



STG Presents Trader Joe's Silent Movie Mondays Return to The Paramount Theatre with *Silents from the South Seas* Featuring Jim Riggs On the Historic Mighty Wurlitzer Organ

Trader Joe's Wild Card - Bonus night includes a collection of three short films from the Charlie Chaplin library selected in-store by Trader Joe's customers

SEATTLE, Tuesday, February 2, 2010 - Seattle Theatre Group (STG) presents Trader Joe's Silent Movie Mondays this March at The Paramount Theatre in Seattle, Mondays at 7pm. This all-classic silent film series, **SILENTS FROM THE SOUTH SEAS**, is accompanied by live music featuring the historic Mighty Wurlitzer Organ, one of the last three remaining organs of its kind to reside in its original environment, played by critically acclaimed organist Jim Riggs.

SILENTS FROM THE SOUTH SEAS brings us to the cultural vastness of the South Pacific where the early masters of the cinematic silents turned their lenses on the beautiful landscapes and tribal customs of the island's inhabitants.

The region's exotic culture, handsome (mostly topless) natives and fascinating religious ceremonies, such as the dances and the funeral pyres, attracted directors like F.W. Murnau (*Sunrise*) and Henry de la Falaise whose film, *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas*, captured the pristine and idyllic lives of the native inhabitants by enlisting them to be players in the semi-ethnographic fictions whose frank sensuality embraced both the lush scenery and the glowing bodies of his half-nude subjects.



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Contrasted against these natively integrated productions, Raoul Walsh's *Sadie Thompson* takes a different approach to casting. Rather than use the natives, Walsh infuses the island with the glitz of Hollywood's biggest silent era stars, Gloria Swanson and Lionel Barrymore.

All three films in **SILENTS FROM THE SOUTH SEAS** represent impressive sensitivity to native customs as well as an eye for the natural beauty of the islands, remaining enduring masterpieces of tropical splendor.

March 8, 2010 - *LeGong: Dance of the Virgins*

Henry de la Falaise and Gaston Glass, 1935, 35mm

"A garden of Eden with dozens of Eves!" In the 1930s, the island of Bali was an American cultural obsession, appearing as the setting of many films and becoming a popular tourist attraction. This exploitation film tells a sad, simple tale of love denied and reflects that sentiment. Filmed in Bali by Marquis Henry de la Falaise (husband of both Gloria Swanson and Constance Bennett), and shot in glorious two-color Technicolor, *LeGong* depicts Bali as an exotic paradise, reveals de la Falaise's personal connection to the island in his meticulous presentation of various Balinese dances and religious rituals. The film follows a young girl, Poutou, who represents her community as a Legong dancer, a holy assignment. She is to remain "the chaste maiden and sacred dancer of the Temple" until she falls in love, when she will dance her last Legong in celebration of marriage. The trouble begins when Poutou falls for the young musician Nyoung, a talented newcomer to the local Gamelan (orchestra). *LeGong* is both a feast for the eyes and the imagination, and the ultimate demonstration of the documentary conceived as an arresting, escapist spectacle.

March 15, 2010 - *Sadie Thompson*

Raoul Walsh, 1928, 35mm

This 1928 silent film masterpiece, starring Gloria Swanson, Lionel Barrymore and Raoul Walsh, and directed by Walsh is based on a Somerset Maugham short story *Rain*. With her enormous expressive eyes, Swanson turns out what must be her best role before *Sunset Boulevard*. Here

she stars as the South Sea island lady of the night who seduces a hellfire preacher. The reformer Alfred Davidson, played here by the great Lionel Barrymore, threatens to send her back to San Francisco unless she converts to his puritan brand of religion. The change is immediate and frightening, and in a testament to Swanson's talent. It also won her accolades with an Academy Award nomination for best actress. The film's lusty moments barely survived the Hays Office scissoring, though audiences could still lip-read some of the racy dialogue. The film remains both an iconic exotic fare and is among the finest dramatic achievements of the 1920s!

March 22, 2010 - *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas*

F.W. Murnau, 1931, 35mm

Tabu: A Story of the South Seas brought F.W. Murnau and pioneering documentary filmmaker Robert Flaherty together to create the last film of the silent era. Also Murnau's last work (he died in a tragic car accident just weeks before the film's premiere), this unique collaboration between two silent cinematic legends, tells of the love of a sun-bronzed Tahitian fisherman for a young woman whose body has been consecrated to the gods, rendering her tabu for mortal men. The filmmakers had their differences, and Flaherty ended up relinquishing control of the film to Murnau. But it was Murnau's knack for the rhythms of editing, the lyricism and simplicity of tone that makes *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* a masterpiece.

