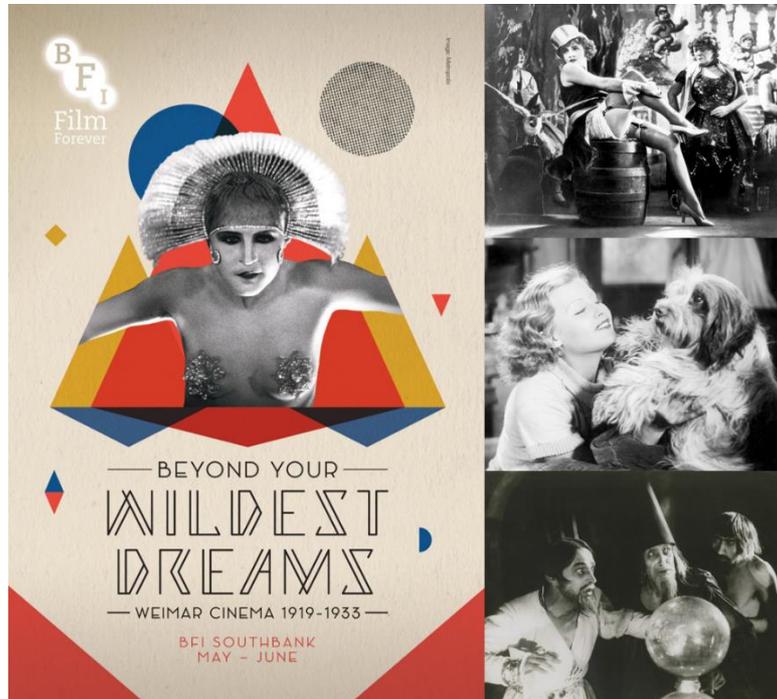


Beyond Your Wildest Dreams: Weimar Cinema 1919-1933 **BFI Southbank, 3 May – 30 June**



Includes work by filmmakers such as Ernst Lubitsch, Fritz Lang, Max Ophuls, Josef von Sternberg, FW Murnau, Leontine Sagan, Lotte Reiniger and Robert Siodmak, and featuring stars such as Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Anna May Wong, Louise Brooks, Conrad Veidt, Peter Lorre and Emil Jannings

Thursday 28 March 2019, London.

BFI Southbank will mark the centenary of the Weimar Republic with a major two-month season running **Friday 3 May – Sunday 30 June**. **BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS: WEIMAR CINEMA 1919-1933** will celebrate one of the most innovative and ground-breaking chapters in the history of cinema. The first major survey of Weimar cinema in London for many years, the season will reveal that the influential body of cinematic work which emerged from this remarkably turbulent era is even richer and more diverse than generally thought.

Thanks to brilliant aesthetic and technical innovations, Germany's film industry was soon second only to Hollywood, catering to a new mass audience through a dazzling range of styles and genres – not only the 'haunted screen' horror for which it is still chiefly renowned, but exotic adventure films, historical epics, urban tales, romantic melodramas, social realism and avant-garde experiments. Most surprising perhaps is the wealth of comedies, with gender-bending farces and sparkling musicals such as *I Don't Want to Be a Man* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1918) and *A Blonde Dream* (Paul Martin, 1932). But Weimar cinema wasn't just dazzling entertainment: throughout this period of polarised politics, which was increasingly overshadowed by the rise of Nazism, it also posed vital questions. From an early plea for gay rights – *Different from the Others* (Richard Oswald, 1919) – to stirring critiques of the capitalist system such as *The Threepenny Opera* (GW Pabst, 1931) and *Kuhle Wampe* (Slatan Dudow, 1932) the films still speak urgently to contemporary concerns about a range of social issues.

