

## The 14th British Silent Film Festival

### Going to the Movies: Music, Sound and the British Silent Film

Thursday 7 April

**10.30am – *Helen of Four Gates* (PG\*)** (UK 1920 Dir. Cecil Hepworth 77 min)

Based on a novel by a working-class author, Ethel Carnie Holdsworth, ***Helen of Four Gates*** follows the fortunes of Helen at the mercy of an abusive guardian. Filmed on location in Hebden Bridge, this shows Cecil Hepworth's partiality for the pastoral drama and features his regular leading lady, the beautiful Alma Taylor. Long thought to be lost, the film was recently rediscovered in the collection of the Cinematheque Quebecoise.

Cast: Alma Taylor, James Carew, George Dewhurst

**1.00pm – British Cinema on the Home Front During the First World War (PG\*)**

presented by **Toby Haggith** and **Matthew Lee** of the **Imperial War Museum**

Film was used extensively during WW1 to mobilise the support of British civilians behind the war effort. Drawing on films from the Imperial War Museum's collection, this presentation examines how films articulated important national propaganda campaigns, boosting military recruitment, the production of munitions, agricultural produce, the distribution of food and the purchase of War Bonds. The programme includes the rarely seen spy comedy ***The Revenge of Mr Thomas Atkins*** (1914), directed by George Loane Tucker, and ***The Adventures of Dick Dolan*** (1918), the government-sponsored drama to promote the sale of War Savings Certificates.

+

**'The whole of these people were behaving in a disgusting manner'**

**Alex Rock** (De Montfort University) gives an insight into indecent behaviour at the Rank Cinema in Finsbury Park during the Great War as recorded by the local police and do-gooders.

+

***Peace on the Western Front – A Story of the Battlefields* (PG\*)** (UK 1930 Prod. Fred Swann and Hans Nieter 37 min)

In ***Peace on the Western Front – A Story of the Battlefields***, a rarely seen anti-war film in which a little boy playing with toy soldiers, is joined by his father who shows him an album containing pictures of devastated France and Belgium and tells him of many episodes of the Great War.

Photography: C.Crapper

Dialogue: Eliot Stannard

Cast: Moore Marriott and Eric Pavitt

This screening will include a short interval

**4.00pm – *Twinkletoes* (PG\*)** (USA 1926 Dir. Charles Brabin 83 min)

Colleen Moore was at the height of her fame when she starred in ***Twinkletoes***, a fascinating glimpse of the Cockney East End viewed from across the pond.

*Twinkletoes* is a slum waif who aspires to be a music hall star hampered by roguish

father and a boyfriend improbably named 'Chuck'. Based on Thomas Burke's notoriously sordid novel of the same name.

Cast: Colleen Moore, Kenneth Harlan, Tully Marshall

**6.00pm – *Pavement Butterfly* (PG\*) (*Grossstadtschmetterling*) (UK/Germany 1929 Dir Richard Eichberg 97 min)**

Anna May Wong is luminescent as the Butterfly Princess, an exotic Parisian fan dancer who flees her show after a serious accident. She becomes a society darling, but her past catches up with her in the form of a sadistic blackmailer. ***Pavement Butterfly*** is one of Anna May Wong's five collaborations with Eichberg, which sealed her reputation in Europe.

Cast: Anna May Wong, Louis Lerch, Alexander Granach

**8.30pm – *Lonesome* (USA 1928 Dir. Paul Fejos 70 min)**

Made on the cusp of the silent/ sound era, with some short sound sequences, ***Lonesome*** is the story of two isolated young people living and working in New York who meet by chance at Coney Island. They spend an idyllic afternoon, only to lose each other in the thronging crowds. Emigré director Paul Fejos crams every frame with such energy and movement that this is both an intoxicating tale of urban alienation and a cinematic ode to romance.

Cast: Barbara Kent, Glenn Tryon, Fay Holderness, Eddie Phillips

Print courtesy of George Eastman House

+

**short film**

**Friday 8 April**

**9.00am – *The Goosebump Effect* (PG\*)**

Before the public screamed at the music for *Jaws* or sighed at the score for *Brief Encounter*, silent movie musicians were turning the classical repertoire into cinema chemistry by choosing music that would fit the mood – but why do high quavery violins produce unease, and who first used them? Did audiences of the 16th and 17th century recognise specific music as dramatic the way we do now? Polymath musicologists Dr Philip Carli and Neil Brand will provide some of the answers, and try out musical ideas to the best moments of Hitchcock, Griffith and German Expressionism.

