

**Directed by** Ernst Lubitsch  
**Written by** Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder, Walter Reisch, Melchior Lengyel (story)  
**Produced by** Ernst Lubitsch and Sidney Franklin  
**Cinematography by** William H. Daniels  
**Edited by** Gene Ruggiero  
**Art Direction by** Cedric Gibbons  
**Costume Design by** Adrian

**Greta Garbo...**Ninotchka  
**Melvyn Douglas...**Leon  
**Ina Claire...**Swana  
**Bela Lugosi...**Razinin  
**Sig Ruman...**Iranoff  
**Felix Bressart...**Buljanoff  
**Alexander Granach...**Kopalski  
**Gregory Gaye...**Rakonin

#### *National Film Registry 1990*

**ERNST LUBITSCH** (January 28, 1892, Berlin, Germany – November 30, 1947, Hollywood, California) won an honorary Academy Award in 1947. He directed 47 films, some of which were 1948 *That Lady in Ermine*, 1946 *Cluny Brown*, 1943 *Heaven Can Wait*, 1942 *To Be or Not to Be*, 1941 *That Uncertain Feeling*, 1940 *The Shop Around the Corner*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1938 *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, 1937 *Angel*, 1935 *La veuve joyeuse*, 1934 *The Merry Widow*, 1933 *Design for Living*, 1932 *Trouble in Paradise*, 1932 *One Hour with You*, 1932 *Broken Lullaby*, 1931 *The Smiling Lieutenant*, 1929 *The Love Parade*, 1928 *The Patriot*, 1925 *Lady Windermere's Fan*, 1924 *Three Women*, 1920 *Anna Boleyn*, 1919 *Rausch*, 1919 *Madame DuBarry*, 1918 *Carmen*, 1916 *Schuhpalast Pinkus*, 1915 *Der Krafmeier*, 1915 *Der letzte Anzug*, and 1914 *Fräulein Seifenschaum*. Between 1912 and 1918, he acted in 38 films. He was also producer for many of his most famous films, among them 1943 *Heaven Can Wait*, 1942 *To Be or Not to Be*, 1941 *That Uncertain Feeling*, 1940 *The Shop Around the Corner*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1938 *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, and 1932 *Trouble in Paradise*.



**CHARLES BRACKETT** (November 26, 1892, Saratoga Springs, New York – March 9, 1969, Los Angeles, California) won four Academy Awards: 1946 – Best Screenplay (*The Lost Weekend*) – shared w. Billy Wilder; 1951 – Best Screenplay (*Sunset Blvd.*) – w. Billy Wilder, D.M. Marshman Jr.; 1954 – Best Screenplay (*Titanic*) – w. Walter Reisch, Richard L. Breen; and 1958 – Honorary Award – (“for outstanding service to the Academy”). He has 46 screenwriting titles, some of which are 1959 *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, 1956 “Robert Montgomery Presents”, 1955 *The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing*, 1954-1955 “Lux Video Theatre”, 1953 *Titanic*, 1953 *Niagara*, 1951 *The Mating Season*, 1950 *Sunset Blvd.*, 1948 *A Foreign Affair*, 1947 *The Bishop's Wife*, 1946 *To Each His Own*, 1945 *The Lost Weekend*, 1941 *Hold Back the Dawn*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1938 *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, and 1933 *Little Women*. He was also producer for 27 films, the last of which was 1962 *State Fair*. Some of the others are 1959 *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, 1958 *Ten North Frederick*, 1958 *The Gift of Love*, 1957 *The Wayward Bus*, 1956 *The King and I*, 1955 *The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing*, 1955 *The Virgin Queen*, 1953 *Titanic*, 1953 *Niagara*, 1951 *The Mating Season*, 1950 *Sunset Blvd.*, 1948 *A Foreign Affair*, 1946 *To Each His Own*, 1945 *The Lost Weekend*, and 1943 *Five Graves to Cairo*.

**BILLY WILDER** (June 22, 1906, Sucha, Galicia, Austria-Hungary [now Sucha Beskidzka, Malopolskie, Poland] – March 27, 2002,, West Los Angeles, California) was recipient of the 1988 Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award and six Academy Awards: 1946 – Best Screenplay (*The Lost Weekend*) – shared w. Charles Brackett; Best Director (*The Lost Weekend*); 1951 – Best Screenplay (*Sunset Blvd.*) – w. Charles Brackett, D.M. Marshman Jr.; 1961 – Best Screenplay (*The Apartment*) – w. I.A.L. Diamond; Best Director (*The Apartment*); and Best Picture (*The Apartment*). He has 76 writing credits, including 1981 *Buddy Buddy*, 1978 *Fedora*, 1974 *The Front Page*, 1972 *Avanti!*, 1970 *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, 1966 *The Fortune Cookie*, 1960 *Ocean's Eleven*, 1960 *The Apartment*, 1960 “Ninotchka”, 1959 *Some Like It Hot*, 1957 *Witness for the Prosecution*, 1957 *Love in the Afternoon*, 1957 *The Spirit of St. Louis*, 1955 *The Seven Year Itch*, 1954 *Sabrina*, 1953 *Stalag 17*, 1951 *Ace in the Hole*, 1950 *Sunset Blvd.*, 1948 *A Song Is Born*, 1948 *A Foreign Affair*, 1948 *The Emperor Waltz*, 1947 *The Bishop's Wife*, 1945 *The Lost Weekend*, 1944 *Double Indemnity*, 1942 *The Major and the Minor*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1938 *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, 1933 *No Children Wanted*, 1931 *Princesse, à vos ordres!*, 1930 *Menschen am Sonntag*, and 1929 *Hell of a Reporter*. He directed 27 films: 1981 *Buddy Buddy*, 1978 *Fedora*, 1974 *The Front Page*, 1972 *Avanti!*, 1970 *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, 1966 *The Fortune Cookie*, 1964 *Kiss Me, Stupid*, 1963 *Irma la Douce*, 1961 *One, Two, Three*, 1960 *The Apartment*, 1959 *Some Like It Hot*, 1957 *Witness for the Prosecution*, 1957 *Love in the Afternoon*, 1957 *The Spirit of St. Louis*, 1955 *The Seven Year Itch*, 1954 *Sabrina*, 1953 *Stalag 17*, 1951 *Ace in the Hole*, 1950 *Sunset Blvd.*, 1948 *A Foreign Affair*, 1948 *The Emperor Waltz*, 1945 *The Lost Weekend*, 1945 *Death Mills*, 1944 *Double Indemnity*, 1943 *Five Graves to Cairo*, 1942 *The Major and the Minor*, and 1934 *Mauvaise graine*. He was also producer for 14 of his films, among them 1978 *Fedora*, 1972 *Avanti!*, 1966 *The Fortune Cookie*, 1963 *Irma la Douce*, 1960 *The Apartment*, 1959 *Some Like It Hot*, 1955 *The Seven Year Itch*, 1954 *Sabrina*, 1953 *Stalag 17*, and 1951 *Ace in the Hole*.

**WALTER REISCH** (May 23, 1903, Vienna, Austria-Hungary, now Austria – March 28, 1983,, Los Angeles, California) won the Best Screenplay Academy Award in 1954 for *Titanic* (shared with Charles Brackett and Richard L. Breen). Some of his films are 1959 *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, 1955 *The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing*, 1953 *Titanic*, 1953 *Niagara*, 1951 *The Mating Season*, 1947 *Song of Scheherazade*, 1944 *Gaslight*, 1940 *Comrade X*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1935 *Escapade*, 1934 *End of an Affair*, 1934 *Unfinished Symphony*, 1934 *The Countess of Monte Cristo*, 1930 *The Song Is Ended*, 1930 *Never Trust a Woman*, 1927 *Die indiskrete Frau*, 1925 *The Curse*, and 1925 *Oberst Redl*.

