
keiko kimura

Photo by Pamela Gentile

Once again we draw back the curtain on another exciting slate of silent-era masterpieces and newly revived discoveries, presenting them as they were meant to be experienced—on the big screen with live musical accompaniment!

A nonprofit organization, SFSFF is committed to educating the public about silent cinema as a valuable historical and cultural record as well as an art form with enduring relevance. In a remarkably short time after the birth of moving pictures, filmmakers developed all the techniques that make cinema the powerful medium it is today—everything except for the ability to marry sound to the film print. Yet these films can be breathtakingly modern. They have influenced every subsequent generation of filmmakers and they continue to astonish and delight audiences a century after they were made. And because music is intrinsic to silent film presentation, we proudly host the world's foremost practitioners of the art of live musical accompaniment.

Our preservation program continues its impressive growth with more than thirty features, shorts, and fragments in SFSFF's collection of restored works. Three of these restorations premiere this year alone. Amid the films and music are many of the people who make all this possible. Archivists, researchers, preservation specialists, and authors gather from all over to enrich our experience of these gems and to tease the revelations to come.

While this festival is marked by a profound sadness with the loss earlier this year of SFSFF cofounder Stephen Salmons (1958–2023), we celebrate his wonderful legacy with every film projected, every note played, every shared moment across the theater aisles. We dedicate this year to Steve and to long-time festival advisor, board member, and treasured friend Russell Merritt (1941–2023).

WEDNESDAY JULY 12

7:00 PM THE IRON MASK
Musical accompaniment by the Guenter Buchwald Ensemble

THURSDAY JULY 13

11:00 AM AMAZING TALES FROM THE ARCHIVES
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne

2:15 PM MAN AND WIFE
Musical accompaniment by Wayne Barker
preceded by short **THE GREAT LOVE OF A LITTLE DANCER**
with accompanied by William Lewis

4:30 PM THE JOHNSTOWN FLOOD
Musical accompaniment by Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra

7:00 PM UP IN MABEL'S ROOM
Musical accompaniment by the Guenter Buchwald Ensemble

9:00 PM STELLA MARIS
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne

FRIDAY JULY 14

11:00 AM STARK LOVE
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne and Frank Bockius

1:00 PM FLOWING GOLD
Musical accompaniment by Utsav Lal

3:00 PM PADLOCKED
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne

5:00 PM THREE AGES
Musical accompaniment by Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra

7:00 PM THE DRAGON PAINTER
Musical accompaniment by the Masaru Koga Ensemble

9:00 PM THE CAT AND THE CANARY
Musical accompaniment by Utsav Lal

SATURDAY JULY 15

11:00 AM STAN & OLLIE
Musical accompaniment by Wayne Barker

1:00 PM A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
Musical accompaniment by the Sascha Jacobsen Quartet

3:00 PM THE ORGANIST AT ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL
Musical accompaniment by Maud Nelissen

5:00 PM PIGS WILL BE PIGS
Musical accompaniment by Guenter Buchwald and Frank Bockius

7:00 PM CRAINQUEBILLE
Musical accompaniment by the Stephen Horne Ensemble

9:00 PM WALK CHEERFULLY
Musical accompaniment by Utsav Lal

SUNDAY JULY 16

11:00 AM THE EDWARD E. HORTON SHOW!
Musical accompaniment by Ben Model

1:00 PM KENTUCKY PRIDE
Musical accompaniment by Wayne Barker

3:00 PM VOGLIO A TTE!
Musical accompaniment by Stephen Horne

5:00 PM A DAUGHTER OF DESTINY
Musical accompaniment by Guenter Buchwald
☛ SFSFF Award presentation

8:00 PM THE MERRY WIDOW
Musical accompaniment by Maud Nelissen conducting
Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra

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MUSICIANS AT THE FESTIVAL

WAYNE BARKER has garnered acclaim both for his original compositions and live performances in the theater, most notably a Tony nomination for best original score on *Peter and the Starcatcher*. His numerous credits include piano scores for Beth Henley's *Laugh* and Joe DiPietro's *Hollywood*. He composed for Dame Edna Everage and appeared onstage for six years as Master of the Dame's Music.

Versatile jazz percussionist **FRANK BOCKIUS** specializes in jazz and is versed in a wide variety of musical styles, from medieval to flamenco. He has performed for dance and theater companies as well as with his own bands, including the jazz quintet Whisper Hot and the percussion ensemble Timpanicks. Since joining Guenter Buchwald's Silent Movie Company nearly thirty years ago, he has performed for silent films at festivals around the world.

Conductor, composer, pianist, and violinist **GUENTER BUCHWALD** is a a pioneer of the renaissance in silent film music. A soloist known for his virtuoso improvisation, he has performed with a repertoire of more than three thousand silent-era titles and conducted orchestras worldwide. Cofounder of the Silent Movie Music Company, Buchwald is also resident conductor of the Freiburg Philharmonic Orchestra for Silent Film in Concert.

Based at London's BFI Southbank, **STEPHEN HORNE** is considered one of the leading silent film accompanists working today and his music has met with acclaim worldwide. Principally a pianist, he often incorporates other instruments into his performances, sometimes playing them simultaneously. He has recorded music for DVD releases and television broadcasts and regularly performs internationally.

Bassist **SASCHA JACOBSEN** draws on a variety of musical styles, including classical, jazz, and Argentine Tango, and has played with musicians as varied as the Kronos Quartet, Rita Moreno, and Randy Newman. He is founder of the Musical Art Quintet, which regularly performs his original compositions. He is joined by Seth Asamow on piano, Michele Walther on violin, and Daniel Riera on flute for the Sascha Jacobsen Quartet.

New York-based **MASARU KOGA**, known as Mas, was born in Chiba, Japan, and grew up in numerous cities around the world, an upbringing that deeply informs his music. Trained primarily in jazz on trumpet and saxophone he also apprenticed under shakuhachi master artist Masayuki Koga and incorporates this traditional end-blown flute, as well as its hybrid sister, the shaku-lute, into his music. He makes his SFSFF debut this year leading an ensemble that includes Erika Oba on piano and flute, Lewis Patzner on cello, and Frank Bockius on percussion.

Steinway's Young Artist of 2010, **UTSAV LAL** made his debut at the age of eighteen with his rendition of Indian ragas on the piano, stunning the world with his innovative handling of Hindustani classical music on a Western instrument. Often referred to as the "Raga Pianist," he has gained international recognition, performing everywhere from Ireland to Singapore, Germany to Kuwait, and beyond.

A classically trained pianist, organist, and composer **WILLIAM LEWIS** has been writing music for silent films since 2014. Mentored by fellow accompanist Donald Sosin, Lewis strives to create both passionate and (mostly) historically appropriate scores. A recent graduate of the Oakland School for the Arts, Lewis is also an actor, singer, and marionettist.

Primarily a pianist **BEN MODEL** specializes in comedies, scoring for the films of Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Marion Davies, Harold Lloyd, Edward Everett Horton, and a hefty roster of others. He is resident film accompanist at New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Packard Campus Theater at the Library of Congress. His Silent Clown series with historian Steve Massa has been a beloved New York City institution for twenty-five years running.

A chamber ensemble that revives the tradition of silent-film orchestras, **MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA** culls historic music libraries for its live accompaniments. Together musicians Rodney Sauer, Britt Swenson, David Short, Brian Collins, and Dawn Kramer have recorded and toured widely, creating vibrant, emotional, and historically appropriate scores for more than 125 films.

Dutch composer **MAUD NELISSEN** has earned international acclaim performing live and recording both solo and with her ensemble, The Sprockets. Nelissen has collaborated with many other ensembles and orchestras, such as the Vienna Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna, and the Cello Octet Amsterdam, and has recorded scores for home video releases of the films of Charlie Chaplin, Max Linder, Asta Nielsen, Alice Guy, and Lois Weber.

Photo by Pamela Gentile

Douglas Fairbanks and Dorothy Revier

THE IRON MASK

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE GUENTER BUCHWALD ENSEMBLE

DIRECTED BY ALLAN DWAN, USA, 1929
CAST Douglas Fairbanks, Léon Bary, Stanley J. Sandford, Gino Corrado, Marguerite de la Motte, Dorothy Revier, William Bakewell, and Nigel de Brulier **PRODUCTION** The Elton Corporation
PRINT SOURCE Cohen Film Collection

The motion picture industry was changing rapidly in 1928, and one of its biggest stars, forty-five-year-old Douglas Fairbanks, was seriously contemplating his place within it. It would be hard to overstate his importance to Hollywood as a movie star, a creative producer, and an industry leader. Fairbanks advanced the concept of independent film production as a cofounder (with Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, and D.W. Griffith) of United Artists Corporation in 1919. He was also a civic leader, with wife Mary Pickford, in Beverly Hills when they lived together at "Pickfair," their legendary home. He was a founder and the first president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He promoted filmmaking as a craft that merited academic analysis and, in 1929, was instrumental in the formation of the first university-level film curriculum in America, personally delivering the first lecture in film appreciation at the University of Southern California. But his true legacy lies in his multitude of films, ranging from the satirical comedies such as *When the Clouds Roll By* (1919) that characterized the first part of his career to his crowd-pleasing, costume-adventure spectacles of the 1920s that redefined him in the public eye: *The Mark of Zorro; The Three Musketeers; Douglas Fairbanks in Robin Hood; The Thief of Bagdad; Don Q, Son of Zorro; The Black Pirate; Douglas Fairbanks as The Gaucho*; and, what may be his finest film, *The Iron Mask*.

Then "the talkies" arrived. After all his years of experience, this innovative producer intuitively recognized that talking motion pictures called for something completely different than he was used to making, yet he had little enthusiasm for pioneering the new technology. Instead, Fairbanks embarked on his last silent film and last great endeavor, summoning from himself and his team one final swashbuckling adventure film, a sequel to 1921's *The Three Musketeers*. For what became *The Iron Mask*, he decided to emphasize historical authenticity, a quality he believed his first film based on the D'Artagnan story lacked. Fairbanks's final turn as his favorite character coupled with the film's story about the end of the musketeer tradition plays like a farewell to the silent cinema itself. In this regard, *The Iron Mask* is unsurpassed. In one of his few departures from playing a young man—and with fewer characteristic stunts—Fairbanks conjures up his most multidimensional and moving screen portrayal in what could be called the supreme achievement of its kind.

"Doug seemed to be under some sort of compulsion to make this picture one of his best productions," director Allan Dwan later observed about the film. "He had always meticulously supervised every detail of his pictures, but in this one I think he eclipsed himself. It was as if he knew this was his swan song." Indeed, Fairbanks was determined to leave behind the silent film genre he practically invented in a

triumphant blaze of glory. A romantic adventure, not far removed from the grand pageantry of 19th-century opera, *The Iron Mask* contains an element of pathos without precedent in Fairbanks's work. The film, like *Douglas Fairbanks as The Gaucho*, is unmistakably dark in tone, lending a bittersweetness to his farewell to the art form and, it could be said, to the best part of himself.

In addition to Dwan, who was directing his tenth and last film for Fairbanks, Fairbanks assembled top-notch collaborators. For production consultant he engaged the septuagenarian French artist Maurice Leloir, a recognized authority on the period of Louis XIV and the illustrator of the 1894 Calmann-Lévy edition of the Dumas novel *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. The British painter and stage designer Laurence Irving, grandson of the legendary actor Sir Henry Irving, served as principal art director with William Cameron Menzies as consulting production designer.

With the working title of *Twenty Years After*, the scenario of *The Iron Mask* incorporated episodes from *The Three Musketeers* (Fairbanks adapted only half of Dumas's novel for his 1921 film) with events from two of Dumas's sequels: *Twenty Years After* and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne, or Ten Years Later*. (*The Man in the Iron Mask* is the third part of the *Vicomte de Bragelonne* trilogy.) The central plot point in Fairbanks's *Iron Mask* is the malevolent twin brother of Louis XIV being substituted for the real king.

The fourteen-week production, which began in August 1928, proceeded smoothly and efficiently at the United Artists studio in West Hollywood, with location work in and around Los Angeles. Several of the original cast members from *The Three Musketeers* repeated their roles in *The Iron Mask*: Marguerite de la Motte as Constance, Léon Bary as Athos, Nigel de Brulier as Cardinal Richelieu, and Lon Poff as Father Joseph. Henry Sharp was engaged as cinematographer and Fred Cavens was engaged to choreograph the swordplay and fight sequences. Near completion of the film, Fairbanks felt compelled to make some concession to film exhibitors who were then clamoring for sound pictures. Midway through the production the studio installed new sound equipment for the lot. While Fairbanks knew that the primitive technology could never accommodate the sweeping grandeur of the film he was about to complete, he was astute enough to know that he was going to have to make a concession to this new technology. Plus, his financial and emotional investment in the film was so great he was determined to give it every opportunity for success. So, he decided to insert two sequences with D'Artagnan speaking directly to the audience.

The Iron Mask was released as both a silent and sound feature to ensure the widest possible audience. The version featuring D'Artagnan's two soliloquies had a symphonic musical score by Hugo Riesenfeld with the synchronized speeches recorded on an optical soundtrack using the Western Electric System. (It was also issued with the track dubbed onto Vitaphone discs.) Movie theaters not yet equipped for sound could show a silent version with the speeches left out.

Despite overwhelmingly positive reviews and grossing an impressive $1.5 million, *The Iron Mask* was considered only a moderate financial success, owing to its approximately $1 million production cost. Having virtually defined the swashbuckler as a movie genre, Fairbanks was also the one to usher out its initial cycle. With the microphone effectively paralyzing movement in the early stages of sound film development, Hollywood concentrated on talk-laden original scripts, static adaptations of Broadway plays, and musicals, with action films momentarily cast aside.

When D'Artagnan bids farewell to the world in the final moments of *The Iron Mask*, Fairbanks also seems to be bidding farewell not only to his favorite character, but also to Zorro, the Thief of Bagdad, the Black Pirate, and all the other romantic roles of his swashbuckling past. It would have been a superb ending to his career, had that only been the case. However, Fairbanks had nearly a dozen more years to live, and time and conditions compelled him to exit less gracefully from the stage that he loved so dearly. But it was a different stage. It was, in every respect, the "sound" stage. As United Artists began equipping the studio for sound Fairbanks could sense the end of an era, and when he entered the completed soundstage for the first time, he told Laurence Irving, "the romance of motion picture making ends here."

Whether it was the romance of motion picture making, or Fairbanks's own romance with picture making that ended with *The Iron Mask*, one thing is certain. Fairbanks never again made the same emotional and artistic investment in one of his films. He and his team had created a fitting valedictory to the age of silent cinema. It is a beautifully mounted, superbly executed swashbuckling adventure. Fairbanks's subsequent four films display his old magic only in brief flashes. To paraphrase D'Artagnan's prologue speech, film never had "a brighter power" than Douglas Fairbanks and with *The Iron Mask* Douglas Fairbanks had his last "high, romantic hour." A fitting epitaph to a cinema giant.

— JEFFREY VANCE

Adapted from Jeffrey Vance's book *Douglas Fairbanks* (UC Press, 2008).

Center: William Bakewell and Ullrich Haupt

DUELING CRITIQUES

Doug Talks a Little in Loveless Film

Motion Picture News

This is the first time in years the public in New York has gotten a chance to leap right up to the box office and get a load of Doug Fairbanks in a new picture at popular prices. Heretofore for years agone Doug has always managed to feed it to the waiting public at two bucks a smack before he let them get a peek for six bits or less. Just to show Doug that Broadway appreciates this they are kicking in with enough of the six bits to smack the Rivoli house record in a Dobbs topper.

Of course, Doug and his boys may have had their own idea in giving *The Iron Mask* direct to the picture house public without the benefit of a legit run in advance. If so they were wise, 'cause there ain't no two bucks worth on tap in this one. But in the picture houses it should wow 'em and probably will.

The Iron Mask is a sequel to *The Three Musketeers*, and it is loaded with a lot of the swashbuckling stuff that made Dumas and Stanley Weyman the best selling writers of their day. The story for *The Iron Mask* was worked out by Elton Thomas,* who frankly states via the program that it is based on *The Three Musketeers*, *The Man in the Iron Mask* and the memoirs of D'Artagnan, Richelieu and De Rochefort. Well, with a background like that he should have done a pretty good job. But he seemingly got so mixed up in his sword play that he killed off his heroine early in the story, or maybe he got around to the stage where he thought that the flaps wouldn't believe that the lovely Constance, as played by Marguerite de la Motte, would fall for as old a guy as Doug as D'Artagnan, and figured the only way out was to have her bumped off.

Even without any great love interest there are enough thrills in the picturization to make it well worth while for anyone to sit through. It is advertised that Doug talks. He does, too, but only a little bit as a sort of prologue introduction and epilogue finish to the picture itself. Of course, that doesn't make this picture a talker in the accepted sense.

Doug looks best as the greying D'Artagnan, although in the earlier scenes he is as athletic and acrobatic as ever, and his sword play is still as stirring as it was in the old days.

***Elton Thomas is a nom de plume for Douglas Fairbanks.**

Excerpted from Freddie Schader's review in the March 2, 1929, issue of *Motion Picture News*.

Romance Thrives

Movie Makers

Dumas, who had a nice sense of the external humor of things, would extract much piquant satisfaction from the reactions of jaded Broadway audiences to Doug Fairbanks's *The Iron Mask*, a United Artists product. These disillusioned photoplayfarers appear to enjoy the old-fashioned Dumas tale as much, if not more, than they enjoy the latest version of how youth goes wrong and comes out all pure in the end.

Fairbanks does a more restrained and intelligent piece of work in *The Iron Mask* than he did in *The Three Musketeers* because he is more in the period. In the earlier excursion into Dumas romance he imposed the Fairbanks tradition very emphatically on the story, and d'Artagnan was more Doug than Dumas. In the present photoplay Doug is a medium and not a motive. This is possibly to be credited to the reported research Fairbanks made before this last production and the expert guidance he received from French artists and advisors. At all events he is entitled to great credit for subduing his own very definite personality in favor of the character of Dumas.

The film is wholly artistic in treatment. It makes use of modern cinematography, its photography is admirable, its direction by Allan Dwan in excellent taste and its cutting is very happy. The action is eminently satisfying. There is nothing outstanding in any of these fields but there is nothing disappointing. It is workmanlike throughout. The adaptation may irritate Dumas fans because pieces are taken from the d'Artagnan saga with no regard for fidelity to the great French romancer. Yet the resulting scenario is faithful to the spirit of Dumas to a fine degree. Doug does a prologue and an epilogue in verse and we have not heard many Shakespearian actors do better with heroic declamation. These and incidental sound effects make the film a modified "talkie." Personally we could have done without the sound effects, which strike us, in general, as puerile in any film whatsoever but the two recitations of Mr. Fairbanks provide an excellent start and finish.

We recommend *The Iron Mask* to those of our readers who are intelligent enough not to fear being old-fashioned and who still like to re-create early romantic thrills of a clean and wholesome kind. It is a good photoplay of a good story produced by a first-class director with a deservedly popular film star.

Excerpted from an unsigned review in the May 1929 issue of *Movie Makers*.

Illustration by Wayne Shellabarger

AMAZING TALES
FROM THE ARCHIVES

A GREAT NOISE

The live Foley artists of their time, percussionists deployed whistles, blocks, bells, ratchets, anvils, and all manner of delightfully specific noisemakers known as "traps" to perform sound effects for silent movies. While some of these traps were common in late 19th-century theater and vaudeville, it was the demand created by the opening of thousands of movie houses across the country that allowed them to multiply and flourish in the silent era. In collecting and sometimes restoring these artifacts, Chicago-based musician **NICHOLAS WHITE** has amassed the largest number of antique traps in the world, along the way researching exactly how they were put to use. White can soon be seen demonstrating this often neglected history in Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*, which includes a segment re-creating a live-radio drama from the 1930s.

ANIMATED LADY

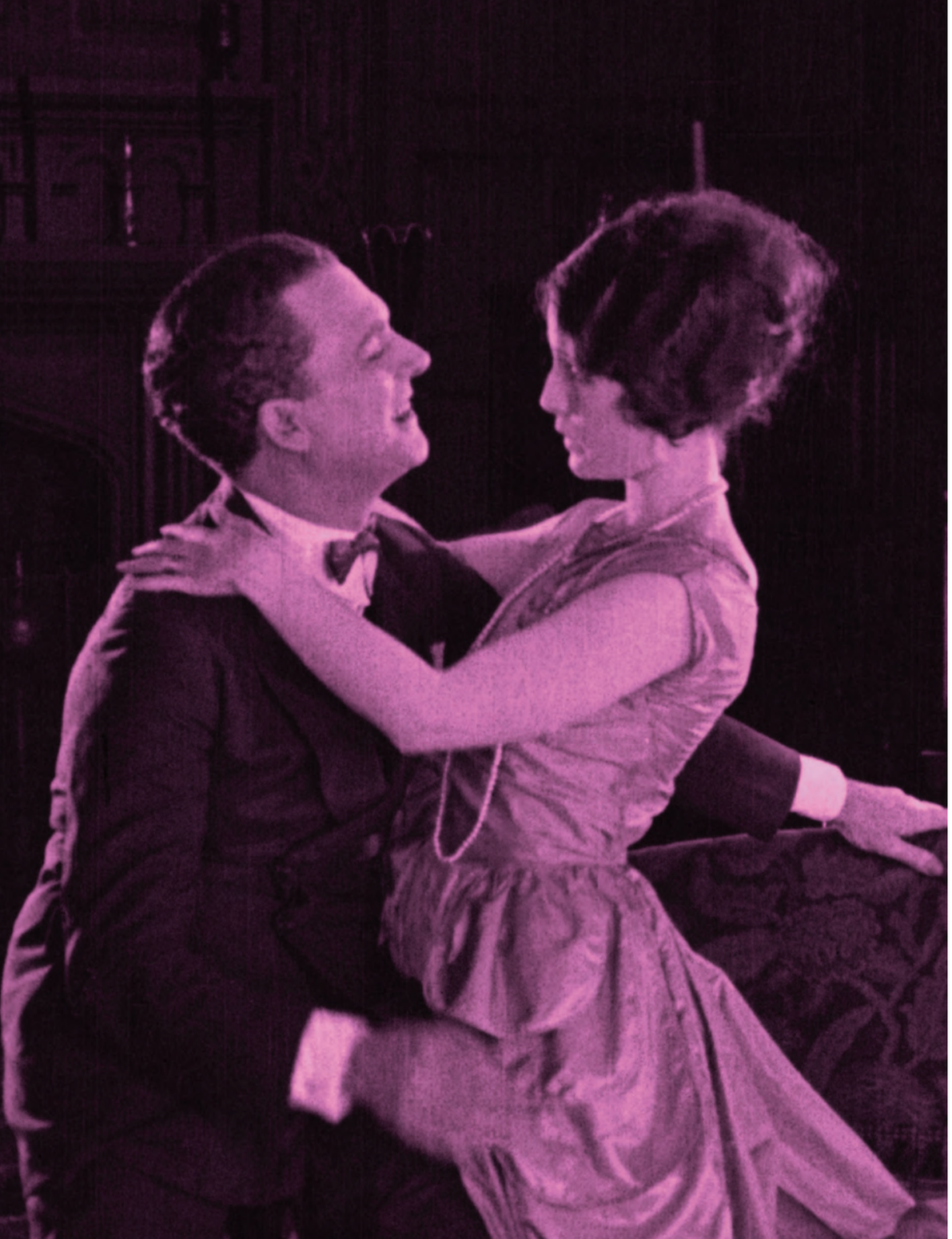
Unnamed among a cohort of male animation artists in a series of portraits from the early 1920s and later dismissed as "possibly a cleaning lady or secretary," Bessie Mae Kelley finally takes her rightful place in animation history—thanks to the dogged research of scholar **MINDY JOHNSON**. Author of a landmark 2017 book on the women artists at Disney and instructor of animation history at California Institute of the Arts and Drexel University, Johnson embarked on a years-long search that eventually led her to the garage of a descendant of Kelley's in San Diego, where she uncovered a trove of the animator's drawings, journals, and cans of films, including 1921's *Flower Fairies*. These newly discovered films mark the earliest surviving hand-drawn animation, animated and directed by a woman.

GOODWILL AMBASSADRESSES

Doll Messengers of Friendship, from 1927, celebrates the exchange of friendship dolls that occurred between Japan and the United States after World War I when the urgency of bridging cultural divides was keenly felt. Organized by Dr. Sidney Gulick's Committee on World Friendship Among Children, the program eventually shipped more than twelve-thousand handsewn dolls to Japan, where they were feted in lavish ceremonies attended by dignitaries and schoolchildren as part of Hinamatsuri, the annual Japanese doll festival. A parallel effort in Japan organized by industrialist Eiichi Shibusawa resulted in fifty-eight exquisitely made Japanese dolls that were presented to select American schoolgirls with accompanying pageantry on a nationwide tour. The extant nine-minute fragment of this precious find, which shows how the dolls were received in Japan, has been preserved on film by the Chicago Film Society, whose **KYLE WESTPHAL** presents it in a 35mm print.

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

Doll Messengers of Friendship



Robert Elliott and Norma Shearer

MAN AND WIFE

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY WAYNE BARKER

DIRECTED BY JOHN L. MCCUTCHEON, USA, 1923
CAST Gladys Leslie, Robert Elliott, Norma Shearer, Maurice Costello, and Edna May Spooner
PRODUCTION Effanem Productions **PRINT SOURCE** UCLA Film and Television Archive

Preceded by **THE GREAT LOVE OF A LITTLE DANCER** (DIE GROSSE LIEBE EINER KLEINEN TÄNZERIN) **GERMANY, 1924, WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ALFRED ZEISLER AND VIKTOR ABEL** and featuring the marionettes of the Schwiegerling family's famous puppet theater **PRINT SOURCE** Deutsches Filminstitut and Filmmuseum **MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY WILLIAM LEWIS**

Hail the humble programmer. Although sometimes denigrated as "the Bs" for their minimal production values, B- and C-list casts, and often far-fetched plots, programmers were a vital and ubiquitous feature of the American motion picture business from its early days through the 1950s. Programmers, which usually ran less than sixty minutes, cost less to make thus providing a fairly quick, economical source of revenue for major studios and a point of entry for cash-strapped independent producers.

Man and Wife was a programmer that was the first and presumably only film made by Effanem Productions, one of the independent production companies that came and went in the early days of the American film industry. A complete tinted and toned nitrate print had been in the UCLA Film and Television Archive for decades. Preservationists, concerned about deterioration caused by toning, a chemical process that replaces silver in the images with colored silver salts, and the fact that the print was the only one known to exist prompted the archive to give this orphan programmer a digital restoration.

As with many films of the time, *Man and Wife* juxtaposes healthy, wholesome life in the country with urban immorality, albeit with a light touch. Dolly and Dora Perkins (Gladys Leslie and Norma Shearer) are sisters who live with their parents (Maurice Costello and Edna May Spooner) on a farm. Dolly is sunny contentment itself, but Dora is restless. She leaves to make her way in the big city, where she meets and marries Dr. Howard Fleming (Robert Elliott). Despite her love for him, Dora is enticed to abscond with her husband's caddish friend (Ernest Hilliard) when Fleming goes on an extended business trip to Florida without her. Soon, he receives reports that Dora has died in a hotel fire. The grieving widower repairs to the country, where he meets and falls in love with Dolly. Neither knows of their respective connections to Dora, and when she resurfaces, now hopelessly insane, the happy couple has some difficult choices to make.

The film's lurid-sounding plot

The Great Love of a Little Dancer

made some critics cringe. *Exhibitors Trade Review* said the film "sacrificed logic to [a] thirst for sensation," and Laurence Reid of *Motion Picture News* said that the writer's imagination was allowed "to run riot in fashioning a 'punchy' melodrama."

Other reviewers were generally kind to *Man and Wife*. *Variety* called it "a wild tale, wildly done," and *Motion Picture World* characterized it as "not a big picture, but it is honest to goodness entertainment." It's easy to see why.

Effanem hired well-regarded actors and a prominent director, John L. McCutcheon, who was able to bring out the best in them. In addition, the film's writer, Leota Morgan, had a knack for domestic melodramas and the experience gained from working with prolific producer/director Burton L. King in the early 1920s to give substance to the film's melodramatic structure.