**11.00am – *Radio Fun* (PG\*) presented by Bryony Dixon**

Focusing on the period in which sound and image began to converge, at the end of the 1920s and into the early 1930s, **Bryony Dixon** takes a look at the relationship between the two distinct forms of radio and cinema. From the strange case of ***Mr Smith Wakes Up***, a radio play adapted as a film, to radio's love affair with the stars of the cinema. This radio-related miscellany from the BFI National Archive also includes a welcome screening of the wonderful Hans Richter classic, ***Radio-Europa*** (1931).

**2.00pm – *Only the Screen Was Silent* (PG\*) presented by Luke McKernan**

**Luke McKernan**, moving image curator at the British Library, presents an instructive entertainment on children and cinema-going in London before the First World War, using oral history and memoir testimony, music and film.

**4.00pm – The Silent Musician Speaks! (PG\*)**

Through a series of illustrated presentations, screenings and demonstrations, some of the world's best silent film musicians and historians will discuss the history and workings of their craft from its early days to the present. This session is presented in conjunction with the **AHRC Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain** project.

**7.30pm – *Morozko* (PG\*) (Russia 1924 Dir. Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky 40 min)**

The delightful and rarely seen Soviet film ***Morozko*** is based on a well-known Russian fairy tale about a stepdaughter who is driven out to face the spirit of winter. It is presented here with Philip Ellis (Royal Birmingham Ballet) conducting Julie Brown's reconstruction of a score that was specially composed by British composer Frederick Laurence for the film's 1925 London run. This event is presented in conjunction with the **AHRC Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain** project and will be followed by a discussion of the score's discovery and reconstruction.

Cast: Varvara Massalitinova, Vasili Toporkov, Boris Livanov, Kladvdiya Elanskaya

+

***Cinderella* (1907)**

Pathé's classic fairy tale with tinting and stencil colouring, and Lotte Reiniger's beautiful animated and tinted ***Cinderella*** from 1922.

+

***Morozko*** will be followed by a Q&A with members of the composer's family and Julie Brown.

**Saturday 9 April**

**9.00am – *Decameron Nights* (12A\*) (UK 1925 Dir. Herbert Wilcox 83 min)**

Director Herbert Wilcox was best known for using cracking casts and high production values, but ***Decameron Nights*** is perhaps most interesting from the music point of view. Starring Lionel Barrymore and Werner Krauss, this is a film version of a famous stage adaptation of Boccaccio's original lusty medieval tales. In this rare screening, musicologist Philip Carli will recreate some of the original musical themes.

Cast: Lionel Barrymore, Werner Krauss, Ivy Duke, Hanna Ralph, Jameson Thomas

**11.00am – Family Film Club and The 14th British Silent Film Festival**

**present *Transports of Delight* (PG\*)**

Trains, planes and automobiles in comedy are the themes of this special programme of silent film fun. Featuring Charley Chase in ***Limousine Love***, some phantom rides and the ***Smallest Car in the Largest City in the World*** – all accompanied by Neil Brand.

**1.30pm – *The Skipper's Wooing* (PG\*) (UK 1922 Dir. Manning Haynes 70 min)**

To follow last year's surprise hit ***Sam's Boy***, the Festival uncovers ***The Skipper's Wooing***, another Manning Haynes adaptation, based on the stories of popular writer

W.W. Jacobs. These gently humorous dramas were shot in lovely locations on Britain's east coast.

Cast: Gordon Hopkirk, Cynthia Murtagh, Charles Levy, J.T. Macmillan, Bobby Rudd

**3.00pm– The Annual Rachael Low Lecture, presented by Matthew Sweet: Just Between Ourselves: Gossip and the British Silent Film (PG\*)**

Matthew Sweet tells the stories behind the story of British silent cinema, from its rackets beginnings to the 1920s – when gossip columnists emerged from star dressing rooms declaring, 'we talked about music, and almonds, and Elinor Glyn, and chocolate cakes, and sex'.

**Matthew Sweet**, writer and broadcaster, presents Night Waves on BBC Radio 3 and is the author of *Shepperton Babylon: the Lost Worlds of British Cinema*

**Rachael Low** is a key figure in the history of the study of early British cinema. Her pioneering studies published as *The History of the British Film 1895-1929* (BFI) remain an unparalleled source for students and the unchallenged standard text in this field.

**6.00pm – A Night at the Museum**

A trip to the **Cinema Museum**, home to a wonderful collection 'devoted to keeping the spirit of the cinema alive' including screening of the recently rediscovered ***What Next?***

**7.30pm – *What Next?* (PG\*) (UK 1928 Dir. Walter Forde 60 min)**

One of a series of comedy features made by popular British comedian Walter Forde who stars as a bric-a-brac salesman who unwittingly buys a valuable antique candlestick that is also being sought by a deranged archaeologist with a Napoleon complex. Walter becomes embroiled with a peculiarly useless detective who styles himself in the Holmesian mode and his diminutive assistant (played by the wonderful Ian Wilson) who makes up for his lack of inches with a sarcastic hauteur. The whole thing culminates in a splendid 'night-at-the-museum' scene, replete with scary weaponry, a guillotine, suits of armour and trapdoors.

Cast: Walter Forde; Pauline Johnson Frank Stanmore, Douglas Payne

+

**short comedies from Mitchell and Kenyon**

**Please note that separate tickets apply for this event at the Cinema Museum**

**Sunday 10 April**

**9.00am – In Sound and Silence: Opera, Dance and Popular Classical Music in Silent Film (PG\*)**

Tony Fletcher and John Sweeney present a programme of films featuring popular classical music, opera and dance in 1920s and the various experiments in synchronous sound used to record these performances. From films about great composers, to a stencil colour film of *The Mikado* and Harry Parkinson's series '**Tense Moments from Opera**'.

**11.00am – *I Was Born, But...* (*Umarete Wa Mita Keredo*)** (Japan 1932 Dir. Yasujiro Ozu 87 min) (PG\*)

Silent film flourished in Japan into the early 1930s. Ozu's classic *I Was Born, But...* takes advantage of the advances made in filmmaking technique at this time while retaining the fluidity of silent cinema at its height. But this is not all – Ozu also brings his own very individual eye for composition to this painfully funny tale of two young brothers struggling against the 'law of the playground' in the new Tokyo suburbs.

Cast: Tatsuo Saito, Hideo Sugawara, Misuko Yoshikawa, Tokkan Kozo

**2.00pm – Playing in the Dark: Celebrating the Centenary of the Birth of the British Newsreel** (PG\*) with Radio 4 pianist **Colin Sell**

The cinema newsreel in the silent era was usually the last reel of film to arrive in the building, so there was little possibility of rehearsing it for the musicians – indeed it was the great test of improvisational ability. Using phenomenal Topical Budget newsreel footage from the teens and twenties covering such historical gems as suffragette marches, the war in the Middle East and on the Western Front, Versailles, Irish independence and Chaplin and Arbuckle visiting London, the Festival's team of pianists attempts to maintain the musical flow by playing the news 'at sight', aided by the resident keyboard genius of 'I'm Sorry I haven't a Clue' and silent film fan **Colin Sell**.

**4.00pm – The Great British Talking Picture Show** (PG\*) presented by **Geoff Brown** and **Robert Murphy**

A lavishly illustrated presentation on the transition to sound in British cinema between 1929 and 1931 which looks at the careers of directors and stars as they moved into synchronised sound and the new genres that emerged as a result. Popular musicals and revue films such as Adrian Brunel's *Elstree Calling* (1930), Walter Summers' *Raise the Roof* (1930) and Richard Eichberg's *Let's Love and Laugh* (1931) will be featured alongside theatrical adaptations like the farcical *Rookery Nook* (1929) and the melodramatic *To What Red Hell* (1929). Sound cinema also embraced variety and music-hall talent, from the long-forgotten Gilbert Childs, featured in *The Co-optimists* (1929), to Gracie Fields, the inimitable *Sally in Our Alley* (1931).

**6.30pm – The BFI Southbank presents: *Beggars of Life*** (PG\*) (US 1928 William Wellman 100 min)

The British skiffle band the Dodge Brothers play classic Americana to accompany William Wellman's legendary 1928 film *Beggars of Life*. A tale of depression era, rail-riding hobos played by the iconic Louise Brooks, Richard Arlen and the great Wallace Beery. **Mark Kermode** (bass, harmonica), **Ali Hirji** (guitar, mandoline), **Al Hammond** (drums, washboard) and **Michael Hammond** (guitar, banjo) together with silent film pianist **Neil Brand** perform as part of this event.

Cast: Louise Brooks, Wallace Beery, Richard Arlen.

**Please note that separate tickets apply for this extra event at the BFI Southbank**

Tickets are available [from the Barbican](#) now. Ticket prices are £10.50 or £8.50 online and less for concessions for individual screenings. A full festival pass is £90 (concessions £60) and day passes are £35 (concessions £25).

As noted above, tickets for the A Night at the Museum event are available separately [from The Cinema Museum](#) and tickets for Beggars of Life are available [from the BFI](#).

Unless otherwise stated, musical accompaniment for the screenings will be provided by Neil Brand, Günter Buchwald, Philip Carli, Stephen Horne and John Sweeney. Please note also, that on Friday 8 April, the festival teams up with the **Sounds of Early Cinema in Britain** AHRC conference. For further information about the festival, please see [the British Silent Film Festival website](#), which has lots of details, including information about accommodation and biographies of all the musicians.

I'll see you there!