


## Document Citation

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These films up to 1930, in fact, distill all that is best in Borzage, one of the greatest romantic creators of the American cinema, whose lyricism reaches its finest heights in the films of the late 1920s, during which one masterpiece succeeded another.

In this period we see how Borzage developed his concept (touched on several times in the following notes) of how the power of love can unite a couple separated sometimes by great distances and provide a bulwark and defence against the forces that oppress them.

Not all Borzage films strive to attain this heightened, intense romanticism, however. He is equally adept with charming excursions into Americana, where his bold and poetic use of landscape comes into play, adaptations of theatre pieces and intimate drama dealing with women struggling with both the elements and their own individual lives and problems.

Here then is an opportunity to renew acquaintance with a director whose ideas and passions contributed much to American cinema. And don't forget that the opening film, *Seventh Heaven*, will screen at The Queen Elizabeth Hall with a new live score - a splendid entrée into Borzage's highly personal world of love, compassion, yearning and triumph.  **JOHN GILLETT**

# FRANK BORZAGE:

## Reaching for the Stars



Lucky Star

*Since the last Frank Borzage season in 1975, many hitherto unseen films have been rediscovered and restored, even though some survive only in fragments. In this season we have tried to take advantage of these discoveries (although not everything was available to us) and construct a short programme contrasting some old favourites with material we have never shown before.*

