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KING VIDOR

September 1 - November 13, 1972

Friday, September 15 (2:00)

Tuesday, September 19 (5:30)

HIS HOUR. 1924. Distributed by Metro-Goldwyn. Presented by Louis B. Mayer. Supervised by Elinor Glyn. Directed by King Vidor. Scenario by Elinor Glyn. Titles by King Vidor, Maude Fulton. Photography by John Mescall. Art direction by Cedric Gibbons. Assistant director: David Howard. Gowns by Sophie Wachner. Courtesy of Czechoslovakian Film Archive. ca. 65 minutes.

Cast: Aileen Pringle (Tamara Loraine), John Gilbert (Gritzko), Emily Fitzroy (Princess Ardacheff), Lawrence Grant (Stephen Strong), Dale Fuller (Olga Gleboff), Mario Carillo (Count Valonne), Jacquelin Gadsdon (Tatiane Shebanoff), George Waggoner (Sasha Basmanoff), Carrie Clark Ward (Princess Marieske), Bertram Grassby (Boris Varishkine), Jill Reties (Sonia Zaieskine), Wilfred Gough (Lord Courtney [Jack]), Frederick Vroom (English Minister), Mathilde Comont (Fat Harem Lady), E. Eliazaroff (Khedive), David Mir (Serge Grekoff), Bert Sprotte (Ivan).

Synopsis

Tamara Loraine, a beautiful young Englishwoman, is attracted to Russian Prince Gritzko, who is famed for his many romantic affairs, when she meets him in Egypt and again in Russia. Gritzko is attentive, but Tamara remains distant so as not to be numbered among his conquests. When Gritzko wins a duel and the right to accompany Tamara to a ball, she decides to return to England. On their way to the ship during a snowstorm, Gritzko maneuvers Tamara to his lodge for shelter, and she resists his advances until she collapses from exhaustion. Gritzko then leaves her alone, but in the morning she finds her waist opened (Gritzko wanted to know if her heart was beating) and believes that honor dictates that she marry him. After the ceremony, the prince offers to go away until sent for, but Tamara realizes their mutual, sincere love and bids him stay.

* * * *

HIS HOUR is the first of five films Vidor made with John Gilbert. 1924 was the busiest year of the actor's career, a year in which he made ten films. HIS HOUR looks as though not too much of Mr. Gilbert's time or M-G-M's money was taken up with it, and this is surely one of the least successful of the films Vidor made for that company. Admittedly, today's fragmented print with its Czech flash titles does not help. This poor version, copied from a deteriorating nitrate print, is apparently all that survives of HIS HOUR.

Vidor recounts his difficulties with Madame Elinor Glyn in A Tree Is a Tree. ("I can't think why she was called 'Madame,' unless it was due to the kind of novels she wrote.")

It was her idea to have John Gilbert caress Aileen Pringle with the tips of his eyelashes. As Vidor tells it: "In this scene Gilbert and Pringle were borne through the streets of St. Petersburg in a troika, reclining only a few degrees above a completely horizontal position. They were protected from the icy cold, but not from each other, by two huge bear rugs...I had Jack start kissing Aileen at her fingertips and slowly work his way upward...We had a hard time keeping Jack in the camera, with so much action taking place under the bear skins, but after three or four hundred feet of film, he found himself in the vicinity of Aileen's cheeks, which he stroked with the recently suggested eyelash caress. It was the sort of scene which had much to do with the formation of the Hays Office."

Vidor once told an interviewer: "You've got to take assignments sometimes to keep a commercial aura about your name so you can get the money for the things you want to do." Thus, there may be very little King Vidor in HIS HOUR, but if there had been no HIS HOUR, there might not have been a BIG PARADE.

-- Charles Silver

Silent film, original piano accompaniment by William Perry