

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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The Museum of Modern Art Film Library announces the initial showing of the first program of Series III: The Film in Germany and in France, the Film Library's new series of outstanding foreign motion pictures. This program, the main feature of which is The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, will be presented to members of the Museum of Modern Art on Sunday, January 10, at 8:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the American Museum of Natural History, 77th Street between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West, New York City. After this showing in New York the Film Library will circulate this program and subsequent programs in the new series to museums, colleges and study groups throughout the country and in Canada.

Program I, entitled The Film in Germany: Legend and Fantasy, is composed of motion pictures produced in Germany from 1896 to 1920. It will afford an interesting basis of comparison with early American pictures presented by the Film Library last year, and with motion pictures made in France during the same period, which will be shown later this season by the Film Library. The most noticeable difference between early American and early German films is the American emphasis on motion pictures of action set against natural, outdoor backgrounds and the German accent on motion pictures of emotional conflict played chiefly against interior settings. The development of studio technique for such pictures reached such a degree of perfection and mastery between 1919 and 1925 that Hollywood adopted the German technique by importing numbers of German designers, technicians, cameramen, actors and actresses. A blend of the American and the German methods came about in time, greatly enriching both the art and the technique of the motion picture.

In her program notes for The Film in Germany: Legend and Fantasy, Iris Barry, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, says: "In Germany as elsewhere, the first films to be made were simple records of everyday scenes, vaudeville turns or improvised

comic incidents. As narrative developed, German production seems for a time to have imitated French and, more particularly, Italian films.....It was not until 1913 that a film (Wegener's first Student of Prague) appeared which can be regarded as the first of that long succession of productions which placed Germany in a position of importance in the world cinema.....The film in Germany was to develop by absorbing elements already introduced on the German stage. But the men who were to play such an important part in its history came from the experimental theatre and not, as in America, from the popular theatre, nor, as with Bernhardt in France and Irving in England, were they merely celebrities briefly conferring prestige on the lowly cinema. They included Reinhardt and Jessner themselves, as well as younger men; they were familiar with contemporary movements in the other arts; they approached the film with curiosity as a medium through which contemporary theories could be expressed. As a result, the German film was able to introduce any number of innovations which have since been incorporated into the general body of cinematographic technique."

Program I begins with the first films made in Germany. These were produced, beginning in 1896, by the German pioneer motion picture inventor and experimenter, Max Skladanowsky, and have been acquired by the Film Library through the courtesy of the Reichsfilmkammer. They consist of half-minute films of acrobats at Berlin's Wintergarden, of street scenes, and of slapstick comedies. Also included are a few animated pictures from the days before the film had been invented - drawings of a train crossing a bridge, a man falling through a bed, a house struck by lightning.

Don Juan's Wedding, acquired through the courtesy of the Reichsfilmkammer, was produced in 1909 by Messter Film and directed by Oskar Messter with the Italian actor Joseph Giampietro as Don Juan. It tells the story of an elderly beau kidnapped on his wedding day by three of his former loves. The film involves a chase and capture, escape and recapture, but hardly in the robust vein of American "chase" comedies contemporary with it. It is more on the order of a French farce.

Misunderstood, acquired through the courtesy of the Reichsfilmkammer, was produced about the year 1912. Its producer and director are thought to be Messter. The film stars Henny Porten, who

made her debut in 1909 and was then and still is the most popular actress in Germany. Misunderstood was contemporary with The New York Hat, directed by D. W. Griffith with Mary Pickford in the leading role. Typically American in its Cinderella story, The New York Hat is produced with ingenuous humor and sentimental pathos. Misunderstood is heavily moral, its principal characters actuated by involved motives which cause them all to suffer greatly. The violent gestures with which the actors interpret their melodramatic roles are in a style very different from that of The New York Hat but they are even more strikingly different from the static and intense acting developed by the post-war German film.

The Golem, acquired through the courtesy of Ufa, was produced by that company in 1920 and directed by the actor Paul Wegener, who wrote its scenario, basing it on a medieval legend. Wegener also played the part of the Golem, a clay image brought to life by an old Rabbi. One reel of this internationally famous film is included in Program I to indicate Wegener's important contribution to German film development. The film is of great interest not only for its settings and lighting but for the acting of Wegener.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, acquired through the courtesy of Ufa, was produced in 1919 by Decla-Bioscop. It was directed by Robert Wiene from a scenario by Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz, with scenic design by Hermann Warm, Walter Reimann and Walter Roehrig, and photography by Willy Hameister. The three who played the principal roles - Werner Krauss as Dr. Caligari, Conrad Veidt as Cesare, and Lil Dagover as Jane - are still leading figures in motion pictures today. The film itself is one of the three most famous of all motion pictures, the other two being the American Birth of a Nation and the Russian Potemkin. It is also one of the few films that has remained constantly in circulation since it was produced. When it was first released it reflected an entire trend in the arts, and especially in the theatre, as developed in Germany. It conferred prestige on the cinema, attracted new and intelligent audiences to it, and encouraged experiments in film-making.

With this program, which is composed of silent films, will go a complete musical score arranged by Theodore Huff, staff member of

the Film Library. The score is made up of excerpts, adaptations and entire compositions, including such old German favorites as Ach du lieber Augustin, Du, du liegst mir im Herzen, Schuman's Traumerei and Strauss's Wine, Women and Song, for the earlier films; Wagner's Fire Music for The Golem; and an arrangement of 62 different compositions, chiefly of modern music, to accompany the wild settings and mad story of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.

Program II of Series III, The Film in Germany: The Moving Camera, will be shown to members of the Museum of Modern Art on Sunday, January 24, in the Auditorium of the American Museum of Natural History.

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