"Double Door" is one of those curiosities that is remembered with awe and affection by those who saw it originally, and which frustratingly never seems to be re-presented so that one can view their impressions either be confirmed, or re-evaluated. Well, here it is, and re-evaluation may be unnecessary. It seems to be the order of the day! Based on a play which caused something of a sensation in its day (because of a physical Grand Guignol element not usually present on the Broadway stage) and which contained a sequence near the end which reputedly always produced a gasp from the audience, it was transferred to the screen with star Mary Morris in her stage role, as did support player Anne Revere. (It was Morris' only film, though reference books often give her a string of credits that actually belong to the British actress of the same name.)

Presumably Paramount didn't have too much faith in it, since its cast was lightweight and its director was new and untried. And when it opened at the Paramount, it had Milton Berle, the Nicholas Brothers, the Bob Allen Ballet and Gertrude Niesen in the stage show (something we can't duplicate at the New School) but it's because of the film itself, not because of a nice atmosphere of Gothic horror to its still chilling if predictable climax. For only his second time out, following a couple of aborted films at other studios (or to be more precise, aborted assignments, where he was either replaced or, uncredited, replaced someone else) and a "B" at Monogram, Vidor doesn't do badly at all. It was his first film to be reviewed in the NY Times, and he stayed with similar cowboy and gangster pictures through the 30's, finally hitting the "A" market with "My Son, My Son" in 1940.

Perhaps the key to the film is its star, Mary Morris, who is chilling enough, who doesn't possess (on screen at least) anywhere near the magnetic and possibly snake-like personality one would need to terrorise all of her victims into submission. One wonders why everybody doesn't just tell her to go to blazes and walk out on her — particularly since they include likeable and intelligent people whose domination is hard to accept. However entertaining it is still, and no more, such questions of logic are of minor import — especially with the lovely Evelyn Venable, and dear old Sir Guy Standing around to command our attention.

--- 10 Minute Intermission ---

ROMEO EXPRESS (Gaumont-British, 1932; US release 1933 by Universal); Directed by Walter Forde; Produced by Michael Balcon; Screenplay by Clifford Grey, Sidney Gilliat, Frank Vosper and Ralph Stock from an original story by Grey; Camera, Gunther Krampf; 94 mins (Remade in 1953 as "Sleeping Car to Trieste"); With: Esther Ralston (Asta Maravelle); Conrad Veidt (Zurta); Joan Barry (Mae Marx); Cedric Hardwicke (MacBain); Hugh Williams (Tony); Donald Calthrop (Pools); Gordon Harker (Tom Bishop); Harold Huth (Grant); Frank Vosper (Inspector Jolif); Muriel Aked (spinster); Elio Makeham (Mills) Finlay Currie (publicist)

If the Russian "China Express" inspired von Sternberg's "Shanghai Express", and the Sternberg film within a few months inspired "Romeo Express", then the latter film is at least an original in placing all of its action on the train, and in the long run was probably the most influential — and definitive — of such films. It arrived in New York today after a couple of weeks after the same director's now lost "The Ghost Train". Forde, formerly a comic in silent two-reelers, was one of Britain's best purely entertainment directors, specialising in neat thrillers and comedies mainly for Gaumont and Ealing, until the early 40's. He is now retired in Hollywood, firmly (if erroneously) convinced that none of his films had any merit. "Romeo Express" (which incidentally was the first writing credit for Claude Rains, co-producer) got otherwise. At least partially thanks to an excellent example of ensemble acting from the fine cast, the film off to a good start, there is some effective use of miniatures and excellent camerawork by Gunther Krampf, although it is not too well served by this new, fully complete, but not too carefully processed print. Not as creative as it might be, but still not bad by any standard, it is nevertheless a very creditable production, especially for one reputedly made for less than the equivalent of $150,000. The alphabetical cast list puts Muriel Aked at the head of a cast for the first and only time in her career... Finlay Currie playing the (then) typical stereotypical loud-mouth American publicist also played in the remake, taking over the Cedric Hardwicke role... and if the main title music suggestions are not used for the car chase highlight on the music track of DuPont's otherwise silent "Moulin Rouge". It's good to have this cast, well-written, well-acted film back with us, and to see Conrad Veidt at his best in such a typical role again... also to see Joan Barry in possibly the best film of her short career. (It was her last film but one). — William K. Everson

Program ends (depending on delayed starting due to earlier concert) at 10.34. No discussion period. Incidentally, this may well be the American premiere of the full "Rome Express", slightly out for U.S. release.