbidding labyrinth of honeycombed chambers, passageways, and strategically-spun webs that do not look like a decorated studio set. There is also a pronounced eroticism in some scenes such as when Pigsy *literally* loses his head to two spider women who have stripped down to battle outfits exposing their bare backs, shoulders, and arms. (Some sources claim that the complete version included female nudity and an underwater swimming scene, which would have been the first of its kind in Chinese cinema.)

It is obvious that a good deal of the budget went toward the costumes and pageantry in the climactic wedding ceremony sequence. Demons with grotesque faces, animal heads, or surreal headgear cavort in a celebration worthy of Hieronymus Bosch while the spider women scurry around with bejeweled hair, dressed in flowing gowns of silk and satin. Everything descends into beautifully choreographed chaos when the Monkey King leads an attack on the party and sets in motion the force of the red-tinted cleansing fire.

The Cave of the Spider Women was recently discovered in the National Library of Norway. While performing an inventory of their film library of nine thousand or more titles in 2011, the staff found a nitrocellulose copy of Duyu's film, which was the first film from China to be screened in Oslo, in 1929. The original length of the film was approximately nineteen hundred meters, of which only twelve hundred have survived. Norway's print features both Chinese and Norwegian intertitles, which some film scholars suspect were loosely translated from English intertitles created for the 1929 Norway premiere. The copy shown at the Silent Film Festival features a new translation from the original Chinese, courtesy of San Francisco's Center for the Art of Translation.

The unprecedented success of *Cave of the Spider Women* encouraged Duyu and Mingzhu to follow up with the sequel *Xu pan si dong* (a lost film) in 1929. By that time, the Chinese film industry was in a state of transition caused by the Great Depression and the rise of left-wing progressives, which resulted in the Film Censorship Act of 1931. Movies that dealt with feudal concepts like myths and the supernatural were considered frivolous and suppressed in favor of films that promoted science and contemporary Chinese life. Under these circumstances, it is a small miracle that even this one print survives of *The Cave of the Spider Women*. It is a significant window onto one of early Chinese cinema's most popular genres.

—Jeff Stafford

Preceded by the U.S premiere of **Modern China** *from the British Film Institute. This eight-minute actuality from 1910 focuses on everyday life in Beijing, filmed during the last years of China's Qing dynasty before the 1911 Xinhai Revolution overthrew imperial rule.*

WHEN THE EARTH TREMBLED, OR THE STRENGTH OF LOVE

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

Directed by Barry O'Neil, USA, 1913
Cast Harry Myers, Ethel Clayton, Bartley McCullum, Peter Lang, Richard Morris, Mary Walters, Mary Powers, and Layton Meisle
Production Lubin Manufacturing Company **Print Source** San Francisco Silent Film Festival

Thomas Edison, world famous for his light bulb and phonograph, created a new sensation in 1894 with his Kinetoscope, a 35mm movie viewing device enclosed in an oak cabinet. Although his team developed a working system, Edison failed to appreciate the value of a projector that would enable large audiences to see a film, and this failure opened the way for other inventors and showmen to enter this new world of entertainment.

One of his competitors was Siegmund Lubin, who made and sold the Cineograph projector. Lubin also made films, thousands of them in the course of a twenty-year career, including *When the Earth Trembled, or the Strength of Love*, a story about the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

Lubin once fled the country to escape prosecution by Edison's lawyers over patents violations.

The Philadelphia-based Lubin was an optician who made song and travel lantern slides as a sideline. In 1896, he saw the new Jenkins/Armat Phantoscope demonstrated and bought one. He then built the Cineograph projector. Later, he improved both machines by copying the Lumière Cinematographe, which was designed as a projector, camera, and printer. Like other film pioneers, Lubin thought nothing of pirating the films of others and became one of the worst offenders. He bought films and copied them, or he re-filmed them shot for shot with his own actors. For a short while in 1901, he even fled the country to escape prosecution by Edison's lawyers over patent violations.

When Lubin returned to Philadelphia in 1902, he increased sales of his projectors, expanded his studio to make more films, and opened Cineograph theaters. Other film pioneers around the country were also doing the same: George Spoor supplied projectors and films to Orpheum theaters with his Kinodrome Service, and William Selig made projectors and films at his Selig Polyscope Company. J. Stuart Blackton, William Rock, and Albert Smith were also producing films and projectors at the American Vitagraph Company, as was the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company (later home to D.W. Griffith). All of them were fighting lawsuits with Edison.

In 1905 a new era in motion pictures began with storefront theaters, called nickelodeons, dedicated to showing movies day and night. The demand for new films was tremendous, and with it came entrepreneurial film distributors who bought films from the

Poster courtesy of Jean Desmet Collection, EYE Filmmuseum

More than thirty carpenters worked for five weeks to build breakaway sets that took two minutes to be destroyed on camera.

producers and rented them to theater owners, often in a less than businesslike way, delivering damaged or worn-out prints, pitting neighboring theaters against each other by giving them the same releases, or simply not delivering the goods. Everyone was making money, but the system was in chaos.

It took awhile, but the major domestic film producers, including Lubin, Edison, Biograph, Selig, Vitagraph, Essanay, and Kalem, plus one foreign company, Pathé, and one American distributor of foreign films, George Kleine, finally set aside their differences and banded together as the Motion Picture Patents Company. The producers were still competing, but on a controlled release schedule, leasing films to the exchanges with the understanding that worn films should be returned to the producer (usually to be melted down for their silver content). Theaters could have a complete change of films on a weekly basis, several times a week, or daily. Each producer had a regular release schedule; Lubin, for instance, released a one-reel film (about fifteen minutes long) each Monday and another on Thursdays.

Lubin had already released more than one thousand films by the time he joined MPPC, and with the threats of annoying litigation now removed, he released another two thousand films in the coming years. As a member of the Patents Company, Lubin was now in a position to expand to a new studio without any interference. By 1913, Lubin was releasing five one-reel films a week plus a two-reeler. The company had also set up studios in Jacksonville, Florida, another in Los Angeles, California, and took over the five hundred-acre Betzwood estate north of Philadelphia.

The one-reel film was a profitable commodity for Patents Company members, but there was increasing pressure from foreign and independent producers for longer films. The company's distribution arm ran very efficiently but had trouble with multiple-reel films because of their extra expense and unpredictable demand within the circumscribed run of the regular exhibition schedule. So, a new system was created for these longer films, the Exclusive Service. When Lubin studios made its first three-reel film, *When the Earth Trembled, or the Strength of Love*, it was offered through this new arrangement.

When the Earth Trembled was an ambitious production with intertwining stories and an impressive reenactment of the San Francisco earthquake, incorporating actuality footage taken by Lubin cameraman Jack Frawley in 1906. More than thirty carpenters worked for five weeks to build breakaway sets that took two minutes to be destroyed on camera. Lubin's top director, Barry O'Neil, was in charge of the production, supervising every detail, and two of the company's most popular stars, Harry Myers and Ethel Clayton, took the lead roles as Paul Girard and Dora Sims.

O'Neil began as an actor and stage director before entering films in 1909 for the Thanhouser Film Company, directing the studio's first release in 1910. He joined Lubin in 1912 and, for three years, directed some of their most important films. Harry Myers, most well known today as the millionaire drunk in Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931), came to Lubin from the stage in 1909 and quickly rose to be one of the company's most popular leading men. In 1913, Myers also began directing films at Lubin.

Ethel Clayton had been a stage actress for almost ten years before she made the transition to movies in 1909 with the Essanay Film Company in Chicago. When she joined the Lubin company in 1912, she was quickly recognized for her talent, costarring with

Harry Myers in a series of comedies and dramas. While making *When the Earth Trembled*, she barely escaped serious injury when a wall collapsed prematurely during the earthquake scene. As she staggered away from it to the middle of the room, a chandelier fell, striking her in the face. She managed to move out of camera range, then fainted.

The Exclusive Service for multi-reel films failed to catch on, lasting a few months, just long enough to have a disastrous effect on the U.S. release of *When the Earth Trembled*. The film fared much better throughout England and Europe, where the surviving prints have been found. Another reason for the scarcity of prints from Lubin was a vault fire that occurred on June 13, 1914, destroying all the negatives produced by the company from its inception in 1896. The film vault at Twentieth Street in Philadelphia literally exploded, sending burning reels of film through the eight-inch reinforced concrete roof and into the street, catching nearby houses on fire.

Even though the vault was rebuilt, it was the beginning of the end for the company. The next setback came in 1915, when the U.S. government ruled that the Motion Picture Patents Company was a trust and must be dissolved. Siegmund Lubin, who had been planning to establish a new $200,000 studio in San Francisco, said: "We will have to readjust the business to fit the law, but I hardly see now how we can do it. It means millions in expense for us and a big loss."

"Pop" Lubin, as he was affectionately known in the business, tried to hold on, but was already overextended financially, and his Philadelphia studio had to be sold at auction in 1917. He died in 1923, still hoping for a comeback.

—David Kiehn

Preceded by the Miles brothers' **A Trip Down Market Street**, *shot days before the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, courtesy of Lobster Films.*

Also showing: **A Canine Sherlock Holmes** *(1912) starring Spot the Urbanora Dog. Print courtesy of David Shepard and the Film Preservation Associates.*

Richard Morris as Mr. Sims being dragged from the rubble. Photo courtesy of Jean Desmet Collection, EYE Filmmuseum

Emil Jannings

THE LAST LAUGH

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE BERKLEE SILENT FILM ORCHESTRA

Directed by F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1924
Cast Emil Jannings, with Maly Delschaft, Max Hiller, Emilie Kurz, and Hans Unterkircher
Production Universum Films A.G. (Ufa) **Print Source** Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation

The now-forgotten expression "clothes maketh the man" dates to the Middle Ages, but it seems to echo loudest from the early twentieth century when office jobs multiplied in new skyscrapers and country folk migrated to the cities by the tens of thousands. It could have been coined to describe the doorman of the upscale Berlin hotel in *The Last Laugh* (*Der letzte Mann*), whose authority, status, and self-worth derive not from his character or accomplishments but from his position, represented by an overcoat bristling with buttons.

Women supposedly love a man in uniform, and so does everyone else in this pompous fellow's tenement neighborhood. Actually, "love" is not the correct word for the tumble of emotions that the doorman (a hulk portrayed by the imperious, larger-than-life Emil Jannings) provokes, for pride and reflected glory will eventually give way to contempt and resentment. For now, his daily brush with the affluent, the aristocracy, and captains of industry sets him apart and above his neighbors; it also offers them a smidgen of faith that the job their children get toiling for the "1%" just might be in a swanky spot. Hope is the not-so-secret ingredient in capitalism.

Hope is the not-so-secret ingredient in capitalism.

But one day, after many years of loyal service, the Atlantic Hotel demotes the front doorman to lowly lavatory attendant. (Ostensibly he has grown too old to carry luggage. But as that stickler for station Fritz Lang observed, no doorman would lower himself to doing the work of a porter or valet.) With the reclamation of the doorman's impressive, button-bedecked regalia, his dominance evaporates. Housekeeping giveth, and Housekeeping taketh away. Alas and at last, our man is revealed as an empty suit.

Screenwriter Carl Mayer's beautifully conceived fable locates its emotional heart in the poignant figure of a working-class man who, after many years on the job, inevitably forgot that his authority was temporary. It was granted to him by the true keeper of the keys, the hotel owner, and now it has been withdrawn. Any perks beyond a living wage that Jannings's character enjoyed for all those years were illusory. And he is as devastated as anyone whose illusions have been shattered.

Mayer's worldview encompasses class consciousness and more—an awareness that the Great War marked the beginning of the end of an era. After all the pointless loss and sacrifice and heroism, the spit-shined military officer had lost his luster. Specifically, the war exposed the nepotism, privilege, and backward incompetence of the officer class, and the unfairness of a system that rewarded ancestry rather than accomplishment. The public (in Germany, England, and elsewhere) finally figured out that the officer's uniform, in and of itself, did not denote or bequeath character. The doorman's acquaintances sensed it all along, and *The Last Laugh* was a subtle nudge in the ribs for moviegoers in 1924.

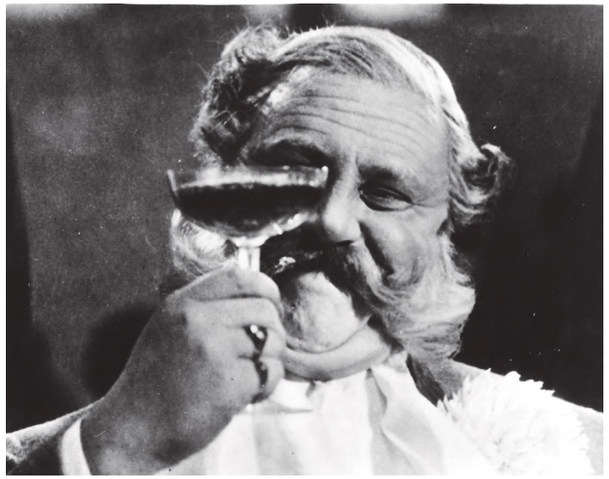
Emil Jannings was a massive monument as well as a major star in Germany, and the screenwriter Carl Mayer, the cameraman Karl Freund, and the director

After all the pointless loss and sacrifice and heroism of the Great War, the spit-shined military officer had lost his luster.

F.W. Murnau devised a fluid, kinetic film to situate him. While Murnau (*Sunrise*) is acknowledged as a genius and Freund came to be revered in Hollywood as an innovator (in addition to photographing the ending of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, he won an Academy Award for *The Good Earth* and received a Technical Oscar in 1954), Mayer is less appreciated.

Unlike the modern screenwriter, who is discouraged by producers and scriptwriting software alike from including shot descriptions and camera angles, Mayer wrote remarkably detailed blueprints that provided cinematographers, set designers, and even directors with a distinct vision. The Austrian native, whose first screenplay was the German expressionist milestone *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (another allegory of the aftermath of WWI, cowritten with Hans Janowitz), had a profound understanding of cinema's special ability to convey psychological states. He believed "the movement of the camera … should convey the vertigo human beings experience when trying to come to terms with their environment."

Mayer was a true pioneer of cinema; he thought, saw, and created stories in the grammar of film. He imagined and invented compositions and effects that the other key talent had to figure out how to achieve.



For artists like Freund and Murnau, that was the best kind of challenge.

Freund recalled in a 1947 interview for "A Tribute to Carl Mayer," a pamphlet published after the screenwriter's death at forty-nine from cancer: "For the well-known trumpet shot, we suspended the camera in a basket from a bridge that ran the length of the courtyard, and when we found that our pulley could not haul the basket upwards the way we wanted, we shot the scene downwards—and reversed the film in the camera. When we wanted to show Jannings drunk, I strapped the camera to my chest, with batteries on my back for balance, and acted drunk … Mayer's imagination had convinced us that we could do anything!" *Last Laugh* producer Erich Pommer once summed up his genius, "Carl Mayer writes true film scripts."

The writer Kenneth White observed in a 1931 article for the Harvard-based *Hound and Horn*, "The doorman got drunk, but not in the way a pantomimic actor with subordinate properties got drunk; the camera did it for him." Those who enjoy the notion that cinema endlessly repeats and reinvents itself in different places and contexts can draw a mostly straight line to certain contemporary directors who prefer directing computer-generated images than actors.

The degree to which Mayer thought out his scenarios, and the level of brilliance sparked by his collaboration with Murnau and Freund, is reflected in the near-absence of title cards in *The Last Laugh*. It was the unchaining of the camera, however, that galvanized the American movie industry and eventually brought all three men to Los Angeles.

After the first screening of *The Last Laugh* in America, "There was a telegram from Hollywood asking what camera we had used to shoot the film," assistant cameraman Robert Baberske recalled. "The Americans, used to a precise technique, didn't dream that we had discovered new methods with only the most primitive methods at our disposal."

Freund and Mayer were two imports whom Hollywood, thankfully, didn't corrupt. Among their subsequent credits, with Baberske and cinematographer Walter Ruttmann, they made *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927), a gorgeous and still-astonishing pinnacle of experiential, visual, and nonverbal cinema.

—Michael Fox

Emil Jannings, at left and above

BACK TO SCHOOL

PROFESSOR SHELDON MIROWITZ "CONDUCTS" THE BERKLEE SILENT FILM ORCHESTRA

INTERVIEW BY MAX GOLDBERG

Whose palms wouldn't begin sweating at the thought of a final exam performed in front of a packed house at the Castro Theatre? But that is exactly the culmination of Professor Sheldon Mirowitz's Scoring Silent Film practicum at Berklee College of Music in Boston, the only school that provides an undergraduate degree in film scoring. Over a single fifteen-week semester, six students work with Mirowitz to compose an original score, rehearse an orchestra, and provide live accompaniment for a paying audience. Previous classes have tackled kinetic classics like *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *Safety Last!* (1923), but this semester's composers have been charged with the altogether more delicate task of F.W. Murnau's expressionist masterpiece, *The Last Laugh* (1924). A landmark of film style, Murnau's *kammerspielfilm* of an aging doorman demands subtlety and sensitivity in its musical accompaniment–qualities that will surely serve Mirowitz's students as they find their places in the world of contemporary film scoring.

How do you help your students to see the challenges and opportunities that are particular to composing for silent films? The students in this class are in their final or penultimate semester of study in Berklee's Film Scoring department, which really is the only academic program of its kind. The first thing we do is to watch the film without music. The students tend to be kind of stunned at how slow everything moves, and then they get worried [laughs]. I spend a hunk of time in the first classes talking about the way the film is put together. In the case of *The Last Laugh*, they need to understand how many wonderful cinematic inventions are involved, like going through the glass window and the dream sequence. I also explain a lot about the social mores and cultural references within the film. So there's a bunch of superstructure stuff that comes early, but then we begin looking closer at the film and talking about how the music will work. *Then* they get it, they start seeing all the things they can do. The important thing is that we don't approach the score as so-called "silent-movie music." We approach it like a modern film, and we try to actually make the film modern again—that's the goal. So we deal with it the same way that we would deal with any film scoring assignment, except that in a silent film we have a lot more responsibility.

It must seem novel to film scoring students to be composing for live performance. Does this change the calculations of composition, especially in terms of needing to keep the score from being too difficult to conduct? Yes, definitely, and they always make it too hard for themselves at first. I'm always reminding them that we're putting on a show. And, by the way, that attitude is important for all film scoring work. It puts you in a position where you're doing something at the service of a bigger concept, and that's really the job.

The Last Laugh* is a film that's known for its graceful camera movements. How do you avoid overpowering the subtle fluidity of Murnau's visual style? It must be very different from the abundance of musical cues you get from something like *Safety Last! It is very different, but then every film is different. The fundamental thing is to keep the composer's intent in the right place. If you're intending to write some incredibly cool music, it will produce poor results in every circumstance—not just for a delicate film. *The Last Laugh* is about this character, and so in this case it is all about us being able to feel what he's feeling as he's feeling it. This is what generates the music. As the teacher, I need to keep asking the students: What does he feel now? Why does he feel this now? His whole life is about this coat, this station, this job. This is who he is, and we need to understand what that means.

