

**Ernst Lubitsch's
CARMEN**



BERTELSMANN

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1918 was an eventful year.



On November 11, World War I ended and with it the German Empire. This meant not only the temporary end to strict Prussian morals, but also – and likewise only temporarily – to film censorship, and paved the way for the experiment of democracy and the “Roaring Twenties,” which were not exactly lacking in debauchery.

The first screening of the film version of CARMEN, based on the opera by Georges Bizet, took place three days before the end of the war, on November 8, 1918, in the screening room of Ufa’s studio in Tempelhof. Inside, the champagne flowed; outside, the previous world order was collapsing. Spartacists and government troops shot at each other while the illustrious preview audience enjoyed itself. The next day, as the latter nursed their hangovers, Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed the Republic.

The real premiere of the film, directed by Ernst Lubitsch and starring the great Pola Negri in the title role, took place a good month later, on December 20, 1918, at Berlin’s Union Theater. Its wildness, opulence, and sensuality captured the spirit of the times to come. “As Carmen, the spirited Polish actress [Pola Negri] swept across the screen in such a way that several women’s clubs immediately cried out for censorship. But the moralizing ladies were out of luck. The odious censorship had been

abolished at the end of the war. The film was permitted to go wild. And it did. (...) Pola set the decorations aflutter with her frenzied dances. But she also got fame to Germany. For herself, for Ernst Lubitsch, for Ufa.“ (*Der Spiegel* 38/1950)

And so it was: the exceptional Berlin director Ernst Lubitsch, who strove to “de-opera-tize” the movie, and the enchanting Pola Negri, femme fatale of the first hour, formed a dream team of the early days of film. CARMEN celebrated great success overseas from 1921 under the title GYPSY BLOOD and paved the way to international fame for the artistic duo, ensuring that the two personages have not been forgotten to this day. CARMEN, however, didn’t stand the test of time so well – most recently, only various abridged versions of the film were available, all of them in poor condition. In 2018, the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation took on the task of painstakingly reassembling, restoring, and digitizing the mutilated versions into a largely complete version with new coloring. The project was made possible by the support of Bertelsmann as the main sponsor.

Join us in looking forward to the premiere of the reconstructed version, for which Tobias Schwencke has composed a new score, commissioned by ZDF/ARTE.

Dear film fans,

Silent films exert an enduring fascination: They allow a journey back in time to the early days of cinema. Actors and directors alike had to develop their own language without sound and find new forms of artistic expression. Their works reflect this pioneering spirit and continue to attract people to cinemas and silent film festivals to this day.

No less fascinating is the cultural-historical significance of this art form, which was born a good century ago. Silent films are the starting point of all cinematic genres. They were the nucleus that gave rise to the creative diversity of the film industry as we know it today. As a company that has thrived on the creative achievements of its filmmakers, authors, musicians and journalists for over 186 years, we know the great value of such inspiring and timeless works. Bertelsmann has long been committed to preserving important cultural assets at the European level – including our cinematic heritage. This is particularly necessary in the case of silent films, as the copies that still exist are not only aging, but will soon no longer be accessible. Only very few cinemas still have analog projection technology. Foundations and film archives

are faced with the mammoth task of restoring and digitizing our endangered silent film heritage to preserve it for posterity – a task they can hardly manage on their own.

As a company with its own tradition in the film business and extensive digital expertise, Bertelsmann can and wants to help. For years, we have organized silent film festivals in Berlin and other major European cities, and supported major restoration projects such as the digital restoration of *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* (2014), Fritz Lang's *DER MÜDE TOD* (*DESTINY*, 2016), and *DER GEIGER VON FLORENZ* (*THE FIDDLER OF FLORENCE*) by Paul Czinner (2018). Now, we have sponsored the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation's restoration of another silent film classic: *CARMEN* by Ernst Lubitsch. Please join me in celebrating the fact that this silent film classic can once again be shown in its entirety and in digital cinematic quality!

Thomas Rabe
CEO of Bertelsmann

Dear silent movie fans,

If films are not shown to audiences, they will gradually disappear from cultural memory. If old films are not restored and digitized, they will eventually disappear physically from this world as well. That is why today marks a double celebration.

CARMEN, an early film by Ernst Lubitsch, is finally available in a digitized version, restored using state-of-the-art techniques, that is as close as possible to the version of its December 1918 premiere in Berlin.

This extensive restoration was only possible with the generous support of Bertelsmann. Our sincere gratitude goes out to the media company.

We are extremely pleased that *CARMEN* can now be shown in new splendor as the opening movie of the UFA Film Nights 2021.

A silent film can only unfold its full glory with a brilliant accompanying score. Tobias Schwencke's composition was commissioned by ZDF/ARTE. Thanks to the wonderful public-service collaboration for the "Stummfilm auf ARTE" (Silent Films on ARTE) series, *CARMEN* will soon be accessible to a television audience as well.

We would like to thank our archive partners, the Bundesarchiv

(Federal Archive) and the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, as well as the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media.

Created during the First World War, *CARMEN* tells a wild story of passion and aggrievement, order and rebellion, love and death. It was to prove a stepping stone to Hollywood for the brilliant leading actress Pola Negri and her ingenious director Ernst Lubitsch.

CARMEN bears witness to the high artistic quality of early German movies. Many of them are held by the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation ... awaiting their revitalization.

Christiane von Wahlert
Chairwoman, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation

CARMEN

José, a dragoon who has just been promoted to sergeant, falls in love with Carmen, a worker in a cigarette factory who is arrested during a riot, while at his post in Seville. He helps her escape, which lands him in prison. When he has served his sentence, he meets the hot-blooded young woman again – this time as a dancer at a festival. He becomes increasingly enamored with her, but she is not too particular about fidelity and keeps seducing men for her own purposes. During a duel with a rival, José becomes a murderer. He loses his post and his bride and joins Carmen's gang of smugglers. She soon gets bored of him and travels to Gibraltar, where she takes up with the matador Escamillo. But her recklessness doesn't end well for Carmen either...

