

# THE SILENT TREATMENT

ALL THE NEWS FIT TO HEAR • VOLUME 02 • NUMBER 03 • MAY/JUNE 2008



## LIVERPOOL ORCHESTRA PERFORMS TO “DER ROSENKAVALIER”

However well you know (or don't know) **Richard Strauss's** opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, this film will surprise and delight you. It's not a film of the opera but music with pictures—an independent silent cinematic version made in 1926 by the pioneering director **Robert Wiene**.

The scenario of *Der Rosenkavalier* (The Knight of the Rose) was written by Hofmannsthal, the opera's librettist, and includes new scenes and flashbacks, with a major role for the Marschallin's husband, unseen in the opera.

The music, played by a live orchestra, was arranged by Strauss with additional material, some newly composed. Masterminded by Frank Strobel, artistic director of European Film Philharmonic Berlin and a specialist in arranging and conducting music for silent films, this newly restored print with a reconstructed final reel comes to Liverpool for the British premiere of this entertaining and fascinating rediscovery, a unique event in the history of film and opera. **Saturday, June 14th, 7:30 pm, at the Philharmonic Hall.** ([http://www.liverpoolphil.com/eventdetail.aspx?Event\\_ID=1369](http://www.liverpoolphil.com/eventdetail.aspx?Event_ID=1369))

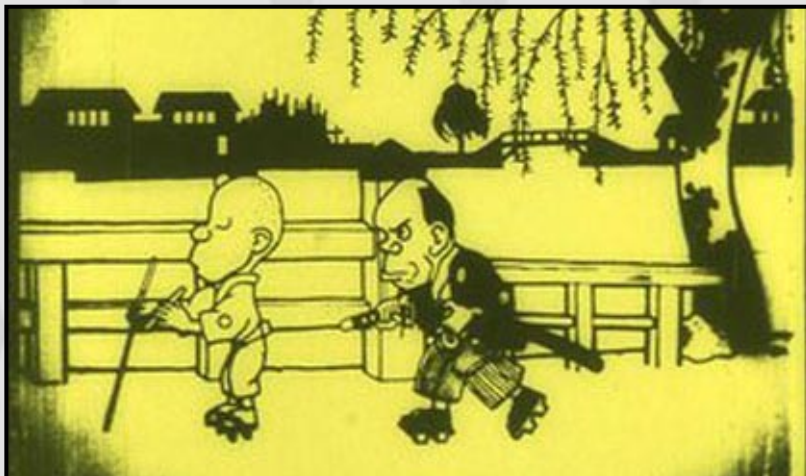
## SHORTS BY “ANIME” PIONEERS SURFACE IN JAPAN

The National Film Center in Tokyo, Japan, is thrilled to take into custody two early animated short films directed by Junichi Kouchi and Seitaro Kitayama, whose later work laid the foundation for Japanese “anime” films, a style of animation that has since swept the world in recent decades.

*Namakura Katana*, produced and directed by Kouchi in 1917, is a two minute story of a samurai tricked into buying a dull-edged sword; and

Matsumoto believes kept the films in such good shape. These pictures, alongside another early animated short *Imokawa Mukuzo, The Janitor* by Hekoten Shimokawa, are believed to be the first commercial releases of Japanese animated film after foreign animation was imported into the country just 3 years earlier.

Assistant Curator, Fumiaki Itakura, was responsible for the conditioning and repair of the two pictures once they arrived at the NFC,



Scene from *Namakura Katana* (Info and image courtesy NFC, Tokyo)

*Urashima Taro* is Kitayama's telling of a fisherman who is transported to a fantastic underwater world on the back of a turtle, inspired by a folk tale and originally released in 1918.

Both films were considered lost artifacts until a film collector, Natsuki Matsumoto, located the treasures at an open air flea market in Osaka inside a paper box, which is what

while lab technicians Kazuki Miura of IMAGICA and Yoshihiro Matsuo of IMAGICA WEST, handled the 2K digital transfer and reproduction of color tinting that closely matches the original tinting methods conducted in the late teens. As it stands now, no arrangement has been made to incorporate these shorts into any upcoming film festival or lecture.

## FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

# BRONCHO BILLY FILM FESTIVAL

JUNE 27-29, 2008

FREMONT, CA. The **Motion Picture Patents Company** was formed on December 18, 1908, when members of ten movie-making companies signed contracts creating the organization. Seven of those companies – **Edison, Essanay, Vitagraph, Biograph, Lubin, Selig and Kalem** – were American companies in active production.



To celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of this pioneering organization, which transformed the movie industry from a novelty into a major entertainment medium and a giant industry, *The 11th Annual Broncho Billy Film Festival* will present a program of the best films they could find from each of the producers. Live piano accompaniment will be provided by Philip Carli, David Drazin, Frederick Hodges, Bruce Loeb, Jon Mirsalis, and Judy Rosenberg. Individual shows are priced from \$7 to \$10, and a pass for the entire weekend is available at \$50.

The museum and theater playing host to the festival is located in the Niles District of Fremont that show-

cases local history and is the west coast outpost of the Essanay film studio (1912-1916); the company responsible for producing the pictures of **Broncho Billy Anderson**, the first movie-screen cowboy star, and comedy legend **Charlie Chaplin**. *The Tramp* and *The Champion*, among other film shorts, were filmed in this rail town and the canyon. Check the website for current hours of operation for tours, upcoming special events, plus the weekly Saturday night silent film series.

(Museum Info and Festival Schedule at [www.nilesfilmmuseum.org](http://www.nilesfilmmuseum.org))

## LA ANTENA Argentina, 2007

January 24, 2007 marked the world premiere of *LA ANTENA (THE AERIAL)*, as it was selected to kick off and compete in the Rotterdam International Film Festival. Directed by Esteban Saphir and shot entirely in Argentina with an estimated \$1.5 million dollar budget, Saphir sought out to fuse the classic genres of Film Noir, Science Fiction, and German Expressionism, into a futuristic landscape shot entirely in black and white with little dialogue and montage style editing.

Relying heavily on striking production design and a modern tango soundtrack, *LA ANTENA* tells the story of *The City Without a Voice* under the menacing control of Mr. TV, whose ever present broadcasts and products have stripped the population of the ability to speak – all except for *The Voice*, a faceless mystery singer who performs on one of Mr. TV's programs. Attempting to seize control of the cities entire communication system, Mr. TV partners up

with a sinister counterpart, Dr. Y, and together concoct a plot to kidnap *The Voice*.



*LA ANTENA* has been enjoying a steady festival run since its world premiere, most recently hitting theaters in parts of the UK in mid May. There are rumors that a double disc DVD edition of this feature exists in Germany, and for those who are curious to view a trailer, there is an official website at [www.laantena.ladoblea.com](http://www.laantena.ladoblea.com) available for viewing in both English and Spanish versions.

(Info extracted from [imdb.com](http://imdb.com) and [cinemawithoutboarders.com](http://cinemawithoutboarders.com))

## "A PAGE OF MADNESS" at SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

AUSTRALIA. Director **Teinosuke Kinugasa's** extraordinary 1926 masterpiece, *A Page of Madness*, was believed lost for many years, until the director himself uncovered a print in his garden storeroom. The film is based on a short story by Nobel laureate **Kawabata**, in which a sailor takes a job in a lunatic asylum where his crazed wife is confined, hoping one day to free her. Kinusaga, using a torrent of images, convincingly creates a world of insanity and confinement. Despite similarities to German expressionist works like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (unseen



in Japan at the time) and, in structure, Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, Kinugasa's film is a true original.

The print is on loan from the **George Eastman House** and is scheduled to run alongside live musical accompaniment at the **State Theatre, 4:30 pm on Sunday June 22nd.** ([www.sydneyfilmfestival.org](http://www.sydneyfilmfestival.org))



## SILENT SPOTLIGHT

### Vera Kholodnaya: Queen of The Screen

She was the first and the brightest, and remains the only true star of the Russian silent cinema. Though Vera Kholodnaya was involved in films for only three years, it was enough for her to become the *Queen of Screen*, as she was titled. Only five films starring her exist now out of the fifty to eighty films she acted in.

Vera Levchenko was born on August 5, 1893 into a respectable well-to-do family in Poltava. At the age of ten she was sent to the famous Perepelkina's grammar school. At the graduation prom, Vera met Vladimir Kholodny, then a student and a race-driver. With the mutual disapproval of both the families they soon got married.

In 1915, Yevgeni Bauer was going to direct the film *Song of Trium-*

*phant Love*, a mystical love drama after Ivan Turgenev's story and was looking for a woman of outstanding beauty. When Kholodnaya was introduced to the director, he was spellbound and at once approved her for the role.

*Song of Triumphant Love* turned out to be a box office hit. Right after finishing the first film, and impatient to wait till it was released, Bauer started another movie starring her, a typical saloon melodrama under the title *Flame of the Sky* about guilty love of a young woman married off to an old widower, and his son. Though 'Flame' was shot after 'Song', it was the first to be released and earn Vera recognition.



1916 found tremendous success for Vera when she was cast in Pyotr Chardynin's tragic melodrama *The Mirages*, followed by *Beauty Must Reign in the World*, *Fiery Devil*, and *A Life for a Life*. It was after the popularity of 'Life', that she was titled 'the Queen of Screen' by the great singer Alexander Vertinsky.

