

THE SILENT TREATMENT

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NATIONAL MEDIA MUSEUM REVIVES OLDEST COLOR FILM



By Raphael G. Satter (Excerpted article, 09/12/12)

LONDON (AP). The earliest color movies known to exist have been revived by film archivists and were shown to an audience at London's Science Museum on September 12th, 2012. The obscure film segments were long considered failed prototypes, flickers of color seen by no more than a handful of people before being consigned to an archive.

The National Media Museum in the city of Bradford announced that digitization had effectively rescued the footage by unlocking remarkably modern-looking images roughly 5 to 40 seconds in length created more than a century ago.



Michael Harvey, the Media Museum's curator of cinematography, said he hoped the movies would change people's perceptions of "what was possible back then." Experts have dated the movie segments back to 1901 or 1902, when cinema was still in its infancy and inventors on both sides of the Atlantic were racing to produce ever-more realistic films.

That was no mean feat. London based inventor-photographer Edward Turner devised a complex, three-color process which would shoot black-and-white negatives through red, green and blue filters alternating in rapid succession. The idea was to project three differently filtered frames at a time on to a screen to create the illusion of a colorful movie.

Turner never quite got the hang of the process, and his footage was passed on to American film entrepreneur, Charles Urban, who partnered with film pioneer George Albert Smith to develop a modified (and much more successful) system, dubbed Kinemacolor, in 1906.

Harvey said that Urban donated Turner's footage to the London Science Museum in 1937, where it stayed until it was sent to the National Media Museum. Experts digitized the footage, finally allowing it to be shown. (news.yahoo.com/uk-museum-revives-first-ever-film-shot-color-173155108.html)

BLANCANIEVES

Mirror, Mirror; Snow White and The Huntsman; Blancanieves—all modern motion pictures with variations on the classic fairytale and all released within the same year—but which one will be the fairest of them all? Any admirer of silent motion pictures will likely choose the final interpretation, *Blancanieves*, a gothic melodrama inspired by the Brothers' Grimm tale, and another current silent feature paying tribute to cinema's roots.



Scheduled for public release on September 28, 2012 in its home country, *Blancanieves* is a Spanish film directed by Pablo Berger, which retells the Snow White story set in 1920s Madrid. A young child named Carmen has been tormented by her vile stepmother and escapes to the woods for sanctuary where she finds a troupe of dwarf bullfighters and remains with them as she grows into adulthood.

Film critic Roger Ebert wrote about the picture following a screening at the Toronto International Film Festival, and identified it as “A full-bodied, visually stunning silent film of the sort that might have been made by the greatest directors of the 1920s, if such details as the kinky sadomasochism of the Evil Stepmother could have been slipped past the censors.”



Pablo Berger’s previous feature film, *Torremolinos 73*, was a very different beast: a comedy about a man who wants to make arty films but gets into pornography instead; which proves he’s no stranger to taking a commercial risk. Back in 2009, the script for *Blancanieves* won a special award at Sundance to help fund the finished film, and it looks like it will pay off in spades.

A final element to mention on this new release is the sumptuous romantic score composed by Alfonso Vilallonga, whose previous work includes the 2008 mystery *Transsiberian*. (Special Thanks to Pamela Hutchinson of Silent London, <http://silentlondon.co.uk>)

Romance, Exploits & Peril: Movie Making in Ithaca, NY

NEW YORK. Running from October 1st – November 7th, **Romance, Exploits & Peril** is an 8-part multimedia exhibit celebrating a time, almost 100 years ago, when two brothers, Theodore and Leopold Wharton,

happened upon Ithaca, New York and made movie making history.

The flagship installation, a 90-foot long sculptural timeline at the Tompkins County Public Library, highlights the history of the Wharton studio, and the impact it had on the approaching Hollywood film boom.

Other exhibit locales scattered throughout Ithaca are Gimme! Coffee, the State Theatre of Ithaca, Petrone, the Crescent Building, the Schwartz Center, GIAC, and Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport.

Stars such as Oliver Hardy, Lionel Barrymore, Pearl White, and Irene Castle mingled and made merry with Ithacans and Cornelians alike. Using the city’s dramatic and natural landscape, whether Ithaca Falls or the lakefront property of the Renwick Park [Stewart Park] studio, the Whartons helped earn Ithaca the alias The Biggest Little City.

The exhibition is a creation of Ithaca Motion Picture Project (IMPP), a non-profit organization committed to celebrating and preserving Central New York’s silent film history, and the transformation of the former Wharton film studio building into a film museum.