Production

Drama in 6 acts freely adapted from Prosper Mérimé, by Hanns Kräly
Directed by Ernst Lubitsch
Exterior and interior design Kurt Richter
Costume director Alex Hubert
Photography Alfred Hansen
Production company Projektions-AG "Union" PAGU, Berlin

Cast

José Navarro	Harry Liedtke
His mother	Frau Pagay
Dolores, his bride	Grete Dierks
Carmen, a cigarette factory worker	Pola Negri
Garcia, smuggler	Paul Biensfeld
Dan Cairo, smuggler	Paul Conradi
Remendato, smuggler	Max Kronert
Carmen's landlady	Margarete Kupfer
Escamillo, a bullfighter	Leopold von Ledebur
An English officer	Heinrich Peer
A prison guard	Wilhelm Diegelmann

World Premiere

Original	December 20, 1918, Union-Theater Kurfürstendamm, Berlin
Restored version	August 25, 2021 as part of the UFA Film Nights in Berlin and as a live stream on www.ufa-filmnaechte.de
Television premiere	September 27, 2021, 11.30 pm on ARTE

Restoration (2018)

Restoration	Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation
Funding	Bertelsmann SE & Co. KGaA, The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Friends and Patrons of German Film Heritage e.V.
Material	Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv (German Federal Archives), Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen
Edition	Luciano Palumbo
Preliminary research	Anke Wilkening
Collation and documentation	Miranda Reason, Luciano Palumbo
Scan, digital image restoration, and 4K mastering	L'Immagine Ritrovata

Music (2021)

New composition	Tobias Schwencke, based on motifs from the eponymous opera by Georges Bizet, commissioned by ZDF/ARTE.
Recording	ensemble KONTRASTE
Executive producer	Thomas Schmölz, Zeleven music film
Editing	Nina Goslar

Biographies



Ernst Lubitsch (Director)

***January 29, 1892 Berlin, Germany; † November 30, 1947 Los Angeles, USA**

Ernst Lubitsch was active in film as long ago as the early 1910s. He became popular first as an actor, and soon as a writer and director. He made several masterful historical films and comedies in Germany. In 1922, he continued his career in Hollywood, working with stars including Mary Pickford, Marlene Dietrich, and James Stewart. His unmistakable style was celebrated as the “Lubitsch touch” and his talkies TROUBLE IN PARADISE (1932) and TO BE OR NOT TO BE (1942) became classics of cinematic history. In 1947, he was awarded an honorary Oscar for his life’s work.

Hanns Kräly (Screenplay)

***June 16, 1884 Hamburg, Germany; † November 12, 1950 Los Angeles, USA**

Born Iwan Kräly, the Hamburg native began his career as a stage actor and as a dramatist for producer Paul Davidson. In 1913 he met Ernst Lubitsch. The two soon became a permanent team and Kräly became Lubitsch’s

resident dramatist from 1915. Together they created films such as MADAME DUBARRY (1919) and DIE BERGKATZE (THE WILDCAT, 1921). The two also worked together in Hollywood until the end of the silent film era. Kräly fell into oblivion in the 1930s, and spent his last years working as a janitor in Los Angeles.

Kurt Richter (Architect)

***October 29, 1885 Krems on the Danube, Austria-Hungary; † April 26, 1960 Salzburg, Austria**

Kurt Richter, a set designer by training, was hired by Ufa in 1914, became one of the first dedicated film architects, and later the production company’s chief architect. He worked with Ernst Lubitsch early on and, as his regular architect, was responsible for the major monumental films after the end of the First World War. In 1930 he returned to Austria, where he worked at various Viennese theaters. In 1940, he was appointed to the Salzburg Landestheater, where he stayed on as its successful chief stage designer, with his own studio, until his retirement.





Alex Hubert (Ali Hubert, Costumes)

*December 1, 1878 Vienna, Austria-Hungary; † June 14, 1940 Los Angeles, USA

Ernst Lubitsch recruited the costume designer to work on films towards the end of the First World War. He created countless magnificent costumes for Lubitsch's epic historical movies. He made a name for himself in Weimar Republic cinema with films such as *SUMURUN* (*ONE ARABIAN NIGHT*, 1920) and *DAS WEIB DES PHARAO* (*THE LOVES OF PHARAOH*, 1921). In 1926 he accepted Lubitsch's invitation to Hollywood, but returned to Germany at the beginning of the talkie era. After the Nazi seizure of power, he moved permanently to the United States and worked for many European directors-in-exile, most notably collaborating with Wilhelm Dieterle.

Alfred Hansen (Camera)

*August 9, 1885 Copenhagen, Denmark; † January 21, 1935 Berlin, Germany

Alfred Hansen was initially a news photographer before he began

shooting silent films during the First World War. Along with Theodor Sparkuhl, he was one of Lubitsch's regular cameramen and enjoyed his professional peak during this time. After Lubitsch's emigration, Hansen worked for Carl Boese and Hans Steinhoff. His film career ended in 1931 with a few B productions directed by Carl Heinz Wolff.

Pola Negri

*January 3, 1897 Lipno, Kingdom of Poland, Russian Empire; † August 1, 1987 San Antonio, USA

Polish-born Apolonia Chalupiec began her stage career in Warsaw before emigrating to Berlin in 1917 and gradually being built into a star. She first appeared in a Lubitsch film in *DIE AUGEN DER MUMIE MA* (*THE EYES OF THE MUMMY*, 1918). Her international breakthrough came with *MADAME DUBARRY* (1919). She followed Lubitsch to America in 1922, where she was typecast as the passionate, exotic vamp. Because of her strong accent, she returned to Europe with the advent of talkies. In Nazi Germany, she played self-sacrificing mother roles such as in *MAZURKA* (1935) until she was forced to emigrate in 1939. Back in the U.S., she was rarely seen on screen, but maintained her reputation as an eccentric diva throughout her life.



HARRY LIEDTKE

Harry Liedtke

***October 12, 1882 Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia); † April 28, 1945 Bad Saarow-Pieskow, Germany**

Born in Prussia, Harry Liedtke initially completed a commercial apprenticeship before taking acting lessons. He appeared on various Rheinhardt stages and came to the film business in 1912 through the producer Oskar Messter. At first he was often seen in the role of a youthful lover, later as an elegant gentleman and aristocratic bon vivant. Also a member of Lubitsch's regular ensemble, Liedtke became one of the first male stars of German cinema. With the advent of talkies, his career slowly wound down; in 1941, he made a comeback as the patriarch in Heinz Rühmann's *SOPHIENLUND*. In late April 1945, he and his third wife were murdered by members of the Red Army.

Leopold von Ledebur

***May 18, 1876 Berlin, Germany; † August 22, 1955 at Gut Bockhorn in Ruhwinkel, Germany**

Leopold Baron of Ledebur first worked as a lawyer before switching to acting in 1906. He appeared as a character actor on German stages for several decades. From 1916 on, he also

appeared in numerous movies, though usually in supporting roles. He was known there for esteemed characters with genteel attitudes such as fathers, patriarchs, heroes, and aristocrats. In *CARMEN*, he plays the fearless matador Escamillo.

Grete Diercks

***September 1, 1890 Hamburg, Germany; † July 15, 1978 Lauingen, Germany**

Grete Diercks began her successful acting career as a child actress on Hamburg stages. As a young woman, she made guest appearances in Riga before accepting engagements in Berlin. There she also came into contact with film and appeared on the screen several times from the mid-1910s on. In addition to roles in the Lubitsch films *CARMEN* and *RAUSCH (INTOXICATION, 1919)*, she also appeared in F. W. Murnau's *DER BRENNENDE ACKER (THE BURNING SOIL, 1922)* and E. A. Dupont's *DIE GEIER-WALLY (VULTURE WALLY, 1921)*. In 1923, she married an engineer and ended her acting career.

**Contemporary
Press Coverage**



FABRICA TABASCO

“Carmen.”

It is no exaggeration if I claim that Union has created its masterpiece, and at the same time the best German film, with its drama “Carmen,” which celebrated its premiere before invited guests last Thursday at the Unionpalast on Kurfürstendamm. It is probably the first time that one has seen a film unfold in which, to one’s own delight, one saw nothing, but absolutely nothing to find fault with, but which instead created a deep impression unimpaired by even a single flaw. [...] The whole film is an experience, an event.

Der Film, Berlin, Nr. 52 dated December 28, 1918



The ‘Union’ Masterpiece – Ernst Lubitsch Directs ‘Carmen’

Friday’s screening of the monumental “Union” film “Carmen” was a tremendous success, received with demonstrative applause by a sell-out audience. This film clearly proves the ability of the German film industry and its indisputable competitiveness in the world market; if the major film productions still ahead from the other companies in 1918 match this great work of art, we will have a closed series of German works of art that can successfully start the march to the world market. [...]

The plot, permeated by a deep sense of human struggle and suffering, has found in Ernst Lubitsch a director who fleshes out the bones of the text with such sparkling, such rich, such colorful life that “Union” may be congratulated on this genius of cinematography. In the 2,000 meters of this film there is not a scene that does not captivate audiences with its pulsating temperament; not a single movement that does not elegantly emphasize the character; not one encounter that isn’t sparkling with the finest artistic esprit. With the strong will that characterizes the great director, he has tactfully subordinated the forces of his contributors to the overall impression, he has limited them to make the overall picture

work, he has goaded each individual to give their best and their all to make the film, to make the ensemble appear borne by the strongest human passion.

We have seen Pola Negri and Harry Liedtke in other films as well: but the masterful performances that shook the audience yesterday, that provoked their demonstrative applause, testify to the fact that their performance was guided by a force that could only come from the genius director who spurred them on, constrained them, pointed the way for them: from Ernst Lubitsch.

Die Lichtbild-Bühne (LBB), Berlin, Nr. 51 dated December 21, 1918

Restoration



A Burning Passion: The Digital Restoration of Ernst Lubitsch's CARMEN

Outside, it is raining as we receive the very first digitized raw images for the restoration of Ernst Lubitsch's *CARMEN* to be viewed at the Deutsches Filmhaus in Wiesbaden. We quickly darken the room; the playback of the film scans on a computer screen is about to start.

It is hot in Seville as the dragoon Don José Navarro dreamily reads the words of love sent to him by his beloved Dolores, adoring and proud of her husband, who has just been promoted to sergeant. Not far from him, in a cigar factory, Carmen incites a big fight out of petty envy and irritation. She jumps on the work tables, shouting lustily. Dozens of workers scuffle, and the brawl begins to escalate until the factory unexpectedly bursts into flames.

It seems as if a sudden fire will end it all after the first 10 minutes, only for things to be miraculously put back together and the fiction to begin

to take hold again. However, the fire reoccurs shortly afterwards: first when Don José burns with remorse for losing his rank and finds himself in prison. And then again at the market, where he falls for the passionate, provocative Carmen, and is slowly but inexorably consumed by her fire.

