

**PICCADILLY (PG)**

Director: E. A. Dupont

Starring: Anna May Wong, Gilda Gray, Jameson Thomas
UK, 1929, 1 hour 49 minutes, Silent + English Intertitles

Stunningly designed and photographed, *Piccadilly* brings a sparkling cocktail of influences to its presentation of 20s London, from West End glitter to a seedy dive bar in cosmopolitan Limehouse. Tragic heroine Shosho (Chinese-American star Anna May Wong) beguiles her way from lowly nightclub kitchen hand to the star attraction; but will a love tryst with her boss be this deco diva's undoing?

Director E.A. Dupont was a German émigré who brought an international flair to late-1920s British cinema. Shosho's dance routines exploit the contemporary fad for eastern exoticism, but Dupont also offers a rare depiction of London's Chinese community and tackles the then risqué subject of interracial sex - though the censors ruled out an actual kiss between Anna May Wong and co-star Jameson Thomas. *Piccadilly* was restored by the BFI National Archive

Piccadilly is a prime example of the internationalism that flourished during the silent era, when accents and languages were irrelevant. The Chinese-American Wong and Polish-American Gray are integrated into a British cast that includes Cyril Ritchard, best known for playing Captain Hook to Mary Martin's Peter Pan, and Charles Laughton in one of his earliest appearances, stealing his one scene as a nightclub patron far more interested in his dinner than in Mabel's shimmy. -

Imogen Sara Smith for SilentFilm.Org

The screenplay was written by Arnold Bennett, the best-selling Edwardian novelist whom Virginia Woolf, in her 1924 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," turned into a derided symbol of pre-modernist conventionality. Visually, *Piccadilly* is accented by a largely German creative team. Director Ewald André Dupont was an émigré from the influential Berlin studio Ufa, where he was admired for innovative expressionist camerawork and stories (he was also a screenwriter) about crime and the sordid side of show business. - **Imogen Sara Smith for SilentFilm.Org**

Dupont's assured direction, Alfred Jünge's art direction, and Werner Brandes' lighting create an atmosphere so hauntingly evocative as to be satisfying in itself. - **Time Out Magazine**

The film screens with a pre-recorded, specially composed score for small orchestra by Neil Brand

Notes compiled by Holly Dennison

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