

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53rd Street, New York, N. Y.

Telephone: Circle 7-7470

Cable Address: Modernart

February 29, 1936

TO MOTION PICTURE EDITORS  
TO CITY EDITORS

Dear Sirs:

The PRESS VIEW of the third program, D. W. Griffith, given by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library will be held at the DALTON SCHOOL AUDITORIUM, 108 East 89th Street, New York City, TUESDAY, March 3 at 8:30 P.M.

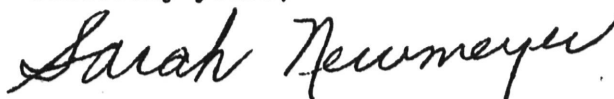
The program will be confined to the work of the great American director, D. W. Griffith, and will consist entirely of the motion picture Intolerance, considered by many his masterpiece. It was completed in 1916, two years after Griffith's Birth of a Nation.

Program notes giving information regarding the production of Intolerance and its place in the history of the cinema will be available, as well as several stills from the picture. Music will accompany the showing of the film.

You are invited to attend or to send a representative. If you are unable to come Tuesday night, you will be welcome to the second showing at the same place and time but on Wednesday night, March 4th. Please use this letter as an admission card.

For further information please call the undersigned at Circle 7-7470.

Sincerely yours,



Sarah Newmeyer  
Publicity Director

SN/bs

NOTE: FOR CRITICS OR SPECIAL WRITERS UNABLE TO ATTEND EITHER THE TUESDAY OR WEDNESDAY NIGHT SHOWINGS, THE MUSEUM WILL HOLD A SPECIAL PRESS SHOWING AT THREE O'CLOCK TUESDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 3, AT THE DALTON SCHOOL. IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND WILL YOU PLEASE CALL MISS NEWMAYER AT THE MUSEUM, CIRCLE 7-7470.

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# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 7-7470

FOR RELEASE Saturday morning or Sunday  
afternoon, February 29 or March 1, 1936

The Museum of Modern Art Film Library announces the New York showing of its third program of motion pictures on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 3 and 4, at eight-thirty p.m. Because the Museum building at 11 West 53 Street is not large enough to accommodate all who want to see the film programs, arrangements have been made to show them to members of the Museum in the auditorium of the Dalton School, 108 East 89 Street.

The third program will be confined to the work of the great American director, D. W. Griffith, and will consist entirely of his motion picture Intolerance, considered by many to be his master-piece. It was completed in 1916, two years after Griffith's Birth of a Nation. Griffith conceived Intolerance as a mighty sermon against injustice and hypocrisy. It weaves together on that theme four distinct stories in different periods of history: the slums of 1914, sixteenth-century France, Judea's Calvary, and ancient Babylon.

Intolerance was two years in the making, and during the last six months of its filming, Griffith worked eighteen hours a day on it. The sets were tremendous in size, and solidly built. The palace courtyard, where the Feast of Belshazzar was held, was a half-mile in length. To photograph this enormous set, filled with thousands of people, the camera was mounted on a movable sixty-foot tower with an elevator device which raised and lowered the camera as it photographed the scene. Another shot of a big scene in the Babylonian sequence was taken from a balloon, with the camera shooting downward on the huge set.

The cast of Intolerance glitters with names famous in motion picture history. Among the best known players are Mae Marsh, Lillian Gish, Miriam Cooper, Robert Harron, Monte Blue, Eric von Stroheim, Bessie Love, George Walsh, Eugene Pallette, Constance Talmadge, Seena Owen, Ruth St. Denis, Tully Marshall, and

George Fawcett. Minor parts are taken by Alma Rubens, Carmel Myers, Pauline Starke, Mildred Harris Chaplin, Eva Southern, Jewel Carmen, Colleen Moore, Carol Dempster, and Winifred Westover. Several who were Triangle stars at the time played extra roles in the Griffith picture: Douglas Fairbanks, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, and De Wolf Hopper. One of Griffith's assistant directors for the picture was W. S. Van Dyke.

Iris Barry, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, says in her program notes: "The film Intolerance is of extreme importance in the history of the cinema. . . . All the old and many new technical devices are employed in it - brief, enormous closeups not only of faces but of hands and of objects; the 'eye-opener' focus to introduce vast panoramas; the use of only part of the screen's area for certain shots; camera angles and tracking shots such as are commonly supposed to have been introduced by German producers years later; and rapid cross-cutting the like of which was not seen again until Potemkin. . . . In his direction of the immense crowd scenes, Griffith achieves the impossible, for - despite their profusion and breath-taking scale - the eye is not distracted; it is irresistibly drawn to the one significant detail."

