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Piece Together Original Pabst Film Of 1929 With Louise Brooks' Lulu

Avoriaz, Feb. 12.

Audiences at the recent Avoriaz fest were the first to see the fully reconstituted version of the famous silent classic "Pandora's Box," directed by G.W. Pabst and mutilated by the censors during its initial release in Germany in 1929.

The Avoriaz screening marks the first time the film is being seen as Pabst envisioned it, according to Catherine Gaborit, who spent years hunting down and reassembling the original version from existing prints of the film.

The film is based on two famous plays by the German playwright Frank Wedekind: "Earth Spirit" and "Pandora's Box," both written at the end of the 19th century. Wedekind's outspoken attitudes on sex and his obsession with it in his work earned him a notorious reputation with his contemporaries and later generations.

Comes Jack The Ripper

Wedekind created one of the most memorable of female characters: Lulu, the amoral, beautiful and sensual "earth spirit" who exists only for sex. All the men who succumb to her frank loveliness wind up being destroyed. In the end, this representation of sexual openness is herself destroyed by a representative of sexual repression, Jack the Ripper.

Pabst abandoned the unrealistic, often grotesque stylistics of the plays for a more soberly realistic, psychologically probing manner. In doing so he created one of the recognized masterpieces of the German cinema and gave Louise Brooks the role from which she

created a legend.

Ahead of its time in its forthrightness and quality of observation, "Pandora's Box" was immediately butchered by the German censors, who chopped up the film, adding and re-writing title cards so as to blur the sense of certain sequences and relationships.

Reversed Roles

Thus the merry little man who was probably Lulu's first lover became her adoptive father, the lesbian countess who is passionately in love with Lulu became just a faithful friend, and the capricious, insouciant young creature ended up redeemed by the Salvation Army.

Gaborit's work on the reassembly of the original was based on already considerable groundwork made years ago by critic-historian Freddy Buache, director of the Swiss Cinematheque, who had reestablished the continuity of sequences, thus restoring an overall coherence.

Working with the cooperation of the Swiss and French cinematheques, the Munich Film Archive, the Goethe Institute and private film collectors, Gaborit collated all existing prints of the film, working against Pabst's original script and a list of "pre-censure" intertitles found in Germany. The completed work, she claims, is about fifteen minutes longer than what is currently visible as "Pandora's Box."

Now In 16m

The film will be commercially released in Paris next month in 16m prints (the existing 35m material not having been of acceptable quality, according to Gaborit). Con-

naissance du Cinema, the distribution house that Gaborit runs with her mother, is handling the release.

Catherine Gaborit is the daughter of Jean Gaborit, a film enthusiast who himself was instrumental in reconstituting two other mutilated films: G.W. Pabst's "L'Atlantide" and Jean Renoir's "Rules of the Game."

Polish director Walerian Borowczyk, who now works in France, is currently in post-production work on "Lulu," a remake of the Pabst film. Anne Bennent, daughter of German actor Heinz Bennent, is the new earth spirit.