

NEDERLANDS

SILENT

FILM
FESTIVAL 2024



CATALOGUS 2024



FOREWORD

As the tradition goes, January is a time for new beginnings; for good resolutions, creating new opportunities, grand plans and big ideas (which, let's be honest, don't always stick for a very long time). But, of course, it's also the perfect moment to cozy up in the cinema and enjoy silent films. To share in these ambitious efforts, this year's Nederlands Silent Film Festival launches two new programme strands. On Sunday evening, the festival will conclude with The Forbidden Picture Show, a program showcasing controversial and/or censored films, which, this year, focuses on cocaine.

In order to delve deeper and offer an even wider perspective on silent film, from now on, we will also be choosing a country in focus every year, starting this edition with a screening of *El tren fantasma*, one of the defining Mexican films from the silent era. This film was selected by José María Serralde Ruiz, a phenomenal pianist who will also accompany the film himself. Together with you, we will be exploring the world through the lens of silent films, and already look forward to discovering many cinematic gems together with our audience.

Therefore, during this edition, we're already traveling a bit further, following in the footsteps of the French writer Pierre Loti. We'll be going to several significant places related to his life and work: from French naval schools, across West Africa and Turkey, ending up in Japan, and finally travelling back to Paris and the Basque Country.

Of course, we will also provide you with a generous dose of the greatest stars of the silver screen: Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Pola Negri, Asta Nielsen, and many more. We'll be laughing with the funniest comedians on Slapstick Saturday (Buster Keaton, Mabel Normand, and some of cinema's first nasty women!). But besides the iconic directors like Ernst Lubitsch and Fritz Lang, we will also be putting a spotlight on filmmakers about whom there is too little information available right now, such as Toko Yamazaki and the female creators who sparked the interest of Kate Saccone and Anke Brouwers for their program 'Who's That Girl?'.

You will find brand new restorations, interspersed with unearthed masterpieces that, in some cases, have never been shown in the Netherlands before. We're delighted to introduce you to future audience favorites such as *Peter Pan* and *His Majesty the Barber* and invite you to our very first music special and yoga session, exploring what it is that music adds to silent films (and how). In this same programme, we'll also be engaging with films in a different way, during a short yoga session inspired by movements within silent film fragments.

In short, a program bursting with drama, spectacle, humor, adventure, beautiful landscapes, and a touch of magic.

Our endless thanks go to our wonderful team, brilliant musicians, dear volunteers, and all the film archives and other partners and sponsors who make all of this possible. And, of course, to you, our audience, for whom we organize this entire festival. Even though these times seem dark, we hope that all these beautiful films can offer a small glimpse of light and provide you with a new perspective on the world and our current time.

English title: Woman in the Moon

Year: 1929

Country: Duitsland

Regie: Fritz Lang

Cast: Willy Fritsch (Wolf Helius), Gerda Maurus (Friede Velten), Gustav von Wangenheim (Hans Windegger) Klaus Pohl (professor Georg Manfeldt), Fritz Rasp (the man who calls himself Walter Turner), the mouse Josephine

length: 169 minuten

collectie Ivo Blom ->



FRAU IM MOND

‘For the human mind, there is no never - only a not yet’
During the 1920s, outer space, the space beyond the earth’s atmosphere, was an entirely undiscovered territory. Only in 1962, the famous Russian astronaut Yuri Gagarin would shoot out of our atmosphere on the first manned space flight. From the nineteenth century onwards, there was much speculation about space travel, e.g. in the books of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. Filmmaker Fritz Lang had an enormous fascination for space magazines, which were already widely circulated at the time. In his first science fiction film, the spectacular Metropolis (1927), in which an evil robot takes control of the world, he reportedly wanted to include a rocket, but the spacecraft was just “too big to fit in it.” So, he decided to dedicate a new film to it, titled Frau im Mond: suspense, romance, and existential fear inside a futuristic spacecraft.

Georg Manfeldt, a somewhat scatterbrained and agitated astronomy professor, is onto something. He is convinced that there is gold to be found on the far side of the moon. Although his conviction mostly provokes laughter within scientific circles, a criminal gang, including a cigar-smoking woman and a man in a wheelchair, is determined to steal his notes. Meanwhile, Manfeldt’s friend Helius, an aeronautical engineer, becomes a believer in his theory and organizes a space expedition. The leader of the criminal gang, Walt Turner, blackmails Helius into taking him on board. Helius’s colleague Windegger also joins the crew, along with his fiancée Friede, an astronomy student that Helius is secretly in love with. All in all, a recipe for disaster one might say, and indeed it is.

SERIOUS SCIENCE FICTION

Although the futuristic aspect of the film may seem a bit clumsy by today’s standards – such as astronauts walking on the moon in lederhosen; the assumption then being that you could breathe normally there – Frau im Mond is considered the first “serious” science fiction of the silver screen. It was made under the watchful eye of space science pioneer Hermann Oberth, who had already designed a long-range rocket as early as 1917. The rocket and the lunar landscape in the film were constructed by him. Lang also had the ill-conceived plan to launch a real rocket as a publicity stunt during the premiere. The experiments failed miserably, with Oberth suffering serious injuries.

