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Dartmouth Film Society

THE GREAT CLOWNS: PROGRAM III

LOVE ME TONIGHT (1932)

Princess Jeanette	Jeanette MacDonald	Mme. Dupont	Mary Doran
Maurice Courtelin	Maurice Chevalier	Emile	Bert Roach
Vicomte Gilbert de Varese	Charles Ruggles	Laundress	Cecil Cunningham
Count de Savignac	Charles Butterworth	Composer	Tyler Brook
Countess Valentine	Myrna Loy	Valet	Edgar Norton
The Duke	C. Aubrey Smith	Groom	Herbert Muddin
First Aunt	Elizabeth Patterson	Chambermaid	Rita Owin
Second Aunt	Ethel Griffies	Shirtmaker	Clarence Wilson
Third Aunt	Blanche Frederici	Collector	Gordon Westcott
Doctor	Joseph Cawthorn	Pierre	George Davis
Majordomo	Robert Greig	Taxi Driver	Rolf Sedan
Dressmaker	Ethel Wales	Hatmaker	Tony Merio
Bakery Girl	Marion Byron	Bootmaker	William H. Turner

Screenplay by Samuel Hoffenstein, Waldemar Young and George Marion, Jr., adapted from a play by Leopold Marchand and Paul Armont. Music and lyrics by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. Photographed by Victor Milner. Sets by Hans Dreier. Produced by Rouben Mamoulian for Paramount Pictures, premiered August 18, 1932.

Directed by ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

One fine day in 1929, when sound was just beginning to take over Hollywood, two stars made a sensational success in the first musical directed by one of the screen's great directors. The performers were Jeanette MacDonald and Maurice Chevalier, the man in charge was Ernst Lubitsch, and the name of the film was THE LOVE PARADE. Hollywood has never been quite the same since.

Paramount, which knew it had a good thing, pushed its stars into more musicals, and, incredibly, up to a certain point, retained a standard of excellence which was never duplicated. When the original trio defected to M-G-M for THE MERRY WIDOW (1934) things began to go downhill. Miss MacDonald was teamed up with another partner, Nelson Eddy, Mr. Chevalier went his own way, and Mr. Lubitsch moved from studio to studio trying to gather up the pieces of his great career.

LOVE ME TONIGHT was the third in a series of sensational cinematic triumphs directed by Rouben Mamoulian, who subsequently burned himself out trying to find new ways to do new things. In his first two sound films, APPLAUSE and CITY STREETS, he forced stubborn studio technicians to help him revitalize the grammar of the film, and injected such originality into these works that they are still relatively startling today. In LOVE ME TONIGHT, taking his cue from René Clair's SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS, he made the first genuinely creative American musical.

Instead of plunking his stars in front of a microphone to go through their numbers, he set his camera swinging in all directions, brought tiny details to the forefront, and used a bagfull of tricks to keep viewers constantly amused and entertained. His first two movies had been achieved over tremendous odds at Paramount; he was fought every inch of the way. But the films had been great critical and box-office hits (due in no small part to Helen Morgan as star) and the studio began to let him have his own way. What came out of his cameras was often too advanced and sophisticated for audiences of the day; when Mamoulian succumbed to compromise, some details look a little dated to our

modern eyes.

When Miss MacDonald was called upon to break some china, we do not hear the actual sound, but rather what she thinks she hears, something rather like two railroad trains crashing at high speed. Likewise, when her tiresome aunts go off on a tirade, the sound track is alive with barking dogs and other obnoxious noises. There are felicitous touches in the script which reflect the directorial niceties of Lubitsch, and show that he was probably in the wings somewhere during most of the production. One particularly memorable moment is the return of the horse "Solitude" whose name is suddenly explained by other than verbal means.

The music is by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, and it is probably their best score written directly for a film. It includes the title ballad; "Mimi," one of Chevalier's big hits of the period; "Lover" sung by Miss MacDonald; the great "Isn't It Romantic?"; and the toe-tapping refrain "The son of a gun is nothing but a tailor."

Until the film was screened at the Venice Film Festival a few years ago, it was an item for the history books, but revivals since have shown it to be a living work of art of the highest order. To be sure, everything is not as crisp and sharp as it was thirty-two years ago, but time has been much kinder to this film than to others of the same vintage.

What has happened to the people involved in LOVE ME TONIGHT? Miss MacDonald has gracefully retired, although she recently expressed a desire to go back to films once more. Mr. Chevalier is still going strong. Myrna Loy, who was Mrs. Arthur Hornblow, Jr. from 1936 to 1942, left the screen in 1960. Mr. Mamoulian still directs from time to time, and most recently achieved considerable publicity by being fired from CLEOPATRA in mid-production and replaced by Joseph Mankiewicz.

David Stewart Hull

Our short subject today is a condensed version of BLOOD AND SAND (1922) with Rudolph Valentino, Lila Lee and Nita Naldi. It is a rare chance to see the screen's greatest lover at work in one of his most famous vehicles.