People talk about how the exaggerated, expressionistic quality of Emil Jannings's performance poses a problem for contemporary audiences. How much of an issue was that for the class? It's a little bit like appreciating Noh theatre. You have to understand where it's coming from. The key thing for us is to find the human truth in his character's situation. Everything flows from that: the pacing, the instrumentation, the melodic qualities, and so on. I think that in the first two weeks the students were a little disoriented by the performance, but now they're getting it. Everything starts to make sense to them because of their constant worrying and concern about making the right story happen!

That the film doesn't have any intertitles is probably exciting for a composer. It *is* exciting. I don't actually have any problem with intertitles, but the challenge for a composer is that you have to know exactly when a joke or a major point happens. The hardest thing about *The Last Laugh* is that after the first thirty minutes or so, the film moves pretty unrelentingly into a very depressing story. It's difficult to make that work without the film feeling drawn out and repetitive. Unlike most people, I actually think that the ending is necessary. The secret is to compose music that makes it seem like it's necessary.

THE COMPOSERS

Making its first appearance at the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, the Berklee Silent Film Orchestra presents an original score for THE LAST LAUGH, the program's ninth silent feature film project. This year's students–Xiaoshu Chen, Amit Cohen, Emily Joseph, Eiji Mitsuta, Shotaro Shima, and Gabriel Torrado–conduct the section of the score they composed. The flute, the oboe, the bassoon, keyboard, the violin, the cello, various types of percussion, among other instruments will be played by a ten-piece orchestra chosen from Berklee and other Boston-area conservatories.

Photo by Rob Hayes

THE GHOST TRAIN

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE AND FRANK BOCKIUS WITH LIVE NARRATION BY PAUL MCGANN

Directed by Géza von Bolváry, Germany/UK, 1927
Cast Ilse Bois, Hilde Jennings, John Manners, Sinaida Korolenko, Ernst Verebes, Guy Newall, Louis Ralph, and Hertha von Walther
Production Gainsborough Pictures, F.P.S., and Phoebus-Film **Print Source** British Film Institute

It's one of those old-school, hypnotizing, daydreamy places very old movies can bring you—an occasion to think of movies "as places," meta-locales, landscapes and rooms you enter into and loiter around inside: the haunted (or faux-haunted) house in a rain storm. It speaks to some primal pretend-play grade-schooler in us, so it's hard to beat for extreme dramatic atmosphere and creepy-but-unthreatening plot machinations. It was for years a favorite meta-place in theater as well, where it developed a comic sense of its own absurdity early in the century; John Willard's 1922 play *The Cat and the Canary* remains a prototype. Géza von Bolváry's *The Ghost Train* is a classic, and virtually forgotten, subgenre tissue sample, an odd British-German coproduction of the Weimar era (resources split between Gainsborough Pictures and Ufa) and restlessly inventive co-opter of visual gimmickry made recently famous and fashionable by Fritz Lang and F.W. Murnau. Based on a 1923 play, his first, by actor Arnold Ridley (reportedly inspired by a night he was stranded at the train depot in Mangotsfield, Gloucestershire), the film is an unpretentious crowd-pleaser, as quaint as a watch pocket and as self-amused as a vaudeville clown. That it's this old, this neglected, this churning with antique affectation just makes it precious, not necessarily as art, but as a cultural find that could stick in your skull, like faintly hearing an old 78 of "Have You Ever Seen a Dream Walking?" seeping from a dark window in a rundown part of town.

The haunted house in a rain storm is hard to beat for extreme dramatic atmosphere and creepy plot machinations.

The story, at first, is a muddling and mysterious collision of mood, portents, black market secrets, corpses, ominous boardings, missed connections, and, best of all, glimpses of toy trains chugging through a tabletop night landscape, under a fake and silvery moon. The credits and title cards are animated to swoop in on you and float around like ghosts; at the drop of a tall-tale told about the titular "ghost train," small spectral engines are superimposed over the actors, smoking and hurtling this way and that. Few opportunities to wink at us are not exploited. In the meantime, a hoary old chestnut is pushed forward: first, a preamble in which nefarious doings lead to a worker's body, found run over, on tracks where "no train has been for seven years!"

At another station, a motley cast of types assemble, all heading to Hellbridge for a connection to London: a fussy temperance spinster carrying a caged parrot (who, in animated speech bubbles, periodically cracks "degoutant!" at passersby), a

Ernst Verebes (center) and Sinaida Korolenko as the Winthrops. Photo courtesy of BFI

This rather spectacular ghost-filled flashback sequence is the kind of musty, inventive, shadowy early cinema riff that always gave Canadian filmmaker/ excavator Guy Maddin crazed inspiration.

lovey-dovey couple on their honeymoon, a second couple brewing with bitterness and on the edge of a divorce (immediately they are punctuated with a cutaway to a pair of caged lions), and an undercover detective, whose job it seems entails being only the amused observer, until the climax. The first leg of their rain-soaked night journey is sidelined by a mysterious pull on the emergency cord; thereafter, the six travelers plus a yarn-spinning conductor are waylaid overnight in an abandoned Mangotsfield-like station, where their follies and fears beset them. The snippy Prohibition maid and the backbiting couple are exposed and tested; the detective is merely a buffoon; while Ridley and von Bolváry obviously have little interest in the happy honeymooners. The pressure is ramped up by the conductor's tales of the station's ghosts, conjured from a track wreck on the nearby drawbridge years before.

This rather spectacular ghost-filled flashback sequence is the kind of musty, inventive, shadowy early cinema riff that always gave Canadian filmmaker/ excavator Guy Maddin crazed inspiration for his retro-meta-movie movies (*Ghost Train* evokes a slew of Maddins but particularly 1990's *Archangel*, and the celebrated shorts *Odilon Redon*, from 1995, and *The Heart of the World*, from 2000). Maddin is always understood as being ironic-euphoric with his chintzy use of shadows, scratched film, missing frames, and undisguised miniatures, but an artifact like *Ghost Train* isn't terribly different—there's a palpable delight in the obvious fakery, hyperbolic double exposures, and melodramatic hokum that's very contemporary. We shouldn't always assume that pulp filmmakers of yesteryear were being dead serious and therefore deserving of campy chuckles. (Von Bolváry went on, under the Nazis and beyond, to thrive as a director of operettas and romantic comedies.) Sure, the visual style of *Ghost Train* may have been state of the art for its time—for a low-budget late silent—but that still doesn't mean the filmmakers weren't reveling, not nostalgically but of the mad-scientist moment, in the evocative craft at hand for its own hyperbolic sake.

Not that it matters terribly to us now almost ninety years later. You could say movies, *Ghost Train* included, only exist right now for the uses and interpretations and delights they offer in the present. As the seven characters twist and whine in their spooky seclusion, offscreen the smuggling operation that sparked the whole story trundles forward (the conductor's horror stories were meant to cover up the illegal train usage) eventually to meet its Waterloo with the waiting detective. In the meantime, Miss Temperance gets soused on a neglected flask of hootch and hallucinates inanimate objects dancing around the place on tiny hand-drawn legs, ending up out in the storm with her umbrella, flung about by the wind like Mary Poppins. The performers, mostly Germans with a few English stalwarts, are only required to embody a pulp-fiction homogeneity, with only the stuffy teetotaling comic relief standing out, played to the hilt by Ilse Bois. (A latecomer, as a vampy member of the criminal gang, in a skintight off-shoulder dress, Hertha von Walther went on in Germany's early sound years to be a favorite of Fritz Lang's and featured in films by Alfred Hitchcock and G.W. Pabst.)

Aficionados know that searching out high-minded artistic purpose and eloquence in silent movies is only one path to take. The alternative, about which we should feel no shyness, involves exploring the cultural past, as an invented country lost to time, gorgeous and fascinating exactly because of its foreignness, its unattainability, its evidentiary existence. Novelist Michael Chabon put it nicely, in an essay extolling the virtues of nostalgia: "We are simply like those savants in the Borges story who stumble upon certain objects and totems that turn out to be the random emanations and proofs of existence of Tlön. The past is another planet; anyone ought to wonder, as we do, at any traces of it that turn up on this one." Auteur masterpieces do not supply this proof—only made-for-fun products like *The Ghost Train* open the door.

—Michael Atkinson

Kyle McCulloch and Kathy Marykuca in Guy Maddin's *Archangel*. Photo courtesy of Zeitgeist Films

Narrator **Paul McGann** is best known to American audiences for creating a beloved incarnation of Dr. Who for BBC television. He has participated in both the Pordenone and Bristol Silents film festivals, and narrated the British documentary South at the 2012 San Francisco Silent Film Festival.

SPEEDY

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

Directed by Ted Wilde, USA, 1928
Cast Harold Lloyd, Ann Christy, Bert Woodruff, and Babe Ruth
Production Harold Lloyd Corporation **Print Source** Janus Films

Speedy, Harold Lloyd's last silent film, is a superb valedictory to the silent film era. "Speedy" was Lloyd's real-life nickname (given to him by his father), and the film lives up to its title. Wonderfully fast-paced and stylish, it is filled with brilliant comedy, thrills, and surprises, climaxing with a wild chase through the streets of New York City.

Lloyd plays Harold "Speedy" Swift, a baseball-crazy young man who cannot hold a job. His employment misadventures include work as a soda jerk and a cab driver. Harold's girlfriend Jane (Ann Christy) lives with her grandfather, "Pop" Dillon (Bert Woodruff), who owns New York's last horse-drawn streetcar. The horse and tramcar are stolen by a gang hired by a railroad monopoly. By stopping Pop Dillon's streetcar from operating for more than twenty-four hours, the rail monopoly hopes to steal away his franchise.

"Speedy" was Lloyd's real-life nickname, given to him by his father.

Realizing that no studio set in Hollywood could replicate Manhattan, Lloyd decided to film *Speedy* partially in New York City. Evocative scenes of the rides and arcades of Steeplechase and Luna Park at Coney Island make up the bulk of the New York material, although Lloyd also filmed at the Plaza Hotel, the Queensboro and Brooklyn bridges, Wall Street, Times Square, Greenwich Village, Central Park, and Yankee Stadium (featuring an extended cameo by baseball legend Babe Ruth). Glimpses of some of this footage can be seen in the film, providing an invaluable record of New York in the 1920s.

Inevitably, the crowds that gathered to watch the proceedings caused delays to such an extent that an intended four-week shooting schedule quickly turned into twelve, and the company resorted to hiding the cameras to film scenes furtively and quickly. To complete the film, Lloyd eventually created a Lower East Side street set at a cost of $80,000 on property he owned in Westwood, California. Few films of the period had bravely ventured—and succeeded—in using the bustling city's locations to the extent of *Speedy*. Buster Keaton attempted it with *The Cameraman* (1928), but ultimately he and his crew retreated to MGM's Culver City studios because of the disruptions caused by the crowds as soon as Keaton was recognized.

Harold Lloyd was virtually unrecognizable without his trademark horn-rimmed glasses and, owing to his average American man screen persona, was better able to stroll through a crowd unnoticed than Keaton. In fact, Lloyd bet director Ted Wilde he could walk down any two blocks of Fifth Avenue in daylight with no makeup and go unnoticed. Wilde chose the most difficult stretch—Forty-first to Forty-third streets—but Lloyd nevertheless won the bet. He later admitted that he had lowered his eyes to avoid eye contact with anyone and, at the appointed time of the

Harold Lloyd and Ann Christy. Photo courtesy of the Harold Lloyd Trust

bet (four p.m.), everyone was bound somewhere in a hurry and preoccupied with their own business.

Despite Lloyd's preparations for the New York shoot, not everything went as planned. One accident that occurred resulted in the creation of a wonderful gag. During the filming of the climactic race to the rescue, Harold drove a horsecar pell-mell through New York City traffic—at full speed down Third Avenue—and struck the post of an elevated subway track, throwing the stunt driver from the cab. Miraculously, neither the driver nor the horses were injured, and the accident provided such wonderful footage that Lloyd reworked the material into the film. After the horsecar crashes into the pole, Harold commandeers a manhole cover and ingeniously uses it to replace the car's broken wheel. It cannot be overstated how much grueling work went into filming these silent feature-length comedies. That these quick minds could turn a mistake on location into a great comedy sequence is a marvel.

A bad unplanned situation came up in the editing room after they returned to Los Angeles, when they realized they needed shots of Lloyd in medium close-up driving the streetcar during the final chase. The cost of returning to New York for what ended up being less than one minute of film was prohibitive. Lloyd instead opted to use the new Williams process, a visual effect that made him appear to be driving at a frantic speed through the streets of the city. He had never before used this process, now more commonly know as rear-screen projection, as the technology was in its infancy. Unfortunately, the technique is apparent to modern eyes and detracts slightly from what is otherwise a brilliantly executed chase.

For his leading lady, Lloyd replaced Jobyna Ralston (whose contract had expired with *The Kid Brother*) with Ann Christy, who had appeared in Christie Comedies (produced by Al Christie). Lloyd thought Christy looked like a modern New York girl. Although she has many charming scenes in *Speedy*—particularly in the Coney Island sequences—she showed little of the depth that Ralston had been able to bring to the previous Lloyd films.

George Herman "Babe" Ruth, the best-known baseball player of his time, is first seen giving away baseballs to children at a city orphanage on First Avenue when he hails Speedy's cab. Starstruck Speedy can only watch his idol Babe in the back seat and not the road ahead, and his worshipful awe results in a comedy-of-thrills cab ride through the traffic to Yankee Stadium. Ruth agreed to appear in the film in part because Wilde had just directed him a film called *Babe Comes Home* (1927).

Whereas Lloyd's typical releases went through five or six preview screenings, he only found it necessary to have three previews before he was convinced *Speedy* was finished. The film appropriately premiered in New York City—a first for a Lloyd feature—to a clamor of critical applause and tremendous popularity with the public. Although it made slightly less at the box office than his previous effort, *The Kid Brother*, it holds the distinction of being the only Harold Lloyd film to receive an Academy Award nomination. Ted Wilde was nominated for Best Comedy Director, a category that was eliminated by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences after the first ceremony. Lloyd, one of the founding members of the actor's branch of the Academy, eventually received an honorary Oscar in 1953.

In the same year *Speedy* was released, Lloyd published his autobiography, titled *An American Comedy* (a play on the title of Theodore Dreiser's 1925 novel, *An American Tragedy*). Written in collaboration with Wesley W. Stout during the making of *Speedy*, the book provides a good account of Lloyd's story and gag construction while making the film.

In his autobiography as well as in his films, Lloyd both reflected and shaped the idealism of 1920s America. *Speedy*, his last film before the Great Depression brought the Jazz Age to a close, was also his last silent film and the last great film he ever made.

—Jeffrey Vance

Harold Lloyd and Ann Christy. Photo courtesy of the Harold Lloyd Trust

VISAGES D'ENFANTS

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

Directed by Jacques Feyder, Switzerland/France, 1925
Cast Jean Forest, Victor Vina, Pierrette Houyez, Rachel Devirys, Arlette Peyran, Henri Duval, Jeanne-Marie Laurent, and Suzy Vernon
Production Mundus Films and Les Grands Films Indépendants **Print Source** Lobster Films

In his epic multivolume *Histoire du cinéma*, French film theoretician and historian Jean Mitry wrote, "If I had to choose one film of all the French productions of the 1920s, it is undoubtedly *Visages d'enfants* I would save … It is the only one that is still modern today." That was written more than forty years ago, but director Jacques Feyder's striking imagery and the subtlety of the performances remain breathtakingly modern.

Set in a village in the Swiss Alps, *Visages d'enfants* (literally, "Faces of Children") begins with the funeral of the mayor's wife, who has left behind two children, ten-year-old Jean, and his little sister Pierrette. In the film's remarkable opening, the casket is brought down the stairs from the bedroom, as Jean watches, heartbreak visible on his face, and Pierrette, uncomprehending, plays. The eleven-minute sequence continues with the procession to the cemetery; and finally, Jean's collapse at the gravesite. The boy is devastated by the loss of his mother and, a year later, is still mourning. Meanwhile, his father proposes to a local widow who has a daughter of her own. Concerned about how his grieving son will react, the father sends Jean on a trip with his godfather, the local priest. Jean returns to find his new stepmother and stepsister ensconced in the family home, where conflicts are inevitable. It is a simple story, beautifully told, and marks a turning point in the Belgian director's career.

It is a simple story, beautifully told, and marks a turning point in the director's career.

Born Jacques Léon Louis Frédérix in 1885, Feyder moved to Paris at the age of twenty-five and pursued an acting career first onstage and later in films. He began directing in 1916 and made his first major feature, the ambitious, if ponderous, three-hour epic *L'Atalantide* in 1921. Feyder spent eight months on location in the Sahara shooting the fantasy about a French Foreign Legionnaire and the mythical Queen of Atlantis. It was the most expensive French production to date.

Critics were not kind, and for his next film, *Crainquebille* (1922), Feyder returned to real-world Paris for the story about an elderly vegetable peddler who becomes a neighborhood outcast and the homeless urchin who idolizes him. To play the boy, Feyder discovered nine-year-old Jean Forest living on the streets of Montmartre, where the film was shot. *Crainquebille* is an early example of the poetic realism that characterized much of Feyder's work and also features some experimentation with the German expressionist style.

As he was preparing his next film, *Visages d'enfants*, Feyder wrote an article for an Austrian film magazine about how European filmmakers must produce movies with international appeal. In it, he notes that

Poster courtesy of Gaston Vermosen

the worldwide success of American productions is a paradox: “These films, aiming only to please the American public, have known the greatest and most durable success the world over,” and concludes, “Only a film of high national character is truly an international film.” He cites the Swedes, “who have created the most beautiful films in the world” while “never producing anything but *Swedish* films.” Feyder’s ideal films have a picturesque natural setting and “a simple story, an event that speaks to all intelligences, to all hearts.” *Crainquebille*, with its colorful city market, and *Visages d’enfants*, with its Alpine village vistas, combine with the emotional honesty of their stories to fit Feyder’s filmmaking prescription. But the production of *Visages d’enfants* was challenging, its road to becoming a milestone of French cinema was as steep and rocky as a mountain path.

Funding came from two Swiss investors who wanted to promote the Swiss film industry and show off the natural beauty of the country. Feyder and his crew shot exteriors in the Haut-Valais region of the Alps, in southwestern Switzerland (all the interiors, along with additional exteriors, were shot on studio sets in Paris). The schedule called for two months of location shooting in the spring of 1923 but lasted four months because of the difficulties posed by the rugged, remote site. Cinematographer Léonce-Henri Burel, who had shot *Crainquebille* and often worked with Abel Gance, captured the magnificence of the region, as well as the isolation and danger of nature. The changes of season also reflect the changing emotions of the characters, with the father’s grief in winter abating as spring arrives. The use of vast landscapes and nature recall those of the Swedish directors Feyder so admired, Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller.

Locals, many of whom had never seen a movie, or even a camera, appeared as extras, adding authenticity to scenes such as the funeral procession and the wedding celebration. The young actors who played the children were spontaneous and natural, and Forest proved that his fine performance in *Crainquebille* was no fluke, delivering a powerful and moving portrait of a troubled boy. Forest later costarred with Feyder’s wife Françoise Rosay in the director’s lighter film about childhood, *Gribiche* (1926), and appeared in several more films over the next decade. When his film career faded, the young actor went on to a long career in radio. Rosay cowrote the scenario for *Visages d’enfants*, and directed some scenes during production in Paris when Feyder had to go to Vienna to set up his next project.