This might have been a dark omen of the significant influence the film would have on actual rocket technology. The rocket in Frau im Mond is built in a tall hangar and then driven outside and launched from a water basin. This is still the standard method for launching space shuttles.

The film was closely studied by Wernher von Braun, a student of Hermann Oberth. He would develop the infamous V2 rockets for the Nazi regime, an invention which would cause the death of thousands of people. After the war, he would play a crucial role in the Cold War space race in the United States.

FEAR OF EMPTINESS

As a viewer of *Frau im Mond*, you need some patience since the rocket only takes off after an hour and a half. But it's more than worth the wait. The serene, modern design of the space journey is fascinating, and the special effects were created by none other than the abstract artist and filmmaker Oskar Fischinger. Not only is it fascinating to watch a film about space travel in 1929, made as realistically as possible for that time, but also the sense of existential dread is palpable. The space journey evokes a contradictory constriction. First, there is the dizzying flight in the cramped rocket – the mouse brought along in a cage is even doubly confined. Then comes the lunar landscape, with its endless, overexposed sand landscape that ignites our horror vacui, the fear of emptiness. But for the crew members, breaking away from the Earth causes great panic and confusion – where is the Earth? Will we ever see it again?

Lang was inspired by this existential dimension of the film when he once fell asleep during a train journey. This seemingly ordinary experience left a deep impression on him: 'the consciousness of being carried from one place to another without having anything else to do but lie still, dreaming.' Space travel is analogous to consciousness outside of time and space.

A SHORT DREAM

In this film, the intriguing vision of the future surpasses the scenario. Like *Metropolis* "Frau im Mond" is based on an eponymous novel by Lang's wife, Thea von Harbou. As in many science fiction books, the characters are generally quite caricatured. Although the sly criminal Walter Turner is brilliantly played by Fritz Rasp, who would be honored as the 'German film villain of more than 60 years' after his death, it's also noteworthy that the only female character in the film, Friede, played by Gerda Maurus, remains the most calm. That's not always the case in films from the 1920s. The romantic storyline is overly sweet, though, and behind the scenes, soap opera-like events occurred: Lang had an affair with Maurus during filming. But it was the changed world that would lead the couple to separate five years later: as a Nazi supporter, she continued to work in Germany, while he, due to his Jewish roots and communist sympathies, moved to America.

Frau im Mond became the last major silent film in German film history. Ufa wanted to capitalize on modern developments and turn it into a sound film, but Lang resisted. Nevertheless, the film became the biggest box office success of that year. For many Germans, this spectacle provided much-needed distraction in difficult times – the crisis had led to high inflation, and the dream of space travel and a different world was very welcome. However, two weeks after the premiere on October 15th at the legendary Berlin film theater Ufa Palast am Zoo, the Wall Street stock market collapsed, leading to a global depression. The dream was short-lived

- WRITTEN BY: VERA DE LANGE

*A film from the holdings of the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung
(www.murnau-stiftung.de) in Wiesbaden.*



WHO'S THAT GIRL

Just how much do we really know about silent cinema? It is estimated that about 80% of all silent films are lost (in some countries this amounts to a staggering 99% of lost films) so there is only a small amount of films left for us to study, screen, love and treasure. We have to live with the knowledge that the majority of silent film production will never be seen again even though we are sometimes able to imagine these lost films from other sources such as newspaper articles, still photographs, and descriptions in memoirs or diaries. Yet, even when taking a closer look at the films that still exist, one can be surprised, even stunned, by what we still don't know or understand about them. It happens that the films themselves are incomplete, but the same goes for our knowledge about them.

Who made this film? Who distributed it? Who did the coloring? Under what circumstances were these films produced? (And of course who watched these films?) Who were these nameless people looking right at us from the screen or doing all the work, unseen, from behind the scenes? These are questions that excite and motivate the scholar, archivist, historian and lover of silent cinema, and they inspired us to create this program.

Because we realized that too often we have asked ourselves just who exactly is the girl, woman or person of color - because the knowledge gaps are (still) the largest when it comes to films made by these marginalized groups - in a particular film. What is their story, seems like a simple question, and yet often we don't have an answer. Recently, a pioneering female animator was rediscovered because a female scholar had finally bothered to ask the question: who is this woman? But even when we do know the names of the women in front of or behind the camera, there is still much left to be uncovered and understood about them. Even the 'bigger' names, like Alice Guy and Lois Weber, that have been canonized over the years remain largely unknown to general audiences and their lives and stories are still incomplete or unfinished. This program celebrates films made by or about strong, funny, enchanting, artful, daring and stubborn women, all of them pioneers of silent cinema, but whose cinematic legacy remains underappreciated until today.



BONSOIR - LA FÉE AUX FLEURS (1906). 1 MIN.

You are welcomed to the program with this very short film by French film pioneer Alice Guy. A flower fairy creates the word 'bonsoir' ('good evening') in French in large colorful letters. There is no one better suited to do this, as Guy was the world's first (known) woman director and yet her absolutely original - varied, surprising, versatile - films are still not as widely known as the work of her male contemporaries.

