



Dr. Mabuse der Spieler

(Dossier curated by Hannes Charen)

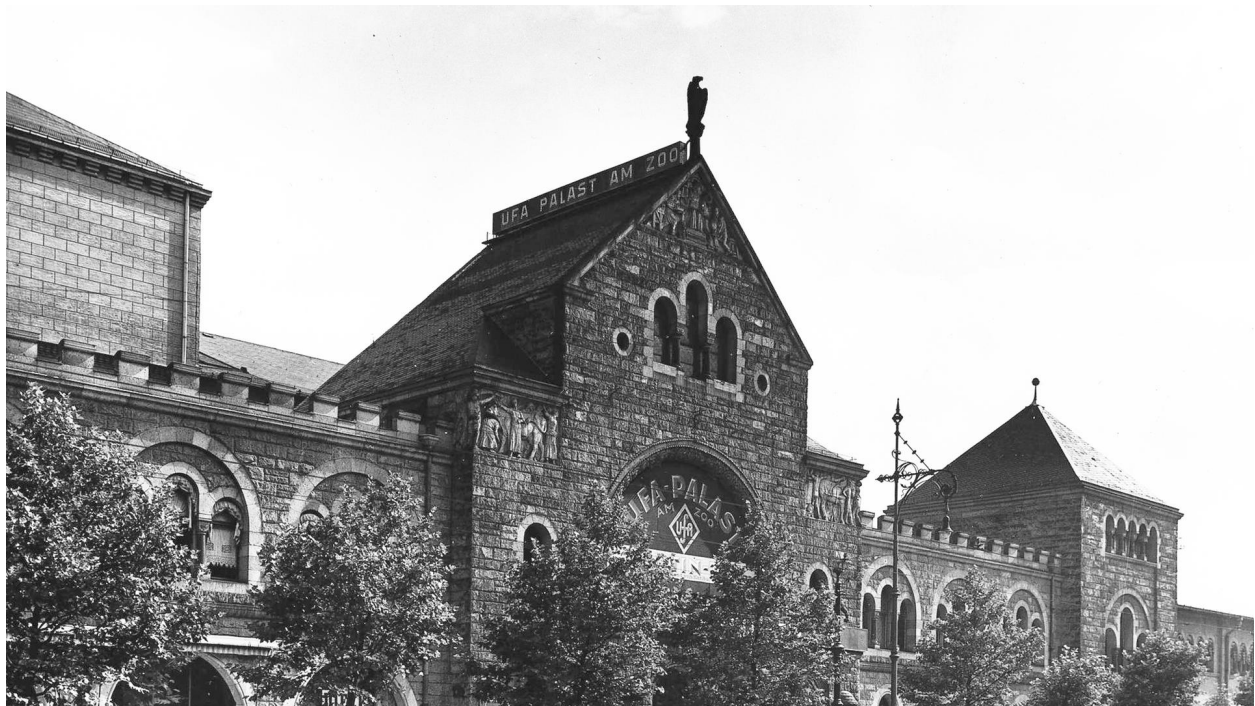
Preface

In 2023 the film journal [Screen](#) dedicated their Spring volume to the centennial of the release of Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler*. Titled *Dr. Mabuse Today* the issue's introduction notes: "An underlying premise of this dossier, therefore, is that at its centennial, *Dr Mabuse, the Gambler* retains its pertinence and is deserving of renewed critical examination. While on its release it was praised and promoted as being a picture of its time, what strikes the viewer of *Dr Mabuse, the Gambler* in 2022 is, remarkably, its contemporaneity."

Based on Thea von Harbou's screenplay, derived from the pulp novel serialized in the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* between September 25, 1921 and January 19, 1922 by the Luxembourgish author Norbert Jacques, Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (1922) was known as one of the great tyrant films of the early 1920s. It quickly became a prototype for the modern gangster film and a prefiguration of the film noir genre. Like *Dr. Caligari*, *Dr. Mabuse* was a psychoanalyst and used hypnosis to overpower others. Unlike previous films centered on a shadowy sinister figure, *Mabuse* presents a contemporary type of the Weimar era. A master of disguise, *Mabuse* utilizes the most advanced technologies, surveillance and hypnosis to form his intricate web of influence. Drawing connections between the international stock market, counterfeiting and the illegal gambling halls of Berlin, the effectiveness of *Mabuse's* sinister schemes underscores the general conditions of vulnerability characterizing the early years of the Weimar republic, reflected in the subtitle of both parts: *The Great Gambler* [Spieler]. *A picture of our times* and *Inferno. A play (Spiel) of the people of our time*. In 1924 Fritz Lang noted: "In *Dr. Mabuse* was the power of evil which held up a mirror to corrupt society." As a grand manipulator "the man with a thousand faces" circulated through contemporary Berlin to con

