

UFA FILM NIGHTS



August 26 - 28, 2026

Presented by

BERTELSMANN

In cooperation with

UFA
A Fremantle Company

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Introduction

Cinematic masterpieces of the silent era, presented under the stars at one of Berlin's most exclusive venues: from August 26 to 28, 2026, Bertelsmann and UFA will host the 15th UFA Film Nights in Berlin.

This year, the UFA Film Nights journey to the rising Hollywood of the 1920s, showcasing films by renowned German directors who were drawn to the American film capital and achieved both artistic and commercial success there. The three American masterpieces by Ernst Lubitsch, Paul Leni, and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau bear witness to the high esteem in which German cinema was held internationally during the 1920s. Long before the Nazi regime forced countless filmmakers – particularly Jewish artists and film professionals – to flee Germany, Hollywood studios offered talented German directors, producers, actors, cinematographers, screenwriters, and set designers opportunities to build global careers.

This year's UFA Film Nights pay tribute to this unique period of cinematic collaboration between Germany and the United States. Yet it was also an era shaped by clearly defined economic interests on the part of the American studios, which recognized and harnessed the extraordinary creative potential they found in Germany. Reinforced by the arrival of German-Jewish émigré filmmakers a decade later, this exchange would have a lasting and profoundly productive influence on Hollywood's development.

The opening evening, **Wednesday, August 26**, celebrates the famous "Lubitsch Touch." **Ernst Lubitsch's** 1925 adaptation of Oscar Wilde's social satire **LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN** tells a tale of intricate family entanglements. The all-female ensemble **The Roaring Dames**, under the direction of **Luiza Labouriau**, will perform the world premiere of a new score by **Tobias Schwencke**.

The second evening features **Paul Leni's THE CAT AND THE CANARY** (1927), produced at the legendary Universal Studios of German-Jewish Hollywood pioneer Carl Laemmle. Drawing on the visual language of German Expressionism, Leni created a horror comedy that remains a classic of the genre. The film will be accompanied by **Ensemble Spooky Tune**, conducted by **George Morton** and featuring **Carolina Eyck** on theremin, performing a score by **Neil Brand**.

The UFA Film Nights conclude with **SUNRISE – A SONG OF TWO HUMANS** (1927). **Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's** Hollywood debut is widely regarded as his undisputed masterpiece. Based on a novella by Hermann Sudermann, the melodrama won three Academy Awards. The screening will be accompanied by **Ekkehard Wölk & The Silent Light Orchestra**.

Each film will be preceded by an introduction providing film-historical context.

Program

8/26 **Wednesday, August 26, 2026, Film starts at 9:00 p.m.**

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN (1925)

Director: Ernst Lubitsch (based on Oscar Wilde)

Cast: Irene Rich, May McAvoy, Bert Lytel

Production: Warner Bros.

Runtime: 82 min

Music: World premiere of a new score by Tobias Schwencke, performed by The Roaring Dames under the direction of Luiza Labouriau

8/27 **Thursday, August 27, 2026, Film starts at 9:00 p.m.**

THE CAT AND THE CANARY (1927)

Director: Paul Leni

Cast: Laura La Plante, Creighton Hale, Tully Marshall

Production: Universal Pictures

Runtime: 108 min

Music: A score by Neil Brand, performed by Ensemble Spooky Tune under the direction of George Morton and featuring Carolina Eyck on theremin

8/28 **Friday, August 28, 2026, Film starts at 9:00 p.m.**

SUNRISE (1927)

Director: Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau

Cast: George O'Brien, Janet Gaynor, Margaret Livingston

Production: Fox Film Corporation

Runtime: 106 min

Music: Ekkehard Wölk & The Silent Light Orchestra

Tickets are available for €22 at:
www.ufa-filmnaechte.de

About the Films

8/26

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

1925



Source: Deutsche Kinemathek

Director	Ernst Lubitsch
Cast	Irene Rich, May McAvoy, Bert Lytel
Production	Warner Bros.
Runtime	82 min

Berlin-born Ernst Lubitsch accepted an offer to move to Hollywood in 1922, where he rose to become one of the most celebrated directors and producers in American cinema. His trademark became the famous “Lubitsch Touch”: the art of suggesting events – often of a romantic nature – through hints, glances, and revealing gestures rather than explicit depiction, which contemporary censorship would not have permitted. In doing so, Lubitsch made the audience his accomplice.

