



**For Immediate Release**

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## **SAG HARBOR CINEMA PRESENTS 'A TOUCH OF LUBITSCH'**

**Friday, March 28 - Thursday, April 3, 2025**

Seven comedies by Ernst Lubitsch who brought to Hollywood the unique blend of European sophistication, wit, sexual irreverence, and artistry that became the renowned 'Lubitsch Touch'

**Sag Harbor, NY** - Sag Harbor Cinema announces "*A Touch of Lubitsch*" featuring seven classic comedies from the German-born director's extensive filmography. Lubitsch, an enduring titan of silent cinema in his own country, was one of Hollywood's most successful European imports, garnering an almost unsurpassed reputation for his sophisticated comedies of manners, as well as his musicals, and whose patented "Lubitsch touch" has inspired generations of filmmakers striving for his level of sharp wit and shrewd storytelling.

"Venice, Paris, London, Budapest, Warsaw...I wanted this small selection of Lubitsch's Thirties and Forties comedies to have the flavor of a 'Grand Tour'; to reflect how Lubitsch had recreated in Hollywood a fantasy version of the world he had left behind. The success of our Douglas Sirk program, two years ago, made me want to further explore the wildly creative contribution that the European diaspora, between WWI and WWII, brought to American Cinema. To this day, Lubitsch remains revered among his peers. Jean Renoir went as far as declaring that 'Lubitsch invented the modern Hollywood'," says Sag Harbor Cinema's Founding Artistic Director Giulia D'Agnolo Vallan.

Born into a Russian-Jewish family in Berlin, Lubitsch entered Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theatre in 1911 at the age of 19, appearing in dozens of films before moving into directing and making his first big mark with *Die Augen der Mumie Ma* (*The Eyes of the Mummy*, 1918). Lubitsch's international reputation quickly grew, eventually securing American distribution for films like *Madame Du Barry* (1919) and *Anna Boleyn* (1920). Contracted by Mary Pickford, he relocated to Hollywood in 1922 to direct the powerful star in *Rosita*. He swiftly became one of the most prolific and sought after filmmakers — working with WarnerBros, MGM, and Paramount — and



moved into sound films in 1929 with *The Love Parade*, followed by *Monte Carlo* (1930) and *The Smiling Lieutenant* (1931), which were all sensations of the new wave of musicals.

Lubitsch's next film, the Pre-Code *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), will kick off "A Touch of Lubitsch" at Sag Harbor Cinema on Friday, March 28th. The romantic comedy stars Herbert Marshall and Miriam Hopkins as lovers/thieves conspiring to scam the head of a famous perfume company played by Kay Francis.

Also part of the series are the Billy Wilder-written *Ninotchka* (1939) — with Greta Garbo as a Soviet emissary in Paris tasked with the sale of jewels seized from Russian aristocrats — and *Design for Living* (1933), adapted from a Noël Coward play, a love triangle set against the backdrop of Bohemian Paris, starring Miriam Hopkins, Frederic March, and Gary Cooper.

Just one week after the screening of *The Mortal Storm* (on March 22) Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullavan will be back on SHC's screens with one of Lubitsch's masterpieces *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), a workplace romance set in Budapest, based on Miklós László's 1937 play *Parfumerie*, whose brilliance was replicated for decades — from Buster Keaton's *In the Good Old Summertime* (1949) to Nora Ephron's *You've Got Mail* (1998).

Hitler's Germany is the target of Lubitsch's subversive political satire *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), starring Jack Benny and Carole Lombard as husband-and-wife thespians in Nazi-occupied Poland who become embroiled in a plot to track down a German spy. Released just three years after Hitler's invasion of Poland, the film proved controversial at the time for its daring humor. It has since been recognized as one of Hollywood's sharpest satirical takes on the Nazi regime, on par with Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940).

An inspiration for Peter Bogdanovich's last feature, *Squirrels to the Nuts* (2014), Lubitsch's final film (aside from *That Lady in Ermine*, completed by Otto Preminger after Lubitsch's death mid-production) *Cluny Brown* (1946) offers a zany social commentary through the eyes of Jennifer Jones as a parlormaid sent to a stuffy English manor who, along with a Czech political refugee (Charles Boyer), turns the household upside down.

'A Touch of Lubitsch' will close with a new restoration of *Heaven Can Wait* (1943), a supernatural comedy in beautiful Technicolor with Don Ameche negotiating his entrance into Hell after a lifetime of philandering, notwithstanding his love for wife Gene Tierney. Nominated for Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Director, *Heaven Can Wait* showcases Lubitsch's distinctive and unparalleled (though much imitated) irreverent wit.

For Alfred Hitchcock, writer-director Ernst Lubitsch was "a man of pure cinema." For Orson Welles, he was a "giant" whose "talent and originality were stupefying." François Truffaut wrote, "What cannot be learned or bought is the charm and mischievousness ... of Lubitsch, which



truly made him a prince." For Martin Scorsese, "Everything in a Lubitsch film counts: every gesture, every word, every design choice for every set, every angle, every second."

"Ernst Lubitsch could do more with a closed door than most of today's directors can do with an open fly," said Billy Wilder, Lubitsch's longtime devotee who famously had a sign in his office that said "How would Lubitsch do it?" When Lubitsch passed away in 1947 at the age of 55, Wilder said "No more Lubitsch," to which William Wyler responded, "Worse than that. No more Lubitsch pictures."