The season will be a mixture of must-see classics like *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920) and *Emil and the Detectives* (Gerhard Lamprecht, 1931), and more rarely screened features such as *Variety* (EA Dupont, 1925), a tale of erotic intrigue in a sensational circus setting, and *The Joyless Street* (GW Pabst, 1925), featuring a young Greta Garbo. Audiences will be able to see a number of the films on rare 35mm prints, enjoy new restorations of films like *Opium* (Robert Reinert, 1919) and *The Devious Path* (GW Pabst, 1928), see many of the

silent films screened with live musical accompaniment, and explore Weimar cinema in detail through an illuminating special events programme.

The season will feature not only well known directors like Josef von Sternberg, FW Murnau, Lotte Reiniger, Max Ophuls and Robert Siodmak but less familiar figures – Joe May, Richard Eichberg, Leontine Sagan, Gerhard Lamprecht – whose work was enormously popular in its time. The richly varied programme is divided into key thematic strands – **IMAGINATION, INNOVATION, SPECTACLE; WEIMAR GOTHIC; LAST LAUGHS; TALES OF THE CITY; DARING TO BE FREE** and **BRAVE NEW WORLDS** – so that audiences can easily navigate the different kinds of work to be found on a thrilling and eye-opening journey.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The season will start with a bang with **The Party at the End of the World**, curated and hosted by comedian, actor and drag queen **Jonny Woo**. The evening will begin with a screening of silent comedy *Heaven on Earth* (Reinhold Schünzel, Alfred Schirokauer, 1927), about a hapless politician who leads a double life – publicly attacking the depravity of Berlin nightlife while secretly running ‘Heaven on Earth’, a notorious nightclub. This delicious distillation of the contemporary debate around moral degeneracy features raunchy chorus girls, a black jazz band, and a cross-dressing scene that anticipates *Some Like It Hot* by several decades. Following the screening there will be a Weimar-themed cabaret party in the BFI Bar & Kitchen, curated and hosted by **Jonny Woo**.

BFI Southbank will partner with the **Philharmonia Orchestra** to offer audiences a full day of activity on the South Bank on **Saturday 9 June**. The day will begin with a talk at BFI Southbank – **Music Meets Film in the Weimar Republic** – with Gavin Plumley and Margaret Deriaz exploring how music was integral to the cinema-going experience of Weimar Germany: from ambitious orchestral scores composed for silent films, to sound-era musicals which spawned hit songs for a mass audience. This talk will be followed by a screening at BFI Southbank of GW Pabst’s film version of Brecht and Weill’s celebrated stage hit *The Threepenny Opera* (1931), the shocking tale of charismatic crime-boss Mack the Knife who terrorizes Victorian London with help from his Establishment friends. Then, next door, at **Royal Festival Hall**, Gavin Plumley will talk to writer and broadcaster Philipp Blom, about the Weimar Republic and its enduring echoes, ahead of a concert, *Weimar Berlin: The Sounds of Change*, with a programme of Berg, Hindemith, Weill and Shostakovich, offering a snapshot of Germany in the 1920s. The concert is the opening in a new series – **WEIMAR BERLIN: BITTERSWEET METROPOLIS** – presented by the **Philharmonia Orchestra** at the **Southbank Centre**.

Other contextual events in the season will include a talk – **The Weimar Dream Factory: An Introductory Survey** – from **season programmer Margaret Deriaz** on **Tuesday 7 May**, to guide audiences through the dazzling and disturbing dreamscape of Weimar cinema, which emerged from the catastrophe of WWI. A study day on **Saturday 1 June**, in partnership with the German Screen Studies Network, will consider how Weimar cinema reflected the turbulent times of the Weimar Republic and the changes happening in German society during the period. There will also be a **Sight & Sound** discussion, **The Birth of Criticism**, led by editor of *Sight & Sound* **Nick James**, to look at the birth of film and cultural criticism, which can be traced back to the Weimar Republic. BFI Southbank’s regular Seniors’ Matinee series will screen *Kuhle Wampe* (Slatan Dudow, 1932), a radical slice of communist filmmaking set in Berlin in the early 30s, showing the shattering impact of mass unemployment on a working-class family. At the same time – through montage sequences, subversive humour and Hanns Eisler’s stirring songs – it challenges the system that led to the crisis. Brecht was closely involved with the film, which was swiftly banned by Nazis.