**WILLIAM H. DANIELS** (December 1, 1901, Cleveland, Ohio – June 14, 1970, Los Angeles, California) won the 1948 Best



Cinematography Oscar for *The Naked City*. He shot 164 films, some of which were 1970 *Move*, 1969 *Marlowe*, 1969 *The Maltese Bippy*, 1967 *Valley of the Dolls*, 1967 *In Like Flint*, 1965 *Von Ryan's Express*, 1964 *Robin and the 7 Hoods*, 1963 *The Prize*, 1962 *How the West Was Won*, 1960 *All the Fine Young Cannibals*, 1960 *Ocean's Eleven*, 1960 *Can-Can*, 1958 *Some Came Running*, 1958 *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, 1957 *Istanbul*, 1956 *The Benny Goodman Story*, 1955 *The Shrike*, 1955 *Strategic Air Command*, 1954 *The Glenn Miller Story*, 1950 *Harvey*, 1950 *Winchester '73*, 1950 *Three Came Home*, 1948 *The Naked City*, 1947 *Brute Force*, 1944 *The Canterville Ghost*, 1944 *The Heavenly Body*, 1942 *Keeper of the Flame*, 1942 *For Me and My Gal*, 1940 *The Shop Around the Corner*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1938 *Marie Antoinette*, 1936 *Rose-Marie*, 1935 *Anna Karenina*, 1933 *Queen Christina*, 1932 *Grand Hotel*, 1931 *Mata Hari*, 1931 *Susan Lenox <Her Fall and Rise>*, 1931 *Anna Christie*, 1930 *Anna Christie*, 1929 *Wild Orchids*, 1928 *A Woman of Affairs*, 1928 *The Actress*, 1928 *Bringing Up Father*, 1928 *The Latest from Paris*, 1927 *Tillie the Toiler*, 1926 *Flesh and the Devil*, 1926 *The Temptress*, 1926 *Torrent*, 1926 *Dance Madness*, 1925 *The Merry Widow*, 1924 *Greed*, and 1922 *Foolish Wives*.

**CEDRIC GIBBONS** (March 23, 1893, Dublin, Ireland – July 26, 1960, Hollywood, California) won 11 Art Direction Oscars. He was art director for more than a thousand films (!), some of which were 1956 *Lust for Life*, 1956 *High Society*, 1956 *The Fastest Gun Alive*, 1956 *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, 1956 *The Catered Affair*, 1956 *Forbidden Planet*, 1955 *I'll Cry Tomorrow*, 1955 *Kismet*, 1955 *Blackboard Jungle*, 1955 *Bad Day at Black Rock*, 1954 *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, 1954 *Brigadoon*, 1954 *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, 1954 *Valley of the Kings*, 1954 *The Student Prince*, 1954 *Men of the Fighting Lady*, 1952 *The Bad and the Beautiful*, 1952 *Million Dollar Mermaid*, 1952 *The Prisoner of Zenda*, 1952 *The Merry Widow*, 1952 *Singin' in the Rain*, 1951 *Quo Vadis*, 1951 *An American in Paris*, 1951 *Show Boat*, 1951 *The Red Badge of Courage*, 1950 *King Solomon's Mines*, 1950 *Father of the Bride*, 1950 *The Asphalt Jungle*, 1950 *Annie Get Your Gun*, 1949 *On the Town*, 1949 *Intruder in the Dust*, 1949 *Madame Bovary*, 1947 *Green Dolphin Street*, 1947 *Lady in the Lake*, 1946 *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 1945 *Anchors Aweigh*, 1945 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1944 *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, 1944 *Bathing Beauty*, 1944 *Gaslight*, 1943 *Lassie Come Home*, 1942 *Keeper of the Flame*, 1942 *For Me and My Gal*, 1942 *Tarzan's New York Adventure*, 1942 *Tortilla Flat*, 1941 *Tarzan's Secret Treasure*, 1941 *Billy the Kid*, 1940 *Waterloo Bridge*, 1940 *The Shop Around the Corner*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1939 *The Wizard of Oz*, 1936 *Camille*, 1936 *Three Godfathers*, 1935 *Mutiny on the Bounty*, 1935 *Anna Karenina*, 1933 *Gabriel Over the White House*, 1932 *Red Dust*, 1932 *Red-Headed Woman*, 1932 *Grand Hotel*, 1932 *Tarzan the Ape Man*, 1931 *Mata Hari*, 1931 *Susan Lenox <Her Fall and Rise>*, 1931 *Sidewalks of New York*, 1931 *Anna Christie*, 1930 *Billy the*

*Kid*, 1930 *Way Out West*, 1930 *Anna Christie*, 1929 *Hallelujah!*, 1929 *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, 1929 *The Broadway Melody*, 1928 *While the City Sleeps*, 1927 *Man, Woman and Sin*, 1927 *Annie Laurie*, 1925 *Lights of Old Broadway*, 1924 *Greed*, 1921 *Made in Heaven*, 1920 *Earthbound*, and 1919 *The Unwritten Code*.

**ADRIAN** (March 3, 1903, Naugatuck, Connecticut – September 13, 1959, Hollywood, California) designed costumes for 253 films, some of which were 1952 *Lovely to Look At*, 1948 *Smart Woman*, 1947 *The Bishop's Wife*, 1946 *Crepe Is the Star*, 1944 *Mrs. Parkington*, 1942 *Woman of the Year*, 1941 *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1940 *The Philadelphia Story*, 1940 *Waterloo Bridge*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1939 *The Women*, 1939 *The Wizard of Oz*, 1936 *Camille*, 1936 *Romeo and Juliet*, 1936 *The Great Ziegfeld*, 1935 *Anna Karenina*, 1934 *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, 1934 *Nana*, 1933 *Queen Christina*, 1933 *Gabriel Over the White House*, 1932 *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, 1932 *Red Dust*, 1932 *Red-Headed Woman*, 1932 *Grand Hotel*, 1932 *Arsène Lupin*, 1931 *Mata Hari*, 1931 *Susan Lenox <Her Fall and Rise>*, 1931 *The Squaw Man*, 1931 *Anna Christie*, 1930 *Let Us Be Gay*, 1930 *In Gay Madrid*, 1930 *Anna Christie*, 1927 *The Angel of Broadway*, 1926 *The Volga Boatman*, and 1924 *The Hooded Falcon*.

**GRETA GARBO...Ninotchka** (September 18, 1905, Stockholm, Stockholms län, Sweden – April 15, 1990, New York City, New York) won an honorary Academy Award in 1955. She appeared in only 32 films: 1941 *Two-Faced Woman*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1937 *Conquest*, 1936 *Camille*, 1935 *Anna Karenina*, 1934 *The Painted Veil*, 1933 *Queen Christina*, 1932 *As You Desire Me*, 1932 *Grand Hotel*, 1931 *Mata Hari*, 1931 *Susan Lenox <Her Fall and Rise>*, 1931 *Inspiration*, 1931 *Anna Christie*, 1930 *Romance*, 1930 *Anna Christie*, 1929 *The Kiss*, 1929 *The Single Standard*, 1929 *Wild Orchids*, 1928 *A Woman of Affairs*, 1928 *The Mysterious Lady*, 1928 *The Divine Woman*, 1927/1 *Love*, 1926 *Flesh and the Devil*, 1926 *The Temptress*, 1926 *Torrent*, 1925 *The Joyless Street*, 1924 *Gösta Berlings saga*, 1922 *Luffar-Petter*, 1922 *Kärlekens ögon*, 1921 *En lyckoriddare*, 1921 *Konsum Stockholm Promo*, and 1920 *How Not to Dress*.

