

The Museum of Modern Art

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196
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THE LUBITSCH TOUCH: THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE RETROSPECTIVE OF ERNST LUBITSCH

The most comprehensive Ernst Lubitsch Film Retrospective ever assembled in any part of the world will take place at The Museum of Modern Art from October 21st to December 3rd, when forty-one of the master film-maker's pictures, culled from archives in nine countries, and dating back to 1914, will be shown.

"The Lubitsch Touch," as the program is called, coincides with the publication of a book of the same title by Herman G. Weinberg, who together with Adrienne Mancina of the Department of Film, devoted one year to the preparation of this retrospective enlisting the cooperation of archives in West Berlin, Vienna, Amsterdam, Brussels, Weisbaden, Copenhagen, Paris, and Rochester.

The films, covering thirty-three years, will include the German-born director's earliest works with Emil Jannings and Pola Negri as well as his Hollywood films, such as "The Love Parade," "The Smiling Lieutenant" and "Trouble in Paradise," for which he is most famous.

Though he is celebrated for "the Lubitsch touch," the director was "a seminal figure in the cinema's formative years," according to Herman G. Weinberg. Lubitsch influenced the work of Rouben Mamoulian, Preston Sturges and many others, and ranks, in the opinion of Weinberg, with D.W. Griffith, Charles Chaplin, and Erich von Stroheim. Mr. Weinberg will discuss the director's contribution Thursday evening, October 24th, at the 8:00 P.M. performance of "Anna Boleyn." The picture has not been seen in this country in forty years.

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Before coming to America, in 1922, Lubitsch was already one of the foremost international film directors. He had made "Carmen," with Pola Negri, who admittedly owed her success to him. He had also made "The Oyster Princess" about a "dollar princess" and her millionaire father, the American "oyster king," who wants to buy his daughter a title by wedding her to an aristocratic Prussian family. In "The Oyster Princess" Lubitsch first employed "the dramatic virtue of irony" and gave the first signs of what became known as "the Lubitsch touch."

What was "the Lubitsch touch?" It has been variously defined as an amusing contrivance or an innuendo, and best described by Mr. Weinberg as a metaphor, or a visual comment, comparable to the "raisin at the bottom of a bottle of Kvass." To achieve this effect Lubitsch "condensed into one swift, deft moment the crystallization of a scene or even the entire theme." Weinberg points out that the close-up played an important part by magnifying a detail the significance of which was its laconic wit.

One of the best known Lubitsch touches is a five-minute sequence with Charles Laughton in "If I Had a Million," which ended with a calorific razz from the meek clerk to his boss that was echoed in ten million/^{viewers'} hearts around the world.

Memorable among Lubitsch touches is the scene in "The Smiling Lieutenant," when Maurice Chevalier tries to amuse the prim princess, played by Miriam Hopkins, with a game of checkers. Bored as she is by the game, he suddenly overturns the checkerboard on the bed.

Another well known Lubitsch touch took place in "The Merry Widow," when, as the credits flash on the screen, a magnifying glass above a map scans it in vain to find the tiny mythical kingdom where the action takes place.

The Lubitsch touch was as much a part of a Lubitsch picture as the equally ubiquitous cigar was part of his physiognomy. Robert E. Sherwood, the playwright, who was then a film critic on Life wrote "Mr. Lubitsch, in appearance, resembles a combination of Napoleon and Punchinello; in character he combines the best features of each. He is dominant, aggressive, emphatic and decisive." Sherwood,

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who describes Lubitsch as "an extremely short, dark, thick-set man, with ponderous shoulders and huge, twinkling eyes," refers to "the nimble alertness of his wit, the indefatigable irreverence in his attitude toward all the musty tradition, all the trammeling fetishes of his profession."

Lubitsch himself tried to explain the Lubitsch touch as "the king in his bedroom with his suspenders hanging; or the singing gondolier hauling garbage on a moonlit night in Venice; or the husband bidding his wife a tearful goodbye as he sees her off on a journey, and then rushes madly to the nearest telephone to call up his inamorata. It is based on the theory that at least twice a day the most dignified human being is ridiculous."