THE BLUE ANGEL – EXTENDED RUN

The season will also include an **extended run** of Josef von Sternberg’s *The Blue Angel* (1930), starring Marlene Dietrich in her breakthrough role as Lola Lola, star attraction of The Blue Angel beer hall. Loosely based on a novel by Heinrich Mann, Sternberg’s masterpiece is a dazzling construct of enigmatic lighting, décor and sound, featuring real-life stars of Weimar cabaret and the now classic songs of Friedrich Hollaender. For leftist critics it lacked satirical edge, yet it conjures a transgressive realm that recalls the paintings of George Grosz and Otto Dix. An enduring classic, its subversive vitality is undiminished; *The Blue Angel* is re-released in selected cinemas on **Friday 31 May**.

FULL PROGRAMME DETAILS BY THEME:

IMAGINATION, INNOVATION, SPECTACLE

A cinema with international ambition, experimenting in a range of genres

- Nobody really knows the titular character in Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* (1922); desperate to unmask this mysterious manipulator of a vast criminal empire, Public Prosecutor von Wenk plunges into a world of depraved nightclubs, aristocratic mansions and shadowy backstreets.
- Lang's sci-fi epic *Metropolis* (1927) is an astonishing, dystopian vision of a grotesquely unequal society which threatens to implode – and a thrilling celebration of technology that also recognises its enslaving power.
- Sensational silent drama *Opium* (Robert Reinert, 1919) warns against the perils of drug addiction and sexual debauchery. Now newly restored in gorgeous colour, it stars Werner Krauss as a Chinese opium dealer and Conrad Veidt as a love-crazed English doctor. *Opium* will screen alongside *The Victor* (Julius Pinschewer, Walther Ruttmann, 1922), a hand-coloured animation from pioneers of German film advertising.
- In *Madame Dubarry* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1919) Louis XV (Emil Jannings) is smitten by a Parisian shopgirl (Pola Negri) with an insatiable appetite for sex, food, fashion and fun. But as she schemes to become the most powerful woman in France, the spectre of revolution looms. Also screening alongside the film will be newsreel of President Ebert's visit to the set of Lubitsch's *Anna Boleyn*.
- An eerie, fantastical old dark house is the object of a deadly inheritance dispute between two brothers with strikingly different wives in *The Chronicles of the Grey House* (Arthur von Gerlach, 1925).
- Rarely screened in the UK, the great German silent *Variety* (EA Dupont, 1925) is about a middle-aged circus acrobat whose life is derailed by a seductive stranger. The vertiginously mobile camera work captures aerial exploits of the trapeze artists that will have audiences holding their breath.
- Alpine thriller *The Fight for the Matterhorn* (Mario Bonnard, Nunzio Malsomma, 1928) – screening in a new restoration – is based on the true story of English climber Edward Whymper who vies with Jean-Antoine Carrel, an Italian mountain guide, to conquer the Matterhorn.
- The superb melodrama *Song* (Richard Eichberg, 1928), a British-German co-production, was designed to appeal to international markets. Set in a bustling Asian port, it centres on a vaudeville artist (Anna May Wong) whose emotional attachment to a knife-thrower is complicated by the reappearance of his former mistress.