Diminutive Gladys Leslie, an ingenue fashioned in striking resemblance to Mary Pickford, earned her starring roles at the Thanhouser production company after the *New York Herald* dubbed her "The Girl with a Million Dollar Smile." She was wooed away by Vitagraph and became a major boxoffice draw for that and other studios from 1917 through the early 1920s. Her performance in *Man and Wife* avoids cloying sweetness. She genuinely loves her sister and delicately supports her husband, who struggles to do the right thing when Dora returns. Similarly, Robert Elliott, who acted well into the 1940s, impresses with his sincerity. In a scene in which his character conjures Dora's image in his mind, Elliott shows the depth of his loss.

The Great Love of a Little Dancer

Rejected in her 1919 and 1920 Ziegfeld Follies auditions, Norma Shearer started her show business career in the movies, mainly in uncredited and bit parts. In her substantive supporting role in *Man and Wife*, we see a distinguished acting career in the making. Shearer gets at the underlying restlessness of her character, making her break from her family's rural life believable. Even in later scenes, when she must approximate near-catatonic madness, we feel her suffering and sympathize with her despite the predicament she brought on herself. Her performance led *Variety* to single her out as "a screen possibility" in its review of the film.

Maurice Costello, a vaudevillian whose side hustle was film acting, became a familiar star to moviegoers. His portrayal of main protagonist Sydney Carton in Vitagraph's three-reel *A Tale of Two Cities* (1911) put him on the map. He became box-office poison after news broke that he beat his wife, but he continued to act in supporting and uncredited film roles and appeared in a total of 294 films by the time of his retirement in 1945, five years before his death. Additionally, he spawned something of a film-acting dynasty. When Costello was cast as Lysander in Vitagraph's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1909), he brought his daughters, three-year-old Helene and six-year-old Dolores, along for their screen debuts as fairies.

A word needs to be said about Fort Lee, New Jersey, where *Man and Wife* was filmed. This "Hollywood on the Hudson" was launched as the center of American filmmaking in 1909, when Mark M. Dintenfass established the Champion Film Company, the first permanent production studio in the area. In 1912, Champion merged with Carl Laemmle's Independent Moving Pictures and several other production companies to form what became Universal Pictures, with Laemmle as

Norma Shearer

its president. Until the inviting weather and cheap real estate of Southern California caused a film studio exodus, seventeen studios, including Metro Pictures, Selznick Pictures, and the William Fox Film Corporation, made Fort Lee their home. Films ranging from shorts to epics were churned out by the thousands; D.W. Griffith alone made one hundred films in New Jersey.

The choice of location was logical. Inventor and motion picture pioneer Thomas Edison had opened his Black Maria studio in West Orange in 1893. The area's varied terrain created opportunities for exciting river scenes, cliff sequences on the Palisades, and pastoral idylls of the type that helped *Man and Wife*'s Dr. Fleming recover from his grief. Perhaps most important, Fort Lee offered ready access to top-flight acting talent from the New York stage.

Robert Elliott, for example, moved freely between the stage and screen. Active in movies beginning in 1916, he originated the part of Sergeant O'Hara opposite Jeanne Eagels in the 1922 theater production *Rain*, based on Somerset Maugham's short story "Miss Thompson." In addition to Maurice Costello, *Man and Wife* tapped the talents of another vaudevillian, Edna May Spooner, for her first and only screen appearance. Spooner toured the United States with the well-known Spooner Stock Company and acted at the Bijou Theatre in Brooklyn, New York, which she, her mother, and her sister leased and ran for several years.

One final connection between the stage, screen, and the Fort Lee of yesterday and today concerns Costello's daughter, Dolores. She became the third wife of legendary stage and screen star John Barrymore, who performed for the first time in 1900 on a platform stage in the New Jersey town's Main Street. The Barrymore Film Center, which opened in Fort Lee in 2022, pays tribute not only to this famous family and their local roots, but also to Fort Lee as the birthplace of the U.S. film industry.

— MARILYN FERDINAND

THE JOHNSTOWN FLOOD

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

DIRECTED BY IRVING CUMMINGS, USA, 1926
CAST George O'Brien, Janet Gaynor, Florence Gilbert, Paul Panzer, Anders Randolf, Max Davidson, and Walter Perry **PRODUCTION** Fox Film Corp. **PRINT SOURCE** Film Preserve Ltd. and The Maltese Film Works

Blessed with directors like John Ford, Frank Borzage, and Raoul Walsh, not to mention F.W. Murnau, it is surprising that William Fox should assign such an ambitious and sure-fire subject to Irving Cummings. When Alex Gordon was rescuing nitrate prints from the Fox vaults in 1970, I was able to see a number of Cummings's films. He was efficient and vigorous, although from the batch that I saw, this was by far the best. He had been an effective leading man and his work in serials must have been a great help on this picture. Although Janet Gaynor's scene as a female Paul Revere is ruined by the cameraman (the speed of her horse is far too fast)—what an introduction! Gaynor plays the ward of the lumber camp boss, "a newcomer and a corker," declared *Variety*. The following year, Murnau cast her opposite *Johnstown Flood* costar George O'Brien in *Sunrise*.

O'Brien came to acting via an unusual route. The son of a San Francisco police chief, he was a star athlete at San Francisco Polytechnic High School who planned for a medical career after serving two years in the Navy. O'Brien had won the light heavyweight boxing title in an elimination contest among Navy boxers in San Diego and briefly considered a professional boxing career, but his mother persuaded him not to. "I'd have probably never amounted to much," he later said, "because whenever you're good, there's always someone just a little bit better. Besides, I got into the movies and I won every fight. I couldn't lose! Why should I take a chance when the scriptwriter wrote me that I won?" When he met Tom Mix at a rodeo, the western star offered him a job as camera assistant and he quit school to move to Southern California.

O'Brien's job at Fox for $15 per week mostly involved carrying equipment. "Strong back and a weak mind," as he put it. He occasionally cranked a camera on second units, played small parts, and did stunt work—he even doubled for Valentino and wore a shark fin to play a shark in a Hobart Bosworth movie. And then John Ford gave him the lead in *The Iron Horse* (1924), one of the great epics of the silent era. In *Johnstown Flood* O'Brien replaced Edmund Lowe, who had been announced for the role of the young engineer. O'Brien recalled that the studio had tremendous tanks, which could be tripped on cue for the flood scenes. Filming these scenes took a toll, as they had to deal with horses and cattle as well as human beings. "I recall Janet Gaynor passing completely out as I was carrying her out of the water, from cold and exhaustion," O'Brien told an interviewer years later. "I took her to her dressing room where her secretary, Miss Thompson, and I just put her bodily, clothes and all, right into her shower and I turned the hot water on to revive her. She was blue absolutely ... She was a very petite package. I took her in the car to the studio doctor. After relaxing, she was able to go right back to work in the afternoon."

Janet Gaynor

Irving Cummings remembered that the topography of Santa Cruz in Northern California was similar in many respects to that of Pennsylvania's Conemaugh Valley, where Johnstown was located. Cummings and his team surveyed the area but were sorely disappointed. They were ready to leave when they met hotel proprietor Robert Jones, who had covered the disaster for the *Chicago Daily News* and retained a vivid impression. Jones took the party to several spots hidden in the mountains. Cummings was so pleased he decided to look no further. By coincidence, Gerald Rudolph, the publicity manager of Fox Films, was on the West Coast and came to see how Cummings was progressing. He and Jones struck up a friendship when Jones revealed that, unlike most newspapermen, he had kept the notes he'd made. According to *Moving Picture World*, "Most of the exteriors were shot with Mr. Jones on the ground."

The Santa Cruz *Evening News* reported in November 1925 that director Cummings had been exploring the area along with his "miniature men," E. Roy Davidson and Jack Clifford Smith, in order to reconstruct the flooded areas of Johnstown in Hollywood. For Davidson, this was the big break that led Howard Hughes to hire him for *Hell's Angels*. His most renowned work came later for Columbia, the plane crash and the Shangri-La sequences in *Lost Horizon*. According to Italian film historian Federico Magni, who primarily focuses on the technical side of filmmaking, Smith was an "unsung hero" of special effects, in charge of process work at Fox and responsible for the storm on the lake in *Sunrise*. He later published quick instructions for making a synthetic waterspout as he'd done for *Johnstown*, calling it "very simple."

The plot of *The Johnstown Flood* includes violent (and fabricated) conflict between Capital and Labor, a subject rare in mainstream cinema since the arrival of the Hays Office. Anders Randolf plays Hamilton, the boss of the lumber corporation, who has done a crooked deal involving a million feet of lumber, which is convincingly photographed by John Ford's cameraman George Schneiderman as it floats serenely down river with half a dozen extras standing bravely on the logs.

In May 1926, *Photoplay* devoted its Six Best Pictures of the Month to such titles as *The Black Pirate* with Fairbanks and *La Bohème* with Lillian Gish, leaving *Johnstown Flood* among the also-rans like *The Torrent*, an MGM film starring Garbo, which, coincidentally, was about the building of a dam. Its torrent was anti-climactic compared to *Johnstown Flood*, which the reviewer liked better: "A thrilling melodrama centered around the flood of 1889. It is apparent that the flood is the most important sequence in this picture and around it the story was written. Besides the thrilling flood scene, this serves to introduce a very charming young lady, Janet Gaynor, who is easily recognized as one of the season's best 'finds.'"

When I interviewed Gaynor in 1977 she talked about a moment in the film that was also used as her test: "They just gave me a few pages of script. They had a rather sweet set – it was an old-fashioned well. The man I was in love with – this was supposed to be his wedding day – to another girl – and my lines were – well, now, let me think if I can really say them ... I know the tears came to my eyes and I said something like 'Today's the day, isn't it?' And the tears welled up and with that they cut the camera and they rushed me to the casting office, so I guess it was my tears and my smile, you know, which got me my five-year contract."

The career of Florence Gilbert, who plays O'Brien's betrothed, was overshadowed by her five marriages—one to Ashton Dearholt, pioneer film actor, and another to Edgar Rice Burroughs, the celebrated author of *Tarzan*. She made one more outstanding silent, *The Return of Peter Grimm* (1926), in which Janet Gaynor, now her friend, also appeared. Anders Randolf, whose wealthy lumberman in the film is also uncle to Gilbert's character, had been the champion sword-fencer of Denmark and was featured in *The Black Pirate* and *Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall*. He died in 1930. Max Davidson was a much-loved Jewish actor whose comedies for Hal Roach were rediscovered with delight at Pordenone a few years ago. Sid Jordan was a genuine cowboy and one of Tom Mix's closest friends. Janet Gaynor's father is played by Paul Panzer, a veteran of serials, including the original *Perils of Pauline* (1914).

Photoplay printed a fan letter that read: "Beyond all doubt it will remain, to me, one of the most thrilling of pictures. The story value was not forgotten in view of the historical happening, thus we have a most entertaining picture, boasting a perfect cast." *The Johnstown Flood* may lack the filmmaking mastery of later disaster films like 1936's *San Francisco*, but if the damburst still impresses a century later, imagine how rural audiences must have felt in the 1920s! One exhibitor in Point Marion, Pennsylvania, about seventy miles from the real Johnstown, gives us an idea in his capsule review for *Exhibitors Herald*: "With a 70-ft dam recently filled above our town, felt unsafe showing this one but we ran it ... and they ate it up."

— KEVIN BROWNLOW

Thanks to Theodore Goodman, Federico Magni, and Shari Kizirian for their invaluable contributions to this piece.

Through the Johnstown Flood by a Survivor

From 2 o'clock until 4 o'clock the water seemed to rise slowly; in fact, it was slightly falling, when at 10 minutes after 4, a great avalanche rushed upon us. I had been in my study, on the first floor, preparing for the Sabbath services, when, contrary to my own judgment of the necessity of the case, I was induced to go into my parlor to assist in taking up the carpet. In a moment after I heard a sound as of an approaching railroad train, when all at once the mighty torrent struck our residence. I cried "up-stairs! up-stairs!" and when I saw all my family and Mr. Lloyd and his sister—neighbors who were present at the time—safely in advance of me, I followed, with the family Bible in my hand, pushed upward by the incoming water. Mrs. Beale, with great presence of mind, had turned off the natural gas, and one of my daughters had seized the canary cage and carried it above stairs. The water was on the second story sooner than I was, and carried the hat-rack with such force as to strike me on the back, just as I reached the head of the stairs, up to my waist in water. In a moment the family had rushed to the attic, when a man was washed through a window beside me as if shot out of a catapult. I said in one breath, "Who are you? Where are you from?" He did not give his name (although I recognized him as one whom I had frequently seen near the woolen mill), but struggling for breath, he merely replied, "Woodvale." He had been carried on a roof a mile and a quarter, and was dashed through the window into my second story as the roof on which he had been borne, with a great shock, struck the parsonage.

Soon we were altogether on the third floor, and for several minutes after, scores, aye, hundreds of houses and parts of houses, wrecked and ruined structures, were dashing, rocking, grinding, tipping and tumbling past our shattered, broken and twisted parsonage on the right of us, and on the left of us; for, superadded to the water already on our streets, from 16 to 40 feet more, dependent on the width of the valley, rushed down upon us, bearing on its bosom houses, barns, freight cars, city passenger cars, locomotives, tenders, iron bridges, the Gautier plant, trees, lumber, animals, and human beings, dead and alive, and all kinds of wreckage, pitching, tossing, banging and smashing to pieces in one indiscriminate mass. We were in the midst of an angry, raging sea.

I recognized J.Q.A. Benshoff, our leading bookseller; Mrs. John Fulton and daughter, Charles Barnes, Mrs. Young of Park Place, and scores of others as they were dashed past our residence. I saw two little children alone, and almost nude, clinging to the comb of one roof as it floated by, and three or four young ladies, on another roof, clinging to each other in agonized embrace amidst the swirl and swash of the sweeping waves. I observed that for several squares west and north and south of us nearly every house had been torn from its foundations, and we all were in momentary expectation of a similar disaster. But it now appeared that the waters flowed less rapidly and in a different direction, for the immense stone bridge on the Pennsylvania Railroad had become the breast of a turbulent sea, which submerged our fair city and hurled the waters back again.

The houses which first passed ours were now completely crushed together, with trucks of cars, tons of steel and piles of lumber at the railroad bridge; but those which came last were returned to near my locality by the back water. At this moment, seeing Captain A.N. Hart, his wife, sister and two children struggling among wreckage which had drifted near the parsonage, I descended into the water in the second story and succeeded in getting them into my house through a window. Now our company numbered 15 in the parsonage garret.

Some of the wreckage to the west of us began to move off, and our house, which is a large, new frame building, began to shake and rock and sag in the middle, Captain Hart and Mr. Lloyd insisted that we were in immediate peril, as in their judgment, the house was giving way. Finally, after an unsuccessful attempt to get upon our own roof, we gained egress from the highest window upon a floating roof below. This was, indeed, a hazardous alternative. Seizing a rope at hand, I let Captain Hart out first. He assured me that the roof was worthy; and then, in quick succession, all the occupants of the attic were passed out the window. Just as I was about to pass David and Wilson, our youngest boys, out of the window, they expressed the desire that their dog, which stood by, mutely pleading for its life, should be saved, and accordingly "Guess" was let down upon the roof.

We began a perilous journey to Alma Hall, the largest, strongest building in the city, walking and jumping from one moving house or roof, or box-car to another; and sometimes we were on opposite sides of roofs, and therefore out of sight of each other; then again, we were compelled to bridge over deep watery spaces with loose boards or planks. One of the young ladies, when walking on a piece of scantling, fell into the watery chasm, so that we could see nothing but her hair floating on the surface. She was rescued by being pulled upon some floating timbers. Just before dark we succeeded in reaching the Hall. We found that very many from different parts of the city had sought refuge there. A meeting of the men in the Hall was held on the second staircase and on motion, being requested, I offered a prayer. This was, indeed, a solemn and impressive occasion. In this service, Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants, Africans and Chinese united.

Excerpted from Reverend David J. Beale's book-length account of the catastrophic failure of the South Fork dam on May 31, 1889, in Pennsylvania's Conemaugh Valley. Their travails were only beginning. After having to find even higher ground, they spent ten days in the rough waiting for the water to recede. All told, 2,209 people died, including ninety-nine entire families. The dam was privately owned by a nearby sportsmen's club, which counted as members Andrew Carnegie, Andrew Mellon, and Henry Clay Frick.

Marie Prevost (courtesy of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research)

UP IN MABEL'S ROOM

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE GUENTER BUCHWALD ENSEMBLE

DIRECTED BY E. MASON HOPPER, USA, 1926
CAST Marie Prevost, Phyllis Haver, Harrison Ford, William Orlamond, Maude Truax, and Harry Myers
PRODUCTION Christie Film Co. **PRINT SOURCE** UCLA Film and Television Archive

Too few people remember just how funny Marie Prevost really was. Watching *Up in Mabel's Room* should put us all on to the truth about her short but brilliant career. Ontario-born Prevost was discovered in her late teens by Mack Sennett when she was working as a secretary in a law firm in 1915. She started her film career as a Keystone Bathing Beauty, and she ended it with a trail of bit parts in the 1930s. However, in the midst of the Roaring Twenties, Prevost briefly reigned as one of Hollywood's most modern, mischievous leading ladies.

Her cute and perky comic style, not to mention her shapely silhouette, made her a favorite with the public, and she made a big impression on Hollywood. When Prevost left Keystone and signed for Universal, she burned her bathing suit in a stunt funeral pyre of publicity stills on the beach at Coney Island to symbolize her transformation. After a run of light comedies for that studio, Prevost was snapped up by Warner Bros., where she starred in an adaptation of *The Beautiful and the Damned* with Kenneth Harlan. The two were lovers and were due to raise publicity for the film by marrying on set when the papers got wind of the fact that Prevost had neglected to get a divorce from her first husband—a brief relationship from her Keystone days. This faux pas enraged Jack Warner, but Prevost got great reviews and she soon became a favorite of Ernst Lubitsch, appearing in three of his films, including his 1924 comic masterpiece *The Marriage Circle* as well as *Three Women* (1924) and *Kiss Me Again* (1925).

Harlan and Prevost had a much quieter wedding in the end, after the paperwork had been filed, and continued to work for the studio until 1926 when Warner Bros. decided not to renew either of their contracts. Prevost signed a deal with Metropolitan, but before starting work for them she was engaged by the Christie Film Company, a studio specializing in situation comedies, spiced up with scantily clad ladies, run by two brothers from Ontario, Charles and Al. *Up in Mabel's Room*, directed by E. Mason Hopper, was much trumpeted in the trades as Prevost's first starring role with the studio, and it looked likely to be a hit as it was adapted (by Tay Garnett and F. McGrew Wallis) from a Broadway smash of 1919, written by Wilson Collison and Otto Hauerbach (as Harbach). Collision was a drugstore clerk in Columbus, Ohio, when he wrote this, his first major success. He appeared to have a taste for titillating subject matter, pivoting several of his early efforts around the boudoir, and the lingerie drawer in particular. He later wrote the play *Red Dust*, which had the distinction of closing after just eight performances, but became box-office dynamite for Clark Gable in both 1932 and 1953.

Despite these portents of box-office returns, Prevost's involvement with the Christie studio got off to an inauspicious, even tragic start. In February

1926, her mother Hughina was killed in a car crash in New Mexico. The driver of the car, who walked away with some injuries, was Al Christie. This loss was understandably a terrible blow for Prevost, who was simultaneously going through a rough patch in her marriage to Harlan following their dismissal from Warner Bros. She sued him for divorce a year later. According to her close friend Phyllis Haver, this period marked the beginning of Prevost's heavy drinking and the alcoholism that eventually took her life.

You'd have no inkling of such tragedy from *Up in Mabel's Room*, which is a hoot from start to finish: a farce garlanded with innuendo and slapstick galore. It's a saucy comedy of remarriage in which Prevost plays fashionable young lady Mabel and Harrison Ford is architect Garry, the "hotsy hubbie" she divorced over a misunderstanding now "posing as a bachelor" among his new friends in New York. In Garry's opinion, the Paris wedding, as one of Walter Graham's witty intertitles confides, was "like a vaccination ... it hadn't taken." Mabel thinks otherwise, so she pursues Garry to New York with fiercely flirtatious, not to say predatory, determination. In pursuit of her man she deploys some fancy footwork, a provocative wink, and a lavishly modish wardrobe.

The source of Mabel's confusion was Garry's purchase of an embroidered camisole, an item that continues to cause embarrassment. Not for Mabel, who seems to delight in flaunting it. It's the male characters who find it so unmentionable that they, including Garry's valet Hawkins, gleefully played by William Orlamond, can only splutter out references to a "feminine doo-dad," "the indescribable," and endless other euphemisms. Phyllis Haver plays Sylvia, a swinging singleton, "unmarried ... but not unwilling," who complicates Mabel's strategy. The cast includes Maude Truax, Arthur Hoyt, Harry Myers, and Carl Gerard, all of whom escalate the comic scenario with gusto, creating a panicky mood of lingerie-induced hysteria. Thanks to the strength of this ensemble, *Up in Mabel's Room* maintains the energy and inventiveness of the best comic two-reelers in a feature-length caper. The intertitles are especially delectable, packed with double-meanings and Jazz Age slang.

Up in Mabel's Room was adapted once more and very well in a 1944 film directed by Allan Dwan, but the Production Code did this story no favors. The silent version is far more lascivious in its own free-spirited way and it makes for a picture postcard of Roaring Twenties humor, hipness, and hedonism. This is a romp through contemporary sexual mores (couples celebrating their six-month wedding anniversary just so as to be sure to have one) in much the same vein as Anita Loos's novel, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, published the year before. In the El Rey nightclub scene, do look out for a gymnastic appearance by the Marion Morgan Dancers: a vegetarian, Christian Scientist troupe directed by the woman who soon met Dorothy Arzner on another film set and lived with her for the rest of her life.

Up in Mabel's Room was shot in April 1926 and released in July, promoted as "a merry mix-up of husbands, wives and sweethearts in a riotous farce," alongside a tie-in with Maiden Fair Lingerie that saw hundreds of twenty-two-inch cutouts of Prevost in American shop windows, clad in miniature chemises. Larger stores featured windows dressed as lingerie-strewn boudoirs with "a life-sized portrait of Miss Prevost peeping around the edge of a doorway from a bathroom."

Many critics were unamused by the film's hijinks, perhaps a little disapproving of the adult humor,

with *Billboard* critic Elias E. Sugarman confessing that much of the material "smacks of the risqué spirit of illustrated Parisian magazines." *Variety*'s Sime Silverman felt it would please only the feminine half of the audience: "To a man it's very wearying, but the flaps and the mams seemed to enjoy it." However, *Motion Picture News* praised the enjoyable "mock-seriousness" of the cast and one newspaper praised it as "a tower of absurdities, built up with the single idea of making people laugh, and its one purpose is achieved." Even that fainthearted *Billboard* critic announced that Prevost's "sterling performance" proved that she was "fast becoming the queen of cinema coquettes."

Thanks in part to lurid and discredited claims in Kenneth Anger's notorious *Hollywood Babylon*, Prevost is better remembered for her decline and her early death in 1937 at age forty, than for her glorious heyday. It is fortuitous then that we have the evidence of her captivating presence in charming comedies such as this one. *Up in Mabel's Room* offers both a glimpse of the liberated spirit of the age and a welcome reminder of a vivacious talent sadly lost to illness.

— PAMELA HUTCHINSON

Expanded from her essay first published in the 2022 catalog of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival.

Marion Morgan Dancers (publicity still courtesy of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research)

Edwardian-era Eye Candy

by Lea Stans

Playful, perky, and mischievous, these swim-ready gals were the pinup models of the World War I generation, sighed over by countless young men, no doubt some young women, and probably a few of their parents, too. As one wise guy in a 1918 issue of *Film Fun* proclaimed, "Mack Sennett has every male movieite in the U.S. raving over his Bunch of bathing beauties. No wonder the population of Los Angeles is increasing!" Exhibitors, noticing significant ticket sales for Keystone shorts that featured the Beauties, were more than happy to cash in. The girls were even immortalized in song via Ray Perkins's "Help! Help! Mr. Sennett (I'm Drowning in a Sea of Love)." These actresses were not just eye candy, they were the whole candy aisle, since there was always a ton of them filling up the frame at once. Doing exercises, playing games, dancing, running, arguing—Sennett's films used any ol' excuse to show off those slender figures resplendent in striped, checked, or ruffled bathing suits, often accented by dark stockings or a slightly startling hat.

The Primordial

Mack Sennett and Mabel Normand had worked together at Biograph where she had starred in Sennett's very first inkling of a "bathing girl" picture, Biograph's *The Diving Girl* (1911), clad in a clingy black swimsuit. Normand was very athletic and happily showed off her diving skills again in one of the Keystone Film Company's very first releases, *The Water Nymph* (1912). It wasn't long before Sennett reasoned: why have just one pretty girl in a bathing suit when you can have a whole flock? So, he began deploying his newfound "Bathing Girls" to drum up audiences for his films, plastering their cheeky images in magazine spreads, newspaper ads, theater lobbies, postcards, and arcade cards. Not to mention parading them in actual Bathing Beauty competitions, like a September 1917 event in Venice Beach, where Sennett Beauties Mary Thurman, Juanita Hansen, Maude Wayne, and Marie Prevost walked off with the prizes.

The Exceptional

Sennett's comedies often set aside chunks of running time to show a lively group of ten or more girls frolicking near the main characters, playing ballgames on a beach or poking fun at spooning couples (never mind how well these scenes serve the plot). Sometimes the Beauties showed up as run-of-the-mill "cabaret girls" or as something unique, such as "dancers engaged in Grecian outdoor dancing pursuits." In one 1921 short, *On a Summer's Day*, a few appeared as "farmerettes." While many of its participants remained obscure, some became stars. Marie Prevost was an audience favorite in flapper farces until the end of the silent era, and her best pal Phyllis Haver was the original saucy Roxie Hart in 1927's *Chicago*. Relative latecomer Carole Lombard parlayed appearances in eighteen Sennett films into a robust (if sadly too brief) career as screwball comedy's sweetheart, beginning with 1934's *Twentieth Century*.

The Costars

By the late 1910s the Bathing Beauties were fixtures on the movie screens, and other studios were taking notice. Copycats started springing up: Fox Sunshine Girls, Christie Studios Bathing Beauties, Hal Roach Bathing Girls—almost everyone wanted in on the act. And while it wasn't often that Buster Keaton surrounded himself with them like he did for *Hard Luck* and years later in *The Cameraman*, he did seem to favor them for his "Girls," using Sennett like a farm team for his many costarring love interests. Virginia Fox appeared in ten of his shorts, Sybil Seely was loaned out for five, Phyllis Haver costarred in one short, and Kathryn McGuire appeared in two of his features. Plus, both Marion Mack (*The General*) and Marceline Day (*The Cameraman*) may have done brief stints as Keystone Beauties. Why did Keaton use so many? A reflection years later by Virginia Fox, who went on to become Mrs. Darryl Zanuck, might be a clue: "If I was hanging from an elk's head and they said, 'Hold it,' I held it—even if they went to lunch."

The Bevy

Numerous Bathing Beauties fell in and out of the group from 1917 to the end of the 1920s, making a thorough list of all the names something of a conundrum. Besides the members already mentioned their ranks also included lesser known names like Ora Carew, Lois Boyd, Roxana McGowan, Vera Steadman, Isobel Keep, Cecille Evans, Ruth Hiatt, Mildred June, Eva Diltz, Edith Roberts, Myrtle Lind, June Day, Marion Aye, Harriet Hammond, Marvel Rea, Claire Anderson, Jane Allyn, Thelma Bates ... and more. Some ladies remain unknown to this day, unless future intrepid researchers can shed light on their identities.

The Exception

Gloria Swanson always, somewhat vehemently, insisted that she was never a Bathing Beauty, even though the Internet is littered with photos of her in bathing gear during her days at Sennett's studio. Yet in her first two Keystone films Gloria played "The Girl," and by her third comedy she was starring alongside Bobby Vernon in 1916's *A Social Cub*, the first in a series they did together. In general, the Bathing Beauties tended to be used as a team of anonymous pretty faces, a group which Gloria was never a part of on screen. The proliferating bathing suit images seem to be promos taken around the time of 1917's *The Pullman Bride*. So congrats, Gloria, what you said seems to be true ... from a certain point of view.