Jean Forest and Victor Vina, as his father. Photo courtesy of Lobster Films

Cost overruns on *Visages d’enfants* only added to Feyder’s reputation as a profligate filmmaker that he had earned while making the epic *L’Atalantide*. Trying to secure better distribution for their films, Feyder and fellow directors Max Linder and René Hervil teamed up to form a distribution company, Les Grands Films Indépendants. But after shooting on *Visages* ended, Feyder clashed with the company administrator, who impounded the footage. The company held the film for several months and, by the time they released it, Feyder was working on another project. It was a year before he was able to edit *Visages d’enfants*.

The film finally opened in March 1925. Critics hailed it as a masterpiece, but it was not popular with the public. It was considered a failure, although it did receive international distribution, thanks to the good reviews. Japanese critics named *Visages d’enfants* the best European film of the year. Over the years, the film’s negative disappeared, and no good print existed until the Royal Belgian Film Archive restored it in 1986. New restorations were made in 1993 and 2004.

Jacques Feyder’s “career zigzag,” as film historian Lenny Borger labels it, took him to Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Hollywood (where he directed Garbo and Ramon Novarro), and London. He earned the most acclaim for his masterpiece of poetic realism, *Le Grand jeu* (1934), and *La Kermesse héroïque* (1935), a historical satire about a Flemish town occupied by invading Spaniards, which the Nazis banned in 1940 soon after taking over Paris. Feyder and Rosay fled to neutral Switzerland, where they lived until his death in 1948.

In the decades since he died, Feyder’s work has been forgotten, reviled (by *Cahiers du cinéma* critics such as François Truffaut), ignored, lost, and rediscovered. The restoration of his best films, among them *Visages d’enfants*, has revived his reputation as well. In 1944, Feyder and Rosay published *Le Cinéma, notre métier*, an autobiographical memoir of their films together. In it, Feyder wrote that he regarded himself simply as an artisan, a craftsman of filmmaking “in the full sense of the word, both honorable, and limited.” Today, many cineastes would disagree. Not only was he an artist, he was a true auteur long before the same *Cahiers* critics who had disparaged him proclaimed the *auteur* theory.

—Margarita Landazuri

The 2015 San Francisco Silent Film Festival Award will be presented to Serge Bromberg of Lobster Films at this program.

THE MAN IN THE CENTER RING: SERGE BROMBERG SAVES CINEMA

Interview by Monica Nolan

Serge Bromberg is an impresario, a ballyhooer of cinema in the best tradition of Barnum and Bailey. Fortunate audiences around the world know him for his Retour de Flamme clip shows, during which he may burn a bit of nitrate film stock on stage and accompany some early animation on the piano while presenting his latest discoveries. Through Lobster Films, the company he founded in 1985, Bromberg restored the color to Georges Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* and, if you missed the San Francisco Silent Film Festival screening of it in 2012 you can find it on one of the DVD compilations Lobster puts out. But wait, folks, there's more! Since the late 1980s, Bromberg has produced and hosted hundreds of hours of French television, he's made a César-winning documentary, *L'Enfer d'Henri-Georges Clouzot* (codirected with Ruxandra Medrea) and, for fifteen years, he ran the festival of animation in Annecy. The future undoubtedly holds more thrilling adventures.

GIVEN THE RANGE OF YOUR ACTIVITIES, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO?
I'm a cinevore. When I ran the film festival I tried to impart my passion for animated film to younger audiences. When I did my shows on television—at the beginning it was like twenty minutes a day, at the end it was three hours a day—it was to show animation. I'm following my passion for wonderful films and human adventures. Cinema is just an excuse for being together and sharing our passion.

HOW DID THAT PASSION BEGIN? I UNDERSTAND YOUR FATHER BROUGHT HOME A CHAPLIN FILM ...
In the days of Super-8 my father brought home a print of *A Night in the Show* [1915] and I was hooked instantly. A few years later a cousin of mine left me alone with a Super-8 projector that was running *King Kong*. I was fascinated and scared at the same time. I was so scared I thought, well, King Kong comes out of the machine, so if I'm behind the machine, King Kong cannot get me.

AND NOW YOU DO SCREENINGS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN.
We're doing it the first Sunday of the month at the Balzac theater [in Paris]. We read the titles [out loud], so if they can't read, it won't be a problem. There will be piano or a band and it will be one hour long because we know that they can't take more than one hour. Most important, when they arrive, we offer them ice cream, and probably in the future whenever they see ice cream they'll think, 'oh, I need to see silent film.'

VERY CLEVER.
It's a bit unfair, because they have no defense, but it's very efficient.

TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT LOBSTER AND ITS INVOLVEMENT WITH VISAGES D'ENFANTS.
When I created Lobster, I had already been a collector for about fifteen years, first Super-8, then 16mm, and, you know, I'm a dangerous maniac—this is a neurosis! Lobster's main aim is to restore classic films and restore the audience for classic films. We're basically passing our passion onto the next generation. When Lobster bought the rights to Jacques Feyder's *L'Atlantide*, the owner said "there are two other films I don't know what to do with. I would be happy if you could take care of them." They were *Visages d'enfants* (1925) and *Crainquebille* (1922).

WHO WAS THIS?
It was the grandson of Jacques Feyder. And we had no clue about *Visages d'enfants*. Then at Pordenone we watched the film with Antonio Coppola's music and realized how amazing it was. But the film was not restored, so in 1993 four European archives—Netherlands Film Museum [now EYE Film Institute], the Cinémathèque française, Gosfilmofond, and the Royal Belgium Film Archive—gathered all their material to reconstruct the film. Then, in October 2014, I was told the original nitrate of *Visages d'enfants* was decomposing. So we put the film on the scanner, and where the original nitrate material had decomposed we used the preservation of 1993. And the film is back on its feet.

WHEN YOU STARTED LOBSTER FILMS, RESTORATION WAS ON FILM, AND A TELECINE MACHINE TRANSFERRED FILM TO VIDEO. TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE CHANGES IN THE TECHNOLOGY OF RESTORATION—WE'VE GAINED A LOT, IS THERE ANYTHING WE'VE LOST?
To restore a film in the old days was basically like a Xerox copy. Whenever you copy something, you lose a little sharpness, gain a bit of contrast, and if there are scratches on the film, they are photographed—they are not scratches anymore, they are images of scratches. The digital technologies avoid a loss of quality when you transfer the image to data or when you transfer the data back to image. With digital, you can stabilize the image perfectly, you can remove defects—it's like Photoshop, but twenty-four times a second. What we've lost is the [sense of] human limits—there is no human limit with digital technology; you can make the film much more perfect than it was ever conceived to be. You can put a film in 3D, why not? You can go too far. The restorer knows all the technologies, he knows everything that can be done, but what he knows best is how far you can go, and where you must stop.

IS THERE ONE FILM YOU HAVEN'T FOUND YET THAT YOU CONSIDER YOUR HOLY GRAIL?
We found it—*Trip to the Moon* in color. Actually for thirteen years the code name for the reconstruction of that film, because we didn't want to make it public, was "the Grail." But maybe another way to answer the question is to say the most interesting discovery is the next one.

SERGE BROMBERG RECEIVES THE SAN FRANCISCO SILENT FILM FESTIVAL AWARD AT THE SCREENING OF THE RESTORED VISAGES D'ENFANTS ON MAY 30.

THE DONOVAN AFFAIR

A MOVIE AND LIVE THEATER EVENT PRODUCED BY BRUCE GOLDSTEIN PERFORMED BY THE GOWER GULCH PLAYERS

Frank Capra's 1929 comedy whodunit *The Donovan Affair* was his very first all-talking picture. (His previous film, *The Younger Generation*, was a "part-talkie," with alternating reels of silence and talk.) Based on the 1926 Broadway hit by the prolific Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Owen Davis, *The Donovan Affair*, starring square-jawed Jack Holt as Inspector John Killian, was a big enough attraction to open at New York's 5,900-seat Roxy movie palace, complete with a live stage show featuring the Roxyettes (precursors to the Radio City "Rockettes").

For Capra, it was the beginning of the most fertile ten years of his career, a decade that yielded *It Happened One Night*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Lost Horizon*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and other classics—one of the most remarkable string of hits in movie history.

So why have you never heard of *The Donovan Affair*? Because the only known copy, at the Library of Congress, is missing one little thing: its soundtrack. And, since *Donovan* was, as heralded, a "100% All-Dialogue Picture," this has been a big deterrent to showing it anywhere.

Like many early talkies, Donovan's soundtrack was recorded and played back on Vitaphone disks, one sixteen-inch disk for every reel of film. But not one of its eight disks has surfaced in recent years; the LOC's print remains a talkie without talk.

So when I wanted to show it in the early 1990s as part of a comprehensive Capra series at New York City's Film Forum, I figured I could do one of two things: run it silent, which would simply baffle the audience, or get some actors together to dub all the dialogue—live. I chose the latter. I mean, who wouldn't?

But in order to pull this off, the dialogue would have to be precisely dubbed—and there wasn't even a script. Not even Columbia Pictures, the original producers, had one. It was going to take months of detective work—and a lot of guesswork— to reconstruct the missing dialogue. In fact, it's taken more than twenty-three years to finally nail it—and I still consider it a work in progress.

Surprisingly, the Library of Congress had neither the script nor Owen Davis's original play (when a copy was finally located twenty years later, I was amazed to find that this had almost nothing to do with Capra's film anyway). Then Wesleyan University, guardians of Capra's papers, turned out to have the continuity script for the *silent* version (for theaters not yet wired for sound). (It's important to note that this version is not the lost silent film—which used intertitles for the dialogue—but the talkie *without sound*.)

I finally hit pay dirt with the discovery of a dialogue list in the archives of the now-defunct New York State Board of Film Censors, a stenographic record (but not entirely accurate) of the dialogue, used to ferret out any dirty bits. It was exactly what I needed to get started.

Then, I arranged a screening at the Library of Congress. Anxiously clutching the dialogue list as the lights went down, I tried lipsynching the opening line: "Say, I'll lay anybody in this room a bet ... that Donovan don't show up." It worked. I sat there dubbing all the voices, men and women, following only about half the dialogue. But there was certainly enough to work with.

Next I needed actors, but the kind whose idols aren't De Niro, Pacino, and Brando, but Cagney, Robinson, and Tracy (Spencer *and* Lee). Actors who know to

Alphonse Ethier as Captain Peter Rankin and Jack Holt as Inspector Killian

say "I'm Inspector Killian from head*quarters*" and not "*head*quarters." I didn't want it camped up, but played as true to the period as possible, as if the lost disks had actually turned up.

Through Film Forum's longtime silent film accompanist, Steve Sterner—also an actor with an affinity for 1920s and 1930s movies—I met the likeminded actor Glenn Taranto, who proved the ideal Killian, delivering the inspector's machine-gun interrogation in perfect synchronization. Eventually, we put together a cast of ten, with some of us taking two or more parts. Steve took the role of henpecked, stuttering Dr. Lindsey, while doubling as pianist and musical director.

I created a proper script from the dialogue list by adding scene breakdowns and stage directions. But the dialogue still matched only about sixty percent of the mouth movements. The actors themselves filled in even more dialogue by carefully studying the lip movements of his or her own character from video copies of the film. And since Capra was experimenting with sound (by having characters talking offscreen or with their backs to the camera), some of the dialogue had to be written.

But voices and music weren't enough. We also needed lots of atmosphere: wind, rain, thunder, ringing telephones, doorbells, slamming doors, etc. In fact, everything you'll hear at the Castro is a complete re-creation. That includes the surface noise of a Vitaphone disk. The soundtrack on the film itself is completely *dead*.

In a packed house for our first performance in 1992—*Donovan*'s first New York City screening in more than sixty years—the opening line of dubbed dialogue got some nervous laughter. Then the sound of ice being dropped into a glass got a huge laugh. It was just how audiences reacted to the earliest talkies, when everyday sounds brought down the house.

By the time the film ended, the audience had nearly forgotten about us and got caught up in the movie. It was a triumph, but it was over after just two performances. Five years later, in 1997, we repeated *Donovan* for Capra's centennial year. Glenn had moved to Hollywood, so Killian was now played by Allen Lewis Rickman, another actor born at least five decades too late. Happily, the San Francisco Silent Film Festival show features both Allen *and* Glenn in key parts.

We've had other cast changes over the years, but the New York and Los Angeles actors who make up the Gower Gulch Players (after the nickname of Columbia's Gower Street Studios in Hollywood) will be dubbing the missing voices of Jack Holt (star of Capra's *Submarine* and *Flight*), Dorothy Revier (allegedly the model for Columbia's "Torch Lady"), William "Buster" Collier (a close friend of Buster Keaton's, who appears in Kevin Brownlow's Keaton documentary *A Hard Act to Follow*), Wheeler Oakman, Alphonse Ethier, and comedians Fred Kelsey, Ethel Wales, and former Keystone Kop Hank Mann. And then there's Agnes Ayres, who almost a decade before had been swept away in the desert by Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik*.

You may be wondering if *Donovan* is worth all this trouble, or is it just an ancient potboiler that should be allowed to languish in silence? To quote a *New York Times* ad for the original Broadway production, "*The Donovan Affair* is the most thrilling, baffling, chilling, hypnotizing, electrifying, play that has been presented on the stage in the last generation." At the Castro Theatre, you'll finally be able to see—and *hear*—for yourself.

—Bruce Goldstein

Bruce Goldstein is the award-winning director of repertory programming of New York's Film Forum and founder of classics film distributor Rialto Pictures.

The Gower Gulch Players: Glenn Taranto, Rick Pasqualone, Hannah Davis, Ashley Adler, Steve Sterner (also on piano), Yelena Shmulenson, Allen Lewis Rickman, Bruce Goldstein, and Frank Buxton.

The DCP used in this performance was transferred from the print in the Library of Congress. Special thanks to Mike Mashon.

FLESH AND THE DEVIL

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MATTI BYE ENSEMBLE

Directed by Clarence Brown, USA, 1926
Cast John Gilbert, Greta Garbo, Lars Hanson, Barbara Kent, William Orlamond, and George Fawcett
Production Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer **Print Source** Photoplay Productions

Flesh and the Devil is one of the very best examples of the palpable romantic eroticism that can often be found in silent films. A huge hit in its own day, it is still remarkably sexy and entertaining, a great example of how movies could provide a private, alone-in-the-dark viewing experience that evoked passionate love. *Flesh and the Devil* stars John Gilbert and Greta Garbo, two beautiful people of talent who, even if they had hated each other, could have generated the sensuousness needed for the plot. As it happens, they didn't hate each other. Quite the contrary. They were madly, recklessly in love. Everyone working around them could clearly see and hear their mutual obsession. (Garbo called Gilbert her "Yacky" and he called her "Flicka", the Swedish word for girl.) Director Clarence Brown said, "they were in that blissful state of love which is so like a rosy cloud that they imagined themselves hidden behind it, as well as lost in it." The camera captured their "no one but us ever felt this way" attitude, which gives *Flesh and the Devil* an immediacy, a modern kind of zing. Garbo and Gilbert are like two teenagers in love, except, of course, they are very beautiful, very sophisticated, and very experienced teenagers with really ritzy wardrobes.

They were madly, recklessy in love.

There are three key people who shaped *Flesh and the Devil*'s success: Garbo, Gilbert, and the director Clarence Brown. At the time of the film's original release, it was Gilbert's film not Garbo's. He was already a huge star, having appeared in hits such as *The Big Parade* (1925) and *The Merry Widow* (1925). His only real rival as a screen lover was Rudolph Valentino, who died suddenly and tragically in August of 1926, leaving Gilbert the undisputed king of the matinee idols. Proof of his stature is reflected in the film's original billing: "John Gilbert in *Flesh and the Devil* with Greta Garbo." Gilbert has been misrepresented in film history as an example of how the coming of sound ruined careers (because of his allegedly high-pitched voice). However, he actually had a successful sound career. He lost his place at the top because changing times rendered his type of romanticism obsolete and created the desire for a rougher, more down-to-earth leading man (á la Clark Gable), and because personal demons (primarily alcoholism) destroyed his ability to work. *Flesh and the Devil* shows Gilbert at his best. His stardom transcended the term "matinee idol."

Garbo is obviously the more famous of the two today. Garbo is Garbo. She's unique, a "one and only" presence. Beautiful, exotic, erotic, and somehow both a real woman and a fantasy creature, she had the singular ability that is crucial to movie stardom, especially silent movie stardom: when the camera lingers on her face, audiences believe they know what she's thinking and feeling. By the time *Flesh and the Devil* had circulated widely, Garbo had taken her place beside Gilbert as an equally great movie star. They are the perfect couple to enact the plot of *Flesh and the Devil* with or without their offscreen passion. With it, they lift *Flesh and the Devil* onto the list of great silent movies. Both performers are

Greta Garbo and John Gilbert

Director Brown delivers love and sex on a silver nitrate platter.

at a peak of beauty and, although they are unquestionably star personalities, they are also serious and talented actors. Both face the camera without fear, exuding professional self-confidence.

Garbo and Gilbert were fortunate to find themselves under the guidance of Brown, one of the lesser known, but most capable directors of their era. Garbo was comfortable with Brown and he became a favorite of hers. Brown directed some of Hollywood's most enduring movies, among them *The Rains Came*, *National Velvet*, *The Yearling*, and *Intruder in the Dust*. (Besides *Flesh and the Devil*, he directed Garbo in *A Woman of Affairs*, *Anna Christie*, *Romance*, *Inspiration*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Conquest*.) Brown's forte was the ability to create an atmosphere that supported and extended actors' performances. Brown *felt* atmosphere. He could present the erotic and sensuous world of *Flesh and the Devil*, but also the honest small-town life of *Ah, Wilderness*, the sassy, success-driven world of *Wife vs. Secretary*, the historical periods of *The Gorgeous Hussy* and *Edison the Man*, and the sacrifice of the World War II home front in *The Human Comedy*. His willingness to support, not suppress, the offscreen feelings of Garbo and Gilbert lifts the movie to a higher level than it otherwise might have had. Garbo and Gilbert, of course, are not the only famous movie stars whose love affair was captured in their first film together. There's also Bogart and Bacall with their lessons on how to whistle in *To Have and Have Not* (1944) as well as the great scandal of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in *Cleopatra* (1964). But Garbo and Gilbert are fully captured at the height of their short-lived passion, largely due to Brown's willingness to give their love all the time and space it needed. Brown allowed William Daniels (who became Garbo's favorite "go-to" cinematographer) to shoot his two stars in slow and languorous close-ups, beautifully lit and erotically expressive. Brown delivers love and sex on a silver nitrate platter.

Flesh and the Devil is an experience for the senses, a film that motivates an audience to let go of logic. Garbo and Gilbert walk through softly falling snow, yearn toward each other in front of gigantic fireplaces, and swan around on privately owned islands. They make love on huge pillows, with cigarette smoke curling upward around their heads. She wears silk and brocade, and elegant shoes. He's in ornate, superbly tailored military uniforms. Everything is posh, elegant, and expensive. (I first saw this film in the 1950s, and when Garbo falls through the ice on a lake wearing the most magnificent fur coat ever seen on the screen, a woman in the audience yelled out, "Quick! Save that fur!")