WEIMAR GOTHIC

'Haunted screen' horror puts German cinema on the world map

- *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920) is a peculiar tale of a fairground showman and his sinister somnambulist; this multi-layered murder mystery caused an unexpected international sensation on its release, creating a vogue for expressionist design.
- Landmark of horror cinema *The Golem* (Paul Wegener, 1920) is renowned for actor-director Paul Wegener's unnerving portrayal of the Golem, a clay monster brought to life through cabalistic arts, and the expressionistic designs of architect Hans Poelzig, whose labyrinthine ghetto seems weirdly alive.
- FW Murnau's haunting masterpiece *Nosferatu* (1922), an un-authorized version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, blurs the boundaries between dreams and waking life. The vampire (Max Schreck) is horribly convincing, while the almost documentary-style use of real locations makes the supernatural eruptions all the more startling.
- *Waxworks* (Paul Leni, 1924), about three grotesque figures from a waxworks show – Harun al-Raschid, Ivan the Terrible and Jack the Ripper – is Weimar horror at its most playful.
- *The Student of Prague* (Henrik Galeen, 1926) is a darkly romantic tale, a superbly crafted remake of Stellan Rye's supernatural chiller of 1913; an impoverished student (Conrad Veidt) sells his mirror reflection to a moneylender and is subsequently stalked by a Doppelgänger over whom he has no control.

LAST LAUGHS

Gender-bending farces, rags-to-riches fantasies, sparkling musicals

- *The Oyster Princess* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1919) is an exquisitely orchestrated comedy which satirises the fashion for all things American, with surreal gags about conspicuous consumption and crazy dance styles. Ossi Oswalda plays a spoilt young woman whose self-made millionaire father promises to marry her to a prince.
- *I Don't Want to Be a Man* (1918) is another delightful Ernst Lubitsch film starring Ossi Oswalda, this time in a gender-bending romp as a rebellious young woman who dons top hat and tails and heads off to a fashionable Berlin night haunt.
- In *The Last Laugh* (FW Murnau, 1924) an elderly porter (Emil Jannings) stands proudly by the revolving door of a luxury Berlin hotel. In a ruthlessly fast-paced world, he's about to suffer a life-changing shock.
- *Her Majesty, Love* (Joe May, 1931) is a comedy of class differences, with delightful songs and brilliant gags, about a debonair young aristocrat who rebels when his family insists on his marrying for money.
- America's grip on the Weimar imagination is joyously satirised in *A Blonde Dream* (Paul Martin, 1932), a hugely popular Depression-era musical, with a sparkling script co-written by Billy Wilder.

- **Heaven on Earth** (Reinhold Schünzel, Alfred Schirokauer, 1927) is about a hapless politician who leads a double life – publicly attacking the depravity of Berlin nightlife while secretly running ‘Heaven on Earth’, a notorious nightclub. It will screen alongside **At the Film Studio** (Hedwig Otto, Gerda Otto, 1927), a stop-motion ad for Bayer Aspirin by a mother-daughter filmmaking duo.

TALES OF THE CITY

The modern metropolis of Weimar cinema – thrilling and threatening

- Using candid footage shot over many months, Walther Ruttmann’s kaleidoscopic montage **Berlin: Symphony of a Great City** (1927) portrays a day in Europe’s most modern city, from early morning stirrings to the energy and excitement of its neon-lit nightlife.
- The radical satirical short **Accident** (Ernö Metzner, 1929) portrays the city and its inhabitants as violent, anarchic, devoid of glamour and was instantly banned.
- In Fritz Lang’s superb thriller **M** (1931) the police are under terrific pressure to catch a compulsive child-murderer on the loose in Berlin. Meanwhile, the criminal underworld – weary of heightened police activity – instigate their own manhunt.
- Erich Kästner’s children’s classic **Emil and the Detectives** (Gerhard Lamprecht, 1931) was brilliantly adapted by Billy Wilder, Emeric Pressburger and the author himself. While travelling alone by train to Berlin, young Emil is robbed of all his money. Though a stranger in the vast metropolis, he’s determined to track down the thief, aided by a gang of highly resourceful local boys.
- In **Life Begins Tomorrow** (Werner Hochbaum, 1933) a young man embarks on an urban odyssey, searching for his wife who’s failed to show up to meet him on his release from prison.
- Silent documentary short **Where Do Old People Live?** (Ella Bergmann-Michel, 1932) shows how modern architecture enhances the lives of elderly people.
- **The Street** (Karl Grune, 1923) – screening as part of BFI Southbank’s SUNDAY SILENTS series – was the first of the famous Weimar ‘street films’ with their ambivalent take on the modern metropolis. A middle-aged man, bored with domesticity, takes a sudden plunge into the nocturnal wilderness of chaotic crowds, dazzling shopfronts and sexual temptations.

