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Pacific Film Archive
University Art Museum
Berkeley, California 94720
Telephone: (415) 642-1412

Fritz Lang's SIEGFRIED (1922-24)

will be presented:

Monday, March 2 at 9 pm
at the University Art Museum's
Pacific Film Archive

2621 Durant Avenue
Berkeley

and

Thursday, March 5 at 7:30 pm
at the San Francisco Museum
of Modern Art (Herbst Auditorium)

Van Ness Avenue at McAllister Street
San Francisco

Enno Patalas,
Director of the Munich Film Museum
will introduce both screenings

The twelve screenings of restored 35mm prints of classic German films are presented

in association with

The Goethe Institute, San Francisco



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SIEGFRIED (1922-24)
Part I of the Nibelungen Saga

Director	Fritz Lang
Producer	Eric Pommer for Decla-Bioscop/UFA
Screenwriter	Thea von Harbou
Photographer	Carl Hoffman, Günter Rittau
Animation	Walter Ruttmann
Art Direction	Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut, Karl Vollbrecht
Construction of Dragon	Karl Vollbrecht
Costumes	Paul Gerd Guderian

C a s t

Queen Ute	Gertrud Arnold
Kriemhild	Margarete Schön
Brunhild	Hanna Ralph
Siegfried	Paul Richter
King Gunther	Theodor Loos
Gerenot	Hans Carl Muller
Giselher	Erwin Biswanger
Volker von Alzey, the Minstrel	Bernhard Goetzke
Hagen Tronje	Hans Adalbert von Schlettow
Dankwart	Hardy von Francois
Mime, the Smith	Georg John
Alberich	
Blaodel	
The Priest	Georg Jurowski
The Page	Iris Roberts

SYNOPSIS:

PART I

Mime, Master of Weaponry, was the master of Siegfried, son of King Sigmund of Kanten. The student surpasses the teacher and learns of Kriemhild, sister of King Gunther of Burgundy, who lives in a castle on the Rhine at Worms and is unsurpassed in nobility. Siegfried forces his master to tell him the route and sets out through the forest in which lurks the dragon, Fafnir. Siegfried slays the Dragon and touched by its blood learns the language of the birds. They instruct him to bathe in the dragon's blood and become invulnerable, but on the spot on his back upon which a leaf fell he remains vulnerable. The months pass and Volker von Alzey sings the song of Siegfried before the King of Burgundy and his sister Kriemhild. He tells of how Siegfried crosses the land of fogs where Alberich watches for him, Alberich is no match for Siegfried and in exchange for his life he gives Siegfried the web of invisibility, the ability to change his appearance and leads him to the treasure of the Niebelungen, deep inside the mountain where work goes forward on the crown for the Giant of the North. Kriemhild gives an embroidered cloak to Alzey in thanks for his song. Siegfried arrives at the castle and offers his greetings. The King is warned against Siegfried by the jealous Hagen. Siegfried asks for the hand of Kriemhild, but Hagen persuades the King not to accept until Brunhild, Queen of Isenland, has been won for him. But Brunhild has conquered twelve kings and has sworn never to be a king's vassal. Siegfried pledges to win Brunhild for King Gunther and they set out for Isenland. The royal vessel arrives at Isenland and Siegfried, Gunther and their men set forth on foot across the sea of flames. Brunhild is scornful and claims she will add their weapons to her room. When King Gunther arrives Brunhild challenges him to a contest in which he must beat her three times: at the throw of a stone, the jump and the length of a javelin. Siegfried makes himself invisible and enables Gunther to win. Brunhild returns to Burgundy and they prepare for a double wedding, but Brunhild scorns Siegfried as a vassal, although Gunther loves him as a brother.

PART II

Hagen devises a plot to lower Siegfried in the eyes of Gunther. Brunhild is defeated but not won. Siegfried is persuaded to appear as Gunther and break Brunhild's pride. He takes from her a bracelet. The treasure of the Niebelungen arrives. Kriemhild finds the bracelet and questions Siegfried, who tells her its deadly secret. The treasure kindles the envy of Brunhild, and she insults Kriemhild on the steps of the cathedral. Kriemhild, humiliated by Brunhild, reveals the secret of the bracelet. Brunhild demands Siegfried's death, and Gunther is persuaded to betray his blood brother. Hagen tricks Kriemhild into revealing Siegfried's vulnerable spot by sewing a cross onto his tunic. Siegfried thinking he is reconciled with Gunther joins in a fox hunt. Stopping at a stream to quench his thirst, he is run through by Hagen and dies. The body is returned to the castle, and Kriemhild becoming aware of the treachery takes her revenge upon Brunhild.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The German poet Heine commenting on the legends of the Nibelungen, as quoted in Lotte Eisner's The Haunted Screen:

"Yet this song of the Nibelungen is extremely powerful and sublime; it is difficult for a Frenchman to form a notion of it. It is a language of stone; and the verse is rhymed blocks. Here and there in the joints blood-red flowers grow. . . Of these giants' great passions moving through this epic it is even less possible for you good people, civilized and courteous as you are, to form a notion. . . All the Gothic domes seem to have agreed to meet in a vast plain. . . It is true that their gait is a little heavy, that a few of them are most uncouth, and that their love-transports are rather laughable; but the sneering stops as soon as they are seen to fly into a fury and throw themselves at each other's throats. . . There is no tower higher, no stone harder, than the grim Hagen and the vindictive Kriemhild."

-- from Die Romantische Shule, 1833

"In the opening scenes of Siegfried, which introduce the characters of the tragedy and reveal warriors frozen into living pillars, Lang introduces a living architecture. His decorative compositions seem often like frozen bits of life, as if any movement would disturb the geometry. In the constructional austerity of his geometrical universe, any irregular plant life would seem out of place. Produced entirely in the studio, its most typical shot is the image of Siegfried riding through a mystical Germanic forest whose trees are silhouetted against the artificial light. Too much has been made of the so-called expressionism of this film's monumental images. They are much more derivative of the style of Germanic painting influenced by Arnold Bocklin and of the Munich style of architecture that characterized the last period of the Second Reich and to which the expressionists were intensely opposed. . .

"The two-part film was conceived as a monumental tribute to the German nation. UFA, which controlled Decla-Bioscop, was in turn controlled by heavy industry, especially by Krupp and Farben who were subsidizing national movements. Hitler admired Nibelungen very much and it has often been noted that the gigantic mosaic designs of Triumph of the Will resemble many passages in Nibelungen. However, Hitler was only a discredited agitator in 1924 and it was Minister Streseman who released it 'to create a feeling of unity among the people.' And yet, according to Mon Ciné (October 8, 1924), militant German nationalists were highly indignant about the film because it showed their 'ancestors as bandits.' . . ."

-- Georges Sadoul, Dictionary of Films