COMPILATION OF CLIPS FROM TRAVEL AND FASHION FILMS. APPROX 13 MINUTES

A compilation of clips from beautiful color films from the Eye Filmmuseum in which we encounter several unknown women, vaguely described or not at all. The compilation shows women from various parts of the world, such as France, Japan, Hungary, Croatia and present-day Turkey. Diverse as they are, all the clips prompt the following questions: Where did these women come from? Who were they? What is their story? Why were they filmed?

ALICE EN DE BRANDWEER (ALICE THE FIREFIGHTER) (1926). 9 MIN.

In this animated short, a live action Alice (Margie Gay) is a firefighter who comes to the rescue when a hotel catches fire. This short was part of Walt Disney's "Alice Comedies" series, which was distributed by Margaret J. Winkler, who supported numerous animators like Max and Dave Fleischer, Pat Sullivan, and Otto Messmer. After a year of celebrations dedicated to Disney's centennial, we want to celebrate the woman who gave the 'struggling artist' Walt his start with a distribution contract.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL (1914). 12 MIN

American actress Gertrude McCoy saves the day in this thrilling dramatic short produced by the Edison Company. When her railway switchman husband falls asleep at the job, McCoy must take matters into her own hands in the face of impending disaster. Less known than many of her contemporaries, McCoy's career as an actress and screenwriter deserves attention today.

FILMENS VOVEHALS (1923). 9 MIN.

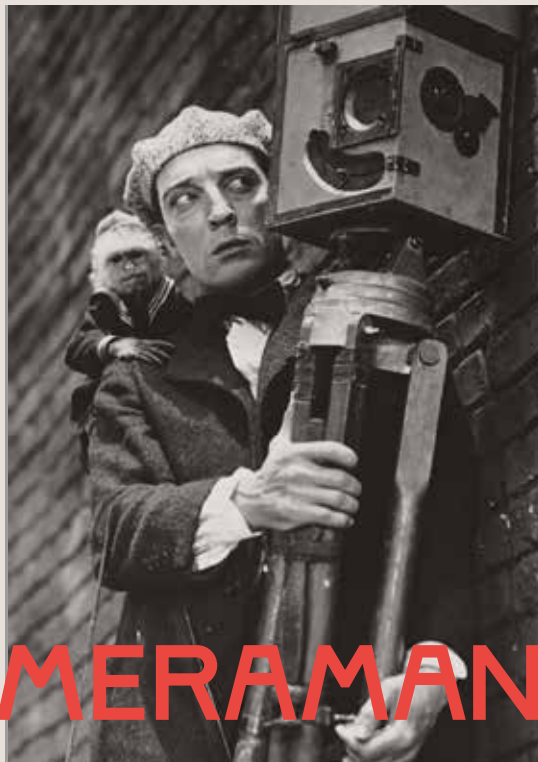
This compilation highlights some of the most spectacular stunts performed by the Danish serial queen Emilie Sannom. A stunt performer on and off-screen, Sannom's sensational career as an actress, screenwriter, and real-life daredevil inspires amazement and awe.

JUSTITIA (1919). 47 MIN.

In the 1910s the female action star graced cinema screens worldwide. These action stars were the opposite of 'delicate' and 'meek': they were adventurous, athletic and fearless. 'Astrea' was Italy's favorite strongwoman. In Justitia she plays a mysterious woman selflessly fighting for justice. The film was directed by French comedian Polidor who injects the film with speed and humor.

- WRITTEN BY: ANKE BROUWERS & KATE SACCONI

Year: 1928
Country: United States
Director: Edward Sedgwick
Cast: Buster Keaton (Buster), Marceline Day (Sally Richards), Harold Goodwin (Harold Stagg), monkey Josephine (assistant camerawoman)
Copy: Park Circus
Duration: 69 minutes



THE CAMERAMAN

“Do you want a job here? With that cocktail shaker?” These are the questions the clumsy Buster receives when he applies as a camera reporter at the MGM News film company. Indeed, his equipment is not very suitable: the ‘cocktail shaker’ he carries with a tripod on his shoulder is not even a film camera. It is a so-called ‘tin type camera,’ an old-fashioned camera with which he takes snapshots of passersby on the street for 10 cents.

His goal is not so much a career move; he mainly wants to impress the beautiful studio secretary. She advises him to film as much as possible, and something will eventually come out of it. So, he exchanges his cocktail cup for a film camera and gets to work. This leads to a lot of unexpected and hilarious adventures that turn the city of New York upside down.

FALL DOWN THE STAIRS

The Cameraman was the first film Buster Keaton made under contract with the film giant MGM. Before that, he had been making independent productions as a comedian for years, where he could freely perform his famous antics. Born as Joseph Frank Keaton in 1895 in Kansas, he reportedly got the name Buster when he fell down a high staircase as a baby, without a scratch on him. This served him well when, as a tiny child, he performed with his parents in their vaudeville act. A recurring part was them throwing their son, to his great pleasure, into the air or into the audience. Physical comedy would become the great strength of this bouncing ball. Therefore, he always preferred to do his stunts himself.