Adapted from the author's 2015 post "Splashes of Fun" at Silent-ology.

STELLA MARIS

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

DIRECTED BY CHARLES BRABIN, USA, 1925
CAST Mary Philbin, Elliott Dexter, Gladys Brockwell, Jason Robards, Phillips Smalley, and Lillian Lawrence
PRODUCTION Universal Pictures Corp. **PRINT SOURCE** Universal Pictures

You could almost feel bad for Mary Philbin. A Chicago-born beauty, she'd been discovered by virtue of proximity, a childhood friend of Rebekah Laemmle, niece to Universal's Carl Laemmle who loved nothing more than to give family and the family-adjacent a break. It didn't hurt that she bore a passing resemblance to Mary Pickford whom Laemmle had in the fold for one magical year back in 1911. By the time of *Stella Maris* Philbin was one of the bigger names at Universal, having appeared in the successful *Merry Go Round* opposite Erich von Stroheim and most recently in the film that launched Lon Chaney into the big time, *The Phantom of the Opera*. She'd risen in part by attrition, others having left Laemmle for bigger salaries elsewhere, and had a reputation in the business for being merely a face without technique. Edward Sloman, who directed her in 1927's *Surrender* opposite Russian acting legend Ivan Mosjoukine in his only Hollywood appearance, later told Kevin Brownlow that Philbin required "hard-riding direction," a bracing phrase if you speculate about what that might have meant.

Psychological games on set were hardly rare, or old-fashioned. A DVD extra from some Francis Ford Coppola movie from the 1990s shows teamsters unleashed on ingenue Claire Danes, storming around her on the set, yelling and thrashing props until she produced tears. Coppola sheepishly regretted the tactic but called it necessary to get the shot. (Who knows, he may have inadvertently provided her with a lifetime "sense-memory" as countless Crying Face memes of her *Homeland* character attest.) Lon Chaney used similar methods on *Phantom* as the de facto director of all his scenes, frightening Philbin for real as the cameras rolled. All for the good of film (well, not all, with the lecherous director Rupert Julian and costar Norman Kerry pawing at Philbin every chance they got during that shoot). But Philbin's no Danes and needed manipulating, and not just for waterworks, never having mastered the craft. It seems almost cruel then to cast her as the lead in *Stella Maris*, a dual role involving physical and emotional transformations of a kind that appeals to Oscar voters today. Plus, Mary Pickford had already turned the material into her acting triumph back in 1918, casting herself as the two primary characters whose fates are intertwined in the 1913 British novel by William J. Locke, making the most of her cascading curls as the bed-bound heiress of the title, and also playing Unity Blake, a household drudge with an ugly countenance and a beautiful soul.

To portray Unity, Pickford took a naturalistic approach, taming her hair, darkening her teeth, and downplaying her comeliness in other simple ways. But Philbin is unrecognizable in the role, hidden by a prosthetic mouthpiece and a truly terrible wig, a mask that does a lot of the work for her, or, as

Mary Philbin (in dual roles)

one review put it: "The star's association with Lon Chaney has apparently inspired her in the neat tight art of putting on make-up." When the 1925 version came out, reviewers couldn't help but contrast it with the earlier success. *Photoplay*, for one, admitted the remake cannot compare to Pickford's yet insisted it was not to be missed, its reasoning being Philbin, for "daring to sacrifice her beauty in the role of a deformed slavey." Milton Moore's photography also garnered praise—*Variety* calling his skillful double exposures "a revelation," one in particular that allowed for Stella to bestow Unity with a tender kiss on the cheek. Sadly, that scene is part of nine irretrievable minutes missing from this new Universal restoration. An earlier scene of Stella passing in front of Unity uses a stand-in, fooling at least one critic into thinking the moment was further proof of Moore's expertise.

Mostly, though, reviews were unfavorable, with *Film Daily* basically throwing up its hands at what comes across as more horror movie than melodrama about the great class divide: "Something is wrong with *Stella Maris* but it is rather hard to define exactly what it is." Everyone took notice of supporting player Gladys Brockwell, however. In her early thirties at the time of *Stella Maris*, Brockwell had rebounded after being let go by the Fox studio when her stardom seemed assured. She transformed herself into a memorable character actress, taking roles as mothers (in 1923's *Penrod and Sam*, in which Philbin also appeared) and a run of supporting baddies, her turn as the whip-wielding sister to Janet Gaynor's tender-hearted waif in *7th Heaven* yet to come. Here she plays Louisa Risca as a dark pillar of scowl, mistress of the house where Unity serves and sadistic architect of the poor girl's pointless misery. *Stella Maris* is worth Brockwell alone, plucking her eyebrows as if they were her enemies, seething over an ash-laden cigarette, or, later, in a darkened room languidly draped in an armchair like a jungle cat who's just devoured some nice fat prey. "Strikingly effective," said *Moving Picture World* of her performance. "Character honors," proclaimed *Exhibitors Trade Review*. *Variety* suspended its relentless bashing of director and cast—outright calling *Stella Maris* a "flop"—to tout Brockwell: "After seeing this girl in this picture, one pauses to ask why and wherefore of Pola Negri, Nita Naldi, et al. Miss Brockwell trouped around everyone else in the picture."

Nearly all the principals involved in the production saw their movie careers fade with silents, including cameraman Moore. His credits begin in 1916, running through Victor Sjöström's celebrated *He Who Gets Slapped* in 1924 and Clarence Brown's *The Goose Woman*, the same year as *Stella Maris*, followed by a ten-film collaboration with director Dallas Fitzgerald at Peerless Pictures, under Laemmle's old colleague Jules Brulatour. Director Charles Brabin had a good run in programmers and gained prestige after self-financing his 1923 no-frills mountain drama, *Driven*, which critic Robert E. Sherwood said "atoned for a number of past sins." Brabin's remembered now, however unfairly, for marrying vamp-tress Theda Bara and getting replaced on two MGM pictures: *Ben-Hur*'s money-pit of a location shoot in 1924 and 1932's *Rasputin and the Empress* after clashing with the mighty Barrymore siblings. *Stella Maris* was Jason Robards's third feature and he had the longest career of all, albeit in mostly minor roles. He supported Warner moneymaker Rin-Tin-Tin three times in 1927 but never really broke through; as Robards Sr. he played bit parts on the big screen through 1950 and then in television after a lengthy bout with blindness. Stage actor Elliott Dexter had begun late in films and was already in poor

Jason Robards

health by the time of *Stella Maris* and his portrayal of John Risca turned out to be his last. Brockwell was nearly the exception. Her well-established reputation as a character actress and her early years on stage made her an asset as sound took over. She proved her worth in the Warner Bros. all-talking crime drama *Lights of New York* from 1928, an intriguing new niche for her talents. But it was not to be. She died in 1929 from a punctured appendix caused by a car accident five pictures into her Warner contract.

For a while Mary Philbin continued at the top of the Universal heap, playing opposite Conrad Veidt in both Paul Leni's *The Man Who Laughs* and in *The Last Performance* directed by Hungarian import Paul Fejos. Her story goes that she and producer Paul Kohner fell in love, and he cast her with an eye for keeping her close. He also cowrote *Love Me and the World Is Mine* for her, directed by another European émigré, E.A Dupont. But Philbin was devoted to her controlling parents, pious Catholics who, it was said, refused to let her marry someone Jewish, and she and Kohner broke off their relationship after half a dozen years. She dubbed her voice in the 1930 rerelease of *Phantom of the Opera*, made two fully sound films, then retreated to her home in Huntington Beach where she lived out her days in apparent peace and quiet, never needing to work again. She died in 1993, at ninety years old, passing mostly unseen and even more rarely heard from, barely uttering a bad word about Hollywood or how she was treated.

— SHARI KIZIRIAN

Courtesy of the J. Willis Sayre Collection

"GLAD-EYES" BROCKWELL

by Barbara Little

If the land of calcium and make-believe is one of unending fascination for you. If you have ever hung around a railroad station watching for the "opery house" troupe to arrive; if as a child you harbored a desire to be one of those little blonde darlings who said her prayers before the footlights and fairly dissolved the audience in tears—then you would love knowing Gladys Brockwell. For Gladys Brockwell was carried on the stage to play her first part when she was but three and a half years old. By the time she had reached her gawky schoolgirl years she was playing all manner of parts in a stock company from romping children on the stage to murderous, grown-up shrieks in the wings. She was eleven when it fell to her lot to play three parts in one performance of *East Lynne*. Not a normal childhood, but one fraught with excitement of life back stage. Learning a part on the day a show had to be given, feverishly lengthening a skirt and making a dress look grown up while some one listened to her lines, sleeping on jerky trains and eating wherever and whatever was available; spoiled and petted one day, ignored the next; belonging to a vivacious, companionably gay creature who seemed surprised and a little abashed at the idea of being a parent—that was Gladys Brockwell's childhood.

At fourteen, widely experienced and with considerable business acumen she went into vaudeville as the head in a dramatic skit. Coming into pictures at eighteen, girls even older than herself looked on her as an old-timer.

She seemed to be the pet inspiration of the advertising men in the days of those old Fox melodramas that she starred in. They lavished on her the titles of Modesjeska of the Screen, Empress of Fiery Emotions, and she was the original of that phrase that has since become so hackneyed that it is always a cure for a laugh—The Girl of a Thousand Faces.

"Oh, they made me look very grand on the billboards, and in the publicity," Gladys Brockwell told me one day recently, recalling those old days at my insistence. "But the studio carpenters didn't read the papers evidently. They went right on calling me "Glad-eyes," so I didn't have to suffer the loneliness of greatness at my own studio.

"I used to loll about on tiger skins in many of those pictures and receive gorgeous presents from leering men. After a day of that I would go home and darn stockings or do something prosaic like that. Salaries weren't so grand in those days. We were lavish only when we were on the screen. "People actually used to believe that I was like the parts I played. As a wicked woman of the world my advice was sought through my fan mail on every subject connected with impropriety and sin. I'm afraid some audiences still expect that, they may think I am like the old hag I played in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. It's great for your art to play these character parts, but a girl ought to have a chance at a few young roles before she is shelved in them."

As she spoke a little regretfully of the public that thought she was an old woman because she had played such parts and wished wistfully for a place in the fuzzy close-ups, I cringed a little and averted my glance. Until recently, in fact, I had a hazy notion that she was a nice, big, raw-boned woman about forty, with a stern countenance. Instead, she is a bob-haired blonde who rushes about with a sort of restless energy.

"Yes, I was off the screen for quite a long time after the expiration of my Fox contract," she told me. "Not that I wanted to be. I suppose I had some mistaken notions about how important I was. Anyway, I had to sit home until I got over them."

There is an engaging frankness and gayety about Gladys Brockwell that is refreshing. She never seems to be saying anything to make an impression or be diplomatic. She just skips from one subject to another, ridiculing herself more often than not. But for my part I wouldn't care much what she talked about as long as she talked. I wish that I could describe her sort of voice as to make you hear it. It is one of those vibrant voices that has met all the demands of a hundred melodramas but not one of these stage voices that sounds upholstered.

Don't let me give you the impression that Gladys Brockwell had no childhood at all. She certainly did, as attested by a collection of snapshots which her grandmother recently dug out of the attic of their old Brooklyn home and sent to her. One of them shows her a chubby youngster dominated by an enormous hair ribbon and standing proudly beside a new bicycle. With her was another youngster of about the same age.

"Guess who it is," she urged me. "Someone you're crazy about. Every one is."

It was Dorothy Davenport, better known as Mrs. Wallace Reid. They were chums as little girls and are still devoted friends.

Glady Brockwell came to New York in January to play in some First National productions. It was entirely natural that in building up a troupe of versatile players they should think of her. Her first appearance will be in *Chickie*, in which she plays Dorothy Mackaill's mother. She is bound to be good; she always is. But since meeting her I cannot help wishing that she might get her wish to play a young part in a picture again. I would like to have the public know her just as she is.

Condensed from the original profile, "Adventure and the Adventuress," from the May 1923 issue of *Picture-Play* magazine.

Helen Mundy

STARK LOVE

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE AND FRANK BOCKIUS

DIRECTED BY KARL BROWN, USA, 1927
CAST Helen Mundy, Forrest James, Silas Miracle, and Reb Grogan **PRODUCTION** Famous Players-Lasky Corp. **PRINT SOURCE** Museum of Modern Art

Karl Brown was only twenty-nine when he wrote and directed *Stark Love*, but by then he was thoroughly grounded in the motion picture business, having started with Kinemacolor's American operation in 1912 at the age of fifteen. Developing camera negative for the company he learned the basics of film production. When Kinemacolor failed in 1913, Brown convinced D.W. Griffith's cameraman Billy Bitzer to hire him as an assistant. Proving himself capable, he was soon charged with shooting the titles for *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), then with creating special effects for *Intolerance* (1916). He moved up to second camera on Griffith productions and first camera for director Elmer Clifton. After moving to Famous Players-Lasky, he began working on Wallace Reid and Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle features directed by James Cruze, who continued his climb to the top with the landmark film *The Covered Wagon* (1923), which Brown photographed. In all, Brown worked with Cruze on twenty-five features, before getting the chance to step into directing himself. That first film was *Stark Love*.

While making *The Covered Wagon*, Brown became impressed with pioneer settlers, some of whom participated as extras on location in Utah and Nevada, and he began to wonder if a story focused more intimately on their day-to-day lives would be worth filming. He'd read Lucy Furman's 1923 book, *The Quare Women: A Story of the Kentucky Mountains*, about the Appalachian people who lived simply, just as they'd done for two hundred years with minimal influence from the outside world, and began to plan a film.

Paramount executive Walter Wanger agreed to provide $10,000 for an exploratory trip, so Brown and his camera assistant Jim Murray took an eastbound train in December 1925 to search out these mountain people and their way of life. They eventually came to Bryson City, North Carolina, where they met Horace Kephart, who knew the people well. Author of the 1913 book *Our Southern Highlanders*, Kephart recounted his experiences living in the Great Smoky Mountains among the very folk Brown was interested in. Kephart pointed Brown and Murray in the direction of Robbinsville, N.C., and from there they camped out in the Santeetlah area, hoping to gain the trust of the surrounding inhabitants.

It wasn't easy. One false step and the locals would shun him. Kephart had advised, "Do whatever you do honestly and openly, without the slightest trace of pretense. You never know what eyes are watching you from the nearest thicket." They encountered a local man, nicknamed Shotgun John, who negotiated a wage of $25 a week to do the odd jobs during production. When Brown asked him to recommend a local woman for the lead in the film, he brought over a man and his daughter who appeared ideal to Brown. Once the father understood what was going on however, he

refused to let her participate, snarling, according to Brown: "You leave my women-folks be. They ain't none of 'em agoen to be movie Jezebels for you or nobody else." The father stormed away, but Shotgun John shrugged it off, saying the father was just in a bad mood because his son had run off with the woman who had been pledged to him after his wife died. Brown suddenly had his story. He also realized through this encounter he was going to have to recruit his leads from outside the mountain community.

To keep executives back in Hollywood interested, Brown and Murray filmed the local scenery. But the powers-that-be were underwhelmed when they saw the footage, and it appeared the project was dead. Brown wouldn't call it quits, however. He sent a night wire to studio chief Adolph Zukor in New York, extolling the film's virtues, comparing its potential to that of other recent films about real-life struggles, like *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Grass* (1925). He also played up that Zukor's financial risk would be minimal, with only a small crew needed, no expensive sets, and a breath-takingly beautiful location. Zukor went for it and Brown was back in business. He kept Jim Murray as cameraman and added Robert Pittack as his camera assistant. For assistant director he chose Paul Wing, who stayed at Paramount as a line producer for many years afterward.

The team left in late April 1926 for Bryson City to search for their lead actors in the surrounding cities. All four were found in neighboring Tennessee: Helen Mundy and Forrest James as the young lovers, James Silas as his jealous father, and Reb Grogan as her father. Mundy proved to be the most difficult to recruit. When Paul Wing first approached her in a Knoxville soda fountain, she laughed it off, thinking he was a con man but was eventually convinced. College athlete Forrest James was also skeptical, but eventually signed on as leading man.

The film company lived in tents at Santeetlah. A couple of cabins were brought in for sets, with part of the roof and two walls torn out to get the camera angles and light in. As there was no electricity available, they brought in banks of carbide lamps, an elaboration of the kind used by miners working underground. The actors wore no makeup, although Mundy required a wig as her fashionably bobbed hair wouldn't do. The company spent five months in production, filming out of sequence to keep the nature of the story and its violent climax a mystery to the locals, who might object. The footage was shipped to Paramount's New York studio for developing and editing by Ralph Block. In February 1927, it opened at a small theater on 42nd Street in New York and ran for three weeks and went into wider release later that year.

Film critic and future Pulitzer-winning playwright Robert E. Sherwood, writing for *Life*, said it was "just about the greatest moving picture that an American has produced. *Stark Love* is an extraordinary achievement in the movies, and it serves to elevate Karl Brown to the Film Hall of Fame." *Film Daily* confirmed that high praise but zeroed in on the film's ultimate problem, "It is an artistic achievement in every sense, not a commercial proposition." Indeed, the film didn't do well at the box office.

Brown found only intermittent work as a director after that, finishing his directing career in 1938 with *Under the Big Top* for Monogram Pictures.

From *Stark Love* on, his main income came from writing screenplays and later televisions scripts, most notably for *Death Valley Days*, until his retirement in 1960. He remained in comfortable obscurity until 1968 when Kevin Brownlow saw the last known surviving print of *Stark Love* at the Czech Film Archive. All elements held by Paramount Pictures had been melted down for their silver content years before. Appreciating the value of the film, Brownlow tracked down Karl Brown in the Los Angeles area, living in a small house in Laurel Canyon with his ex-wife Edna Mae Cooper, actress and aviatrix. Brownlow recalled about knocking on his door: "... it was as though he'd been waiting. There was no surprise, no need even for explanation. He began to tell us of his days with Griffith. It was a profoundly moving experience, for Brown proved to be the most eloquent and articulate man I had ever interviewed." Brownlow encouraged Brown to write about his career in Hollywood and the result was *Adventures with D.W. Griffith*. Published in 1973, it is a remarkable first-person account of a critical period in American filmmaking and stands out for its intelligence, wit, and detail. Brown wrote a follow-up, *The Paramount Adventure*, that has only been partially published but is no less fascinating. Karl Brown died in 1990 at ninety-three before he could see it in print.

— DAVID KIEHN

Forrest James

Anna Q. Nilsson

FLOWING GOLD

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY UTSAV LAL

DIRECTED BY JOSEPH DE GRASSE, USA, 1924
CAST Milton Sills, Anna Q. Nilsson, Alice Calhoun, Charles Sellon, Josephine Crowell, Bert Woodruff, and John Roche **PRODUCTION** Richard Walton Tully Productions **PRINT SOURCE** SFSFF Collection

The title didn't exactly sell itself. "*Flowing Gold*?—that must be one of them moonshine pictures," guessed an Arkansas moviegoer. Equally puzzling was the tantalizing ad banner: "Flowing Gold on Market Street on Monday." But at least one blurb caught the film's gist: "A thrilling story of flaming hearts and blazing oil wells amid the frenzy of the Texas boom days."

Set around Ranger, Texas, after the oil gushers of 1917, the eight-reel feature could boast neither major stars nor well-known figures behind the camera. The last film to be independently produced or scripted by the playwright Richard Walton Tully (remembered for his 1912 play *Bird of Paradise*), it was also the next-to-last of at least ninety films directed by Joseph De Grasse (remembered for collaborating with his wife, Ida May Park, at Universal). But theater owners didn't need to look far to tie the film to current news. The Teapot Dome scandal, which centered on bribes for federal oil land leases, was still unfolding when *Flowing Gold* was released in February 1924. The most inventive exhibitor hired newsboys to hand out a fake "EXTRA" edition filled with alternating columns about *Flowing Gold* and national politics and mock-headlined that his "THEATERS NOT INVOLVED" in U.S. Attorney General Harry Daugherty's forced resignation in March.

The movie's initial selling point was its close adaptation of Rex Beach's 1922 novel *Flowing Gold*. For a time, Beach's books proved both highly popular and ideal movie sources. His usual formula: Pick a historical frontier, weave around it a Jack Londonesque rugged melodrama—a "virile story" in terms of the day—centered on a "self-made" Westerner, hampered by pesky regulations, corporate malfeasance or unionized mobs, who wins out in the end. Variations structured such novels as *The Silver Horde* (1909), set in Alaska's salmon-fishing industry (with movie adaptations in 1920 and 1930); *The Ne'er-Do-Well* (1911), set during construction of the Panama Canal (and adapted into the politically fascinating ten-reel 1915 Selig epic); *The Iron Trail* (1913), about rail lines into Alaska (filmed in 1921); and most successfully *The Spoilers* (1906), set during the turn-of-the-century Nome gold rush (with its five film versions: 1914, 1923, 1930, 1942, and 1955). It's testament to the popularity of adaptations from Rex Beach novels that all the silent films cited above survive.

Flowing Gold's frontier was well within memory. Both novel and film were promoted with the claim that "The Gold Rush of '49 Was Nothing Compared to the Oil Rush of 1919." As with Teapot Dome, the book and film center on oil lease schemes. Our self-made hero is Calvin Gray, introduced with intriguing ethical complexity: a penniless World War I veteran—strictly speaking, he has three cents when we meet him on a train from the east—who is not quite a confidence man but "a

gentleman of adventure" who can bluff his way to the top. His effortless nerve gains everyone's "trust" and "friendship," and he proves equally at ease with business negotiations in Dallas as with six-guns in Ranger's barrooms. He is played winningly by Milton Sills, a forgotten star, although SFSFF audiences may recall his impressive range from the 2007 festival: as the fighting lumberman in *The Valley of the Giants* (1927) and the charming schoolteacher in *Miss Lulu Bett* (1921). He had the lead in the 1923 film of *The Spoilers*, famous like all the versions for "brawls and pugilistic encounters." *Flowing Gold*, coming just six months later, was looking to build on its success—and its fistfights. "Milton can't appear in a picture anymore, without someone getting all messed up!" warned *Photoplay*. "It's hard to remember that he was a college professor—once" (at the University of Chicago!).

Flowing Gold could be described without too much irony in *Picture-Play* as "a story about the rush to cash in on the dividends of nature's gift to the automobile industry." The oil boom genre continues today, however, only through deeply revisionist variations, notably Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood* (2007) and Martin Scorsese's upcoming *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023). The oil flowing down a creekbed in *Flowing Gold*'s opening shot now conjures up toxic waste rather than gold coins. The most recently released Texas-set oil feature, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* (2023), promises a distinctly different sort of boom.

Those ballyhooed *mano a mano* fistfights in Texas oil films never quite disguise that it's the family melodrama that propels them. (Remember Dorothy Malone fondling her phallic derricks in *Written on the Wind* or oil-coated James Dean crowing "I'm a rich'un" before grabbing discontented wife Elizabeth Taylor in *Giant*.) *Flowing Gold*'s gentler family melodrama opens by introducing the Briskows, a proto-*Beverly Hillbillies* homesteader family of four: good-hearted Ma (Josephine Crowell), sensible Pa (Bert Woodruff), comically dim adult son Buddy (John Roche), and diamond-in-the-rough daughter Allie (Swedish-born Anna Q. Nilsson, in a curiously small role for the credited lead). The film shifts Beach's story politically leftward by adding an opening scene, missing from the book, of bad banker Henry Nelson (Crauford Kent) threatening foreclosure on their drought-ravaged farm. After our family strikes "black gold, Texas tea" (to quote the *Beverly Hillbillies*' catchy theme), comedy comes in their attempts to ape wealthy ways in Dallas ("a small New York"). As with many adaptations from novels, the storyline here can get dizzyingly complicated, thanks to the film retaining so many of the book's characters. Beyond the town sheriff and judge, the various motley schemers and their grubby henchmen, we are met with three sets of fathers and children. The two daughters vie for the affection of our hero, but only the toughest will be his match in the end.

In the film's thrilling final reel—"a whopper of realism," in *Exhibitors Trade Review*'s words—Allie must save Calvin from death by fire and a torrential storm. Anna Q. Nilsson draws on action heroine skills honed back in her Kalem one-reelers of the early 1910s, although she sensibly relied on a stuntwoman for Allie's dive into the turbulent waters covered with burning oil. The huge wooden derrick was burned, before the Hollywood Fire Department was called out by worried residents, near the intersection of Melrose and Highland Avenues (where now, fittingly, there's a gas station on one corner and an oil change station on another). *Flowing Gold* had begun with Allie's pathetic efforts with a watering can to revive her desiccated flower garden. The deluge conclusion brings things full circle by neatly bookending the West's boom-or-bust rainfall options: destructive floods or killing droughts.

Reviews were decidedly mixed following the premiere on February 25, 1924. For the *New York Times*, "*Flowing Gold* fills one with amazement at the amount of movie hokum that can be packed into eight reels." But if the notices held only faint praise, and if the film was only "a fair draw" at the box office, according to *Variety*, that's at least partly because of the impressive competition. Among other American films released in New York within just a month of that date were Ernst Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle*, D.W. Griffith's *America*, King Vidor's *Wild Oranges*, Frank Borzage's *Secrets*, John S. Robertson's *The Enchanted Cottage*, James Cruze's *The Covered Wagon*, and star vehicles such as Douglas Fairbanks in *The Thief of Bagdad*, Harold Lloyd in *Girl Shy*, and John Barrymore in *Beau Brummel*, to mention only features that survive. Is it just nostalgia to think we'd have a tough time finding two recent movie months like that?

Flowing Gold had a three-day run at the Castro Theatre from May 26 to 28, 1924, with music arranged by twenty-three-year-old Hugo Friedhofer (later a prolific Hollywood composer and Academy Award-winner for *The Best Years of Our Lives*). Reviews for *Flowing Gold* in San Francisco were again mixed. *The Chronicle* scoffed ("It has a slow start and a cheaply melodramatic finish"), while *The Examiner* raved ("*Flowing Gold* has everything that made *The Spoilers* a great cinema success—heart interest, melodrama, a fight which is a real he-man affair, a pretty love story and an abundance of comedy").

Miraculously, *Flowing Gold* survived complete, via just a single known nitrate print saved by the Czech Republic's archive, and has been lovingly restored with crisp visuals and evocative tinting by the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, thanks to major funding from the National Film Preservation Foundation. So let's savor its return to the Castro for the film's first public screening in nearly a century!

— SCOTT SIMMON

Lois Moran and Irma Kornelia

PADLOCKED

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

DIRECTED BY ALLAN DWAN, USA, 1926
CAST Lois Moran, Noah Berry, Florence Turner, Louise Dresser, Helen Jerome Eddy, and Allan Simpson
PRODUCTION Famous Players-Lasky Corp. **PRINT SOURCE** SFSFF Collection

Over the years, Allan Dwan told dozens of different stories about how he got into the picture business. Most involved some combination of a youthful stint as an actor, a gig helping to install mercury-vapor arc lights at Essanay Studios in Chicago, and his instant success selling original stories to Essanay, which soon hired him as a scenario editor. He told historian Kevin Brownlow that his first experience behind the camera came when he was ordered to step in for a director who had disappeared on a bender, and pragmatically asked the actors to show him what to do. While the facts remain murky, all these variants peg Dwan as an inspired storyteller and problem-solving technician who didn't take himself too seriously. "Dwan is a sane director," *Photoplay* proclaimed in 1921, hinting that this set him apart from the rest.

Auteurists have struggled to pin down Dwan, who worked in every conceivable genre over the course of a prolific fifty-year career that began with silent one-reelers and ended with widescreen Technicolor features. He may also be underrated precisely because of his sanity, the directness and unadorned classicism of his style. But Dwan's strong opinions about cinema run through his work like a sturdy spine. "Any story worth a damn must be intimate. It must be close to you," he told Brownlow. With an optimism that has, alas, hardly been borne out by contemporary Hollywood, he believed audiences would easily tire of spectacle, and what was needed to hold their interest was above all "good scenes between two people."

