THE NEW SCHOOL  
FILM SERIES 26: Program #2  
June 22, 1977

An Evening of Melodramatic Theatre with The Barrymores

Piano Scores for both films arranged and played by Stuart Oderman

SHERLOCK HOLMES (Goldwyn Pictures, 1922) Directed by Albert Parker; Produced by F.J. Godgold; Scenario by Harion Fairfax and Earle Browne from the play by William Gillette; Based on novels by Arthur Conan Doyle; Camera, Roy Hunt; European release title, "Moriaty". 8 reels.
With: John Barrymore (Sherlock Holmes); Gustav von Seyffertitz (Koriarty); Roland Young (Watson); Carol Dempster (Alice Falkner); William Powell (Porman Wells); Hedda Hopper (Madge Larabee); Reginald Denny (Prince Alexis); David Torrence (Count von Stalberg); Anders Randolf (James Larabee); Louis Wolheim (Craigin); Percy Knight (Sid Jones); Peggy Bayfield (Rose Faulkner); Margaret Kemp (Therese); Robert Schable (Alf Bassick); Lumsden Hare (Dr. Leighton); Jerry Devine (Billy); John Willard (Inspector Gregson).

The story of the piecing together of this long-lost film (done partially with the aid of its director, who died during the reconstruction work) is perhaps far more fascinating than the film itself. I'll talk about this aspect (which needs more space than we have here), but it is enough to say that although some attempts have been made to open up the play, not always to its advantage, and the London backgrounds are an asset, it remains essentially filmed theatre, copying the pacing and the content of key scenes to the latter, even though it was the bravura acting and dialogue that made those scenes dialogue so effective on stage. But making allowances for its filmed shortcomings, and for some very dark sections in the print, it is still quite a fascinating film - archaeologically if not artistically - and its cast a real hum-dinger.

---  Ten Minute Intermission ---

THE BELLS (Chadwick Productions, 1926) Adapted and directed by James Young from the Eckman-Chatrian play; Camera, L. William O'Connell; 7 reels.
With Lionel Barrymore (Mathias); Lola Todd (Annette); Boris Karloff (The Mesmerist); Gustav von Seyffertitz (Erast); Laurenson Freulon (Catherine); Edward Phillips (Christian); Laura LeVernie (Fortune Teller); E. Allyn Warren (Baron Koweski), and Jethro Koweski.

Coincidentally, the negative of "The Bells" was also stored in jig-saw fashion - but the pieces were larger, and it was an easy film to re-assemble! As a play, it was one of a Henry Irving's most successful vehicles, and it was a popular barnstormer for years. It served Harry Baur in a French version, and here Lionel Barrymore has a field-day with it, even though made in an off-peak period when he was on drugs, and showing it. The play was first presented in 1869, and perhaps it is no coincidence that Dickens' unfinished "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" (1870) seems to borrow quite a lot from it! However, "The Bells" itself, or at least this version, has its own share of borrowing: at least two sequences seem to have their roots in "Macbeth", while the concept of the Mesmerist, and his physical appearance - are quite plausibly lifted from "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari". Boris Karloff is so effective in this role that it is incredible that it would still be six years before his talent for the macabre would pay off in worthwhile roles. What impresses most about "The Bells" however is its production mounting: it's well directed by James Young (once married to Clara Kimball Young), the crowd scenes do not stint, the sets are solid, and the photography and lighting excellent. Intelligent independent productions of this sort are too often forgotten, yet are often quite superior to the economy-conscious efforts from major companies. Chadwick Productions had a curious rule that anyone or film to ten reels, doubtless the length they considered the minimum for their films to be treated as "A" product. Very often the padding showed, and equally often their films were not "A", either in style or content. This one is; not an outstanding film it's true, but a very creditable one for a small company, and quite fascinating for its cast and its unashamed absorption of Doctor Caligari!

William K. Everson

A reminder: as I will be away next week, the program will commence promptly at 7:30 with "21 Days" (Oliver-Leigh) followed by "The House of Rothschild" with George Arliss.