Tonight's program:

"LEADING LIZZIE ASTRAY" (1911) One reel
A Mack Sennett comedy with Wallace Beery, Louise Fazenda and Charlie Murray

"HER HEART'S DESIRE" (1922) one-reel
(Fox) starring Bebe Daniels with W. C. Fields

"SUNRISE" (1927) Fox, One reel.
A selection of highlights and cut-takes from the outstanding film of F. W. Murnau.

"OTHELLO" (1922) UFA. Six reels.
Starring BILL JANNINGS and KENSEI KRAUSE,
with Theodore Loose and Ida de Putti. Directed by Dzmitry Buchovetskij; photographed by Carl Nassakian

"MIGHTY LIKE A MOON" (1926) Two reels.
A Hal Roach production, released through Pathé Exchanges. Directed by Leo McCarey, supervised by F. Richard Jones.
Starring CHARLIE CHASE with Vivian Oakland.

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Running time of program:
2 hrs., 15 minutes, inclusive of intermission.

Important: Please note that with this show, we have returned to the Marine Room.
"LEADING LIZZIE ASTRAT"

We have played many Bennett comedies before, and have several more scheduled for the near future. Our members know just what to expect from Mack, so we need spend little space here detailing the invention and vigor of these early comedies. This item (retitled "The Oily Scheme" for a later release) has a plentiful supply of the usual slapstick knockabout and the inevitable hectic chase finale—this time taking place in a department store, and by no means unworthy of comparison with the much later efforts of the Marx Brothers in "The Big Store". However, there are occasional subtler humor in this particular Bennett, and the film is interesting too in that it is obviously a forerunner of Chaplin's "Vitagraph Fluctuation Romance", which it pre-dates by only a year. Not only in the basic plot the same (with Wallace Beery in the Chaplin role!) but many individual comedy sequences are identical.

"HER HEART'S DESIRE"

Unfortunately we have not, as yet, tracked down the name of the director of this charming and well-made little film. This is a pity, for it is comparatively early (1920) and shows that, undaunted leader though he was, Griffith had no monopoly in dramatic pictorial composition and in solid directorial talent. This very pleasing little film has many lovely compositions, and simple though its plot is, it is still quite effective. Edmund Lowe in the leading, and the charming heroine in "Her Heart's Desire", etc., and finally to settle down in a comfortable rut as the perennial villain in cheap thrillers, westerns and serials.

"SUNRISE"

Probably the finest of all the films directed by Huneur, "Sunrise" surely needs no introduction. Based on the story of "Trip to Tiliti" by Sudekum, it was all-round acclaim for the power of its acting and direction, for its photographic beauty (Ikzer), its outstanding script (Carl Mayer) and not least for one of the finest musical scores ever recorded for a silent picture. This is an interesting little reel (by no means a condensation) of highlights from the film, including the beautiful marshland scenes, the journey in the trolley-car, and many of the city and carnival scenes. You will see too, one or two different versions of the same scenes, not used in the final version—plus occasional intrusions by the clapper-boy to signify the end of the scene to the cameraman! For those unfortunate who have never seen the film (although we hope that none of our members are in such a shameful position) this reel will prove appetising and frustrating; to the rest of us, it raises the hope that perhaps the Museum of Modern Art will show the film again before too long.

"CAMELI"

Film criticism exist (or should exist) not to show just the great films and the influential films. It is their responsibility to show as well the earlier efforts of directors and stars, the worthwhile failures, the films of certain eras—the films in fact of interest to all serious students of cinema. Last month we showed "The Ghost That Never Returns"—a film that is little known but one that is almost a great film. This month's "Othello" is a film that conversely is quite familiar but is hardly great. Its interest (and the facets of interest are considerable) lies primarily in non-cinematic fields.... in the acting, in the sumptuous décor, and the fine sets. For cinematically, although "Othello" comes from the oft-referred to "Golden Age of German Cinema" its sound is static and stagy (as in fact most versions of "Othello" have been, except the new interpretation by Welles which has not been shown here as yet, but which seems to be anything but stagy!).

"Othello" was made under a number of difficulties, chief among them being the fact that Jannings was seriously ill during its production. This may be the reason for Jannings' surprising restraint in the film, although one would like to think that this underplaying was his own idea, for the performance in both moving and effective. Kraus, it has been alleged from reliable sources, was enjoying one huge bender throughout the shooting—and certainly his glorious mugging confirms that there may be a great deal of truth in the report. Quite certainly the screen has never seen a more revolting Iago—and Kraus' efforts are enhanced by his costuming, consisting for the most part of quite repulsive and semi-transparent black silk. However, it is only fair to report that in 1923, Kraus was praised by American critics for his performance. We shall quote a typical review in just a moment.

