

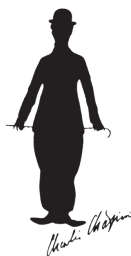
# SAN FRANCISCO SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

# CITY LIGHTS

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2022**  
**PARAMOUNT THEATRE, OAKLAND**

**TIMOTHY BROCK CONDUCTOR**  
**OAKLAND SYMPHONY**

**Dedicated to the memory**  
**of Michael Morgan**





# OAKLAND SYMPHONY

## TIMOTHY BROCK, GUEST CONDUCTOR

### FIRST VIOLIN

Terrie Baune  
*Concertmaster*  
Natasha Makhijani  
*Assistant Concertmaster*  
Kristina Anderson  
Matthew Vincent  
Carla Picchi  
Ellen Gronningen

### SECOND VIOLIN

David Cheng  
*Principal*  
Sharon Calonico  
*Assistant Principal*  
Candace Sanderson  
Sergei Goldman-Hull  
Deborah Spangler

### VIOLA

Tiantian Lan  
*Principal*  
Meg Titchener  
*Assistant Principal*  
Tatiana Trono  
Betsy London

### CELLO

Daniel Reiter  
*Principal*  
Beth Vandervennet  
*Assistant Principal*  
Mike Graham

### DOUBLE BASS

Alden Cohen  
*Principal*  
Ben Tudor  
*Assistant Principal*

### FLUTE/PICCOLO

Alice Lenaghan  
*Principal*

### OBOE

Robin May  
*Principal*

### CLARINET

Diane Matester  
*Principal*  
Cory Tiffin

### BASS CLARINET

Dan Ferreira

### BASSOON

David Granger  
*Principal*

### HORN

Alex Camphouse  
*Principal*  
Alicia Telford

### TRUMPET

Bill Harvey  
*Principal*  
Leonard Ott  
John Freeman

### TROMBONE

Bruce Chrisp  
*Principal*  
Thomas Hornig

### TUBA

Zachariah Spellman  
*Principal*

### TIMPANI

Kumiko Ito  
*Principal*

### PERCUSSION

Allen Biggs  
*Principal*

### HARP

Dan Levitan  
*Principal*

### PIANO/CELESTE

Hadley McCarroll  
*Principal*

### GUITAR/BANJO

Timothy Roberts  
*Principal*

### SAXOPHONE

David Henderson  
*Principal*  
Kevin Stewart  
Bill Aron



# CITY LIGHTS

by David Robinson

**I**n many respects *City Lights* stands as Chaplin's archetypal and most perfectly realized work. Yet no film ever cost him more labor and anxiety. The production extended over 683 days, or 113 six-day working weeks. Shooting occupied 179 of these days; the remaining 504 are recorded on the production sheets as "idle," which they were certainly not, since they included preparation of sets and costumes, rehearsing, cutting, work on the music, illness (Chaplin's), and the conception and plotting of scenes—as with all Chaplin's silent films, there was no script: the film was progressively created in independent sections that were styled "factions," a curious verbal misusage shared by other comedy studios. For Chaplin a great deal of time and energy was eaten up by anxiety, changes of mind, sudden splits with colleagues and cast. Many years later Chaplin told his interviewer Richard Meryman, "I had worked my way into a neurotic state of wanting perfection."

The neurosis had more complex causes. Work began in May 1928, almost two years after the launch of sound films. By the time *City Lights* was released the silent film was extinct. For Chaplin this

was a dual challenge: he had won a worldwide audience with the universal language of silent mime; if he now talked, that audience would shrink to the English-speaking world. The further risk was that in giving his character a voice, he could disillusion a public every one of whom over the past decade and a half had formed his own imagining of how the Tramp's voice might sound. His bold decision to resist speech in his films remained for almost a decade, until *The Great Dictator* in 1940.

**I**n the past Chaplin was beset by the peril of falling in love with his leading ladies. Virginia Cherrill was a definite exception. Half a century later she would say, "I never liked Charlie and he never liked me." A twenty-year-old Chicago socialite and divorcée, she first appealed to Chaplin by her looks and her ability to "look blind without being offensive, repulsive—the others all turned their eyes up to show the whites" (Chaplin advised her to look at him but "to look inwardly and not to see me"). She was, finally, effective on screen, but her inexperience and amateur's lack of real commitment gave Chaplin headaches. No scene ever occupied him for so long as the brief sequence of their first meeting, at her



pavement flower-stand—a scene which Chaplin saw as a “dance.” He did retake after retake to get the rhythm and the right “intonation” for the line, “Flower, sir?” (which would never, of course, be heard). Only after many painful days, spread over three shooting periods, did the scene, in the words of Alistair Cooke, “finally flow as easily as water over pebbles.”