**MELVYN DOUGLAS...Leon** (April 5, 1901, Macon, Georgia – August 4, 1981, New York City, New York) won two Best Supporting Actor Oscars: 1964 for *Hud* and 1980 for *Being There*. Some of his 111 film and TV credits are 1981 *Ghost Story*, 1980 *Tell Me a Riddle*, 1979 *Being There*, 1977 “Portrait of Grandpa Doc”, 1977 *Twilight's Last Gleaming*, 1972 *The Candidate*, 1970 *I Never Sang for My Father*, 1967 “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”, 1967 *Hotel*, 1966 “The Fugitive”, 1963 *Hud*, 1962 *Billy Budd*, 1957-1959 “Playhouse 90”, 1957-1958 “The United States Steel Hour”, 1955 “The Ford Television Theatre”, 1952 “Studio One in Hollywood”, 1950 “Lux Video Theatre”, 1949 “The Philco-Goodyear Television Playhouse”, 1948 *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1938 *The Toy Wife*,

1938 *Arsène Lupin Returns*, 1937 *Captains Courageous*, 1932 *As You Desire Me*, and 1931 *Tonight or Never*.

**BELA LUGOSI...Razinin** (October 20, 1882, Lugos, Austria-Hungary [now Lugoj, Romania] – August 16, 1956, Los Angeles, California) is best known for his monster films and for his appearances in three films directed by Edward Wood, Jr., generally recognized as Hollywood's worst director: 1958 *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, 1955 *Bride of the Monster*, and 1953 *Glen or Glenda*. Some of Lugosi's other films are 1952 *Bela Lugosi Meets a Brooklyn Gorilla*, 1948 *Bud Abbott and Lou Costello Meet Frankenstein*, 1945 *The Body Snatcher*, 1945 *Zombies on Broadway*, 1944 *Return of the Ape Man*, 1944 *The Return of the Vampire*, 1943 *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, 1942 *The Corpse Vanishes*, 1942 *The Ghost of Frankenstein*, 1941 *The Wolf Man*, 1941 *The Black Cat*, 1940 *The Devil Bat*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1939 *Son of Frankenstein*, 1935 *Murder by Television*, 1935 *The Raven*, 1935 *Mark of the Vampire*, 1934 *The Black Cat*, 1932 *Island of Lost Souls*, 1932 *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, 1931 *Dracula*, 1929 *The Thirteenth Chair*, 1920 *Caravan of Death*, 1920 *Last of the Mohicans*, 1920 *Auf den Trümmern des Paradieses*, 1920 *Das ganze Sein ist flammend Leid*, 1918 *Lili*, 1918 *Lulu*, and 1917 *The Wedding Song*.



**SIG RUMAN...Iranoff** (October 11, 1884, Hamburg, Germany – February 14, 1967, Julian, California) has 125 acting credits, some of which are 1966 *Way...Way Out*, 1966 *The Fortune Cookie*, 1966 *The Last of the Secret Agents?*, 1965 “The Man from U.N.C.L.E.”, 1965 “The Addams Family”, 1965 “Petticoat Junction”, 1962 “The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis”, 1958-1962 “Maverick”, 1957 *The Wings of Eagles*, 1954 *White Christmas*, 1954 *The Glenn Miller Story*, 1953 *Houdini*, 1953 *Stalag 17*, 1948 *Give My Regards to Broadway*, 1946 *A Night in Casablanca*, 1944 *House of Frankenstein*, 1943 *The Song of Bernadette*, 1942 *Enemy Agents Meet Ellery Queen*, 1942 *Remember Pearl Harbor*, 1942 *To Be or Not to Be*, 1941 *This Woman Is Mine*, 1940 *Comrade X*, 1940 *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1939 *Only Angels Have Wings*, 1938 *Girls on Probation*,

1937 *Heidi*, 1937 *Think Fast, Mr. Moto*, 1936 *The Bold Caballero*, 1935 *A Night at the Opera*, and 1928 *Lucky Boy*.

**FELIX BRESSART...Buljanoff** (March 2, 1892, Eydtkuhnen, East Prussia, Germany [now Chernyshevskoe, Russia] – March 17, 1949, Los Angeles, California) was in 67 films, among them 1949 *Take One False Step*, 1948 *Portrait of Jennie*, 1948 *A Song Is Born*, 1946 *I've Always Loved You*, 1944 *The Seventh Cross*, 1944 *Song of Russia*, 1942 *Iceland*, 1942 *Crossroads*, 1942 *To Be or Not to Be*, 1942 *Mr. and Mrs. North*, 1941 *Ziegfeld Girl*, 1940 *Comrade X*, 1940 *The Shop Around the Corner*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1930 *The Son of the White Mountain*, and 1930 *Es gibt eine Frau, die dich niemals vergißt*.

**ALEXANDER GRANACH...Kopalski** (April 18, 1893, Werbowitz (Wierzbowce), Horodenka, Galicia, Austria-Hungary [now

Verbovcy, Ivano-Frankiv'sk oblast, Ukraine] – March 14, 1945, New York City, New York) was in 55 films, some of which are 1944 *My Buddy*, 1944 *The Seventh Cross*, 1944 *The Hitler Gang*, 1943 *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, 1943 *Hangmen Also Die!*, 1942 *Joan of Ozark*, 1942 *Joan of Paris*, 1939 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1936 *Gypsies*, 1931 *Danton*, 1929 *Der Adjutant des Zaren*, 1929 *The Last Fort*, 1927 *Svengali*, 1923 *Crown of Thorns*, 1922 *Lucrezia Borgia*, 1922 *Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror*, 1921 *Camera obscura*, and 1920 *Die Liebe vom Zigeuner stammt*.

**GREGORY GAYE...Rakonin** (October 10, 1900, St. Petersburg, Russia – August 23, 1993, Studio City, California) was in 149 films and TV series, some of which were 1979 *Meteor*, 1978 “The President's Mistress”, 1966-1970 “The F.B.I.”, 1969 *Topaz*, 1955-1969 “Hallmark Hall of Fame”, 1968 “Mission: Impossible”, 1966 *Batman*, 1963 *The Prize*, 1959-1962 “77 Sunset Strip”, 1962 *The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, 1959 “Playhouse 90”, 1958 *Auntie Mame*, 1957 *Silk Stockings*, 1955 “Lassie”, 1955 *Creature with the Atom Brain*, 1955 “Captain Midnight”, 1953 *Flame of Calcutta*, 1950 *Counterspy Meets Scotland Yard*, 1950 *Flying Disc Man from Mars*, 1947 *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer*, 1945 *A Song to Remember*, 1944 *Song of Russia*, 1942 *Casablanca*, 1942 *My Gal Sal*, 1939 *Ninotchka*, 1939 *The Three Musketeers*, 1938/II *Test Pilot*, 1937 *Tovarich*, 1936 *Charlie Chan at the Opera*, 1936 *Dodsworth*, 1934 *British Agent*, 1929 *The Cossack's Bride*, and 1928 *Tempest*.