And yet, this extremely powerful symbolic force of the flames, which would fit so perfectly in this film centering on passion and its destructive power, is neither a clever gimmick employed by director Ernst Lubitsch, nor by screenwriter Hanns Kräly, nor by producer Paul Davidson.

The fire is not part of the film's content, but a ravage of time that physically affects one of the few last surviving film materials of *CARMEN*.

Because if they are not stored under very strict conditions, which can be ensured only at great expense, film material that may be close to a hundred years old suffers "at best" from a phenomenon known as decay or decomposition: Irregular spots form on the surface of the film due to corrosion and other chemical reactions, causing it to deform. If these images are set in motion, as during our test viewing, they result in visual effects that dance across the film's images, much like fire, and finally dissolve it completely.

This is even more the case for films that were colored the way *CARMEN* was, by dipping the film





One of the surviving fragments from the historic distribution copy

stock into a variety of dye baths (“tinting”). According to a convention that had already established itself as part of a canonical film language by the time CARMEN was produced in the late 1910s, each nuance was ascribed its own meaning. If decay or disintegration is the “best case scenario” for the inexorable aging of cellulose nitrate film material, the most common scenario is a more drastic and irreversible one: it self-ignites and burns (spontaneous combustion). This is precisely the reason why so few of the films of the past – especially from before World War II – have survived. And this is precisely why it is such a great sensation whenever one is rediscovered.

Except for some of the scenes set in the robbers’ den, which were shot at the Rüdersdorf limestone quarry, the filming of Ernst Lubitsch’s

first “major movie” took place on the Tempelhof studio lot. The popular actor Harry Liedtke plays Don José, Carmen is Pola Negri at the beginning of her success, a mere moment before the big leap that would take her straight to Hollywood.

The movie premiered on December 20, 1918 at Berlin’s Union Theater on Kurfürstendamm. A few weeks earlier, on November 8, 1918, press and Ufa executives had been treated to an exclusive preview of the film while Lubitsch was still working on the final cut. Pola Negri later recounted that the November Revolution raged in the streets of Berlin that evening, and the screening kept being punctuated by the distant sound of rifle fire. On November 9, 1918, the day after the advance screening, the Weimar Republic was proclaimed.



Duplicate produced in West Germany in the 1970s, from the holdings of the Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv

After the film was released in Germany, it took two years for it to reach the U.S., where it was released in 1921 under the title GYPSY BLOOD, following a massive revision of the content. In the U.S., the camera negative was heavily manipulated; so was the editing order and the length of entire shots. The entire Dolores storyline is omitted in this cut version, the intertitles are longer and some of them hint at a magical – quasi-mystical – dimension of Carmen’s character that is not at all evident in the German version. So love moves over to create more room for action, perhaps to appeal less to the intellect than to the tastes of the masses.

Because in their original version of the film, Ernst Lubitsch and screenwriter Hanns Kräly portray a Carmen who is driven not by the longing for

love as we was the case in Bizet’s opera, but by a fascination with destroying everything that embodies order and ordinariness. Pola Negri’s anti-heroine is moved by the desire, as antisocial as it is alluring, to circumvent the rules and humiliate her fellow human beings: a suitor is silenced, a powerful army officer is deceived, another – an Englishman at that! – is seduced and then exploited, as a business. Carmen, a wild-willed woman, bosses around a whole group of robbers, seduces a prison guard, and, last but not least, wreaks havoc with the bourgeois life of an ordinary man until it is hopelessly destroyed. Don José is wound into a death spiral before it even occurs to him that his infatuation will be his death sentence. Thus, a perhaps crude but still appropriate symbolism is the fact that the only man with whom

Carmen can truly fall in love is an animal tamer – a bullfighter – who plays with the lives of animals out of sporting ambition.

Perhaps the reason for CARMEN's success in Germany lies precisely in the fact that the film offered an audience – exhausted by the First World War and shaken by the social changes – to experience the pleasure of the forbidden on the big screen. Thus it helped to suspend, or even defeat, the hard years of “routinized” danger of death for an hour and a half.

Unlike other contemporary films, which were often shot with two cameras placed side by side – one for shooting the German version and one for the export version – the cut for CARMEN's U.S. American release was made directly in the negative of the German version, because only that one had been made. As a result, the material cut away from the original negative is now considered irreversibly lost.

After its exploitation in the U.S., the film saw a re-release in Germany in 1923, and was then confiscated by the Soviets after World War II.

Many West German institutions concerned with cinematic heritage have sought to reconstruct the montage of the premiere version in the postwar period, using a variety of approaches. In the 1980s, Enno Patalas, then director of the Filmmuseum in

Munich, had access to the Russian materials and was able to combine them with others for the first time, adding to and re-releasing entire film takes that had previously been considered lost.

The Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation had something similar in mind in 2018, when the film was digitally restored for the first time. Eight different elements – which, lined up one behind another on the ground, would have bridged the distance between Zoo-Palast and Kino International in Berlin – were viewed, measured, compared. For each film reel, the length of each of the approximately 660 shots was measured to determine how many frames were missing from which reel. Since the only contemporary surviving materials are fragments of one or more tinted distribution prints from the holdings of the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv (German Federal Archives), and the Deutsche Kinemathek, these were considered central elements and taken as reference.

Two black-and-white duplicates, one of Soviet manufacture with working notes incised, now stored in the German Federal Archives, and another of later generation from the same stock, served as the source and basis. Together with the copy fragments, these two materials were digitized in 4K at L'Immagine Ritrovata in Bologna and combined into a largely



Film still from the Soviet material



Duplicate produced in West Germany, from the holdings of the Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv



For the restoration of CARMEN, various incomplete film materials were combined with each other. In order to determine what frames were missing at which points in which film elements, the film materials were scanned and compared with each other, frame by frame.