The most famous Lubitsch touch of all, perhaps, is the scene in "The Love Parade," when bored American tourists in a bus suddenly wake up with interest when their guide tells them that the Sylvania royal palace cost \$110,000,000. Equally amusing is the booming of the cannons on the prince's wedding night and his futile efforts to stop them. The palace watchdogs in the same film offer a reprise of the chorus in a series of musical barks.

Ben Hecht, who worked with Lubitsch, describes the director in the process of creating these delicate touches. "He has a way of flinging himself around the room like an old-fashioned fancy roller-skater," Hecht wrote. "He pirouettes, leaps, claps his ankles together in mid-air, screams at the top of his voice and bursts into tears if contradicted."

The result was "no let up in the touches. Each catapulted the next one into place." In "The Patriot," for example, the eccentric monarch, after putting his guards through their paces, suddenly loses interest and rushes off, while the troops are left with one foot upraised. In still another scene, the monarch's mistress slaps him on the cheek in a coquettish manner, when he awakens to the importance of his position and socks the lady on the jaw. The same king, when he is involved in affairs of state, throws them all up and begins seriously to rearrange several insignificant objets d'art on his desk.

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According to Weinberg, the Lubitsch touch was anticipated by Sir Thomas Mallory in the fifteenth century. When King Mark finds Iseult asleep in the arms of Tristan, he removes the sword of the gallant knight and places his own sword between them.

Though he later became famous for his "touch," Lubitsch was first called "the humanizer of history," and he employed history as a background for boudoir intrigue in "Madame Du Barry." The picture, made after World War I, was a spectacle that emphasized the decadence of a recent enemy. It was so successful, that it was followed by "Anna Boleyn," which was designed to calumniate the British, and portrayed King Henry the VIII as a lusty, brutal monarch, "a cavalier with the ladies of the court, a swine who was withal a shrewd diplomat right out of Holbein's portrait."

With "The Loves of Pharoah," a spectacle of the magnitude of "Ben Hur," Lubitsch attracted the attention of Hollywood. He had learned from Max Reinhardt how to handle mass movement on the stage. He was a member of Reinhardt's touring Deutsches Theatre, after working as a bookkeeper in his father's tailoring shop by day, and performing as a comic by night in cabarets and music halls.

Lubitsch, who numbered among his admirers George Jean Nathan, Edmund Wilson, Alfred Kerr and Thomas Mann, started in movies as an actor. He invented a comic character, a Bavarian blockhead, called "Moritz," in a series of one-reelers of which he was writer, director and star. By the time he came to America, he had given up acting.

In this country, Lubitsch had to become facetious on the subject of sex, since he was confronted by taboos and repressions and puritanism. His humor, derived from "the repartee of mittel-Europa cafes and clubs," led him to make Americans laugh at something they took so seriously. Actually there were two American fetishes he satirized - sex and money - with appreciable results at the box office.

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Lubitsch became known as "the Attila of Hollywood," after he made nine successive hit pictures. His first American film was "Rosita" with Mary Pickford, who wanted the famous European director to change her image from a childish hoyden to an alluring female. The star and the director, however, quarrelled throughout the production, and Miss Pickford insisted that nothing interested him except doors. "He's a director of doors," she said.

It is true that Lubitsch had a special way with doors and used them in a suggestive manner. He had learned from Chaplin that the language of cinema was not literal, and he had found an oblique way of conveying what he wanted to say to audiences.

What makes Lubitsch unique, according to Mr. Weinberg, is the fact that "He was a master of all styles. Eisenstein was noted for crowd scenes, Chaplin for comedy, Stroheim for realism, but Lubitsch did all that they did. He made spectacles, satires, farces and tragedies. You cannot name a genre of film in which he has not worked," Mr. Weinberg said, pointing out that he is the only director with such a versatile range. For this reason he is known as "a director's director," and Orson Welles has called him "a giant. His talent and his originality," said Welles, "were stupefying."