Keaton’s second unique selling point, which sets him apart from the two other major comedians of his time, Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd, is his stoic gaze. That’s why he was also called ‘the great stone face.’ The fact that he never laughs, however, does not mean he lacks expression. From dreamy to ecstatic, shy and confused, in The Cameraman, we see a range of expressions, making it never get old.

DISGUISE PARTY

Before Keaton signed his contract with MGM, he was used to making films of which only the beginning and the end were predetermined. The rest was completed with whatever funny things happened during filming. This was absolutely not the working method at MGM. In this multimillion-dollar business, films were continuously made, and every choice and change in the script had to be determined and budgeted in advance. Randomly picking a few extras off the street, as Buster was used to, was not intended either. This led to huge fights on the set, making him call his move to MGM ‘the biggest mistake of my life.’

However, the quarreling did yield something, as ultimately more than half of the film was created through improvisation. This includes the unforgettable scene in which Buster goes to the pool on his first date with the secretary and has to share his dressing room with another man. The resulting hilarious dressing-up/struggling/climbing mishap is recorded in a single take of no less than 4 minutes, without any rehearsals in advance. Keaton was particularly proud of this. Director Edward Sedgwick had offered to take on the role of the co-star, but according to Keaton, he looked too much like a hulk that would throw you out of the dressing room if he got angry. In the end, Edward Brophy, the unit manager, took on the role. He looked less intimidating but was hefty enough to get in your way in a small booth.

A MONKEY AS A FILMMAKER

Buster is never alone in the film; he and his film apparatus are inseparable. Occasionally, he literally hides behind it, and with its awkward tripod, it's a great prop for comedic bumbling or clever actions. When he gets involved in a spectacular gang war in Chinatown, his tripod is 'shot down' by guns. He skillfully uses this to film from a lower perspective. This fusion of man and camera would be taken to the extreme a year later in Dziga Vertov's dynamic *Man with a Movie Camera*. The first 'rushes' of Buster in *The Cameraman* would also definitely suit an experimental film. However, the studio bosses at MGM immediately rejected the footage, which is indicative of the unadventurous way of filmmaking at this production studio. And what does the fact that the most important shots are made by... a monkey... tell us?

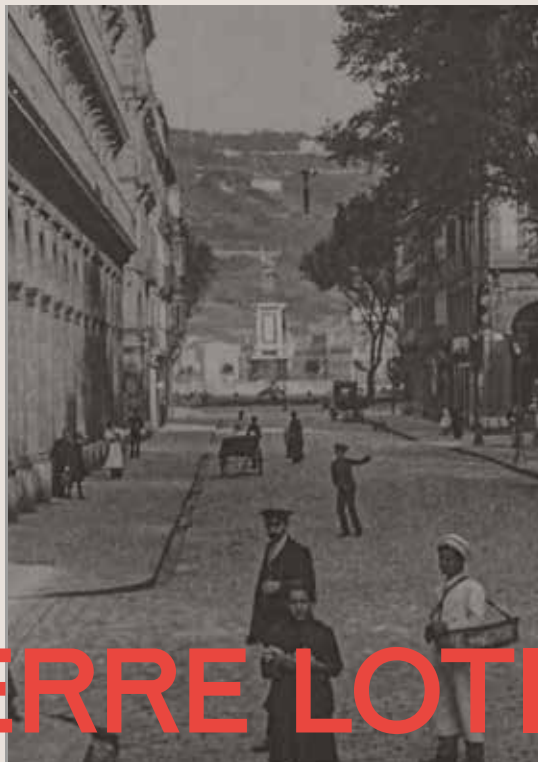
Indeed, you read it correctly; there is a monkey in the film, and in an important role. This brilliant sidekick, notably named Josephine, just like the mouse in *Frau im Mond*, is an experienced film actress. She comes from Tony Campanaro's menagerie, which trained animals for film performances.

She probably also played one of the three monkeys harassing tightrope walker Charlie Chaplin in the comedy *The Circus*, released earlier that year. Allegedly, Keaton wanted to pay tribute to his greatly admired colleague by choosing a monkey for the lead role.

The Cameraman was a big success in theaters, but after a fire in the MGM vaults, the film was presumed lost for many years. After two copies were found, the film (unfortunately, except for three missing minutes) was digitally restored in 2019 in 4K by Warner Bros, The Criterion Collection, and Cineteca di Bologna. At the screening at the Il Cinema Ritrovato film festival, a special amateur film was shown, which had also surfaced a few years earlier. It was made by a Milanese couple on their honeymoon in New York in 1928. As they exited the subway, they found themselves in a huge crowd. In the middle of this was Buster Keaton filming a scene for *The Cameraman*—of course, accompanied by his cocktail shaker.

- WRITTEN BY: VERA DE LANGE

Vera de Lange writes about film and art in the interwar period. She contributed to exhibitions and research projects for institutions such as the Kunstmuseum, Stadsarchief Amsterdam, and Eye Filmmuseum. She also contributed to various exhibition catalogs, including Universum Max Beckmann, Modern Perspectives, and Nieuwe Kaders: Schilderkunst, fotografie en film 1920-1940. Under the name verascoop, she writes a blog about film and museum culture



PIERRE LOTI

Pierre Loti (born Julien Viaud, 1850-1923) was a French writer, naval officer, traveller, acrobat, and diplomat, among other things. During his lifetime he visited 29 countries and participated in 31 naval military actions. He also published 61 books and was admitted to the Académie française in 1891. It is hard to comprehend how one person could fit so many different careers, ambitious achievements, hobbies, and romances (with men and women) into one life.

Loti completed his military education in 1875 at the École de gymnastique de Joinville. The same year he met the celebrated French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who would remain a dear friend until her death, just a few months before Loti.

Stationed at the naval academy in Brest, Loti studied Breton culture, which would later inspire him to write *Pêcheur d'Islande* (1886). [...] He transformed the family home in La Rochelle into an eclectic temple inspired by his many travels over the course of decades, where he gave themed costume parties.

In 1903 Loti bought a house at Hendaye, in the French Basque region. His military career with the navy ended in 1910. Returning to Constantinople, where he stayed until 1913 as a diplomat, he was welcomed as a successful Orientalist author, but was also suspected of being a spy. In 1921 he suffered a stroke, from which he never seemed to recover. He died in Hendaye in 1923. Despite many of his novels having been adapted to the cinema even during his lifetime, and his eagerness to have himself photographed, often in exotic costume, no film footage of Loti is known to exist

This programme is meant to evoke the universe of Loti, touching upon the many places to which he travelled, and echoing his formative times at military school and with close friends. It also contains some short fiction films with settings and stories similar to Loti's own fictional writings. Since the scope of Loti's life is so rich and broad, such a loosely associative programme risked getting larger and larger (or as sprawlingly eclectic as his house in Rochefort, now converted into a museum). To avoid this, we decided to limit the compilation to films selected from the collections of the Eye Filmmuseum. All the Pierre Loti quotations in the film notes are from Lesley Blanch's biography, *Pierre Loti: Travels with the Legendary Romantic* (2004 edition)

LES ATHLÈTES DE L'ÉCOLE MILITAIRE DE JOINVILLE (De Athleten van de Militaire School van Joinville-lePont bij Paris) (FR 1917)

“Les athlètes de Joinville. Les barres parallèles”. A series of exercises on the parallel bars (“bridge”), many also filmed in slow-motion, recorded per the Dutch titles with the Pathé Frères “langzaam-werkend apparaat” (literally, slow-working apparatus).

PASSAGE DES PORTIQUES (ÉCOLE DE GYMNASTIQUE JOINVILLE) (GB 1897)

Scene of cadets climbing the stairs of a gantry, running across it, and then descending by sliding down poles or jumping off. Pierre Loti joined the École Militaire de Joinville in 1875. Throughout his life, he was fond of gymnastics. He is said to have performed with the Etruscan circus in Toulon immediately following his training in Joinville. A photograph taken in acrobat costume survives, along with his diary entry: “My costume comes straight from Milan, chez Carolo Lorenzi, who makes for all the fashionable acrobats.”

STAMBOUL ET LA CORNE D'OR (Turkije) (FR 1912) 3'51”

Loti was stationed in Constantinople many times between 1876 and 1913, first with military and then with diplomatic duties. He wrote several novels and essays set in Turkey, the most famous being *Aziyadeh* (*Aziyadé*, 1879), about the illicit romance between a French naval officer and a harem girl. Loti remained interested in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, albeit lobbying from a distance.

“I have suffered too much these last months, seeing the infamous machinations against my beloved Turkey,” he wrote following the occupation of Istanbul by Allied forces in 1918, which lasted until 1923. Both films show the neighbourhoods Loti frequented and regularly wrote about. Loti is still fondly remembered in Istanbul; many streets and establishments are named after him, and the Turkish translations of his books are still widely available.

DE ZEEVAARTSCHOOL DER FRANSCHÉ MARINE [THE MARITIME SCHOOL OF THE FRENCH NAVY] (FR, 1917?)

Documentary about the education of pupils of the French naval school in Brest, aboard the ships *Magellan* and *Armorique*, including physical exercises and practical instruction. Loti started his naval training at the Naval School at Brest in 1867, living for the first year aboard the *Borda*, and then departing on a long voyage around the world in his third year. He wrote: “This floating cloister was huge and light and welcoming; it smelled of scrubbed paint, tarred ropes, salt, seaweed – and the sea.” Loti spent a good portion of his life on ships, until his last naval command (“Viceroy of Pheasant Island”) ended in 1898 (see the note for the last film in this programme, *Sous le ciel Basque*, 1913). Made from an original nitrate print, duplicated to negative in 1994 at Haghefilm; the positive was printed at Neyrac in 2002.