[Watch the same scene in the restored version here](#)

complete version. Any glaring anomalies were corrected there as part of a complex retouching plan.

The copy fragments served not only as a reference, but also as a template for the coloration of the black-and-white materials. These were taken as the basis for the color plan, which, however, remains largely speculative. The missing intertitles were digitally reconstructed – for this, the handwritten notes in the “Soviet” duplicate served as a valuable template. Due to its physical condition, the decaying footage of our first viewing was ultimately not included. No flames, in that sense, are shown on the screen.

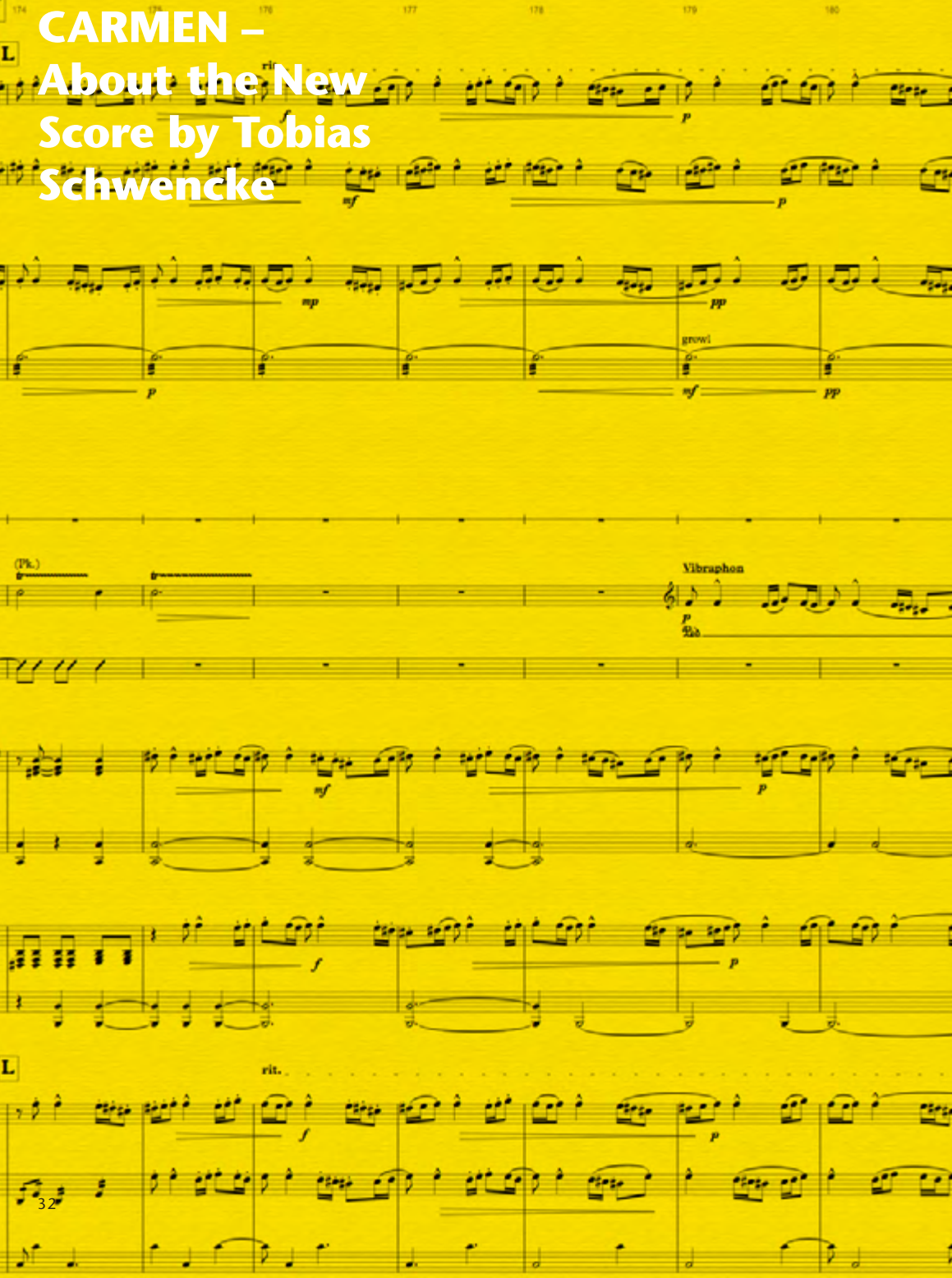
Hopefully, however, the fiery appeal of CARMEN has become visible again in the present digital restoration: an exquisite cast and the well-considered elegance of their acting; complex buildings that make you forget the studio dimension and that open up modern, neorealist vistas; above all, the first traces of the Lubitsch genius, the unconventionality of his narratives, his art in combining different genres, the subtly mocking criticism of the bourgeoisie, of the timid who let themselves indecisively be manipulated by others. The first flickering flames of the Lubitsch touch.

Luciano Palumbo
*Film restorer at the Friedrich Wilhelm
Murnau Foundation*

Music



CARMEN – About the New Score by Tobias Schwencke



Carmen is one of the best-loved operas in music history. It is omnipresent, its catchy arias are fixtures in the musical repertoire of seduction and passion – from the bouncy opening motif of the overture to the ecstatic-rhythmic “Tra la la” of the Chanson Bohème or Carmen’s famous habanera “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle.”