Romance, Exploits, & Peril allows the viewer to discover Ithaca’s silent film history—an industry so hypnotic, so unique, you’d expect to only see it in the movies. All exhibits and events are free and open to the public. (www.ithacamotionpictureproject.org)

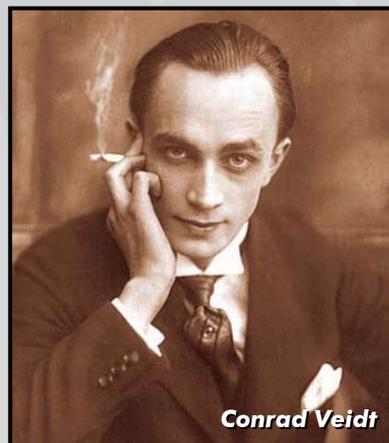


SILENT SPOTLIGHT

THE GOOD GERMAN: The Life & Legacy of Conrad Veidt

By Caroline Shapiro (Excerpted article, 03/09/12)

Hans Walter Conrad Veidt was born on January 22, 1893, in Potsdam, Brandenburg, Germany, although some sources say Berlin. He was first bitten by the drama bug as an adolescent, a secret he was forced to hide from his father but which was lovingly encouraged by his mother.



Conrad Veidt

After studying under the tutelage of drama coach Albert Blumenreich, Veidt got his first big break when he was hired on by Max Reinhardt as a company extra at the renowned Deutsches Theater.

After climbing to the top of the Berlin theater community, it was only natural that film producers would start to take an interest in the gaunt, gangly, altogether unusual-looking Veidt. His first film was 1916’s *Der Weg des Todes (The Road of Death)* alongside Carl de Vogt and Maria Carmi. He worked endlessly during the latter half of the 1910s, appearing in four films in 1917, eleven in 1918, and fourteen in 1919.

One of these, *Anders als die Andern (Different from the Others)*,

featured Veidt portraying one of the first intentionally explicitly homosexual characters in film history (a film currently being restored by the UCLA Film & Television Archive & the Outfest Legacy Project). Co-written by director Richard Oswald & pioneering sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, the film was a condemnation of Paragraph 175, Germany's law forbidding homosexuality.



Different From The Others

The first role that brought Conrad Veidt to the world's attention was as Cesare—the murderous somnambulist in Robert Wiene's 1920 groundbreaking Expressionist masterpiece *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Veidt quickly made a name for himself in the budding horror film industry (he was known as the “Demon of the Silver Screen”) and became one of the highest-paid film actors in Germany.

Eventually Hollywood came calling—in the form of a written invitation sent directly from one of America's very own stage and screen legends: “I saw your picture *Waxworks*. You must play in my picture as King Louis XI. I cannot make the picture without you—sincerely, John Barrymore.”

The picture in question was 1926's *The Beloved Rogue*, and Veidt agreed to play the part and set sail for America. He was immediately welcomed into the fold of the Hollywood German ex-patriot community by the likes of Paul Leni and Ernst Lubitsch.

Perhaps Conrad Veidt's greatest success in America during the late 1920s was the Paul Leni directed

horror-melodrama *The Man Who Laughs* (1928). Adapted from a Victor Hugo novel, the film starred Veidt as Gwynplaine, a sensitive man with a hideous permanent ear-to-ear grin carved into his face, who catches the attention of a sadistic duchess. By enduring the rigorous makeup process and successfully rendering the tenderest of emotions, Veidt proved himself a viable rival to horror icon Lon Chaney—but alas, it was not to be. Along came sound, and with it went Veidt's hopes of continuing his rise in Hollywood.

He was welcomed back into the German film community with open arms, but his brief dalliance with Hollywood was not forgotten. Next was the British film industry which came calling. Veidt felt at home in England and began making films and taking lessons to improve his English.

However, by the early 1930s tensions were mounting outside of the movie industry, and soon Veidt was forced to make a choice. Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's second-hand man in the rapidly-growing Nazi Party, thought of Veidt as a valuable asset to Germany and tried to convince him to sign an oath of loyalty to the new totalitarian government & make only pro-Aryan films.



The Man Who Laughs

Veidt, who valued tolerance and liberalism above all else, refused Goebbels' offer and instead signed on to play the lead role in the British adaptation of *Jew Süss*, a pro-Jewish historical novel by Lion Feuchtwanger. Goebbels was not pleased, and had Veidt placed under house arrest, and rumor has it there was even a plot by the Nazis to assassinate him. Veidt left Germany in 1933, knowing that he could never return. Upon emigrating, Veidt (born a Protestant) wrote “JEW” when asked his religious affiliation.