When Gilbert first sees Garbo at a train station, he stands transfixed, his jaw dropping, an unabashed portrait of a young man struck dumb by love at first sight. When he meets her again later that night at a glamorous ball, he holds the single rose he stole from the bouquet she had been carrying. When he sees her, he goes directly to her as if there's no one else in the room. He pulls her into his arms and sweeps her wordlessly out onto the dance floor. She herself is no slouch at this game. She enters his arms completely, sinking physically up against him, almost letting her lips touch his. Off they go in a dancing whirl, round and round, and then they move outside into the moonlight for an unforgettable love scene. "Who are you?" he asks. "Does it matter?" she answers. Well, as it turns out later, it does matter, but who really cares? Garbo places a cigarette between her lips, which are wet and open, and then she puts it in his mouth instead. When he starts to light it, the illumination of the match reveals two of the most beautiful faces in film history. Today's movies are too cool, too cynical for scenes like these.

Seeing *Flesh and the Devil* affords the modern moviegoer an opportunity to surrender to a world that never really existed, but that nevertheless offers something very real: the heat between two amazing people, and the quiet glamour that only silent film could create.

—Jeanine Basinger

John Gilbert as Leo von Harden and Greta Garbo as Felicitas

An Idyll or a Tragedy—Which?

When Clarence Brown Filmed the Love Scenes with Greta Garbo and John Gilbert for "The Flesh and The Devil" He Was Working with Raw Material

By Doris Markham

None of us knows very much about her. But once in a while a woman appears who is more than anything else just that—a woman, and subconsciously everyone acknowledges her power. Such a woman is Greta Garbo.

It is just a little over a year since she came to America. There was no blowing of trumpets about it—no laying of red carpet. And there has been no sensational advertising since her arrival. Yet today, Greta Garbo is one of the most significant figures among the women of the screen—if not the most significant. It is nothing that has been said or written about her. It is nothing that she has done—yet. It is just the inexplicable charm and power of a rare personality. Everyone feels, without being able to explain the fact, that this slim girl is one of the children of Destiny.

"I can only talk to you in little words," she says. "I can say yes and no, but I cannot explain much in your English. Here in America, everyone is so happy and so young. Your men, your women, everyone, they never grow old," she says wonderingly.

"Then you have not been homesick for Sweden?" "No, no," she answers slowly, "No, I have not been that—lonely, sometimes, but not homesick."

When two such personalities as John Gilbert and Greta Garbo love, there will be either a great idyll or a great tragedy . . . possibly both. It is hard to imagine their love story running along conventional lines.

"And when the Crown Prince visited the studio, you were his luncheon partner?"

"Yes, and I had never seen him before in my life. Not on the street, not in a procession, not anywhere. And in Sweden, I would never have met the Crown Prince. It would have been too difficult—but here in America, I sit beside him, I talk to him—oh, he is charming, and he had such a good time here—he—"

"A wonderful fellow, that Crown Prince of yours," threw in John Gilbert, from his place beside Greta—but the look he gave her was not for the Crown Prince—"wonderful," he repeated—and he looked at her.

It was just a flash, but for a second the whole story was told—as clearly, as starkly, as lightning reveals the minutest details of a room.

No wonder Clarence Brown says he is getting the greatest love scenes that have ever been screened in "The Flesh and the Devil." He is working with the raw material. They are in that blissful halcyon stage of love that is so like a rosy cloud that they imagine themselves hidden behind it, as well as lost in it—they are not even self-conscious—yet.

And when two personalities such as John Gilbert and Greta Garbo love, there will either be a great idyll or a great tragedy—possibly both. It is hard to imagine their love story running along conventional lines—and as for denying it—they might just as well try to deny the existence of fire!

It was between such scenes later in the afternoon that Greta's "distinctive foreignness" was mentioned. "Don't let them Americanize you," we pleaded.

"And why not?" demanded Gilbert. "Why shouldn't she learn our ways? The world doesn't go to see her because she is Swedish—because she has a fascinating accent! They can't hear her talk! They want to see her because she is an actress, nationality has nothing to do with it." Maybe not—but it would be a pity to change her—for any reason at all—even love.

Just now, life seems very full of work. "I do not see how you can work and play so much, too," she says quaintly. "Me, I am so sleepy I cannot go to parties. I must go to bed—I get so tired—I cannot do it."

"And oh, I do not want to be a bad woman—on the screen, you know! That is my only trouble in America. People say I am what you call—'vamp type'! I know what they mean but I do not think I am. I do not like to play 'bad woman!' Oh, much rather, I played good women—good, but interesting—you know?"

"Garbo! Garbo!" The voice of the Assistant Director reverberated thru the great stage. Greta hastily opened her make-up box and wielded the inevitable powder-puff.

"Coming," she answered, and slipped thru the crowd—a tall, slim girl—all long, graceful lines.

A few minutes later she was kneeling at a communion rail. John Gilbert beside her.

Again they were caught up in the magic cloud of their own making—they played a scene that tightened your throat with its intense beauty—even there in that most prosaic and disillusioning of all places—a motion picture set.

"They have done that in every love scene they have played," said Clarence Brown, "it's marvelous."

The scene was over and Greta had slipped down from her knees into a pathetic little heap on the altar steps. Her face was dead white. Her eyes, big and solemn and tragic—for the scene she has just played was part of the story of a woman who is interesting but not—good—"and when people see me on the screen, they will think that I am like that," says Greta. "Oh, yes, they will! They will write me letters about it—that is why some days I am sad, but most days I am very, very happy—I am very happy"—she was looking up—John Gilbert was standing there.

Excerpted from an article in the December 1926 issue of* Motion Picture *magazine.

PAN

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY GUENTER BUCHWALD

Directed by Harald Schwenzen, Norway, 1922
Cast Hjalmar Fries Schwenzen, Hans Bille, Gerd Egede-Nissen, Lillebil Ibsen, Rolf Christensen, and Falhi
Production Kommunernes Filmscentral **Print Source** National Library of Norway

Norwegian feature film production in the 1920s was infrequent. It could hardly be considered a major industry at the time; there were very few full-length movies being made annually and very few trained and experienced filmmakers working in Norway. It was quite a sensation when someone suddenly had the nerve to go ahead with a film adaptation of Knut Hamsun's famous 1894 novel *Pan*, already a national classic and widely appreciated abroad. The film was well-timed, as Hamsun had received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1920 and was considered one of the country's biggest heroes.

A talented young actor from the National Theatre in Oslo, Harald Schwenzen, wrote the script and directed the film about the brooding, carnal, back-to-nature Lieutenant Thomas Glahn who takes refuge in Norway's remote northern territories. The project apparently was a labor of love for Schwenzen—it was his first film as a director and he never made another. For the rest of his career, he concentrated on acting, both for the stage and screen. In *Pan*, Schwenzen cast his own brother, actor Hjalmar Fries Schwenzen, as the male lead, and Harald himself played Glahn's hunting companion in the film's epilogue.

Kommunernes Filmscentral (Norwegian Municipalities' Film Central), primarily a corporation for the distribution of films, but for some years also credited as a production company, supported the project. Probably the most daring idea for the film was the plan to shoot the epilogue on location in Algeria (the stand-in for the book's original destination of India). Never before had a Norwegian film crew traveled so far. In an interview published in the Norwegian newspaper *Morgenposten* in 1945, Schwenzen talked about the adventure. "We were three of us traveling down to Algeria, my brother Hjalmar, the photographer Tønsberg, and myself, all of us packed for summer holidays, furnished with passports and other suitable things. From Algiers, we traveled farther on the governor's recommendation, with safe passage by bus or camel, five hundred kilometers down south, through the stone desert and into the sand desert to an oasis, where no Norwegians had ever set foot before; there were only some Arabs and Frenchmen there. And very hot it was—oh my!—forty-five degrees in the shade! And in that heat we were to work from four in the morning until eight in the evening, with a dinner break of two hours. The Frenchmen said we were mad to go on working in this heat, and even the Arabs were skeptical. When we arrived at the oasis we were met with a huge disappointment, and I feared that the whole journey had been in vain: they told us that Arab women were never allowed to leave their houses. And we needed an Arab girl for one of

> "The Frenchmen said we were mad to go on working in this heat, and even the Arabs were skeptical."

Gerd Egede-Nissen as Edvarda. Photo courtesy of the National Library of Norway

"The daring step to put the novel PAN on film has succeeded beyond all expectations."

the leading roles, of the Arab girl Maggie, Lieutenant Glahn's sweetheart. But helped by the powerful French prefect we made contact with a young Arab girl, who was absolutely thrilled to get out of her imprisonment, when she learned that it was properly allowed. And she was a real find! Yes, Falhi, a slim and charming creature, an eighteen-year-old Nature Girl. She appeared to have a natural talent, gracious like a gazelle and extraordinarily flexible. We stayed on there the whole summer, and it was a wonderful time. We were shooting the epilogue of *Pan*, and it was really great fun to make a Norwegian film in Africa for the very first time."

The filming in Algeria was done during the summer of 1921. The main portion of the film was not shot until the following year, in Melbu, in the Vesteraalen archipelago in northern Norway. Two young actresses were hired for the main female leads, Gerd Egede-Nissen as Edvarda and Lillebil Ibsen as Eva. They both had already played film roles abroad, but had never appeared in a Norwegian film before. When the film premiered in the autumn of 1922, it was anticipated with both excitement and skepticism, but the critics were mostly enthusiastic, in some cases amazed. The newspapers generally lavished praise on the film: "The images of Nordland in this film are probably the most beautiful ever seen in a movie," wrote one. "And what is more, in an excellent way one has succeeded in placing the characters effectively against the surroundings. The strange sentiments of the characters in *Pan*, which can only be understood with Nature as a background, never seemed unnatural on the screen. This is probably the film's greatest triumph."

Another reviewer observed: "The daring step to put the novel *Pan* on film has succeeded beyond all expectations, due to the film company's wisdom of casting first-class actors in the leads, and first-class photography. Edvarda is played by Gerd Egede-Nissen. An achievement like this is rarely seen on the screen. Here comes Hamsun's Edvarda, walking right out of the book, messy and erratic, but intense, lively, and lovely."

Though warmly received upon its release, it gathered dust in the film archives for decades afterward. Whenever it had been shown in recent years, it was a reprint of an old nitrate print, which was unable to recapture the film's original picture quality, and in which, sadly, half the film's epilogue was missing. Happily, the epilogue was reconstituted in the 2012 restoration, using the film's camera negative (great portions of which were intact) and a safety dupe print made in the early 1960s. The original intertitles did not survive but were reconstructed from the Swedish censorship report and modeled after the style of type in the old print. All earlier safety prints had been produced in black and white, so using the indications in the original material, the tinting was also reconstructed.

Let Harald Schwenzen have the last word, taken from the film's original program brochure: "The task we have given ourselves is to make a beautiful and artistic pictorialization of this, perhaps Knut Hamsun's strangest story. Outwardly, there is no strong plot in *Pan* which could possibly tempt us, but the book is, with its powerful beauty and lyricism, so rich in atmosphere, so characteristic and strong in its human descriptions, that it offers both the director and the actors a very special artistic task. If we have succeeded, through our images, together with excerpts of Hamsun's text, to give life to these people and this atmosphere, as in the book, then we have fulfilled the great task we set for ourselves."

—Bent Kvalvik

THE AUTHOR AND THE ACTOR

Knut Hamsun once wrote that the purpose of literature was "to pursue thought in its innermost concealed corners, on its darkest and most remote paths, in its most fantastic flights into mystery and madness, even to the distant spheres, to the gates of Heaven and Hell." Some of literature's first truly modern works, Hamsun's early plotless psychological novels, *Hunger*, *Mysteries*, and *Pan*, presented both a great temptation and challenge for moviemakers. That Harald Schwenzen chose to adapt *Pan* as a first-time director is both surprising and, as an accomplished actor, fitting. Who better to interpret what Hamsun describes as the "secret stirrings that go on unnoticed in the remote parts of the mind, the incalculable chaos of impressions, the delicate life of the imagination seen under the magnifying glass; the random wanderings of those thoughts and feelings; untrodden, trackless journeyings by brain and heart, strange workings of the nerves, the whispers of the blood, the entreaty of the bone, all the unconscious life of the mind" than an actor whose primary purpose is to express a character's inner motivations? Schwenzen was one of Norway's leading stage actors at the National Theater, Oslo, from his debut there in 1918 until his death in 1954. In the early years, he played attractive roles such as Peer Gynt in Ibsen's play and Don Carlos in Schiller's, as well as Orsino in *Twelfth Night* and Sebastian in *The Tempest*. He also occasionally directed in the theater and moved on to play darker characters in later years. He appeared in his first film in Sweden, in Victor Sjöström's *Masterman* (1920). After *Pan*, his sole outing as director, he returned to Sweden and appeared in Elis Ellis's *Två konungar* (1925) and Gustaf Molander's *Till Österland* (1926). His last silent film role was back in Norway, in George Schnéevoigt's *Laila* (1929). His destiny could not have differed more strikingly from that of *Pan* author Knut Hamsun, who began to champion Nazism during the 1930s and once had a private meeting with Adolph Hitler. During World War II, Schwenzen worked actively in the resistance against the Occupation, and in 1944 was sent to, and survived, the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The author Hamsun, whose wife and sons were imprisoned after the war as collaborators, was deemed too "permanently impaired" for prison but was condemned for treason and stripped of all his wealth. He died at age ninety-two in poverty and disgrace. He turned his postwar experiences into his final novel, *On Overgrown Paths*, published in Norway in 1949 and still considered one of his finest works.

Program essay and sidebar adapted from the 2014 catalog of the Giornate del Cinema Muto, Pordenone

Knut Hamsun and his family in 1917

THE AMAZING CHARLEY BOWERS

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY SERGE BROMBERG

Print Source Lobster Films

THE FILMS: A WILD ROOMER, USA, 1926 *Charley, a brilliant inventor, has forty-eight hours to make a convincing demonstration of his newest machine in order to collect an inheritance from his father.* **NOW YOU TELL ONE, USA, 1926** *The liars' club meets to vote on who can tell the most unbelievable story. Along comes Charley, the brilliant inventor of a universal grafting process, whose story takes the cake.* **MANY A SLIP, USA, 1927** *Charley decides to invent an anti-skid banana peel.* **THERE IT IS, USA, 1928** *Charley is a detective from Scotland Yard sent to America to solve the mystery of a haunted house.*

Sometime in the mid-1960s, French film archivist and historian Raymond Borde of the Toulouse Cinémathèque stumbled across three silent shorts that showcased a talent he had never heard of before. There were no credits on the films, merely the name "Bricolo" on the canisters, and they featured elaborate and imaginative stop-motion sequences unlike anything he had seen in American slapstick comedy. These were films that "take on a disorderly life of their own, obeying nothing but the logic of a dream," wrote Borde in his 1967 article "Le mystère Bricolo," which announced the discovery and called upon fellow archivists and historians to share any information they had. But no one recognized Bricolo, whose straight-faced curiosity recalled Buster Keaton and childlike innocence suggested Harry Langdon. Borde finally cracked the mystery while reading through a film directory from 1928 and seeing an ad promoting the films of Bricolo, a.k.a. Charley Bowers.

> **Bowers's films "take on a disorderly life of their own, obeying nothing but the logic of a dream."**

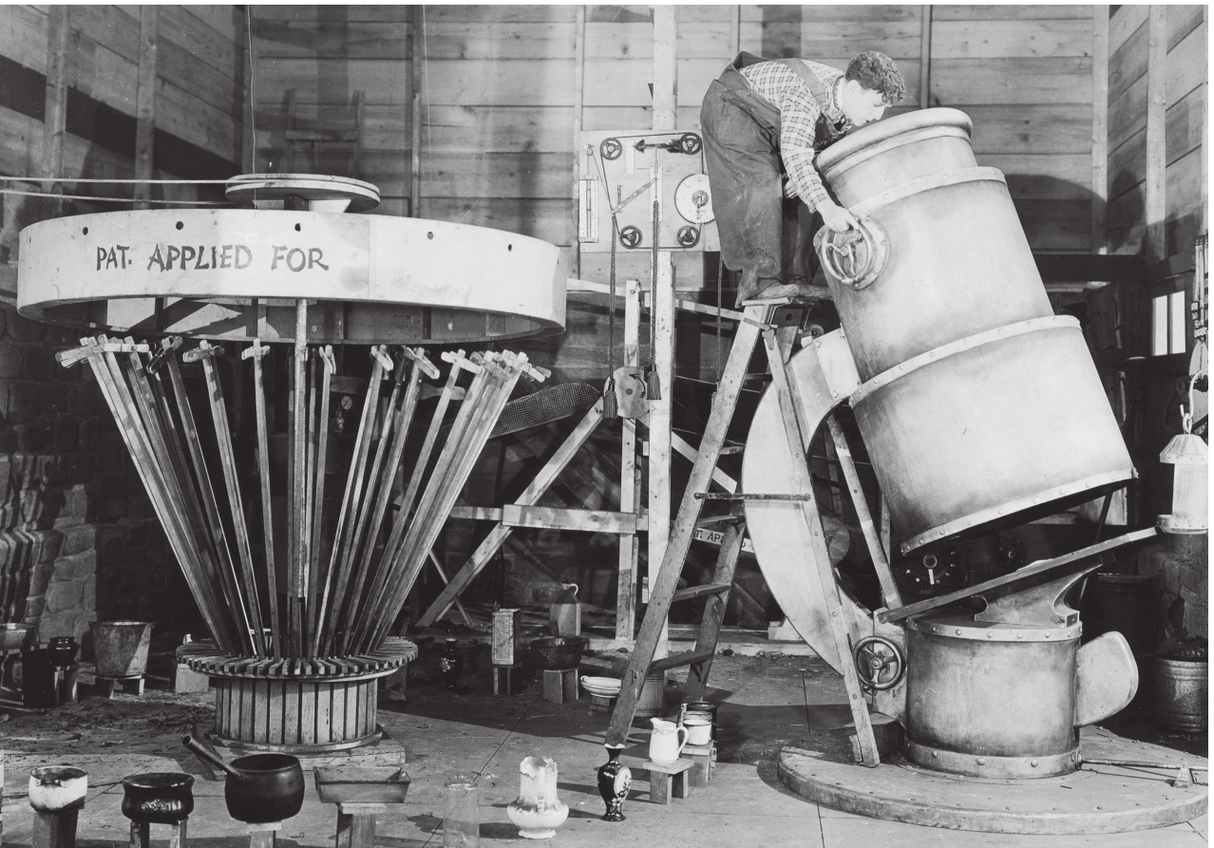
Who is Charley Bowers and why isn't he better known? Cartoonist, animator, director, and, for a brief period, silent movie comic, Bowers created some of the most imaginative, idiosyncratic, and surreal short comedies of the 1920s. His French screen moniker Bricolo is an inspired shorthand for a filmmaker who applied the art of bricolage to slapstick surrealism, cobbling together animated wonders from gears and gizmos, household objects, and junkyard bric-a-brac, and creating funny Frankenstein marriages of the biological and mechanical. Yet he received little critical attention at the time. His most admiring notice came from French surrealist André Breton who saw his sound debut seven years after its release and wrote: "In 1937, *It's a Bird* took us away, for the first time, our eyes opened to the dull sensory distinction of reality and legend, to the heart of the black star." By then Bowers was in poor health and supporting himself as a cartoonist and illustrator, while periodically working as an animator on films like *Pete Roleum and his Cousins* (1937), an industrial short made for the oil industry by director Joseph Losey. He died in 1946 at the age of fifty-seven, all but forgotten by Hollywood.