Tobias Schwencke’s new film score, written for a small ensemble (4 winds, 3 strings, guitar, harp, accordion, percussion) takes all of Bizet’s themes for representing the characters and weaves them together in a new, original score. Much as Lubitsch reinterpreted the operatic material and placed the unfortunate José at the center of the cinematic narrative, Tobias Schwencke also takes on the music: The familiar motifs accompany the main characters through the film, but they change, overlap and are further developed so that they can be adapted to the film’s dramaturgy at every second. Tobias Schwencke uses all his experience as a stage musician to choreograph the music in a new way. The result is an enjoyable potpourri – just like in the historical silent movie theater, which functioned like a large juke box and offered the audience a new selection of popular music at each screening, music that could otherwise only be heard at the opera or in concert halls.

About the composer:

The composer and pianist Tobias Schwencke regularly works for theaters and opera houses such as the Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin, the Berliner Ensemble, and the Staatsoper Unter den Linden. He has staged or served as the musical director at renowned institutions around the world such as the Theater an der Wien, the Teatro Real Madrid, the Uppsala Stadstheater, the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, and the Munich State Opera. He has worked with directors such as Herbert Fritsch, Nurkan Erpulat, Claus Peymann, Leander Haußmann, and Frank Castorf. Schwencke is also known for his new concertante film music, for example to accompany Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s *FAUST* at the Salzburg Festival in 2011.

Nina Goslar
Film editorial department ZDF/ARTE



Listen to an excerpt from
Tobias Schwencke’s new
composition

Historical Background



Typification, Yes – Typism, No

Friedemann Beyer, Curator of the UFA Film Nights, on Ernst Lubitsch's CARMEN

To what extent does the character of Carmen in Ernst Lubitsch's film differ from that in Bizet's opera of the same name?

Georges Bizet's *Carmen* is still the most frequently performed opera in classical musical theater. While Bizet creates a romanticizing image of his protagonist and emphasizes her love of freedom, Lubitsch draws a self-confident, rebellious young woman of the lower class who exerts a great attraction on men. Most importantly, Lubitsch does not deny his origins as a comedy director in his *CARMEN* adaptation. Pola Negri appears less as a femme fatale than as a parody of one, with hyperbolic external traits and an exaggeratedly spirited play.

Doesn't Lubitsch perpetuate clichés and prejudices with his CARMEN film?

No, he doesn't – if you look at him and his art in the context of his time. Quite the opposite, in fact: Ernst Lubitsch sympathizes with minorities in his films – not just in *CARMEN*. In the early phase of his films made in

Berlin, he worked strongly with typification. This is based on the one hand on his origins in the theater, where, especially on popular stages, typification is a centuries-old tradition, as in the characters of the *Commedia dell'arte*. Besides, typification is one of the widespread stylistic devices of silent film, in which the actors, as in pantomime, expressed themselves according to the nature of the genre exclusively through overemphasized gestures and facial expressions, at times bordering on the grotesque. These attributions may seem borderline alienating, and even ostracizing today. However, *Carmen's* affiliation with the Roma minority plays only a subordinate role in Lubitsch's work and is not used in a denunciatory or pejorative manner.

What role model do female characters like Carmen embody in Ernst Lubitsch's early films?

Lubitsch uses the historical *Carmen* figure of the 19th century as a cipher to show solidarity with the self-confident women of the early 20th century. Emancipatory-minded women who, like everywhere else in the Western world, broke with outdated social norms and took to the streets for their equal rights. Lubitsch's sympathies were with them, and he celebrated them in his films. A woman like *Carmen* is not an isolated case in

Lubitsch's early work: in many films of his Berlin years, non-conformist, rebellious women are at the center, for example, in addition to *CARMEN*, in *ICH MÖCHTE KEIN MANN SEIN* (1918 – I DON'T WANT TO BE A MAN), *MADAME DUBARRY* (1919), *DIE AUSTERNPRINZESSIN* (1919 – THE OYSTER PRINCESS), and *DIE BERGKATZE* (1921 – THE WILDCAT).

What makes Ernst's Lubitsch's CARMEN interesting for today's audience ? Why should the film still be screened today?

It is above all a valuable document of contemporary history, even if an examination of this early masterpiece of film history leads us directly into current cultural debates about the experience of foreignness and clichés. Starting from a crucial historical moment, the period of upheaval immediately after World War I, it opens up important perspectives for us: The film illustrates how and with what means early cinema staged foreign worlds from a Central European perspective; it documents the artistic transfer from theater to cinema through its actors and actresses, most of whom came from Berlin theaters; and finally it illuminates the social charisma of an early female screen idol like Pola Negri on the threshold of the emancipatory dawn of modernity. All of these topics are still highly relevant

today against the backdrop of the ongoing fundamental transformation of media and society.

Friedemann Beyer

After working as a television editor in Munich and Cologne, Friedemann Beyer served as Managing Executive Board member of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation in Wiesbaden from 2001-2007.

At the foundation, he supervised numerous restorations and DVD releases of works of German film heritage, including *DER LETZTE MANN* (THE LAST MAN), *MÜNCHHAUSEN*, and *NOSFERATU*. A film historian and author of various pertinent publications, Beyer has curated the UFA Film Nights since 2011.