IN WEST-AFRIKA (FR, 1919-1922)

Compilation of Pathé Revue items. Subjects: West Africa *Habe* dancers. [Note: The ritual dances and masks depicted – bird dance, shell masks, stilt bird, reed dance – match modern footage of the Dogon tribe in Mali.] Sudanese textile production and embroidery, including cotton cultivation on the banks of the Niger. Tapioca preparation in Togo

Birds of Sudan and Senegal (this final fragment is from Oiseaux aquatiques d’Afrique Occidentale Française, M. Livier, France, 1919). Following a trip to Tahiti, Loti set sail to West Africa in 1874. Stationed in Dakar, he immersed himself in West African life. His novel *Le Roman d’un spahi* (1881) is believed to be partly autobiographical, where he conjures “all the sounds and smells of Africa, of soumaré, dusky flesh, musk and rot; the strange cries of the baboons in the forests... the bird calls”, as well as the local dances and music. Anatole France wrote: “It was reserved for Pierre Loti to make us savour – to the point of intoxication, of delirium, of stupor, even – the bitter flavour of exotic loves.”

IL FIORE DEL DESERTO (IT 1911)

Lakmé sacrifices herself to the Emir in order to save her people. Her lover Sidi tries to save her from the harem, but he is too late, as Lakmé chooses to die by a snakebite while performing her dance. Although not an adaptation of a Loti novel, this film represents the Orientalist tendencies of Loti’s universe in all its aspects. An impossible love story with a beautiful harem woman set in lavish Orientalist decors (recalling the “Salon Turc” of Loti’s house in Rochefort), it could easily have been written by Loti. It is also worth noting that Léo Delibes’ opera *Lakmé* (1883) was based on Loti’s *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880).

L’APRÈS-MIDI D’UNE JAPONAISE (PATHÉ-REVUE NO. 42) (Japanese ladies) (FR 1920)

This Pathé Revue shows the daily life of a Japanese lady: we see women drinking tea, strolling in the park, playing a game of hanetsuki (similar to badminton but played with wooden paddles), shopping, and arranging flowers (ikebana).

MARIAGE JAPONAIS (FR, 1910?)

Film shot in one continuous take, showing a traditional Japanese wedding ceremony, with much tea drinking and a fan dance. Shortly after completing the novel *Pêcheur d’Islande* at Rochefort in 1885, Loti departed for Japan. Anchored for about six months near Nagasaki, Loti was able to observe the Japanese way of life. He ended up writing a trilogy; the most famous volume, *Madame Chrysanthème* (1888), became the inspiration for Puccini’s opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904). “Japaneries” were already very fashionable in France, but Loti didn’t stop at collecting small mementos: he had a Japanese pagoda built in Rochefort in 1886, which was dismantled in the late 1920s.

DE BEGRAFENIS VAN SARAH BERNHARDT [The Funeral of Sarah Bernhardt] (FR 1923)

Duplicated from a nitrate print to negative in 1993; this black & white print was made in 1999. The titles are in Dutch, with only one French title at the end (“Au cimetière du Père Lachaise”). When Sarah Bernhardt died on 26 March 1923, numerous obituaries appeared in Dutch newspapers. Practically all of them mentioned the fact that her health had not been good at all recently, and that the day before her death she had requested many flowers at her funeral and expressed her wish to be buried in the rosewood coffin she had made to measure 30 years earlier, which Loti had seen on various occasions (he may even have slept in it!). As the news of her death was followed so closely, it is not at all surprising that footage of her funeral was screened at Dutch film theatres. The nitrate print of this newsreel arrived at Eye in 1961 through a private donation.

SOUS LE CIEL BASQUE (Onder de Baskische hemel) (FR 1913)

A black & white print of an English-language version of this film, entitled *On the Coast of the Bay of Biscay, France*, released by George Klein in the U.S. sometime between 1911 and 1915, also survives at the Library of Congress. A published description reads: "A travelog of the frontier dividing France and Spain, with views of the Hendaye Coast, France; the village of Fontarabia [i.e., Hondarribia], Spain; Saint Marie Gate at Fontarabia; a shopping center; homes of fishermen; the frontier of Spain; Behobie, France (rather than Spain, as appears on interior title); the International Bridge between France and Spain; the beach and streets of San Sebastian; the house of Pierre Loti and the old castle of Polignac; and the Island of Pheasants. Includes a trip by electric train from Hendaye to San Sebastian, and ends with twilight scenes of the Spanish coast." (The George Kleine Collection of Early Motion Pictures at the Library of Congress: A Catalog, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 1980) Eye's Desmet Collection contains the original French brochure. L'île des Faisans (Pheasant Island) is the world's smallest "condominium", a territory under joint sovereignty, officially alternating governance for periods of six months, administered by naval commanders of Spain and France. The French position carries the title of "Viceroy of Pheasant Island"; between 1892 and 1898 one of the French officers with this title was Pierre Loti. Here he met Crucita Gainza, with whom he had four sons. He lived in a house called "Bakhar Etchea", which he later bought in 1903, where he would die 20 years later. Basque culture inspired him to write the novel *Ramuntcho* (1897), which was filmed in 1919, 1938, and 1959.



