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herence to that heritage brings him into conflict with his daughter. At the same time, the two brothers are separated by class tensions that threaten to destroy their family as well as the larger community. The distribution of these conflicts reaches a point where the contradictions seem irresolvable, except through the displacement common to melodrama—a climax of near catastrophe and individual heroic action. Created by the vengeful jealousy of one woman, this catastrophe is dispelled by the love and self-sacrifice of her sister, abetted by the man who loves her. In Lia and André, then, all conflicts and contradictions seem to be mediated and resolved, much as they will be two years later in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. But here the mediation remains momentary, even suspect, as Samuel's recalcitrance attests.

Despite its critical and commercial success, *La Terre promise* did not put in play all of the elements that were coming together to constitute the modern studio spectacular. That honor probably goes to Ciné-France-Westi's *Ame d'artiste* (1925), which premiered at the Salle Marivaux in July, 1925.[20] Directed by Germaine Dulac, it was adapted by the director and Alexandre Volkoff from a contemporary Danish play by Christian Molbeck. The cosmopolitan nature of the production—its financing was French, German, and Russian emigré—also extended to the cast, which included English, French, and Russian emigré actors. Dulac's way of handling this diverse group was quite opposite Renoir's in *Nana* and may well have set a precedent for the genre: she imposed a uniform style of acting which effectively neutralized any cultural differences among them. *Ame d'artiste* was set in modern London, in the milieu of the theater, probably, as Charles Ford suggests, in order to capitalize on the success of *Kean* from the previous year.[21] However, this image of London was created almost entirely in the studio with Lochakoff designing the sets and Jules Kruger doing the camerawork. There was a complete theater set (as in *Kean*), a huge hotel set for a masked ball (as in *Le Lion des Mogols*), a luxurious townhouse (as in *La Terre promise*), a simple cottage on the city's outskirts (again as in *Kean*), and a cheap hotel and bar. And there were elegant costumes for the two principal actresses and for nearly everyone at the masked ball. Yet, except for the names and exterior shots designating London, all these settings could just as easily have been French or American.

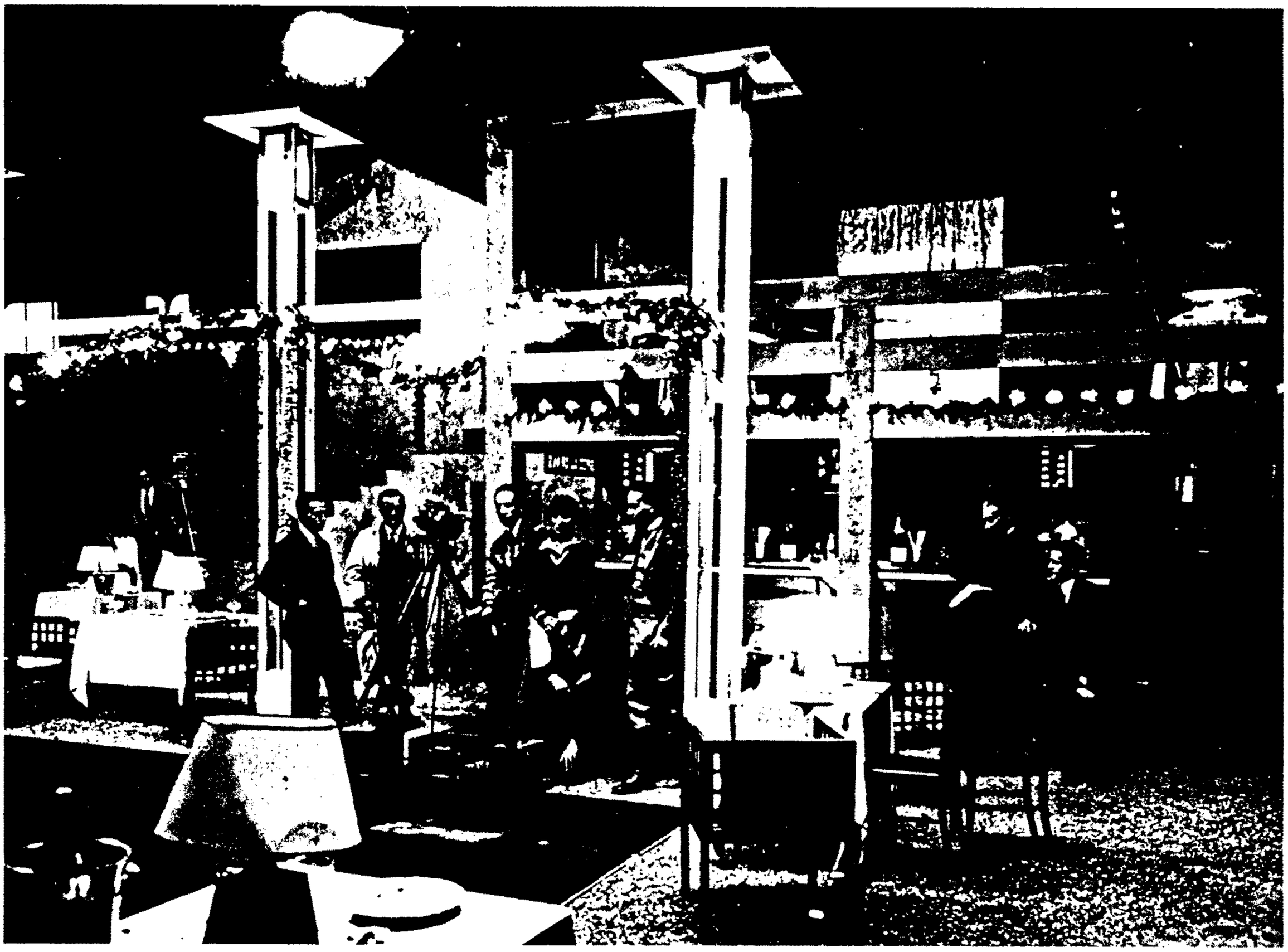
The melodramatic narrative of *Ame d'artiste* has some affinity to *L'Inhumaine* but also has the advantage of being more plausible and more emotionally authentic.[22] The film opens rather cleverly in a series of FSs and CUs: a domestic quarrel between a husband and wife (with two children in the background) climaxes with her picking up a knife to stab him. Suddenly, an ELS reveals the previous action to be a play, a play whose dramatic conflict ironically sets up expectations quite opposite to what actually happens in the film. For a while thereafter, the narrative develops rather conventionally through contrasts between the frivolous life of a famous actress, Helen Taylor (Mabel Poulton), and her lenient father (Nicolas Koline) and the rather sedate life of the Campbells—Herbert (Ivan Petrovich), an aspiring dramatist, his wife Edith (Yvette Andréyor), and her mother (who owns the cottage they live in); between the power of the rich theater-owner, Lord Stamford (Henry Houry), and the naiveté of Herbert, who falls in love with Helen. However, the masked ball sequence, in which Stamford discovers Herbert and Helen embracing, has several nice touches: Herbert is disguised as a clown, and Stamford's falling

