

# THE SILENT TREATMENT

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## Alice Guy Blaché: Cinema Pioneer *Whitney Museum Exhibition*

NEW YORK CITY. Running **November 6th, 2009 – January 24, 2010**, is the first comprehensive retrospective of the films of Alice Guy Blaché (1873–1968), a key but unsung figure of the early years of cinema, the first woman director, and the first woman to establish and preside over her own film studio.



Between 1896 and 1920, first in France and then in the United States, she wrote, directed, supervised, and/or produced more than 1,000 films. These ranged from short films of less than a minute's duration to full-length multi-reel features and include some hand-tinted in color, and more than one hundred films with synchronized sound made between 1902 and 1906, some twenty years before sound revolutionized motion pictures as we now know them.

A screenwriter as well as director, she worked in a remarkable variety of genres including comedies, westerns, dramas, detective stories,

and a biblical epic, as well as making films based on literary classics and theatrical productions. Alice Guy (as she was known at Gaumont Film Company), made her first story film at a time when the earliest motion pictures were used in the service of science and selling cameras—a time when the notion of motion pictures as a form of popular entertainment was not yet on the horizon. Radically shifting the parameters of cinematic imagination, production, and distribution, Blaché participated in every aspect of the evolving motion picture business, and her careers in the two countries where cinema was born testify to her extraordinary accomplishments.



Alice Guy-Blaché

As part of the exhibition, the Whitney Museum's performance series *Whitney Live* will present four new original scores for suites of Guy Blaché's films. Commissioned in collaboration with the French Institute Alliance Française, the scores

by Du Yun, Missy Mazzoli, Tamar Muskal, and Tender Forever, will be presented during the exhibition as well as recorded and screened in the Museum.

The exhibition is organized by Whitney curator-at-large Joan Simon. It is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue, published by Yale University Press in association with the Whitney, with contributions by noted film scholars Jane Gaines, Alison McMahan, Charles Musser, Alan Williams, film historian and preservationist Kim Tomadjoglou, and the show's organizer, Joan Simon.

([www.whitney.org](http://www.whitney.org))

## THE SILENT TREATMENT FILM SERIES TO LAUNCH EARLY 2010

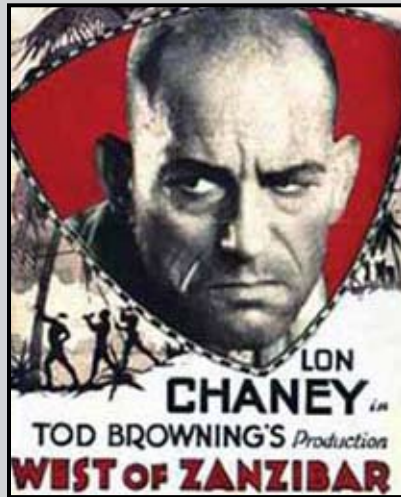
LOS ANGELES. The publishers of *The Silent Treatment Newsletter* are joining forces with the programmers of **Cinefamily at the Silent Movie Theater** to debut **The Silent Treatment Film Series**, scheduled to run on the first Wednesday of every month beginning in early 2010. The aim of the TST Film Series is to offer silent film aficionados an opportunity to watch features that are rarely screened theatrically or not readily available on DVD. The casual and vibrant atmosphere of the Silent Movie Theater on Fairfax makes an ideal venue to showcase silent pictures to film lovers with an enthusiastic and adventurous spirit. Upcoming film titles will be announced closer to the launch date of the series. (Please visit [www.cinefamily.org](http://www.cinefamily.org) for further information)

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**SF SILENT FILM FESTIVAL'S  
5TH ANNUAL WINTER EVENT  
December 12th, 2009**

SAN FRANCISCO. The San Francisco Silent Film Festival is pleased to announce its 2009 Winter Event will take place on **Saturday, December 12** at the landmark movie palace, the Castro Theatre.

This special presentation celebrates the scope and splendor of the silent era with four programs featuring live musical accompaniment opening with with *Chang: A Drama In The Wilderness* (1927), a documentary shot entirely in Siam (present-day Thailand) by Ernest B. Schoedsack and Merian C. Cooper. It is a thrilling adventure that is clearly the prototype for their later masterpiece *King Kong*. The film was nominated for "Artistic Quality of Production" at the first ever Academy Awards ceremony.



The centerpiece event for this season is the U.S. Premiere of *J'Accuse* (1919); Abel Gance's brilliant pacifist epic is set against the backdrop of the Great War, delineating the tragedy of that war's waste

and carnage. Though a huge hit in France, the film was truncated for its American release to blunt its antiwar message, and it flopped. Gance's original cut has been long unavailable until its recent major restoration made possible by Lobster Films Studios and Nederlands Filmmuseum.

The day long exhibition continues with *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924), one of the great movies of all time about the movies—impeccably scripted, beautifully filmed, funny, moving—by one of the geniuses of cinema, Buster Keaton, and concludes with Tod Browning's dark tale *West of Zanzibar* (1928), starring Lon Chaney in a fever-pitched nightmare of betrayal and revenge that moves from the vaudeville stage to the jungles of the Congo. (Tickets and additional information are available at [www.silentfilm.org](http://www.silentfilm.org))

**RICHARD AND OSCAR:  
FILMMAKING IN BLACK & WHITE**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Stage Aurora Theatrical Co., Inc. and the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum (NSSFM) announce a creative collaboration on *Richard and Oscar: Filmmaking in Black and White*, a new play that examines the relationship between two of the silent film industry's most innovative creators and unlikely friends.

Jacksonville's Richard Norman and Illinois-born Oscar Micheaux were among the nation's first to create "race films," which broke the industry's color barrier by starring black actors in positive roles. But each plied their craft from different angles, for different reasons and with very different results. While Norman, who was white, created mild, family-friendly fare, Micheaux, the

most celebrated of early black filmmakers, was known for edgier works that addressed issues such as racial prejudice, wrongful accusation and interracial love head-on.



Professor Howard Denson will conduct research for the script, relying heavily on the archives and memories of Capt. Richard Norman, Jr. (son of the filmmaker); NSSFM directors and advisors; plus local historians and those at Indiana University Bloomington's Black Film Center/Archive. Performances are expected to commence in early 2010. (For more information visit [www.NormanStudiosSFM.org](http://www.NormanStudiosSFM.org), or [www.StageAurora.org](http://www.StageAurora.org))

**Harold Lloyd and  
the Greenacres  
Christmas Spirit**

By Sam Watters (excerpted article)

In our eco-challenged world of global warming and deforestation, the holiday tree is struggling to survive as a family tradition. What do we do? Buy the artificial tree that's not biodegradable? Give up altogether and string a few lights on the palm out back?

Harold Lloyd was a comedian and movie producer accustomed to making the unreal appear real in the black-and-white world of silent film.

He and his wife, actress Mildred Davis, lived at Greenacres, a 1929 Beverly Hills estate along Benedict Canyon.

For a millionaire star, tinsel and mistletoe didn't cut it for Christmas. Starting before Thanksgiving, the Lloyd family worked inside and out. Just off the first-floor screening room was the Orangerie. In this vaulted sunroom, hand-frescoed with trellis and grapevine, Lloyd and Roy Brooks—actor, secretary and adopted family member—willed the tree to life.



From several trees purchased at downtown L.A. rail yards, Lloyd chose the finest specimen. Nature isn't designed for a close-up, so he drilled holes in its trunk and inserted branches cut from the remaining trees. He secured them with bamboo poles and wire to build a 14-by-9-foot symmetrical frame with limbs that never sagged.

Lloyd collected ornaments, and one year he bought a Saks Fifth Avenue Christmas display—all of it. With his tree braced for duty, Lloyd laid out his collection of glass balls,

flowers, butterflies and diamonds. For two weeks, hooks in hand and a ladder nearby, Lloyd and Brooks hung ornaments, layer after layer until the tree was a spectacle of beads, glass and gold.

Lloyd died in 1971, but his holiday tree was still glowing when Greenacres opened to the public as a museum. In 1975, short of money and besieged by neighbor complaints, Lloyd's foundation sold Greenacres at auction. A developer stepped in and later sold off the house, leveled the gardens and subdivided. After this Grinch stole Christmas, the tree was turned to kindling. ([www.latimes.com/features/printedition/home/la-hm-lostla13-2008dec13,0,328979.story](http://www.latimes.com/features/printedition/home/la-hm-lostla13-2008dec13,0,328979.story))

### **A Christmas Carol: 1901 NOW ON YOUTUBE**

By Heidi Blake--Nov 2009

*Scrooge or Marley's Ghost*, which was produced by British silent film pioneer Robert Paul and directed by Walter Booth in 1901, pares down the action of the classic story to its bare bones.



In under four minutes, the black and white film features a brief scene in which Scrooge scolds Bob Cratchit for leaving the office, followed by several eerie encounters with the ghost of Marley. It has been released from the British Film Institute's (BFI) National Archive and can be viewed

on BFI's You Tube Channel .