The fourth program of the Film Series will be entitled "The German Influence", and will include F. W. Murnau's Sunrise. This program will be shown by the Museum for its members April 7 and 8. Immediately after the initial showing by the Museum, each program is started on an itinerary which includes museums, colleges and study groups throughout the country.

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By application to the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, 485 Madison Avenue, New York City, one or more of the following stills will be sent you for reproduction only:

1. Individual shot of Mae Marsh.
2. Individual shot of Constance Talmadge.
3. Scene showing Robert Harron.
4. Scene showing Margery Wilson and Eugene Pallette.
5. The Feast of Belshazzar.

**Babylonian Story—*The Mountain Girl*: Constance Talmadge; *The Rhapsode*: Elmer Clifton; *Belshazzar*: Alfred Paget; *Princess Beloved*: Seena Owen; *High Priest of Bel*: Tully Marshall; *Cyrus the Persian*: George Seigmann; *The Mighty Man of Valor*: Elmo Lincoln; *Judge*: George Fawcett; *Old Woman*: Kate Bruce; *Solo Dancer*: Ruth St. Denis; *Slave Girls, Dancers, etc.*: Alma Rubens, Carmel Myers, Pauline Starke, Mildred Harris Chaplin, Eva Southern, Jewel Carmen, Colleen Moore, Carol Dempster, Winifred Westover. *Triangle stars who played extra roles*: Douglas Fairbanks, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, De Wolf Hopper.**

***Woman Who Rocks the Cradle*: Lillian Gish.**

The film *Intolerance* is of extreme importance in the history of the cinema. It is the end and justification of that whole school of American cinematography based on the terse cutting and disjunctive assembly of lengths of film, which began with *The Great Train Robbery* and culminated in *The Birth of a Nation* and in this. All the old and many new technical devices are employed in it—brief, enormous close-ups not only of faces but of hands and of objects; the “eye-opener” focus to introduce vast panoramas; the use of only part of the screen’s area for certain shots; camera angles and tracking shots such as are commonly supposed to have been introduced by German producers years later; and rapid cross-cutting the like of which was not seen again until *Potemkin*.

The sociological implications of the modern episode seem, perhaps, more pointed now than they did in 1916. They undoubtedly account for the fact that Lenin arranged for *Intolerance* to be toured throughout the U.S.S.R., where it ran almost continuously for ten years. The film was not merely seen there; it was also used as study-material for the post-revolutionary school of cinematography, and exercised a profound influence on the work of men like Eisenstein and Pudovkin. It is true that Griffith is often disorganized and always instinctive in his methods, where the Russian directors are deliberate and organized: but it was nevertheless in large measure from his example that they derived their characteristic staccato shots, their measured and accelerating rhythms and their skill in joining pictorial images together with a view to the emotional overtones of each, so that two images in conjunction convey more than the sum of their visible content.

Though *Intolerance* has been revived time and again, especially in Europe, unlike *The Birth of a Nation* it was not a popular success. Audiences find it bewildering, exhausting. There is so much in it; there is too much of it; the pace increases so relentlessly; its abrupt hail of images—many of them only

five frames long—cruelly hammers the sensibility; its climax is near hysteria. No question but that the film is chaotic, difficult to take in, or that it has many evident faults. The desire to instruct and to reform obtrudes awkwardly at times. The lyricism of the subtitles accords oddly with the foot-notes appended to them. The Biblical sequence is weak, though useful dramatically to point up the modern sequence. The French episode seems to get lost, then reappears surprisingly. And, as Pudovkin says, "the abundance of matter forces the director to work the theme out quite generally . . . and consequently there is a strong discrepancy between the depth of the motif and the superficiality of its form."

Of the Babylonian and the modern episodes little adverse criticism is permissible and only admiration remains in face of the last two reels, when the climax of all four stories approaches and history itself seems to pour like a cataract across the screen. In his direction of the immense crowd scenes, Griffith achieves the impossible for—despite their profusion and breath-taking scale—the eye is not distracted, it is irresistibly drawn to the one significant detail. The handling of the actors in intimate scenes has never been equalled either for depth or for humanity, particularly in the modern sequence and most notably with Miriam Cooper, with Mae Marsh in the trial scene and with Robert Harron as he approaches the gallows. This searching realism, this pulsing life comes not only from Griffith's power to mould his players but, in equal measure, from his editorial skill.

The list of players in *Intolerance* given above has been furnished by Mr. Theodore Huff, an authority on the film to whom I am much indebted. The number of actors in it afterwards to become stars is not more remarkable than the number of actors in it afterwards to become directors—Erich von Stroheim, Elmer Clifton and Joseph Hennaberry. Griffith himself especially delights in recalling that in the crew of assistant directors was a young man, W. S. Van Dyke, whose work in *The Thin Man* (1934) will be fresh in the mind of even the youngest filmgoer today.