One of the finest examples of this celebrated “Lubitsch Touch” is his sixth Hollywood production, *LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN*. Through shots of astonished faces, whispering ladies, opening doors, and forgotten accessories, this social satire tells the story of a fateful misunderstanding while skewering the double standards of English high society almost entirely through visual means.

At the time of its release, the *Los Angeles Times* praised Lubitsch for bringing a literary work to the screen while perfectly capturing the spirit of Oscar Wilde's original.

Synopsis: Young Lady Windermere suspects her husband of having an affair with a woman who abandoned her husband and child years earlier, ruining her reputation in London society before suddenly reappearing after a twenty-year absence. In reality, Mrs. Erlynne is Lady Windermere's long-presumed-dead mother, as she reveals to Lord Windermere. To protect his wife's reputation, Lord Windermere pays Mrs. Erlynne to conceal her true identity. Much to Lady Windermere's dismay, her husband invites the woman she believes to be his mistress to her birthday party. Humiliated and heartbroken, Lady Windermere decides to run away with her admirer, Lord Darlington. When Mrs. Erlynne discovers her daughter's farewell letter, she follows her to Darlington's apartment in an attempt to persuade her to return home. But when Lord Windermere unexpectedly arrives there in Darlington's company, Lady Windermere's reputation is suddenly at risk.

The all-female ensemble *The Roaring Dames*, under the direction of Luiza Labouriau, will perform the world premiere of a new score by Tobias Schwencke.

About the Films

8/27

THE CAT AND THE CANARY

1927



Source: DFF

Director	Paul Leni
Cast	Laura La Plante, Creighton Hale, Tully Marshall
Production	Universal Pictures
Runtime	108 min

Paul Leni arrived in Hollywood in 1927 at the invitation of Carl Laemmle to work for Universal Studios. The two men shared both Jewish and Swabian roots, and Laemmle had been deeply impressed by *DAS WACHSFIGURENKABINETT* (*WAXWORKS*, 1924), Leni's landmark contribution to cinematic Expressionism.

Leni remained devoted to the horror genre with *THE CAT AND THE CANARY*, an adaptation of a successful stage mystery and Broadway hit. Drawing on the visual vocabulary of German Expressionism – including stylized sets and dramatic contrasts of light and shadow – he infused the film with an unusually dark atmosphere. At the same time, exaggerated performances and deliberately grotesque comic moments repeatedly tip the film into comedy. The combination proved highly successful with audiences, and the film became a box-office hit following its 1927 premiere. Two further horror films followed before Leni died of heart disease at the age of just 44.

Synopsis: On the twentieth anniversary of eccentric millionaire Cyrus West's death, his relatives gather at his gloomy mansion for the reading of his will. To their disappointment, West has left his entire fortune to a distant relative, the young Annabelle West. But there is one catch: should she be declared mentally unfit, a second will comes into effect, transferring the money and valuable diamonds to another person whose identity is concealed in a sealed envelope.

Before Annabelle can learn the identity of her potential successor from the family lawyer, he disappears along with the secret. It is the first in a series of mysterious events that place Annabelle under increasing pressure and raise doubts about her sanity.

Ensemble Spooky Tune, under the direction of George Morton and featuring Carolina Eyck on theremin, will accompany the film with a score by Neil Brand, commissioned by Photoplay Productions for CHANNEL 4 and performed by arrangement with Photoplay Productions Ltd.

The presentation of *THE CAT AND THE CANARY* by arrangement with Photoplay Productions.

About the Films

8/28

SUNRISE

1927



Source: DFF

Director	Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau
Cast	George O'Brien, Janet Gaynor, Margaret Livingston
Production	Fox Film Corporation
Runtime	106 min

Following the international success of F.W. Murnau's DER LETZTE MANN (THE LAST LAUGH, 1924), Hollywood producer William Fox (born Wilhelm Fuchs in Austria-Hungary) signed the director to a four-year contract and brought him to Los Angeles. His first film for the Fox Film Corporation – later 20th Century Fox – SUNRISE, earned widespread critical acclaim.

