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LA SIGNORA DI TUTTI

BEFORE NEO-REALISM
Italian Cinema 1929-1944
October 5 - December 21, 1978

Sunday, October 22 at 2:30
Thursday, October 26 at 6:00

LA SIGNORA DI TUTTI. 1934. Directed by Max Ophuls. A Novella production. Director of production: Tomaso Monicelli. Screenplay by Ophuls, Hans Wilhelm, and Curt Alexander based on a story by Salvator Gotta. Photography: Ubaldo Arata. Set design: Giuseppe Capponi. Editor: Ferdinando M. Poggioli. Music: Daniele Amfi-theatrof. Songs by Daniel Dax. "La Signora di Tutti" sung by Nelly Nelson. Sound: Giovanni Bittmann. Shot in the Cines studios. 98 minutes.

With: Isa Miranda (Gaby), Memo Benassi (Roberto), Tatiana Pawlova (Mrs. Nanni), Nelly Corradi, Federico Benfer (Leonardo), Franco Coop, Lamberto Picasso, Mario Ferrari, Vinicio Sofia, Attilio Ortolani, and Mattia Sassanelli.

Note: Portions of this print are out of synch.

SYNOPSIS: LA SIGNORA DI TUTTI (EVERYBODY'S LADY)

The agent of the famous film star Gaby Doriot is in a producer's office, bartering her fee. He goes to her hotel room and finds her unconscious on the bathroom floor after a suicide attempt. The producer calls an emergency meeting of studio executives while a great surgeon is called in to operate on the star. "In the sleep of anaesthesia her entire life appeared before her in a dizzy dream."

(Flashback) Young Gaby (Isa Miranda) is singing in a choir rehearsal when the director of the school informs them that their regular teacher, Professor Sonni, has had an accident. Gaby faints. In his office, the director blames the Professor's suicide on her. Gaby says it only happened once--he told her he loved her, that he would divorce and marry her. "Shame!" At home, her father beats Gaby and her sister Anna mercilessly: they won't be allowed to go into the city anymore!

While she is gardening, Gaby finds a rich neighbor's broken ruler with the initials R.N. Soon she and Anna receive an invitation to a dance at their neighbor's house to celebrate the high school graduation of Roberto Nanni. Their father agrees to talk to their aunt about letting them go. Ecstatic, Gaby makes a wish in her mirror that someone will dance with her. In fact Roberto courts her and dances her into the library--but he is leaving the next day for Rome. A butler interrupts their walk to tell Roberto his mother wants to speak to him immediately upstairs. When he returns, he takes Gaby to meet his mother Alma, who is an invalid and very lonely. They like each other at once. When he drops the sisters off at their

house, Roberto whispers to Gaby to meet him at the gate. But before she can reach him another car passes and Roberto leaves after it. Gaby's voice says: "That other car ruined me."

In Roberto's absence, Gaby becomes his mother's companion. She tells Gaby the other car that night was Roberto's father; he couldn't confess he was waiting for her, and had to leave. She invites Gaby to their house in the mountains and gives her clothes.

Gaby meets Roberto's father Leonardo (Federico Benfer) for the first time when he returns from business. She is thrilled to know such a rich man. He takes her to the opera and on their return they tell Alma about the music. At their request, Gaby's father agrees to let her sleep over at the Nannis' house. Leonardo is taken by her and, when she comes in for a cigarette before bed, almost kisses her.

Gaby spends a few days at the Nannis' country estate, where Alma thanks her for being their guest and making her husband think of something other than business. That evening Leonardo takes Gaby walking in the garden. He says he can't live without her, that she must promise to live alone. Alma has a sudden premonition. In a desperate attempt to find them, she falls down the staircase in her wheelchair. Hysterical, Gaby breaks apart a radio: "I don't want him anymore!"

After the funeral, Roberto tells his father they must have courage and live their lives--and that he wants to marry Gaby. "No!" shouts Leonardo, and he leaves with Gaby on an extended trip around the world. Both are filled with unhappy memories. They return home married. But Alma's portrait stares down at them from a wall, and a telegram arrives from Roberto saying he's not coming home anymore. "We're very alone." Gaby says she can't live in that house, and becomes hysterical.

Leonardo has neglected his business during his travels, and must face accusations from his board of directors that he has spent a large sum of the company's money. He calls a meeting, during which he receives a call from Gaby saying she is leaving him. He must remain with Alma, even if she's not there; he must find peace again. She's going to Paris. Gaby's voice says: "He had no strength left to hang up the phone. I didn't realize the consequences..." A newspaper reports the conviction and 4-year sentence of Leonardo Nanni for appropriation of funds.

We find that Gaby has been recounting her story to a radio interviewer before his show. "I learned to act, for some small parts. I wrote to him in prison". The interviewer says it is all a private drama, not an actress' biography: that's not what the public wants to know. "Her life has been graced with fortune, happiness, and beauty...", he intones.

In a deluxe cinema where Gaby's latest film is playing, an old and haggard Leonardo goes to look at Gaby's photographs in the lobby. An usher throws him out and he falls under the wheels of a car.

Gaby's agents are furious at the news stories reporting Leonardo's death. They have Gaby write a short condolence note to the son, Roberto, whom they locate and bring to see her. They go walking in the woods recalling old times. He confesses he loved her--loves her still, but he reveals

that he has married her sister Anna, whom he got to know while he was selling the house after his father's ruin. "If I had given you that kiss in the garden that night..., who knows where we'd be?"

We see Gaby's last note, to Roberto: "In the film I won what people call happiness. But in life I remained so alone! I was freed from my passion for Leonardo-but when I wanted to return to you, Roberto, to love --it was too late. So I..."

A doctor in the hospital says, "She's gone."

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