Iris Barry

The next program in this series will be

**The German Influence**

# **A Short Survey of the Film in America** **circulated by** **The Museum of Modern Art Film Library**

## **Program III: D. W. Griffith**

At the end of 1913 Griffith left the Biograph Company, for which he had directed hundreds of short pictures since 1908. He had already contributed a new intimacy, emotional depth and flexibility to the cinema. He was prepared now to take advantage of the increased length for which precedent had been set by foreign productions like *Queen Elizabeth* and *Quo Vadis*. The following year he was to make *The Birth of a Nation*, twelve reels long.

Attaining at times to power and expressiveness never since surpassed, this film met with overwhelming success. It earned for the cinema as a whole a status hitherto denied it, compelled the acceptance of the film as art. But it also aroused much opposition and censure, especially north of the Mason and Dixon line. (See Ramsay: *A Million and One Nights*. New York, 1926. pp. 641-644.)

Undeniably, the subject matter of *The Birth of a Nation* is of a controversial and, to many people, inflammatory nature. There can be little question, however, that in translating Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman* to the screen, Griffith (himself a Southerner) believed that he had honestly, impartially told the truth about the South after the Civil War. More than that, though at first he had been ashamed of his connection with the movies, by this date he realized how superb a means of expression he had at his command. He himself had played a conspicuous part in their development, and he very naturally insisted on their right to share with literature the privilege of free speech. The protests against *The Birth of a Nation*, the moves to censor and muzzle the film which it provoked, threw him into a fighting mood. By his mastery over the medium he had unwittingly proved the film to be the most powerful of all instruments for propaganda. He determined now to use it as such.

Before *The Birth of a Nation* was released, Griffith had almost completed a new film, *The Mother and the Law*. It was a modern story with a plot drawn in part from the Report of a Federal Industrial Commission which bleakly revealed the wrongs inflicted by a pious factory-owner on his employees, and in part

from the famous Stielow murder case. Work had been interrupted while Griffith engaged in the battles raging around *The Birth of a Nation*. When he returned to the studio, *The Mother and the Law* seemed to him an insufficiently violent attack on injustice and cruelty. He determined to weave in with his modern story three parallel stories of other times, the whole to serve as an epic sermon, a mighty purge for hypocrisy. The slums of today, sixteenth century France, ancient Babylon and Calvary itself should all speak of the evil that the self-righteous have perpetrated through the ages. He flung up sets, hired players by the hundred, shot miles of film. Money was soon no longer forthcoming: he poured into the production his own rich share of the profits from *The Birth of a Nation*. His Babylon astonished the Californian skies with walls on which armies could march, halls in which men looked like flies. The film was two years in the making. And, against all probabilities, out of all this welter, passion, extravagance, footage, there issued finally a work of art, a film of unmistakable greatness and originality, called *Intolerance*.

## **Intolerance**

**1916**

Produced by the Wark Producing Corp. Directed by D. W. Griffith. Acquired through the courtesy of D. W. Griffith. The cast of the four episodes is as follows:

**Modern Story**—*The Girl*: Mae Marsh; *Her Father*: Fred Turner; *The Boy*: Robert Harron; *Jenkins*: Sam de Grasse; *Mary T. Jenkins*: Vera Lewis; *Uplifter*: Mary Alden; *The Friendless One*: Miriam Cooper; *Musketeer of the Slums*: Walter Long; *The Policeman*: Tom Wilson; *The Governor*: Ralph Lewis; *The Judge*: Lloyd Ingram; *Father Farley*: Rev. A. W. McClure; *Friendly Neighbor*: Dore Davidson; *Striker*: Monte Blue; *Debutante*: Marguerite Marsh.

**Judean Story**—*The Nazarene*: Howard Gaye; *Mary the Mother*: Lillian Langdon; *Mary Magdalene*: Olga Grey; *Second Pharisee*: Eric von Stroheim; *Bride of Cana*: Bessie Love; *Bridegroom*: George Walsh.

**French Story**—*Brown Eyes*: Margery Wilson; *Prosper Latour*: Eugene Palette; *Her Father*: Spottiswoode Aitken; *Her Mother*: Ruth Handforth; *The Mercenary*: A. D. Sears; *Charles IX*: Frank Bennett; *Duc D'Anjou*: Maxfield Stanley; *Catherine de Medici*: Josephine Crowell; *Marguerite de Valois*: Constance Talmadge; *Henry of Navarre*: W. E. Lawrence; *Admiral Coligny*: Joseph Hennaberry.