More than forty years after his rediscovery, Bowers remains an enigma with a biography wrapped in myth and tall tales. What is known of his early years is largely conjecture, informed by fanciful studio

Charley Bowers in *There It Is*. Photo courtesy of Lobster Films

press releases and Bowers's even less reliable accounts. According to these anecdotes, he's the son of a countess, learned to walk a tightrope at the age of five, was kidnapped by circus gypsies at six, and worked variously as a bronco buster, jockey, cowboy, horse trainer, and circus acrobat before an injury grounded him. What can be confirmed (thanks in large part to research by film scholar and historian Rob King) is that he worked as a newspaper cartoonist, which led to a career as an animator on early cartoon series such as *The Katzenjammer Kids* and *Bringing Up Father*. In 1916 he was put in charge of the *Mutt and Jeff* series and wrote, produced, and directed more than two hundred cartoons between 1916 and 1926.

Sometime in the 1920s he began experimenting with puppet animation and stop-motion techniques and, in 1926, he left *Mutt and Jeff* and began a partnership with cinematographer Harold L. Muller. There's even less information (reliable or not) available on Muller, a British émigré who had been, according to his entry in the Motion Picture Studio Directory (1923–1924), experimenting with early color film and synchronized sound technologies before teaming up with Bowers. Together they created eighteen live-action shorts with what we can only guess is enviable creative freedom. Bowers is generally assumed to be the creative force with Muller as director of photography and quite likely technical supervisor, but Muller is variously credited as director, writer, and producer throughout their collaboration. Bowers was also the star and he transformed himself into a silent comic without the training that shaped the great performers. It's no surprise that he lacks the physical polish and comic timing of his contemporaries but he's perfectly appealing as a plucky, energetic hero willing to try anything in the name of scientific inquiry. And while he received top billing in these films, they were really a showcase for his animated creations.



Many a Slip. Photo courtesy of Lobster Films

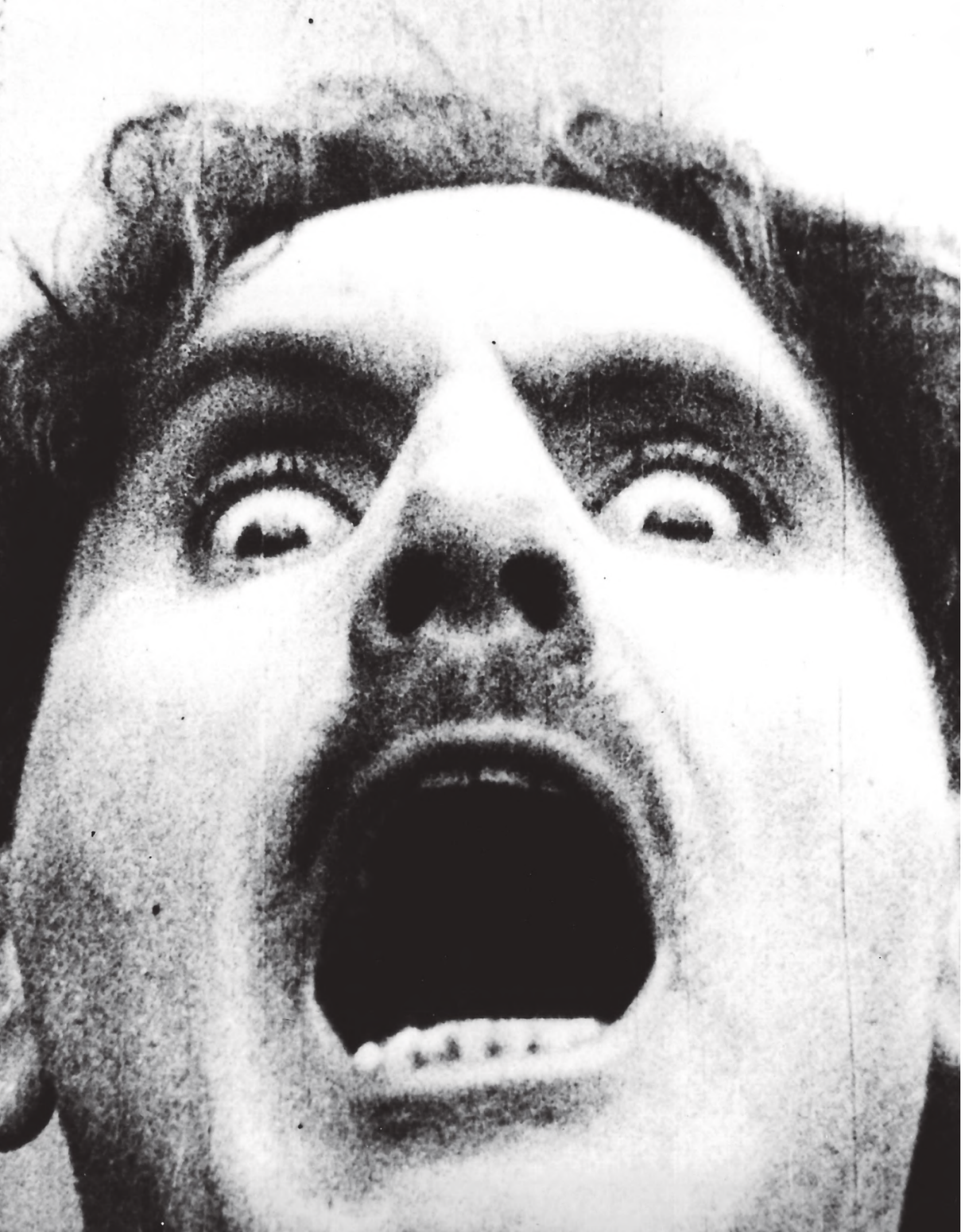
Call it cinematic ballyhoo, but Bowers had the chops to pull off the illusion.

Bowers sold himself as an inventor as much as filmmaker and silent comic—in the 1930 U.S. Census report, after nearly two decades in the movie business, he listed his official occupation as inventor—and proclaimed himself the creator of the exclusive "Bowers Process." The official-sounding term aside, it's merely a catchy brand name for a combination of stop-motion animation and optical techniques used to marry effects with live-action footage. Call it cinematic ballyhoo, a handy gimmick to convince audiences that his films rely on some exclusive technology, but Bowers had the chops to pull off the illusion. Walt Disney combined actors and hand-drawn animation in the fanciful Alice shorts, but no one was bringing physical objects to life and unleashing them in the material world the way Bowers did.

Like Buster Keaton's films, Bowers's films share a fascination with machines and technology. But where Keaton took an engineer's delight in the operations and mechanical possibilities of steam engines and paddle boats, Bowers applied the limitless imagination of a cartoonist and the tools of stop-motion animation to push the conceptual possibilities of his devices beyond the limitations of physics and into the realm of fantasy. Bowers liked to play inventors on-screen as well, the visionary creator whipping up the impossible out of elaborate machines and miracle concoctions. In 1926's *Egged On*, a basket of his experimental "unbreakable" eggs hatch into miniature Tin Lizzies and putter over to their mommy Ford like chicks to a mother hen, and he grows full-sized felines from a pussy willow branch in *Now You Tell One*. Objects don't simply come to life, they transform and mutate and evolve into visual puns and cartoonish impossibilities. His crazy contraptions have been compared to Rube Goldberg. But where Goldberg created absurdly elaborate constructions to accomplish mundane tasks, Bowers imagines the impossible and sets about making it possible, whether it's a machine to take care of household chores in *A Wild Roomer* or isolating the "slippery" germ during his search for the no-slip banana peel in *Many a Slip*. He's the inventor as magician and fabulist, and in *There It Is*, playing a Scotland Yard detective investigating a haunted house, he's the logician faced with anarchy and chaos.

A number of his early cartoons have been saved (you can find some of his *Mutt and Jeff* cartoons on YouTube) but only about half the live-action films he created have been found (mostly in Europe), rescued, and preserved. As an independent making shorts both for FBO, which merged with Keith-Albee-Orpheum to form RKO and neglected its silent film library in the transition to sound, and Educational Pictures, which went bust and was sold off its assets in the late 1930s, Bowers had no studio to protect his legacy and no champions to promote his cause, at least until Borde stumbled across that can of old prints and identified the artist as a subject for further study. That study continues.

—Sean Axmaker



Ménilmontant. Photo courtesy of Cinémathèque française

AVANT-GARDE PARIS

EMAK-BAKIA Directed by Man Ray, France, 1926 | Print Source Cohen Film Collection
LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY EARPLAY FROM AN ORIGINAL SCORE BY NICOLAS TZORTZIS

MÉNILMONTANT Directed by Dimitri Kirsanoff, France, 1926 | Print Source Cinémathèque française
LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

In 1921 when Dimitri Kirsanoff was shooting his first film in Paris and Man Ray had just arrived there, the city was the site of an aesthetic revolution. Artists were discarding painting in favor of assemblages and "readymades" like Duchamps's famous urinal. Surrealists swapped narrative fiction for experiments in automatic writing. The composers of Les Six rejected Wagner for Gershwin. It was a heady atmosphere for the émigré artists then flooding Paris, whether leaving behind the turmoil of eastern Europe like Kirsanoff or the conservatism of middle-class America like Man Ray. The world that had produced the devastating Great War clearly needed drastic revision, and the avant-garde artists were up to the task.

> "An unforeseen art has come into being. We must understand what it means."

The newest of these new art forms was avant-garde film. "An unforeseen art has come into being," wrote Jean Epstein in 1921. "We must understand what it means." In fact, avant-garde films were then defined less by their aesthetics than by their precarious position on the margins of commercial cinema. As they struggled to gain recognition, avant-garde filmmakers and their allies inadvertently fueled the explosive growth of a film culture we take for granted today: film coverage in daily newspapers, film magazines, cinema clubs, lecture series, museum exhibitions, repertory screenings, and art house cinemas. Today's Castro audiences are the descendants of the cinephiles who pored over *Ciné pour tous* (founded 1919) and flocked to the screenings organized by the Club des amis du septième art (CASA, founded 1920).

It was through CASA that Kirsanoff's first film, *L'Ironie du destin* (believed lost), finally reached a sympathetic audience. Completed in 1922, the film tells the story of an old man and woman who meet on a park bench and exchange memories of their lost loves. It languished without distribution for almost two years and then caught the eye of Jean Tedesco when CASA programmed it as part of its regular screenings at a dance studio. A former editor of a women's magazine, Tedesco had recently merged two film publications to create the definitive voice of the art cinema world, *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous*. However, he had bigger ambitions; seeing the success of the CASA screenings, he began to dream of a theater with full-time avant-garde programming.

Meanwhile, Kirsanoff was forging ahead with his second film, made, like the bulk of his work, outside commercial cinema on a tight budget. Little is known about Kirsanoff, who was born Mark David Kaplan in Riga, Latvia, according to some sources, or Dorpat, Estonia, according to others. He may or may not have played the cello in the Ciné-Max-Linder orchestra; he may or may not have played the violin in some of the Russian cabarets then popular in Paris. He *did* compare a film to a symphony in a 1929 *Cinéa-Ciné pour tous* interview, adding, "it's wrong to say that im-

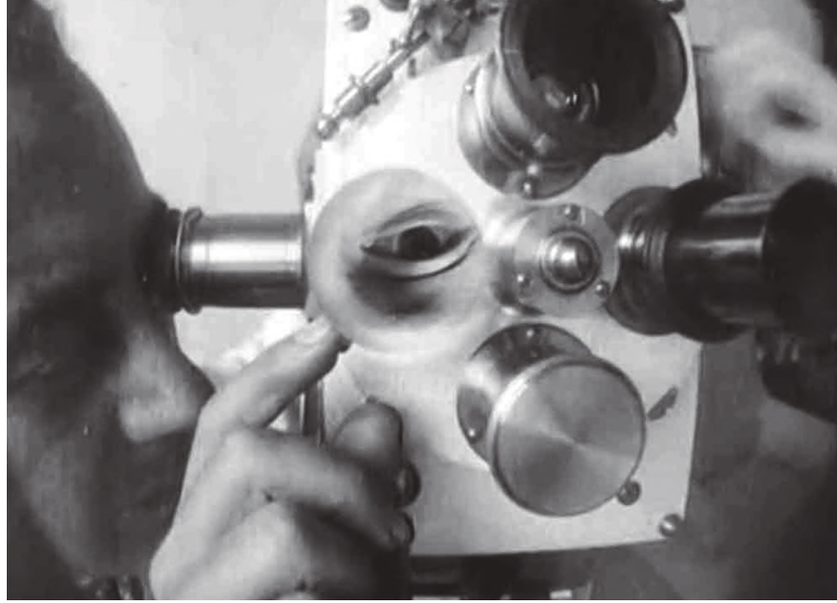
ages are words. They are notes or rather harmonies." In the same interview he disparaged film adaptations of books and called intertitles the "bête-noire" of French cinema.

In fact, like his first film, *Ménilmontant* has no intertitles. The uninterrupted flow of images is only one reason for the film's decidedly modern feel. Kirsanoff takes a melodramatic story of orphaned sisters seduced and abandoned in the poor, eastern Paris neighborhood that gives the film its name and turns it into something fresh and exciting. His technical virtuosity is on display in the stunning opening montage, a murderous sequence worthy of Hitchcock, and in the effective use of jump cuts thirty-odd years before Godard and the French New Wave. Kirsanoff's accomplishment is all the more impressive considering that the atmospheric superimpositions and dissolves were done in camera.

In addition to technique, the film's other strength is Kirsanoff's wife Nadia Sibirskaïa in the lead role as the younger sister. His constant and close collaborator (she claimed in a late life interview that she even filled in as director when Kirsanoff was ill), Sibirskaïa—who was born Germaine Lebas in Brittany—is a subtle, naturalistic actress, with eyes large and expressive enough to rival Lillian Gish's. She is a mesmerizing film presence, whether reacting in horror to the death of her parents or waiting on a deserted street for her faithless lover.

Jean Tedesco programmed *Ménilmontant* to open the second season of his newly established art cinema, the Vieux-Colombier, in January 1926, and the film was an instant success with the art-house crowd. Historian Richard Abel wrote in *French Cinema: The First Wave* that the film "helped assure the success of the Vieux-Colombier and soon became a major film on the ciné club and specialized cinema circuit."

In the fall of that same year, Man Ray's surrealist short *Emak-Bakia* also premiered at the Vieux-Colombier. Born Emmanuel Radnitzky in Philadelphia, Ray was as reluctant a filmmaker as Kirsanoff was determined. He supported himself with photography but considered his paintings and assemblages his real art. Ray had only begun to dabble in film when domineering dadaist poet Tristan Tzara commanded him to produce a film for a soiree of contemporary art in 1923. Then in his dada period, Ray obeyed and *Retour à la raison* (*Return to Reason*) was the result. He cobbled together random footage he had shot, augmented it with his "rayograph" technique, which involved placing three-dimensional objects on light-sensitive material and exposing them. He had never tried the technique on film, but, pressed for time, he scattered thumbtacks over strips of film and developed them. The film broke twice during the projection (Ray didn't know enough to edit with cement and not glue) and the evening degenerated into a brawl between dadaists and surrealists, but the thumbtacks danced on-screen and the technique has stayed in the experimental filmmaker's toolbox ever since.



The man behind *Emak-Bakia* was Arthur Wheeler, an American stockbroker on vacation in Biarritz. Impressed with Ray's photography, Wheeler offered to bankroll a film and was shocked when Ray insisted that all he needed was ten thousand dollars (half of which Ray used to buy a new camera). The film was shot in part at the Wheeler villa, which gave the film its name (a Basque phrase usually translated as "leave me alone"). "I drove down and lived luxuriously for a few weeks," Ray wrote in his autobiography, "shooting whatever seemed interesting to me, working not more than an hour or two every day." Whereas Kirsanoff's bleak winter shoot is evident in his actors' frosty breath, *Emak-Bakia* radiates the sun-drenched pleasures of the Basque coast.

Like *Ménilmontant*, *Emak-Bakia* is a catalog of film techniques. Ray reused the rayograph footage from *Return to Reason*, created abstract shots with distorting mirrors and spinning objects, and mixed stop-motion with live action—Jacques Rigaut, "the dandy of the dadas" is the man who sets the shirt collars twirling, and Ray's lover Kiki, a Montparnasse fixture, is the woman with the painted eyelids in the final shot. When he introduced the film at the Vieux-Colombier that fall, Ray warned the audience, he later wrote, that "my film was purely optical, made to appeal only to the eyes—there was no story, not even a scenario."

Ray made one more film, *Les Mystères du château de dé* (1929), while Kirsanoff plugged away, mixing avant-garde shorts with more commercial features, until his death in 1957. Their films of the 1920s not only share a daring inventiveness but capture a distinct moment in time, when cinema fused with the art world and the possibilities of both seemed unlimited. In January 1922, Henri-Pierre Roché (then living the life that formed the basis for Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*) described an evening party: "Marcel Duchamp projected his film experiments and geometric dances on the silvered side of a piece of bathroom glass—the result, expressive and quite fantastic, surely exploitable."

—Monica Nolan

Left: Nadia Sibirskaïa in *Ménilmontant*. Photo courtesy of the Cinémathèque française. Above: Man Ray's *Emak Bakia*

WHY BE GOOD?

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

Directed by William A. Seiter, USA, 1929
Cast Colleen Moore, Neil Hamilton, Bodil Rosing, John St. Polis, Edward Martindel, Louis Natheaux, Lincoln Stedman, Eddie Clayton, Collette Merton, and Dixie Gay
Production First National Pictures **Print Source** Warner Bros.

As bright a star as Hollywood ever produced, receiving up to ten thousand letters a week from adoring fans at the peak of her stardom in the mid-1920s, Colleen Moore trusted the wrong people with her life's work. In 1944, she gave her collection of fifteen nitrate films to the Museum of Modern Art in New York for preservation, including *Flaming Youth* (1923), the Jazz Age film that had made her a star. The collection joined the seventeen million feet of film in MoMA's possession. Later, MoMA returned prints of her Warner Bros. films to the studio upon their request, but her First National films remained in the collection and were forgotten. By the time the films were rediscovered, they had disintegrated and Moore spent the rest of her life searching largely in vain for prints of her work.

Moore spent the rest of her life searching largely in vain for prints of her work.

Happily, some of her thought-lost films have started to reemerge. The delightful comedy *Her Wild Oat* (1927) was found among the previously unidentified films at the Czech National Film Archive in 2001, which led to its restoration and public exhibition at festivals and art houses around the world, including the San Francisco Silent Film Festival in 2008.

The recovery of *Why Be Good?* is a story of two people coming together in the right place at the right time. In 1994, Ron Hutchinson, founder of the Vitaphone Project, presented a program of restored Vitaphone short films at New York's Film Forum. In his opening remarks, he brought the audience up to date on activities of the organization formed in 1991 to locate soundtrack disks for early Vitaphone and other talkie shorts and features and reunite them, if possible, with their films.