The New York Times hailed the film as a “cinematic masterpiece,” praising Murnau’s ability to preserve the artistic sophistication of his German productions while working within the Hollywood studio system. Owing to its sublime direction and extraordinary cinematography, SUNRISE is widely regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the late silent-film era.

Synopsis: While spending time in the countryside, a sophisticated woman from the city begins an affair with a young farmer. She persuades him to leave his wife, abandon his farm, and move to the city with her. To achieve this, she encourages him to drown his wife in a nearby lake. During a boat trip, the farmer attempts to carry out the plan. At the last moment, however, he cannot go through with it. His terrified wife flees from him, and he finally realizes the enormity of what he was about to do. The couple reconcile and travel to the city, where they spend a joyous day together that culminates in a visit to a bustling fairground.

That night, they begin the journey home across the lake. A violent storm erupts, their boat capsizes, and the farmer’s wife – with whom he has just fallen in love all over again – disappears beneath the waves. Despite a search by the villagers, she remains missing. When the city woman appears and assumes her lover has successfully completed the murder, events quickly spiral out of control.

The UFA Film Nights will present the German premiere of a new 4K-restored digital version of the film, created by the San Francisco Film Preserve.

Music: Ekkehard Wölk & The Silent Light Orchestra

About the Music

8/26

THE ROARING DAMES

The Roaring Dames were formed especially for the UFA Film Nights 2026 as a nine-member ensemble consisting exclusively of female musicians. The ensemble features Kornelia Kulothungan on cello and Samar Hafez on double bass. Karola Elßner plays saxophone and clarinet, while Mathilde Conley performs on trumpet. Banjo and guitar are played by Eva Beneke. Silke Lange performs on accordion, percussions by Sabrina Ma. At the piano is Meg Morley.

The Roaring Dames are led by violinist Luiza Labouriau. She has played the violin since the age of five and has won numerous chamber music awards, including first prize at the 2021 International Chamber Music Competition Beethoven in seiner Zeit with Trio Egmont. Luiza Labouriau recently recorded with Trio Egmont for NAXOS and also leads a wide range of chamber music and interdisciplinary projects that bring together music, dance, theater, and vocal performance.



© Luiza Labouriau

The Roaring Dames will perform the world premiere of a new score by Tobias Schwencke. As a composer, pianist, and arranger, Schwencke is equally at home in a wide range of musical styles, from classical music to hip-hop, contemporary music to techno, and from Baroque madrigals to Persian spoken-word performance. In 2021, his score for CARMEN received its world premiere at the UFA Film Nights, performed by ensemble KONTRASTE.



© Tobias Schwencke

Schwencke has worked with directors including Herbert Fritsch, Leander Haußmann, Anna Bergmann, Claus Peymann, and Manfred Karge. His compositions have been premiered by ensembles such as Ensemble Intercontemporain, Ensemble Modern, Musikfabrik NRW, and the Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne.

www.luiza-labouriau.com

www.instagram.com/tobias_schwencke

About the Music

8/27

ENSEMBLE SPOOKY TUNE, CONDUCTED BY GEORGE MORTON, FEATURING CAROLINA EYCK ON THEREMIN

Ensemble Spooky Tune is a collaboration between film conductor George Morton and the c/o chamber orchestra, an ensemble that performs without a permanent conductor in its regular concert activities.

George Morton is regarded as one of the leading conductors of live film concerts and has conducted a broad repertoire of film scores. He is a regular guest conductor with the Babylon Orchestra Berlin, where he has already led more than 75 performances. *THE CAT AND THE CANARY* marks another collaboration between Morton and silent-film composer Neil Brand. In 2024, Morton orchestrated Brand's score for *THE WINNING OF BARBARA WORTH* for the Silent Film Festival in Pordenone.