March 29, 2010 - *Trader Joe's Wild Card*

A collection of three short films from the Charlie Chaplin library selected by Trader Joe's customers (in-stores). Be sure to stop by a local Trader Joe's to vote.

Tickets: Individual film tickets are \$12.00 and are available online at www.stgpresents.org, by phone at (877) 784-4849, in person at The Paramount Theatre box office, Monday through Friday 10:00am-6:00pm and The Paramount and Moore Theatre venue kiosks, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week. Group sales are available through STG's Group Sales Hotline at (206)315-8054. The Paramount Theatre is located at 911 Pine Street in

downtown Seattle.

About The Mighty Wurlitzer Organ: The Paramount Theatre is home to the Mighty Wurlitzer Organ, one of the last three remaining organs of its kind to reside in its original environment. Installed March 1, 1928 as part of the theatre's grand opening, The Paramount's Mighty Wurlitzer is one of the most ornate organ consoles ever produced. True to the Silent Film presentation of the day, each film is accompanied by Jim Riggs on the Mighty Wurlitzer Organ to present the series as part of our rich cultural identity. STG remains committed to showcasing these rare treasures in the way they were originally shown.

About Jim Riggs: Jim Riggs is in his twentieth year as house organist at The Paramount Theatre in Oakland, California. He has previously appeared at the Grand Lake Theatre (in Oakland), Castro Theatre in San Francisco and at Stanford Theatre in Palo Alto. Having regularly appeared at every major Bay Area movie house equipped with a Mighty Wurlitzer, Riggs has entertained well over one million toe-tapping patrons and is known as the "Wizard of the Wurlitzer".

Though over one million movie patrons have been entertained by Riggs melodies on the organ, few realize he is in global demand as a silent film accompanist. From the Stanford Theater in California to the wilds of northwestern Pennsylvania to Manchester, England to Perth, Australia, Riggs has brought musical life into the silent shadows of the silver screen. He has composed and performed original scores for the films of such screen giants as Douglas Fairbanks Sr., Greta Garbo, Harold Lloyd, Lon Chaney, Buster Keaton, Gloria Swanson, Joan Crawford, Laurel & Hardy and many others.

Although Riggs appreciates the use of existing original music or light classics to provide scoring material, he prefers "...a much more creative and, for me, musically satisfying approach. I call my scores 'highly prepared improvisations.'" The key, he says, is to "...know the film very, very well. By that I mean everything from the general pacing and flow of the cinematic narrative to the

length of the intertitles to where the dramatic action points are---you know, gunshots, pratfalls, quick cuts and so on." He then composes a short theme, or motif, for each major character, crafting it to reflect that character's film personality. Additionally, he says, "...there are often major---sometimes climactic---scenes which warrant their own special music. I'll compose suitable treatments for those, with an ear towards leaving room to slip in a character motif here and there." It all comes together during the performance. In his words: "There I am, sitting at the organ. My eyes are seeing images unfold on the screen, my brain's processing them, and my hands and feet are weaving together all that previously prepared material. I'm thinking about the action on screen plus I'm anticipating the action to come. And on top of it all, I'm manipulating the resources and dynamics of the organ itself. All of this happens simultaneously. The result, I think, is a completely fresh and dramatic blending of moving image and music. It's a very in-the-moment creative thing for me, almost Zen-like in nature. And it's my absolute favorite thing to do on the theatre organ."

About Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society: The Theatre Pipe Organ and its music are a truly unique American art form. Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society (PSTOS) is a non-profit organization furthering the appreciation, preservation and use of the Theatre Pipe Organs of yesteryear. Our members include musicians, technicians, and enthusiastic listeners - all devoted to the preservation and continued enjoyment of what we believe to be a national treasure.

As movies changed to "talkies" in 1929, the organs soon became unnecessary. Many were lost to fire, flood, vandalism, and neglect. Just a very few today remain in their original homes-the Seattle Paramount Wurlitzer is one of those, and as such, has genuine historical significance. For the past 45 years, it has been lovingly maintained by members of the PSTOS.

About STG: STG is the 501 (c)(3) non-profit arts organization that operates the historic Paramount and Moore Theatres in Seattle, Washington. Our mission is to make diverse performing arts and education an

integral part of our region's cultural identity while keeping these two landmark venues alive and vibrant. STG presents a range of performances from Broadway, off-Broadway, dance and jazz to comedy, concerts of all genres, speakers and family shows - at both historic theatres in Seattle and venues throughout the Puget Sound and Portland, Oregon.

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