*A Touch of Lubitsch* runs from March 28th-April 3rd, 2025, with each of the seven films playing twice. Tickets are available individually or as 'The Grand Tour' pass which is \$55 for non-members or \$30 for members and permits guests to attend each film one time.

The full lineup with times, tickets and passes are available at the box office or [sagharborcinema.org](http://sagharborcinema.org).

"*A Touch of Lubitsch*" is made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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## **ABOUT THE FILMS**

### ***CLUNY BROWN***

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch  
USA, 1946; 100 mins, in English

The final film completed by Ernst Lubitsch, this zany, zippy comedy of manners, set in England on the cusp of World War II, is one of the worldly-wise director's most effervescent creations. Jennifer Jones shines in a rare comedic turn as Cluny Brown, an irrepressible heroine with a zeal for plumbing. Sent to work as a parlormaid at a stuffy country manor, she proceeds to turn the household upside down—with plenty of help from Adam Belinski (Charles Boyer), an eccentric Continental exile who has fled the Nazis but is still worried about where his next meal is coming from. Sending up British class hierarchy with Lubitsch's famously light touch, *Cluny Brown* is a topsy-turvy farce that says nuts to the squirrels and squirrels to the nuts.

### ***DESIGN FOR LIVING***

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch  
USA, 1933; 91 mins, in English



Gary Cooper, Fredric March, and Miriam Hopkins play a trio of Americans in Paris who enter into a very adult “gentleman’s agreement” in this continental pre-Code comedy, freely adapted by Ben Hecht from a play by Noël Coward and directed by Ernst Lubitsch. A risqué relationship story and a witty take on creative pursuits, the film concerns a commercial artist (Hopkins) unable—or unwilling—to choose between the equally dashing painter (Cooper) and playwright (March) she meets on a train en route to the City of Light. Design for Living is Lubitsch at his sexiest, an entertainment at once debonair and racy, featuring three stars at the height of their allure.

### ***HEAVEN CAN WAIT***

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch  
USA, 1943; 112 mins, in English

Deceased playboy Henry Van Cleve (Don Ameche) presents himself to the outer offices of Hades, where he asks a bemused Satan for permission to enter through the gates of hell. Though the devil doubts that Henry’s sins qualify him for eternal damnation, Henry proceeds to recount a lifetime of wooing and pursuing women, his long, happy marriage to Martha (Gene Tierney) notwithstanding. Ernst Lubitsch’s *Heaven Can Wait*, nominated for Academy Awards for best picture and director, is an enduring classic that showcases the filmmaker’s trademark blend of wit, urbanity, and grace.

### ***NINOTCHKA***

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch  
USA, 1939; 110 mins, in English

A no-nonsense diplomat of the Soviet Union, Nina Ivanovna Ninotchka Yakushova (Greta Garbo) arrives in Paris to ensure the sale of jewels seized during the Russian Revolution. Meanwhile, carefree bachelor Count Leon d'Algout (Melvyn Douglas) attempts to intercept the valuables on behalf of their former owner, the Grand Duchess Swana (Ina Claire). Despite their conflicting allegiances, the icy Ninotchka soon warms to Leon's charms, reluctantly going against her better judgment.

### ***THE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER***

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch  
USA, 1940; 99 mins, in English

Alfred Kralik (James Stewart) and Klara Novak (Margaret Sullavan) are employees at Matuschek and Company, a general store in Budapest. Klara and Alfred are constantly at odds



with each other, butting heads and disagreeing on almost everything. Both are enamored of their respective pen pals, who serve as welcome distractions in their lives. Little do they know, they are each the other's pen pal and, despite outward differences, have unwittingly fallen in love through their letters.

### ***TO BE OR NOT TO BE***

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch

USA, 1942; 99 mins, in English

As nifty as it is hilarious, this screwball masterpiece from Ernst Lubitsch stars Jack Benny and, in her final screen appearance, Carole Lombard as husband-and-wife thespians in Nazi-occupied Warsaw who become caught up in a dangerous spy plot. *To Be or Not to Be* is a Hollywood film of the boldest black humor, which went into production right before the U.S. entered World War II. Lubitsch manages to brilliantly balance political satire, romance, slapstick, and wartime suspense in a comic high-wire act that has never been equaled.

### ***TROUBLE IN PARADISE***

Directed by Ernst Lubitsch

USA, 1932; 82 mins, in English

When thief Gaston Monescu (Herbert Marshall) meets his true love in pickpocket Lily (Miriam Hopkins), they embark on a scam to rob lovely perfume company executive Mariette Colet (Kay Francis). But when Gaston becomes romantically entangled with Mme. Colet, their larcenous ruse is jeopardized and Gaston is forced to choose between two beautiful women. Legendary director Ernst Lubitsch's masterful touch is in full flower in *Trouble in Paradise*, a pinnacle of the sophisticated romantic comedy, loaded with sparkling dialogue, witty innuendo, and elegant comic invention.

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### **About Sag Harbor Cinema**

As a not-for-profit 501(c)3, community-based organization, Sag Harbor Cinema is dedicated to presenting the past, present and future of the Movies and to preserving and educating about films, filmmaking, and the film-going experience in its three state-of-the-art theaters. The Cinema engages its audiences and the community year-round through dialogue, discovery, and appreciation of the moving image – from blockbusters to student shorts and everything in between. Revitalized and reimagined through unprecedented community efforts to rebuild the iconic Main Street structure after a fire nearly destroyed it in 2016, SHC continues a long historic tradition of entertainment in the heart of Sag Harbor Village.