unwitting victims and ultimately society itself. Siegfried Kracauer noted that the film “show[s] how closely tyranny and chaos are interrelated... That is, chaos breeds tyrants like Mabuse who, for their part, capitalize on chaos.” (Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, 83-84) The film anticipated the hyperinflation which was to plague the Republic soon after the first screenings and it drew from the conspiratorial spirit of the times to conjure a nightmarish atmosphere of paranoia and instability. Significantly, *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* investigates and develops a genealogy of crime through a society still reeling from the fallout of the war in a milieu increasingly shaped by rapid technological, political and economic changes. It is in this sense a critical engagement with the conditions of the times. Themes include gambling, stock market manipulation, the lust for power, drug use, violence, prostitution, counterfeiting, mass deception, hypnosis, madness, violence and urbanism.

At an epic 270 minutes the film was released in two parts. The first: *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler I: Der große Spieler. Ein Bild der Zeit* (*The Great Player. A picture of our times.*) had its first screening on April, 25, 1922 at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo in Berlin. The second, titled: *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler II: Inferno. Ein Spiel von Menschen unserer Zeit* (*Inferno. A play of the people of our time.*) followed one month later (May 26, 1922) also at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo, the largest cinema in Germany. *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* was met with enthusiastic praise and was a resounding box office success. Fritz Lang followed up ten years later with a sequel, the iconic *Testament of Dr. Mabuse*. Towards the latter part of his life he directed the last in the series, the crime thriller *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (1960). (HC)



UFA Palast am Zoo, Berlin, 1920s.



From left: Norbert Jacques, Aud Egede Nissen, Gertrude Welcker, Fritz Lang



Verwaltungsgebäude der Tobis-Ateliers in Johannisthal

The Johannisthaler Filmanstalten (Jofa) film studios. Former manufacturing plant for aircraft, its transformation, in accordance with the protocol for demilitarization stipulated by the Treaty of Versailles, produced the largest film studio in the world.

DR. MABUSE

DER SPIELER

NACH DEM ROMAN DER BERLINER
ILLUSTRIRTEN ZEITUNG — VON

NORBERT JACOUES

REGIE: FRITZ LANG





CREDITS

Director: *Fritz Lang*

Writers: Norbert Jacques, Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang

Cinematography: *Friedrich Weinmann*

Production: *Uco-Film GmbH (Germany)*

Starring: *Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Aud Egede-Nissen, Gertrude Welker, Alfred Abel, Bernhard Goetzhe*

Release in two parts: part 1: 04.25.1922 part 2: 05.26.1922

Duration: 268'

For the full Credits in English with hyperlinks to director, actors, production, click [here for part I](#) and [here for part II](#).

For film-historical context, consult Hans Helmut Prinzler's The Chronicle of German Film (1918-1933) [here](#) and select 1922.

Shot primarily in the Jofa studios in Berlin-Johannisthal in 1921/1922

Dr. MABUSE, der Spieler

DER ZWEITEILIGE UCO-FILM DER DECLA-BIOSCOP

Nach dem Roman der »Berliner Illustrierten Zeitung« von
NORBERT JAUQUES / Manuskript: THEA VON HARBOU

1. Teil: DER GROSSE SPIELER

Ein Bild der Zeit.

2. Teil: INFERNO

Menschen der Zeit

Spielleitung: FRITZ LANG



DIE HAUPTROLLEN UND IHRE TRÄGER:

Dr. Mabuse	Rudolf Klein-Rogge
Cara Carozza, die Tänzerin	Aud Egede Nissen
Gräfin Dusy Told	Gertrude Welcker
Graf Told	Alfred Abel
Staatsanwalt von Wenk	Bernhard Goetzke
Edgar Hull	Paul Richter
Spoerri	Forster Larrinaga
Georg	H. A. von Schlettow
Pesch	Georg John
Hawasch	Karl Huszar
Fine	Grete Berger
Karsten	Julius Falkenstein
Die Russin	Lydia Potechina
Emil Schramms	Julius Hermann

AUSSERDEM WIRKEN MIT:

Anita Berber, Julie Brandt, Auguste Prash-Grevenberg, Adele Sandrock, Max Adalbert, Paul Biensfeld, Gustav Botz, Heinrich Gotho, Leonhard Haskel, Erner Hübsch, Gottfried Ruppertz, Hans Junkermann, Adolf Klein, Erich Pabst, Edgar Pauly, Karl Platen, Hans Sternberg, Olaf Storm, Erich Walter

DIE MITARBEITER:

Photographische Leitung: Carl Hoffmann — Bauten: Stahl-Urach und Otto Hunte

Die Toiletten der Hauptdarstellerinnen wurden nach Entwürfen
von VALLY REINECKE in den Modateliers von Flatow-Schädler und Mossner angefertigt.

Restoration



In the year 2000 Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung released a major restoration of both parts of [Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler](#).

In 2016 Kino Lorber released a newly remastered DVD on Kino on Video based on the Murnau Stiftung restoration. (“Kino on Video is proud to present the authorized version of Fritz Lang’s 1922 film Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler, mastered from a 2000 restoration conducted by the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung, and using existing camera negatives from the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin, and the Filmmuseum in Stadtmuseum, Munich. Featuring extra footage (which reveals more plot information, more close-ups, and a decidedly more provocative and lurid atmosphere), this DVD of Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler shows not only the longest available version of the film, but the one which most closely represents Lang’s original vision.”) [source: [KinoLorber](#)]

A Box Set of the three Fritz Lang Mabuse films was set by the Eureka Masters of Cinema series and released in 2009. This was also based on the 2000 restoration with the addition of English subtitles available to the US and UK markets. Aljoscha Zimmermann’s composition was used for restored 2009 version.

Film Scores:

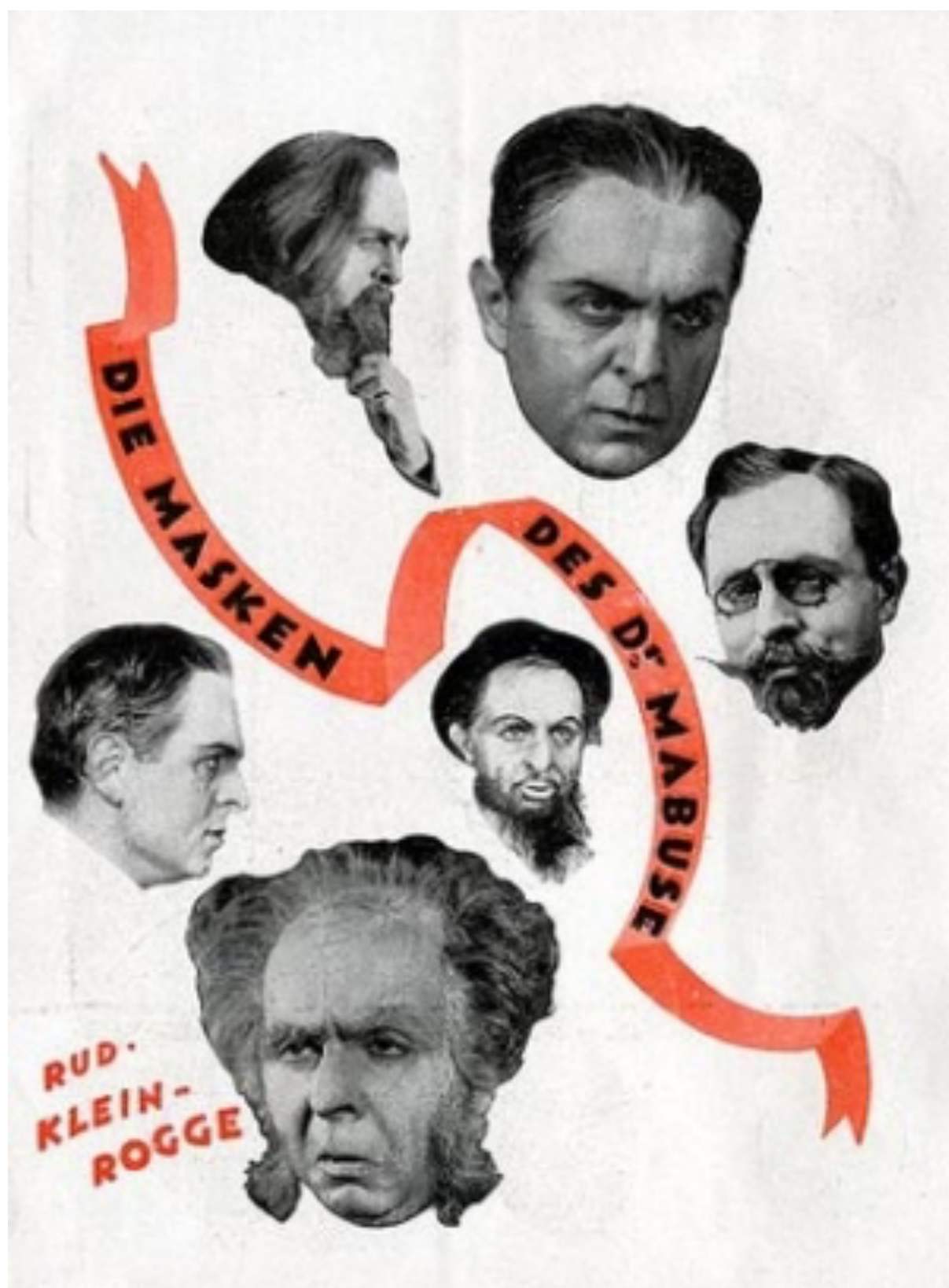
Osmán Pérez Freire (it is uncertain how much of the original score – if any existed – he contributed)

