

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Old theme provides an excellent comedy</b>
Author(s)	William Boehnel
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	1934
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	By candlelight, Whale, James, 1934

# Old Theme Provides an Excellent Comedy

**"By Candlelight" Based on Play Concerned with Master and Butler Exchanging Roles.**

By WILLIAM BOEHNEL.

FOUR screen adaptors were needed to discover that Siegfried Geyer's thin and wispy little piece of pleasantries, known simply as "Candlelight," when it was played on the stage of the Empire Theatre some four years ago, had the makings of a gay and zestful film. Mind you, "By Candlelight," as it is now called on the screen of the original Roxy, is not the mightiest of so-called sophisticated comedy masterpieces, but I had the privilege of liking it—and that privilege has been rather rare in cinemaland recently.

Perhaps calling "By Candlelight" a "high comedy" would be a better description for the film, but, since I have never been able to determine the approximate location of the line that divides high comedy from low—I suspect that in the so-called "high comedies" the various characters slay each other with verbal wit and in "low comedies" they accomplish

the same end with good swift kicks in certain portions of the anatomy—the best thing to do, I imagine, would be to let it pass in print simply as a comedy.

Film comedies like "By Candlelight," which rely on words rather than on strenuous action for their effects, have been conspicuous in recent years for their rarity. Doubtless the terror that many audiences have for high comedy is based on dire experience, from watching actors and actresses strut around in elegant clothes and behave—just as you would expect them to behave—like actors and actresses, and not like human beings.

"By Candlelight" could easily be ruined by that sort of tommyrot, since it permits actors and actresses to pretend that not only are they counts and countesses but barons and baronesses as well. Happily, the actors concerned in the film have been restrained from becoming giddy over their titles and give genuinely believable and amusing performances.

## Many Amusing Scenes.

FRANKLY, I hope that any prejudice audiences may have against comedies of this sort will not keep them away from a film which ripples along delightfully and which makes no pretense at being anything but bright, light entertainment.

It would, of course, be difficult to disagree with anyone about "By Candlelight." An opinion that it is an amusing and entertaining film is just as correct as one that it is neither amusing nor entertaining, since its lightweight plot about a butler who pretends he is a nobleman for a night to impress a maid posing as her mistress is not a new one.

But the authors have filled it with some amusing scenes—especially the one where the butler's master returns home unexpectedly as his servant is entertaining his inamorata and sardonically accepts the situation by donning the valet's livery and waiting upon the two frauds—and with some expert dialogue that is swift, graceful and gay.

Indeed, if the plot is a feeble one that creaks and reeks with the years one barely notices it, because the more one sees of it the more one likes it.

## Excellent Acting Is Done.

"BY CANDLELIGHT" owes a great deal to its actors and its director. Paul Lukas is excellent as the valet who pretends he is a count, and Elissa Landi represents the maid posing as a baroness with skill and beauty. As the count Nils Asther is in every way satisfactory, and capable performances are offered by Esther Ralston and Lawrence Grant.

The film is also blessed with some fine direction by James Whale, the talented young Englishman who made "Journey's End," "Frankenstein," "Waterloo Bridge" and "The Invisible Man" and who is now in England collaborating with R. C. Sheriff on the screen version of the late John Galsworthy's "One More River," which he will produce in Hollywood for Universal.

### "By Candlelight."

Universal Pictures Corporation presents a screen comedy from the play, "Candle-Light," by Siegfried Geyer. Screen play by Hans Kraly, F. Hugh Herbert, Karen de Wolf and Ruth Cummings. Directed by James Whale.

#### THE CAST.

Marie	Elissa Landi
Josef	Paul Lukas
Count Von Bommer	Nils Asther
Countess Von Rischenheim	Dorothy Revier
Count Von Rischenheim	Lawrence Grant
Baroness Von Ballin	Esther Ralston
Baron Von Ballin	Warburton Gamble
Ann	Lois January

At the original Roxy.