

THE THEODORE HUFF MEMORIAL FILM SOCIETY

Special screening session - Saturday June 23rd.

- 3.30 "WIFE AND AUTO TROUBLE" (Mack Sennett-Triangle, 1916)
William Collier and Mae Busch are starred in this vintage Sennett, more polished than most, and a little slower, but winding up in rousing - and typical-style with a fast chase through the streets of Los Angeles.
- 4.00 "AT DAWN" (Reliance, 1914) Directed by Donald Crisp
Wallace Reid, supported by Josephine Crowell and other old Griffithonians, in a powerful early melodrama. The climax packs a real punch.
- 4.15 "DOMPEY AND SON" (Ideal, 1916; released in the U.S. by Triangle).
Although billed as a "modern" version of the Dickens story, its 1916 period has already turned it into a period piece, and thus it has retained a lot of the spirit of the original novel. Strangely enough, an American sound version of the same novel ("Rich Man's Folly" with George Bancroft) was likewise brought up to date. "Dombey and Son" is interesting not only in that the film itself is a rare example of British film-making from the World War One period, but also in that it seems to link two eras of production. It starts out in almost primitive fashion; static, unimaginative, and then, half-way through, suddenly seems to come to life with the sudden introduction of close-ups, and occasional camera movement. It's almost as though the director looked at a good Griffith somewhere along the line, and realised how antiquated his methods were! The director, Maurice Elvey, was something of a British William Beaudine. Like W.B., he started in the early days of films, made some big - and worthwhile - films during the twenties, and slowly slipped from prominence as sound came in. Both directors are still active, Elvey more so than Beaudine. The film's star, Lillian Praithwaite (another parallel perhaps - her career has followed much the same path as Lillian Gish's, though to lesser cinematic, and greater theatrical, fame) is also spasmodically active today in British films and plays.
- 5.25 "THE DOLL HOUSE MYSTERY" (Majestic, 1914)
Directed by Chester and Sidney Franklin, this is such a delightful little item that we will say little about it here, and let it surprise you as pleasantly as it did us. The cutting and camerawork are both superb, and the film is really an amazingly advanced little two-reeler. Note too how the actors really pitched in in those days; one scene calls for a man to leap from a speeding train with a child in his arms - which he does, with no double for either man or child. Another leap is less successful, and the actor comes a nasty cropper -- whereupon the Franklins cunningly shot some matching close-up scenes to make it appear that the fall was all part of the script!
- 5.55 "MISS BLUEBEARD" (Paramount, 1925) Directed by Frank Tuttle, and based on Avery Hopwood's successful play "Little Miss Bluebeard", itself based on the play "Der Gatte des Frauleins" by Gabriel Dregely. Script by Townsend Martin. With BEBE DANIELS, Robert Frazer, Raymond Griffith

A fabulously successful motion picture in its day, "Miss Bluebeard" is no classic among screen farces, but it is a lot of fun - and the best of the humour comes from Raymond Griffith, whose fine pantomime produces several very lively sequences. Bebe Daniels is at her loveliest as the heroine, and Robert Frazer, soon to descend into playing villains in westerns and serials, is pleasing but rather overshadowed by his competition. The print is a fine toned original.
- 6.55
INTERMISSION of 50 MINUTES
There are several restaurants of varying degrees of luxury within the immediate vicinity of the screening room.
- 7.45 "THE DEADLY TURNING" (Eclectic, 1914, dir: Louis Gasnier)
Members who recall the previous episode of "The Perils of Pauline" run by this society, don't need to be told how crude this serial is - or how much fun! Looking at this, and "The Doll House Mystery" together, is a

striking demonstration of just how far some film-makers were behind others, not just in cinematic invention, but in elementary production technique. Anyway, "Perils" is loads of fun, more outrageous than a Sennett satire on such melodramatics, and filled with the most incredibly illiterate subtitles. When we ran the previous episode, we suggested that the titles might have been written by a Greek immigrant right after leaving the boat; these titles look as though they were written while he was still at sea. In this episode, Pearl White and Crane Wilbur defeat the evil, if simple, machinations of Paul Panzer, and win the "International (quote) Motor Racing Tournament".

8.00 "PATHWAYS OF LIFE" (1914-15) Directed by Christy Cabanne, under the supervision of D.W. Griffith; story by Mary O'Connor
The Cast: Pure-of-Heart (Lillian Gish); Much-to-Learn (W.E. Lawrence); Daddy Wisdom (Spottiswoode Aitken); Live Loose (Olga Grey); Empty Head (Alice Raye); Over Indulgence (Wm.H. Brown); Oily Tongue (Alfred Paget)

This quite charming little morality play seems never to have been revived before (in its entirety) and in some ways perhaps it is just as well; certainly one shudders to think of the fate that would await at the hands of an average Museum of Modern Art audience. The film of course, is dated, in both concept and content, but it remains a fragile and very appealing film. Its basic trouble seems to have been too little material for too long a running time; at two-reels, it would have been fine; at three, it is protracted. As Gerald McDonald has pointed out, it is typical of films in that in-between period when producers were switching nervously to features, and trying to do so with the same material that had served them so well in one and two-reelers. Even with a specialised audience such as ours, the film needs kindness and patience; it is a lovely idea that doesn't quite come off, but deserves full marks for trying. Possibly a different director (Cabanne was fine on action and comedy, but his talent otherwise was limited) might have achieved better results; but whatever the film's shortcomings, it still has Lillian Gish, at the height of her youthful loveliness, dancing with her shadow in the fields, and ultimately reclaiming her husband from the arms of the vamp, supremely well played by Olga Grey.

8.50 "MADAME BEHAVE" (PDC, 1926) A Christie Comedy directed by Scott Sidney. With JULIAN ELTINGE, Ann Pennington, Jack Duffy, Lionel Belmore. From the French farce by Jean Arlette; written by F. McGrew Willis.

The "From the French farce" credit seems like merely an added selling angle, for there is little that is French (apart from some very risqué titles) in this fast-paced comedy. The whole thing is purely and simply a vehicle for one of the better female impersonators, Julian Eltinge. His pantomime never leaves a bad taste in the mouth, and is often extremely funny. Another big asset of the film is lively little Ann Pennington, scoring especially in a great Charleston sequence. Not, we admit, a rediscovered classic, "Madame Behave" is nevertheless a thoroughly amusing comedy, and, into the bargain, is a perfect brand-new print right off the old negative.

10.00 "VANITY" (A Cecil B. DeMille production, 1927). Directed by Donald Crisp; written by Douglas Doty; supervised by G. Gardner Sullivan; photographed by Arthur Miller; sets by Anton Grot; edited by Barbara Hunter; titles by John Krafft; starring LEATRICE JOY with Charles Ray and Alan Hale, with Noble Johnson.

Here is another real "exclusive" - the only print in existence, and again of flawless quality, taken right from the original negative. Leatrice Joy vehicles are very much of a rarity, and here she is at her best. The film, an interesting blend of wartime drama and post-war melodrama, is a stylish production which gets off to a somewhat routine start, and then roars to life in three really punch-packed closing reels. Since so much depends on the surprise element, we'll just say here that the vigor (and subtlety) of these final reels is quite an eye-opener - especially since Crisp's other directorial work, though highly competent, has never been remarkable. The film is full of lush DeMille sets and decor - and some delightful telephones shaped into nude statuettes. The extra who LOOKS like DeMille-- especially in the long shots-- isn't! (Doubtless a relative of some sort).