Konrad Elfers (newly scored in 1964)

Michael Obst (newly scored in 1991)

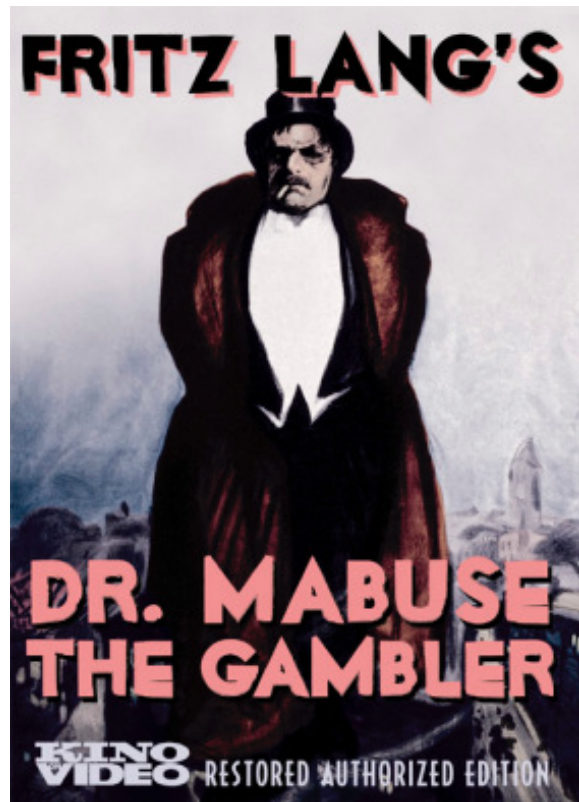
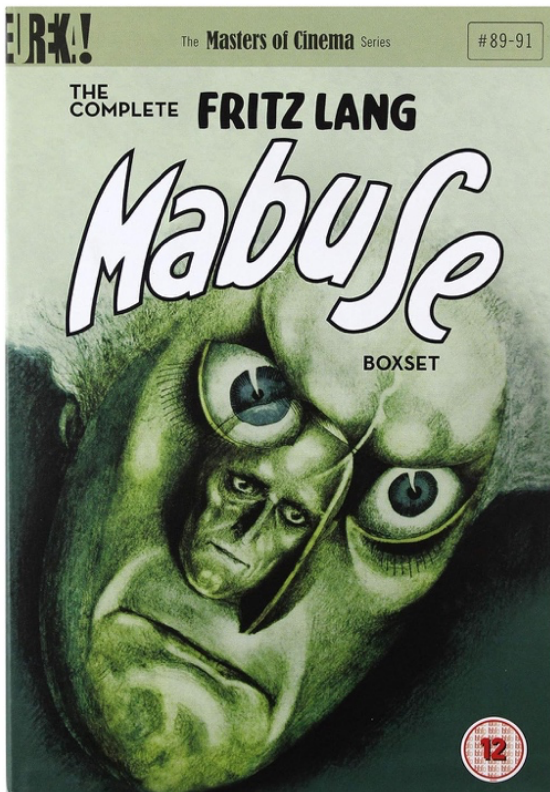
Aljoscha Zimmermann (newly scored in 2004)