Padlocked was Dwan's penultimate film at Famous Players-Lasky (later Paramount), where he had worked since 1923, most notably directing a trio of smart, effervescent comedies with Gloria Swanson. He had enjoyed the autonomy of working at the studio's East Coast branch in Astoria, and his departure was hastened by his distaste for producer B.P. Schulberg, a proponent of strict control and factory-style efficiency who insisted he shoot *Padlocked* in Hollywood despite its New York setting. The studio had reportedly paid a whopping $90,000 for a story by Rex Beach, serialized in Hearst's *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Best known for his novel *The Spoilers* (1906), which was filmed five times, Beach was an unsuccessful prospector who hit pay dirt writing stories in a Jack London mode based on his experiences in Alaska. *Padlocked* was in a very different vein, an urbane drama skewering the cruelty and hypocrisy of moral reformers. Noah Beery plays Henry Gilbert, a wealthy do-gooder and domestic tyrant whose puritanism destroys the lives of his wife and daughter. His myopia about human character proves his undoing: he sees evil in innocent amusements, but is easily taken in by a gold-digging con artist.

Gilbert's ill-fated first wife is played by the magnificent Florence Turner, gone from the movie

too soon. Originally known as "The Vitagraph Girl," she was one of the world's first movie stars (not to be confused with Florence Lawrence, "The Biograph Girl"), and few since have matched her vibrant, natural expressiveness. Watching Turner on screen is like gazing at a flame as it reacts to the tiniest changes in air currents. She has absolute control over every muscle of her face, and her expressions are as pithy as aphorisms, but also charged with luminous feeling. She can turn on a dime from elegant beauty to goofball or gargoyle, then back just as fast to dignified decorum. In 1912, American audiences voted Turner the most popular woman in the movies. A year later she left for England where she formed her own production company, wrote and directed some of her films, and in 1914 was voted Britain's most popular female film star. By the mid-1920s that star was fast waning, though in 1928 she made what is now her most widely seen appearance, a brief and inspired turn as Buster Keaton's mother in *College*.

In *Padlocked*, Mrs. Gilbert throws a seventeenth-birthday party for her daughter with a "kiddie" theme—a Jazz Age fad (Marion Davies hosted a famous one) that gave grown-ups license to dress in rompers and frilly pinafores, play nursery-school games, and generally cut up like toddlers. To be honest, there *is* something a touch grotesque about the spectacle, though Gilbert wildly overreacts to the sinfulness of girls sliding down a banister with bare knees. His brutality drives his daughter Edith (Lois Moran) to flee the house and become a feather-bedecked cabaret dancer. Moran had studied singing and dancing in Paris, and here she performs a fetching Isadora Duncan-esque "Aesthetic" dance in a Grecian tunic. She went on to perform in Broadway musicals but may be best remembered for her affair with F. Scott Fitzgerald, who used her as the model for the dewy young film star Rosemary Hoyt in *Tender Is the Night*.

Edith suffers equally from the forces of puritanism and vice, caught between a greedy stepmother who sends her to a reformatory to get her out of the way and a predatory millionaire who employs a female friend to assist his sleazy pursuit of young girls. Louise Dresser is superb in this morally conflicted Ghislaine Maxwell-like role; her eventual change of heart is heartening, and the theme of female solidarity runs like a bright thread through the story. Indeed, women come out on top all around: Gilbert gets his comeuppance at the hands of his second wife, who blows his money on haute couture and fills his house with her low-life family—a tippling mother, jazz-baby sister, and uke-strumming, spoon-swiping wastrel brother, played with raffish charm by the young Douglas Fairbanks Jr. It is satisfying to see the moralizing patriarch taken to the cleaners by a tough woman who sees through him, but Dwan's films are rarely punitive; they are buoyed by a belief in change, reconciliation, and redemption. Dwan's is, as critic Chris Fujiwara writes, "a cinema of the return of the exile and the acceptance and embrace of home."

Here, a happy ending that could feel formulaic is elevated by a breathtaking setting on a terrace high above the ocean, with mountains sloping gently down to a curving coastline, flowers spilling from urns, and the whole scene swept by billows of sun and wind. This image, held like a resonant final chord, counterbalances the film's opening shot, which is tightly framed and drably lit, showing Gilbert at his desk hard at work on the reform of fallen women. From the cramped gloom of self-righteousness he has reached the boundless open spaces of tolerance. The ravishing panorama is also a calling card for cinematographer James Wong Howe, early in a career that made him one of Hollywood's most revered directors of photography, culminating in Oscars for *The Rose Tattoo* (1955) and *Hud* (1963).

Wong Howe was known for his slow, painstaking perfectionism and his expressive use of natural light, and from early on he was popular with actresses for the care with which he filmed them. He was equally known for the tenacity with which he confronted the racist bullying he faced as a Chinese American in an era of intense anti-Asian bigotry. He literally broke into the industry in 1917 when he climbed over a wall at the Famous Players-Lasky studio, having been turned away by a guard, and scored a job carrying camera equipment. Cecil B. DeMille gave him his first chance to sub in for an assistant cameraman on 1919's *Male and Female*, and he diligently practiced his cranking technique on a manual coffee grinder. His painterly style is always in service of the narrative. Here, he turns the reformatory where Edith and other wayward girls are mortified in gingham smocks into a stark gothic tomb webbed with shadows, and the gardens of the Long Island mansion where she loses and finds love into a bower of glistening leaves dappled with silver light. Not merely grace notes, these images illustrate the pioneer generation's faith in cinema's ability to speak without words.

— IMOGEN SARA SMITH

Helen Jerome Eddy

DANCING IN THE SILENTS

by Catherine A. Surowiec

Lois Moran in *Padlocked*

Dance and dancers have been on our screens since the very beginning. Think of the two men waltzing to the accompaniment of a violin in that early experimental Edison sound film. Performers from vaudeville, music hall, variety, cabaret, and ballet delighted audiences from the time of penny arcades and early projected shows on theater bills, and later the nickelodeon and the movie palace. To cite just a few: Fatima, the belly dancer (censored!); "skirt dancer" Annabelle Moore; "Serpentine" dancer Loïe Fuller and her billowing fabrics with lighting effects; even Anna Pavlova faced the cameras, recording her "dying swan" for posterity. The creative melting pot of the movies attracted a flood of talent. Vernon and Irene Castle started a ballroom revolution that swept the world, captured in one precious feature, *The Whirl of Life* (1915). Valentino's gaucho tango from *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) set hearts racing. Many other talents worked their magic behind the scenes. Ruth St. Denis and her husband Ted Shawn founded the influential Denishawn School for Dancing and the Related Arts in Los Angeles in 1915, and supplied Griffith with dancers for the Babylonian sequence in *Intolerance* (1916). The Russian émigré Theodore Kosloff ran a rival dance school that attracted the attention of Cecil B. DeMille.

For the most part, choreographers created dances without credit in countless silent films, a situation that only changed when talkie musicals brought Broadway dance directors to Hollywood. One of the few we can identify is Englishman Ernest Belcher, a truly unsung hero of dance who provided choreography for both *The Merry Widow* and *Padlocked*. He made his professional debut in 1909 at London's Alhambra Theatre and eventually reached New York in 1914, performing in restaurants and vaudeville. Stricken with tuberculosis, he headed for California in 1915 to get well and found his calling, teaching and coaching. His dance school became a mecca for the movie colony, offering solid technical grounding in a wide spectrum of styles, including ballet, ballroom, acrobatic, Spanish, and Oriental. He coached John Barrymore in the comportment of a Regency dandy in *Beau Brummel*; created gypsy dances for Patsy Ruth Miller as Esmeralda in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*; worked with Pola Negri on *The Spanish Dancer*; turned Baby Peggy into a mini-Señorita for *Carmen Jr.*; and created the ballets for *The Phantom of the Opera* as well as the chorus numbers for the part-talkie *The Jazz Singer* (look fast to glimpse a rare credit, a theater program announcing "Dances Arranged by Ernest Belcher"). Between 1918 and 1939, Belcher trained dancers and created dances, movement, or gestures for an estimated two hundred films. His influence on movies extended for decades through the work of his many students and his daughter Marge, later the wife and dancing partner of Gower Champion.

Belcher's show-stopping waltz for *The Merry Widow* is a highlight of Stroheim's film. Mae Murray as the glamorous widow, dripping with jewels, and dashing John Gilbert in full Ruritanian uniform as Prince Danilo, glide around the ballroom, with inspired moments of a kind of hesitation waltz punctuated with hovering kick steps, locked in each other's arms in a conversation that we know will inevitably end with their romantic reunion. Belcher's knowledge of acrobatic dance also plays a part in the film's storytelling, focusing on Murray's sensual physicality. As the star of a touring revue, she performs a tense acrobatic balancing act in which she assumes various poses, with her tiny feet in tightly laced high heels—perfect bait for the foot-fetishist baron played by Tully Marshall.

For *Padlocked*, Belcher created two very different sequences for the petite Lois Moran, already an experienced performer at age seventeen. One is a captivating cabaret number, where she whirls fairy-like, the ostrich feather plumes of her hat and dress floating in tandem. The second sequence, her audition for a "Studio for Aesthetic Dancing," takes us into the realm of Isadora Duncan's revolutionary free modern dance, with Moran barefoot, garbed in chiffon, her hair coiffed in Grecian style with silk ribbons. A third Belcher number may have been filmed; a still exists of Moran in Spanish costume, wrapped in a fringed shawl, wearing a wide-brimmed Cordobes hat.

The formidable Marion Morgan is even less known today than Belcher. Originally from New Jersey, she was working in California by the mid-1910s, first as a high-school gym teacher in Los Angeles and then at UC Berkeley as a dance instructor. Her Marion Morgan Dancers, a popular attraction on the Orpheum circuit, specialized in Greek dances and pantomime, marked by a blend of what one 1917 newspaper aptly called "terpsichore and calisthenics." The all-women troupe followed a strict regime of vegetarianism and Christian Science, studied classical literature (traveling with a portable library), and never missed a chance to visit a museum. "These girls dance with their brains," declared a 1921 article. In the early 1920s Morgan met Dorothy Arzner, the love of her life, and by the middle of the decade was working in films for Arzner and other directors. In 1926 alone, Morgan's dancers appeared in a bacchanale in Warners' *Don Juan*, and in two films by E. Mason Hopper: *Paris at Midnight*, featuring an elaborate Beaux Arts masquerade ball, and the marital farce *Up in Mabel's Room*. An intriguing publicity still from *Mabel's Room* shows a trio of cheeky bonneted chorines, each sporting one leg painted with a diamond motif, a spectacle sadly not in the existing print. Instead we see another Morgan Dancers nightclub number. Startling and imaginative, it's staged in a tiny space, beginning and ending with eight dancers in a tight circle, holding acrobatic poses; in the main section, they proceed to strut in a circle, like figures on a Greek vase come to life. It lasts for less than a minute, but it's so bizarre that it will stay with you forever.

Buster Keaton

THREE AGES

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

DIRECTED BY BUSTER KEATON AND EDWARD F. CLINE, USA, 1923
CAST Buster Keaton, Margaret Leahy, Wallace Beery, Joe Roberts, and Lillian Lawrence **PRODUCTION** Buster Keaton Productions **PRINT SOURCE** Cohen Film Collection

A century ago, both Los Angeles and the new movie industry within its borders were growing, and evolving, at breakneck speed. In 1923, after making nineteen independently-made short films for producer Joseph M. Schenck, Buster Keaton released his first comedy feature, *Three Ages*, a parody of D.W. Griffith's 1916 epic of love's struggle throughout the ages, *Intolerance*. While Griffith depicted his tale in four interwoven stories, Keaton efficiently traced love through three eras: the Stone Age, the Roman Age, and the Modern Age (Los Angeles in the Roaring Twenties, described in an intertitle as "The Present Age Of Speed, Need, and Greed"). The three sequences that unfold in parallel episodes are essentially three two-reel comedies, which minimized the risk if it failed to capture an audience as a feature. As Keaton described in a 1958 interview: "Cut the film apart and then splice up the three periods, each one separately, and you will have three complete two-reel films."

In each episode, Keaton repeats the basic narrative of rival suitors (Keaton and Wallace Beery) vying for the affection of a pretty young lady (Margaret Leahy), hopping back and forth from epoch to epoch. Beery, who became a great film star in the 1930s in his own right, was a well-known character actor when Keaton hired him for *Three Ages*. Beery had worked for the Essanay Film Manufacturing Company and Mack Sennett in the 1910s, and critics had praised his depiction of King Richard the Lion-Hearted in *Douglas Fairbanks in Robin Hood* (1922). For the leading role of "The Girl," Keaton wanted his sister-in-law Constance Talmadge, who had played *Intolerance*'s Mountain Girl. However, Joseph Schenck (producer of both Keaton's and Talmadge's films) would not allow it, believing two stars together in one film was a waste. Instead, Schenck cast Margaret Leahy as Keaton's heroine. Incredibly, Leahy, a twenty-one-year-old imported beauty, was selected because she had won a "New British Film Star" competition, in which the prize was to appear in one of Schenck's films in a prominent role. Leahy was blonde-haired, blue-eyed, and pretty but, unfortunately, those turned out to be her only qualifying attributes. She had neither the training, the talent, nor the temperament for acting. Keaton suffered through many difficulties with her during the production of the film. Easy scenes had to be shot over and over again. However, true to his nickname, the "Great Stone Face" never complained and tried to make the best of the situation. *Three Ages* turned out to be Leahy's only film role. She later became bitter about her disappointing Hollywood experience and grew to loathe the film industry, eventually burning the scrapbooks she had kept from that time. However, she remained in Los Angeles, married and divorced twice, and was employed as an interior decorator by Bullock's department store before committing suicide in 1967 at the age of sixty-four.

Work on *Three Ages* began in January 1923 and required nearly five months to complete. Keaton structured the Modern Age story first, and the ensuing rivalry between Keaton and Beery for the affection of Leahy as the cornerstone for the Prehistoric and Roman segments. The Stone Age sequence, which was filmed on location in the "Garden of the Gods" section of the Iverson Movie Ranch in Chatsworth, California, provided a memorable backdrop of boulders and mountains. Keaton remembered (and was inspired by) D.W. Griffith's *Man's Genesis* (1912), a Stone Age love triangle Chaplin had parodied in *His Prehistoric Past* (1914). However, he conceived a truly inspired moment of his own for this sequence, introducing himself atop the back of a giant brontosaurus. Keaton had seen Windsor McCay's animated film *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) and wanted something similar for his Prehistoric plot. Max Fleischer, the creator of the popular *Out of the Inkwell* series of cartoons, made a miniature Buster surveying the landscape from the back of a miniature dinosaur. Fleischer brought the beast to life using the clay figures and stop-motion animation.

Technical director Fred Gabourie designed some large sets for the film's Roman episode, but they were not as elaborate or as expensive as they appear. The Colosseum set for the chariot race was built up only to the first two tiers with the rest of the iconic amphitheater depicted on a glass shot. (Glass shots, a well-known technique in the 1920s before rear projection and modern digital special effects, were elaborate backgrounds painted on glass and positioned precisely before the camera to achieve the desired effect). The newly-built Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum appears in the film to suggest ancient Rome as well. Keaton filled this episode with silly gags, the most memorable perhaps being his encounter with a ridiculously fake lion in need of a pedicure. The tale of Androcles—a slave saved by the mercy of a lion—had been popularized a decade before in playwright George Bernard Shaw's 1912 play, *Androcles and the Lion*.

During the filming of the Modern Age episode, a mishap occurred that Keaton cleverly worked into the film. One scene required Keaton to leap from the roof of one building to another. A set was constructed on the former Hill Street Tunnel in downtown Los Angeles, giving the illusion that Keaton was twelve stories up but, in reality, it was only a (relatively) less dangerous thirty-five-foot drop. Keaton used the lid of a skylight as a springboard for his eighteen-foot jump from one rooftop to another. However, he misjudged the spring of the board and failed to make the leap, hitting the wall of the other side and falling into the waiting safety net below. The usually indestructible Keaton bruised his knees and was in bed for three days. When the crew ran the footage of the accident, codirector Edward F. "Eddie" Cline suggested rather than trying to repeat the stunt they should expand the sequence to work the fall into the film. Buster lands instead in the local fire station, where, bewildered, he finds himself on the rear platform of a fire truck as it speeds off to a fire. According to Keaton, this altered sequence consistently provided the biggest audience laugh of any gag in the finished film.

Three Ages enjoyed its world premiere in Britain in June 1923 with an American release in September 1923. Any fears that *Three Ages*, with its interwoven storyline, hysterical visual comedy, and Keaton's bravura performance would not stand on its own as a feature film was short-lived. The movie not only was a commercial success, but it also launched Buster Keaton into feature films. Although *Three Ages* is ultimately a transitional film, filled with the farcical fun that more appropriately belonged to the period of his short comedies, it was the precursor to a string of superb features. His next film, *Our Hospitality* (1923), was the first of Keaton's comic masterworks, followed by *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), *The Navigator* (1924), and *The General* (1926).

— JEFFREY VANCE

Buster Keaton and Margaret Leahy (above center) and right

Keaton and His Cameraman

by Lea Stans

Born in 1883 in a small town in Missouri, Elgin Lessley was the son of a Civil War veteran and a milliner. In his teens he developed a keen eye for still photography and in 1911 he became a cameraman for the American branch of the Méliès-Star Company. After a few years he was working for the legendary Keystone studio, filming shorts like *He Did and He Didn't* (1916), starring Roscoe Arbuckle. Arbuckle started his own studio, Comique, where Lessley met the twenty-one-year-old Buster Keaton, then appearing in films for the first time. When Keaton made the leap to directing his own shorts in 1919, Lessley became his chief cameraman. Working on all nineteen of the comedian's two-reelers and seven of his features, he was arguably one of the most essential members of Keaton's talented crew.

One Week (1920)

The cinematography of Keaton's first released solo short features many of the clean, precise compositions that he preferred. The numerous medium shots and long shots tended to be perpendicular to the action and gags were captured with an eye toward having as few edits as possible, or none at all. Lessley clearly had a pragmatic attitude toward working with the endlessly creative comedian, who might want the exterior of a full-sized spinning house captured one day and scenes of its chaotic, whirling interior the next.

The Playhouse (1921)

Set in the type of vaudeville house that Keaton knew so well, this short is famous for its challenging trick shots featuring Keaton playing multiple roles—up to nine characters on screen at once. It was likely filmed with the strategic use of custom-cut mattes, the success of these shots depending in large part on Lessley's impeccable sense of timing and his precise placement of the mattes behind the lens. Decades later Keaton told writer Rudi Blesh about the difficulty of capturing the minstrel show scene: "[Lessley] had to roll the film back eight times, then run it through again. He had to *hand crank* at *exactly* the same speed, *both* ways, *each* time. Try it sometime ... He was a human metronome."

Three Ages (1923)

The multiple time periods of Keaton's first feature presented their own filming challenges for Lessley, from working on camera platforms high over the Broadway tunnel in Los Angeles to conjuring special effects like the mighty Roman arena set, created by placing a hanging miniature in front of the lens so a 30-foot structure appeared 150 feet high. Also essential was Lessley's patience when it came to Keaton's insistence on capturing difficult gags in single shots, wanting audiences to see they were done "for real." Reportedly the quick shot of Wallace Beery lobbing a rock at Keaton, who bats it straight back at Beery with a club, took a whopping seventy-six takes.

Our Hospitality (1923)

During an interview in Venice in 1965, Keaton mentioned Lessley always being on the alert for natural beauty while filming outdoor scenes: "He would go by the sun. He'd say, 'I like that back crosslight coming in through the trees. There are clouds over there right now, so if we hurry up we can still get them before they disappear'... We took pains to get good-looking scenery whenever we possibly could ...." Today *Our Hospitality*'s cinematography is a much-admired highlight in Lessley's portfolio, capturing the bucolic

Elgin Lessley, far right (courtesy of the Cohen Film Collection)

settings of early American landscapes and towns with confident grace. Shots of the Stephenson Rocket train making its wobbly way across the countryside may have inspired similar scenes shot by Dev Jennings for 1926's *The General*.

Sherlock Jr. (1924)

With Lessley's flawless special effects showing Keaton jumping in and out of a movie screen, the reality-bending *Sherlock Jr.* is considered a technical masterpiece even today. According to Keaton, it was Lessley who suggested having the film's most surreal gags take place within a dream sequence, keeping the main plot anchored in the real world. The shots of Keaton trapped inside the screen, with the scenery constantly changing around him in the blink of an eye, relied on Lessley keeping precise measurements of the distance from the comedian to the camera for each shot—down to a fraction of an inch.

The Navigator (1924)

During the silent era, filming scenes underwater was challenging enough—and filming underwater *gags* was even trickier. To shoot the ship repair sequence, Keaton, Lessley, and assistant cameraman Byron Houck headed to crystal clear Lake Tahoe. Lessley and Houck were enclosed in a weighted, waterproof box packed with three hundred pounds of ice to keep the window fog free. The three of them could only stand to work in the frigid water for thirty minutes at a time. The results were highly praised, although Keaton ended up scrapping one elaborate gag involving a school of rubber fish, after it failed to get enough laughs at a preview screening.

The Cameraman (1928)

After a two-year sojourn filming Harry Langdon features, Lessley reunited with Keaton to film his first feature at MGM. Keaton had lost his independent status when executive Joseph Schenck sold his contract to the big-time studio and, in hindsight, greatly regretted the move. However, Keaton's tenure at MGM did have a honeymoon period: the production of *The Cameraman*, for which he was allowed to assemble some of his former crew. Lessley's smooth camerawork resulted in elegantly done sequences like Keaton running up and down several flights of stairs and a precarious stunt where Keaton cranks a tintype camera on a collapsing platform. *The Cameraman* was the last film the two men made together, the end of an era of thoughtful collaboration. The remainder of Lessley's career was low-key, and records show that he worked sporadically as an uncredited second cameraman until his death from heart inflammation at age sixty.

Tsuru Aoki and Sessue Hayakawa

THE DRAGON PAINTER

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE MASARU KOGA ENSEMBLE

DIRECTED BY WILLIAM WORTHINGTON, USA, 1919
CAST Sessue Hayakawa, Tsuru Aoki, Edward Peil, and Toyo Fujita **PRODUCTION** Haworth Pictures Corporation **PRINT SOURCE** SFSFF Collection

After making his name in films like *The Wrath of the Gods* and *The Cheat,* matinee idol Sessue Hayakawa was ready for a change. "Such roles are not true to our Japanese nature ...," he explained in the March 1916 issue of *Photoplay*. "They are false and give people a wrong idea of us. I wish to make a characterization which shall reveal us as we really are." When he said this, the Japanese-born actor was about to reach the peak of his superstardom, which had begun in 1915 with the sensational success of his appearance as a sexy but villainous Japanese art dealer in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat.* Despite his popularity, Hayakawa was not fully satisfied with the star image that was created by Jesse L. Lasky's studio. Lasky took a double-barreled approach that made Hayakawa an embodiment of exotic Eastern culture, typified by his restrained acting style, and simultaneously a model minority, an immigrant assimilated into the American way of life. Hayakawa was also concerned about the Japanese American communities' unfavorable reactions to his work. Right after the release of *The Cheat,* the Japanese American newspaper *Rafu Shimpo* severely criticized Hayakawa's character in the film. So, in March 1918, aiming to better represent his own culture and hoping to restoring his reputation among Japanese people in the U.S., Hayakawa established his own independent film production company, Haworth Pictures Corporation, with director William Worthington. At the launch of Haworth, Hayakawa declared that he would introduce authentic Japanese characters in his films. *Moving Picture World* reported in July 1918 how he was going about it: "Hayakawa sent several of his company to Japan ... to film scenes for the initial production. They have just returned, bringing with them about four thousand feet of film taken in Tokio and Yokohama and in the wonderfully beautiful Mt. Fujiyama region."

Nevertheless, Hayakawa was also aware of the expectation of him from general audiences in the U.S. Hayakawa's chosen method—obtaining images from Tokyo, Yokohama, particularly Mt. Fuji, as well as geisha districts—was hardly original. Many early travelogue filmmakers sent to Japan did the same thing to cater to the exoticism-searching gaze of European and American audiences. Later, in 1960, Hayakawa confessed in his autobiography *Zen Showed Me the Way ... to Peace, Happiness and Tranquility*, "I was not about to change away from the type of picture which had earned me my fame and following [when I established Haworth]." *The Dragon Painter* was typical of Hayakawa's balancing act between authenticity and exoticism, between his response to the Japanese spectator and his awareness of the American audience. The power structure of the Hollywood film industry at this time also played a vital role in the Haworth strategy. While Hayakawa was aiming for an authentic Japaneseness, his distributor, the

Sessue Hayakawa and Tsuru Aoki

Robertson-Cole Company, which was expanding its influence as a leader in independent film distribution, pressured Haworth to produce films that would appeal to a wide audience.

The Dragon Painter was the first of Robertson-Cole's new series billed as "Hayakawa Superior Pictures." The distributor promoted the film as if it represented an authentic Japan. *Moving Picture World* reported in September 1919, "In this setting the village of Hakone, Japan, was duplicated even to its famous Shintu [*sic*] gates. Each setting is so naturally beautiful that it is hard to realize the perfection of the interior detail. The picturesqueness of 'The Land of the Rising Sun' has been fully retained in *The Dragon Painter*." In truth, the scene of Hanake (a fictional place intended to evoke Hakone) combines footage of the actual location in Yosemite Valley dressed with Japanesque objects, including a torii, the Shinto shrine gate, without a shrine.

In addition, the home of the heroine Umé-ko (Tsuru Aoki) is filled with objects typical of the current vogue for Japanese things: a garden with a torii, a footbridge, stone lanterns, and a peacock in front of a small shrine; a room with tatami mats, fusuma (sliding panel doors), shoji, paintings of both Mt. Fuji and a dragon; as well as paper lanterns. Umé-ko wears a luxurious kimono and the beautiful hairstyle of an unmarried woman known as a shimada. After making up in front of a Japanese-style vanity, she dances a Japanese dance with a silver fan in front of flowers arranged in a Japanese style, while her housemaid plays the shamisen and Japanese drums. Even after she marries, she keeps wearing her long-sleeved kimono, which married women traditionally do not, and her shimada hairstyle, which should have changed to the less showy marumage of married women.

The garden where Tatsu and Umé-ko have a romantic interlude was photographed on location at the Japanese Tea Garden in Coronado, California. (In real life, Coronado was Sessue and Tsuru's favorite vacation spot, so the romance in the film was authentic to their relationship.) This garden was created in 1902 (and moved in 1905), not by a Japanese architect but by an Australian, George Turner Marsh, who had also played a significant role in building Golden Gate Park's Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco in 1894. *The Dragon Painter* craftily displays the exotic and picturesque Japan that many American audiences were accustomed to. No wonder *Kinema Junpo*, a well-regarded Japanese film magazine, pointed out to its readers in April 1922 that the film "did not show either contemporary or actual Japan" and would have preferred if the film were shot in the real Hakone and in the currently modernizing city of Japan.

The Dragon Painter was based on a 1906 story written by Mary McNeil Fenollosa, who lived in Japan for several years and had written a study of the famous 19th-century artist Utagawa Hiroshige. Her husband, the collector and historian Ernest Fenollosa, taught art in Japan from 1878 to 1890 and his Japanese art collection became the basis of the Japanese art collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where he headed the Oriental Department. Fenollosa played an influential role in exposing middle-class America to the Japonisme vogue that had started in France among Impressionist artists fascinated by ukiyo-e, the Japanese technique of woodblock prints. McNeil Fenollosa's novel was a conscious reflection of Japonisme. Her story tells of a young painter named Tatsu (played by Hayakawa) fixated on finding the dragon princess who he believes is hiding under the surface of a mountain lake. An older artist, Kano Indara, becomes impressed by Tatsu's paintings and invites him to become his apprentice. (Kano Indara's name is a clear reference to the Kanō school, the oldest and most influential school of Japanese painting.) Tatsu is reluctant until he meets Kano's beautiful daughter Umé-ko and becomes fixated on her instead.

Near the beginning of the film, look for a scene clearly inspired by the art of ukiyo-e. In a high-angle shot, Tatsu paints near a waterfall. The waterfall is so gigantic and white in the foreground it makes an astonishingly strong contrast to the dark forest landscape behind it. The shot looks like a famous 19th-century ukiyo-e by Hiroshige or Katsushika Hokusai.