**Ernst Lubitsch, from *World Film Directors, Vol. I*. Ed John Wakeman. The H.W. Wilson Co., NY, 1987**

German and American director, scenarist, producer, and actor, born in Berlin. He was the son of Simon Lubitsch, a Jewish tailor who owned a profitable men's clothing store in the city. Ernst Libitsch was educated at the Berlin Sophien-Gymnasium. He acted in school plays and at sixteen announced that he wanted a career in the theatre. He was a small, clumsy, and homely boy and his father assured him he would be better

off working in the family business. For a time Lubitsch had to accept this judgment, though he was so inept in the store that his father relegated him to the back office as a bookkeeper. Then he met and became the friend of the comic actor Victor Arnold, who tutored him and helped him to find evening work as an actor and low comedian in Berlin music-halls and cabarets. In 1911, after a year of this hard training, Arnold introduced him to Max Reinhardt, who hired him as a member of his famous company at the Deutsches Theater—a company that included Emil Jannings, Paul Wegener, Rudolph Schildkraut, Albert Basserman, and Conrad Veidt, among other great names.

Lubitsch was nineteen when he abandoned bookkeeping and became a full-time actor. During the next year or so he appeared in a variety of minor classical and other roles, and in one major one, as the hunchback clown in *Sumurun*, and he traveled

with the Deutsches Theater to Vienna, Paris, and London. Beginning in 1912, he began to eke out his small salary as a property man and general dogsbody [a person who is given boring, menial tasks to do] at the Bioscope film studios in Berlin. The following year he went to work as a comic actor for Paul Davidson, one of Germany's first cinema entrepreneurs. Having built over fifty movie theatres, Davidson decided that it would be more profitable to make his own films than to rent those of others, and established the Union-Film production company. Lubitsch's first screen appearance was in the title role in *Meyer auf der Alm* (*Meyer in the Alps*, 1913). Thereafter he appeared in a succession of short Union-Film comedies, often as the archetypal Jewish *dummkopf* who makes good in the end, thanks to his indestructible optimism, good luck, and a winning way with the ladies.

These comedies were very popular and successful, and when the studio ran out of ideas, Lubitsch came up with some of his own, offering his services as director into the bargain. According to Herman G. Weinberg, author of the wonderfully detailed biography *The Lubitsch Touch*, Lubitsch's first film as director-author-star was *Fräulein Seifenschaum* (*Miss Soapsuds*, 1914), a slapstick one-reeler about a lady barber. Others maintain that his directorial debut was *Blinde Kuh* (*Blindmans Buff*), made the following year. By 1915, at any rate, Lubitsch was directing most of the comedies in which he starred, and sometimes writing them as well. In the evenings, nevertheless, he would appear in some topical sketch at the Apollo Theater and then go to eat at a show-business cafe called Mutter Maentz's. There he would often stay until dawn, swapping anecdotes and wisecracks with his circle of Berlin wits, and puffing on his endless cigars.

Lubitsch's first big success as a director was *Schuhpalast Pinkus* (*Shoe Salon Pinkus*, 1916). It was written partly by Hans Kräly, soon to become the directors's regular scenarist, and starred Lubitsch not as a clownish Meyer or Moritz but as Solomon Pinkus, a bumptious young man-about-town. The following year Paul Davidson and his temperamental new star Pola Negri persuaded a reluctant Lubitsch to direct his first serious drama (and first feature) *Die Augen der Mumie Ma* (*The Eyes of the Mummy Ma*, 1918), starring Negri as a temple dancer in ancient Egypt and Emil Jannings as her fanatical pursuer. World War I ended soon after its release and Berlin became a madhouse of inflation, blackmarketeering, hunger riots, drug peddling, and every kind of prostitution and pornography. But the arts flourished and so did the escapist cinema, greatly aided by the devaluation of the Reichsmark (which meant production costs could quickly be recovered if a film was sold abroad).

In this atmosphere Lubitsch made his second film with “that temperamental Polish witch” Pola Negri. This was *Carmen*, adapted by Kräly and another writer and told in flashback, with some hand-tinted scenes. Released at the end of 1918, it was voted the best German picture of the year and some years later was a success also in the United States (as *Gypsy Blood*). However, Jay Leyda, who saw it in 1967, found it devoid of Lubitsch's characteristic wit and “film logic.” After directing two or three comedy shorts (and starring in one of them, *Meyer aus Berlin*), Lubitsch then embarked on another feature, *Die Austernprinzessin* (*The Oyster Princess*, 1919). It had Ossi Oswalda as the spoiled daughter of an American “oyster king” who sets out to buy a Prussian aristocrat for a husband, and satirizes with equal good humor Prussian snobbery and American materialism. Lubitsch thought it his “first comedy that showed something of a definite

style.” Another hit, it was followed by a drama called *Rausch* (*Intoxication*), based on Strindberg’s *There are Crimes and Crimes*.

Paul Davidson, the entrepreneur behind all this, then decided that he should make “the greatest film of all time.” He raised funds from UFA, the government-sponsored production company in which his Union-Film was already an important element and put Lubitsch and Negri to work on *Madame Dubarry*. Emil Jannings begged for and got the role of Louis XV, and Lubitsch engaged over two thousand extras to fill his carefully researched costumes and his studio-built Paris. The film shows what he had learned from Reinhardt about the direction of crowd scenes and also his own unique talent as a “humanizer” of history. Running over two hours, it was supplied with a specially written score, played at the Berlin premiere by a full orchestra. It was a huge success in Germany, then all over Europe, and finally in the United States. Some critics, it is true, objected to the presentation of the French Revolution as the outcome of an affair between a king and his *midinette* mistress. There was also some resistance to the picture in the United States, even though its distributor there, aware of the virulent anti-German feeling of the time, had retitled it *Passion* and removed all traces of its German origin from the credits (including Lubitsch’s name). Nevertheless with this film, as Andrew Sarris says, “Lubitsch almost singlehandedly lifted Germany into the forefront of film-producing nations.”

After this triumph, Lubitsch demonstrated his versatility in a string of successes for Union-UFA. *Die Puppe* (*The Doll*, 1919) is an E.T.A. Hoffman fantasy that makes audacious use of all the movie camera’s capacity for visual trickery (and opens with an extraordinary shot of puppet-master Lubitsch himself assembling a miniature set). Another hit (in spite of charges that it was anti-clerical), it was followed by *Köhliesels Töchter* (*Köhliesel’s Daughters*, 1920), a peasant *Taming of the Shrew* shot on location in Bavaria, then by a screen version of *Sumurun* (*One Arabian Night*, 1920, with Lubitsch repeating his stage performance (and vigorously overacting) as the hunchback clown in love with a beautiful dancer (Negri).

*Anna Boleyn* (*Deception*, 1920), starring Jannings as Henry VIII, was another spectacular essay on the influence of lust on history. Gerald Mast writes that if *Dubarry* “is convincingly eighteenth-century France, *Anna Boleyn* is even more magnificently convincing as Renaissance England. Lubitsch’s control of lighting gives the wood of sets and the faces of people the glow of Renaissance painting.” At the same time, in this as in all his historical epics, Lubitsch sought to “de-operatize” and to “humanize” his characters: “I treated the intimate nuances just as importantly as the mass movements and tried to blend them both together.” *Die Bergkatze* (*The Wildcat*, 1921) is by contrast an anti-militaristic satire, unique among his films in that its bizarre sets and stylized acting were evidently influenced by expressionism (and, in its day, a complete failure).