Brian Robinson of the BFI said: "We are delighted to be able to share the delights of the first ever Dickens film from the earliest days of British cinema. This compressed version of the tale offers a fascinating comparison to the big screen excitement of Disney's *A Christmas Carol*." (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/6543653/A-Christmas-Carol-1901-black-and-white-version-competes-with-Disney-blockbuster.html>)

### **BOOK CORNER**

### **RUDOLPH VALENTINO: THE SILENT IDOL**



One of the most alluring, enigmatic, and simply irresistible movie icons of all time, Rudolph Valentino continues to inspire generation after generation of moviegoers. In *Rudolph Valentino, The Silent Idol: His Life in Photographs*, author Donna Hill retells the story of Valentino's life using a treasure trove of rare photographs. Drawn from the author's extensive collection and those of generous fellow collectors and archives, most of the images in this volume have not been seen since the 1920s; many have never been released publicly until now.

Rudolph Valentino was more than the "sheik" of one of his most

famous films. He was more than the legendary star who died at a tragically young age. For long-time fans as well as curious newcomers, these remarkable images—candid snapshots at home, traveling, on film sets—reveal the glamour and charm of the man who continues to beguile and inspire movie lovers to this day.

**Rudolph Valentino – The Silent Idol** will be available for purchase at [www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com) in December 2009.

**ON DVD**

## MISS MEND

Flicker Alley, in collaboration with Blackhawk Films and Turner Classic Movies, is proud to present the astonishing *Miss Mend*, a 1926 three-part serial / adventure film from Soviet directors Boris Barnet and Fedor Ozep.



Widely regarded by the official Soviet press of the time as a prime example of shameless “Western-style” entertainment, the serial was nevertheless hugely popular, becoming one of the most successful Soviet films of the 1920s.

*Miss Mend* is an energetic, fast-moving serial which opens a window

on the phenomenon of Soviet Americanism and reveals a little-known side of early Soviet cinema. This new edition was mastered in high definition from superb original 35mm elements produced by David Shepard and Jeffery Masino, with digital restoration and editing being carried out by Eric Lange of Lobster Films, Paris. Featuring a “dream cast” of 1920s Soviet films stars, the DVD is accompanied by a newly-recorded large-orchestra score by Robert Israel.

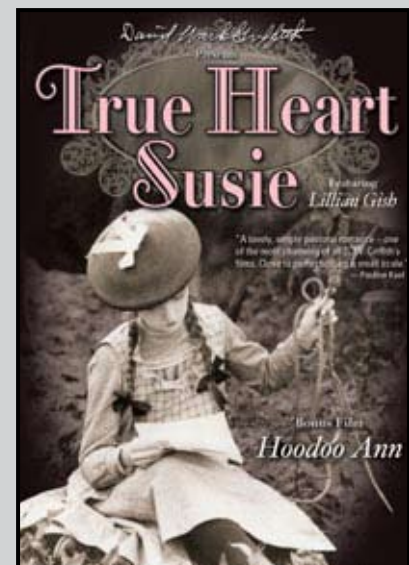
Soviet culture specialists Ana Olenina and Maxim Pozdorovkin wrote the new English intertitles as well as a booklet essay, *Miss Mend and Soviet Americanism* and a new 25-minute documentary, *Miss Mend: A Whirlwind Vision of Imagined America*. ([flickeralley.com](http://flickeralley.com))

## TRUE HEART SUSIE & HOODOO ANN

In 1918-1919, D. W. Griffith turned from spectacles such as *The Birth of a Nation*, *Intolerance* and *Hearts of the World* to smaller films, which he called his “short story series.” Among these is *True Heart Susie*. In an almost mythical American arcadia, Lillian Gish portrays a pure, prim girl who so loves her childhood sweetheart (Robert Harron) that she sells the family cow to anonymously finance his higher education, only to lose him to a more “modern” woman (Clarine Seymour) when he comes home.

The bonus feature, *Hoodoo Ann*, is a light comedy that Griffith supervised and scripted (using the pseudonym Granville Warwick), although the actual direction is by Lloyd Ingraham. Mae Marsh is paired with Robert Harron; the actors had been often partnered since Biograph days, concurrently were in the modern story

of *Intolerance* and continued to play leads together until Miss Marsh left the company at the end of 1916. Although the plot is a tangle of unlikely coincidence, the performers make it work, and “it is filled with those little touches for which Fine Arts pictures are famous,” in the words of an original review. ([www.image-entertainment.com](http://www.image-entertainment.com))



## MOMENTS IN SILENCE

**November 30, 1923** – Actress Martha Mansfield dies from severe burns after costume catches fire

**December 9, 1916** – Chaplin wins legal case preventing publication of unauthorized biography

**January 16, 1916** – Goldwyn Pictures Corporation is formed

## TST EDITED & PUBLISHED BY:

**Brandee Brannigan:**

Content Manager

**Steven K. Hill:**

Layout & Graphic Design

Contact us at: [tstnews@yahoo.com](mailto:tstnews@yahoo.com)

[www.tstnews.net](http://www.tstnews.net)

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