

# **Weimar Cinema, 1919–1933**

## **Daydreams and Nightmares**

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**The Museum of Modern Art, New York**

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# Catalogue of Weimar Films

Compiled by Ulrich Döge

(entries on *Niemandsland*, *Der Mann, der seinen Mörder sucht*, and *Razzia in St. Pauli* compiled by Eva Orbanz)

The documentation that follows is dedicated primarily to German films produced in the era of Germany's Weimar Republic (1919–33) and is based mainly on several printed and virtual sources of data: censorship cards; advertising material provided by the film distributor; production news items and reviews published in trade papers such as *Lichtbild-Bühne* and *Film-Kurier*; and monographs, among them biographical reference works and filmographies of movie directors, such as Hans-Michael Bock, ed., *CineGraph: Lexikon zum deutschsprachigen Film* (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1984– ); and Ulrich J. Klaus *Deutsche Tonfilme: Filmlexikon der abendfüllenden deutschen und deutschsprachigen Tonfilme nach ihren deutschen Uraufführungen*, 15 vols. (Berlin-Berchtesgaden: Klaus 1988–2006). Details about various release dates and screenings were obtained from contemporary reviews in the *New York Times* and *Variety*.

While there is plenty of literature concerning a small group of prominent German and Austrian directors of this era—as the number of publications dedicated to F. W. Murnau, Fritz Lang, and Ernst Lubitsch demonstrates—for the great majority of their lesser-known and unknown colleagues, basic biographical information is scarce or missing. Thus some biographies include more detail than others.

**Titles:** English titles are generally those of a film's first English release. When this title differs from the circulating title used by The Museum of Modern Art, the original title is given with the film's US or British premiere date.

**Year:** The year refers to a film's first release in its country of origin.

**Cast, film credits, and music:** The cast and crew lists identify major participants, but they are not exhaustive.

The credits for silent-film music are limited to composers of original scores and those conductors and arrangers of the music performed at premieres who would presumably have been known in the United States. Although this appears to dismiss the musicians who performed the music, it is in fact because we don't know who they were. However, most major silent productions were released with an accompanying score,

sometimes—if a production company had a big budget at its disposal—an original score by a famous composer. At the first-run cinemas in larger cities, these would be performed by orchestras, at least at the film's premiere. More frequently, scores arranged by the performer and/or conductor from music by other composers were performed. Even in the smallest towns, cinema owners hired local pianists to accompany screenings with musical passages meant to make the mood of a scene audible.

**Exile:** Exile forms an important part of a director's biography, unless he (or occasionally she) died before 1933, the year the National Socialist party assumed absolute power. Some directors left Germany well before 1933 to continue their work abroad, but eventually simply living abroad became exile.

Austria became the provisional country of exile, primarily for German-Jewish directors but for some non-Jewish directors as well, from 1933 to the Anschluss, in March 1938, when Austria was annexed to Nazi Germany. So not every German director who worked in Austria in this period was automatically in exile. Starting in 1934 much of the private Austrian film industry freely fulfilled the Nazi politicians' demands not to employ Jewish cast and crew on films for the commercially critical German market. Only a small number of independent production companies in Austria deliberately engaged German-Jewish exiles, and the German authorities forbade the import of the resulting films.

**Reviews:** Excerpts from reviews are taken almost exclusively from German periodicals contemporary with the films themselves, preferably, but not limited to, trade papers. Both prominent and unknown authors are included in order to demonstrate the rich culture of film criticism in Weimar-era Germany.

Statements by directors and other crew members come either from the same sources as well as from monographs published decades later. German periodicals cited were published in Berlin unless otherwise indicated.

**Censorship:** During the Weimar Republic, two boards were responsible for film censorship: the Filmprüfstellen in Berlin and Munich and the Filmoberprüfstelle in Berlin, a superior board for appeals, both under the Reichsinnenministerium (Federal Ministry of the Interior). Once the Nazis came to power, the criteria and organization of film censorship changed fundamentally, becoming a ministry, under Joseph Goebbels, of Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (Public Enlightenment and Propaganda). A number of films produced in the Weimar era were retroactively censored by the National Socialists, especially those with perceived pacifist, leftist themes (such as *Cyankali*, *Kuhle Wampe*, and *Niemandsländ*) made during the transition from democracy, even in an already authoritarian form, to dictatorship. Conflicts with the various agencies, leading to the mutilation of circulating copies of films or to the banning of public screenings, are noted in the Film Notes section.

—U.D.

## Foreword

*Weimar Cinema, 1919–1933: Daydreams and Nightmares* features eighty films made in Germany between the world wars, a period of cinema history that was extraordinarily fertile and influential in the development of the moving image. Since the mid-1930s, when the Nazis attempted to obliterate the cultural achievements of the Weimar Republic, The Museum of Modern Art has played a significant role in keeping alive the contributions of German filmmakers, first through national exhibition and eventually through preservation. Since the reunification of Germany in 1989, many Weimar-era films have been restored, and thanks to the special relationship the Museum's Department of Film has with film archives in Germany and elsewhere, we can present a comprehensive exhibition for the first time in the United States—a mix of classic films and motion pictures unseen since the 1930s—that will provide museumgoers with hours of enjoyment and students of cinema and the Weimar period with the opportunity to appreciate and reappraise the contributions of German filmmaking between the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the coming to power of the Nazis. It was during this period that film matured from a silent art, international in its visual expressiveness, into a more localized one, circumscribed by language.