DARING TO BE FREE

Sexuality unleashed; rebellious women; new ways of living

- **Different from the Others** (Richard Oswald, 1919) is a powerful plea for the decriminalisation of homosexuality; the film, about a gay violinist who manages to find love only to be threatened by blackmail, sparked riots and censorship, and only survives incomplete.
- **The Song of Life** (Alexis Granowsky, 1931) is a daring surrealist film focusing on a young woman who runs away from the party celebrating her engagement to a wealthy baron; a censorship row was sparked by a scene which, it was feared, would put women off childbirth.
- Featuring one of the most extraordinary, decadent nightclub scenes in all of Weimar cinema, **The Devious Path** (GW Pabst, 1928) sees a bored and sexually frustrated married woman retaliate by abandoning herself to the pleasures of jazz-age Berlin. *The Devious Path* will screen with **The Secret of the Marquise** (Lotte Reiniger, 1922), an animated advert for skin cream.
- The magical blend of documentary and fiction in **People on Sunday** (Robert Siodmak, Edgar G Ulmer, 1930) takes us back to a glorious summer Sunday in late 20s Berlin where five young workers take a day off. While they enjoy freedoms undreamt of by their parents, sexual rivalry soon lends an edge to their flirtations.
- Louise Brooks gives a performance of radiant vitality and real depth in **Diary of a Lost Girl** (GW Pabst, 1929). She plays a young woman who suffers at the hands of a grotesque assortment of men, but refuses – despite everything – to be a victim.
- In **Girls in Uniform** (Leontine Sagan, 1931) a vulnerable student develops a crush on a sympathetic schoolmistress in her Prussian boarding school for girls. This terrific melodrama, with its all-female cast, became a cult film in lesbian circles and screens as part of the BFI FLARE strand.

BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Polarised politics; social divisions; conflicting values

- Visually ravishing and immensely moving, **The Ancient Law** (1923) is a delicately crafted response to Weimar anti-semitism from Jewish director EA Dupont.

- Set in inflation-ridden Vienna, *The Joyless Street* (GW Pabst, 1925) is a savage indictment of social inequality, showing desperate poverty side by side with decadent luxury. Greta Garbo radiates courage and vulnerability in her role, while co-star Asta Nielsen devours the screen with her haunting despair.
- The superbly realised action film *The Cat's Bridge* (Gerhard Lamprecht, 1927), set during the Napoleonic Wars, centres on a family divided by politics, and is a fascinating rediscovery.
- Living in a crowded Berlin tenement, the title character in *Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness* (Phil Jutzi, 1929) works hard to support her unemployed son and her daughter who has a communist boyfriend; this is an outstanding example of left-wing Weimar realism. Will screen with *Inflation* (Hans Richter, 1928), a short avant-garde critique of capitalism.
- *No Man's Land (aka Hell on Earth)* (Victor Trivas, 1931) is a hymn to international solidarity featuring five WW1 soldiers from different countries trapped together in no-man's land.
- The turn-of-the-century love story, *Liebelei* (Max Ophüls, 1933) dramatises the clash between the old and new orders; this intoxicating masterpiece was virtually the swansong of Weimar cinema.
- GW Pabst's film version of Brecht and Weill's celebrated stage hit *The Threepenny Opera* (1931), tells the shocking tale of charismatic crime-boss Mack the Knife who terrorizes Victorian London with help from his establishment friends.
- *Kuhle Wampe* (Slatan Dudow, 1932) – screening as part of BFI Southbank's regular Seniors' Matinee series – is a radical slice of communist filmmaking set in Berlin in the early 30s, showing the shattering impact of mass unemployment on a working-class family.

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– ENDS –

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