RUD.
KLEIN-
ROGGE

Home Viewing



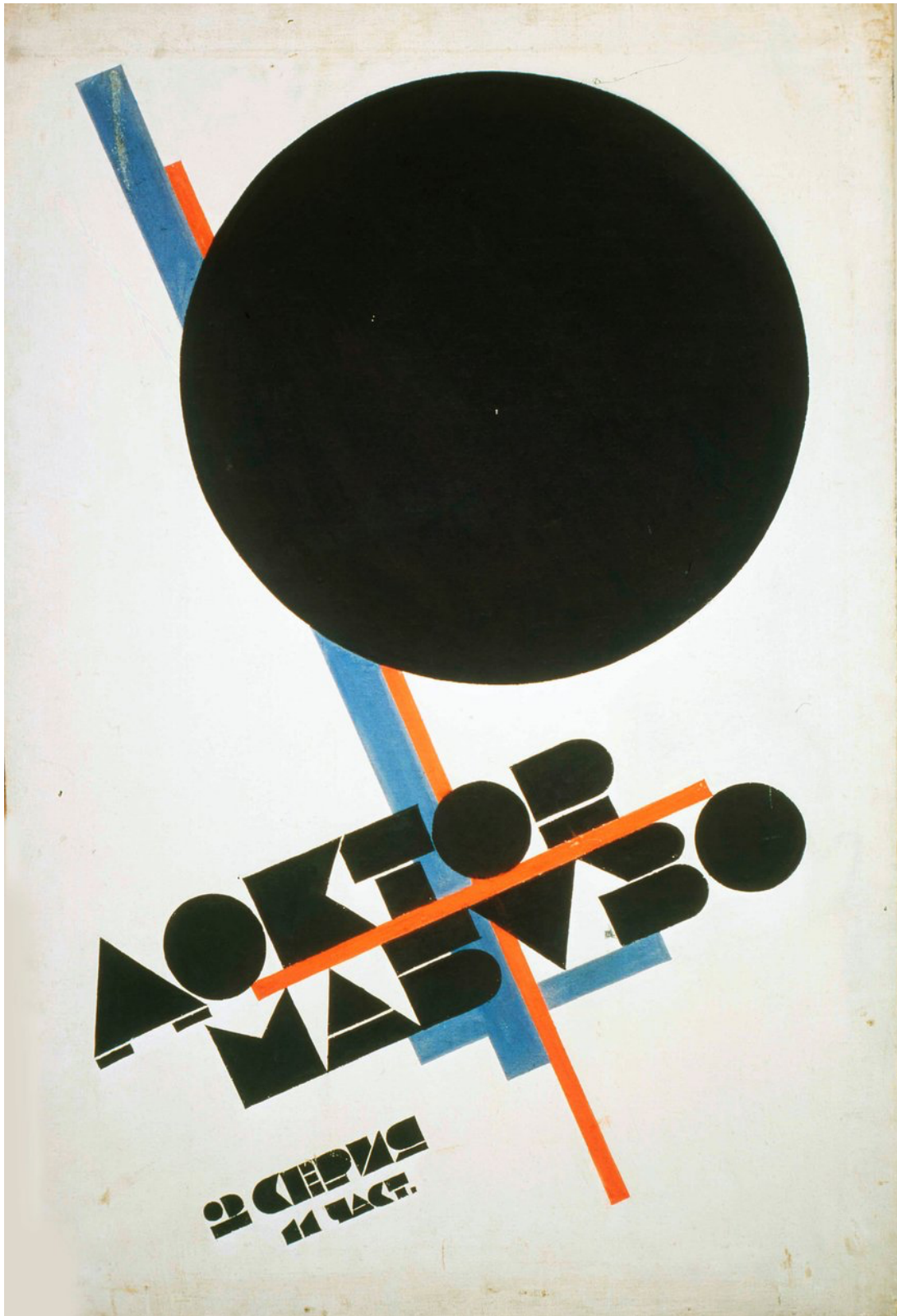
DVD and Blu-ray:

The Complete Mabuse Box Set [DVD][1922]. Eureka: The Masters of Cinema Series, Oct. 19, 2009

Dr. Mabuse the Gambler [Blu-ray]. Kino Lorber. <https://kinolorber.com/product/dr-mabuse-the-gambler-blu-ray>, Oct. 13, 2016.

Streaming:

We recommend [Kanopy](#) which can be accessed through your school or with a public library card.



Kazimir Malevich film poster for *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (color lithograph, 1925)