The last and most elaborate of the historical spectacles Lubitsch made in Germany was *Das Weib des Pharaos* (*The Loves of the Pharaoh*, 1922), which crowded the UFA lot with palaces and pyramids and many thousands of extras (at a total cost, according to one account, of only \$75,000). It is a movie on the scale of *Intolerance* or *Ben Hur* and took almost a year to make. There are notable performances from Jannings as the Pharaoh Amenes and Paul Wegener as the King of Ethiopia, who go to war for the love of the beautiful slave girl Theonis (Dagny Sevræs). In December 1921 Lubitsch paid his first visit to the United States, taking *The Loves of the Pharaoh* with him. It opened in New York a few months later and was hailed as “a magnificent production and stirring testimony to the genius of Ernst Lubitsch.”



Much interviewed in the United States, Lubitsch expressed his admiration for Chaplin, Griffith, De Mille, Stroheim, and the American cinema in general, but with one reservation: “The American moviegoing public has the mind of a twelve-year-old child: it must have life as it isn’t.” Back in Berlin, Lubitsch made one last film there, *Die Flamme* (1923), a relatively small-scale story set in *fin-de-siecle* Paris about a *cocotte* (Negri) who falls in love with a composer (Hermann Thimig), loses him, and kills herself. It was released in the United States

as *Montmartre* (1924), with an unsatisfactory happy ending tacked on for the public that “must have life as it isn’t.”

In December 1922, meanwhile, Lubitsch had committed himself to that public. The “greatest director in Europe,” the “European Griffith,” had been invited by “America’s sweetheart,” Mary Pickford, who starred opposite Douglas Fairbanks in Lubitsch’s first American movie, *Rosita* (1923). It is an agreeable fantasy about a street singer in nineteenth-century Spain who attracts the attention of a libidinous king with a satirical song about him. Lubitsch and Pickford clashed incessantly, personally and professionally, throughout the three months of filming, and the picture, perhaps because it gave Pickford her first grown-up role, was not a financial success. However, the critics, then and since, have praised it warmly as a “distinguished and lovely film,” and Lotte Eisner was put in mind both of Goya and of Sternberg’s later *The Devil is a Woman*.

As Gerald Mast says, *Rosita* “closed Lubitsch’s first period”; after it, romanticism gave way to irony, the crowded canvas was exchanged for the telling detail. The move to Hollywood must have had something to do with this dramatic change of style; marital comedies were then in vogue, and Lubitsch no doubt learned from the achievements of Stroheim and De Mille in this genre. But by far the greatest influence on Lubitsch at his time was Chaplin’s *A Woman of Paris* (1923), which tells its story about a provincial girl who becomes a “kept woman” with absolute moral detachment, great economy of means, and brilliantly suggestive imagery.

Much of what Lubitsch learned from Chaplin is already evident in *The Marriage Circle* (1924), the first of five movies he made for a relatively new and still minor studio called Warner Brothers. It is a sophisticated comedy studying the collision between a hopeful new marriage (Florence Vidor and Monte Blue) and one that is failing (Marie Prevost and Adolphe Menjou). It impressed Iris Barry that Lubitsch “has shown, not told, the story. Everything is visualized, all the comedy is in what the characters are seen or imagined to be thinking or feeling, in the interplay, never expressed in ... [subtitles], of wills and personalities... Gestures and situations, so lucidly presented that one is perfectly aware from the ‘pictures’ alone of what is happening, give rise to other gestures and other situations which—because of the permanence of visual memory—one recognizes as the logical outcome of what has occurred before.” The *New Yorker* called it “a champagne picture in a beery movie world.”

In a moment of exasperation Mary Pickford had referred to Lubitsch as a “director of doors,” and there is justice in the charge. As Arthur Knight has pointed out, “prior to *The Marriage Circle*, almost any decoration would do—either wholly nondescript for a routine film or, for a more elaborate production, rooms choked with bric-a-brac and overstuffed chairs set off by loudly ornamental drapes and busy wallpaper. Lubitsch cleared away the clutter, providing clean playing areas for his action. The advantages were so immediately apparent that they were incorporated into the majority of pictures from that moment on. Few directors, however, have quite his ability to use settings to their fullest advantage. To Lubitsch, a door was always more than simply a way to get into or out of a room; it was a way to end an argument, to suggest pique or coquetry or even the sexual act itself. Corridors, stairways, windows—all had a dramatic function in the Lubitsch films.”

*Three Women* (1924) is a harsher picture about a “lady-killer” (Lew Cody) who plays mother (Pauline Frederick) against daughter (May McAvoy)—the first for her money, the latter as a recruit to his “harem.” It was the first of Lubitsch’s American films to be written by Hans Kräly, who had followed him to Hollywood and who was thereafter his principal scenarist until 1928. Pola Negri also arrived in Hollywood, and she starred in *Forbidden Paradise* (1924) as Catherine the Great of Russia, equally interested in power and virile young officers. The visual economy of this satire has been much discussed—for example the officers’ revolt which is put down in three shots: the general’s hand moving to his sword; the chamberlain’s hand pulling out a checkbook; the general’s hand releasing his sword. The movie’s general air of mockery extends to totally unrealistic sets and the deliberate anachronisms, which endow eighteenth-century Russia with automobiles and flashlights to underline the universality of human frailty.

Lubitsch’s sexual comedies always preserve this mood of sardonic but affectionate amusement at the dismal antics of his characters, and it was this, as much as the obliqueness of his

innuendos, that earned him his apparent immunity from censorship in both Germany and America. He demonstrates both qualities again and again in *Kiss Me Again* (1925), adapted from a Sardou farce and starring Marie Prevost as a wife who wants to divorce Monte Blue in favor of a long-fingered pianist (John Roche). Much loved scenes include one in which Blue, to facilitate the divorce, is urged by all concerned to strike his wife but cannot bring himself to do so; and the final scene in which Roche, awaiting his beloved (and unaware that she and her husband are reconciled), serenades her on the piano. Blue enters in pajamas and urges him to play more softly before hurrying back to the marital bedroom. It was strokes like this, crystallizing in a single shot the whole essence of a (generally outrageous) situation, that became known as “the Lubitsch touch.” Robert Flaherty, asked to name his favorite film, usually said it was Dovzhenko’s *Earth* because “that’s what they expect me to say.” But, he told Weinberg, “between you and me, my favorite film is Lubitsch’s *Kiss Me Again*.”

The movie was chosen as one of the ten best of 1925; so was *Forbidden Paradise* and so was Lubitsch’s adaptation of *Lady Windemere’s Fan*: an unparalleled achievement. *Lady Windemere*, as Ted Shane wrote, substituted Lubitsch’s “own great sense of cinematic wit and the dramatic” for Wilde’s “perfumed sayings.”... Georges Sadou considered this Lubitsch’s best silent film, full of “incisive details, discreet touches, nuances of gestures, where behavior betrays the character and discloses the sentiments of the personages. With Lubitsch a new art carried on the subtleties of Marivaux, and the comedy of manners made its debut on the screen.”

So *This is Paris* (1926) was another “sophisticated comedy, full of marital complications petty jealousies, and humors of the married but otherwise unemployed,” and another huge success for Warner Brothers. It captures the frenetic spirit of the twenties in the sequence which shows us “a host of dance-crazed revelers performing the Charleston. Like an animated Cubist painting,... [Lubitsch’s] camera has caught the pulsating pandemonium of the scene, and the tempo of his dissolving scenes has the swing of a futuristic rhapsody....