Historical Paths

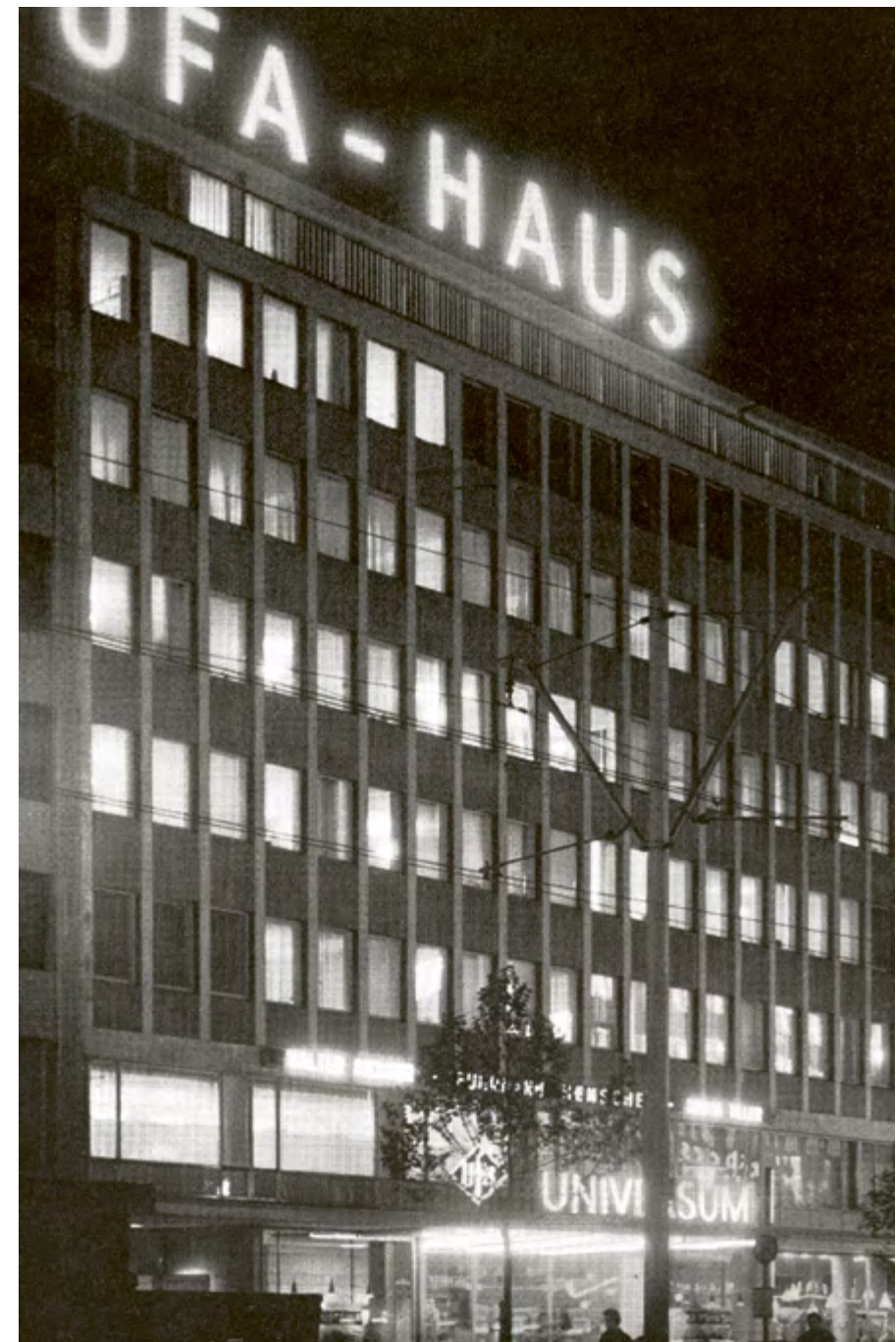
Ufa, Bertelsmann and the establishment of the Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation

It may surprise some cineastes to see an international company that is commercially successful with its media businesses in more than 50 countries, and a foundation under public law, which today manages most of Germany's film heritage, appear as partners in a project to preserve a significant silent film. For several years now, Bertelsmann has been working to preserve Germany's silent-film heritage, at various levels and in pan-European context: The UFA Film Nights, for example, a festival originally established in Berlin, went on to achieve great popularity in other European countries as well; and seven years ago Bertelsmann became the main sponsor of the digital restoration of the classic *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI*. The world premiere of this version of the Expressionist masterpiece at the Berlinale 2014 became a major media event. Since then, Bertelsmann has organized further screenings in Berlin, Brussels, Madrid and New York.

In this connection, it also provided the financial support for the

digital restoration of Fritz Lang's *DESTINY* (2016), Paul Czinner's *THE FIDDLER OF FLORENCE* (2018), and Ernst Lubitsch's *CARMEN*, which will now be presented for the first time in its largely reconstructed version at the UFA Film Nights 2021. Ultimately, however, the efforts of Europe's largest media house tie in to a historical connection that began more than 50 years ago.

Effective January 1, 1964, Bertelsmann acquired Universum-Film AG (Ufa), which had gone bankrupt after the reprivatization, and in so doing achieved its long-desired entry into the television production business. At that time, expansion was the order of the day in Gütersloh. Founded in 1835, the publishing house had taken its first step out of pure-play (printing and) publishing in 1950 with the establishment of the Bertelsmann Lesering, and had enjoyed rapid growth ever since. In the early 1960s, the first Lesering offshoots in other European countries were founded. Above and beyond this, Reinhard Mohn (1921–2009), the “post-war founder,” CEO and owner of Bertelsmann, was determined to expand into new lines of business, a process that had begun with the founding of the Ariola record label in 1958. And while the next step – the path to commercial television, which had moved within



THE UFA HOUSE IN DÜSSELDORF, 1964

reach at the end of the 1950s (“Ade-nauer-Fernsehen”) – was still a long way off, content production for public-service TV appeared to be a worthwhile business for the future.