Writing about the occasion, Hutchinson recalled, "I casually mentioned that I recently acquired all the soundtrack disks for Colleen Moore's *Why Be Good?* I said something to the effect that 'unfortunately, this is a lost film.' Film historian Joseph Yranski, who ran the film library at the Donnell Media Center [a now-closed repository of the New York Public Library system], was a friend of Colleen Moore and knew more about this film than probably anybody on the planet, yelled out 'No it's not! I know where it is!' The full house at Film Forum cheered." Those cheers were premature, however. It was not until 2012 that Cineteca Italiana di Milano, which housed the print, returned it to the United States for restoration. It was synched with the jazzy Vitaphone soundtrack, which is available on the Warner Bros. DVD. The Silent Film Festival is presenting the film with live music, as was common during the transition to sound.

With the new availability of *Why Be Good?*, it becomes clear what a crucial find it is. Extant copies of other Colleen Moore films display her physical

Colleen Moore as Pert Kelly. Photo courtesy of Joseph Yranski

The flapper lived for the moment: she drank bootleg liquor, danced until dawn, and explored her sexuality.

dexterity, dead-on comedic timing, fresh-faced beauty, and, in talkies like *The Power and the Glory* (1933), her dramatic abilities. Yet none before has given us the image that launched her into Hollywood's pantheon of stars—the flapper.

While the source of the word "flapper" is up for debate, there are some indications of its origins. In the 1610s, the term "flap" was sometimes applied to "a young woman of loose character." In 1747, "flapper" referred to a "young wild-duck or partridge" that flaps its wings while learning to fly. The iconic John Held Jr. drawings of the 1920s illustrated another possible reason for the "flapper" designation: it was a fad among young women to wear unbuckled rubber galoshes that flapped when they walked. Symbol of the Roaring Twenties, the flapper was a young woman who lived for the moment: she drank bootleg liquor, danced until dawn, and explored her sexuality.

Suddenly, too, women flooded the workforce as secretaries and sales clerks, earning their own money and mixing freely with male coworkers and customers. Their generally low wages still kept them living at home with their parents but gave them enough economic freedom to buy the baubles, bangles, and beads of their flapper costumes. Corset-free, with bound breasts, shorter skirts, rolled stockings, low heels, and bobbed hair, the flapper had maximum freedom of movement. Men treated them to gifts, drinks, cover charges, and, while not formally selling sex, flappers likely made a consensual exchange. The rise of automobile ownership—the number of cars on U.S. roads went from 6.8 million to 122 million from the beginning to the end of the decade—abetted this sexual freedom.

Even though fragments of *Flaming Youth* still exist, we may never know exactly what Moore's flapper from the movie was like, but, according to film historian Jeanine Basinger, audiences believed they finally had a picture of "just what a young woman who flamed and flapped really looked like. What she looked like was Colleen Moore." Her *Why Be Good?* character, Pert Kelly, is the full-blown variety. She lives in an urban area with her parents, works as a sales clerk at a department store, and is a Charleston champion with a jaunty walk who flirts for her food, drink, and entry into trendy jazz joints.

Unlike the frankly sexual movie flappers who came after—Clara Bow, Louise Brooks, Joan Crawford—Moore is rather the flapper-next-door, a good girl who pretends to drink and would be humiliated if anyone knew that she wasn't sexually experienced. In this, her flapper's lineage descends from Annabelle Moore, of Edison's flapping butterfly dance shorts, a former Ziegfeld Follies girl and probable model for the Gibson Girl, and Olive Thomas, another Ziegfeld girl, a risqué dancer, and the star of the first flapper feature, *The Flapper* (1920). Thomas's version edged timidly into the lifestyle, trying unsuccessfully to smoke a cigarette, and pinning, but not bobbing, her ringlets. Moore's "dutch cut" became the height of fashion for the Jazz Age's modern woman, as well as Moore's trademark and principal hairstyle to the end of her life.

Why Be Good? was one of three films Moore made in 1929 with director William A. Seiter and her producer-husband John McCormick under the aegis of First National Pictures. As the silent era came to an end, so did her marriage and her studio contract. After a three-year hiatus, she made four talkies at four different studios, including one more flapper film, *Social Register* (1934), with *Her Wild Oat* director Marshall Neilan. By then, the age of the flapper was over, and so was Moore's career. Content to leave the limelight, Moore wrote in her 1968 autobiography *Silent Star*, "I had become at last a 'private' person."

—Marilyn Ferdinand

Colleen Moore and Neil Hamilton. Photo courtesy of Joseph Yranski

NORRTULLSLIGAN

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MATTI BYE ENSEMBLE

Directed by Per Lindberg, Sweden, 1923
Cast Tora Teje, Inga Tidblad, Renée Björling, and Linnéa Hillberg, with Egil Eide, Tollie Zellman, Olav Riégo, Stina Berg, Lili Ziedner, Lauritz Falk, Nils Asther, Gabriel Alw, Torsten Bergström, and John Ekman
Production Bonnierfilm **Print Source** Swedish Film Institute

Four working girls sharing an apartment in the big city might sound more like the premise for a 2015 American cable series than a 1923 feature from Sweden. But not only is *Norrtullsligan* a silent-era film set in Stockholm, it was adapted from a serialized novel published fifteen years earlier. The author, Elin Wägner, later a member of the Royal Swedish Academy, was also a journalist, an ardent feminist, and an advocate for a life lived closer to nature's rhythms than to the minute-by-minute mechanical ticking that had become society's dominant tempo during her lifetime.

The film captures the delicate moments among the difficulties.

The title of the novel, Wägner's first, and only recently published in English, literally means the Northgate League (often translated into the folksier "Gang") and refers to a working-class district where the quartet of pink collar ladies make their home. The newly minted English-language title, however, is stripped of any local color and conveys more plainly the challenges these young women face as they jostle alongside other rats in the modern race: "Men and Other Misfortunes." The misfortunes are familiar as they still menace us today: sexual harassment, prejudice against single-parenting, the wage gap, the glass ceiling, and an unforgiving capitalism that pits poor against poor in a wealth-rules-all world. But neither the book nor the film are a mere socialist tract, and under Per Lindberg's deft direction, the film captures the delicate moments among the difficulties written about by Wägner.

Norrtullsligan was one of five films released by the short-lived Bonnierfilm, a production unit set up by the respected publishing house Albert Bonniers Förlag to adapt selections from its inventory for motion pictures. The time seemed right to exploit the newly popular commercial art form, the tail end of Sweden's Golden Age of cinema not yet visible. The tight-knit group of creators associated with *Norrtullsligan*'s production maps out like the branches of an incestuous family tree.

Director Per Lindberg was the son of revered stage actress Augusta and her actor-director husband August, both with deep roots in Stockholm theater. Their son was "an ambitious firebrand" in his day, credited with bringing Berlin-based Max Reinhardt's radical staging to Stockholm. Per Lindberg's sister Greta married Tor Bonnier, heir to Bonnier Publishing, today a worldwide media enterprise still owned and operated by the family. It can be deduced from letters written to her husband that Tor was the de facto head of Bonnierfilm's projects.

Per's other sister, Stina, married author Hjalmar Bergman, who adapted Elin Wägner's story for *Norrtullsligan*. Primarily a novelist, but also active as a playwright, Bergman wrote the scripts for two other

From left to right: Inga Tidblad, Linnéa Hillberg, Renée Björling. Image courtesy of the Swedish Film Archive

Bonnierfilm productions, *Kalle Utter*, directed by Karin Swanström, and *Anna-Clara*, also directed by Per Lindberg. Bergman later contributed scenarios to other films by director Swanström and by his great friend Victor Sjöström. Bergman's final screenplay credit is for an adaptation of his own novel that unfolds over the course of a single day in a small Swedish town. It was directed by Sjöström and released just after Bergman's death. This productive stretch of screenwriting included a short stint alongside Sjöström in Los Angeles, about which he wrote to Tor Bonnier, "What in this poor, ugly and petty country might interest esteemed readership? I find nothing—until further notice." A notorious binge-drinker, Bergman had earlier scolded his friend Sjöström for being "so thoughtless" as not to warn him about Prohibition and expressed a "senseless terror of the drained continent."

A witty writer possessed by volatile humors, Bergman sent several letters to producer Bonnier that provide a notion of the complexities of transforming a story for the screen. "The film is a hell," he once wrote, signing off another time more cheerfully, "I'll return to my puzzle." He details what he'll keep and what he'll discard of Wägner's narrative, including tagging on a happy ending, skipping a big wedding, which he says he can work back in if Bonnier wants it, and dropping a secondary character, because "empty people are just as pernicious on the screen as on stage." He preserved *Norrtullsligan*'s most engaging quality, the first-person point-of-view of the principal character, Pegg (played by theater great Tora Teje), whose thoughts and observations provide all the text for the film's intertitles and gently guide the story forward.

What Per Lindberg was able to preserve of the original story was the warmth that Wägner obviously felt for her characters and the fullness she gave them as human beings. Whether exhibiting the wide-eyed naïveté of Baby (Inga Tidblad), the sad resignation of Emmy (Linnéa Hillberg), or the practical optimism of Eva (Renée Björling), these women rise above the suffocating stereotypes of female characters sadly prevalent in American movies of the time. Here, even Pegg's widowed aunt (the delightful Stina Berg), who expects instinctive deference for her inherited wealth, exhibits humor and humanity, if not awareness, in her brief appearances.

Lindberg's visual flair condenses into seconds what took the writer hundreds of words to describe: the chaotic but effective morning routine of four women getting ready for work: pinning hair while grinding coffee beans, polishing boots while boiling water, all while trying to avoid being seen in their underwear by the landlady's lurking son. Wägner's "Army of Blouses" becomes stunning overhead shots of women milling about city streets and filling row upon row of office desks, five years before King Vidor's iconic scene in *The Crowd*. Lindberg also conveys the intimacy among these women sharing their few resources and negotiating their small living space, with close-ups on consoling hugs and gentle caresses, a caring that seems largely absent on-screen even today. This is Wägner's vision, who saw the hope for women in women, interpreted but respected.

Lindberg and Bergman had their fun, too, adding visual codes to hint at things that could not yet be explicit. For instance, one older character, who in the book has a larger role, is dressed in a crisp white shirt and tie (tucked into a long skirt), sitting in the middle of a sewing bee, her hands folded idle, looking slightly down on the busy swarm of industrious ladies. Played by Lili Ziedner, *Norrtullsligan*'s union organizer can be read as a butch stand-in for the radical Wägner, who after divorcing her unfaithful husband shared a farm and an environmental vision with another woman.

Scenarist Bergman was satisfied overall after a preview screening, writing later to Bonnier, "As sad as I was after the running of [*Anna-Clara*] I was pleased after *Norrtullsligan*." He wrote about the performances: "all in my opinion excellent—with one major exception: Eide's appearance [Pegg's boss]. My God, cut at least the worst gorilla close-ups! And do not cut an inch of [Nils] Asther's scenes (excepting an incomprehensible, unappetizing trouser pull-on). Had I the slightest idea that he could do such a comical figure, I certainly wouldn't have skimped so with the Notary scenes."

A letter written by Bergman in 1926 implies Wägner had mixed feelings about the adaptation, or at least about him: "I just learned that Elin Wägner will come here in the next few days and I shall then invite her for a cup of tea—for they shall be collegial." As for Lindberg, after his brief interlude at Bonnierfilm, he stuck mostly with the theater, having another spurt of film directing from 1939 to 1941. In 1940's *June Nights*, he reprised his sensitive portrayal of women in modern kinds of trouble, creating the same intimate atmosphere and tender moments but, this time, with newcomer Ingrid Bergman at the center.

—Shari Kizirian

Tora Teje (horizontal), Linnéa Hillberg, Inga Tidblad, Renée Björling. Image courtesy of the Swedish Film Archive

SHERLOCK HOLMES

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE DONALD SOSIN ENSEMBLE

Directed by Arthur Berthelet, USA, 1916
Cast William Gillette, Ernest Maupain, Edward Fielding, Marjorie Kay, Grace Reals, Mario Majeroni, William Postance, Chester Berry, Buford Hampden, Frank Hamilton, Fred Malatesta, Stewart Robbins, and Miss Ball
Production Essanay Film Manufacturing Company **Print Source** San Francisco Silent Film Festival

The earth moved a year ago when film curator Céline Ruivo broke the news that William Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* had been discovered in the vaults of the Cinémathèque française. The 1916 film, starring Gillette and based on his play, had been the one opportunity to witness the archetypal Holmes, the actor who defined for generations what the detective looked like, how he moved, and what he wore. Gillette's play survives, of course, and has been given several major revivals as a Victorian period piece. But without Gillette, it has always lacked its legendary center. Now, for the first time, we can judge for ourselves the actor writer Vincent Starrett called the magical personality blessed with the unique talent to play Holmes.

> ...the actor who defined for generations what the detective looked like, how he moved, what he wore.

The original film was a nine-reel feature, and, when it came to Europe after the First World War, it was reissued in France as a four-part serial, each chapter given its own slightly lurid title. The episode having Holmes lured into the Stepney Gas Chamber is now called, ominously and with appropriate misdirection, "Une Nuit tragique"; and in the best serial tradition, every chapter is introduced with a recap of last week's action. Happily, the only other alterations are in the intertitles. Some have been moved around or deleted; all of them hastily translated. But, as best as we can tell, not a frame of the original picture is missing.

Almost as compelling as the film itself is the story of how it came into being. By the time Gillette started shooting, his original play was considered, like Gillette himself, an institution from another age. The film was released in 1916, and by then Gillette's play was almost seventeen years old and had made a fortune for Broadway producer Charles Frohman, the leading impresario of his day. But a new era had opened up, triggered by the Great War. And our story starts when Frohman decided to risk the U-boats and make his annual crossing to oversee his extensive London and Paris theatrical holdings. He never made it. On May 1, 1915, he boarded the doomed RMS *Lusitania* in New York.

Having no major production ready for its 1915–1916 season, Frohman's company went into a tailspin. So the new director, Frohman's younger brother Daniel, persuaded Gillette to revive his perennial smash hit, and Gillette quickly assembled a cast to open on Broadway, alternating *Sherlock Holmes* with *Secret Service*, another Gillette blockbuster, and then put

William Gillette as Sherlock Holmes

Here, Watson, like Billy the page, Moriarty, and the others, are mere satellites circling the sun.

the two plays on tour. The limited tour ended in Chicago where the Essanay Film Manufacturing Company agreed to convert his war horse into a feature film, combining members of Gillette's touring company with the studio's regulars, including French actor Ernest Maupain as Moriarty.

With the screenplay adapted and the movie directed by two more Essanay regulars, Gillette made his one and only feature film—and it turned out much better than it had any right to. Don't expect one of those wooden stage adaptations with leaden camerawork and stiff, artificial performances. This adaptation is far more faithful to the play than the Barrymore film made six years later, and it does have trouble with some of the famous Great Moments. However, director Arthur Berthelet lets the plot breathe and the film has a wonderful sense of pace. Most of all, it has Gillette as Sherlock Holmes. Audiences were delighted.

The bad news is that it was produced by a company on its last legs. By 1916, Essanay was a dinosaur, a relic from the prewar era when movies were still ran ten and twenty minutes long in small nickelodeons. The company's one great movie star, Charlie Chaplin, had jumped ship just as Gillette arrived, which meant among other things that Gillette never met his most famous Billy. Gillette's production was one of the few feature-length films Essanay ever tried, the only one to make money, and it came too late. It opened just before the studio shut down.

That the film survives at all is because George Spoor, head of Essanay, reissued it in Europe, not out of any affection for either Gillette or the film but as a last-ditch effort to capitalize on the Holmes craze and the enduring popularity of the great French silent serials—*Fantômas* (1913), *Les Vampires* (1915), and *Judex* (1917)—not to mention the American Pearl White serials that had taken postwar France by storm. The Sherlock Holmes serial opened with some fanfare at Le Palais de la Mutualité starting December 10, 1919, and then, with no fanfare at all, disappeared without a trace.

Now that it has been found, what can we look forward to? The film is not only a powerful reminder of how Gillette the actor helped shape our image of Holmes, but also how Gillette the playwright shaped our impression of Moriarty. By the time Gillette's original stage play opened, Conan Doyle had left them both to die at Reichenbach Falls, with no plans to bring either of them back. Gillette had to revive Moriarty on his own, and he made fascinating changes.

The Moriarty Gillette found in Arthur Conan Doyle's 1893 story "The Final Problem, was a first-class weirdo, a loner, who sits motionless in his study, as insulated from his gang as he is from us. Gillette reconfigures Moriarty as a hands-on kind of mastermind who works from an underground office replete with state-of-the art technology. People run in and out, giving him a chance to bark out orders, curse Holmes, and direct tune-ups for wayward members of the gang. Although he is still called Professor, he's lost all connections with academia. Instead, he's a hyper-excitable monomaniacal wizard.

This Moriarty not only escapes Reichenbach, but escapes Holmes as well. He becomes, as Holmes never does, a gateway to broader, seminal currents in international cinema. If Holmes, like the detective genre he dominates, never quite escapes the confines of the silent B-picture, Gillette's Moriarty soars, becoming the archetype of the evil genius and capturing the imaginations of directors and screenwriters worldwide. Great silent filmmakers ranging from Fritz Lang to Sergei Eisenstein pattern their criminal masterminds and their underground headquarters after Moriarty.

That said, no one went to see Gillette's play, or his movie, to see Moriarty, but to see Gillette himself. So, how does he measure up to the legend? The film reveals a Holmes cut off from his successors. If Basil Rathbone, Peter Cushing, and Jeremy Brett are high strung—the high E-notes on the Sherlockian violin—Gillette is the low G, graceful and imperturbable. He is the patrician Holmes par excellence, with his spats, cutaway, his waistcoat, smoking jacket, and dressing gown. Just as impressive as his famous imperturbability, though, is his delicacy of touch: there's no one like him, feeling surfaces or working his test tubes, cigars, or revolver. When he works over the Larrabees' safe and piano for telltale clues, it's as though he's reading Braille.

The larger point is that Gillette's Holmes lives in a world of his own, complete and hermetically sealed. Later dramatizations discover the friendship between Holmes and Watson as the mainspring of the adventures; here Watson, like Billy the page, Moriarty, and the others, are mere satellites circling the sun.

If the Sherlockians of the 1940s and 1950s were the last generation to see Gillette on the stage, we are the last generation to have known him by reputation only. With the film's rediscovery, Gillette gets promoted from legend to celluloid presence. Doubtless, audiences will differ about the quality of one or another aspect of the film. But anybody who sees the performance will, I suspect, experience something like the adrenaline rush felt by Gillette's earliest admirers.

—Russell Merritt

William Gillette

Maguy Deliac

THE SWALLOW AND THE TITMOUSE

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE AND DIANA ROWAN

Directed by André Antoine, France, 1920
Cast Pierre Alcover, Louis Ravet, Jane Maylianes, Maguy Deliac, and Georges Denola
Production Pathé-Frères, as Société Cinématographique des Auteurs et Gens de Lettres
Print Source Cinémathèque française

André Antoine's fifth film looks surprisingly modern today. Never released at the time production was completed in 1920, it wasn't pieced together until the early 1980s when the Cinémathèque française sifted through six hours of perfectly preserved footage using Gustave Grillet's script and the director's detailed notes as a guide. Finally, audiences were able to see this gem of a time capsule.