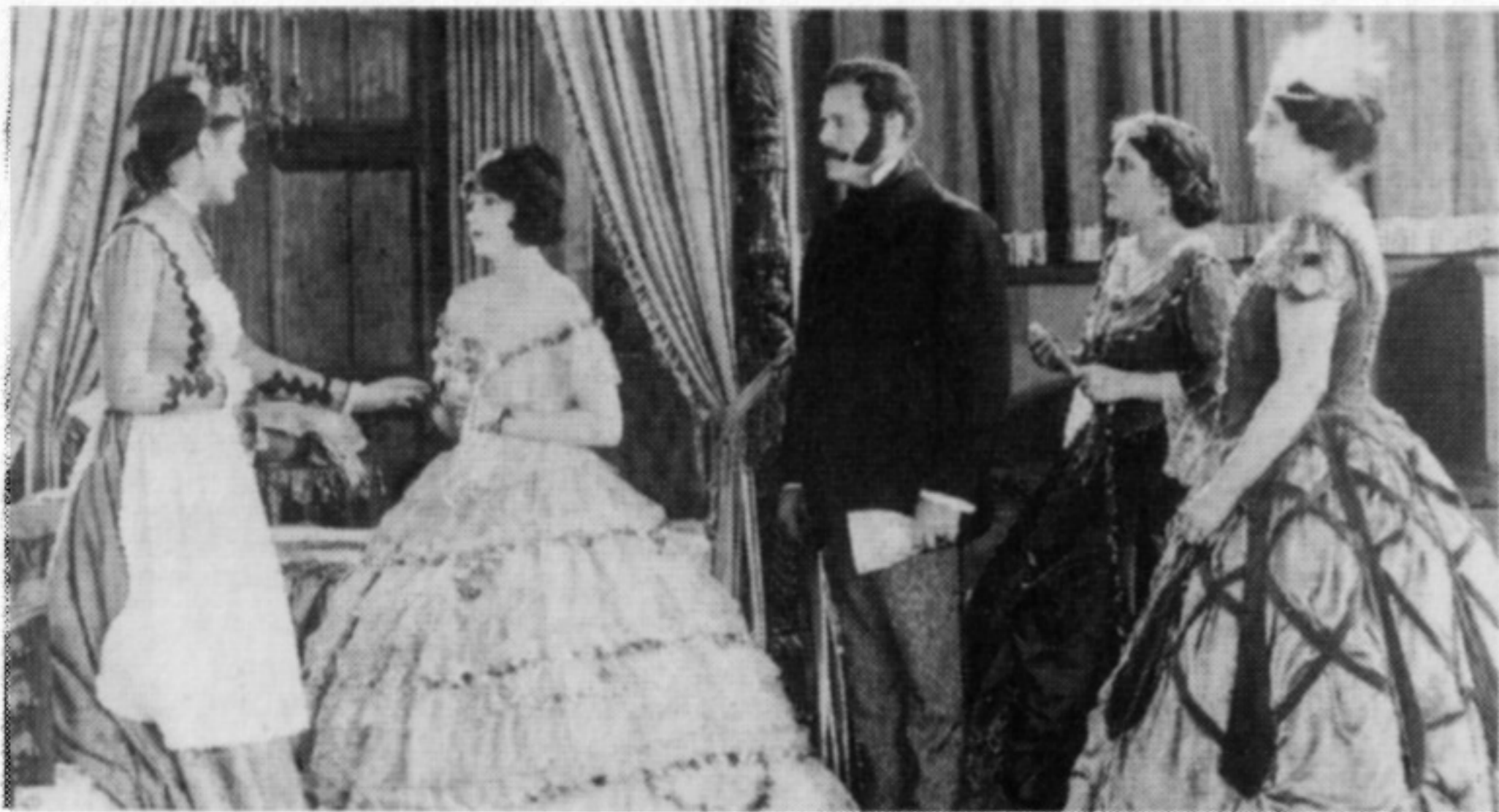
### Seventh Heaven

Fri 14 Jan 7.45 Queen Elizabeth Hall

As a gala opening for this season, we present a print of Borzage's most famous film, with an original score by Paul Robinson, played live by The Harmonie Band. Borzage's ecstatic lyricism is seen at its most potent in this love story about a Parisian worker and a badly treated girl (Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor). It also demonstrates Borzage's favourite theme of how lovers can be brought together even when separated by time and space. Wonderful low-life décor and some virtuoso camera movement contribute to the film's technical innovations. US 1927. Tickets £8.50, now available from the NFT and Queen Elizabeth Hall box offices.



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### Secrets

Tue 18 Jan 6.15 NFT2

Now an old lady, Mary Carlton dreams of her girlhood in England, her elopement with John Carlton to America, their life on a ranch in the West and their return to England, rich and famous. Here Norma Talmadge gives her best performance for Borzage. 'An important Borzage theme is employed here for the first time and the spiritual side of love, played upon in the earlier films, is depicted strongly and its importance made clear. Love transcends the mortal nature of men and women, the bond that it creates bridges time, place, illness and death': *Frederick Lamster. US 1924.*



### Lazybones

Sun 23 Jan 6.15 NFT2

A truly delightful piece of Americana, this stars Charles 'Buck' Jones (later a famous Western star) as a lovable, if shiftless, character who adopts the child of his sweetheart's sister. Borzage creates a vivid and detailed portrait of a small town around 1900, with its gossip, rumours and occasional bigotries, as the shadow of the First World War encroaches on their lives. Buck Jones makes *Lazybones* a richly human figure and the luminous evocation of dusty roads, little homesteads and sunny lazy afternoons has a nostalgic glow for a vanished era. *US 1925.*



### The Circle

Tue 25 Jan 6.15 NFT2

An adaptation of Somerset Maugham's play about marital infidelity among the English aristocracy, set in a large country house. Elizabeth imitates her parents and elopes with her lover, but unforeseen complications intervene... Although it preserves the stage structure, Borzage and his adaptor play it with a likeable fluency. Eleanor Boardman invests Elizabeth with much grace and charm. *US 1925.*



### Street Angel

Sun 30 Jan 6.15 NFT2

Borzage followed the success of *Seventh Heaven* with this intense romantic drama based on a Monckton Hoffs play. In Naples, poverty and despair drive Angela (Janet Gaynor) to stealing, prostitution and prison. She escapes and hides as a dancer in a travelling circus where her relationship with a footloose artist (Charles Farrell) brings new hope. The contradiction between inner purity and an oppressive external world is marvellously conveyed by Borzage's use of lighting and décor, while Ernest Palmer's camera scans the whole setting in long, dipping crane shots. *US 1928.*



### Lucky Star

Mon 31 Jan 6.20 NFT1

One of the latest Borzage films to be uncovered, this is a real find. Concerning the love between a farm girl and a returned soldier, wounded in leg and mind, it recaptures the rapturous tone of *Seventh Heaven*. As usual with Borzage, love has to be fought for and, in the remarkable closing passages, the soldier, sensing that his girl needs him, tries desperately to make his legs work again. The stylised settings of farmsteads and little roads (note the great waking up sequence at the beginning) and the intense playing of Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell all serve Borzage's purpose. *US 1929.*