With the purchase of Ufa, Bertelsmann had not only acquired the brand but also Ufa’s stake in Deutsche Wochenschau GmbH, Ufa Tonverlag including Vienna-based Bohème Verlag, Ufa Industrie- und Werbefilmproduktion, Ufa Fernsehproduktion, and exploitation rights to Ufa’s inventory of films. Initially, Mohn had little interest in cinema productions or even the legendary silent film heritage that is so inseparably linked to the name Ufa, because after the purchase of Ufa, the focus was clearly on the television business. Bertelsmann Fernsehfilmproduktionsgesellschaft and Playhouse Studio Reinhard Mohn, which had only been founded a few years earlier, were integrated into the newly acquired Ufa in 1964. However, the Bertelsmann credo, that media such as books, films, television and records should not compete, but should complement each other as a chain of creative content, inexorably led the company in the direction of film in the following years. In April 1965 the newly acquired Ufa cinema chain was expanded by the acquisition of Pallas Filmverleih GmbH and Merkur Filmtheater. With the 15 Merkur theaters, Ufa-Theater AG now had a

total of 44 movie theaters. Just three months later, on July 1, 1965, Bertelsmann acquired a 60-percent stake in the successful Constantin Film GmbH. The focus was on a common feature film production. These investments, coupled with the relatively good 1964 financials of Ufa-Theater AG, seem to have given the film industry, which was definitely ailing at the time, a glimmer of hope. “There can be no doubt,” wrote the trade magazine *Filmblätter* in March 1966, “that the secret high command of German film expansion is currently based in Gütersloh.”

But the company was looking forward, not back; and at first it remained unclear how one would go about exploiting Ufa’s legendary film inventory, which after all represented a major asset of the newly acquired company. As early as spring 1964, an outcry was heard in the (trade) press: A sale of the films to the US-American company Seven Arts, as was apparently planned, was unthinkable... and was then promptly prohibited by the German government, via the “Ufi liquidation committee.” A directory published in 1966 in the magazine *Filmecho* shows just how extensive the collection was: it comprised “film rights from around 1,000 silent films and 900 sound films, 1,200 cultural films and 106 post-war films, as well as some 200 unfiled material rights.”

After intensive discussions between the German government, Bertelsmann and Germany’s leading cinematographic organization SPIO, it was finally agreed at the beginning of 1966 to establish a non-profit foundation under civil law, which took over both Bertelsmann’s and Bavaria’s film holdings for a total of DEM 13.8 million, for which it received a loan from the UFI liquidation proceeds, that it was expected to repay in the following years. The Wiesbaden-based foundation was named after the renowned German silent film director Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. For Bertelsmann, this closed the chapter of Ufa’s silent film legacy.

Meanwhile, the potential of the large Ufa brand has been exploited further, particularly after the advent of private television in the 1980s. Today, UFA is a powerful program creator within the Bertelsmann Group, which has continuously consolidated its leadership of Germany’s film and television production market. And yet: To this day, its historical legacy forms an essential part of the brand’s charisma. Several years after the 100th anniversary of the “old” UFA, today’s UFA still successfully invokes an artistic tradition that once began with Fritz Lang, F. W. Murnau and many others.

In the case of CARMEN, another major German silent film has been permanently secured by digitization. This masterpiece is now finally made available to posterity in a version that comes as close as possible to its original (now lost) version. As a media company that places creativity at the center of its value creation and corporate culture, Bertelsmann is also committed to safe-guarding and preserving important creations of the past. Today’s diversity and the Group’s large, multi-digital media offering worldwide have historical roots. This is one of the reasons why Bertelsmann feels its commitment to Europe’s cultural heritage is so important.

Helen Müller
*Head of Cultural Affairs
and Corporate History, Bertelsmann*

The Publishers



Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the broadcaster RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the magazine publisher Gruner + Jahr, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato, the Bertelsmann Printing Group, the Bertelsmann Education Group and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has around 130,000 employees and generated revenues of €17.3 billion in the 2020 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world. Bertelsmann aspires to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. In 2021, Bertelsmann commemorates the 100th birthday of Reinhard Mohn, the Group's late post-war founder and longtime Chairman and CEO.

As a creative content company with a close connection to its 186-year history, Bertelsmann is committed to the cultural community at various levels as part of its "Culture@Bertelsmann" activities. For example, the Group devotes itself to preserving important cultural assets, with a focus on making cultural heritage accessible, for example through digi-

tization or exhibitions and concerts. For many years, Bertelsmann has organized the UFA Film Nights in Berlin and supported the screening of silent films at festivals around the world. The company also regularly acts as the main sponsor of the digital restoration of important silent films. The Group also owns the Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan, which houses a wealth of unique testaments to Italian opera history. Bertelsmann is indexing the archive holdings according to the latest standards and making its cultural treasures accessible to a broad public. Since 2020, the "Culture@Bertelsmann" activities have increasingly shifted to the digital realm.

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Foundation

In its capacity as archive and rights holder, the Murnau Foundation looks after a significant portion of Germany's film heritage. The foundation's most important capital is its unique, self-contained film inventory, which includes prints and materials as well as rights of the former production companies Ufa, Decla, Universum-Film, Bavaria, Terra, Tobis and Berlin-Film. This stock, of outstanding importance in terms of cultural and film history, consists of more than 6,000 silent and sound films (feature films, documentaries, short films and commercials) spanning the period from the early days of motion pictures to the early 1960s. It includes films by major directors such as Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch, Detlef Sierck, Helmut Käutner, and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, the man the foundation is named after. Among the best-known titles are DAS CABINET DES DR. CALIGARI (1920), METROPOLIS (1927), DER BLAUE ENGEL (THE BLUE ANGEL, 1929/30), DIE DREI VON DER TANKSTELLE (THE THREE FROM THE FILLING STATION, 1930), MÜNCHHAUSEN (1942/43) and GROSSE FREIHEIT NR. 7 (1943/44).

BERTELSMANN

F.W. Murnau
MURNAU STIFTUNG

arte



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Footnote

¹ Cf. Jörg Schöning, „Es wurde
um ein Butterbrot verkauft“. *Das
Erbe der Ufa: Entflechtung und
Neuausrichtung nach dem Zwei-
ten Weltkrieg* [It was sold for a
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