111. Ivan Petrovich in the bar sequence in *Ame d'artiste* (1925)

cigar ash is intercut with the confetti that descends over the lovers. The sequence in which Herbert asks Edith for a divorce is unusually poignant: it ends with a LS of Herbert going out the front gate into an empty street and then a MCU of Edith closing the door to simply stand there waiting. The sequence between Helen and Edith has a similar poignance, but its narrative function is stronger: Edith brings her Herbert's supposedly lost play, and they consider who loves him most.

The climax of the film comes in a melodramatic but quite effective alternation between Helen's performance of Herbert's play, *Ame d'artiste* (with Edith in the audience) and Herbert's attempted suicide in a cheap hotel room (he believes Helen has gone back to Stamford). The alternation is complicated and intensified by subjective shots of Herbert's delirium, and his rescue by Edith is delayed until the final shots of the film. Thus, the subject ultimately is sacrifice: that of Edith for her husband's career as a playwright and that of Helen, who, transformed by Edith's action, yields Herbert to her while also advancing her career. In the end, Helen has her career, Edith has her love, and Herbert has both love and career—through the sacrifice of the two women. The "artist's spirit" transcends her milieu to articulate a typically French theme, one in which Dulac must have taken little pleasure.

In one major aspect, however, *Ame d'artiste* differed from most of the modern studio spectaculars that followed—beyond the fact that it is still quite watchable even today. Its milieu depends on the theater rather than on the



112. A production photo of L'Herbier (right of camera) and his crew in Mallet-Stevens's restaurant set for *Le Vertige* (1926)

1920s phenomenon of nightclub restaurants, dancing, and automobile touring. In the next two years, through several big films released by three of the top French film production companies, the genre anchored itself securely in these modish settings and activities.

The first of these was Cinéromans' Films de France production of *Le Vertige* (1926), adapted by L'Herbier from a celebrated boulevard melodrama by Charles Méré.[23] The film's popularity so unnerved L'Herbier, who had given much more of himself to *L'Inhumaine* and *Feu Mathias Pascal*, that he avoided further film projects for several months.[24] According to Jaque Catelain, *Le Vertige* was a rather simplistic drama in which Countess Svirski (Emmy Lynn) escapes her tyrannical and—just for good measure—criminal husband (Roger Karl) through the intervention of the hero (Catelain himself).[25] In record time, L'Herbier shot the exteriors at the fashionable resorts of Eden-Roc and Eze on the Côte d'Azur.[26] More time was taken for the interiors—especially an ultramodern house for Catelain and a late night restaurant—designed by Mallet-Stevens and furnished by Jacques Manuel.[27] L'Herbier even got Robert and Sonya