

Lost British silent masterpiece rediscovered in Holland



Betty Balfour as Tiny Toes in *Love, Life and Laughter* (1923)

Embargo-ed until 00.001hrs 3rd April 2014. The BFI is pleased to report the discovery by EYE, the Dutch Film Museum, of a lost masterpiece of British silent cinema, George Pearson's *Love, Life and Laughter* (1923), starring Betty Balfour, Britain's "Queen of Happiness" who was the most successful British actress of the 1920s, known also as Britain's answer to Mary Pickford. It is one of the most wanted on the BFI's list of 75 films published to mark the BFI National Archive's 75th anniversary in 2010. Only one other complete film by Pearson survives which makes this a particularly significant discovery.

The film was recently discovered in the archives of EYE, while being catalogued following its arrival at the archive in November 2012. The print is part of a collection of film cans that belonged to a local cinema in the small town of Hattem (near Zwolle). Cinema Theater De Vries, run by the De Vries family had only been active for 3 years, from 1929 – 1932. In 2012, when the cinema building was about to be redeveloped, an employee at a local television station took the initiative of bringing the material to EYE. No-one had any idea of the contents of the film cans and their discoverer Mr. Van der Worp had actually hoped they would contain some historical footage of the region before the Second World War.

Bryony Dixon, curator, Silent Film, BFI National Archive said, "This is a major discovery featuring Betty Balfour, the biggest female star of the silent period. It is also a rare survival of the work of George Pearson, one of Britain's most talented directors of this time whose

First World War drama *Reveille* is another film on the BFI's most wanted list. Contemporary reviewers and audiences considered *Love, Life and Laughter* to be one of the finest creations of British cinema, it will be thrilling to find out if they're right! We hope to be able to acquire some material from our colleagues at EYE soon so that British audiences can have a chance to see this exciting discovery."

Betty Balfour was best known as the comic character Squibs, in a hugely popular series of films, also directed by George Pearson through the 1920s. She was much in demand as a popular foreign export and worked with leading directors in Germany, Austria and France (including the great Marcel L'Herbier). She stars in Hitchcock's 1928 silent, *Champagne* as a memorable heiress and had a supporting role alongside Jessie Matthews in *Evergreen* (1934). Born in London in 1903 she died in Weybridge in 1978.

Contemporary press reports hailed the film as a triumph, a screen classic and a masterpiece. For the *Daily Telegraph* the film was "destined in all probability to take its place among the screen classics", while the *Manchester Guardian* considered it "certainly the most ambitious [of Pearson's films], spectacular at times, lit and photographed with a beauty to dream of," concluding, "devotees have called it George Pearson's masterpiece, and so it is".

The film was released in the UK in June 1923. It premiered in the Netherlands on Oct 12, 1923, at the famous Amsterdam Tuschinski theater. Reflecting the immense popularity of Balfour's Squibs character among the Dutch audiences, the Dutch release title was *Squibs als Tip-toes; De Koningin van de Music-halls* (*Squibs as Tip-Toes; the queen of the music-halls*). The print is with Dutch intertitles, and beautifully tinted and toned.

The Times praised Balfour as "the cleverest comedienne playing in British films", while the *Evening News* predicted, "what few people there are who have not fallen beneath the spell of her pretty face, clever comedy, and sympathetic interpretation of human feelings must surely be captured now." *Topical Times* labelled her "a genius" who could "beat Mary Pickford at her own game".

Pearson's skill as a director and script writer was likened to that of Dickens (whom he admired) for his ability to wring the maximum amount of emotion out of a story. *Love, Life and Laughter* is the story of Tip-Toes (Balfour), a chorus girl in a garret who befriends a lonely young boy who dreams of being a writer, while she dreams of being a music-hall star. They agree to meet at midnight in two years' time in their slum tenement to see which of their dreams has come true.

Credits

Director	George Pearson
Production Company	Welsh, Pearson and Company
Producer	George Pearson

Script George Pearson
Photography Percy Strong
Night Photography A. H. Blake
Effects Charles Penley

Cast: Betty Balfour (Tip Toes), Harry Jonas (The Boy), Frank Stanmore (The Balloon-blower);
Annie Esmond (his wife), Nancy Price (Her friend), Eric Smith (Charlie), Sydney Fairbrother
(Lily)

6,290 feet, silent, black & white

A selection of images for press use are available via www.image.net filed under BFI/BFI
National Archive/Love Life and Laughter.

