HEART'S DESIRE (British International Pictures, 1935; U.S. release 1937)
Directors: Paul Stein; Produced by Walter Mycroft; Camera, Jack Cox;
Screenplay by Clifford Grey, L. DuGarde Peach, Jack Davies, Roger Harford
and Bruno Frank from a story by Lioni Pickard; 8 reels
With Richard Tauber (Joseph Steidler), Leonora Corbett (Frances Wilson),
Diana Napier (Diana Sheraton), Frank Vosper (Van Straten), Kathleen Kelly
(Anna), George Graves (Granville Wilson), Paul Graetz (Florian), Viola Tree
(Lady Bennington), Carl Harbord (Oliver Desmond), Denier Warren (Ted Meyer).

Somehow the copy I submitted to the New School's bulletin for this film was
inadequately edited, and I hope and assume that nobody is here tonight
under the Bulletin-Inspired delusion that "Hearts Desire" co-stars Tauber
and Gigli! The Abbott & Costello (or Karloff–Lugosi) possibilities of such
a teaming are immense, but of course the two great singers never did appear
together on film. The point I had been making was that, while on a much
higher musical plane, the European films of Tauber and Gigli followed
the same formula as Hollywood films, but their combination of
song and sentiment appealed to European audiences of a temperament and age-
structure that corresponded to Jolson's following. (Hollywood tried to market
John McCormack the same way, but it never worked, while to a lesser degree
Europe did adapt the formula successfully to Jan Kiepura and other classical
or semi-classical singers). Tauber's films were generally bigger, better
and more successful than Gigli's, with "Blossom Time" perhaps at the head
of the list. With his rather stolid acting style and obvious maturity,
Tauber was not an orthodox hero—"Johannes Fluh" (with no matter what, he might
have been a worse villain for Fritz Lang), and his roles—mature
romance, unrequited love, biographical studies—were in keeping with his
appearance. Gigli on the other hand, made films that were literally the
equivalents of the Jolson's in their stress on both young romantic love
(and beautiful leading ladies like Carola Hohn and Joan Gardner) and
sentimental mother love. One gimmick frequently used for both performers
(Tauber's "Palladio" is typical) was to present them as stars of stage
operas, the plot ramifications of which paralleled their own private dilemmas reaching a climax at the same
time! "Hearts Desire" is neither the best nor the weakest of the Tauber
films, but a good representative sample. It takes a little time for Tauber
to get into his singing role, but once into it, he never lets up— which
of course is just what his fans wanted.

---- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION -----

MASKERADE ("Masquerade in Vienna") (Tabis–Saacha, Vienna, 1934; US release,
1937) Directed by Willy Forst; Screenplay by Walter Reisch; musical
score by Willy Schmidt–Gentner; Played by the Vienna Philharmonic
Orchestra; 9 reels

German dialogue; English subtitles.
With Paula Wesely (Leopoldine Dur), Anton Walbrook (Heidenoeck); Olga
Tschekowa (Anta); Peter Petersen (Professor Harrandt); Hilda von Stolitz
(Gerda Harrandt), Walter Janssen (Opera director) Julia Serda (Countess M),
Hans Moser (Zacharias), and the voice of Enrico Caruso.

While "Maskeraide" doesn't entirely live up to its legendary reputation, it's
easy to understand its popularity in 1937, when it benefitted from a kind of
nostalgia that has been held up for some years so that MGM could use the property as a remake to introduce Luise Rainer to
American audiences under the title "Escapade". Thus not only was it about
a vanished way of life (which many in the 30's could still recall), but it
was also virtually from a vanished way of movie life too. European films
were harder and less romantic by the mid-30's; German films dominated by
the Nazis, the French exemplified by "Pepe le Moko" fell in a kind of lyrical defeatism. Small wonder that the warmth of this film—an art
film that was not an "arty" film—found a ready audience. MGM's
"Escapade" had copied it meticulously, even to specific camera movements, and
type-cast it flawlessly (William Powell, Reginald Owen etc.) but in
changing the emphasis so that it became a showcase for Luise Rainer, it lost
much of the original's charm. Even devoid of the freshness of story though,
"Maskeraide" was an infinitely superior work. Today, admittedly—when
associations with Schnitzler's writing and Max Ophuls' many preoccupations in a like tradition—are inevitably lost a little—Forst
and Ophuls have that the once creative and satiric use of
sound as counterpoint is no longer new. But its charm and its elegance
certainly remain. Paula Wesely (then fresh from a huge triumph on the
Berlin stage in "Rose Berndt") is as appealing as ever, Peter Petersen's
restraint and subtlety are a joy to watch, and Anton Walbrook (he very
diplomatically dropped the Adolph in that Nazi period!) though criticised at
the time for too much restraint, is likewise excellent. At the time Hollywood
proudly boasted that both stars, director and screenwriter had been signed
to Hollywood contracts but all Hollywood only to Ophuls made the transfer. The
print has some areas of low sound, but please bear with us; it's fine
plotterially, and is the very best print available.

--- Wm K.Everson ---