



THE SILENT YEARS

with
Miss Lillian Gish
as hostess

Twelve Silent Film Classics
Every Wednesday at 9:00 P.M.
on WNET/13

Made possible by a grant from
THE BOWERY SAVINGS BANK



MISS LILLIAN GISH

Miss Gish enjoys one of the most distinguished careers in film, having appeared in countless films from silents like "Birth of a Nation" and "Broken Blossoms" to contemporary classics like "Duel in the Sun" and "The Comedians." She has appeared in numerous stage productions including "Life With Father," "The Chalk Garden" and "All the Way Home;" has authored two books and received countless honors, including an "Oscar" in 1971. Her incomparable knowledge of the great films and film makers represented in the series gives her a unique perspective. She was there when it all happened and, in so many ways, Lillian Gish is what "The Silent Years" is all about.

THE SILENT YEARS

The series brings together twelve of the greatest silent films produced, including the historical epic "The Iron Horse," the warm romance of "The Eagle," the touching pathos of "Broken Blossoms," the swashbuckling adventure of "The Iron Mask" and the care-free comedy of "Peck's Bad Boy." The earliest and best generation materials available have been reproduced in impressive color tints used in movie palace productions of the 20's and each feature has been given a newly-composed music track.

The silent film is an integral part of our cultural heritage and is recognized as an art form of its own. Public television allows the films to be shown uncut and without commercial interruption. None of the films in the series have ever been shown on New York television.

THE SCHEDULE



June 18

WHAT PRICE GLORY?

(1926)

Victor McLaglen, Edmund Lowe, Delores Del Rio
Directed by Raoul Walsh

One of the great stage successes of the 1920's, this frank and realistic treatment of World War I, with its explicit descriptions of Marine life and the harshness of battle in the trenches of France was a natural vehicle for translation to the screen. In 1926 director Raoul Walsh won national acclaim for his brilliant film version in which Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe star as the roistering comrades-in-arms, Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt. Battling one another as vigorously as they do an opposing army, their battling becomes heated when it concerns the object of their mutual attentions, the lovely but fickle Charmaine (Delores Del Rio). This veritable Mademoiselle d'Armentieres savors passing along to Sergeant Quirt the same garters she was given by Captain Flagg. THE NEW YORK TIMES called the film a "story of wine, woman and war... a powerful screen effort." "The blazing jealousy of Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt is vividly pictured in those scenes behind the lines, and these same soldiers are depicted as Marines who forget everything in loyalty to their flag once they step out of their billets."



June 25

THE EAGLE

(1925)

Rudolph Valentino, Vilma Banky, Louise Dresser
Directed by Clarence Brown

Set in the Imperial Court of 18th Century Russia, the film is a dashing and romantic adventure in which Rudolph Valentino gives possibly his finest screen performance as Vladimir, the handsome young Cossack guardsman banished from the Court of Catherine the Great. As an outcast, he becomes the bold "Black Eagle," a Russian Robin Hood. A chance encounter with Mascha, the lovely daughter of the rich but wicked landowner, Kyrilla Troekouroff, leads to a perilous plot situation and to the scenes of high passion that have inflamed Valentino fans for four decades.

Vilma Banky plays Mascha, while Louise Dresser gives a stunning performance as Catherine the Great. In one of the memorable lines of silent films, Miss Dresser initiates her attempted seduction of Valentino with the soulful declaration: "You are the first Russian to see his Czarina weep."

"The Eagle" was directed by Clarence Brown who popularized Greta Garbo and later won acclaim for "Ah Wilderness," "National Velvet," and "The Yearling."



July 2

THE IRON HORSE

George O'Brien and Madge Bellamy
Directed by John Ford

The story of the building of the first transcontinental railroad, this film was to become the first of many epics on railroad building and also to become the most famous of the first high-budget Westerns. It used large casts of extras, including a regiment of U.S. troops, Chinese laborers, tribes of Pawnee, Sioux and Cheyenne and was shot almost entirely on location in Nevada. As the hero, George O'Brien, seeking to revenge his father's murder, illustrates the code of the Western hero and the conflicts it brings when he falls in love with a "good" woman (Madge Bellamy) who does not understand the code. Initiating what was to become a mythology made sacred by hundreds of Westerns, circumstances force the hero into a man-to-man showdown with his rival.



July 9

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
(1925)

Lon Chaney, Norman Kerry, Mary Philbin
Directed by Rupert Julian

This is one of the most spectacularly successful films of the silent era and one of Lon Chaney's finest. It is enhanced by wonderful settings including the lavish opera house interior and underground catacombs, Chaney's superb performance and artistic make-up, and the skillful direction of Rupert Julian.

Norman Kerry and Mary Philbin play young lovers caught in an insane reign of terror by the ugly, shadowy phantom of the Paris Opera House. Hopelessly haunted by his own ugliness and desperately frustrated for a link with beauty, the phantom kidnaps Mary and tells her there is no hope of her being rescued from his underground domicile and that, "You will stay here to brighten my toad's existence with your love."



July 16

COLLEGE
(1927)

Buster Keaton and Ann Cornwall
Directed by James W. Horne

With a campus full of less than competent students and faculty, Keaton built his screen comedy by being less competent than any of them, yet by the film's end, he somehow overcomes all obstacles and wins the hand of the heroine. The film starts as Buster graduates from high school, with the cliches of graduation broken up by his miscues. He enters college, determined to succeed in all phases of campus life and in an unusually symmetrical series of events, he watches baseball players, track stars, soda jerks and waiters doing their things and then tries to imitate them, with disastrous results. College is very much a sports lover's film and the cameo appearance of baseball great "Wahoo Sam" Crawford and other athletes adds to the fun.

In this "Silent Years" presentation, "College" is preceded by one of Keaton's finest shorts—the 1920 comedy—"One Week." Buster sets out to build a prefabricated dream house for his bride but events take a turn for the worse when a tornado hits the house.



July 23

BROKEN BLOSSOMS

(1919)

Lillian Gish, Donald Crisp, Richard Barthelmess
Directed by D. W. Griffith

This classic speaks with more pertinence for today's audience than it possibly did for those in the past. It is a story of non-resistance against violence, a plea for charity and understanding in a world of distrust. It is the story of a sadistic prizefighter whose frail daughter is rescued from mistreatment by a sympathetic Chinese youth only to meet a tragic end later at her father's hands. Donald Crisp is the prizefighter, Lillian Gish is superb as the young girl and the Chinese lover is played by Richard Barthelmess.

The film benefitted from the skilled application of color tints to help reflect changes in mood and nuance. The important atmospheric elements have been faithfully preserved and are a striking contribution to the beauty of this film.



July 30

PECK'S BAD BOY

(1921)

Jackie Coogan
Directed by Sam Wood

In a fast-changing panorama of small town America of the 1920's, Jackie Coogan, in this first feature film of his own, is the neighborhood nemesis of grocers, parsons, dogcatchers and his parents. But even in his wildest escapades, there is an endearing quality that soon forces forgiveness from his victims. Film historian William K. Everson says of Coogan's juvenile career, "Next to Shirley Temple, Jackie was the most phenomenal child star Hollywood ever saw. But quite apart from the pathetic and lovable figure he presented, Jackie was a good little actor too."

In addition to "Peck's Bad Boy," this program features "The Rink," one of the finest comedies of Charlie Chaplin. Charlie appears as a not-too-professional waiter who ducks away from his duties to go roller-skating—a skill to be seen to be believed.



August 6

TEMPEST
(1928)

John Barrymore, Camilla Horn, Louis Wolheim
Directed by Sam Taylor

This colorful and lavish love story of an enlisted sergeant of dragoons (John Barrymore) in the Imperial Army of Czar Nicholas II and a stunning princess (Camilla Horn), daughter of a general, is an acknowledged classic. Sergeant Ivan Markov, a peasant, wins an officer's commission for his bravery in the field but fails to win acceptance from his fellow officers who feel commissions are for the aristocracy, not for men from the ranks. "Tempest" is one of the few American films with the turmoil of the Russian Revolution as the background and, although a romance, is studded with graphic scenes of the Czarist armies and of the Bolsheviks.