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Assisted by **LESLIE HISCOTT**
Photographed by **PERCY STRONG**

London Night Photography by **A. H. BLAKE, M.A.**

Dresses by **Madame Eleanor, Queen's Road, Bayswater**
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Presentation Effects by **CHARLES PENLEY**

Length . Six Reels, 6,300 feet

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THE PERSONS OF THE
TALE IN THE ORDER
OF THEIR APPEARANCE

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The Balloon Blower: An Optimist:	FRANK STANMORE
His Wife: A Martyr . . .	ANNIE ESMOND
Her Female Friend: A Gossip . . .	NANCY PRICE
Charlie: Hot on Love Songs . . .	ERIC SMITH
Lily-of-the-Valley: A fallen Star:	SYDNEY FAIRBROTHER
The Old Musician: A Friend	HARDING STEERMAN
His Daughter: A Woman . . .	AUDREY RIDGWELL
The Rich Man: A Gentleman	GORDON HOPKIRK
The Dancer . . .	DACIA
<i>&c., &c.</i>	

The Story is but a simple exposition of the oldest, yet ever youngest desire of the human heart; the achievement of an earnest ambition. The incidents all in picture form of the struggle of a boy and girl, themselves symbolical of every boy and girl, against the odds of the world. The portrayal of this struggle towards a final goal of desired happiness is unconventional in treatment. The Boy and Girl laugh and weep, succeed and fail, move onward and forward to an inevitable destiny, and to a climax which should live long in the memory.

Period To-day or Any Day.
Place London or Any Great City.



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"Love, Life, and Laughter"
 A WELSH-PEARSON PRODUCTION
 Directed by GEORGE PEARSON
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A. C. & R. C. BROMHEAD present
BETTY BALFOUR
 IN THE WELSH-PEARSON FILM
"LOVE, LIFE & LAUGHTER"
 THE STORY OF TIP-TOES
 A SCREEN TALES
 Produced by GEORGE PEARSON
 Assisted by LESLIE HISCOCK
 Photographed by PERCY STRONG
 Edited by JAMES H. COOPER
 Sound by A. H. BLAKE, M.A.
 Scenario by
 Madame Elizabeth Gould, Beaumont
 and A. Moore, Martin
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The "ope" of young people is like the air we breathe. The more "ope" the "ope" you give. The more "ope" you get.

How beautiful is youth, how bright it glows. Beautiful illusions, aspirations, dreams, ambitions, such wild & terrible, such pure & true!

The Story

THIS was once a happy little cheese girl who lived alone in a garret above a shop in the attic above the shop where the girls who went tales told nobody wanted—except perhaps the two girls. It was easy to begin, for he just took facts and clothed them with fancy. Most stories are made that way. On the other hand, there is "Tip-Toes and Those Who Loved Her."

The story was finished long afterwards, though the later writing of it had been so long that the author's hand may have tired. Keep for curiosity at the last pages, with their strange tale of the writing of the story.

"Why do you always write about the same old things?"

as the last stroke of midnight died away the two frightened women in that attic in the silent house heard the sound of bolts being unfastened from the window which covered a rat-infested, dust-laden window and they talked in whispers. . . . What did they say? Two years ago, Tip-Toes, the little cheese girl, had gone away and for two years she had kept up her secret life, and now she had come back. Her life, they said, had been like a fairy tale. And

"If you're not a star-punked."

Then she took him to find laughter.



Is that the story? Why, it's all about us!"

she had ordered a banquet to be served in that attic of hers upstairs at midnight.

In a silent room in a far corner of the great city, another waited for his girl to appear. And he heard the chimes 2nd. he picked up a pistol on which was written "Tip-Toes" 2nd. An hour after midnight, and he started out for the garret where Tip-Toes had been.

This peep has been long enough—the end can wait. . . .

the tale was but the boy's romance of those around him. Leave imagination to the author. See the people as they were living when he started his story.

The tenement caretakers, who lived below Tip-Toes, were a couple of the most amorous fellows setting up sentimental caveman tricks with his wife, and whose rough philosophy was expressed in the words, "The more 'ope,' the more 'ope,' the higher you goes. Too much 'ope'—but

His wife a life was mainly made up of impulsive, interesting boyish romances, and the cheap girl. With feminine instinct she felt sure that Tip-Toes was "egging her on" to go to Tip-Toes' room, and she had written an author on the stairs, confiding that she was going to be a big music-hall star one day; and he returned the compliment by confessing that he was a well-known diamond-cutting publisher night west in the end.

And always Tip-Toes argued that he should write of laughter and joy, and that the world would be read about. She even took him out into the highways and byways to show him that the poor knew how to live and be happy:

Dessert desserts
 And the mother
 among them.

Tip-Toes' Queen of the Diamond Cutters

Gala Night—The Triumph of Tip-Toes.