Lubitsch was then thirty-four and one of the most admired and successful film directors in the world—some placed him second only to Griffith among Hollywood directors. According to Weinberg, his directorial technique was “simple, direct, patient. He didn’t believe in many rehearsals, feeling they tired the actor and robbed him of his spontaneity. If a scene *had* to be done over several times, he never lost his patience or courtesy.... Sitting on a small camp chair, he would lean forward in his intensity.... And his face would mirror all the emotions of the players, male or female. Sometimes he would jump up and show an actor how to do a scene.... Some directors liked to improvise—not he. It must all be down in the scenario, everything thought and worked out.... Each scene has to ‘grow’ out of the preceding one; a film was a series of propulsions or combustions, like an engine which keeps a vehicle going.” Because his scripts were “complete blueprints,” very little



footage was wasted; in effect his pictures were edited before they were shot.

By this time all the major studios were putting their directors to work on Lubitschian comedies, the master's many imitators including Richard Rosson, Lewis Milestone, and Malcolm St. Clair. Lubitsch himself was naturally much in demand, and in 1926 he left Warner Brothers and, under the auspices of MGM, returned to Germany to shoot exteriors for *The Student Prince*. Based on the operetta *Old Heidelberg*, this was a shrewd "fusing of sentiment and highbred comedy," charmingly played by Norma Shearer and Ramon Navarro (though according to Weinberg it was considerably "doctored" by the studio).

Lubitsch's next picture began his ten-year tenure at Paramount. The "German invasion" of Hollywood had continued and Emil Jannings was now on the scene. Lubitsch starred him in *The Patriot* (1928) as the mad Czar Paul I...*The Patriot*, made on the eve of the advent of sound, was given a synchronized musical score, together with some sound effects and occasional voices. ...Lubitsch's own first talkie was *The Love Parade* (1929), adapted by Ernest Vajda and Guy Bolton from a successful play...and the cast included Jeanette MacDonald in her first screen role as the Queen of Sylvania, Maurice Chevalier as her bored and erring consort, Lupino Lane as his valet, and Lillian Roth as the Queen's maid (with Jean Harlow as an extra).

Lubitsch had his doubts about sound, but when it came he took to it with the greatest ease and panache. *The Love Parade* is witty in its dialogue, lavish in its settings, startling in its sexual innuendos, and adroit in its introduction of songs.... Theodore Huff called this "the first truly cinematic screen musical in America."...

From time to time throughout his career, Lubitsch seems to have become dissatisfied with his court jester role and to have set out to demonstrate a capacity for something more serious than sexual comedies. He did so in *Rausch*, *The Patriot*, and *Eternal Love*, and he tried again with *The Man I Killed* (1932), adapted from a Maurice Rostand play by Sam Raphaelson and Ernest Vajda. It is a somber pacifist tract about a young Frenchman who kills an enemy soldier in World War I and later goes to Germany to beg the forgiveness of the dead youth's parents. Adulated by the critics, it failed at the box-office. More recently, Andrew Sarris has suggested that the public knew better than the critics—that the film is "Lubitsch's least inspired and most calculated effort, all surface effect, all ritualistic piety toward a 'noble' subject."

At any rate, Lubitsch returned to his métier with *One Hour With You* (1932), a remake with music of *The Marriage Circle* that apparently was directed by George Cukor (credited only as dialogue director), and followed it with *Trouble in Paradise* (1932). This masterpiece stars Miriam Hopkins and Herbert Marshall in a totally amoral comedy about a couple of high-class thieves in Venice. The tone is set in the opening sequence, when a gondola gliding through the moonlit canals is seen to be collecting garbage; the gondolier throws a pail of slops aboard and launches into a heartfelt rendition of "O Sole Mio." There is never the slightest hint that the protagonists might be redeemed by love or anything else; they are thieves; never mind, they only steal from the rich, and the rich are thieves too. Gerald Mast writes that "the delights, the gags, the

comic business, the brilliant dialogue, the technical grace and ingenuity of camera, cutting and sound have never been surpassed by any Lubitsch film"; many would agree. It was the director's own favorite among his pictures and marked the high point in his career.

For his screen version of Noel Coward's *Design for Living* (1933), Lubitsch set Ben Hecht to work rewriting Coward's dialogue, explaining that the play was too static for the cinema and that "things on the screen should happen in the present," not be recalled in conversation. This effrontery worried contemporary critics, who also found Lubitsch's cast (Frederic March, Miriam Hopkins, Gary Cooper) inferior to the *soigné* trio of the stage original (the Lunts and Coward himself). There was a mixed reception also for *The Merry Widow* (MGM, 1934), a sumptuous Chevalier-MacDonald adaptation of the Lehar operetta that failed to recover its costs.

In November 1934, tired and a little shaken, Lubitsch acquired a new job as production chief at Paramount. He supervised Sternberg's *The Devil Is A woman* and Borzage's *Desire*, but in 1936 was abruptly replaced by William Le Baron. Lubitsch's own next film, *Angel* (1937), was his greatest failure. Set in London and Paris in the mid-1930s, and with a cast headed by Marlene Dietrich as a neglected wife, Herbert Marshall as her oblivious husband, and Melvyn Douglas as an amorous bachelor, it builds its plot around the fact that the "salon" where Dietrich and Douglas meet is in fact an elegant brothel. Given the ever-increasing puritanism of the period, this was a very nearly impossible theme, but Lubitsch found ways of telling his story without ever mentioning its real content....

This decline in Lubitsch's reputation was halted by the enormous popularity of *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* (1938), his last film for Paramount. It

has Gary Cooper as a much-married American millionaire who finally succumbs to the daughter (Claudette Colbert) of an impoverished French marquis, and the brilliant dialogue was supplied by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder. The same team, supplemented by Walter Reisch, wrote *Ninotchka* (MGM, 1939), Lubitsch's only film with Greta Garbo. She plays a dour and dedicated Soviet commissar sent to Paris to straighten out three comrades who have been seduced from the path of duty by capitalistic self-indulgence. She meets an aristocratic French playboy (Melvyn Douglas) and herself succumbs to Paris, glamour, and romance. Cheerfully satirizing both communism and capitalism (and thus antagonizing some Marxist critics), it is one of the wittiest and also one of the warmest of Lubitsch comedies. It is not particularly well endowed with "Lubitsch touches" but remains perhaps the best loved of all his works, largely because of Garbo's ineffable impersonation of a beautiful iceberg slowly lighting up from within and melting into imperfect but irresistible humanity. Garbo herself once said that "*Ninotchka* was the only time I had a great director in Hollywood."

A leather goods and novelty shop in Budapest is the setting of *The Shop Around the Corner* (MGM, 1940). James Stewart is the head clerk, Margaret Sullavan a salesgirl, and they quarrel so much that they eventually realize they must be in love. It is one of the few Lubitsch films not concerned with the antics of the rich and idle, and it is difficult to understand why it did not fare better at the box office....*That Uncertain Feeling* (United Artists, 1941) was a



disappointing and much altered remake of *Kiss Me Again*, translated from Paris to New York.

It was followed by the controversial comedy *To Be or Not To Be* (United Artists, 1942), in which a Warsaw theatre company during the Nazi occupation combines its work with a little sabotage against the invaders. According to Theodore Huff, the piece was called “callous, a picture of confusing moods, lacking in taste, its subject not suitable for fun-making.” It didn’t help that it was released shortly after the death in a plane crash of its star, Carole Lombard. In fact, the film is rich in the kind of “black humor” that only became acceptable years later. Peter Bogdanowich wrote in 1972 that it “survives not only as satire but as a glorification of man’s indomitable spirits in the face of disaster—survives in a way that many more serious and high-toned works about the war do not.”