The Lubitsch Touch program which follows, is more extensive than the retrospective in Berlin las year of Lubitsch's silent films held on the twentieth anniversary of the director's death. Paris, too, commemorated this event, and this year some of Lubitsch's later films were shown, but no retrospective has compared in scope to the present program.

James Card, Curator of the Motion Picture Division of the George Eastman House Archive, will be present Thursday, October 31, at 8:00 P.M., to introduce the screening of "Carmen (Gypsy Blood)".

Performances are at 2:00 P.M. and 5:30 P.M. daily and Sunday; with an extra 8:00 P.M. showing Thursday evenings; Saturday showings are at 3:00 P.M. and 5:30 P.M.

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PROGRAM:

Monday, Oct. 21

Hans Trutz in Schlaraffenland (Hans Trutz in Never-Never Land).*

Direction and scenario by Paul Wegener. With Ernst Lubitsch, Paul Wegener. Courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek. German titles. 25 min.

Fraulein Piccolo (Miss Bell-Hop).* 1914. Directed by Franz Hofer.

With Dorrit Weixler, Franz Schwaiger, Ernst Lubitsch. Courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek. German titles. 30 min. Der Stolz der Firma

(The Pride of the Firm).* 1914. Directed by Carl Wilhelm. With Ernst Lubitsch, Marthe Kriwitsch, Victor Arnold. Courtesy of Moscow Gosfilmofona. German titles. 50 min.

Tuesday, Oct. 22

Romeo und Julia im Schnee (Romeo and Julia in the Snow).* 1920.

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly and Ernst Lubitsch.

With Lotte Neuman, Julius Falkenstein, Jakob Tiedtke. Courtesy of

Osterreichisches Filmarchiv. German titles. 35 min. Schupalast Pinkus

(Pinkus' Shoe Emporium).* 1916. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario

by Hans Kraly and Erich Schonfelder. Courtesy of Moscow Gosfilmofona.

German titles. 55 min.

Thursday, Oct. 24

Anna Boleyn (Deception).* 1920. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario

by Fred Orbing and Hans Kraly. With Henny Porten, Emil Jannings.

Flash titles. 95 min. Herman Weinberg will introduce the eight o'clock screening.

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Friday, Oct. 25

Die Augen der Mumie Ma (The Eyes of the Mummy Ma).* 1918.

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. With Pola Negri, Emil Jannings, Harry Liedtke. Courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek. German titles. 50 min.

Die Puppe (The Doll).* 1919. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly and Ernst Lubitsch. Photography by Theodor Sparkuhl. With Ossi Oswalda, Hermann Thiming, Victor Janson. German titles. 55 min.

Saturday, Oct. 26

Sumurun (One Arabian Night).* 1920. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch.

Adapted from a pantomime staged by Max Reinhardt. Scenario by Hans Kraly and Ernst Lubitsch. With Ernst Lubitsch, Pola Negri, Paul Wegener, Harry Liedtke. Courtesy of George Eastman House. English titles. 90 min.

Sunday, Oct. 27

Die Austernprinzessin (The Oyster Princess).* 1919. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly and Ernst Lubitsch. With Ossi Oswalda, Victor Janson, Julius Falkenstein. Courtesy of Staatliches Filmarchiv der D.D.R. and Deutsches Institut fur Filmkinde. German titles. 70 min.

Kohlhiesels Tochter (Kohlhiesel's Daughters).* 1920. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly and Ernst Lubitsch. With Henny Porten, Emil Jannings, Jakob Tiedtke. Courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek. Danish titles. 60 min.

Monday, Oct. 28

Die Bergkatze (The Mountain Cat/The Wild Cat).* 1921. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly and Ernst Lubitsch. With Pola Negri, Victor Janson, Paul Heidemann. Courtesy of Staatliches Filmarchiv der D.D.R. German titles. 100 min.

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Tuesday, Oct. 29

Madame Du Barry (Passion). * 1919. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch.

Scenario by Hans Kraly, Fred Orbing. With Pola Negri, Emil Jannings, Harry Liedtke. English titles. 90 min.

Thursday, Oct. 31

Carmen (Gypsy Blood). * 1918. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario

by Hans Kraly and Norbert Falk from the story by Prosper Merimee.

With Pola Negri, Harry Liedtke, Magnus Stifter. Courtesy of George Eastman House. English titles. 60 min. James Card will introduce the eight o'clock screening.

Friday, Nov. 1

The Marriage Circle. * 1924. Warner Brothers. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch.

Scenario from the play by Lothar Schmidt. With Florence Vidor, Monte Blue, Marie Prevost, Adolphe Menjou. English titles. 85 min.

Saturday, Nov. 2

Three Women. * 1924. Warner Brothers. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch.

Scenario by Hans Kraly. With Pauline Frederick, May McAvoy, Marie Prevost, Lew Cody. Courtesy of George Eastman House. French titles. 75 min.

Sunday, Nov. 3

Das Weib des Pharo (The Loves of Pharaoh). * 1921. Directed by Ernst

Lubitsch and Hans Kraly. With Emil Jannings, Harry Liedtke, Paul Wegener. Courtesy of Staatliches Filmarchiv der D.D.R. German titles. 75 min.

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Monday, Nov. 4

Lady Windermere's Fan. * 1925. Warner Brothers. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Adapted by Julien Josephson from the play by Oscar Wilde. With May McAvoy, Ronald Colman, Bert Lytell. English titles. 80 min.

Thursday, Nov. 7

Forbidden Paradise. * 1924. Warner Brothers. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly and Agnes Christine Johnston. Courtesy of George Eastman House. English titles. 75 min.

Friday, Nov. 8

So This Is Paris. * 1926. Warner Brothers. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly. With Monte Blue, Patsy Ruth Miller, Andre Beranger. Courtesy of Contemporary Films. English titles. 60 min.

Saturday, Nov. 9

The Love Parade. 1929. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Ernest Vajda and Guy Bolton. With Maurice Chevalier, Jeannette MacDonald, Lupino Lane, Lillian Roth. 110 min.

Sunday, Nov. 10

Eternal Love. * 1929. United Artists. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly. Photography by Oliver Marsh. With John Barrymore, Camilla Horn, Victor Varconi. English titles. 100 min.

Monday, Nov. 11

The Student Prince. * 1927. M-G-M. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Scenario by Hans Kraly. Adapted from the operetta by Sigmund Romberg. With Ramon Novarro, Norma Shearer, Jean Hersholt. English titles. 110 min.

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Tuesday, Nov. 12

Monte Carlo. 1930. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Ernest Vajda. Photography by Victor Milner. With Jack Buchanan, Jeanette MacDonald, Zasu Pitts, Claude Allister. Courtesy of EMKO, a Division of Universal Studios, Inc. 90 min.

Thursday, Nov. 14

The Smiling Lieutenant. 1931. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Based on the operetta A Waltz Dream by Leopold Jacobson and Felix Dormann. Screenplay by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson. Music by Oscar Strauss. With Claudette Colbert, Maurice Chevalier, Mariam Hopkins. Courtesy of Danish Film Museum. In English. 102 min.

Friday, Nov. 15

The Man I Killed (Broken Lullaby). 1932. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. From the play by Maurice Rostand. Screenplay by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson. With Lionel Barrymore, Phillips Himes, Nancy Carroll, Zasu Pitts. 77 min.

Saturday, Nov. 16

Trouble In Paradise. 1932. Paramount. Produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Samson Raphaelson. With Miriam Hopkins, Kay Francis, Herbert Marshall, Charles Ruggles, Edward Everett Horton, C. Aubrey Smith. 83 min.