Also watch out for a gorgeous painting being admired by Europeans at an exhibition of Tatsu's work toward the finale of the film, now crisply visible in the new restoration by Eye Filmmuseum, the George Eastman Museum, and SFSFF. It is a rather large painting, of a man, a woman, and two dragons, done in a markedly different style from the usual ink paintings (called sumi-e) that have been shown up to this point in the film. Rather, it resembles the European-influenced style of Japanese American painter Toshio Aoki who had adopted Tsuru when she was a little girl. He had already died by the time of *The Dragon Painter*, but the inclusion of this painting, which art historian Chelsea Foxwell has speculated is his work, might have been a tribute from his daughter and son-in-law.

— DAISUKE MIYAO

TSURU AOKI: SKETCH OF AN ARTIST

Her career often overshadowed by her husband's, Tsuru Aoki has a legacy of her own as one of the first Japanese actresses on film and the first to become a star. She comes from a rich acting pedigree: her uncle, Otojiro Kawakami, owned Japan's Imperial Theatre and sought to reform Kabuki traditions by depicting the ordinary lives of the Japanese and incorporating Western plays as well as women performers, who had been banned from all stages from 1629 until 1891.

Aoki's aunt by marriage was the famous former geisha Sadayakko (née Sada Koyama), whose virginity had been preserved for Japan's Prime Minister Hirobumi Ito. She later became the first woman to perform on the modern Japanese stage as part of her husband Otojiro Kawakami's troupe, and together they toured the world, their performances drawn from both Japanese and Western texts.

Kawakami and Sadayakko arrived in France just as Japonisme was spreading across Europe—evident in the Belle Époque's embrace of Japanese artforms and the popularity of Japanese-themed opera productions like *The Mikado*. To their Paris stage shows Kawakami and Sadayakko added a "geisha act of dying dance" and a "hara-kiri" performance to cater to local expectations.

Billed as Madame Sada Yacco, Sadayakko became a sensation in France. Parisian women donned "Yacco style" dresses, Guerlain sold Yacco perfume, and Picasso portrayed her in a series of sketches. She also was the face of a line of cosmetics based on the tones of Kabuki makeup.

As a young child Tsuru Aoki accompanied Kawakami and Sadayakko on their U.S. tour, the first Japanese acting troupe to do so. *Harper's Bazaar* put Sadayakko on its December 1900 cover and wrote approvingly that "she has been playing to large and enthusiastic audiences of society men and women."

Tsuru remained in San Francisco after the tour as the adopted daughter of set designer and painter Toshio Aoki, taking his name. He had relocated from Yokohama in 1880 and by the early 1890s he had his own business, which expanded to include a second studio in Southern California. After he died in 1912, Tsuru was cared for by Louise Scher, a journalist for the *L.A. Examiner*.

All grown, Aoki was one of the leading performers at the Japanese Theatre in Los Angeles and began appearing on film in 1913, in comedies by Fred Mace and in the Majestic film, *The Oath of O'Tsuru San*, which caught the eye of producer Thomas Ince looking to contract Japanese players for a series of films that would appeal to the new fashion for the "East," in particular Japan.

In 1914 Aoki starred as the heroine in *The Wrath of the Gods*, Ince's feature about the eruption of the Sakurajima volcano, which he publicized by falsely claiming that Aoki's home had been destroyed and her family dead in the disaster. The film was so successful that Ince signed Aoki and twelve of her fellow actors, including Sessue Hayakawa, at a time when white actors were usually cast in the Asian roles of American films. Aoki appeared in shorts and features at Ince, playing mostly characters of Japanese origin but also Chinese, Indian, and Native American. She garnered publicity in the trade publications of the day, even appearing on several covers.

By the time Aoki and Hayakawa's Ince contracts expired in late 1914, they were a married couple. After Hayakawa's star-making turn in *The Cheat*, Aoki and Hayakawa were under contract to the Jesse Lasky studio, appearing in six films together, including *The Honorable Friend*, *Alien Souls*, *The Call of the East*, and *The Bravest Way*, with her now mostly in supporting roles.

Aoki was no doubt integral to the formation of Hayakawa's move to independent production, with an eye for improving the roles they both got to play. In addition to her portrayal of Umé-ko in *The Dragon Painter* she costarred in seven American-made independent features alongside Hayakawa. Her stardom, which embodied Western perceptions of an exoticized East, is believed to have in turn shaped the persona of Japan's first female movie star, Sumiko Kurishima, popular in the 1920s as "a typical traditional Japanese beauty."

In 1920 Aoki signed a three-picture deal with Universal and starred in *The Breath of the Gods*, based on another novel by the author of *The Dragon Painter*. She also supervised set design for the film. Her other Universal pictures were *Tokio Siren*, about a Japanese woman brought to America so she could avoid marrying someone she didn't love; and *Locked Lips*, about a woman living in Hawaii who discovers a shipwrecked white man and nurses him back to health.

Life became untenable for the Hayakawas in California with the continual stripping away of the civil rights of Japanese Americans. The couple decamped first for New York then England and France, appearing in a handful of films along the way, including 1924's *La Bataille*. The French revered Hayakawa since his appearance in *The Cheat* but also fondly remembered Aoki's aunt, Sadayakko. The Hayakawas eventually resettled in Japan, but she had already retired from the screen to raise their three children. In 1960, Tsuru made her final screen appearance alongside Sessue in Hollywood's *Hell to Eternity*, after an absence of thirty-six years. — *Editor*

Based on the research of Daisuke Miyao, Sara Ross, and Lesley Downer.

THE CAT AND THE CANARY

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY UTSAV LAL

DIRECTED BY PAUL LENI, USA, 1927
CAST Laura La Plante, Creighton Hale, Tully Marshall, Flora Finch, Gertrude Astor, Forrest Stanley, George Siegmann, Arthur Edmund Carewe, Lucien Littlefield, and Martha Mattox **PRODUCTION** Universal Pictures Corp. **PRINT SOURCE** Museum of Modern Art

Some believe "Old Dark House" thrillers began with J.B. Priestley's 1927 novel *Benighted*, which was adapted for the screen by James Whale as *The Old Dark House* in 1932. The reality is that the template had already been created by Mary Roberts Rinehart in her 1908 novel *The Circular Staircase*, which she reworked into a highly successful 1920 Broadway production entitled *The Bat* with playwright Avery Hopwood. Author and actor John Willard also had a Broadway smash hit with his 1922 play *The Cat and the Canary*, which shared a number of familiar horror/mystery elements with Rinehart's creation, most significantly the gloomy mansion in an isolated setting with a menacing character prowling the corridors.

The first film version of *The Bat*, directed by Roland West, appeared in 1926 (West remade it in the sound era as *The Bat Whispers* in 1930), but *The Cat and the Canary*, directed by Paul Leni for Universal, is generally acknowledged as the more influential movie for two reasons. First, the stylish visual design, which introduced German Expressionism to a broad American audience, established the look and ambience of the studio's future horror classics, especially evident in the work of art director Charles D. Hall on 1930's *Dracula*, 1931's *Frankenstein*, and 1933's *The Invisible Man*. And second, Leni's fast-paced direction, which deftly combined the sinister with the humorous and transcended the stage-bound setting to immerse the viewer in a fraught nocturnal world of menacing shadows, low-angle close-ups, superimpositions, and jarring POV shots.

Paul Leni had recently arrived in Hollywood from his native Germany after being recruited by Universal chief Carl Laemmle, who had been impressed with the director's delightfully macabre anthology film *Waxworks* (1924). *The Cat and the Canary* was Leni's Universal debut and his three subsequent features were proof positive that he was one of the studio's most talented new directors. *The Chinese Parrot* (1927), now considered a lost film, is a Charlie Chan mystery starring Japanese actor Sojin Kamiyama as the famous sleuth and Anna May Wong as a murder victim. Next came *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), with Conrad Veidt infusing pathos into his portrayal of the title character in Victor Hugo's grotesque historical melodrama and what many feel is still the definitive film version of the novel. Leni's final film was *The Last Warning* (1929), a murder mystery set in a haunted theater, which reunited him with Laura La Plante, the heroine of *The Cat and the Canary*. Reportedly, *Dracula* was next on Leni's slate, but he died suddenly in September 1929 of sepsis from an untreated tooth infection at age forty-four.

The Cat and the Canary remains one of Leni's peak achievements and the opening prologue

Laura La Plante and Tully Marshall

sets the sinister tone. Twenty years after the death of Cyrus West, his surviving heirs arrive for a midnight reading of the will at his forbidding hillside mansion along the Hudson River. All of them are shut out of the inheritance with the exception of Annabelle West (Laura La Plante), who stands to get everything but must first prove she is competent and sane. Before the night is over, someone will try to drive her to the brink of madness in order to claim the property and its hidden fortune of diamonds. Another layer of menace is added when news reaches the mansion that a maniac known as The Cat has escaped from the local asylum and enjoys clawing his victims to death.

The haunted house horror tropes might seem clichéd after more than ninety-five years, but they are still enormously effective today: a hairy claw-hand reaches for a victim, curtains flutter in the drafty hallways, a black cat appears on the road to the mansion, and a portrait of the deceased owner drops to the floor, suddenly, like a sign of impending doom. This new MoMA restoration, with the original color tinting, finally allows for a better view of the settings and art direction that transform the ordinary into something forbidding—like a stairwell that becomes uninviting through a chiaroscuro lighting scheme. Even the furnishings can function as something to be feared, as when Aunt Susan (Flora Finch) and her niece Cecily (Gertrude Astor) suspect that someone is hiding under their bed. When they nervously investigate, they are startled to see two eyes glowing at them in the dark.

From the opening shot, Leni's gothic approach is playfully introduced with a gloved hand wiping away cobwebs and dusting off a mirror to display the credits. Even the font style used for the intertitles has an undeniably "spooky" look. Other striking examples of the German Expressionism Leni brought with him can be seen in his disturbing depiction of Cyrus West, who, in his final days, is dwarfed by giant bottles of medicine and a trio of oversized hissing cats, or in Leni's innovative use of a flashlight to illuminate details in a darkened room. Leni also inserted what appears to be an homage to Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), the primordial Expressionist film, with the mysterious character of Doctor Ira Lazar (Lucien Littlefield), who is brought in to question the heroine's sanity. He comes on like Werner Krauss's shape-shifting mesmerist of *Dr. Caligari* but turns out to be one of several red herrings in the plot.

Laura La Plante

In the role of the frightened but resilient heroine is Laura La Plante, one of Universal's top stars of the early 1920s, who had made her film debut at age fifteen. She was a versatile actress appearing in everything from Tom Mix westerns to action serials like *Perils of the Yukon* (1922) and from romantic dramas such as *Smouldering Fires* (1925), directed by Clarence Brown, to her comedies opposite Reginald Denny. La Plante could even lay claim to being one of the first movie Scream Queens for her performances in the two films she made with Paul Leni. La Plante successfully survived the transition to talkies and her signature role is generally considered to be Magnolia in the 1929 part-sound version of Edna Ferber's *Show Boat*.

Playing opposite La Plante is Creighton Hale as Paul Jones, a skittish ally who alternates between cowardice and bravery and appears to be mimicking the appearance and demeanor of comedian Harold Lloyd who was at his peak in 1927. (Bob Hope played a version of this character in the 1939 Paramount remake of *The Cat and the Canary*.) Hale was a trained theater actor who entered the film industry in 1914 and had supporting roles in D.W. Griffith films, such as *Way Down East* (1920) and *Orphans of the Storm* (1921). Although he was reduced to playing bit parts for most of the sound era, Hale enjoyed a film career that lasted forty-four years with a credit list of more than three hundred films and TV appearances, including Ernst Lubitsch's *The Marriage Circle* (1924), Benjamin Christensen's *Seven Footprints to Satan* (1929), and the 1930 version of *Holiday*.

Paul Leni's legacy far outpaced the four features he was able to complete at Universal. "He was one of the most stylistically assured directors of the 1920s," according to MoMA film curator Dave Kehr. As a former poster artist and set designer for the renowned Austrian stage impresario Max Reinhardt, Leni realized the importance of art direction in a visual medium like cinema. The director once said, "I cannot stress too strongly how important it is for a designer to shun the world seen every day and to attain its true sinews … He must penetrate the surface of things and reach their heart. He must create mood (Stimmung) even though he has to safeguard his independence with regard to the object seen merely through everyday eyes."

As an example, the mansion of Cyrus West in *The Cat and the Canary* becomes a character in its own right, interacting with the assembled heirs. When a cabinet panel slides open to reveal a standing corpse inside, it is as if the house has served up a victim. There is even an astonishing POV shot from within the inner workings of the grandfather clock as it looks out onto the table where the guests have assembled for the reading of the will. The house may not be haunted but it definitely exerts a presence. It is easy to see why Alfred Hitchcock was impressed and influenced by Leni's work, but also why *The Cat and the Canary* brought a new vitality to the Old Dark House genre and made it the gold standard for the Universal horrors that followed.

— JEFF STAFFORD

STAN & OLLIE

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY WAYNE BARKER

PRODUCTION Hal Roach Studios **PRINT SOURCE** Lobster Films

The sound shorts of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy are iconic, well-known from decades of availability on television, and although numerous incomplete and damaged original elements survive on each title, the rights-holders have not invested in their long-term survival. These films have been part of major restoration projects between Jeff Joseph's SabuCat Productions, the UCLA archive, the Library of Congress, and other archives.

But the silent films are a different story. Rarely shown on television, the primary commercial market for the last half of the 20th century was mostly from 8mm and 16mm nontheatrical collector prints through the distributor Blackhawk Films (whose library is now owned by Lobster Films), a few theatrical compilations (e.g., 1965's *Laurel and Hardy's Laughing Twenties*), and a little-seen television series *Laurel and Hardy's Laughtoons* from 1979.

Surviving elements are held in many locations, including by the successors to Hal Roach Studios, various archives, licensees that made material for their own commercial use, and private collectors. There were two original negatives made for a number of the titles, with the extra negative sent to service European sales, often compiled from inferior shots, which offers an additional print source, but complicates the restoration process.

While some of the titles have been available for years (1927's *Hats Off* is the only Laurel and Hardy title completely lost), there has been little incentive to undertake a major restoration project of the silents because the rights to these films have been, shall we say, checkered. Blackhawk Films has held nontheatrical 8mm and 16mm distribution rights since 1952, but rights for the Western Hemisphere (other than theatrical rights and the rights held by Blackhawk) were licensed in 1972 to Richard Feiner and Co., whose interest was in producing the *Laughtoons* series not in showing the films in their original form. That has now changed as most of the titles are, or will soon be, in the public domain.

Copyright law has evolved over the past 233 years since Congress first enacted it on May 31, 1790. For most of the 20th century, films (and books, plays, music) in the U.S. received an initial twenty-eight year copyright period that could be extended once, for a total of fifty-six years. In 1978, Congress amended the law to be a single seventy-five-year period, then in 1998 they extended it again to a ninety-five year term. For forty years, the public domain cutoff was stuck at 1922, but, finally in 2019, works from 1923 fell into the public domain. The cutoff has moved up a year every January 1 since then. This means that in 2023, all films from 1927 and earlier are now in the U.S. public domain, greatly freeing up distributors to restore and distribute all the silent Laurel and Hardy shorts—if they can access quality copies.

Dorothy Coburn, Stan Laurel, and Oliver Hardy in *The Second Hundred Years*

Unlike for the sound titles, few of the camera negatives of the silents survive. Enter the mysterious world of film collectors, who hold a vast array of prints. The Kodascope Film Library, a commercial distributor in the late silent era through 1939, released a number of the shorts in lovely 16mm tinted prints, which have filled in many of the gaps in prints when 35mm material was unavailable. Then there's Robert Youngson, who licensed Laurel and Hardy footage for his theatrical silent comedy compilations of the 1950s and 1960s. And, also, Gordon Berkow whose legendary collection contained 16mm reduction prints struck from the camera negatives of *The Battle of the Century* (including the famous pie fight scene), *The Second Hundred Years*, *Double Whoopee*, *You're Darn Tootin'*, and *Angora Love*, apparently screener prints Berkow had ordered from Roach to determine what footage he wanted to use for his 1957 compilation film *The Golden Age of Comedy*. With Serge Bromberg and Eric Lange supervising, Lobster Films has tapped into all these sources to undertake a massive project restoring all the silent Laurel and Hardy films, drawing on the best possible prints in consultation with the foremost Laurel and Hardy specialists in the world, returning classic and little-seen shorts to today's audiences.

FLYING ELEPHANTS

Directed by Frank Butler, USA, 1927
With James Finlayson and Dorothy Coburn

The earliest of the three restorations showing, *Flying Elephants* was the last made under Roach's distribution deal with Pathé, but it was not released until after Roach and the Boys had moved over to MGM. More typical of early farces by Stan Laurel, the film is one of their few silent shorts that leaves the studio and Hollywood environs to film on location, in this case the Valley of Fire, Nevada. Against the backdrop of the area's sandstone formations, it tells a prehistoric tale of cavemen Stan and Ollie both vying to drag Dorothy Coburn back to their cave. The characters are definitely *not* the team we have come to know and love, as Ollie is constantly trying to find ways to kill off Stan. The restoration was a jigsaw puzzle of prints, with a Blackhawk safety dupe negative of reel 2, a nitrate print in the Lobster collection, the French sound rerelease, and short sequences from the Packard Humanities Institute's Kodascope print.

THE SECOND HUNDRED YEARS

Directed by Fred L. Guiol, USA, 1927
With Tiny Sanford and James Finlayson

The tenth film in which Stan and Ollie appear together on screen, this is really the first film released where they are clearly billed as a team, not just as two characters who happen to appear in the same film. The Boys are in prison, and thanks to some men painting the prison, they concoct an escape, only to find themselves back in prison disguised as French dignitaries on a fact-finding mission. The restoration derives from a Blackhawk Films fine grain print, with about twenty percent of the material from a Robert Youngson 16mm original reduction print. These elements were combined with additional 35mm nitrate and fine grain fragments from Blackhawk and the Library of Congress.

THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY

Directed by Clyde Bruckman, USA, 1927
With Noah Young, Gene Morgan, Sam Lufkin, Charlie Hall, and Anita Garvin

Other than a short pie-fight sequence in Youngson's *The Golden Age of Comedy*, *Battle* had been unavailable for decades, making it perhaps the most famous of the Laurel and Hardy silent shorts. The "battle" of the title refers to two different fights. In reel 1, Stan is a prizefighter in a match where he is clearly outclassed, with hilarious results. In reel 2, the Boys accidentally instigate a pie fight that became the largest filmed pie-fight in cinema history, dispensing some three thousand pies in a mob scene that slowly builds to a hilarious conclusion. Having reluctantly accepted that only the short Youngson sequence survived for all these years, fans were shocked when, in the early 1990s, Leonard Maltin found an amber-tinted nitrate print of reel 1 in the Museum of Modern Art collection. It was missing only a short sequence at the end featuring Eugene Pallette convincing Ollie to take out accident insurance on Stan. Then, twenty-five years later, I began liquidating the Berkow collection, working through the more than 2,300 titles, prioritizing features and rare films that took up the most space and would bring the highest price at sale. When I found a can marked "BATTLE OF THE CENTURY R2," I tossed it in the pile with *Cops*, *His Royal Slyness*, and *The Adventurer* ... just another common title to check on at a later date. Months later I discovered, to my astonishment, and that of the rest of the cinema world, that this was indeed the complete reel 2. Lobster combined this footage with the reel 1 material for a nearly complete version, containing the full pie fight.

— JON C. MIRSALIS

Thanks to Serge Bromberg, David Pierce, Stan Taffel, and Jim Kerkhoff for helpful details and suggestions.

From top to bottom, *Flying Elephants*, *The Second Hundred Years*, and *The Battle of the Century* (courtesy of the André Lamy Collection)

Tamara Geva and Lori Leux

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE SASCHA JACOBSEN QUARTET

DIRECTED BY HANS NEUMANN, GERMANY, 1925
CAST Theodor Becker, Ruth Weyher, Charlotte Ander, Hans Albers, Werner Krauss, Tamara Geva, Lori Leux, and Valeska Gert **PRODUCTION** Neumann-Film-Producktion **ORIGINAL LANGUAGE TITLE** EIN SOMMERNACHTSTRAUM **PRINT SOURCE** UCLA Film and Television Archive

"**A**LL losses are restored" wrote Shakespeare in Sonnet 30, and while we can only wish that were true in terms of film survival, it remains remarkable how often titles long considered lost suddenly turn up out of the blue. *Ein Sommernachtstraum,* shot in 1924 and released in 1925, is one such film discussed (when mentioned at all) with cautious uncertainty in literature on Weimar cinema and Shakespeare adaptations. Contemporary reviews varied wildly, hindering scholars' assessment of where to place it in the history of German film between the wars, yet the presence of so many major industry figures was tantalizing, from director Hans Neumann, cinematographer Guido Seeber, and designer Ernő Metzner, to actors Werner Krauss, Hans Albers, and even the great ballerina Tamara Geva. The fortuitous discovery in 2010 of an American-release print in Oregon, buried under a cellar floor, enabled the UCLA Film and Television Archive to make a hybrid reconstruction incorporating fragments from German archives, casting new light on this idiosyncratic charmer and its stubborn resistance to easy categorization.

In cinematic terms, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* remains inextricably linked to the great impresario of the German stage, Max Reinhardt, whose 1905 Berlin theater production made him an overnight celebrity. His association with the play continued for decades, through his much-lauded New York staging in November 1927 and on to the 1935 Warner Bros. film in which he aimed to convey his thirty-year involvement with Shakespeare's comic masterpiece. Reinhardt's influence on early 20th century productions of the play is impossible to ignore, and it's no accident that the first German film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (believed lost) was released in 1913, the same year as a famed revival of Reinhardt's production.

Neither can it be mere chance that so many people involved in the 1925 film version had close ties to the impresario. Further research is needed to pinpoint whether director Hans Neumann directly fit within Reinhardt's circle, but the film's cowriter, Hans Behrendt, studied with Reinhardt in 1911, while actors Werner Krauss, Hans Albers, Valeska Gert, and others all went through Reinhardt's school. Yet it's remarkable how fast and loose Neumann and Behrendt play with Shakespeare's original while sticking close to the spirit of the work.

For starters, there's the language: Neumann and Behrendt wanted to loosen up the Bard's prose and remove the intimidation factor often associated

with "high art." To that end they hired the poet and playwright Klabund (pseudonym of Alfred Henschke) to write intertitles that good-naturedly toy with pastiche, especially in the early scenes, concocting lines in colloquial German addressed directly to the viewer that win the audience over to the coming hijinks. They must have been gratified by the assessment of the Berlin correspondent for the British trade paper, *The Bioscope*: "Although it is 'costume stuff,' it is an entirely modern film, full of grotesque humour and rather witty and up-to-date features."

Neumann's experience as a producer wouldn't have made him the obvious choice for this kind of adaptation, as the projects he shepherded the year before *Ein Sommernachtstraum* were the rather heavy-going though innovative costume dramas *Sanssouci* (1923) and *I.N.R.I.* (1923), the latter through his newly-formed production company Neumann-Film-Produktion, which that same year also produced the Expressionist touchstone *Raskolnikow*. Yet digging further back in his career we find him directing *Aladin und die Wunderlampe* (1918), another lost film impossible to judge now, but the kind of fantasy story with parallels to Shakespeare's feel for the wonderous. This type of imaginative fantasizing was especially present in the work of production and costume designer Ernő Metzner, whose first screen credit, for Ernst Lubitsch's delicious *Sumurun* (1920), was an adaptation of Max Reinhardt's famed pantomime.

Ein Sommernachtstraum opens with an extensive non-Shakespearean tongue-in-cheek prologue of Hippolyta and her Amazon warriors attacking Theseus in his Athenian stronghold and, while almost nothing survives from these scenes, we get a hint of what they looked like thanks to UCLA's montage of surviving stills and production shots. In his largely favorable review, the critic of the Austrian newspaper *Reichspost* appeared to not want to admit he enjoyed the silliness: "In the prelude, the freedom with which the poetry is handled goes a bit too far, the travestied battle scenes between Theseus and the Amazon army seem too cartoonish, but in general, the tone of the high-spirited play is well taken...."

"High-spirited" is the right adjective, as the whole film delights in the sylvan mayhem of Puck, Bottom, Titania, and all the denizens of the enchanted forest (shot at the vast Staaken Studios just outside Berlin). Composed in lively scenes that swiftly follow one another, the film relies on audience familiarity with the play and its characters, whose exuberant frolics are contrasted with the more staid sequences of the court of Athens (and, yes, Hans Albers looks especially fetching in his short Grecian tunic). Werner Krauss makes a memorable Bottom, especially toward the end in the Pyramus and Thisbe scene, and influential performer Valeska Gert was an ideal choice for Puck, relishing the role's license for over-the-top mugging and playfulness. In contrast, Tamara Geva, at just eighteen years old and already the wife of George Balanchine, projects a haunting gravitas as Oberon. Credited only as "Tamara" in this, her film debut, the renowned dancer was on the cusp of her international career.

The film's most notable achievement, however, is its visuals. Cinematographer Guido Seeber, who also shot the 1913 version, made significant use of double-exposure in the enchanted forest scenes, creating painterly yet cinematic tableaux that no amount of stage-bound special effects could ever replicate. This is combined with Metzner's appropriation of 19th century fairy paintings by artists such as Léon Frédéric, John Anster Fitzgerald, and Joseph Noël Paton, whose evocation of that era's vogue for fairy subjects in general and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in particular is clearly reflected in the film's mise-en-scène and costumes. More groundbreaking was Neumann's choice for the musical accompaniment, selecting composer Hans May to write a score that unexpectedly shifts from classically inspired themes to thoroughly modern jazz tunes. *Variety*'s Berlin correspondent singled out the score for special praise: "Almost the best part of the evening is the music arranged and composed by Hans May and played by Eric Borchard's American jazz band, strengthened by a few string instruments. It marks a real advance in scores for accompanying comedy pictures. At one moment Wagner is being seriously interpreted and the next the latest from 'Tin Pan Alley.' Often the music secured an outright laugh and applause for itself alone."

German critics also focused on the music. "The best thing about the film is the really excellent music," wrote the reviewer for *Kinematograph*, "which is full of witty ideas and brings a whole series of scenes to humorous prominence." The writer praised the film but was convinced it would flop in the sticks, where less sophisticated audiences, he claimed, wouldn't be able to appreciate its mischievous jumble of references: "For the theater owner in the provinces the film is almost useless, because in Kyritz or in Buxtehude one cannot presume knowledge of Greek history or of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and because jokes showing the city gate of Thebes as the Brandenburg Gate are not understood in large parts of the German Empire."

In the English-speaking world, the reviews were more uneven. Mordaunt Hall in the *New York Times* praised the special effects but wrote, "the result is rather disappointing after one has seen Max Reinhardt's magnificent stage production of the Shakespearean fantasy, for despite the camera's magic possibilities, this is something that needs sound and color." More curious still was the film's British release, where it was given the dreadful title *Wood Love*. Oswell Blakeston (pseudonym of Henry Joseph Hasslacher), a rising voice in the film world, fell back on the novice critic's conviction that snideness conveys cleverness, writing a peculiar review for the avant-garde journal *Close Up* that's even less euphonious than the UK distribution title: "there are things in this picture more ineluctably Rabelaisian than I have ever discovered in the most boisterous German comedy." The U.S. distributor removed all the modern flourishes of Klabund's intertitles, replacing them with pure Shakespeare—UCLA happily went back and translated the original German into English, to preserve Neumann's intentions—but Blakeston's review makes it seem that the UK release was closer to the German. More research is needed, but while the surviving material is at least twenty minutes shorter than what was seen in Berlin in 1925, we can be grateful to finally have the opportunity of appreciating this unique adaptation.

— JAY WEISSBERG

Theodor Becker (center) and Ruth Weyher

A Pungent Presence: Valeska Gert in Silent Film

by Nora Fiore

As the projectionist changed reels, Valeska Gert held completely still, her arms raised. Through her Weimar-era piece "Pause," the Berlin-born dancer associated her body with the material basis of film. Gert also put her edgy and compelling performance style on film. Her physicality pushed the limits of a 2-D medium, conjuring smells, sounds, and tactile sensations. Critic Oswell Blakeston described the impact of Gert's lone close-up in *A Daughter of Destiny*: "The back number of a French illustrated paper fallen on the worn plush sofa at a cheap barber; the cartoon smudged with the dirt of anxious fingers. The face of that cartoon, with the smudges, come to life!" Gert's contribution to *Daughter of Destiny* has been lost, apart from a still, but her talent for creating characters through movement spawned a series of silent-era grotesques that have survived.