Though Barrymore was nearly 50 in this film, he was at his peak as a romantic idol. He also manages to interpolate a bizarre "mad" scene in the tradition of Mr. Hyde and Svengali. According to a reviewer in 1928, the film, "reveals the formidable strides made in the technical end of film productions, for the photography of this chronicle is highly artistic and it also can be said to possess a feeling of depth which in itself commands attention."



August 13

DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS
(1925)

Clara Bow and Raymond McKee
Directed by Elmer Clifton

Never has location shooting been carried to such exciting extremes as in this whaling epic, filmed with sailors and townspeople from the famous whaling town of New Bedford, Massachusetts. The drama, heroism, hardships and chilling majesty of the pursuit and capture of the mighty bull whale have never been so convincingly and realistically depicted. The whaling sequences, filmed with much danger to the crew, provide the climactic scenes, but interwoven with these is a "love-over-evil" plot involving the austere Quaker, William Morgan (William Walcott), his daughter Patience (Marguerite Courtot), her beau Allen Dexter (Raymond McKee), the unscrupulous Samuel Siggs (J. Thornton Baston) and his cohort Jake Finner (Patrick Hartigan). The film also features an early appearance as young Dot Morgan by Clara Bow.



August 20

RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE

(1925)

Tom Mix and Warner Oland

Directed by Lynn Reynolds

As a performer, Tom Mix was a man of action rather than emotion, a real showman who insisted on doing all of his own stunts. When he announced early in his career that he was "not for mush," he endeared himself to small boys for generations to come. His version of "Riders of the Purple Sage" was one of the four made by the Fox Studio and probably the finest. This classic Zane Grey story has breathtaking scenery, plenty of action and excitement and a plot of more than usual substance.



August 27

SEVENTH HEAVEN

(1927)

Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor

Directed by Frank Borzage

This film won for Janet Gaynor the first Academy Award for best performance by an actress and cast her with Charles Farrell in this greatest of all screen romances. Their perfect embodiment of the shy but beautiful rapture of young love established them as one of the most popular romantic teams in screen history.

"Seventh Heaven" tells of Diane, a Parisian street waif who, in the midst of a savage beating, is rescued by Chico, a sewer worker, who takes her home to his garret dwelling—a seventh heaven opening to the stars. Chico's initial pity turns to love and then to heartbreak as World War I is declared and he is rushed to the front. The Paris "Taxicab Army" engaged in the Battle of the Marne is excitingly depicted by director Borzage. Chico is thought to have been killed in the fighting, but Diane refuses to lose hope that he will one day return to their seventh heaven. The climax of the film justifies her faith and courage.



September 3

THE IRON MASK

(1929)

Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. and Marguerite de la Motte

Directed by Allan Dwan

From the pages of Alexander Dumas' *Three Musketeers* and its sequel *The Man in the Iron Mask* comes this tale of d'Artagnan, premier swordsman of France and his three companions who are called upon to save the king and their country from the treacheries of Cardinal Richelieu and the evil Duke de Rochefort. When the consort of Louis XIII gives birth to twins, one of the babies is spirited away to be raised as a commoner, lest there be division in the succession to the throne. But years later, the prince is kidnapped and imprisoned in an iron mask while his twin is brought forward in his place. Under Rochefort's influence, he would have led France to ruin were it not for the timely intervention of the Musketeers.

All of the agile acrobatics and spectacular heroics that are associated with Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. are present in this beautifully mounted film. When the film opened in New York, Mordaunt Hall of THE TIMES proclaimed, "It is just such a story as young and old can enjoy, for it is all accomplished with a delightful sense of humor. Crackerjack entertainment!"



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