In 1943 Lubitsch joined 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox as a producer-director, performing both functions for his first movie there, *Heaven Can Wait* (1943)...It was Lubitsch’s first film in color, which he used well enough to earn an admiring comment from D.W. Griffith. In 1945 the director has his first heart attack while working on a remake of *Forbidden Paradise* called *A Royal Scandal*. Otto Preminger took over and Lubitsch was credited as producer, though the film has nothing of his style. The same is true of *Dragonwyck* (1946) of which he was also the nominal producer.

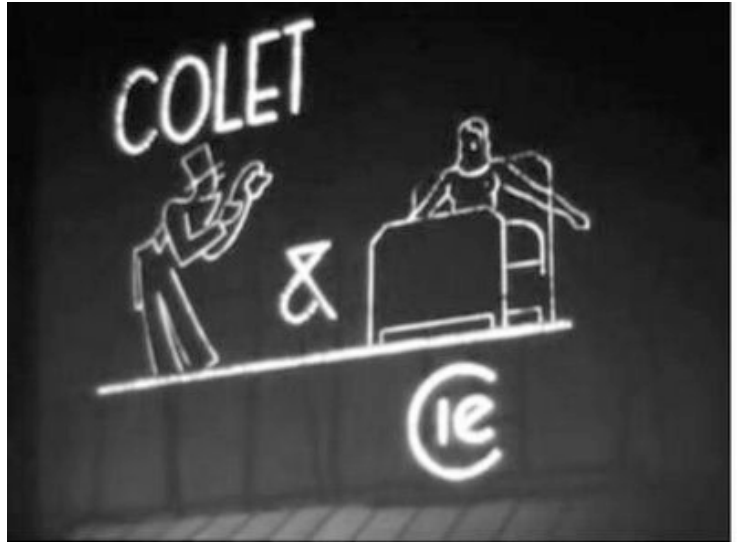
Lubitsch went back to work in the spring of 1946. he produced and directed *Cluny Brown*, an excellent satire on English society with a fine cast headed by Charles Boyer and Jennifer Jones and including Reginald Gardiner, C. Aubrey Smith, Peter Lawford, and other pillars of Hollywood’s “British Colony.” In 1947 Lubitsch began work on *That Lady in Ermine*, a screen version of an operetta starring Betty Grable. After a week’s shooting he became ill and Preminger again took over. Lubitsch died later the same year at the age of fifty-five.

Theodore Huff defined the “Lubitsch touch” as a “swift innuendo or rapier-like ‘comment’ accomplished pictorially by a brief camera shot or telling action, to convey an idea or a suggestion in a manner impossible in words.” Lubitsch himself thought that “one shouldn’t single out ‘touches.’ They’re part of a whole. The camera *should* comment, insinuate, make an epigram or a bon mot, as well as tell a story. We’re telling stories with pictures so we must try to make the pictures as expressive as we can.” Gerald Mast thought Lubitsch the American cinema’s greatest technician after Griffith and wrote: his “art is one of omission...he consistently shows less than he might, implies more than he shows.” In this way Lubitsch “transformed melodramatic and sentimental tripe into credible human stuff and forged deeper into sexual desires, needs, frustrations and fears than most of his contemporaries (and descendants) dared to go.” Jean Renoir thought that Lubitsch “invented the modern Hollywood.”

Robert E. Sherwood described the director as “an extremely short, dark, thickset man, with ponderous shoulders and huge, twinkling eyes.. In appearance he resembled a combination of Napoleon and Punchinello; in character he combined the best features of each.” Lubitsch’s 1922 marriage to Irma Kraus ended in divorce in the early 1930s. Some years later he married an Englishwoman, Sania (whom he called Vivian); they were divorced towards the end of World War II. Lubitsch had a daughter, Nicola, by this second marriage. He was a hyperactive man who drove himself relentlessly, a gourmet, a wit, and a practical joker; he never lost his music-hall German accent nor relinquished the big

black cigars that became his trademark. He loved to dance, and he played the piano and the cello badly but with enthusiasm.

For Lubitsch, the crucial stage in making a film was the preparation of the script, and he worked so closely with his writers that they could seldom remember afterwards who contributed what to the finished product. Many of his writers became close friends. Samson Raphaelson, his favorite scenarist of the post-Krály period, remembered him like this: “Lubitsch loved ideas more than anything in the world, except his daughter Nicola. It didn’t matter what kind of ideas. He could become equally impassioned over an exit speech for a character in the current script, the relative merits of Horowitz and Heifetz, the aesthetics of modern painting, or whether now is the time to buy real estate. And his passion was usually much stronger than that of anyone else around him, so he was likely to dominate in a group. Yet I never saw, even in this territory of egoists, anyone who didn’t light up with pleasure in Lubitsch’s company. We got that pleasure from the purity and childlike delight of his lifelong love affair with ideas....As an artist he was sophisticated, as a man almost naïve. As an artist shrewd, as a man simple.”



**Ernst Lubitsch *Laughter in Paradise*. Scott Eyman. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore Md, 2000.**

Ernst and Vivian’s honeymoon trip stretched on. There was Vienna, where Ernst’s niece Evie had moved after her father landed a job with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer...In mid-April. Lubitsch and his wife arrived in Moscow for what he said was a “purely private” visit. Vivian’s mother was Russian, her father Swiss. Never having seen her mother’s homeland, she was curious. In Moscow, they were feted by Boris Shumyatski, head of the Soviet Film Industry, but overall the trip was kept rigorously low-key....Ernst was staying at the Hotel Metropol and was overjoyed to see his old friend Gustav von Wanferheim, [an old colleague from the Reinhardt days who had acted for Ernst in his two Shakespearean pastiches]...Inge von Wagenheim appraised Vivian as “a beautiful American WASP, stiff and quiet, who appeared to have just thawed.” Ernst struck her as “alert, lively, piercing...truly nice, without guile or pretension.”...

The conversation turned to the great Socialist experiment, and Inge von Wagenheim, a committed Communist, went into a long humorless diatribe. What was happening in Russia, she declared, would be of enormous importance for the entire world,



and she failed to understand how a man of culture and experience like Lubitsch could believe there was anything more important than the effort to build a new world. Certainly, she said, “the dream machine lubricated by dollars” seemed a paltry, insufficient world in which to spend one’s life.

Ernst listened attentively, never even interrupting let alone contradicting, black eyes dancing, clearly growing more and more amused. So this was what had replaced the dirt and squalor of czarist Russia from which his father had escaped! He could understand why the lower and working classes preferred life under communism—it held the promise of improvement. But for an artist?

At the end of the evening, Ernst grabbed his old friend by the arm and asked him bluntly, “Now tell me honestly, Gustav, are you happy here?”

The answer was affirmative—von Wagenheim and his wife would only return to Germany in 1945—but Lubitsch was clearly bewildered by his friend’s enthusiasm.

The evening was far from a total loss, however, for in the stentorian, mechanical-minded Inge von Wagenheim, Lubitsch discovered the matrix for the title character of what would become his most famous film: *Ninotchka*....

The trip to Russia disabused Lubitsch of any romantic feelings he might have had about socialism in any form. Soon after his return, he told Salka Viertel, a screenwriter and good friend of Garbo’s, to take his name off the roster of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, saying it was a tool of the Communists. As an alternative, beginning in October 1939, Ernst became involved in a project called the European Film Fund.... Successful émigrés working in Hollywood would tithe between 1 percent and 5 percent of their pay to a central fund....