Sunday, Nov. 17

One Hour With You. 1932. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Dialogue director, George Cukor. Screenplay by Samson Raphaelson. With Jeanette MacDonald, Maurice Chevalier, Genevieve Tobin, Charles Ruggles. Courtesy of EMKO, a Division of Universal Studios, Inc. 90 min. (more)

Monday, Nov. 18

2 p.m. only. Ninotchka. 1939. M-G-M. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, Walter Reisch. Photography by William Daniels. With Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas, Ina Claire, Felix Blesant, Sig Rumann, Alexander Osanach. Courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 110 min.

Tuesday, Nov. 19

Design for Living. 1933. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. From the play by Noel Coward. Adaptation and screenplay by Ben Hecht. Photography by Victor Milner. With Frederic March, Gary Cooper, Miriam Hopkins, Edward Everett Horton. Courtesy of EMKO, a Division of Universal Studios, Inc. 90 min.

Thursday, Nov. 21

The Merry Widow (The Lady Dances). 1934. M-G-M. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Produced by Irving Thalberg. Screenplay by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson. Music by Franz Lehár. With Maurice Chevalier, Jeanette MacDonald, Edward Everett Horton. 110 min.

Friday, Nov. 22

If I Had a Million. 1932. Paramount. Seven variations on a theme by seven directors: Ernst Lubitsch, Norman Taurog, Stephen S. Roberts, Norman McLeod, James Cruze, William A. Seiter, H. Bruce Humberstone. Production Supervisor, Ernst Lubitsch. Charles Laughton appears in the Lubitsch sequence. Courtesy of EMKO, a Division of Universal Studios, Inc. 88 min.

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Saturday, Nov. 23

Angel. 1937. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. With Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Melvyn Douglas, Edward Everett Horton. Courtesy of EMKO, a Division of Universal Studios, Inc. 98 min.

Sunday, Nov. 24

Bluebeard's Eighth Wife. 1938. Paramount. Produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder from the play by Alfred Savoir. With Claudette Colbert, Gary Cooper, Edward Everett Horton, David Niven. 80 min.

Monday, Nov. 25

The Shop Around the Corner. 1940. M-G-M. Produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Samson Raphaelson. Photography by William Daniels. With Margaret Sullivan, Frank Morgan, James Stewart, Felix Bressart, Joseph Schildkraut. Courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 97 min.

Tuesday, Nov. 26

That Uncertain Feeling. 1941. United Artist. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Donald Ogden Stewart. Photography by George Branes. With Merle Oberon, Melvyn Douglas, Burgess Meredith. Courtesy of Banner Films. 84 min.

Thursday, Nov. 28

Heaven Can Wait. 1943. Twentieth-Century Fox. Produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Screenplay by Samson Raphaelson. With Gene Tierney, Don Ameche, Charles Coburn, Marjorie Main, Spring Byington. Courtesy of National Telefilm Associates. 112 min.

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Friday, Nov. 29

To Be or Not To Be. 1942. United Artists. Produced by Ernst Lubitsch and Alexander Korda. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. With Carole Lombard, Jack Benny, Robert Stack. 99 min.

Saturday, Nov. 30

Cluny Brown. 1946. Twentieth-Century Fox. Produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch. From the novel by Margery Sharp. With Charles Boyer, Jennifer Jones, Peter Lawford, Reginald Owen, Sir C. Aubrey Smith. Courtesy of National Telefilm Associates. 100 min.

Sunday, Dec. 1

Anna Boleyn (Deception).* 1920. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. With Henny Porter, Emil Jannings. Silent with flash titles. 95 min.

Monday, Dec. 2 and Tuesday, Dec. 3 : 2:00 p.m. only

The Smiling Lieutenant. 1931. Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Based on the operetta A Waltz Dream by Leopold Jacobson and Felix Dormann. Screenplay by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson. Music by Oscar Strauss. With Claudette Colbert, Maurice Chevalier, Miriam Hopkins. Courtesy of Danish Film Museum. In English. 102 min.

Stills and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.