The Last Performance

Veidt returned to America for the 1940s film *Escape* starring Norma Shearer and Robert Taylor, in which he played a Nazi general. In 1942 came a little picture called *Casablanca*, and he received the highest salary among the cast for his portrayal as the villainous Major Heinrich Strasser. By 1943, Veidt was once again allowed to play a good guy, a leader of the German resistance in *Above Suspicion* with Joan Crawford and Fred MacMurray. Sadly, it was to be his last role. Shortly after shooting had been completed, Conrad Veidt died suddenly on a Hollywood golf course, the victim of a heart attack. He was only fifty years old. (Full article, <http://garbolaughs.wordpress.com/2012/03/09/the-good-german-the-life-and-legacy-of-conrad-veidt/>)

BOOK CORNER

American Silent Horror SCIFI & FANTASY FEATURE FILMS

By John T. Soister, Henry Nicoletta
with Steve Joyce, Harry H Long, and
Bill Chase



The Magician

During the Silent Era, when most films dealt with dramatic or comedic takes on the “boy meets girl, boy loses girl” theme, other motion pictures dared to tackle such topics as rejuvenation, revivication, mesmerism, the supernatural and the grotesque. *A Daughter of the Gods* (1916), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), *The Magician* (1926) and *Seven Footprints to Satan* (1929) were among the unusual and startling films with story elements that went far beyond the realm of “highly unlikely.”

Using surviving documentation and their combined expertise, the authors catalog and discuss these departures from the norm in this encyclopedic guide to American horror, science fiction and fantasy in the years from 1913 through 1929. (www.mcfarlandbooks.com)

MARY PICKFORD: QUEEN OF THE MOVIES

Edited by Christel Schmidt.

In the early days of cinema, when actors were unbilled and unmentioned in credits, audiences immediately noticed Mary Pickford.

moviegoers everywhere were riveted by her magnetic talent as she rose to become cinema’s first great star.

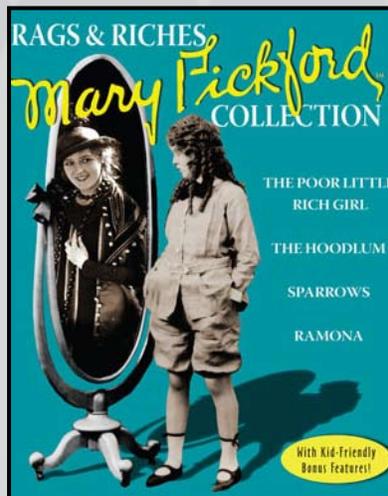
In this engaging collection, Mary Pickford is revealed as a gifted actress, philanthropist, and savvy industry leader who fought for creative control of her films.

This volume features more than two hundred color and black and white illustrations, including photographs and stills from the collections of the Library of Congress and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. (www.kentuckypress.com)

ON DVD & BLU-RAY

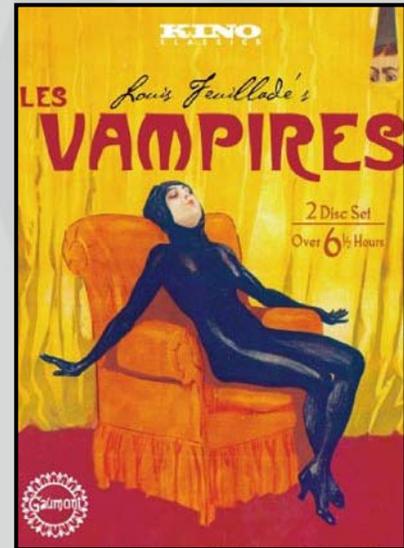
RAGS & RICHES: THE MARY PICKFORD COLLECTION

Funny, feisty, and diminutive, Mary Pickford was the first actor to have complete artistic control of her films and chose to work with the best directors, writers, craftsmen and editors throughout her career. *The Poor Little Rich Girl* (1917), *The Hoodlum* (1919), and *Sparrows* (1926) are newly remastered with full orchestral scores, and demonstrate the star’s commitment to excellence and the brilliant range of her acting. (www.milestonefilm.com)



LES VAMPIRES

The undisputed master of the espionage serial, Louis Feuillade (*Fantômas*), crafted films with labyrinthine plots and unforgettable characters that influenced multiple generations of filmmakers. Comprised of ten episodes, and clocking in at nearly 7 hours in duration, *Les Vampires* is an unqualified masterpiece.



It follows journalist Philippe Guérande (Édouard Mathé) in his efforts to expose a vast criminal organization known as the Vampires.

Authorized by the Gaumont Studios, this 2 disc set was mastered in HD from the 35mm restoration produced in 1996 by the Cinémathèque Française, under the supervision of Feuillade’s grandson, Jacques Champreux. (www.kinolorber.com)

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