Before this, though, Chaplin had fired Cherrill after she interrupted his creative enthusiasm with a request for time off to go to the hairdresser. He tried Georgia Hale, his heroine in *The Gold Rush*, but then recalled Cherrill, who took the opportunity to demand that he

double her \$75-a-week salary. Hers was not the only sacking. Chaplin had taken a liking to the Australian glamour artist Henry Clive (1880–1962), but when, being bronchial, Clive declined to fall into a pool until the sun had warmed it, he had to go, permanently out of favor. Harry Crocker, a friend and associate for many years who had worked with Chaplin on early story ideas for *City Lights*, was dismissed without warning or explanation. Chaplin’s state of mind was not improved when a road-widening scheme required the rebuilding of part of the studio.

Compared with Cherrill’s dramatic scenes, the extended comedy

sequences—the supremely ironic “Peace and Prosperity” opening, the restaurant, the party devastated by a dog-whistle—were filmed without notable problems. The boxing sequence—which Chaplin himself always treasured as the peak of his choreographic comedy—was achieved with six days’ rehearsal and four of shooting.

Exceptionally, though the story and the characters passed through many revisions in the preparatory stages of the work, from the very beginning Chaplin never changed his plan for the end of the film—that final scene which James Agee unreservedly called “the greatest piece of acting and the highest moment in movies.” Paradoxically, after an abandoned first attempt early in production, this sequence seems to have been filmed with the minimum of problems. The close-ups were completed in seventeen takes and a three-hour afternoon of shooting. Many years later, when Richard Meryman expressed the same sentiments as Agee, the octogenarian Chaplin replied simply, “Well, I knew it was right.” If we want to define Chaplin’s genius, it is precisely that: the capacity for the infinite pains of experimenting, trying, repeating; the limitless retakes and rejections—but then the gift of knowing when he has arrived, when it has “come right.”



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DAVID ROBINSON’s *Chaplin: His Life and Art* (1985) is considered the definitive biography on the artist and was adapted for Richard Attenborough’s 1992 biopic. A former critic for the *London Times* and a stalwart of the international film scene for decades, he has championed the conservation of silent film. Robinson led the pioneering Pordenone Silent Film Festival for nearly twenty years and now serves as its director emeritus. His essay first appeared in the 2014 catalog of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival and is reprinted here with permission.



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## TIMOTHY BROCK

Since composing his first silent-film score for orchestra (*Pandora's Box*) in 1986 at age 23, Timothy Brock has written more than 30 silent-film scores and has been commissioned by some of the most prestigious orchestras and film institutions in the world.

Brock is the leading authority on the music of Charles Chaplin and since 1998, he has served as the Chaplin family's score preservation and musical editor. Brock is the sole restorer of 12 published film-scores composed by Chaplin.  
timothybrock.com

## OAKLAND SYMPHONY

Founded in 1933, Oakland Symphony has long been lauded as a symphonic organization unlike any other. From 1991 to his death in 2021, Michael Morgan served as the Symphony's Music Director and Conductor and he personified the organization's commitment to serving its vibrant and diverse community through artistic excellence, community service, and education programs.

The Symphony's aim is to make classical music accessible to all members of the community by presenting programs that attract a wide-ranging, culturally-diverse audience. Throughout the years, the Symphony has fostered collaborations with local arts organizations, from children's choruses to jazz ensembles. To ensure the future of symphonic music, the Symphony regularly commissions works from composers who have never before written for a full orchestra.  
oaklandsymphony.org

## SF SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

San Francisco Silent Film Festival is dedicated to the presentation and preservation of silent cinema, and to demonstrating silent films as a relevant art form for modern audiences and culturally valuable historical records.

SFSFF presents live cinema events that showcase important titles from the silent-era, often in restored or preserved prints, with superb live musical accompaniment. SFSFF not only supports film preservation efforts by exhibiting major restorations but also partners with archives around the world to restore films, adding to the SFSFF collection held at the Library of Congress.  
silentfilm.org

## THE CHAPLIN OFFICE

The Chaplin Office in Paris represents the Chaplin rights-holding companies (Roy Export SAS, Bubbles Incorporated SA, and Association Chaplin). Its representatives also manage the Chaplin archives, approve certain Chaplin-related projects, and sometimes help out with such projects as film distribution, screenings, books, exhibitions, research, documentaries, stage shows, etc.  
charliechaplin.org

The entire catalog—images and documents—of the Chaplin personal and studio archives has been scanned by the Cineteca di Bologna and made available online at [charliechaplinarchive.org](http://charliechaplinarchive.org)