Punk Nightmare: A Midsummer Night's Dream (1925)

Jerking around like a rebellious punk rocker, Gert revels in Puck's unsettling weirdness with her bulging grimaces, twitchy blinking, and flicking tongue. The image of Puck squatting above Titania echoes *The Nightmare*, Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting of an incubus planted atop a sleeping woman, except Puck's legs are splayed like she's about to relieve herself. Gert's wanderer of the night seems to reek of the untamed woodlands: dampness, decay, and the scent markings of wild beasts. Her performance also evokes the mechanical. While Puck administers the confusion drug to a sleeping mortal, her arms snap from position to position as if controlled by gears. Behind the scenes, a hostile director stoked Gert's anxiety. Furious that Gert refused to cut her hair, Hans Neumann lashed out at the dancer and blamed her fatigue on promiscuity. In fact, as she later wrote, "I was tired because the fear of shooting prevented me from sleeping. I never wanted to start making movies again."

Flesh Peddler: The Joyless Street (1925)

Fortunately, photographer Suse Byk helped Gert shed her discomfort with being filmed. By the time Gert embarked on her first collaboration with G.W. Pabst, she was able to take "pleasure in what had pained me before: being captured by the camera ... And the camera multiplied the audience by millions. Fantastic!" Gert's newfound ease on screen resulted in her bawdy, complex characterization of *Joyless Street*'s Frau Greifer. Against the misery of the meat queue, Greifer's laughter is almost audible as her head turns every which way like a bird's. Gert's charisma pulls focus away from the languishing loveliness of Greta Garbo and onto her unappealing procuress. Tempting Greta's Rumford with luxury, Greifer's smirking face rolls along the edge of a fur coat, giving viewers the sensation of caressing its softness. When Greta freezes at an arranged assignation, Greifer's awkward stare before offering herself up as a replacement, wrings rancid humor from the situation.

Dialectic Domestique: Nana (1926)

In the frame of a long mirror, Nana and Zoe present a striking contrast: the bouffant-topped courtesan in a lacy robe versus the plain chambermaid in a long gray dress, crouching nearby like a pet. Gert crafts some of *Nana*'s sharpest comic moments and conveys Zoe's waxing insolence. When the weak-willed Georges squirms over his uncle's confrontation with Nana, Zoe pauses disdainfully with downcast eyes and fires off a wry gesture of dismissal, three slicing waves over crossed arms. Then later, as Nana reduces Count Muffat to a begging pooch, Zoe can hardly pry herself away. With each sideways step through the door, she keeps her eyes trained on the spectacle of an aristocrat's abasement. When we last see Zoe, she's draped in Nana's cape as she mocks Muffat in the street. Her snide restraint has given way to open shrewishness, like a guignol imitation of Nana's hauteur.

Leering Disciplinarian: Diary of a Lost Girl (1929)

Of the working relationship between Pabst and Gert, Louise Brooks recalled, "he *adored* her." Gert's exploration of the sordid, the taboo, and the perverse overlapped with the preoccupations that drive some of Pabst's greatest silents. As Sydney Jane Norton notes, Gert's performance art satirized bourgeois moral failings. In *Diary of a Lost Girl*, Gert skewers hypocrisy by endowing the reformatory director, a human metronome of sadism, with riveting ugliness. An oversized crucifix hanging around her neck, she combines the severity of a nun with the lecherous arrogance of a tyrant surveying his concubines. Gert owns arguably the most memorable scene of the film. As she beats the gong in accelerating rhythm, the girls bend and reach, bend and reach for their nighttime exercises. Her face contorts with growing arousal then erupts as the screen fades to black.

The Other Woman: Such Is Life (1930)

Through dance, Gert portrayed what she described as, "the people that the upright citizen despised: whores, pimps, depraved souls—the ones who slipped through the cracks." That spirit of defiance and solidarity with the marginalized pulses through her vital performance in the Czech film *Such Is Life*. Gert's barmaid cavorts with a washerwoman's unemployed husband as he spirals into alcoholism. Instead of a hissable villainess, however, she emerges as a good-time girl whose alley-cat allure brings merriment to the bleak lives of working-class men. Her eyes shining over a beer tankard, she winks and pokes her tongue saucily into the corner of her mouth, flirting with a customer. Her riotous tabletop jig, supercharged by montage, adds a jolt of infectious excitement to the grim social drama. When news arrives that the washerwoman has been fatally injured, Gert flings herself face down onto the bed where she had been entertaining the laundress's husband moments before. Flexing with the force of a sob, she exhibits a visceral compassion for another woman oppressed by the same harsh realities.

THE ORGANIST AT ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY MAUD NELISSEN

DIRECTED BY MARTIN FRIČ, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1929
CAST Karel Hašler, Suzanne Marwille, Oskar Marion, and Ladislav H. Struna **PRODUCTION** Lloydfilm
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE TITLE VARHANÍK U SV. VÍTA **PRINT SOURCE** Národní filmový archiv

There is no greater physical symbol of the Czech people than the Gothic cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague. Construction began in the tenth century, during the reign of the legendary Wenceslaus, with additions continuing for several hundred years. It was only finally completed the year that this film was released.

In *The Organist at St. Vitus Cathedral*, the church is shown as a glorious paean to a Christian god, with spires reaching upward to the heavens. In a magnificent collage of images of the cathedral, the bells swing back and forth like flowers in the breeze, tolling their inspirational sounds to the entire population of the city. But coexisting with these uplifting sights and sounds is a dark side.

Inseparable from the cathedral is the legendary figure of the benevolent ruler Wenceslaus, who ordered it to be built. Wenceslaus was murdered in a nefarious plot by his power-hungry younger brother, who was influenced by pagan religions. Wenceslaus became a Catholic martyr and was retroactively made king and declared a saint. His remains are buried in the rotunda, along with other Bohemian rulers, including four Holy Roman emperors.

Like the opera house in *The Phantom of the Opera* and the church in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, St. Vitus Cathedral is a magnificent building, but at the same time its nether spaces hide an evil history. In all three films a lowly figure becomes the victim of the curses of these buried secrets: the Phantom, Quasimodo, and the Organist.

The Organist is an elderly, unassuming man who goes about his longtime vocation: providing holy music at night. Most parishioners don't even know who he is. One evening a mysterious figure, who turns out to be an old friend, comes to his shabby apartment nearby to ask him to deliver a letter and some money to his daughter, who is a nun in a convent. Before the Organist can talk him out of it, the man takes out a gun and shoots himself.

Afraid to bring the authorities into the situation because they might falsely implicate him in some wrongdoing, the Organist hides the man's body in the cellar. But it's too late: He has been observed by Josef, a neighborhood ne'er-do-well who threatens to expose him, but will keep quiet for a fee.

Meanwhile, the mystery man's daughter, Klara, has decided to leave the monastery. "The call of life and liberty was too strong," the intertitles tell us, and turns to the Organist for shelter. The Organist now has two problems: deal with Josef the blackmailer and try to make things up to Klara. Before anything can be resolved, he is struck by a

Clockwise from upper left: Karel Hašler, St. Vitus Cathedral, Ladislav H. Struna, Suzanne Marwille

partial paralysis that means he will never be able to play the organ again.

The Organist was only Frič's second film as director, but he was able to collaborate with a number of Prague's top professionals. In the 1920s, Frič had acted in the films of director-actor-producer Karel Lamač, known for his collaboration with comedy star Anny Ondra. *The Organist*'s interiors were shot at Lamač's Kavalírka studio, and the story originated with Frič and the writer and actor Václav Wasserman, a member of Czech silent cinema's so-called Strong Four that included Lamač, Ondra, and cameraman Otto Heller. *The Organist*'s scenario was written by poet Vítězslav Nezval, who, two years later, wrote Gustav Machatý's *From Saturday to Sunday*. Nezval was a prominent member of the avant-garde scene in Prague and is credited with founding the Surrealist movement in Czechoslovakia.

Starring in the role of the Organist is the venerable Karel Hašler, who gives a virtuoso performance as a character humble to the point of being anonymous, someone whose music everyone can hear, but whom no one ever sees. At the same time, this self-effacing character displays an immovable strength that Hašler more than matched in real life. Primarily a songwriter, he ran afoul of authorities since the days of the Hapsburg Empire with his sardonic lyrics that criticized foreign rule of the country. During the Nazi occupation Hašler was arrested by the Gestapo for going around nightly to the pubs and leading patrons in his songs. He was sent to the Mauthausen concentration camp in September 1941 and killed before year's end.

The year before he made *The Organist* director Frič married the actress and scenarist Suzanne Marwille, considered the Czech people's first movie star. Frič cast her in the pivotal role of Klara. Marwille portrays the sudden transformation of a modest girl into a liberated woman who trades in her nun's habit for a Lulu-inspired bob and short skirts. This magnetic beauty attracts the attention of Ivan, a well-heeled young painter who is immediately smitten. Playing Ivan is Oskar Marion, who became a well-known figure in Czech cinema, appearing in more than a hundred productions.

An obsessive worker, Frič went on to an impressive career. When he didn't have a feature on his agenda, he was busy with documentaries, shorts, stage work, acting, directing, writing. "When I didn't make a film for a few days," he is quoted as saying, "I felt empty." As a teenager he attended art school and soon found his first jobs in film as a poster designer, artist, lab assistant, camera assistant, bit player, writer, anything he could get. He also worked extensively in cabaret until he got his first serious movie break with an offer in 1928 to direct *Father Vojtěch* (*Páter Vojtěch*), which starred Karel Lamač and Marwille.

Working in the aftermath of World War I and the Russian Revolution, Frič became part of the swirling avant-garde of the 1920s, both artistically and politically. He associated with Surrealists and radicals and befriended André Breton. Ultimately, Frič became best known for dark comedy. He made film versions of classics of satire like *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1931) by the Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek and in 1933 Nikolai Gogol's *The Inspector General*. His wide-ranging background prepared him for anything. This is evident in the assured structure and timing of dramatic plot twists he brought to *The Organist at St. Vitus Cathedral*.

Frič was a survivor, too. Despite his radical credentials, he not only survived the Nazi occupation from the late 1930s till the end of World War II, he even managed to make two films in Hitler's

Otto Zahrádka

Germany! After Germany's defeat, Frič fit into Soviet-dominated Czechoslovakia more easily. He became a member of the Communist Party and continued to direct films, though he was always resented by Stalinist bureaucrats for his satirical bent. His films competed at Cannes and Venice into the 1960s.

One of Czechoslovakia's most beloved directors he also became an elder statesman to younger artists. "When he arrived on the set, he never failed to greet everyone with a smile," filmmaker Giovanna Roklová later said about him. "Technicians, lighting crew, sound engineers, costume designers and make-up artists. He was a wonderful person."

In the end it was his self-destructive lifestyle that did him in. In 1968, a new era erupted with the Prague Spring uprising against Soviet domination and the Czech New Wave burst upon the world with filmmakers like Miloš Forman, Jiří Menzel, Ivan Passer, Věra Chytilová, Jan Němec, and others. Now at age sixty-six, after a lifetime of smoking and excessive drinking, Frič was fighting terminal cancer. Doctors told him just one more drink could kill him.

"One day, when I don't care about anything anymore, I'll pour myself a real shot from that wonderful cognac," Frič told Miloš Forman, who was visiting him and accidentally found a bottle in the cupboard. As the Soviet tanks rumbled across the Czech border headed for Prague, Frič decided he could no longer tolerate the pain and drank the entire thing. The doctors were right, he died soon after.

"Martin Frič's contribution to Czech film is, in my opinion, still underrated," his colleague Jaroslav Marvan, who appeared in more than thirty Frič movies, told film writer Mary Meixner in a 2012 interview. "Some say he was our greatest film professional, others despise him and claim he was only a craftsman. But this is a truth that nobody can change: Filmmaking needs artists who properly know the craft."

— MIGUEL PENDÁS

PIGS WILL BE PIGS

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY GUENTER BUCHWALD AND FRANK BOCKIUS

DIRECTED BY KHANAN SHMAIN, SOVIET UKRAINE, 1931
CAST Ivan Tverdokhlib, Konstantin Garin, Borys Bezhin, and M. Sidorova **PRODUCTION** Ukrainefilm
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE TITLE STANTSIYA PUPKY **PRINT SOURCE** Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Film Archive

The Soviet film corpus of the silent era—the mass of films that survived that tumultuous era, at least—is famous for formal innovation, social realism, and headlong propaganda. But not for farce. Comedy was the commercial lifeblood of silent film; without it, a national industry could scarcely hope to function. But the sociopolitical pressure of the new Soviet project, along with its fiercely pedagogical attitude toward its massive and far-flung native audiences, made comedies a seeming rarity. What's so funny about work, pride, and authoritarianism, anyway?

Well, as Khanan Shmain's *Pigs Will Be Pigs* proves, the Soviet cultural machine was not quite as homogeneous and bullet-headed as we think it was, or as the Politburo probably would've liked. Comedy happened, at least sometimes. Originally titled *Stantsiya Pupky*, or *Pupky Station*, this lowdown lark is through and through a Ukrainian film, saturated with stubborn local norms and happily self-distracted from any notion of Communist ideology. Long considered lost until it turned up in the German Federal Archives in 2015, Shmain's modest film liberally assaults and mocks Soviet bureaucracy for its self-important idiocies, from a disrespectful provincial perspective. Set almost entirely in a remote rural train station unprepared for traffic of any kind, and beset by an occupation of guinea pigs, the movie feels about as anti-authoritarian as any Soviet silent ever made. In fact, Ivan Kozlenko, former director of the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Film Archive in Kyiv, noted on social media when the film was found that "comedies are perhaps the worst preserved genre of the Ukrainian silent period … they were the first to be banned and often never even made it to the screen. Today we know of just five surviving Ukrainian comedies."

More than a little Ma and Pa Kettle in its skewering of both lazy hayseeds and the establishment forces who think they're in control, *Pigs* was actually sourced from all-American pulp: it's a loose and uncredited adaptation of Ellis Parker Butler's goofy and apparently beloved story "Pigs Is Pigs," from 1905, which had, by the end of the silent era, already been turned into comedy two-reelers twice (once in 1914 with forgotten star John Bunny) and saw a final incarnation as a Disney cartoon in 1954. (There is no relation, however, to the 1937 Warner cartoon directed by Friz Freleng, also called *Pigs Is Pigs*.) Rather than specifically exuding the corn-pone Americana in the recipe, however, Shmain's film toggles the tale's satiric focus toward the USSR's newfangled "scientific" administrative hysteria.

The domino-cascade of a tale begins with the arrival at Pupky Station of a student carting two pregnant guinea pigs in tiny wooden cages—illegal passengers, it seems, as the rulebook main-

tains that animals of any kind, particularly "pigs," cannot accompany passengers in general carriage. The fact of their pregnancy is itself a cause for hysterical panic among the passengers. The station, the kind where farm pigs wander on the tracks and the staff of two expect nothing of interest to ever happen, is hardly equipped to handle the disruption. The gruff station master (Konstantin Garin) and his bandy-legged, dull-witted assistant (Ivan Tverdokhlib) struggle to settle the guinea pigs' destiny before litters of more arrive, and as a detached wagon filled with grain seed for the local kolkhoz somehow goes missing. ("Nothing is ever lost in Pupky," we're told by both the station master and, sarcastically, by the film's intertitles.) Through it all, the guinea pigs themselves exercise a charm offensive on virtually every Soviet citizen in sight, not unlike the furry affect of the proliferating alien puffballs in the famous *Star Trek* episode "The Trouble with Tribbles" (1967).

Likewise, the pigs begin multiplying at a preposterous rate, as the cigar-chomping stuffed shirts at the junction station bicker and wrangle about what should be done about them, taking time for a ponderous zoological lecture and arriving at an enthusiastic conclusion: "We'll appoint a COMMISSION!" Meanwhile, a determined kolkhoznitsa (played by M. Sidorova, who some sources rather daringly suggest is famed Russian opera singer Mariya Maksakova, née Sidorova) plunges into the local bureaucracy to find the errant seed wagon, a Kafkaesque nightmare Shmain riotously stages on an ingeniously devised set built like a revolving merry-go-round—the poor woman literally goes in circles, from window to window, as the apparatchiks whiz by and the buck gets perpetually passed. Eventually, the two threads collide when Tverdokhlib's lazy yokel, faced with the dilemma of where to put the now-uncountable guinea pigs, decides to house them in an apparently orphaned storage car left on a nearby siding …

The subtle, derisive recalcitrance at the heart of *Pigs Will Be Pigs* isn't, on one hand, surprising—this is a Ukraine that still remembered the incomparable chaos of the 1917–21 War for Independence, which it lost, and still bridled at being subsumed into the larger Communist state. Shmain's film spits in the Politburo's eye despite Joseph Stalin's various efforts to suppress what was left of Ukrainian resistance, from the recent takeover of the Ukrainian film studio by Soyuzkino after accusations of nationalism and "unacceptable behavior," to the routine imprisonment and execution of Ukrainian patriots, to forced collectivization and the ensuing man-made famine that killed millions of Ukrainians. Considering the violence and repression brought to bear on Shmain's countrymen during this period, it seems almost crazy to make a film—a comedy, no less—that so fiercely disrespects the entire Soviet apparatus.

Shmain himself has a scattershot filmography as a result, though he did not share the stubborn independence nor the fate of his mentor from the 1920s: avant-garde theater director Les Kurbas was sent to the gulag in 1933 and executed in 1937. Shmain endured with a low profile, tolerating a relocation to Moscow, surviving World War II as a German POW, and finally spending decades in state production, primarily working on propaganda and scientific films, but also on the occasional comedy. He died in 1969.

It's hardly surprising, then, given the history, that *Pigs Will Be Pigs* had long ago vanished from the film culture radar, as so many silent films have, in Ukraine and elsewhere. Its freakish reappearance, however, comes with an additional layer of historical puzzlement: this lone German print comes

with a distinctive preamble, added as a warning to whomever the privileged Weimar viewer in fact was. With "special permission," the film, which was otherwise "prohibited for public screenings in Germany," could be seen but "it is strictly forbidden to tell unauthorized people about the screening and the content of the movie." Germany in 1931 was a political rumble, with the Nazis and the Communist Party occupying the opposing extremes of an intensely unstable and sometimes violent political landscape, and German censors were very sensitive to the incitement potential of Soviet propaganda films like Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). But why Shmain's bouncy little film, which seems to have posed a threat only to Soviet pride, would have been banned there remains for us a mystery, as is who were the special few "authorized" to screen it, and why they were sworn to secrecy about what they saw.

A comedy about guinea pigs? Woodrow Wilson once supposedly remarked that Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) was "like writing history with lightning," which was not at all true of Griffith's film, narratively speaking, but in a larger sense it's true of all movies, which freeze in time their own historical moment and context like a fly in amber. It's an essential fascination inherent in early-century movies, and Shmain's opens a delightful window on a historical slice of Ukrainian history, sans Marxist glorification or state messaging, at a time more than ninety years later when the resistance of the Ukrainian spirit is once again defying totalitarian might.

— MICHAEL ATKINSON

Jean Forest

CRAINQUEBILLE

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY THE STEPHEN HORNE ENSEMBLE

DIRECTED BY JACQUES FEYDER, FRANCE, 1922
CAST Maurice de Féraudy, Jean Forest, Marguerite Carré, Charles Mosnier, Félix Oudart, René Worms, and Françoise Rosay **PRODUCTION** Les Films Legrand **PRINT SOURCE** Lobster Films

"AT THE THEATER CRAINQUEBILLE MADE ME WEEP," REMEMBERED MARCEL PROUST IN 1916.

Of course it did. Anatole France's parable of an aging vegetable peddler whose minor run-in with a policeman has a devastating effect on his life was written to provoke not just tears, but indignation. France's novella, which first appeared in *Le Figaro* in 1901, refers to "more celebrated affairs," other examples of mangled justice, and his readers would have been quick to see the parallels between *L'Affaire Crainquebille* (the novella's original title) and the Dreyfus Affair then polarizing the country: the wrongful conviction of Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus for treason and his twelve-year struggle to clear his name.

Like Captain Dreyfus, Crainquebille the pushcart peddler is tried and imprisoned—for insulting a police officer in his case—despite a lack of evidence and witnesses testifying to the contrary. And like Dreyfus, Crainquebille serves time and is released—although his fifteen days in jail is a significantly lighter sentence than the five years Dreyfus spent on Devil's Island. Crainquebille also sees his livelihood affected; but whereas Dreyfus succeeded at last in clearing his name and continuing his army career, Crainquebille's fate is more ambiguous. Finally, while Dreyfus was a victim of anti-Semitism, it is Crainquebille's economic and social position on society's margins that makes him a target.

Between the novella's first appearance in *Le Figaro* and an announcement in the summer of 1922 that Jacques Feyder would be directing a film version, *Crainquebille* had also been published in book form and adapted into the popular play that Proust saw. Anatole France had just won the Nobel Prize for Literature the year prior, boosting the novella's commercial potential. The press notices announcing the production mentioned the author first, its star Maurice de Féraudy (of the Comédie-Française) second, and Feyder last. Although Feyder, whose bumpy career included brilliance and frustration in equal measure, is now considered one of French cinema's greats, he was a relative novice in 1922, with only one feature under his belt, the exotic fantasy *L'Atlantide* (1921), a risky enterprise made under great duress over months in the Sahara, but which paid off at the box office.

Feyder's second feature was a contrast to his first in every way: shorter, cheaper, local, rooted in reality, and yet with its own set of difficulties. Friends had advised Feyder against the project, arguing that Anatole France's much admired literary style would never translate to the silent screen as well as it had to the stage. However, Feyder was ready to make another bet, albeit on a more modest

scale. The thirty-seven-year-old proved up to the challenge, making a film that yanks France's original story as polemical essay back to the streets of Paris, fleshing out the details of Crainquebille's corner of the city, a world of pushcart peddlers, street urchins, prostitutes, and shop owners. Feyder replaces the author's cerebral abstractions with visualized daydreams of the characters' hopes and aspirations, or with astute details like Crainquebille's amazed delight at the warm radiator in his jail cell. He also deftly conveys the layers of wordplay around the French insult "mort aux vaches" (slang roughly equivalent to "kill the pigs") that precipitates Crainquebille's arrest.

If any French critics recalled the connection to the Dreyfus Affair, they didn't mention it in their reviews. Instead, they played up the film's Frenchness with a chauvinistic pride, conveniently ignoring that Feyder was actually Belgian. *Cinéa* praised the photography, calling the street scenes "so essentially Parisian, executed by the hand of a master," and *L'Echo National* exulted, "Coming out of the screening we could tell ourselves, no, the cause of French cinema isn't so desperate, we still have directors, artists; it's our job to encourage them to tirelessly keep on with their efforts until the day we will be first in the world film market!" In fact, Hugo Riesenfeld acquired *Crainquebille* for his New York theaters. "This was the only picture he saw that he felt like bringing back to America," *Film Daily* reported. And after seeing it in New York D.W. Griffith declared, "I have seen a film which, for me, precisely symbolizes Paris." While not achieving world domination, *Crainquebille* did better overseas than most French productions.

A film that made money abroad as well as at home was the holy grail of the floundering French film industry in the early 1920s, and penetrating the American market was always cause for celebration. But such success was exceptional in France's chaotic and perennially underfunded film business. Feyder had relied on a banker cousin to raise the money for *L'Atlantide*, while *Crainquebille*'s producers were small independents, part of "a cottage industry," according to historian Richard Abel, that sprang up to fill the production vacuum when large studios like Pathé and Gaumont cut back on production.

The upside of this hobbled industry was an openness to experimentation, with producers and directors trying to revive French filmmaking through sheer creativity. *Crainquebille* is an inventive blend of disparate cinematic ideas, combining melodrama, realism, Expressionism, and a touch of whimsy, making for a finished product that was both a commercial success and avant-garde. Influential critic Émile Vuillermoz wrote in his review of *Crainquebille*, "We can't vanquish the Americans by opposing our franc to their dollar; but if we want to oppose our intelligence to theirs, we'll beat them hollow."

The director liberally expanded on the source material, opening the film with a sequence of farm wagons crossing nighttime Paris that not only gives us a jolt of visual pleasure but sets up the film's economic and social power structures and introduces crucial secondary characters, all before we meet the protagonist. Feyder's cameraman was the talented Léonce-Henri Burel, who worked with everyone from Abel Gance to Robert Bresson, and this sequence is one of the first actually shot at night rather than being merely tinted. As dawn breaks, the wagons reach Les Halles, the city's historic central market (demolished in the 1970s), and the high-angle camera captures its vastness, panning over the crowd of buyers and sellers swarming around pyramids of cabbages and cauliflowers.

In his memoir Feyder wrote, "There is no sharper pleasure, no greater or more unreliable happiness than the invention of a vocabulary, the fixing in place of some new kind of cinematic syntax." Feyder's mastery of cinema syntax is apparent throughout the film. During the pivotal encounter between Crainquebille and the policeman, the director crosscuts between our protagonist who's waiting for payment, the policeman ordering him to move along, the growing traffic jam, and the shopkeeper who's gone to get change and been distracted by a customer of her own. Feyder orchestrates these multiple perspectives to create a polished set piece of half-comic, half-suspenseful tension. In other sequences Feyder switches gears, incorporating fantastical effects—miniature people dancing on one character's tarot cards, a statue of Marianne, emblem of the Republic, swiveling her head in the courtroom scene as if appalled at the proceedings. Much of the novella's charm lies in the author's sardonic aphorisms, one about the inherent injustice of the justice system Feyder converted into funhouse images of a giant policeman in the witness box followed by a miniature witness for the defense.

In November 1922 *Crainquebille* was previewed for free to an invited audience of Parisian pushcart peddlers. It was, unsurprisingly, a hit with them. "That's it exactly," one spectator murmured as Les Halles appeared on screen, according to an eavesdropping journalist. The audience applauded Féraudy, whistled (a sign of disapproval) at the police and judges, wept at Crainquebille's hard times, and applauded even more vigorously the upbeat conclusion (very different from the novella's). Another reporter quoted a peddler who said, "It's not us they should be showing this film to." To whom, then? "The cops" was the succinct response.

At the opposite end of the social scale, Vuillermoz's review did more than rave. While he objected to the ending's sentimentality, he gave the film credit for transcending its own melodrama, arguing that while no one—not the judge or the customers who turn away from Crainquebille—acts maliciously, nevertheless "Jérôme Crainquebille is slowly caught and broken by the powerful, well-oiled gears of our institutions." It's a perceptive summation of what we call systemic inequity today, and it's this sophisticated, nuanced portrait of social machinery and its destructions that makes *Crainquebille* resonate a century later. In that sense, the wronged ghost of Dreyfus haunts the film still.

— MONICA NOLAN

Jean Forest and Maurice de Féraudy

WALK CHEERFULLY

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY UTSAV LAL

DIRECTED BY YASUJIRO OZU, JAPAN, 1930
CAST Minoru Takada, Hisao Yoshitani, Hiroko Kawasaki, Satoko Date, and Takeshi Sakamoto
PRODUCTION Shochiku Film Company **ORIGINAL LANGUAGE TITLE** HOGARAKA NI AYUME
PRINT SOURCE Janus Films

Yasujiro Ozu will always be best known for his mid-century dramas, like *Tokyo Story*, *Late Spring*, and *Floating Weeds*. They have a towering reputation in world cinema: their distinctive visual style defining what an Ozu film 'is' for most people. But doesn't this make his earlier work intriguing? His three so-called gangster films, in particular: silent movies loaded with violence, menace, and flamboyant style—with *motion*—set in a Japan that in some senses could be anywhere, and where Western influences are obvious and abounding. *Walk Cheerfully* was the first of these.

It's a love story, and not a complex one. Kenji (Minoru Takada) is a hoodlum, known on the streets as Ken the Knife. He makes a passable living as a mugger and pickpocket, spending most of his time with Senko (Hisao Yoshitani), his buddy, flunky, and accomplice, and Chieko (Satoko Date), his girl. One day, after completing a routine scam (shot by Ozu with frequent cuts and plenty of action), Kenji spies Yasue (Hiroko Kawasaki) exiting a store. Struck by her beauty—or is it her class?—he starts down a long path of redemption that will make him worthy of her.

