



Monday 26 September at 6:30 pm

The Shop Around the Corner AFS thanks Logical Office USA, 1940

Director/Producer: Ernst Lubitsch
 Production Co: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Loew's Incorporated
 Screenplay: Samson Raphaelson. Based on a play by Nikolaus Laszlo
 Cinematography: William Daniels
 Editor: Gene Ruggerio
 Music: Werner R Heymann

With: Margaret Sullavan (Klara Novak), James Stewart (Alfred Kralik), Frank Morgan (Hugo Matuschek), Joseph Schildkraut (Ferencz Vadas), Sara Haden (Flora), Felix Bressart (Pirovitch), William Tracy (Pepi Katona), Inez Courtney (Ilona), Sarah Edwards (customer), Edwin Maxwell (doctor), Charles Halton (detective), Charles Smith (Rudy)

99 mins, 35mm, 1:1.37, b&w. PG

Close to perfection – one of the most beautifully acted and paced romantic comedies... Margaret Sullavan and James Stewart are the employees who bicker with each other, and in no other movie has this kind of love-hate been so convincing. – Pauline Kael

The struggles of a coterie of neurotic, underpaid, underloved department store clerks are brought to the screen with the delicacy and grace of a fine ermine purse by that German-expat genius Ernst Lubitsch, in this wonderful 1940 comedy. At its centre is Jimmy Stewart playing bookish grafter Alfred Kralik, who penfriends a dame more enlightened and worldly than any of his colleagues (or so he thinks). But this is as much a film about group dynamics in the workplace and how the distress and desperation inflicted on those at the top of the ladder can trickle down to the rank and file as it is about romance. For my money, this is Lubitsch's masterpiece, an immaculate conflation of his sprightly shooting style, expertly layered wisecracking and bracing realism, all topped off with a romantic subplot that offers a nakedly joyous celebration of young, serendipitous love. Now, does anyone know where I can buy a cigarette box that plays 'Ochi Tchornya'? – David Jenkins, *Time Out London*

There's never been a better picture of what it's like to work retail. All those supposed Stewart tics are absent here. It's a simple characterization of a typical store schlub, a clerk trying to get by like any other, with just enough brown-nosing to rise in the company and still retain some dignity. People in Lubitsch movies are witty beyond our wildest dreams, but Stewart gives his lines a particular twist. He's a guy trying to stave off boredom by being funny, but making the quips is enough. He doesn't expect the others to get them and he's pretty much resigned to the fact that they don't. And besides, off duty, on his own, he's discovered a way to pour out his heart, corresponding with an anonymous girl who hears his every secret via letter. Stewart doesn't try to make Kralik a standout of some sort. Instead, as WS Van Dyke said of the actor, he's "unusually usual". – Farran Smith Nehme, *Self Styled Siren*

The once-famous 'Lubitsch touch' was a combination of wry observation, delicate sentiment and gently controlled romanticism. The touch was never more touching than it is here. – Richard Schickel, *Time*



Monday 03 October at 6:30 pm

Ernst Lubitsch in Berlin Germany, 2006

Director/Writer: Robert Fischer
 Production Co: Transit Film
 Cinematography: Michael O Rüdiger, Manuel Lommel, Jonathan Rho
 Editor: Frank Schönfelder
 Music: Aljoscha Zimmermann, Sabrina Hausmann

With: Nicola Lubitsch, Tom Tykwer, Michael Hanisch, Hans Helmut Prinzler, Enno Patalas, Jan-Christopher Horak, Wolfgang Becker, Dani Levy, Amanda Goodpaster, Evy Bettelheim-Bentley, Jörg Jannings

In German with English subtitles
 110 mins, DV, colour and black and white

At Lubitsch's funeral, Billy Wilder is said to have pined, "No more Lubitsch," William Wyler responded, "Worse than that – no more Lubitsch films." Lubitsch specialized in satiric social comedies and lavish historical romances. Well before he turned 30, he was Germany's most celebrated director. At once sophisticated and vulgar in his taste for orientalism and theatrical bric-a-brac, Lubitsch was a cannier, less pretentious, and more cosmopolitan entertainer than his peers Fritz Lang and FW Murnau – closer in his showbiz sensibility to the Hollywood moguls. In 1922, America's aging sweetheart Mary Pickford hired Lubitsch to direct her next picture. The first of the European émigrés to establish himself in the American movie colony, he adapted brilliantly: "I prefer Paris, Paramount, to Paris, France." – J Hoberman, *Village Voice*

Born in Berlin in 1892, Lubitsch quit school at 16 to break into show business. In 1911 he scored an entry-level position in the Deutsches Theater run by legendary director Max Reinhardt, moved quickly up the ladder, and studied movie acting on the side, making his first screen appearance in 1912. He soon began writing and directing as well, and graduated from comedy shorts to more ambitious films just as World War I was ending in 1918. As an actor he's been likened to Charles Chaplin, who also gravitated toward outsider characters: Chaplin was a European infiltrating Hollywood as a nonconformist tramp, while Lubitsch's comic persona was a Jew not quite at home with dominant manners and mores. Although he made eight movies with Pola Negri and nine with Emil Jannings, his major muses during these years were Ossi Oswalda, a prodigiously gifted comic, and Henny Porten, an unimpressive actress but a major star. In 1922 he visited America to promote a movie, realized Hollywood was the place for him, and stayed there until his death in 1947...

The film presents a generous array of clips and an eclectic group of commentators ranging from the director's daughter and granddaughter to film scholar Jan-Christopher Horak and filmmaker Tom Tykwer, whose speculation that Lubitsch's move to America saved him from "getting mired in the expressionistic, Murnau trend" casts intriguing light on the late Lubitsch silents... As for the fabled Lubitsch Touch, which is explored near the end of the documentary, I'm relieved to discover that the director's fondest admirers find it as slippery a notion as I always have. Tykwer says it's the sense of hope and optimism expressed by the films. Others say it's the glow of Lubitsch's respect for the intelligence of his audience; still others say nothing at all. And that's fine. Lubitsch's great movies don't need slogans to support them, and the best offerings here are as great, if not as imposing, as anything he ever did. – David Sterritt, *Cineaste*