Dimitri Buchovsky, the director, went on to better things but became rather bogged down in extravagant romances when he was imported by Hollywood a few years later. Our print is a good Insets original, and in fine shape—it appears to be complete, although a mild shortening of the murder of Desdemona suggests that the comrade's scenes were brought into play. The American subtitles, then not quoting Shakespeare, attempt to imitate him—this resulting in such Joyous phrases as "Art drunk?!"
"Exceptional Photoplays" of February 1923, had this to say about the film:

"...Jammings is both terrifying and pitiful in his wrath and his jealousy, and his physical makeup adds value to his admirable characterization. The performance is the equal of anything that John Jammings has ever offered. The Iago of Werner Kraus is an Iago that may be questioned but cannot be entirely disapproved. There is enough in Shakespeare's "Othello" to warrant Kraus's interpretation of the part as a kind of sinister Jack-in-the-Box. He plays the part according to that interpretation. We hope in slated action from one vile and ominous minded to another, the friend of every man and the enemy of each. If the character sometimes assumes more of the clown than the villain, that is not altogether the fault of the actor who (in the silent film) must exaggerate those things in action which are dealt with entirely by words in Shakespeare's play. But there is plenty of authority in Shakespeare for "clowning"... Iago may be interpreted as a villainous clown, just as Mercutio may be played as a hero-clown. Werner Kraus chose that method ... it is doubtful if he could have made Iago anything but the conventional sinister villain had he not so chosen. A noteworthy German attempt.

Rene Clair, in "Reflections on the Cinema," writes: "Othello!" has demonstrated to us what intelligent adaptation can achieve. Forget Shakespeare's text. You have nothing to fear you will be constantly reminded of its spirit. Look at "Othello" as you would listen to a symphony. It is a pictorial symphony on a Shakespearean theme. Some of the facial expressions are literal translations of the text. Elsewhere... the entire inner movement of the filmReminder us of the play and is in no way unworthy of Shakespeare. The acting has greatly contributed to the value of the film. Jammings makes no concessions to the operatic tradition, he is a helpless child driven by Iago. His anxious eyes, his reeling gait, his trembling hands, everything in him expresses jealousy. And in his scenes of love and doubt, his savage gentleness in infinitely moving. Such new has not hesitated to present an Iago who is almost a clown. Iago's pernicious deeds - how could they be rendered on the screen? - he translates into movement. One gets the impression that he is destroying the castle by his frantic rushing about much as in the play he did by saying a few words. "Othello" is an adaptation, but it is also a film made with such skill that it may well convert some of the present enemies of adaptation to a cause which is not a good one in itself!"

"MIGHTY LOW: A HOUSTON"

This Charlie Chase comedy is such a gem that we deliberately left it as the last item on the program - thirty fast-paced minutes designed to counteract the feelings of doom and despair left with us by Shakespeare and Jammings. The film abounds in delightful touches, and we'll leave you to discover them for yourself. We'll just say in passing that the comedy is quite one of the best that Chase and Leo McFarley have made - and the print is a sparkling, crystal-clear toned original, the like of which one doesn't see too often alas.

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS TO: ARTHUR LEIGH, for his time and trouble in arranging and tape-recording our score for "Othello" tonight. If the experiment succeeds, we'll try to continue with bigger-and-better scores on tape... to DOROTHY LOWELL for the fine art-work on our front cover... and to AARON SCHIMMEL for supplying the "Exceptional Photoplays" review on "Othello".

THOUGHTS IN PERSPECTIVE: Several members have asked us when, if ever, we were going to revert to our former two shows a month schedule. There are several reasons why we have not done so as yet. For one thing, although we have a good backlog of pictures now, there is certainly no plethora of good silent pictures around. More to the point - and the real reason - is the lack of time and amount of work involved. For every film society showing at present, there are four nights of work involved - we devoted to writing, printing and mailing the notes, a third to scoring and checking prints, and finally the night of the show itself. Devoting the complete evenings per week to the society (which is what a two-a-month schedule would entail) is frankly impossible.

However, we have attempted a compromise. Starting in June, we will launch a "Second Unit" of the society, specializing solely in sound films. No program notes will be mailed, but the shows will be announced on our regular notes. Short notes will be provided at the screening itself. Thus three nights of preparation can be written off, and it will be possible to maintain a regular schedule. Details have yet to be worked out, but we already have several good, rare, sound films lined up - including Abel Gance's "Jurone Fermes", Mizutani's "Motherland", a complete, unscrupulous print of the remarkable British film "Man's Kin", a good Italian film from the mid-thirties, and others of a like caliber. As always, we'll be showing only films that are worth showing and that can't be seen elsewhere. We'll be printing more details on our next notes.

Committee of the Film Society: Dorothea Lovell, Edward Conner, William K. Everson
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