The beginning of 1917 saw the

release of one her best films, *By the Fireplace*, based on a popular romance. However, no other film from her arsenal enjoyed such huge success as *Keep Silent, Melancholy*, in 1918. At the same time, never did a film draw equal amounts of criticism, especially after the revolution. By mid 1918, Kholodnaya turned from just a popular and admired actress into a true phenomenon of Russian cinema.



On February 8, 1919 the star performed at a concert in a cold Odessa theatre, where viewers were wore fur coats, while actors appeared in open dresses. Vera fell ill with a dangerous form of flu following the concert, which brought about her untimely death on February 16, 1919 at age 26, despite several different rumored versions of the actual cause.

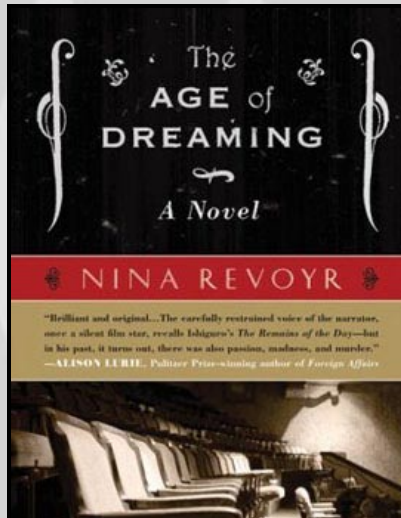
In 1931 the Odessa cemetery (where she was laid to rest), turned into a park, and the actress' vault was destroyed and her body vanished. However, the memory of her has survived. In 2003, a bronze statue cast in her likeness was erected near a flower shop in the city as a tribute to her early influence. (Full article at, [http://www.russia-ic.com/culture\\_art/theatre/587/](http://www.russia-ic.com/culture_art/theatre/587/))

## TST BOOKCORNER

### ***The Age of Dreaming***

By Nina Revoyr

Jun Nakayama was a silent film star in the early days of Hollywood, but by 1964, he was living in complete obscurity—until a young writer, Nick Bellinger, reveals that he has written a screenplay with Nakayama in mind. Jun is intrigued by the possibility of returning to movies, but he begins to worry that someone might delve too deeply into the past and uncover the events that led to the abrupt end of his career in 1922.



These events include the changing racial tides in California and the unsolved murder of his favorite director, Ashley Bennett Tyler. *The Age of Dreaming* is part historical novel, part mystery, and part unrequited love story. ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

### ***Keep Your Eye on the Kid: The Early Years of Buster Keaton***

By Catherine Brighton

Four-year-old Buster Keaton became one of the best-known comedi-



ans of his age and inches when his father threw him across a vaudeville stage, shouting “Keep your eye on the kid!” The crowd roared as he easily landed on his feet and instantly became a star. As Buster grew, he set his sights on the budding world of Hollywood and went on to become one of America’s most beloved silent-film stars.

Airy detailed illustrations evoke small-town USA in the early 20th century. Told in Buster’s voice, this captivating biography introduces young readers to a boy who became an American icon and changed the face of comedy and the film world forever. ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

## ON DVD

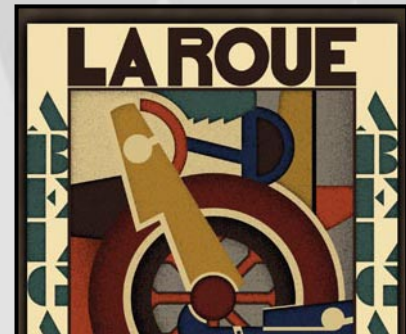
### ***La Roue (The Wheel)***

Never before released in the United States, this monumental French film is one of the most extraordinary achievements in the whole history of cinema. Written and directed by Abel Gance (*Napoleon*, *J'Accuse*), three years in production, *La Roue* pushed the frontiers of film art beyond all previous efforts.

This new restoration with a run-

ning time of nearly four and a half hours, accompanied by Robert Israel’s symphonic score, is the fullest presentation of *La Roue* to reach the public since 1923. It at last allows audiences today to experience the amazing, poetic vision that Abel Gance brought to the world.

The DVD also includes a short film that provides a vivid documentary of the great work in production, along with a booklet containing an outstanding essay by William M. Drew on the history & impact of *La Roue*, and comments by Robert Israel on the score. ([www.flickeralley.com](http://www.flickeralley.com))



## MOMENTS IN SILENCE

**June 15, 1896** – *The Kiss* creates scandal and brings first demand for film censorship

**June 28, 1927** – Greta Garbo’s contract with MGM is renewed at \$5,000 per week

**July 2, 1910** – Fire breaks out at Vitagraph Studios, destroying numerous negatives & prints.

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