Lubitsch returned to the Paramount lot, twenty-seven acres in the heart of Hollywood illuminated, at one time or another, by practically every famous name in movie history. By this time, Paramount had assumed the realm of a cozy cocoon for Lubitsch, and for hundreds of others as well.... Billy Wilder was born in Sucha, a small town one hundred miles east of Vienna, in 1906.... Wilder moonlighted on movie scripts, including the minor classic *People on Sunday*. Leaving Berlin after the Reichstag fire (“It seemed the wise thing for a Jew to do”), he made his way to Paris, where a script he wrote attracted the attention of director Joe May. The script was never produced, but the money from the sale got Wilder to Hollywood. After the usual period of adjustment, that is to say total and complete impoverishment, Wilder landed at Paramount, where he once claimed to have made so little of an impression that he was seriously studying the want ads.

It was at that point that Paramount story editor Manny Wolf introduced him to Charles Brackett, a patrician from the Eastern Seaboard. “From now on,” Wolf told them, “you’re a team.” At Wolf’s suggestion, Lubitsch took them on to write *Bluebeard’s Eighth Wife*... Lubitsch was enthralled. Where had this

diminutive man with a slanted mind been all his life?... Wilder, whose ambitions to direct would shortly be jump-started by having Mitchell Leisen (“That fag who ruined my scripts”) direct his material, immediately fell into a student/teacher relationship with Lubitsch, who taught him things he would remember the rest of his life.

“His technique was totally subordinated to storytelling,” Wilder would remember, pacing back and forth in his office, occasionally stopping to whack his thigh with a riding crop. “His theory—and mine—is that if you notice direction, you have failed. You have to hide your technique. No dolly shot should be so overwhelming that you say, ‘My God, look at that.’ Look at the story, look at the characters, and make the technique become part of the action.”

Beyond niceties like plot and character, Lubitsch gave Wilder an underlying attitude, an aesthetic belief system: let the audience write the script with the filmmaker. “Don’t spell it out, like they’re a bunch of idiots. Keep it just slightly above their station. He would not say to the audience, ‘Now listen to me, you idiots! Two plus two equals four! And three plus one equals four!

And one plus one plus one plus one equals four!!! Big deal.

“No. You give them two plus two and let *them* add it up. They’ll have fun and they’ll play the game with you.

“Lubitsch would have laughed if you had suggested making a film with no cuts in it, or making a film with just ten setups, like Hitchcock did in *Rope*. Those are exercises in masturbation and it would never occur to him. The living room should never be shot through a fireplace unless it is from the point of view of Santa Claus and he’s a character in the film.”...

“If the truth were known,” remembered Wilder, “he was the best writer that ever lived. Most if the ‘Lubitsch touches’ came from him.”...

As far back as 1929, Greta Garbo had been vocal in her enthusiasm for the idea of being directed by an artist, as opposed to the craftsmen of various abilities who were employed at MGM. Specifically, she was enthusiastic about working with either Lubitsch or Erich von Stroheim. In 1922, Louis B. Mayer had dangled the possibility of borrowing Ernst from Paramount to direct *Queen Christina*, which led Garbo to cable on April 1, “Prefer Lubitsch, also happy for [Edmund] Goulding.” But Ernst was too deeply involved in preparing *Design for Living*, which began shooting in the first part of July. The tantalizing partnership had to be put off for a few more years.

The story for *Ninotchka* had been brought to MGM in 1937 by Gottfried Reinhardt, who was then working as an assistant to Sidney Franklin. Melchior Lengyel’s original story was obviously written with Garbo in mind but it is highly conventional. Its springboard was a three-sentence memo scrawled in a notebook: “Russian girl saturated with Bolshevist ideals goes to fearful, capitalistic, monopolistic Paris. She meets romance and has an uproarious good time. Capitalism not so bad after all.”...



Work resumed on the script, and again Wilder and Brackett were called in to help...and to be amazed. “He wasn’t just a gagman,” remembered Wilder, “he was the best creator of toppers. You would come up with a funny bit to end a scene, and he would create a better one. I think he thought up the bit where the picture of Lenin smiles back at Garbo, [but] I can’t be too sure. He would look at our stuff and go ‘Ho-ho, very good,’ and scratch out the next line. He’d read a bit more and go ‘Ho-ho, very good,’ and scratch out another line. What he did was purify, and that was what made him a great writer.

By April 8, the script was very close to the finished shooting script; dialogue and scenes are largely intact. The script gives credit to Lubitsch as well as Wilder, Brackett and Walter Reisch, who wrote a memo to MGM saying that all three writers felt that Lubitsch was more than entitled to a credit....

Lubitsch put the drunk scene off for virtually the entire production, waiting to do it until Garbo felt completely secure with him and the film. “I believe she is the most inhibited person I have ever worked with,” Lubitsch said....

Privately, Lubitsch’s mood during the production of *Ninotchka* was testy. He didn’t trust Metro and Metro wasn’t thrilled with him either. Although *Ninotchka* would (apparently) renew Garbo’s commercial viability, the start of WWII divested MGM of the European market, which accounted for nearly 40 percent of their revenues. It was a particularly dire situation for a star like Garbo, whose domestic appeal was largely urban....



At a preview of *Ninotchka*, Lubitsch brought along Charlie Brackett, Billy Wilder, Walter Reisch, and a few studio executives. The film seemed to go well, with laughter in all the right places. After the film ended, Lubitsch swooped down on the filled-out preview cards and took them back to the studio limousine, refusing to let anyone else look at them.

“He had this very serious expression as he was reading,” remembered Billy Wilder, “and you could tell that

it was pretty positive. Well, he gets to this one card and he just stared at it for a while and then he breaks into this howl of laughter. He was rocking back and forth on the seat and pounding it with one hand. We were looking at each other and wondering what the hell was so funny. Finally, he hands me the card and this is what it said:

“Great picture, Funniest film I ever saw. I laughed so hard, I peed in my girlfriend’s hand.”...

*Ninotchka* marks the beginning of Lubitsch’s richest period, when he would examine with remarkable, tender humor the ways in which the life of the mind yields to the life of the heart; communism yields, not to capitalism, but to copulation. “No one can be so happy without being punished,” *Ninotchka* wails at one point, but in the benevolent world of Lubitsch, no one is punished and nothing is punishable except cruelty.

Commercially, *Ninotchka* returned worldwide rentals to MGM of \$2.2 million on a cost of \$1.3 million. The tally was all the more impressive because countries as various as Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and France banned the film because of its satire on communism (France’s ban was lifted on appeal).

## COMING UP IN THE SPRING 2011 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXII:

- Feb 8 Luchino Visconti **OSSESSIONE** 1942  
 Feb 15 Robert Bresson **AU HASARD BALTHAZAR** 1966  
 Feb 22 Martin Ritt **THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD** 1965  
 Mar 1 Nicholas Roeg **WALKABOUT** 1971  
 Mar 8 John Mackenzie **THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY** 1980  
 Mar 22 Bertrand Tavernier **COUP DE TORCHON/CLEAN SLATE** 1981  
 Mar 29 Werner Herzog **FITZCARRALDO** 1982  
 Apr 5 Nagisa Ōshima **MERRY CHRISTMAS MR. LAWRENCE** 1983  
 Apr 12 Stephen Frears **THE GRIFTERS** 1990  
 Apr 19 Jafar Panahi **DAYEREH/THE CIRCLE** 2000  
 Apr 26 Ridley Scott **BLADE RUNNER** 1982

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