- WRITTEN BY: ELIF RONGEN-KAYNAKÇI

*originally written for the Le Giornate del cinema muto/Pordenone
Silent Film Festival catalogue, 2023*



PETER PAN

Peter Pan (1924) is the first adaptation of this classic play. 100 years later, the film has not lost its childlike charm. With its beautiful special effects, sets, and acting, Peter Pan is a charming whole that does justice to the essence of the original source material. And that's not the only reason the film is special. In various ways, the film had an impact on the careers of two legends in film history: Walt Disney and Edith Head.

THE BIRTH OF PETER PAN

Scottish playwright J. M. Barrie was the creative mind behind Peter Pan. He first introduced the character in the book "The Little White Bird" (1902) before bringing Peter Pan into the spotlight with his own play, premiering in London in 1904. It became a massive worldwide hit. Barrie later published the play as a book, which also achieved tremendous success.

With such popular source material, it was only a matter of time before a film studio would recognize the story's potential. In the early 1920s, Paramount Studios acquired the film rights. Herbert Brenon was chosen as the director. Barrie remained closely involved in this first film adaptation of his play, crafting a detailed script and overseeing the film production. He was also involved in casting, selecting 17-year-old Betty Bronson to play Peter Pan. A remarkable choice, as Betty Bronson had only played minor roles, while established names such as Gloria Swanson and Mary Pickford were also interested in the role. In the end, Barrie proved to have an eye for talent: Betty Bronson was widely praised as the perfect Peter Pan. In 1926, the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, for example, wrote: "Miss Bronson has all the qualities for her role, the mischievous open face, the captivating gaze, the sympathetic figure, the resolute legs."

Casting Betty Bronson as Peter Pan also continued a theatrical tradition: Peter Pan was always played by a young woman. This adaptation also closely adheres to the theatrical tradition in other regards. Many intertitles, for instance, were directly taken from the play, and all animals were portrayed by people in costumes.

FILM MAGIC AND INNOVATIONS

Simultaneously, a generous dose of film magic was sprinkled across the story. Barrie recognized the potential of cinema: "The film can do things for Peter Pan which the ordinary stage cannot do," he said. One innovation was that Tinker Bell was portrayed by an actress, Virginia Brown Faire. In the theater, the fairy could only be represented by a spotlight, but film's special effects allowed an actress to be given the correct height. The scenes with Tinker Bell showcase the film at its best. Another alteration was giving the film an American touch.

The lost boys suddenly show great loyalty to the Stars and Stripes, the American flag. Undoubtedly a Hollywood intervention to engage the American audience more in the English story.

DISNEY'S DREAM: PETER PAN THROUGH WALT'S EYES

Animator Walt Disney was familiar with *The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* from an early age: as a child, he saw a traveling stage production in 1913. In 1924, he also watched this first film adaptation, inspiring him to create his own animated film. Disney revolutionized the film industry when he produced the first feature-length animated film, "Snow White," in 1937. During its production in 1935, Disney had already decided that his second film would be *Peter Pan*. However, a complex rights situation first caused a delay. In 1929, Barrie had given the rights of *Peter Pan* to the Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. A noble cause: ensuring his play would always bring joy to children. At the same time, Paramount still owned the film rights after producing this film in 1924. In 1938, the three parties managed to reach a deal. Walt Disney Studios began the groundwork for the animated film's production.

However, this time, World War II caused a delay. Disney focused on making educational and propaganda films during this period, and his other projects were put on hold. In 1949, the studio restarted its plans, and eventually, *Peter Pan* was released in 1953. Not as the second but as the fourteenth Disney animated film. It was a lucrative move for the studio: several sequels, spin-offs, and a live-action remake followed, solidifying *Peter Pan*'s significant legacy at the film studio.

THE FLYING START OF EDITH HEAD

But *Peter Pan* was not only a pivotal point in Walt Disney's career. *Peter Pan* was one of the first films that legendary designer Edith Head worked on, as a textile designer. In her illustrious career, Head received 35 Oscar nominations, winning 8. She still holds the record for the woman with the most Oscars ever. In 1924, she had just been hired at Paramount Pictures as a costume sketch artist. Although she borrowed designs from other designers for her job interview, this marked the beginning of a long and successful career. Most of her career was spent at Paramount. Head once said, "If it is a Paramount film, I probably designed it." This was not an exaggeration. It's difficult to determine how many films Head contributed to, but it's at least 500. In her career, she created costumes for major stars such as Clara Bow, Jean Harlow, Mae West, Hedy Lamarr, Ginger Rogers, Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck, Veronica Lake, Bette Davis, Elizabeth Taylor, Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn, and Jerry Lewis. Alfred Hitchcock also collaborated with Head numerous times. It's remarkable to realize that *Peter Pan* gave Head such a flying start to her illustrious career.

Another remarkable creative talent who made a major contribution to *Peter Pan* early in his career is cinematographer James Wong Howe. The future master of light and shadow, whose techniques would also shape the look of film noir, already managed to capture the lost shadow of *Peter Pan* in 1924. Also in front of his camera, was international star and budding fashion icon, Anna May Wong, in the role of Princess Tiger Lily, whom he would also film in "The Alaskan" (Herbert Brenon, 1924) that same year. Anna May Wong had already experienced some early successes at that point but would gain even more recognition through films like *The Thief of Baghdad* (Raoul Walsh, 1924) and truly achieve international fame through her iconic roles in *Piccadilly* (E.A. Dupont, 1929) and *Shanghai Express* (Josef von Sternberg, 1932).

YOUTHFUL WONDER

The main strength of Peter Pan? As we immerse ourselves in the magic of The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up, this film reminds us that we all possess the power to re-channel our youthful wonder. Whether you are a child of 10, 30, 60, or 100. As the film itself begins: "It is necessary that all of you – no matter what age you may have individually attained – should be children. PETER PAN will laughingly blow the fairy dust in your eyes and presto! You'll all be back in the nursery and once more you'll believe in fairies, and the play moves on."

- WRITTEN BY: EVELIEN VAN DER KOOI





When director Rudolph Meinert presented his project to actress Asta Nielsen in 1927, he was astonished when the world-famous diva immediately accepted the role. Despite Nielsen not having made a film in almost two years and rumors of her imminent retirement circulating for a while, Meinert specifically had her in mind for the role of a mother, opera singer, and drug addict.

It quickly became apparent that she would be the best choice for the film. From their initial conversations on, Meinert soon realized that Nielsen would take over control from him on everything. She personally chose the costumes and determined the camera angles. Choices which can be considered quite bold, because, at that time, it was exceptional for a popular world star like Asta Nielsen to be unvarnishedly portrayed as an aging drug-addicted diva.

The theme of drug addiction created a problematic and sometimes hypocritical relationship with various European censorship authorities. In Denmark, the film was banned from being screened by using the argument that cocaine was not used in the country. In France, the film was released, but the distributor was forced to re-release it under a different title after complaints. First as “Les égarés” and then as “La morte vivante.” Substantively, little changed about the film, but it toned down the story this way. Promotion and reviews from that time remained silent about cocaine addiction but described Nielsen’s character as an alcoholic. In Belgium, the film was released as forbidden for those under 18, using the revealing title: “Les Marchands de Neige / De Sneeuwhandelaars” (The Snow Merchants). So, for the Belgian audience, there was little doubt about the content of the film. Nielsen was still popular in the Netherlands, and people eagerly awaited her film when news of the recordings from Germany arrived. However, whether the film actually premiered in the Netherlands could not be determined.

In 1993, the film was restored by CINEMATEK as part of the Lumière project, a European film restoration program. The only known surviving element was used for this: a French distribution print in black and white, found at the Cinémathèque de Luxembourg. It was decided to restore two versions. One version remained faithful to the French distribution print, and the other followed the original German storyline and intertitles. The transcription of these intertitles, preserved by the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, was available for this purpose.

This restoration was revisited in 2021 to make the film digitally available and perform additional repairs using digital techniques. Certain damages to the original could not be cleaned up analogously.

In a digital restoration plan for films like *Laster der Menschheit*, it is crucial to intervene as little as possible and leave the original film grain untouched. Only the few moments of instability, large stains, and scratches are digitally retouched. It is also preferred to retain all defects related to the techniques of that time, such as small photographic scratches, glue spots, and camera hairs.

Additional archival research brought new elements to light that could significantly improve the composition of a German version, compared to the 1993 version. At that time, newly created intertitles had a neutral font. The Bundesarchiv had two short film fragments in its collection. The presence of original intertitles, useful in the reconstruction of the intertitles for the entire film, was crucial. An additional intertitle was found in a collection of film frames at the Düsseldorf Filmmuseum.

A font designer could provide a font that closely resembled the original. One of the biggest challenges was the positioning of the various title cards within the film. The French version did not exactly follow the original text, and it was not always clear how to give the German title cards an appropriate spot.

The film manages remarkably well, and presumably representing the cultural climate of the Weimar era, to address the theme of drug addiction and drug abuse. The dramatic consequences of the character played by Nielsen choosing to continue to perform on stage and not facing her weaknesses are presented in a very contemporary way. This is done without moralizing her behavior.

. The action remains well-paced, with Nielsen providing theatrical intensity that elevates the story and message to new heights until the last moment of the film. Actor Werner Krauss also adds a strange physicality to the role of a man hollowed out both physically and morally by addiction; for example, when he searches for a new shot from someone who clearly no longer needs him. On the other hand, aspects such as the use of yellow face for a character show that sensitivities then and now differ significantly.

Although this film is a silent film about a famous opera singer – which inherently brings dramatic aspects – musical performances play a particularly prominent role. Think of the powerful opera “*Salomé*,” the representation of music through a record player, and the news broadcasted by a radio. These musical elements do not merely serve as background melodies; on the contrary, they play an essential role in adding new layers to the dramatic confrontations unfolding between the different characters. The sounds act as powerful amplifiers of emotions and uniquely contribute to the depth of the cinematic experience.

- WRITTEN BY: BRUNO MESTDAGH

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Branding: Willem van Kollenburg

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