Antoine's portrait of Flemish bargemen centers on Pieter van Groot and his wife Griet, who live on their barges l'Hirondelle (Swallow) and la Mésange (Titmouse) with Griet's sister Marthe, carrying goods up and down the rivers and canals between France and Flanders. Their work is important because they carry coal and construction supplies to areas still rebuilding from the devastation of World War I.

Part of the life of a typical bargeman, the film's intertitles tell us, is a little smuggling on the side to make ends meet. Pieter smuggles diamonds and Griet fine lace. One day Michel, an unemployed sailor wandering the docks of Antwerp, spies Pieter talking furtively with a diamond merchant. The next day Pieter advertises for a barge pilot to replace the one who just left. The ruggedly handsome Michel appears with excellent credentials, and his quiet, gentle self-assurance charms Pieter, who hires him on the spot. "You're a real seaman," Pieter says, "but we'll turn you into a freshwater fish."

With the subtlest of looks and gestures it becomes apparent that the young Marthe is also taken with Michel. Griet's instincts, however, make her wary. As the new party prepares to head out from Antwerp toward France, the four visit the city, and Antoine's camera makes a priceless record of the town's Ommergang festival, with its huge merrymaking crowds and gigantic floats.

As an experienced dramatist Antoine understood how dramatic plots work and how they can be manipulated.

Pieter thinks Marthe and Michel would be a perfect match, but Griet holds back. And to complicate matters, even though Michel coyly agrees to propose to Marthe, we sense that he has more than a passing interest in Griet. When Michel becomes aware of Pieter's hiding place for the diamonds he plans to smuggle into France and how Griet has cleverly hidden the lace, the quiet boatman becomes a potential danger to his adopted family.

As an experienced dramatist Antoine understood how dramatic plots work and how they can be manipulated. He consciously manages the narrative of *The Swallow and the Titmouse* in an unusual way. The first part of the film moves slowly and inexorably like the boats moving upriver. As we near the end the

events pick up speed and the twists come faster, terminating in a shocking resolution. As Antoine once wrote about the film, "The story was a very simple drama. It ended with a man getting stuck in the mud one night, and the next day, the barge was again calmly on its way in the light and silence."

In 1914 Antoine abruptly left a thriving career in the theater to make his first film, *The Corsican Brothers*, based on the 1844 book by Alexandre Dumas. The film's release was delayed by the outbreak of the Great War, and it wasn't seen until 1917. He followed it in 1917 with *Le Coupable* and 1919's *Les Travailleurs de la mer* from the Victor Hugo novel. After *The Swallow and the Titmouse* in 1920, Antoine directed *La Terre*, based on Émile Zola's novel. His final film was a 1922 adaptation of an Alphonse Daudet story, *L'Arlésienne*.

Considered by many to be the father of modern theater, Antoine sought to bring a greater realism to the stage, which in the late nineteenth century was still characterized by declaimed dialogue, mannered gestures, and fake-looking sets. Art movements of the time were influenced by the work of Charles Darwin, which stressed the importance of the environment in the development of human character, personality, and reasoning. That in turn influenced the emphasis on realistic and natural surroundings in the arts. In painting, this impulse away from high-flown subject matter was expressed in the anecdotal subjects that became a characteristic of the impressionists.

Antoine sought to create a naturalist theater, bringing the works of Ibsen, Strindberg, and other proponents of naturalism to the French stage. Notoriously, Antoine's realism went so far as to include live chickens in an adaptation of Zola's *La Terre*. He built realistic sets enclosed in all four walls and rehearsed in them before choosing one wall to eliminate for performances, originating the concept of the "fourth wall" in modern theater and cinema.

In 1887, he founded the Théâtre Libre in Paris in order to have the freedom to produce plays of his own choosing. He also developed a small repertory company that was essentially the avant-garde of its time. Then, in 1914, Antoine left the stage to embark on a career in film that was to be as innovative as his career in theater.

Naturalism in film for him meant shooting only in real locations, no sets. He also sought nonprofessional actors who wouldn't have to unlearn bad habits. He used innovative techniques like shooting the same scene with more than one camera and creating special effects in the camera rather than in postproduction. In his short, untutored career he became a master of pacing, shot selection, the use of subtle, restrained performances, and visual storytelling.

Antoine was so successful in his realistic depiction of life on the canals of Flanders that producer Charles Pathé dismissed the film as a "documentary" and refused to release it. So it sat on the shelf for sixty-three years until the discovery of the original footage, which was edited together by editor and director Henri Colpi. The newly constructed version was shown at the Cinémathèque for the first time in March 1984.

As precipitously as he left his theater career in 1914 to turn to cinema, Antoine ended his film career in 1922 with *L'Arlésienne* and turned his attention entirely to writing film and theater criticism. For twenty years, his commentary was published by *L'Information*, and from time to time in other journals. Two volumes of his memoirs were published in 1928 and appeared in the journal *Théâtre* from 1932–33. He died October 21, 1943.

Antoine has been widely recognized and appreciated as a pivotal figure in modern theater. However, it is only with the reconstruction of *The Swallow and the Titmouse* that his contributions to cinema have begun to be recognized.

His work is uncanny in its modernity. The steady, procedural pace of the daily tasks of the bargemen in *The Swallow and the Titmouse* prefigures the ascetic style of Robert Bresson. Antoine's use of a hidden camera to film performers in a crowd unaware it is being recorded was not unlike the guerrilla techniques of French New Wave filmmaking. And the unexpected violence of the film's conclusion is surely worthy of Luis Buñuel. In the gallery of underappreciated twentieth-century filmmakers, André Antoine occupies a prominent place.

—Miguel Pendás

Above: Pierre Alcover and Jane Maylianes

THE DEADLIER SEX

LIVE MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY GUENTER BUCHWALD

Directed by Robert Thornby, USA, 1920
Cast Blanche Sweet, Mahlon Hamilton, Winter Hall, Roy Laidlaw, Russell Simpson, and Boris Karloff
Production Jesse D. Hampton Productions **Print Source** Academy Film Archive

The May 5, 1920, headline in the *Los Angeles Times* for the recurring "Flash" column about Hollywood read, "Blanche Going Abroad." In the short item, the correspondent bemoaned, in her slightly purple prose: "We shan't have a single star left in our American firmament if the emigration of our best-loved luminaries keeps on." The Blanche of the headline is Blanche Sweet, a big star who needed no surname to be recognizable. Since her anonymous days as the "Blonde Biograph Girl" making films under D.W. Griffith, Sweet had grown into one of Hollywood's biggest stars.

Sweet had grown into one of Hollywood's biggest stars.

Like her fellow Biograph actresses Mary Pickford and the Gish sisters, she began as a child on the touring theater circuit—thrust on a Cincinnati stage at only eighteen-months old, she told film historian Anthony Slide, as a human prop in *Blue Jeans*. Then, also like Pickford and the Gishes, Sweet worked in the flickers between theater gigs, first with Edison, briefly, and then at Biograph, as an extra in Griffith's short masterpiece about the small farmer getting screwed by Wall Street, 1909's *A Corner in Wheat*. At fifteen, she played the title role in his *The Lonedale Operator*, wielding a wrench against telegraph office burglars.

After five loyal years at Biograph, she starred in Griffith's first feature and his last release for the studio, the four-reel *Judith of Bethulia*, for which she was finally credited by name. A critic in *Moving Picture World* noticed her ability to portray a fully formed character: "The feminine sweetness and shyness of the lovely Judith are intensified by her advances and retreats in measuring her sex attractions against his formidable power." Movies were making their most significant transformation since invention, from short amusements to longer more elaborate entertainment, and Sweet was poised on the brink of stardom.

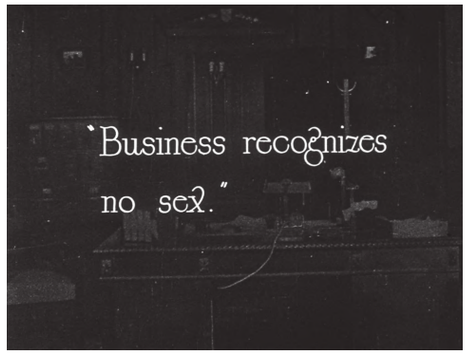
She followed Griffith to Mutual and was set to play Elsie Stoneman in his upcoming opus, *The Birth of a Nation*. Not around one day for an impromptu rehearsal, the earthy Sweet found herself replaced by the vulnerable, ethereal presence of Lillian Gish. Reluctantly, Sweet moved on to the Jesse Lasky studio. In a telegram, Lasky wrote of trying to lure the still-teenaged actress from Griffith: "I am still holding out on Blanche Sweet, as I hate to pay her over $300, but I will not lose her and, if by the time I leave I cannot bring her around, will give her more money." He ended up paying her $500 each week the first year and $750 the next.

She was a boon to the budding studio. Sweet acted for both Cecil B. DeMille, starring in his *The Warrens of Virginia* (planned like *Birth* to commemorate the fifty-year anniversary of the end of the Civil War), and his brother William, formerly of Broadway. Sweet didn't get along with Cecil, always preferring William, whom she later said, had a "more subtle way of doing things." As part of the publicity push for her move to Lasky, Adela Rogers St. Johns wrote a glowing portrait of her in a 1914 issue of *Photoplay* magazine: "In

Blanche Sweet as Mary Willard. Photo courtesy of the Academy Film Library

Hollywood, where all things come in time to a great sameness, Blanche has managed to avoid the mold."

Now romantically and professionally linked to the talented director Marshall Neilan whom she'd known since Biograph, she worked under his sure—but often hung-over—hand in several Lasky productions before taking a mysterious two-year hiatus. She returned to the screen with an independent feature set in occupied Belgium during World War I, 1919's *The Unpardonable Sin*, directed by Neilan. Her refusal to sign any long-term contracts led to an itinerant way of working—that May 1920 article marked this new phase of her career. A second notice in the *L.A. Times* in June announced that producer Jesse D. Hampton had commissioned scenarios by six British authors, one of which would be chosen as a vehicle for Sweet. She later dismissed the films she made during this period as "what I knew I shouldn't do." *The Deadlier Sex*, shot in part on location around Truckee, California, was one of those films.



In it she plays the daughter of a railroad magnate (Winter Hall) who has to take charge when her father unexpectedly dies. Timing couldn't be worse as he was in a do-or-die stock market struggle over control of his company. To fight back, she doesn't resort to her feminine wiles but to her cunning and survival skills as an outdoorswoman. She kidnaps her rival (Mahlon Hamilton), stranding him far from the city where his money's no good. The role is typical of Sweet, in that she doesn't play a shrinking violet or damsel in distress, at least not one without resources, yet she also conveys tenderness, in particular during an early scene in her father's study.

The film also has some interesting touches: a trail of pipe smoke enters the frame as her father dies and sinister doings in a clearing in the woods are shot from a great distance. Boris Karloff, in his second feature, plays the trapper whose brutish ways inadvertently unite the couple. But here, rather than the lumbering, pitiful monster that later made him a legend, Karloff's an aggressive brawny threat.

Reviews were tepid but most pointed to Sweet, who had above-the-title billing, as the film's single best draw. *Wid's Film Daily* advised exhibitors: "You can't feature Blanche Sweet too much for her performance here certainly justified stardom and will go a long way toward pushing her up to the top again." In an *Exhibitors Herald* article the month the film opened, Pathé asserted that Sweet was still the distributor's biggest box-office attraction.

She followed her Hampton films with some of her best work, this time with producer Thomas Ince, who paid $35,000 for the screen rights for *Anna Christie*, the O'Neill play about a prostitute who finds redemption. Now considered lost, the film was directed by John Griffith Wray, with whom Sweet later said she was in "constant conflict" because he had "a melodramatic idea of the thing." It didn't help that he used a megaphone to direct her even during close-ups. Ince lost a coin toss to Sweet who insisted on retakes and the resulting film got great reviews. The playwright even approved, calling it "fine and true." They followed it up with the light-hearted *Those Who Dance* (1924), but, by November of that year, Ince was mysteriously dead. Sweet moved on again.

By now married to Mickey Neilan, the pair made a deal with MGM in 1924 to distribute their independently made features, including the now lost *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *The Sporting Venus*. But Neilan did not get along with Louis B. Mayer

("prenatal enemies," Sweet called them) and the relationship ended in what Anthony Slide labels "vitriolic litigation." A few years later her marriage also ended. She made the transition to sound but no longer had top billing, appearing in three films in quick succession, one that included a song she made famous, "There's a Tear for Every Smile in Hollywood." She still felt that she had "a whole big future ahead" when, in that same film, 1930's *Showgirl in Hollywood*, she played a fading movie star of the silent era who tells her protégée, "When you are over thirty-two, you are older than the hills out here." Sweet was thirty-four years old. She worked onstage and in radio, but the next and last time she appeared on-screen was in 1959, in an uncredited role in Paramount's musical biography, *The Five Pennies*.

—Shari Kizirian

Top: Boris Karloff as the French trapper
Middle: Mahlon Hamilton as Harvey Judson
Left: Blanche Sweet as the railroad magnate's daughter

BERT WILLIAMS: LIME KILN CLUB FIELD DAY

LIVE PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY DONALD SOSIN

Directed by Edwin Middleton, T. Hayes Hunter, and Sam Corker Jr., USA, 1913
Cast Bert Williams, Odessa Warren Grey, Walker Thompson, Abbie Mitchell, J. Wesley Jenkins, Sam Lucas, Julius Glenn, J. Leubrie Hill, Emma Reed, Billy Harper, Sam Corker Jr., Tom Brown, and members of J. Leubrie Hill's *Darktown Follies* stage company
Production Biograph Company **Print Source** Museum of Modern Art

The rarest of films, *Bert Williams: Lime Kiln Club Field Day* is one of a handful of surviving silent films with an all-black cast. Produced in 1913, it features legendary entertainer Bert Williams and is based on a popular collection of stories known as *Brother Gardner's Lime Kiln Club*, written by Charles M. Lewis (as "M. Quad"). The film follows three suitors competing for the hand of the local beauty and features one of the first examples of on-screen intimacy between a black man and a black woman—a kiss—along with scenes of middle-class leisure; story elements that challenged the mostly negative, sometimes evil, depictions of blacks in the majority of white-produced films, which reached a distressing nadir in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, released two years later.

one of the first examples of an on-screen kiss between a black man and a black woman

Shot then abandoned, the seven unedited reels of film were kept at New York's Museum of Modern Art after being acquired in 1938 along with everything else from the Biograph vaults. According to MoMA curator Ron Magliozzi, the reels of *Lime Kiln Club Field Day* were untitled, unidentified, unedited, and had never been released. No script, intertitles, or production credits survive. Examining the footage frame by frame, along with a lip reader to decipher the dialogue, MoMA curators reconstructed the film's narrative, piecing together an "archive assembly" of the material.

Through an arrangement with New York theatrical producers Klaw and Erlanger, Bert Williams also produced, wrote, directed, and starred in two short films for Biograph, *A Natural Born Gambler* (1916) and *Fish* (1916). Produced by a black man for white audiences, they were groundbreaking, however, these films featured characters and storylines that still satisfied dominant racist stereotypes of black men—shiftless, superstitious, childlike—found in the era's art, literature, and films. The footage from *Lime Kiln Club Field Day* stands in stark contrast to the artist's short works by challenging the negative stereotypes of blacks with representations of middle-class life and adult relationships.

Lime Kiln Club features upwardly mobile partygoers dancing the famous "cakewalk," and Williams and his costar Odessa Warren Grey dressed up for a date at a park, which includes riding on a merry-go-round.

Stills from *Bert Williams: Lime Kiln Club Field Day*, courtesy of MoMA

Much of the cast were members of J. Leubrie Hill's uptown stage show known as *Darktown Follies*, a trailblazing dance musical that drew white audiences to Harlem. Along with *Lime Kiln Club*'s performed scenes, the surviving footage includes what would normally be outtakes, snippets of action that show the interracial cast and crew working and enjoying each other's company. But despite Williams's work in film, the popular entertainer was destined for the stage.

Born Egbert Austin Williams in Nassau, Bahamas, in 1874, he relocated with his family to the United States in 1885 as part of the mass Bahamian labor migration to Florida, and they later moved to southern California. Williams said that as a boy he sang in the Riverside Boys High School choir and entertained his classmates with jokes—demonstrating his performing skills from an early age. Interested in studying engineering at Stanford University, he joined a traveling minstrel show in order to raise money for tuition. When the tour was cancelled, Williams ended up in the lumberyards of northern California, eventually signing in 1893 with Martin and Selig's Mastodon Minstrels, then passing through San Francisco where he met his future partner George Walker. As a team, Williams and Walker toured for sixteen years until Walker became too ill. He died in 1911 at age thirty-nine.

Williams and Walker performed mostly in medicine shows and "hootchy-kootchy" joints, with Williams playing the straight man and Walker the comic foil. Their experiences were sometimes harrowing, ranging from white vaudevillians refusing to perform with them to being chased out of venues by angry crowds. Once, Williams and Walker were stripped of their clothes at a Colorado mining camp because the white audience thought them too well-dressed. Williams, who was tall and fair-skinned, and Walker, who was short and dark-skinned, had vowed never to perform in blackface because "degradation had its limits," according to the *New Yorker*'s Claudia Roth Pierpont. However, one night in Detroit, desperate for a "less deadly" experience, Williams took the bold step of applying blackface, and he and Walker began performing as "Two Real Coons" to huge audiences.

The footage shows black Americans actually pursuing life, liberty, and happiness at a time when they were denied basic dignities on a daily basis.

A black performer applying burnt cork was unusual. Most white vaudeville entertainers used blackface to mock black people and to connect with white audiences who supported segregation or simply looked down on blacks. While the mainstream white press gave Williams great reviews and many in the black community lauded him (Booker T. Washington was said to have been a huge fan), others, including the black press, criticized him for embracing what they considered taboo. Author Caryl Phillips, whose 2005 novel *Dancing in the Dark* is based on Williams's life, once defended the performer's choice: "Bert Williams was an outsider in all sorts of ways. He was Caribbean. He didn't see himself to be fully a part of African-American traditions, so in a sense he didn't quite understand the full implications of the blackface performance. He didn't see it as demeaning. He saw it as part of his costume." Donning blackface helped Williams "cross over," as minstrel shows were a big hit with white audiences.

In 1910, Williams signed with the Ziegfeld Follies and, by 1912, he was the first black Broadway star. In addition to comedy sketches, Williams was a best-selling recording artist, known for singing "I'm a Jonah Man" and his own original compositions, including "That's A-Plenty," "Dat's Harmony," and what became his signature tune, "Nobody." At one point in his career, Williams is said to have been making more money than the president of the United States. Wildly popular and financially secure, Williams still had to deal with segregation, which, while institutionalized in the South, was de facto in the North. Once, after being forced to ride a freight elevator to his hotel room, Williams remarked to fellow Ziegfeld star Eddie Cantor, "It wouldn't be so bad, Eddie, if I didn't still hear the applause ringing in my ears." Yet Williams persevered, continuing to perform until his death. While onstage in Detroit in 1922, he collapsed and died a week later at age forty seven. Thousands of mourners lined up in New York to view his casket.