The film program is augmented by an exhibition of posters and photographs of Weimar filmmaking in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 Lobby Gallery and by this illustrated book, with an extensive filmography supplemented by German criticism and essays by leading scholars of the period.

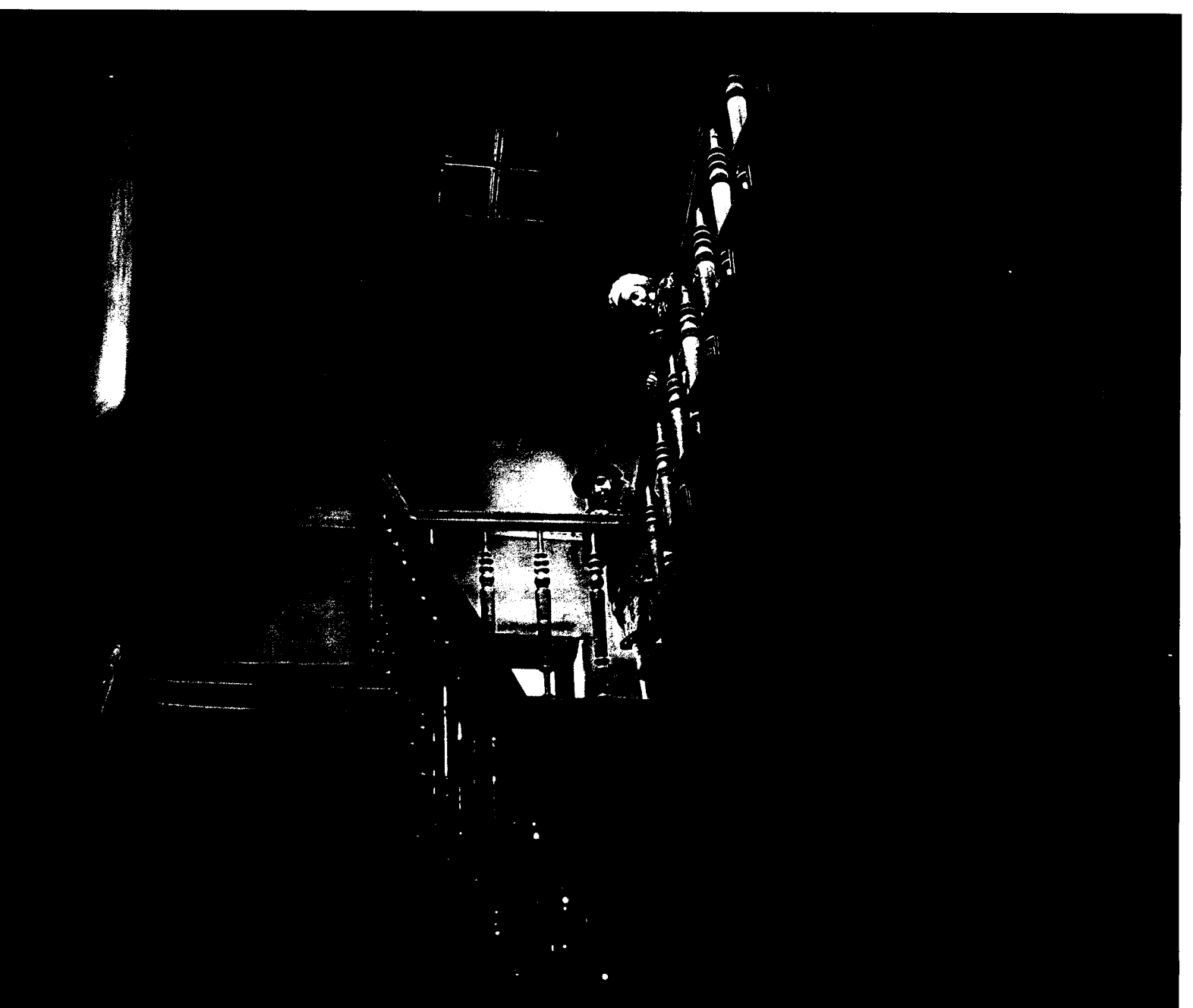
I want to thank Laurence Kardish, Senior Curator in the Department of Film, for initiating and organizing this project, and his collaborator, Eva Orbanz, Senior Curator for Special Projects at the Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin and former President of FIAF, the International Federation of Film Archives, for her contributions to the film program. I am also grateful to Ron Magliozzi, Assistant Curator in the Department of Film, for co-organizing the gallery exhibition.

The participation of three organizations in Germany has proved essential to the realization of all aspects of this exhibition, and for their generous collaboration and cooperation MoMA is deeply appreciative of the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung, Wiesbaden, holder of many of the original film materials of Weimar-era films, along with Transit Film, its distribution agency; the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin, which in addition to films, loaned personnel, film posters, still photographs, and research materials; and the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin, the national film archives of Germany, for providing access to its collections.

Glenn D. Lowry, Director  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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German cinema from the end of World War I to 1933—the years of the Weimar Republic—is widely appreciated for an Expressionist style of filmmaking characterized by anxiety, distorted narrative, and vivid plays of light and shadow. Far less well-known in the United States are the period's musicals, romances, and comedies, lighter films that were made in equal numbers as the darker fare. *Weimar Cinema, 1919–1933: Daydreams and Nightmares* puts these contrary approaches side by side, examining the full spectrum of Weimar filmmaking through essays by prominent contemporary scholars and a selection of eighty films. Excerpts from reviews and other writings evoke the reception of these movies at the time, as the use of sound in film gained purchase and the economic and political situation in Germany propelled the country toward another, darker historical moment.