If you think you've seen this before, you probably have. And Ozu had, too. *Walk Cheerfully* is the work of a young director enthralled by films from other places, and eager to pay homage to them. Over the course of ninety minutes or so we see early noir fashions, German Expressionist lighting (even a bit of Germany's famous "unchained camera"), a poster of Joan Crawford's *Our Dancing Daughters*, another of Clara Bow from *Rough House Rosie*. Art historian Kathe Geist has broken down the film's office sequence, shot by shot, and found much to compare it with *Berlin, Symphony of a City*, which Ozu could have seen as early as 1927. This is a fantastical world—a hyper culture that couldn't be further removed from the films Ozu became known for later: stories about the joys and cruelties of everyday life.

What *Walk Cheerfully* lacks in psychological depth, it makes up for with heart. Kenji is dapper and cool, but feels deeply; Senko, squat and bumbling, is also earnest and impressively loyal. These are men we believe can go straight. In fact, they already know how to act that way. In the film's first sequence we see Kenji pass as an innocent onlooker, confused about a crime that he actually orchestrated. He must have a violent side, but it's rarely seen, the main exception being a noble one, when he saves Yasue from a rapist (Takeshi Sakamoto), who also happens to be her boss. Even his nickname, intimidating as it sounds, may be a sign of his better nature. As Geist notes, guns were rare in Japan, and not to be taken for granted, even in a gangster film. Ken the Knife is a man to take seriously, but he rarely feels lethal.

Satoko Date and Minoru Takada

GOOD AND BAD, IN THIS FILM, AREN'T SO CLEAR CUT

If Kenji and Senko occupy a liminal space between good and bad, it must be said that good and bad, in this film, aren't so clear cut—a telling departure from his American influences. Often it's a matter of disguise: Kenji's dress makes him appear respectable, but what does that even mean, when Yasue's boss, the sleaziest character in the film, wears a suit, too (and shares, with Senko—a crook—an affinity for a style of hat)? Chieko, party girl and accomplice that she is, has a day job. Only Yasue is what she appears to be: an epitome of humble womanhood, which the flawed characters, Chieko included, must reckon with.

Of course most of these people should change. What makes some admirable, and others detestable, is their willingness to do it—and once Kenji begins that journey, we feel for him, because it's hard. Ozu offers us a few signposts, but nothing too deep: we see Senko leaving his hat behind, then backing up to fetch it; Kenji picking up a doll, broken and discarded by Yasue's sister the day they met, and deciding it's not worth keeping. Kenji's eventual turn to honest work makes him seem like a penitent: he bears the drudgery of washing windows without any complaints, like he doesn't miss his old life at all.

In real life he probably would. But this isn't real life.

Ozu was still in his twenties when he made *Walk Cheerfully*, having worked at Shochiku Film Company since 1923. The bulk of his output up to that point was silent comedy, most of it light, much of it lost. His cinematographer, Hideo Shigehara, worked with him almost exclusively, and continued to do so until Shigehara's retirement in the late 1930s, at which point his apprentice, Yuhara Atsuta, took over the lens. But big changes were ahead. The next five years saw Ozu make or top the *Kinema Junpo* top-ten poll with *Tokyo Chorus* (1931), *I Was Born, But...* (1932), *Passing Fancy* (1933), *A Story of Floating Weeds* (1934), and *An Inn in Tokyo* (1935). He made his first sound film in 1936 (*The Only Son*). His star was rising, and with it his license to experiment—or resist—and here the multiplicity of styles and genres he'd absorbed gave him material.

If *Walk Cheerfully* is a minor work in the Ozu canon, we can still appreciate its elegance. It feels, at times, like something choreographed as much as scripted. Characters of a similar type (hoods or police) move in lockstep, making simultaneous turns; heightening the fantasy and even humor beneath Kenji's grim situation. Even the plot seems rhythmic, with Kenji's and Yasue's lives far apart, then seemingly closer as similar circumstances befall them—the effect can be like that of a danced duet, the performers coming together in the middle of the stage, before parting again.

Hiroko Kawasaki, Nobuko Matsuzono, and Minoru Takada

When studying the work of an artistic genius, there is a strong temptation to categorize. Picasso had his Blue Period; Michelangelo, those unfinished sculptures, the figures left encased in rock, emblematic of his later life. To consider them is to expand our own perception of the person; to humanize them as creators in time—people who were young once, and who matured; their own brilliance the product of many influences. If Ozu's *Walk Cheerfully* doesn't require—or reward—such deep analysis, it is only because the master's mind is so fully, deliberately on display. To watch it is to join young Yasujiro for a movie night; to visit his home and talk about his passions, be shown the things he collected, the artwork he hung on his walls. It is to imagine, too, a director at a crucial moment, when his career could've gone in multiple directions. In 1930 you could have sat in a theater and watched *Walk Cheerfully* and thought it a pastiche of things done well—and predicted Ozu's successful future as a maker of comedies or romances, crime films or melodramas. Least of all, perhaps, the kind of films that ended up making him famous. There's a lesson in that. No genre, no style is a barrier to greatness, if the artist has an abiding love for what they do, and a drive to do it well.

— CHRIS EDWARDS

THE EDWARD EVERETT HORTON SHOW!

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY BEN MODEL

NO PUBLICITY Directed by Nicholas T. Barrows, USA, 1928. With Ruth Dwyer, Josephine Crowell, and Aileen Manning **HORSE SHY** Directed by Jay A. Howe, USA, 1928. With Nita Cavalier, Bruce Covington, and William Gillespie **VACATION WAVES** Directed by Nicholas T. Barrows, USA, 1928. With Duane Thompson, Aileen Manning, and Billy "Red" Jones
PRODUCTION Hollywood Productions **PRINT SOURCE** Undercrank Productions

Classic movie buffs know Edward Everett Horton as a most welcome effete and persnickety character actor in a long line of films beginning in the 1930s, primarily comedies and musicals. And Boomers may recognize his soothing well-enunciated voice as the narrator of *Fractured Fairy Tales* from the *Rocky and His Friends* (a.k.a. *Rocky and Bullwinkle*) television cartoon from 1959 to 1963. So his presence at the San Francisco Silent Film Festival might be a bit of a surprise. Indeed, that he even *had* a career in silent films is revelatory.

Horton was born in Brooklyn on March 18, 1886, the son of a *New York Times* compositor. When young Eddie developed an interest in the theater, his father was encouraging, but his sterner church-going mother was not. He enrolled at Oberlin College in Ohio, where he was expelled for the ghastly prank of throwing a lifelike dummy off a tall building. He then attended Columbia but dropped out when the theater bug bit. "I was an ambitious lad, smitten with the smell of greasepaint and Minnie Maddern Fiske," he said in looking back. He toured in vaudeville, performed Gilbert and Sullivan, and made his Broadway debut in the melodrama *The Man Who Stood Still* in 1908.

When he played a hysterically distraught husband to great effect in *A Fool There Was*, the 1909 Broadway production later adapted into Theda Bara's film vamp showcase in 1915, his career was set toward comedy. In 1919, he left New York and joined the Majestic Theatre's resident stock company in Los Angeles, which further boosted his credentials and visibility. Horton made his film debut in 1922 at thirty-six in the comedy *Too Much Business* as part of a three-film deal at Vitagraph. He began in pictures as a leading man in comedies, but most of his early films don't survive, including the 1923 version of *Ruggles of Red Gap*, in which he had the title role.

The film and stage community adored Horton. Screenwriter Francis Marion called him "one of the kindest men and most facile performers in the theatrical business." He was by all accounts a generous and loyal friend. He secured a job for actress-comedienne Marie Dressler when her career stalled, holding no grudges after she left his stage production of Ferenc Molnár's *The Swan* to accept a film offer. His acting was admired as well. British actor Reginald Denny said, "To do farce properly, you take an almost impossible situation but you play it legitimately. Eddie Horton was a great farceur. He was sincere and legitimate."

Edward Everett Horton in *Vacation Waves*

Beginning in 1927, Horton starred in eight two-reel comedies for Paramount Pictures. They were produced by Harold Lloyd for his Hollywood Productions company and came with high production values, saucy intertitles, and talented personnel, including Lloyd's ace cameraman Walter Lundin. The three screening as part of the festival reveal Horton as a masterly silent film comedian, with flawless timing and mercurial facial expressions. Most surprising, however, was his gift for physical comedy, throwing his entire body into action as needed.

In *No Publicity*, Horton is a photographer assigned to cover the engagement of a young society woman. By this time he had perfected his unique style of double take. Something outrageous is said, or an impropriety is committed. Horton's character looks, nods, and smiles politely, maintaining decorum until reality strikes. Then his face falls, eyes go wide, and he lurches toward some resolution. *No Publicity* is a tour de force of gags. It features Horton in drag, the "Ford fender shimmy" dance, a gallery of funny matrons ready to have their dignity assailed, and a foreshadowing of the hounding paparazzi phenomenon. It also reveals Horton's generosity. His costars are given moments to shine, resulting in twenty minutes of delight.

In *Horse Shy*, Horton is called upon to do some daring stunts. It features nifty camera tricks and is shot largely outside in the bright sunshine, with Horton's nimble physicality nearly the equal of Lloyd's. *Vacation Waves* includes a scene on a city trolley that captures Los Angeles locations of nearly a century ago. Comedy setups look borrowed from Lloyd's bag of tricks, but that doesn't reduce their pleasure when executed by Horton. Each gives us a side of him lost with the talkies, as well as glimpses of the urbane and reliably wry actor to come.

Horton was well prepared for sound. By then in his forties, gangly at six feet two inches tall, and dispossessed of leading man handsomeness, he became one of the great character actors of classic Hollywood. Through it all, he kept appearing on stage. His turn as the sybaritic Henry Dewlip in the comedy *Springtime for Henry* was such a good fit, he played the part off and on for decades. But he focused greater attention on film work—and lots of it. He was soon cast as the quintessential bemused supporting player and best friend-lawyer-butler-confidante to the leading man. Tacitly understood to be gay, his characters enlivened dozens of movies with comic interludes, either commenting on the main action or occasionally having subplots of their own.

In *The Celluloid Closet*, Vito Russo's landmark study of homosexuality in the movies, Horton is catalogued as a "sissy" in the films of the 1930s and '40s alongside Franklin Pangborn, Eric Blore, and Grady Sutton. Frequently caught in predicaments that hinted at gay desire, he has the dubious distinction of being the best remembered of them all. With his thin lips curling into a smile, his eyes narrowing to crescent moons, and his voice frequently exclaiming "My word!" in befuddlement, Horton was a winking superstar of lavender Hollywood. He once claimed to play "thirty-five best friends, twenty-six timid clerks, and thirty-seven 'frustrated' men." His sound credits are impressive and include *Reaching for the Moon* (1930), *The Front Page* (1931), *Design for Living* (1933), *The Merry Widow* (1934), *The Gay Divorcee* (1934), *Top Hat* (1935), *Lost Horizon* (1937), *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941), *The Gang's All Here* (1943), and *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944).

Horton was routinely typecast, but it didn't embitter him. He acknowledged playing a "mouse" on screen, saying, "It pays to be a mouse, or at least it pays me. And as long as it pays, I'm going on with my mousing, just as long as the producers ask for it." Though he was very popular, he was never tied to a long-term contract. He built a good life, buying a twenty-one acre estate in what was a rural Encino in 1926. He nicknamed it "Belleigh Acres," grew fruit trees, kept livestock, and threw big social gatherings. His guest cottage was rented by the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Marjorie Lord, and Vivian Vance. Actor Gavin Gordon and he were longtime companions, though both were as discreet as the era demanded of homosexuals.

Beginning in the 1950s, Horton found more work on television, appearing in guest spots on *I Love Lucy*, *The Real McCoys*, *Dennis the Menace*, *F Troop*, and *Batman*. His turn as the narrator of *Fractured Fairy Tales*, a reimagining of "Once upon a time" stories with irreverent modern twists and turns, brought him new fame late in life.

Horton died of cancer at his beloved estate on September 29, 1970, at age eighty-four, his final performance in the comedy *Cold Turkey* not yet on movie screens. These silent shorts are further proof of how good he was, even before applying his memorable drollery to the talkies.

— MATTHEW KENNEDY

Edward Everett Horton in *No Publicity* (above) and *Horse Shy* (right)

KENTUCKY PRIDE

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY WAYNE BARKER

DIRECTED BY JOHN FORD, USA, 1925
CAST Virginia's Future, Henry B. Walthall, J. Farrell MacDonald, and Gertrude Astor **PRODUCTION** Fox Film Corp. **PRINT SOURCE** Museum of Modern Art

When Frank S. Nugent and Laurence Stallings were working on the screenplay for the 1948 western *3 Godfathers*, director John Ford, who felt they relied too heavily on exposition, told them, "Has it ever occurred to either of you that the first motion pictures were Leland Stanford's studies of a running horse [the experiments on photography of motion by Eadweard Muybridge for Stanford in the 1870s]? Well, for your information, a running horse remains the finest subject for a motion picture camera. Now forget this dialogue stuff and give me some horses and real estate."

Ford's lifelong love of horses is evident in many of his movies from his earliest days as a stuntman and director and most famously in his many classic westerns, including his films about the U.S. Cavalry. But perhaps most touching of all Ford's cinematic work with horses is his little-known 1925 silent film *Kentucky Pride*. This modest gem was absent from the acclaimed 2007 DVD box set *Ford at Fox*, which collected twenty-four of Ford's astonishing list of fifty-two films for that studio. But it now has been beautifully restored from nitrate elements held by the Museum of Modern Art, with funding by 20th Century Studios (which absorbed the former 20th Century-Fox), so hopefully it will take its rightful place as one of the highlights of Ford's rich and vast body of work.

Kentucky Pride is based on a story by Dorothy Yost, a prolific screenwriter from the silent days through 1966. Yost also wrote two lost Ford silents, *Jackie* and *Little Miss Smiles*, and among her other work are many westerns, such as *Thunderhead: Son of Flicka* and *The Strawberry Roan*, as well as *The Gay Divorcee*, *Alice Adams*, and *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*. What's most striking about the highly entertaining and endearing *Kentucky Pride* is that it takes several of what would become Ford's key themes—tradition, duty, the breakup and occasional reunion of families, and what Peter Bogdanovich called "victory in defeat"—and situates them in the world of horses. It's also a rare film charmingly narrated (through intertitles) by a horse, Virginia's Future, the central character who comments wryly and often ruefully on how those animals have been abused by humans. *Kentucky Pride* is Ford's heartfelt equivalent of later films about the abuse of donkeys, Robert Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar* and Jerzy Skolimowski's *Eo*, and it has similarities to *War Horse*, Steven Spielberg's tribute to the millions of horses worked and often killed in World War I.

Kentucky Pride begins with scenes of two generations of horses being suckled on the farm of a wealthy Kentuckian (Henry B. Walthall) and depicts, often in breathtakingly lyrical documentary-style footage shot in Kentucky, the early training of Virginia's Future, named after Walthall's

Gertrude Astor, J. Farrell MacDonald (standing), Henry B. Walthall, and Peaches Jackson

daughter (Peaches Jackson), and the inevitable but heartrending separation the thoroughbred filly undergoes from her mare. From there it's downhill into work as a drayhorse hauling junk for a cruel owner and his two unsavory pals, and for Walthall into loss of his fortune and a seedy living as a bootlegger during Prohibition. Eventually the horse's former Irish American groom, the beloved Ford regular J. Farrell MacDonald, reclaims her in a jolly Fordian donnybrook. MacDonald, who becomes a cop in *Kentucky Pride*, would go on to star as a benevolent Irish cop in New York in another largely unsung Ford delight, *Riley the Cop* (1928), and appear in many other films for the director, most memorably in *3 Bad Men* (1926) and *My Darling Clementine* (1946). Unlike most Ford films about the breakup of families (his favorite metaphor for the collapse of traditional societies), *Kentucky Pride* manages a triumphant happy ending through the horse's offspring, Confederacy. Several of the horses are played by champion thoroughbreds of the day, notably by the legendary Man o' War, one of the most celebrated sports figures of the 1920s, featured by Ford in a thrilling five-shot cameo.

While working as a stuntman and actor for his brother Francis Ford in the early days at Universal, John Ford became adept at horse stunts, and in the very first film he directed, *The Tornado* (1917), a lost short he described as a series of stunts, Ford's equestrian derring-do was hailed by *Moving Picture World*: "In his hand-to-hand struggle in the cabin and the jump from the cabin roof to the back of his horse, Jack Ford qualifies as a rough-riding expert.... As a climax the hero leaps from his running horse onto a moving train!" In 1916, Ford had taken $50 of his salary as a crewman and actor to buy his first horse, a bay saddle gelding named Woodrow, and he enjoyed riding horses while playing cowboy with his early star, Harry Carey, on Carey's Newhall ranch where they stayed while making westerns in the rough.

Among the many other Ford films in which horses play major roles are *Cheyenne's Pal* and *Bucking Broadway* (both released in 1917), *Hitchin' Posts* (1920), *The Shamrock Handicap* (1926), *Hangman's House* (1928), and his later westerns, notably the Cavalry Trilogy (1948–50, especially in the "Roman riding" with Ben Johnson and Harry Carey Jr. in *Rio Grande*), *Wagon Master* (1950), *The Quiet Man* (1952), and *The Horse Soldiers* (1959). The film that put Ford on the map as an "A" director, his 1924 epic, *The Iron Horse*, takes its title from the Native American name for a train, while Ford celebrates the building of the transcontinental railroad during the 1860s.

Ford recalled the filming of *Kentucky Pride* in his 1967 interview book with Peter Bogdanovich in terms of his love affair with horses: "There was one little filly — just a beautiful thing — and she had a terrific crush on me. She'd leave the herd and run over and play with me — take my cap, run away with it and look at me — then she'd come back and drop it, and when I'd reach down to get the cap, she'd pick it up again and run away. The fellow who owned her said, 'Why don't you name her — she's crazy about you.' So I named her Mary Ford [also the name of the director's wife], and she went out and won her first three races easy, then broke down — broke a tendon in her leg or something — and they put her to stud. I'm not a horse race fan [perhaps because of the danger it presents to horses?], but I know her get has been famous. I always remember her — she just loved me."

J. Farrell MacDonald and Virginia's Future

That warmth and humor Ford brought to his feelings for horses are evident throughout *Kentucky Pride*, which convincingly employs his favorite tropes to his empathy for the animal world. The film is marred by some of the stereotypical racial and ethnic overtones that popped up in Ford's early work, although his films were always distinguished by integrating racial and ethnic minority groups into the fabric of American society, a rare quality in films of his era. Virginia's Future's villainous later owners are a swarthy trio of caricatured immigrants, a Russian and two Italians. Henry Walthall is best known as the Little Colonel in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (in which Ford played a KKK horse rider); Walthall's a superb actor who also appeared for Ford in *The Face on the Barroom Floor* (1923) and *Judge Priest* (1934), but he carries associations from *Birth* into this yarn that begins with the intertitle, "With us Kentuckians, pride of race is everything!" and names the mare's foal Confederacy. Ford's wife was a Southerner, and though the always contradictory filmmaker was a liberal on civil rights issues, Nugent observed that Ford "loves the Confederacy with all an Irishman's affection for lost causes."

But Ford characteristically reserves honors at the end for both the Irish American groom and a Black stable-hand as they pose in triumph with the two horses for not only a still photographer but also three newsreel cameramen. It's a pleasure to present *Kentucky Pride* the way it looked in 1925, and let's hope the restored version will be released in Blu-ray as it deserves.

— JOSEPH MCBRIDE

WONDER HORSES OF THE SILENT SCREEN

by Fritzi Kramer

"CAN YOU RIDE?"

An acting manual from 1922 warned wannabe movie stars that this would be among the first questions asked when they applied at motion picture studios. As a matter of fact, there was every chance that a new actor's big name costar would have four legs, hooves, and a taste for sugar cubes.

During the 1910s, the best loved horse-cowboy bromance of the screen was between hard-bitten, fist-fighting two-gun Good Bad Man William S. Hart and his pinto pony, Fritz. Fritz was small but mighty, demanding his own entourage, consisting of a mustang named Kate and a mule named Lizbeth, and allegedly penned his own book—though Hart did admit to editing it. Hart was eventually able to purchase Fritz from the studio and took him into retirement with him when he bid farewell to the screen.

Tom Mix, the flashiest of the celluloid cowboys and genuine veteran rodeo star, rode Tony, who had a distinctive white blaze and was as stylish as his owner. Tony was touted as a "Wonder Horse," a title shared by many cinema steeds, but no other animal enjoyed billing alongside Mix. Meanwhile, John Ford's original leading man, Harry Carey, was dustier, gritter, and devoted to Pete, a dapple-grey who went home with Carey to his ranch when they weren't working. Smaller names in the western game also showed off the antics of their signature mounts. Ken Maynard's Tarzan was billed as "endowed with super-intelligence." Jack Perrin had Starlight, a white horse with a playful side whose talents included politely knocking on doors to gain entry.

Other rodeo veterans turned movie stars rode their favorites as well. Bill Pickett, a legendary bulldogger who made two films for the Norman Film Company in the 1920s, was partnered with an equally fiery horse named Spradley. Trick rider Helen Gibson was having difficulty finding the right horse for her film work, so the Kalem film company bought Black Beauty, her former mount, from the western show that owned him.

Rex, who caused a sensation in *King of the Wild Horses*, belonged to no cowpoke and was a superstar in his own right. He was a black Morgan so charismatic that he was bestowed an "IT" title by author and hoopla queen Elinor Glyn, sharing the distinction with Antonio Moreno, Douglas Fairbanks, John Gilbert, and, of course, Clara Bow. In an interview, Glyn pointed out that, unlike human beings, Rex was unlikely to ever lose "IT" as being casually unaware of one's own sex appeal was the secret of keeping it.

Rex wasn't the only example of a standalone equine star. Just as boxers, baseball greats, surfers, and track stars were referenced, cameoed, or even starred in silent films, celebrity racehorses were accorded similar respect. Famous champions Man o' War, Fair Play, Morvich, and The Finn were featured in Fox's *Kentucky Pride* and "Us Horses" were billed before their human costars. Man o' War also enjoyed solo recognition in his own self-titled 1920 short, which touted him as the "Wonder Horse of the World" and the film as "a delight to women, children and all horse lovers." Just weeks after *Kentucky Pride* was released, Universal announced that it had obtained the services of three notable racehorses: two bay geldings named Last Chip and Short Change and a third horse named Jack Lee. "Track Stars Forsake Tia Juana for Films!" *Universal Weekly*'s headline screamed.

The similarities between human and horse stars didn't stop there. A fan magazine fashion piece described Helen Holmes's riding habit in loving detail and the rig of her horse, Rocket, was given equal consideration. He wore a smart browband of white patent leather accented with red. Antonio Moreno may have had "IT" but magazine glamor shots of his horse, Salano, gave both Moreno and Rex a run for their money. Beautiful people on beautiful horses proved to be an irresistible combination for the press of the era.

If equine stars shared the rewards of their human counterparts, they also shared the downsides. For every superstar horse, there were hundreds of unnamed extras and the film industry cared even less for their safety. A breathless American ad for the 1913 Italian version of *The Last Days of Pompeii* proudly proclaimed, "Five Horses Killed in Chariot Scene!" The pattern tragically repeated as four human extras and forty horses were reported killed during the 1926 shoot for *Beau Geste* in Yuma, Arizona, and it was hardly the exception. For all of its affectionate title cards, *Kentucky Pride* seems to have made use of the often deadly (but routine) tripwire to stage its leading horse's fall before the finish line.

Film producers found themselves grappling with activists determined to force the movie moguls to look after the well-being of their animal performers, particularly horses. In 1924 the American Animal Defense League organized a protest, instructing patrons to buy tickets to horse pictures and then walk out, citing cruelty as the reason. Targeted films included *King of the Wild Horses*, *The Covered Wagon*, and *The Ten Commandments*. Producers countered that the group's actions were both libelous and slanderous and threatened to take legal action. Real reform was still years away.

There were some cases of motion pictures doing good. A 1916 fan magazine recounted a particularly vicious Wild West show performing in Cincinnati that mistreated the company horses. Humane officers were able to bring charges because a reporter had taken newsreel footage of the show and volunteered the film as evidence.

Francesca Bertini

VOGLIO A TTE!

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY STEPHEN HORNE

DIRECTED BY ROBERTO ROBERTI, ITALY, 1922/1925
CAST Francesca Bertini, Guido Graziosi, Alfonso Cassini, Gino Viotti, and Ida Carloni Talli
PRODUCTION Bertini Film **PRINT SOURCE** Cineteca Milano

Before temporarily retiring from film acting in 1922, Italian diva Francesca Bertini completed one last film for her most trusted director, Roberto Roberti. Variously entitled, in Neapolitan vernacular, *Voglio a tte!* ("I Want You!") or, in Italian, *La fanciulla di Amalfi* ("The Maiden from Amalfi"), the film was submitted to the censors in December 1922 with the latter title but did not receive final approval for more than two years. It was cleared for circulation only in early July 1925 with significant changes: a new Spanish title (*Consuelita*), new intertitles referring to Spanish settings and characters replacing the film's original Neapolitan ones, and several cuts resulting in a final version one hundred meters shorter (from the original of 1,564 meters to 1,481). The version screening at SFSFF comes out of the lab of Cineteca Milano, which completed the restoration in 2022 on the basis of the only known surviving print (an even shorter one at 1,160 meters), held by the same archive and entitled *Voglio a tte!*

The film belongs to the rich Neapolitan film tradition that had emerged in Italy since the early 1910s. Deeply indebted to the city's musical and theatrical culture, this tradition represented a response to the historical filmed epics and grand literary adaptations produced in Turin, Milan, and Rome. Both aesthetically and commercially, Neapolitan cinema was prized for its regional authenticity, stemming from such well-established pre-cinematic practices as the centuries-old pictorial tradition of the panoramic city view or the popular stage and musical dramas of atavistic passion and jealousy, with their plebeian characters and histrionic acting style. The post-World War I success of Neapolitan cinema beyond Italy's southern regions and throughout the peninsula (and even beyond) had propelled performers, songwriters, and playwrights into a form of stardom that was at once regional in character and national in reach.

One of Neapolitan cinema's earliest and most exemplary works was the noirish melodrama *Assunta Spina* (1915), recently restored and screened at the 2015 Giornate del Cinema Muto (Pordenone). It featured a charming seamstress played by Francesca Bertini (real name: Elena Vitiello), who also claimed to have directed it. In the following years Bertini succeeded in complementing her performative Neapolitaness (she started on the city's stages at an early age even though she was not born there) with the broader fame of Italian diva par excellence, that is, as an interpreter of realistic dramas who exuded *national*, and not just regional, merit.

After the Great War, when the lucrative Italian historical and literary epics lost their might in terms of production values and international appeal, Neapolitan films continued to do well. According to historians Stefano Masi and Mario Franco, their

numbers might have seen a decrease in the early 1920s (thirty-six in 1920; twenty-five in 1921, and sixteen in 1922), but the percentage of their production compared to the rest of Italian films increased to reach its apex of eleven percent in 1922, when *Voglio a tte!* was made. That year also saw the release of two notable productions directed by the celebrated Neapolitan filmmaker Elvira Notari, *'A Santanotte* (*The Holy Night*) and *É piccerella* (*The Little Girl's Wrong*).

Voglio a tte! was the last of a dozen or so films Bertini acted in under the direction of Roberti. Born Vincenzo Leone near Avellino in the Campania region (and father to Sergio Leone of spaghetti western fame), Roberti was familiar with the Neapolitan cinematic tradition and just two years before had directed Bertini in *Marion, artista di caffé-concerto* (1920), a melodrama centered on a café singer's messy love life, which displays traits of the same cinematic culture.

The film opens on stereotypical scenes of Neapolitan fishermen—even though we are allegedly in Spain—who are returning to port after a successful fishing expedition to share in the profits. After a violent confrontation between an arrogant man armed with a stiletto and the fishermen's aging boss, Pablo Santos, we meet Consuelita, Pablo's adopted daughter, played by Bertini. Relieved that Pablo (Alfonso Cassini) has remained unscathed, she is revealed to be a hard-working figure, a kind of ideal working-class Neapolitan woman who is saddened by the absence of love in her life.