Why producers abandoned *Lime Kiln Club Field Day* remains a mystery. The footage shows black Americans actually pursuing life, liberty, and happiness at a time when they were denied basic dignities on a daily basis. That Williams brought this cast and crew together at this time in American history offers a refreshing glimpse of how performance and creativity can foster harmony even while living through some of this country's worst times. Perhaps media scholar Cara Caddoo says it best in her recent book *Envisioning Freedom*, about race movies and black audiences: "In short, both what we have lost and what we find are part of the longer history of American cinema."

—Nsenga Burton

Project leader for the recovery of* Bert Williams: Lime Kiln Club Field Day*, MoMA film curator Ron Magliozzi will present visual material explaining the film's creation, 101-year disappearance, and ultimate resurrection.

Bert Williams (left) and Odessa Warren Grey (center) in *Lime Kiln Club Field Day*. Photo courtesy of MoMA

Bert Williams in 1922 (Photo by Samuel Lumiere)

The Comic Side of Trouble

by Bert Williams

Adapted from the January 1918 issue of *The American Magazine*

A Negro slightly over forty, who is one of the greatest and most successful comedians in the world. His income is easily $50,000 a year. For a long time he has been appearing in New York and throughout the country. This winter he is in "The Follies of 1917," produced by Florenz Ziegfeld. For a good while *The American Magazine* has wanted Williams to tell its readers something of his story, and his wisdom as to how to make people laugh. The article reveals a man who has thought about his job until he is master of it.

One of the funniest sights in the world is a man whose hat has been knocked in or ruined by being blown off–provided, of course, it is the other fellow's hat. All the jokes in the world are based on a few elemental ideas and this is one of them. The sight of other people in trouble is nearly always funny. This is human nature … the man with the real sense of humor is the man who can put himself in the spectator's place and laugh at his own misfortunes.

This is what I am called upon to do every day. Nearly all of my comic songs have been based on the idea that I am getting the worst of it. I am the "Jonah Man," the man who, even if it rained soup, would be found with a fork in his hand and no spoon in sight, the man whose fighting relatives come to visit him and whose head is always dented by the furniture they throw at each other. There are endless variations of this idea, but if you sift them, you will find the principle of human nature at the bottom of them all.

It was not until I was able to see myself as another person that my sense of humor developed. For I do not believe there is any such thing as innate humor. It has to be developed by hard work and study, just as every other human quality. I have studied it all my life, unconsciously during my floundering years, and consciously as soon as I began to get next to myself. It is a study that I shall never get to the end of, and a work that never stops, except when I am asleep. It is only by being constantly on the lookout for fresh material, funny incidents, funny speeches, funny traits in human nature that a comedian can hope to keep step with his public.

I find material by knocking around in out of the way places and just listening. Americans for the most part know little about the unconscious humor of the colored people and the negroes, because they do not come in contact with them. Many of the best lines I have used came to me by that sort of eavesdropping. For eavesdropping on human nature is one of the most important parts of a comedian's work.

People ask me if I would not give anything to be white. I answer, in the words of the song, most emphatically, "No." How do I know what I might be if I were a white man? There is many a white man less fortunate and less well-equipped than I am. In truth, I have never been able to discover that there was anything disgraceful in being a colored man. But I found it inconvenient–in America.

It was [in San Francisco] that I first ran up against the humiliations and persecutions that have to be faced by every person of colored blood, no matter what his brains, education or the integrity of his conduct. How many times have hotel keepers said to me, "I know you, Williams, and I like you, and I would like nothing better than to have you stay here,

but you will see we have Southern gentlemen in the house and they would object."

Frankly, I can't understand what it is all about. I breathe like other people, eat like them–if you put me at a dinner table you can be reasonably sure that I won't use the ice cream fork for my salad; I think like other people. I guess the whole trouble must be that I don't look like them. They say it is a matter of race prejudice. But if it were prejudice a baby would have it, and you will never find it in a baby. It has to be inculcated on people. I have noticed that this "race prejudice" is not to be found in people who are sure enough of their position to be able to defy it.

One day at Moore's Wonderland in Detroit, just for a lark, I blacked my face and tried the song, 'Oh, I don't know, you're not so warm." Nobody was more surprised than I when it went like a house on fire. Then I began to find myself. By that time I had met George Walker, and we used to travel around the country together. I took to studying the dialect of the American negro, which to me was just as much a foreign dialect as that of the Italian.

After [success in New York] I went to Europe frequently, not only because I found kinder treatment there but in order to learn my trade. I used to go over every summer for a while and study pantomime from Pietro, the great pantomimist. He taught me gesture, facial expression–without which I would never have been able to do the poker game stunt that was so popular. And above all he taught me the value of poise, repose and pauses. He taught me that the pause after a gesture or a movement is frequently more important than the gesture itself, because it emphasizes the gesture.

It was Pietro who taught me that the entire aim and object of art is to achieve naturalness. The more simple and real the manner of your walking or talking the more effective, and that is the purpose of art.

Each time I come back to America this thing they call race prejudice follows me wherever I go. When Mr. Ziegfeld first proposed to engage me for the Follies there was a tremendous storm in a teacup. Everybody threatened to leave; they proposed to get up a boycott if he persisted; they said all sorts of things against my personal character. But Mr. Ziegfeld stuck to his guns and was quite undisturbed by everything that was said. Which is one reason why I am with him now, although I could make twice the salary in vaudeville. There never has been any contract between us, just a gentlemen's agreement.

I always get on perfectly with everybody in the company by being polite and friendly but keeping my distance. Meanwhile I am lucky enough to have real friends, people who are sure enough of themselves not to need to care what their brainless and envious rivals will say if they happen to be seen walking along the street with me. And I have acquired enough philosophy to protect me against the things which would cause me humiliation and grief if I had not learned independence.

It was not people in the company, I since discovered, but outsiders who were making use of that line of talk for petty personal reasons. Meanwhile, I have no grievance whatsoever against the world or the people in it; I'm having a grand time, I am what I am, not because of what I am but in spite of it.

Do You Laugh at the Misfortunes of Others?

Yes, you do! Don't deny it. At least you laugh at their *little* misfortunes. And so well does a wonderful comedian like Bert Williams know this about you that he deliberately makes himself appear unfortunate in order to make you laugh at him. Think about this the next time you see a good comedian or a funny show. You will discover that most of your laughs are laughs at the troubles which the actors are supposed to be having.

Now can you laugh at your own troubles–really laugh at them? Can you enjoy an honest-to God chuckle over them–both when you are alone, and when you are in the company of others? If so, you are that rare bird known as a person with a real sense of humor. Such persons are usually popular. People like to be with them. They know how to provide laughs for others. They have what is called magnetism.

Lots of people claim to have a sense of humor when as a matter of fact they have no humor at all. All they have is health and good spirits. They take enormous pleasure in laughing at others, and mistake their own laughter for humor. –The Editor

BEN-HUR: A TALE OF THE CHRIST

PRERECORDED ORIGINAL SCORE BY COMPOSER CARL DAVIS

Directed by Fred Niblo, USA, 1925
Cast Ramon Novarro, Francis X. Bushman, May McAvoy, Betty Bronson, Claire McDowell, Kathleen Key, Nigel De Brulier, and Frank Currier
Production Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer **Print Source** Photoplay Productions

Moviemaking might makes right in Fred Niblo's *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*. It marries a rip-roaring saga of vengeance in ancient Antioch and Jerusalem to a reverent vision of Christianity bringing faith, hope, and charity to the Roman Empire. Judah Ben-Hur shares the title with the Christian Messiah, but the worldly Jewish prince is the star of the show, especially as embodied by magnetic young Ramon Novarro. Filmgoers familiar with chiseled Charlton Heston in William Wyler's 1959 remake may be startled to see a Judah who looks vulnerable. He's true to the character in Lew Wallace's novel who musters armies *and* overflows with tears. Appealing equally to action lovers and sentimental readers, the book outsold every novel until *Gone with the Wind*, including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. A blockbuster and a *flock*-buster, it made antiquity approachable—and made romantic adventure acceptable to Bible-thumping Christians. Niblo and company sought to equal or surpass it.

Ben-Hur had been a record-breaking hit in live theaters, complete with chariot races staged on treadmills. But when the movie started life at Goldwyn Pictures, it threatened to go bust. The challenges of shooting in Italy overwhelmed the film's first director Charles Brabin. When Goldwyn, Metro, and Louis B. Mayer Pictures merged to form MGM, executives discovered that "Brabin's footage was terrible," according to Mayer's daughter, Irene. The rushes failed to showcase the spectacular sets and "what did appear looked cheesy." Production chief Irving Thalberg swiftly corrected course. Niblo took over from Brabin; Novarro replaced George Walsh as Judah. The studio committed to making *Ben-Hur* the most colossal, lavish super-production ever seen. There would be eleven Technicolor scenes, including a rosy set piece of topless flower girls celebrating Judah as Rome's star athlete and Nativity tableaux as otherworldly-colorful and quaint as antique Christmas cards (except for one epicene Greek wise man).

Niblo filmed or re-filmed everything, notably a mammoth sea battle that imperiled extras in the waters off Livorno (no deaths were ever certified). Blood, sweat, and tears permeated the production even after it moved to Los Angeles where Niblo and associate director B. Reeves Eason staged the chariot race in a Roman circus built where Venice Boulevard meets La Cienega.

With a $4 million price tag, *Ben-Hur* didn't turn an immediate profit. But it became synonymous with grandeur. Kevin Brownlow, in his seminal book *The Parade's Gone By* (1968), calls it a "sort of Dunkirk of the cinema: a humiliating defeat transformed, after heavy losses, into a brilliant victory." After decades of neglect, Brownlow and his longtime partner in film restoration and production, David Gill, restored *Ben-Hur* in 1987, using (among other materials) MGM's duplicate negative, a Czech Film Archive reel containing every Technicolor sequence, and a cutting continuity that cued them to the film's many tints. They re-conjured the Glory That Was Rome—and Hollywood. No one has done more to open contemporary eyes to the beauty and power of silent movies than Brownlow, who called the chariot race "the first time that an action director, realizing the potential of the cinema, had possessed courage and skill enough

Francis X. Bushman and Ramon Novarro

to fulfill it." So it's wonderfully apt that Brownlow is being celebrated at a screening of *Ben-Hur*.

The movie begins with Betty Bronson as a Virgin Mary so pure and pretty that anyone who looks at her instantly becomes more charitable, including the innkeeper who opens his stable. The movie then jumps thirty years ahead to Judah Ben-Hur's young manhood. All his life he's heard that "the Nazarene" born to Mary would free the Jews from Roman rule. Judah's pursuit of payback and his martial vision of the Messiah imbue this Roman Empire extravaganza with a momentum that only *Spartacus* matched, thirty-five years later.

Judah's Jewish pride gets tested when Messala (Francis X. Bushman), his one-time bosom buddy, returns to Jerusalem as a Roman legionnaire. Has any actor cast a bolder Roman profile? Campy and charismatic, Bushman radiates the fantasy of omnipotence. Messala's imperial arrogance unsettles Judah but doesn't annihilate his loyalty. As Judah excitedly points out to his mother (Claire McDowell) and sister Tirzah (Kathleen Key) how well Messala looks on parade, he inadvertently knocks a roof tile onto the head of the new Roman governor. Messala briskly condemns all three as anti-Roman conspirators. He tosses the women in the clink (forgotten in a dungeon, they become lepers), and he sends Judah to his almost certain death as a galley slave for the Roman fleet.

This underdog epic dramatizes colonialism with brio. Niblo alternates high, deep shots of Jerusalem as a human hive with intimate vignettes of oppressed men and women buzzing around in it. When Judah accidentally backs into a soldier, he enrages the Roman, who sneers that it must be a Jewish custom "to walk backwards." Niblo leavens the overall tension with bits of comedy, including a winged "meet-cute" between Judah and Esther (May McAvoy). When Esther buys a pigeon as a pet near the Joppa Gate, it flutters away, and Judah, who's been ambling nearby, scurries between foot traffic and hoof traffic to get it back. It's breezy visual love poetry, but no introductions are made. *Ben-Hur* is about missed connections, separations, and reunions across vast, arid landscapes.

Judah's on-and-off contact with Jesus starts in his slave days when the carpenter revives him by handing him a dipperful of water. (You see only the Nazarene's hand; to honor the spirit of a contract drawn up by Wallace's heir, nowhere can you view the face of the "King of the Jews.") Jesus ultimately teaches Judah nonviolence, though not before he battles pirates and comes out on top in a bone-crunching chariot race. In this movie, revenge is a dish best served hot, and it's renounced only after it's been relished and consumed.

Ben-Hur, at its best, is viscerally sweeping and surprisingly iconoclastic. Shortly after Roman triremes—war galleys with three banks of oars—majestically glide into view, Niblo reveals slaves rowing to a merciless drumbeat. The director intercuts one camera moving closer to the relentless drummer with ever broader views of the ship's lower deck as a Dantean hell. Commander Quintus Arrius (Frank Currier), impressed by Judah's defiant attitude, orders him unchained right before Arrius's fleet clashes with ruthless pirates. The sea battle is full of nightmarish touches, like a Roman prisoner being strapped to a pirate ship's prow before it rams a trireme.

Niblo uses details to bring you *inside* the action—especially when he and Eason stage the chariot race that becomes a fight to near-death between Judah and Messala. The tension escalates with each screeching wheel or frenzied whiplash; every change in the charioteers' positions ups your adrenaline and alertness. Cameramen shot the race from all angles, including *beneath* the thundering hooves. But they would have toiled in vain if Bushman hadn't registered as a gleaming-eyed competitor and if Novarro hadn't gone for broke as an action hero.

What makes the sequence electrifying and exalting is its balance between dynamic motion and pageantry. It's a marvel, considering that the Circus includes special-effects miniatures that added galleries with ten thousand "people." (Assistant directors like young William Wyler, dressed in togas, received and delivered cues for *live* extras via semaphore.) Editor Lloyd Nosler and Niblo achieve a you-are-there quality; we in the movie audience find ourselves completing the cheers of the on-screen crowds. *Ben-Hur* was not an immaculate conception. It was *the* birthplace of great kinetic spectacle.

–Michael Sragow

Judah Ben-Hur's chariot races in the Roman circus

KEVIN BROWNLOW: MONUMENTAL MAN

A film collector since the age of eleven, the British-born Kevin Brownlow is responsible in large part for the revival of silent-film art around the world. Brownlow's tireless sleuthing has led to the rediscovery of many of Hollywood's silent-film landmarks, including *Intolerance*, *The Thief of Bagdad*, *The Crowd*, *Sunrise*: *A Song of Two Humans*, and *Ben-Hur* (playing at this year's festival); "small films" no less interesting or significant, such as Cecil B. DeMille's *The Godless Woman* and Paul Leni's T*he Cat and the Canary*; as well as Abel Gance's dismembered *Napoleon*, which Brownlow spent almost half a century returning to its triple-screen splendor. His exhaustive research and thorough interviews with surviving silent film artists in the 1950s and 1960s—just in the nick of time—resulted in the publication of several indispensable tomes of film history, beginning with *The Parade's Gone By*, which collects for all time first-person testimony of or about familiar giants like Gance, King Vidor, and Mary Pickford, the largely forgotten like directors Edward Sloman, Allan Dwan, and Dorothy Arzner, bygone stars like the soulful Louise Dresser, and little known cast and crew, including cameraman Charles Rosher and editor Margaret Booth, who played their crucial parts in film history. There's still enough material in that nearly fifty-year-old book to spawn countless new research projects.

In addition, Brownlow has directed his own fiction films (*It Happened Here* and *Winstanley*) and several British television documentaries on the likes of Garbo, Keaton, and DeMille, as well as his epic series on the silent era, *Hollywood*, which deepens our understanding of classic cinema. He set up Photoplay Productions in early 1990 with producing partners, the late David Gill and Patrick Stanbury, and through this company continues to find, restore, and release silent-era gems. For these efforts and more, the American Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences selected him in 2010 for an honorary award, given specifically for "the wise and devoted chronicling of the cinematic parade."

Brownlow, however, is no mere monument. Talk to anyone who's worked with him and you'll hear a similar refrain. Yes, he's knowledgeable—"his presence in the room feels to me like a guarantee of quality" one colleague says. But he's also generous—"he sends Xeroxes to reinstate his points through written sources." Curious—"when Kevin is around, there is always something grand at stake." And, inspiring—providing "the constant presence," of what one archivist called, "the pleasure of watching." San Francisco Silent Film Festival board president Robert Byrne talked to a host of international archivists and colleagues and collated a long list of tributes to Brownlow that reveal the man behind his impressive accomplishments.

Longtime friend David Robinson, now director of the thirty-five-year-old Giornate del Cinema Muto, recalls that when he was fourteen Brownlow invited him to his room to watch *Napoleon*, at that time only seventy-five minutes long, and Robinson began his love affair with silent movies. Thomas Christensen talks about the time he ran the Danish Film Institute's nitrate print of that same film on a flatbed for Brownlow and, on seeing the German intertitles, watched Brownlow's eyes widened in wonder at the thought that the print might have belonged to Hitler. Utretcht University's Frank Kessler recalls seeing a Photoplay documentary on Charles Chaplin, which explored the filmmaker's creative process, and being struck by his "whole new way of doing film history." Nicola Mazzanti of the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique describes Brownlow's vulnerability to the films themselves, his profound appreciation of silent cinema's "sense of sheer beauty." Paula Félix-Didier of Museo del Cine in Buenos Aires once knocked on the door of Photoplay Productions in London, unknown and unannounced, to ask questions about silent film, and Brownlow immediately invited her in for tea.

Lobster Films' Serge Bromberg paints the most vivid picture of Brownlow's contribution, giving us an image worthy of a film lover: "Doctor Frankenstein of lost film." Hunting down parts from all corners, even the darkest, dankest ones, stitching them together until they are (mostly) whole, and maybe even a little bit mad, Brownlow is the archetypal film collector who finds something, fixes it up, and then shares it with the world. Yes, it needs to be found, reconstructed, and saved, but Brownlow also knows it needs to be seen—not only so the films he's helped rescue from the heap once again sparkle on the movie screen, but also so others in the audience are inspired to continue the work. The tributes Byrne collected can be read in full on the Silent Film Festival website. Here, the man himself has the last word, in the form of advice he once gave to an aspiring archivist named Mike Mashon, now at the Library of Congress: "to see and read all I could and never lose my youthful enthusiasm for the art form." With Brownlow's example to follow, who ever could?

Kevin Brownlow at SFSFF 2011

Visit silentfilm.org to read SFSFF's Kevin Brownlow tribute

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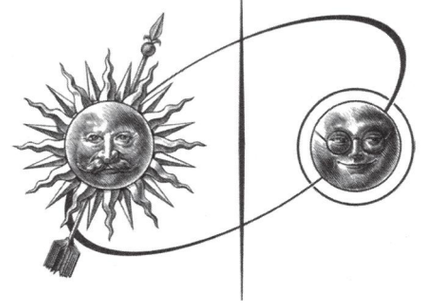

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