The c/o chamber orchestra was founded in Berlin in 2014 by former members of the Baltic Sea Youth Philharmonic. The musicians wanted to preserve the energy and excitement of a youth orchestra while taking artistic responsibility for shaping the music themselves. The ensemble's name derives from the postal abbreviation "c/o" ("care of"). Just as a letter is entrusted to another person's care, a composer entrusts music to the care of musicians. The c/o chamber orchestra has appeared to great acclaim at festivals including Young Euro Classic, the Usedom Music Festival, and Sommerwinds Münster. Its debut recording, *Divertimento!*, was selected as BBC Radio 3's "CD of the Week."

For the performance of *THE CAT AND THE CANARY*, Ensemble Spooky Tune will be joined by Carolina Eyck, widely regarded as the world's leading theremin virtuoso.



Invented in 1920, the theremin is an electronic musical instrument played without physical contact. Pitch and volume are controlled by the position of the performer's hands relative to two antennas. The instrument is named after its inventor, Lev Termen, who became known in the United States as Leon Theremin. August 27, 2026, will mark the 130th anniversary of his birth.

Carolina Eyck has performed in more than 30 countries and has appeared with orchestras including the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Brussels Philharmonic. In 2022, she performed at the BBC Proms, and in 2025 she toured with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. She has released several solo albums and, through her project *Theremin & Voice*, is also active as a composer and producer of film music.

www.carolinaeyck.com

www.co-chamberorchestra.com

www.georgeconducts.co.uk

About the Music

8/28

EKKEHARD WÖLK & THE SILENT LIGHT ORCHESTRA

The Silent Light Orchestra, formed especially for the UFA Film Nights, already proved itself at the 2021 and 2022 festivals. The ensemble emerged from members of Trioglyzerin and the Ekkehard Wölk Quartet.



Trioglyzerin has appeared at the UFA Film Nights on numerous occasions and has delivered several acclaimed performances. The ensemble performed the music for Fritz Lang's SPIES in 2012, SECRETS OF THE ORIENT in 2013, THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE ACHMED in both 2015 and 2020, THE MOUNTAIN CAT together with the Deutsche Oper Berlin Jazz Combo in 2016, and SUMURUN in 2018.

Ekkehard Wölk also enjoyed considerable success with his 2019 score for MADAME DUBARRY, an accomplished fusion of Baroque and jazz. For that project, he joined forces with three additional musicians to form the ensemble Ancien Régime.

For their 2021 score for THE LIGHT OF ASIA, the Silent Light Orchestra focused particularly on the film's Oriental-inspired soundscapes. In 2022, the ensemble presented a new composition for CHASTE SUZANNE, inspired by the vibrant dance music of the 1920s while also incorporating elements of modern jazz.

The Silent Light Orchestra is led by Ekkehard Wölk (piano, keyboards, arrangements, composition) and includes Kristoff Becker (cello, electronics), Andrea Marcelli (drums, clarinet), Ulrich van der Schoor (accordion, keyboards), and Walter Gauchel (soprano and alto saxophone, flute).

About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services, and education company with more than 75,000 employees that operates in some 50 countries around the world. It includes the entertainment group RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato Group, Bertelsmann Marketing Services, the Bertelsmann Education Group, and Bertelsmann Investments. The company generated revenues of €19 billion in the 2025 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world.

As a creative content company with a history spanning more than 190 years, Bertelsmann engages in cultural activities on multiple levels – both nationally and internationally. The focus of its Culture@Bertelsmann initiatives is to support cultural diversity and preserve important cultural heritage. Bertelsmann has been organizing the successful UFA Film Nights silent-film festival in Berlin for many years and has repeatedly served as the principal sponsor of digital restorations of significant silent-era films.

The Group also owns the Archivio Storico Ricordi in Milan, which holds a rich collection of unique materials documenting 200 years of Italian opera history. Bertelsmann is cataloguing and digitizing the archive according to the latest standards, making thousands of documents, stage and costume designs, libretti, and pieces of business correspondence freely available online.

For more than 20 years, Bertelsmann has also provided authors with a prominent platform for presenting their latest works through its literary series The Blue Sofa. Its Culture@Bertelsmann initiative is dedicated to making culture accessible to a broad audience. Further information about Bertelsmann is available at:

www.bertelsmann.com

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We thank the Verein der Freunde und Förderer des Internationalen Filmerbes e.V., an association dedicated to preserving international film heritage, for its support in sourcing materials and subtitling the films.



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