Eyes of Youth (Harry Garson Productions, 1919) Directed by Albert S. Parker; Scenario by Parker from the play by Max Marcin and Charles Guernon as presented on Broadway in 1917; 75 mins approx.

With Clara Kimball Young, Edmund Lowe, Milton Sills, Ralph Lewis, Rudolph Valentino, Gareth Hughes, Norman Selby, Pauline Starke, Sam Sothern, William Courtney, Vincent Serrano.

When "Eyes of Youth" opened at the Rivoli in late December of 1919, it was somewhat of a comeback for Clara Kimball Young, and was considered to be her best film for some time. Alas, she never did regain the stature at the boxoffice that they had enjoyed in her earlier years, but all four of the younger leading men in the film became stars of varying stature within the independent film industry in which they had played, but somehow a mere colorful one, that attracted the attention of June Mathis and led Rudolph Valentino to "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and immediate stardom. Milton Sills too, became a major star in short order. But only Edmund Lowe survived into the sound era as a star of note, whereas Clara Kimball Young did at least retain stardom (in 8 movies) and featured roles in bigger films, through the 30's and 40's.

"Eyes of Youth" was remade in 1927 by Clara Swanson as "The Loves of Sunya", and remake very faithfully though it was longer and much glossier. However, it was so much of a showcase for widely-contrasted Swanson personalities that the plot suffered in some measure.

While "Eyes of Youth" is simpler — perhaps even a shade simple-minded in its attempts at profound philosophy — it does at least give the story rather more of a chance. Young is perhaps a little too mature to be entirely convincing as the woman so much in demand by so many men, and the independent status of its heroine is more an afterthought than a meaningful feature of its story, not in the least of its set and art direction, but it is still quite an absorbing and off-beat little film. Director Parker also directed the Swanson remake, incidentally, with John Boles in the Edmund Lowe role, and Ivan Lebedeff, hoping (unsuccessfully) that lightning would strike twice in the same place, taking on the Valentine seducer role.

— TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION —

THRU DIFFERENT EYES (Fox, 1929) Directed by John Blystone; Story by Milton Herbert Creppen and Edna Sherry; Camera: Ernest Palmer, Al Bruck; 80 mins.


Most versions of early talkies (released solely to accommodate those theatres as yet unequipped for sound) tended to be extremely static, with long, stagy dialogue scenes broken up by an excessive number of subtitles translating dialogue that was often not very good to begin with. As silent they were frankly rather pointless, since most of the time the original had no claim to major entertainment or even minor art, and existed only to exploit sound. "Thru Different Eyes" is an exception however. It is fairly obvious that it is a hybrid film of that type — it's rhythm is clearly that of a talkie, and the titles throw it off — but for one released as early as April of 1929, it is quite brisk and cinematic. Even though the story is perforce told stage-like, in a series of acts, it is brisk and visually well-paced. There is lots of camerawork and some sharp editing so that it never bogs down too much. In any event, the sound version has long since been lost, this is the only record of any kind. One piece of footage is missing, but it is mainly a build-up to a climax that is still there, and that in any case is re-covered later in a flashback. Part of the solution to the mystery depends on sound — on the audience hearing two shots fired and knowing from prior information that the first shot is a blank. Oddly enough, while an early title does establish the matter of the blank, there's no title to remind us of that later on, although the later dialogue does have such a reminder. However, it's a minor matter and the only real casualty of the silent version is that it defines Sylvia Sidney (sitting around placidly most of the time, waiting for her big scene) of some long dialogue chunks, thereby minimising the impact of her role. But otherwise it is still quite engrossing, and an interesting forerunner of the plot structure of "Rashomon". Much of the early experimenting in sound was done by lesser directors like John Blystone ("Tom Mix Western, "Red Dust, "Bordello of Bagdad") who handled "Thru Different Eyes". They often pulled off quite daring little coupes, while the big contract directors waited until all the bugs were ironed out before moving in to make their talkie debuts.


With Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis, Roxy Brooks.

To wrap up, a recently rediscovered Harold Lloyd comedy shot around the Venice amusement park area in Hollywood: fast, inventive, and very funny — and a really good print to boot. Incidentally, the silhouetted seaman in the opening shots is producer/director Roach.

Program Ends approx. 10:30.

followed by discussion session.

------- William K. Everson.