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Author(s)	Craig Reynolds
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Wellington Film Festival



The Joyless Street

Programme One, National Library, Tuesday, July 9 at 12.15 p.m.

Asta Nielsen

Denmark, 1968
Director/With: Asta Nielsen
Production Co.: Laterna Films
Interview: Axel Strobye
Photography: Peter Roos
Sound: Knud Kristensen
Music: Morten Slaebo
With: Poul Reumert

Running time: 30 minutes

Print courtesy of Det Danske Filmmuseum.

In 1968, Asta Nielsen made a short documentary of her career with Poul Reumert, Mr Rudolf in *The Abyss*. In the final scene she sits among the art treasures of her Copenhagen apartment and says, "I am only waiting to die," a single tear trickling down her cheek. After the scene was shot she is said to have told the cameraman, "I hope you got that. I don't think I have another screen tear left in me." - Robert C Allen, *Sight & Sound*, Autumn, 1973

Poor Jenny

Die Arme Jenny, Germany, 1912
Director/Script: Urban Gad
Production Co.: Deutsche Bioscop/Union (PAGU)
Photography: Guido Seiber
With: Asta Nielsen, Leo Peukert, Emil Albes, Hans Staufen

Running time: c25 minutes

Print courtesy of Department of Film, International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House. German intertitles with live English translation.

With the sensational success of her first film, *The Abyss*, Asta Nielsen was lured to Berlin where between 1911 and 1915 she and Urban Gad were contracted to produce eight films per year - one 'Asta Nielsen' was released every month for eight months. The rest of the year was devoted to developing projects for the next season. These first four years "were a self-imposed and self-supervised apprenticeship: her goal was the development of a 'silent language' which could 'make the spirit visible'... Nielsen worked closely with Gad in the selection of material - choosing themes, characters and locales as diverse as possible to provide a constant challenge to her versatility." - Robert C. Allen, *ibid.*

In addition to the contributing Archives, *Tribute to Asta Nielsen* acknowledges the cooperation of the Melbourne Film Festival (Tait Brady), Pacific Film Archive (Edith Kramer, Berkeley, The National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra and Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, Pordenone.

Programme Two, National Library, Friday, July 12 at 12.15 p.m.

The Abyss

Afgrunden, Denmark, 1910
Director/Script: Urban Gad
Production Co.: Kosmorama
Photography: Alfred Lind
With: Asta Nielsen, Poul Reumert

Running time: c25 minutes

Print courtesy of Det Danske Filmmuseum. Danish intertitles with live English translation

Asta Nielsen's first film.

She is all! She is the drunkard's vision and the lonely man's dream ... She laughs like a girl completely happy, and her eyes know of things so tender and shy that one dare not speak of them... A new light seemed to shine from the screen. -

Guillaume Apollinaire

Even in 1910 *The Abyss* would hardly have stirred a ripple of interest had it not been for the acting of Asta Nielsen... Her face has a "tragic power without equal". Hers was a restrained, naturalistic style, her frugal use of external gesture riveting attention on her expressive face. - Robert C. Allen, *ibid.*

Sins of the Fathers

Die Sünden der Väter, Germany, 1913
Director/Script: Urban Gad
Production Co.: Deutsche Bioscop/Union (PAGU)
Photography: Guido Seiber
With: Asta Nielsen, Emil Albes, Fritz Weidemann

Running time: c25 minutes

Print courtesy of Department of Film, International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House. German intertitles with live English translation.

In many of her melodramatic parts, she is a victim at the end. Yet she is never a conventional victim. The very naturalness with which she endows so many actions deemed unusual for women, her integrity, her depth of feeling, her active sense of intelligence, her particular kind of sensuality, mark her female roles with an individuality that resists reduction to types... She creates characters... individualised by a strong sense of self-identity and self-definition. - Janet Bergstrom, *Prima di Caligari*