Meanwhile in a posh London mansion a team of medical doctors reports on the health of the son of Sir David Yames, Harford (Guido Graziosi), who they claim suffers from "intellectual torpor and hypochondria" and needs a change of scenery. At the same time Consuelita seeks out some life counseling of a different kind from an old fortune teller who predicts that a visitor arriving by sea will solve Consuelita's romantic longings, which, as an intertitle suggests, are typical of her Spanish nature.

In the predictable way of classic melodrama, there is a chance encounter. The destination for Harford's recovery is Spain and as he lands on shore in the company of his father, Consuelita also happens to be there with a group of her friends who immediately begin to tease her about the new arrival, calling him *her* prince charming. As Harford and Consuelita get to know and appreciate each other, his mood improves spectacularly. Realizing that his son could not bear returning home without her, Sir David persuades Pablo to let his daughter accompany them to London. After a detour of European capitals, Consuelita arrives to the mansion transformed, possessing the refined manners and elegant outfits of an aristocratic lady. A regenerated Harford, now completely in love with her, proposes marriage and, after a short-lived rejection, she accepts. Pablo receives news of the wedding and a compensatory check, which makes him a rich and happy man. The first night, however, Harford's dark thoughts re-emerge. He assaults Consuelita who manages to defend herself, escape, and return home. But the villagers, who had been closely following news of her abroad, incessantly gossip about her, driving her to take refuge in the remote home of an old woman she knows.

Harford's fragile mental health, as the doctors finally discover, is because of a splinter inside his head. After a successful operation, he returns to Spain looking for his wife. His promise to compensate whoever can find her induces an old bitter suitor to deceive him into an ambush. A good friend of Consuelita, who alone knows of her actual location, alerts her of Harford's return and the danger he's now in. She returns to the village in time to save her husband's life and her marriage.

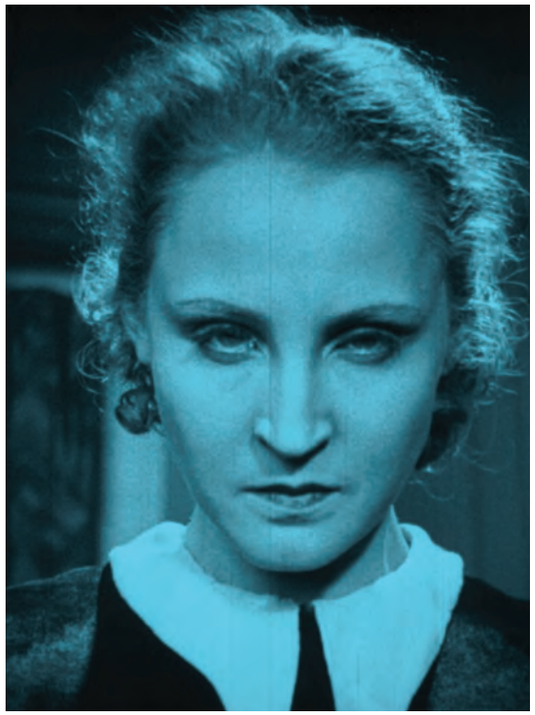
Historians have not determined with certainty the reasons for the long distribution delay. As film scholar Nino Genovese argued in 1985, the fact that about two months before the censors received the film, the Fascist leader Benito Mussolini had succeeded in becoming Italy's Prime Minister following the March on Rome (October 1922) may have been the deciding factor. For a production that would draw on Bertini's international fame, the film may have showcased, according to Genovese, too many negative stereotypes about Naples—poverty, backwardness, violent inclinations, and folkloric singing and dancing. In particular, Pablo's acceptance of financial compensation for his daughter's voluntary marriage might also have come across as a reprehensible concession to supposed British social and racial superiority.

Bertini-Roberti's film was not one-dimensional, however. The narrative is complex and presented in stylistic layers: the plebeian Neapolitan/Spanish setting, with its musical scenes and melodramatic twists versus the bourgeois British atmosphere and its more restrained portrayals. The same diversity informed Bertini's interpretation: she tapped into the operatic routines that she had already adopted for her humble role in *Assunta Spina* and other films before transitioning to the reserved ones of an impeccable aristocratic lady of her subsequent work. Still, in the new climate, made clear by Mussolini from the very beginning of his leadership, cinema was to showcase a modern Italy, and the old stereotypes in *Voglio a tte!* might have been too much.

After 1922, following her marriage, Bertini briefly retired from the screen. Roberti worked with her again in 1925 and 1926 as well as directed *Napoli che canta* (*When Naples Sings*), a summa of Neapolitan film culture that passed the censors with ease and went on to become a major success in the U.S. Meanwhile, in 1927, *Voglio a tte!* was rereleased with yet another title, *Amore vince timore* ("Love Prevails Over Fear"). Very few people, mostly in the South, noticed.

— GIORGIO BERTELLINI

Francesca Bertini



A DAUGHTER OF DESTINY

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY GUENTER BUCHWALD

DIRECTED BY HENRIK GALEEN, GERMANY, 1928
CAST Brigitte Helm, Paul Wegener, Iván Petrovich, John Loder, and Valeska Gert **PRODUCTION** Ama-Film **ORIGINAL LANGUAGE TITLE** ALRAUNE **PRINT SOURCE** Filmmuseum München

"GOD, SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL!"

That was Fritz Lang to an interviewer, decades after casting teenage Brigitte Helm in a double role in *Metropolis*: both the virginal worker Maria and Maria's evil robot duplicate. Helm's dual performance is one of the most famous in all silent drama. Just eighteen when cameras began turning on *Metropolis*, Helm went on to international stardom, and in the German cinema she was, according to Austrian film writer Kay Weniger, "for a decade the epitome of an enigmatic screen diva and demonic temptress."

Helm never worked for Fritz Lang again—his autocratic ways nearly drove her to a breakdown, so once was plenty—but she did play another monster created by science run amok. That was the title role in 1928's *Alraune*, directed by Henrik Galeen and released in English as *A Daughter of Destiny*. Galeen had collaborated with Paul Wegener, both men writing, directing, and appearing in the silent horror film *The Golem* (1915), the first version of that Jewish folktale for the screen (now lost), and he wrote the screenplay for 1922's *Nosferatu*. While *Daughter of Destiny* has an eerie setup and plenty of atmosphere, it doesn't play as a horror film. Instead, Helm's lab-created Alraune, both enchanting and sinister, gradually takes over the movie and our sympathies. When it comes to the scientist and the monster, there's no question who most people want to emerge victorious.

"Alraune" literally means "mandrake." The movie explains, in a poetically non-explicit way, that the vaguely human-shaped mandrake root grows from semen that is expelled, along with other body fluids, by a hanged man in his death throes. Professor Jacob ten Brinken (Paul Wegener) has fixed his unbalanced mind on the idea of using mandrake from a freshly executed prisoner to inseminate a prostitute. Why? Well, because he can, and because the professor takes an unholy interest in the darkest side of eugenics. Ten Brinken's nephew, Frank Braun (Iván Petrovich) cries, "Your attempts are a crime against nature!" and this gets about as far as you'd expect with a mad scientist.

Elegant though the movie is for its first third, matters pick up considerably once Helm appears as seventeen-year-old Alraune who is being raised in a convent school. There sits the delicate creature as she hides from her own birthday celebration, her perfectly tapered fingers extending toward a bowl of water. We see the girl's objective: a hapless fly buzzing on the bowl's edge. Alraune gently pushes the creature to its liquid death, and it's now plain, if ever there was doubt, that in the nature-versus-nurture debate, this film is one hundred percent endorsing the former. Then again, is it?

Ah, Alraune, what a delinquent she becomes. A hapless youth with a crush steals from his own father to help her run away from the convent, and she abandons the kid as soon as she finds a more

Brigitte Helm and Paul Wegener

promising sponsor in the form of a magician from a traveling circus. (A brief shot of Alraune, who has taken up the cigarette habit, blowing smoke in the face of a caged lion is one of the most delicious things in the film.) Professor ten Brinken, whom she believes to be her father, tracks her down and drags her back to his magnificent home.

For a short while, it seems as though Alraune can be tamed, into a "society lady," and she even falls for a vicomte. But one day she discovers the truth of her conception in ten Brinken's diary and resolves to seduce and therefore destroy her creator. It won't be hard, since the professor's interest in the young woman seems grotesquely sexual from the start. Wegener's perpetually narrowed eyes are constantly trained in his not-daughter's direction.

Daughter of Destiny gets a considerable amount of seductive power from the air of Weimar decadence that goes into overdrive when Helm hits the scene. The great Franz Planer, who left Europe in 1937 and went on to a distinguished Hollywood career, was cinematographer. Here he is equally adept with the sinister depths of ten Brinken's mansion and the rhythms of nightclubs and roulette tables. The Berlin-on-the-brink feeling reaches its apex when Alraune begins to destroy the professor with jazz and champagne, with feather fans and heavy-lidded maquillage. The movie is based on a wildly popular 1911 novel by Hanns Heinz Ewers; *Alraune* was the middle entry in Ewers's so-called Frank Braun trilogy, after *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and before *Vampire*. Among the liberties taken by the Galeen movie is the way it relegates Frank, Ewers's Nietzschean hero, to little more than a plot device.

Brigitte Helm

The trilogy, which is not widely available in English translation, is said to be prescient in more ways than one. It is rather spooky to look at reviews for the 1930 talkie version of *Alraune* (also starring Brigitte Helm), which played New York City cinemas in 1934, and see one calling it a film about a "Test-Tube Baby." (In those days, "test-tube baby" was being used to describe infants born from artificial insemination, a technique that was in the news at the time.) More than once there is an uncomfortable foreshadowing of Nazi-era genetic myths in *Daughter of Destiny*. In fact, novelist Ewers was a party member for a time. But he abandoned National Socialism and the Nazis banned his works (temporarily anyway), perhaps because of the sympathetic Jewish characters in his books, perhaps because of his likely being gay. Ewers died of tuberculosis in 1943.

Director Galeen was Jewish, and at the time of *Daughter of Destiny*'s release he was already recognized as an important talent. Citing Galeen's direction of *The Student of Prague* in 1926, the U.K. *Observer* said in its review of *Daughter of Destiny* that Galeen's "sense of narrative is violent and uncanny—he sees legend in every stick and stone, and draws from nature and the supernatural to strengthen his theme," adding that it bears "at every point the personal stamp of the director." Galeen is even judged by the critic to be more of an individual talent than Howard Hawks or Allan Dwan. But by 1933, Galeen directed his last film. As the Nazis purged the film industry of Jews, he left first for Sweden, then the U.S. He died in Vermont in 1949 at sixty-eight years old.

According to film noir specialist James Ursini, Brigitte Helm made two decisions that altered the shape of her career. She turned down Lola-Lola in *The Blue Angel*, the role that made Marlene Dietrich a superstar. No one can regret Dietrich in that part, but *Daughter of Destiny* suggests that Helm's Lola would have been well worth seeing. Helm also refused an offer to appear in the title role of *The Bride of Frankenstein*, which amounted to refusing a Hollywood career as well. Had she taken up that job, she might have continued acting for years. Helm herself was not Jewish, but by all accounts she loathed the Nazis in general and Adolf Hitler in particular; the Führer had a crush on La Helm that was decidedly unreciprocated.

But Helm always said that she really wanted to be a wife and mother, to keep house and cook for her children. Improbably, it seems she meant it. She married the Jewish doctor Hugo Kunheim and moved with him to Switzerland in 1935, just in time for Kunheim to avoid the worst of what awaited in Germany. They had four children. Helm died in 1996 at eighty-eight years old, having spent virtually all of her post-cinema years refusing to discuss cinema. Possessed of a beauty and charisma that made her Alraune more than memorable, Helm had other qualities in abundance that were ideal for the role—a smart and stubborn temperament, a disinclination to explain herself, and a determination to follow her own path in life.

— FARRAN SMITH NEHME

Stefan Drössler Works His Magic

Interview by Marilyn Ferdinand

World cinema owes an incalculable debt to Germany. Some of the greatest and most iconic treasures ever committed to film come from the fertile imaginations and technical ingenuity of German filmmakers, from the big-budget Ufa spectaculars to the many independent productions that made their way to screens around the world, not to mention the German actors and directors who brought their expertise to the nascent Hollywood film industry. One iconic film, F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), sparked a passion for film in Stefan Drössler, this year's recipient of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival Award for his contributions to silent film preservation, restoration, and exhibition.

A lifelong film enthusiast, Drössler established in 1985 what is now the Bonn Summer Cinema – International Silent Film Festival. He was director of the Bonn Kinemathek from 1986 to 1998 and has been director of Filmmuseum München (Munich Film Archive) for the past twenty-four years. Drössler was a longtime member of the Film Advisory Board of the Goethe-Institut and is one of the founders of the DVD label Edition Filmmuseum, which publishes archive treasures and film restorations. He spoke with me about his early film experiences and the work that went into *A Daughter of Destiny*, or *Alraune* as it is known in German, written and directed by *Nosferatu* scriptwriter Henrik Galeen.

How did your cinephilia begin?

My mother thought that all these moving images are a bad influence. This initiated my interest in this forbidden fruit and I tried to see as many films as I could. When I saw an interesting one, I wanted to share it, so I founded my school film club. When I got some films in bad condition or as incomplete prints, I tried to combine two prints to get the full film. This was my very first step in so-called film reconstruction, and I found it thrilling.

The first silent film I saw as a child was on television. It was *Nosferatu* and it impressed me a lot. Then, much later, in the late '70s, I attended a lecture by the film historian Enno Patalas from the Munich Filmmuseum who had started to reconstruct the movie. He presented the first reel of his workprint. I was very impressed how much longer it was than what I had seen! I told myself, "One day, when this restoration is finished, I will present it in my film club." It needed some years, but at last, in 1987, I was able to present the restored *Nosferatu*. Enno personally came because he just had inserted the pink tints in the dawn scenes and wanted to view them on the big screen.

Tell me about your work on *A Daughter of Destiny*?

I was planning a Brigitte Helm retrospective and Enno Patalas recommended showing the beautiful 35mm print he just had acquired from Gosfilmofond in Moscow. I was thrilled, because it was not easy to get one of these unique prints from his Munich Filmmuseum collection. Since the Russian print had only Russian intertitles, I looked for a German title list from a 16mm print which was shown on television. These were not the original intertitles, but ones retranslated from a Danish print. Since these titles didn't fit the print from Patalas, I realized that the 16mm print had parts that were missing from the Russian print. For the Helm series, we finally did the show as a kind of live reconstruction, switching between the 16mm and the 35mm projectors. In 1999, when I became director of the Munich Filmmuseum, I discovered that just before his retirement Patalas had ordered a 35mm print from the Danish Film Institute. Since neither the original negative of *Alraune* nor the censorship card with the wording of the original titles is known to exist, we just combined the material of the two prints. Fortunately, the Russians cut out different scenes than the Danes cut out. In 2019, about twenty years later, we found some of Henrik Galeen's personal papers, including the second half of his original *Alraune* screenplay. With this, and an intense study of all the contemporary reviews and censorship files, we started a new digital restoration.

In what ways does it still differ from the original?

All the reviews mentioned the performance of Valeska Gert, a notorious dancer in Berlin. It was a short scene in the first reel, just one or two minutes. She dances in front of a bordello with a Black soldier. This was too taboo and was cut out everywhere by the censors. The scene is still missing, but at least I found a photo in an old film program which is now in the movie. I also found in reviews that the film was tinted. The Danish print had some tints, but usually Danish tints were different from German tints. I modified them a bit based on how German tints were done in those years. But the biggest problem was always the first reel—the origins of Brigitte Helm's character. In some countries, the film started only with the second reel, when Alraune is already seventeen years old. But now it is nearly complete.

Did this film have an original score?

In Germany, there were only a few dozen films for which an original score was written. It was quite common for the musical director of each theater to compile music for films in a very short time. It differed from theater to theater. *Alraune* was very successful, based as it was on the best-selling novel, but it was not such a big production that a known composer was hired. So, we had to have new music. For me, it's always very important that the films get appropriate music. Especially when certain passages are missing and I have to put in photos or explanation titles for bridging the gap, I very often do it in close collaboration with a musician. The music catches the emotional spirit of a scene better that I can do. For me a film restoration doesn't mean just to preserve what I found. My aim is to restore a film as close as possible to its premiere version. And to present it on screen to an audience—the magical moment that makes all the effort worthwhile.

Photo by Pamela Gentile

Mae Murray and John Gilbert

THE MERRY WIDOW

MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT BY MAUD NELISSEN CONDUCTING MONT ALTO MOTION PICTURE ORCHESTRA

DIRECTED BY ERICH VON STROHEIM, USA, 1925
CAST Mae Murray, John Gilbert, Roy D'Arcy, Josephine Crowell, George Fawcett, and Tully Marshall
PRODUCTION MGM **PRINT SOURCE** Österreichisches Filmmuseum

The Merry Widow was Erich von Stroheim's greatest commercial success, but throughout his career he expressed nothing but contempt for the film. "When you ask me why I do such pictures I am not ashamed to tell you the true reason: only because I do not want my family to starve," he said at the time. For the rest of his life he did his best to distance himself from what he thought of as a real stinker, once even ordering the house lights turned on after the duel scene because (he claimed) the happy ending had been forced on him. But critics disagreed. In the annual *Film Daily* poll of industry, fan magazine, and daily newspaper critics, *The Merry Widow* tied for third place with *Don Q, Son of Zorro*, behind only *The Gold Rush* and *The Unholy Three* (leaving *The Last Laugh*, *The Freshman*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *The Big Parade* behind in the dust). A few years later this film would have been certain Oscar-bait, but in the tangled and tortured world of Erich von Stroheim's Hollywood it proved to be one more step down the slippery slope to oblivion.

This was not the way it was supposed to happen. Just a month after being fired by Universal's Irving Thalberg midway through production of *Merry Go Round*, Stroheim had signed a new contract with the Goldwyn Corporation. Sam Goldwyn had been forced out the year before, which was part of the problem. With no experienced film people at the helm, the suits who ran the studio decided that all they needed to do was hire the best directors they could find and turn them loose. The names were impressive—Victor Sjöström, Maurice Tourneur, Marshall Neilan, King Vidor—but the results never lived up to expectations. Goldwyn's one talented production executive, June Mathis, was supposed to be supervising all these egos but spent most of her time trying to set up their production of *Ben-Hur*. I once saw a studio copy of the *Greed* script which was the size of a telephone book. It was marked "O.K., June Mathis." Had she even read it?

The train wreck that followed was inevitable. To make a long story short, by March of 1924 Stroheim was screening a four-hour cut for his friends while the studio was already assembling a separate version of its own. Cut off from any connection to the film, Stroheim turned to the next project called for in his contract, *The Merry Widow*, which had been put aside while he concentrated on *Greed*. The family needed to be fed, and Stroheim was counting on a twenty-five percent share of the profits. In any case, he had long been attracted to the show, which he claimed to have seen at its 1905 premiere in Vienna. Franz Lehár, he said, was an old friend.

While he had followed the plotline of Frank Norris's *McTeague* religiously, Stroheim decided to keep only the basic idea of *The Merry Widow*—a

wealthy Ruritanian widow living it up in Paris must be seduced into a state marriage so her fortune can continue to support the crown. The opportunity to revisit the marriage/money plot was irresistible, and the rest of it could be fixed. But even before he began work on the script Goldwyn merged with the rival Metro Pictures Corporation, and instead of a distracted June Mathis, Stroheim again found himself under the thumb of Irving Thalberg.

Originally, Stroheim had no intention of employing any movie stars and planned to cast the film with relative unknowns (and possibly even himself).

John Gilbert and Mae Murray (courtesy of the Richard Koszarski Collection)

Mae Murray, a Ziegfeld headliner who had danced with Vernon Castle and Rudolph Valentino, was now a big Hollywood star, just aching to have her way with the Merry Widow Waltz. Her name was floated early on, but she worked at another studio and, since 1916, almost always with her husband, director Robert Z. Leonard. But that studio was Metro, and after the merger it was a foregone conclusion that *The Merry Widow* would become a Mae Murray picture. For a time it even seemed that Stroheim would lose the entire production to Robert Z. Leonard, and in July *Variety* reported that he and Louis B. Mayer had almost come to blows over the assignment. But even the Goldwyn brass had realized that another director "would not give this story the effervescence which it requires." The fact that Murray and Leonard's personal relationship was also dissolving only sealed the deal. They divorced in 1925 and never worked together again.

Stroheim had already split the male lead in two. Danilo would be the film's handsome prince (a prototype for his character in *The Wedding March*) while his degenerate cousin Mirko would be a sneering echo of the "man you love to hate" characters that Stroheim himself had now left behind. The Goldwyn contract allowed Stroheim to appear in his own pictures, but Thalberg had learned his lesson on *Foolish Wives*. Norman Kerry had proved an acceptable Stroheim surrogate on *Merry Go Round*, but Thalberg had no interest in promoting the career of someone under contract to Universal. Against the director's protests Thalberg put the up-and-coming John Gilbert into the role. According to Gilbert's daughter, Stroheim immediately got off on the wrong foot by telling Gilbert that he had never wanted him on the picture. Crown Prince Mirko would be played by Roy D'Arcy, a Stroheim discovery working in his first film. The San Francisco native claimed to have been educated in Berlin and Vienna, and could wear a monocle.

There was still more to fix. The operetta takes place entirely in Paris. Of 477 scenes in the final shooting script, 308 take place before the action even gets to Paris. But at least that draft included a waltz scene. A month earlier Stroheim had submitted a draft that left out the waltz but included some 169 scenes documenting First World War battle action between "Monteblanco" and Austria, in which Mae Murray appears as a nurse and the U.S. Marines put in an appearance. It did, however, climax in a Technicolor wedding/coronation, indicating that the ending he later found objectionable was his own idea.

Viewers should remember that all during the summer and fall, while Stroheim was working on the script and preparing design sketches, he knew that somewhere else on the lot a nameless editor, "on [whose] mind was nothing but a hat," was whittling away at his masterpiece. *Greed* opened in New York on December 4, to some of the most negative reviews in film history. *The Merry Widow* had gone before the cameras just three days earlier; production continued under a very dark cloud.

The waltz finally made it into the picture, beautifully photographed and edited. This somehow happened despite Valerie von Stroheim's claim that when the time came to shoot the waltz her husband turned his back on the action and refused even to watch. She also remembered that when he tried to direct Mae Murray in the scene the star went into a rage, tearing off her plumed headdress and screaming, "You dirty Hun! You think you know everything!" That was par for the course. Stroheim, while explaining to the press that Murray did have "a real capacity for feeling," also insisted that to reveal it her "self-consciousness and cuteyisms had to be torn away." Ouch.

Incentive clauses had recently been built into Stroheim's contract in order not to tie up Mae Murray indefinitely (*Greed* had shot for 198 days). He would receive a bonus of $5,000 if filming was completed in eight weeks, but the fourteen-week shoot didn't even come close. Five weeks after the end of production, months before the release of *The Merry Widow* to great critical and popular acclaim, Stroheim's contract was cancelled by mutual consent. And he never received his piece of the profits, either. In a 1930 accounting, MGM claimed that the losses on *Greed* more than offset the profits of *The Merry Widow*. (The figures shown to Stroheim indicate far less income for *The Merry Widow* than those given in the Eddie Mannix notebooks, considered reasonably accurate by historians. But that's Hollywood.)

It is understandable that all this insult and injury left a bad taste in Stroheim's mouth, but for audiences nearly a century later the film seems to require little in the way of apology. Now is a good time to sit back, luxuriate in Maud Nelissen's remarkable orchestral setting, and watch Stroheim do the impossible. Tasked with turning an operatic warhorse into a viable silent film he managed to please his audience, dazzle the critics, and even impress Franz Lehár. It seems that the only one who wasn't happy with the results was the director himself.

— RICHARD KOSZARSKI

CROSSOVER ARTIST: MAUD NELISSEN PLAYS IT ALL

Interview by Shari Kizirian

When Dutch composer and pianist Maud Nelissen was commissioned to write accompaniment for Erich von Stroheim's *The Merry Widow*, the first thing she did was look for the original score. But the music by William Axt and David Mendoza, who also composed for *La Bohème*, *The Big Parade*, and *The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg*, was nowhere to be found. Instead, Nelissen decided to go back to the beginning: the original 1905 operetta by Franz Lehár. A graduate of the venerable Utrechts Conservatorium she certainly had the classical chops to adapt it—and the composer's estate agreed. Now with their blessing, she had to figure out how to reconcile the lighter tone of the operetta with the famously gimlet-eyed view of the film's director, who had taken broad liberties with the story. When she spotted an accordion player during one of the film's Balkan inn scenes, she hit on her solution. The accordion, she says, "has big possibilities, it can go really low and really dark"—so she used it to weave in some Romani songs as well as composed modern sound clusters that she has called "the black icing on a sweet cake" of Lehár's music. Since then she's accompanied the film over the years with both chamber and large orchestras, and Nelissen says she's excited to return to the roots of her composition and present it again with a small ensemble, the Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra.

How did you go from graduating with honors in classical piano to accompanying silent films?

I was asked to jump in for another pianist at the Amsterdam archive and I really enjoyed it. My teacher at the conservatory was against it; he said it was too obscure. But I had been mesmerized by the images and the possibilities for sound accompaniment and it stayed in the back of my mind as something I could do. For my own benefit I used to spend time trying to understand Charlie Chaplin's film scores, staying up late working out the orchestral arrangement on the piano. It was just luck years later when I was asked to play for a week-long program in Italy with Eric James, who was Chaplin's last arranger. He was really surprised when I could play *The Kid* on the piano:

"WHO IS THIS LADY FROM HOLLAND?!"

It changed my life really. He was the musician I wanted to be. That older generation, they were so versatile. They could play a Bach toccata as easily as they could play ragtime. To them there was not a big difference between light music and classical music—they played everything. It took a while for me to get out of the fenced-in mode of a classical pianist, but I got addicted to silents. I was happy that it was in the dark and that it's not all about me. I get totally taken away by the poetry of the images.

Can you talk a bit about how you'll play for *The Merry Widow*?

I'll be playing piano and conducting Mont Alto, with five added musicians. I heard Mont Alto play at SFSFF in 2016 and was struck by their wonderful music. You can really feel the bond they have with each other, like one of those long, good marriages.

Did you stick to the time period when composing or did you think about how this music has accumulated meaning in the years since, especially the waltz?

I stuck to the time period. The music is sixty percent Lehár, forty percent my own, but I really honored Lehár. I had a very old record of the operetta, with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf singing, and was totally taken away by its lyricism. The waltz is still such a beautiful waltz. Makes me cry, always.

You'll also play for *The Organist at St. Vitus Cathedral.*

Yes. It's not like *The Merry Widow* at all! I first played for the film last year in the Czech Republic. It's a strange film, a horror film in some ways but at the same time a love story. Some unbelievable things happen, like would happen in a dime-store novel, but the movie has an Expressionist feel, so you don't mind the unbelievable parts. There is a lot of suspense, especially at the beginning, so I'll keep the music to a minimum there. I quote some late Romantic composers, including a Scriabin sonata. The atmosphere of the film, how it depicts Prague, the old streets at night in the mist, drew me back to classical composers.

The Czechs loved the screening so much that I played for it again at Smetana's Litomyšl festival in June. My goal in life is to make these kinds of connections to other art forms, encourage more crossover. This is a good film for that. So is *The Merry Widow*; it would fit nicely into a classical music festival.

Can you tell me about your ensemble The Sprockets?

We have percussion, a brass section, banjo, mandolin. We're a project orchestra and play for comedies, smaller films, a lot of women's films, most recently in Switzerland for *It* with Clara Bow. We're like Mont Alto in that we've been together a long time. I am a big believer in playing with the same musicians. If you use the same people, there is something extra, an energy. We're seven musicians so we're expensive, but I prefer to play less and play together.

Do you have an overriding philosophy for accompanying silent films?

Whether it's composing, performing, or even in daily life, I believe you have to find a certain intensity in everything. It's actually the way Stroheim makes his films, giving off these intense vibrations, in a good way though, otherwise you're stressed. [Laughs.] I also look for human proportions in everything. Everything else comes after those two things: intensity and humanity. A sense of humor also doesn't hurt. It's like what Chaplin said about humor being very close to drama. You are on that razor's edge and have to be able to change very quickly between the two.

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And many thanks to all our wonderful event volunteers!

THEATER Margaret Casey, Rae Livingston, Raul Rangel. Special thanks to projectionist Jeff Root

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