

A season of worthwhile films

Frank Gaglioti

21 May 1998

Any opportunity to view worthwhile films outside the norm must be welcomed. The National Cinematheque in Australia caters to those desiring to broaden their cinematic horizons. Its selection of films is wide ranging, with an excellent cross section from various periods and parts of the world.

'Traps for the Mind and Eye' is the title of a season of films by director Fritz Lang. Lang worked in Germany in the 1920s and early 30s and later in Hollywood. He was forced to move to the United States after one of his films incurred the wrath of the Nazi regime. One critic noted that Lang had an 'uncanny genius for invoking terror out of the simplest things.'

There will also be a rare opportunity to view three films by Max Ophuls-- *Caught* (1948), *Reckless Moment* (1949) and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948). Ophuls was also forced to leave Germany after Hitler came to power. He then worked in France until the German invasion in 1940, when he sought refuge in the United States. *Letter from an Unknown Woman* is his best film from his period in the US. Set in Vienna, it deals with the sad and unfulfilled love of a woman (played by Joan Fontaine) for a concert pianist who is indifferent to her.

Several silent films are featured. These include *Night of Vengeance* (1915) by the great Danish director Benjamin Christensen and *The Last Laugh* (1924) by F. W. Murnau. *The Last Laugh* concerns the plight of an aging hotel porter who is demoted to a lavatory attendant at a big hotel. Emil Jannings poignantly plays the doorman, who is humiliated by the loss of his porter's uniform. Also shown will be the animated feature *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926), made by Lotte Reiniger in Potsdam.

More recent films include *A Tale of Love* (1995) by the Vietnamese director Trinh T. Minh-Ha, who portrays the experiences of an immigrant viewed through the eyes of Kieu, a Vietnamese woman writer

living in the United States. *Veronika Voss* (1982), the last film by the noted German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, presents an account of a film star whose career goes into decline due to her drug addiction.

National Cinematheque showings are held in all Australian state capitals. Melbourne screenings are every Wednesday night at the State Film Centre; Brisbane screenings, Monday nights at the Metway Theatre, State Library of Queensland; and Hobart screenings, Monday nights at the AFI State Cinema. In Sydney they are at the Chauvel Cinema on Monday nights and Saturday afternoons; in Adelaide at the Palace Eastend cinema on Sunday afternoons; and in Perth, every Saturday afternoon at the Cinema Paradiso in Northbridge. Sydney programs and sessions can be accessed at <http://www.eg.com.au/chauvel/docs/cteq98.htm>. For detailed information on session times in other cities contact the relevant cinemas.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact