

British Silents, BFI and Phoenix present

THE 18TH **BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL**

10th – 13th September 2015



[www.britishtsilentfilmfestival.com](http://www.britishtsilentfilmfestival.com)

**Phoenix**



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

# WELCOME TO THE 18TH BRITISH SILENT FILM FESTIVAL

We're very pleased to welcome you back to Leicester's Phoenix Cinema with an exciting programme of rediscoveries, rarely-seen British silent (and not-so-silent) films and highlights from festivals such as Pordenone and San Francisco. We'll be looking at iconic events from the world in 1915 along with heroes and villains from Richard III, including a screening close to his resting place in Leicester Cathedral, to Jules Verne's action-hero Michel Strogoff, early cosmonauts, brave seafarers, spies, war heroes and football players. We're also very proud to have the world's best silent film musicians to accompany our films. It's a packed four days. Enjoy!

## BRITISH SILENT FILM AND THE TRANSITION TO SOUND

In 2011, The British Silent Film Festival presented a taster presentation of extracts from early sound films at the Barbican in London. The audience wanted more. And so, as part of our three-year AHRC-funded research project 'British Silent Cinema and the Transition to Sound' Geoff Brown and Laraine Porter will present a series of rarely-seen films made in the transitional period around 1929/1930. Some were shot silent with sound added later, others made in silent and 'talkie' versions, some had a complete synchronised sound track but many still used intertitles at key moments.

This is a fascinating and rarely explored period in British cinema history with films which both reflect back to the achievements of the silent period and forward to the full development of film sound. The most successful of these transitional films incorporate the best of both and we'll be examining this period between now and 2017.





**Thursday 10 September 10.30am  
THE W PLAN (1930)**

A tense WWI spy thriller in which Colonel Duncan Grant (British star Brian Aherne, in his first talking role), parachutes into Germany to gather intelligence on the enemy's secret 'W Plan' and to assist Allied POWs in digging escape tunnels.

This early British talkie is a revelation; taut, stylish, with a great cast and a thrilling plot. The trade press were uncharacteristically enthusiastic about an early British talkie, saying 'thrills in plenty, a little romance and a considerable amount of joy. It is a triumph for Brian Aherne.' Film Weekly, 12.7.1930.

**Dir:** Victor Saville: UK 1930: 95 mins: PG. Sound

**Cast:** Brian Aherne, Madeleine Carroll, Gordon Harker.

Introduced by Laraine Porter.

**Thursday 10 September 1.30pm  
WAS BLACKMAIL REALLY  
BRITAIN'S FIRST TALKIE?**

Presentation and screenings by Geoff Brown.

History always tells us that Britain's first talking feature was *Blackmail*, which went under the microphones in the spring of 1929.

We hear much less about rivals and competitors like the tropical melodrama *White Cargo* ("the world's most sensational all-talking film"), the even more fraught *To What Red Hell*, the charming *Under the Greenwood Tree*, or the fogbound thriller *Black Waters*.

In a fully illustrated talk, Geoff Brown surveys the hectic landscape of a film industry just beginning its painful transition from silent to sound production.

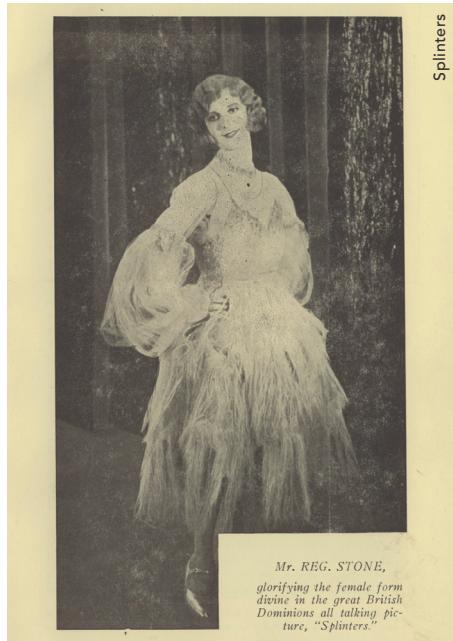


**Thursday 10 September 2.30pm**  
**DARK RED ROSES (1929)**

When a handsome young cellist ingratiate himself on the wealthy Cardew family, Mrs Laura Cardew (Frances Doble) appears to become infatuated with him, much to the frustration of her artist husband David (Stuart Rome). Convinced that his wife is having an affair he seizes the opportunity for hideous revenge when Laura suggests that he makes a cast of the musician's priceless hands.

The couple's children are played by real-life siblings Jill and Jack Clayton, the latter who went on to become a director in his own right and the film features a rare appearance of the legendary dancer George Balanchine, performing his own choreography.

**Dir:** Sinclair Hill, UK 1929, 53 mins. PG. Sound  
**Cast:** Stuart Rome, Frances Doble, Kate Cutler, Hugh Eden, Jack and Jill Clayton



Mr. REG. STONE,  
glorifying the female form  
daring in the great British  
Dominions all talking pic-  
ture, "Splinters."

**Thursday 10 September 4.00pm**  
**SPLINTERS (1929)**

Beginning our look at 1915, Splinters tells of the origins of the 1915 musical comedy revue of the same name, founded by British soldiers fighting on the Western Front in France. The film opens with an intertitle stating 'Supported by a beauty chorus of 40 and everyone a perfect gentleman', which sets the film's tone as much of the revue features some of the most convincing drag acts ever seen on the screen.

A fascinating and light-hearted insight into a slice of WWI history, made all the more authentic as it features some of the original Splinters cast.

**Dir:** Jack Raymond: UK 1929; 82 mins. U. Sound  
**Cast:** Sydney Howard, Nelson Keys, Carroll Gibbons  
Introduced by Laraine Porter



High Treason

**Thursday 10 September 6.00pm**  
**HIGH TREASON (1928)**

Based on Noel Pemberton Billing's futuristic play, this early British sci-fi was influenced by Fritz Lang's Metropolis with Andrew Mazzei's stunning set design imagining life in 1940.

The world has divided into two conflicting entities; the United States of Europe and the Empire of the Atlantic States and peace is threatened when a terrorist plot is uncovered to blow-up the rail tunnel under the Channel.

This is a remarkably prescient film that foresaw the Channel Tunnel sixty four years before it opened, but it is also a plea for world peace a decade after the end of WWI. Made as both silent and sound, this is the sound version re-discovered in the Library of Congress.

**Dir:** Maurice Elvey, UK 1929, 67 mins, U. Sound  
**Cast:** Jameson Thomas, Benita Hulme, Humberston Wright, Irene Rook, Basil Gill  
Introduced by Geoff Brown

**Thursday 10 September 8.30pm**  
**THE GUNS OF LOOS (1928)**

Set against the backdrop of the shell crisis of 1915 at home and the Battle of Loos on the Western Front, two soldiers, one the manager of Grimlaw's munitions factory are tested in their rivalry for Diana, a red cross nurse (Madeleine Carroll in her first film role).

They are equally tested on the battlefield where issues of class and personal bravery are sensitively explored. An extraordinary action sequence - the saving of the guns - gives the lie to the myth that British silent film was static and stagey.

**Dir:** Sinclair Hill, UK 1928, 84 mins, PG  
**Cast:** Henry Victor, Madeleine Carroll, Donald McArdle, Danny Laidlaw

**Accompanied by the world premiere of  
Stephen Horne's stirring new score**



The Guns of Loos



**Friday 11 September 9.00am**

### **THE ROCKS OF VALPRE (1919)**

Adapted from the novel by popular writer, Ethel M Dell, this is a romantic melodrama about a young woman who falls in lust for a glamorous French soldier involved in secret work with the French army. But when he gets falsely accused of stealing army plans, she marries a rich and older man.

Their marriage is strained when her feckless brothers hint that she only married him for his money whilst themselves pestering for handouts. Marital problems escalate when she and her young beau get cut off by the tide on the Rocks of Valpre and are forced to spend the night together. Elvey's Torbay locations look absolutely sumptuous!

**Dir:** Maurice Elvey: UK 1919, 80 mins. PG

**Cast:** Basil Gill, Peggy Carlisle, Cowley Wright, Humberston Wright

**Friday 11 September 11.30am**

### **NOT FOR SALE (1924)**

The British Silent Film Festival has been agreeably surprised at the quality of the films scripted by Lydia Hayward in recent years - her work with Manning Haynes on their

adaptations of W. W. Jacobs stories are a genuine rediscovery of the best of British silent cinema. This modest but well-constructed tale of a young aristocrat reduced to living in a Bloomsbury boarding house featuring a strong ensemble cast is well directed by comedy king W. P. Kellino.

**Dir:** W.P. Kellino. **Scr.** Lydia Hayward, UK 1924, 86 mins, U

**Cast:** Ian Hunter, Mary Odette, George Bellamy, Gladys Hamer

**Friday 11 September 1.30pm**

### **HITCHCOCK LOST AND FOUND THE MAN FROM HOME (1922)**

Like Three Live Ghosts, The Man from Home was adapted from an American property, the 1908 novel by Booth Tarkington (best known for The Magnificent Ambersons).

It's a fairly conventional romance of an American heiress, loved by a boy back home, but bedazzled by a glamorous prince in beautiful Italian surroundings. In the print surviving at the EYE Film Institute in the Netherlands the English titles designed by Hitchcock have been replaced but Hitchcock scholars Charles Barr and Alain Kerzoncuf offer a convincing argument that Hitchcock's hand is detectable in the film! Charles Barr will explain more in his introduction.

**Dir:** George Fitzmaurice, UK 1922, U

**Cast:** Anna Q Nilsson, Norman Kerry, James Kirkwood, Annette Benson, Jose Ruben

Introduced by Charles Barr



Den Starkaste

Friday 11 September 3.30pm

## **THE STRONGEST / DEN STARKASTE (1929)**

The first of our Swedish classic Silents is the story of an itinerant sailor who meets a beautiful girl and takes a job with her father, the Skipper of an Arctic sealer. He must prove himself stronger than his rival among the glaciers and ice floes.

One of the most striking films of the late Swedish silent cinema, the cramped scenes on

board the ship are beautifully contrasted with images of the men leaping from ice floe to ice floe in search of their quarry. One suspects that the filmmaking was as heroic as the story.

**Dir:** Alf Sjöberg, Axel Lindblom, Sweden 1929,  
97 mins, PG

**Cast:** Anders Henrikson, Bengt Djurberg, Gun  
Holmquist, Hjalmer Peters

Friday 11 September 6.00pm

## HITCHCOCK LOST AND FOUND THREE LIVE GHOSTS (1922)

Recently rediscovered at Gosfilmofond in Russia, this comedy is one of the thought-to-be lost films on which a young Alfred Hitchcock worked during his tenure at the Famous Players Lasky's London studio.

Directed by George Fitzmaurice, this was adapted from a popular Broadway play and concerns three veterans who return to London from the War only to discover that they have been officially listed as dead.

**Dir:** George Fitzmaurice, UK 1922, 60 mins, U

**Cast:** Anna Q Nilsson, Norman Kerry, Edmund Golding, Cyril Chadwick, John Miltern  
Introduced by Hitchcock scholar Charles Barr



developed way back in the 1900s.

An adaptation of Jules Verne's epic scale Siberian adventure 'Courier of the Czar' is the perfect vehicle for mega star Ivan Mosjoukine.

This huge production out-Hollywoods Hollywood in offering fantastic locations, costumes, action and romance.

**Dir:** Victor Tourjansky Scr. Tourjansky, Mosjoukine, Boris De Fast, France 1926, 158 mins, PG

**Cast:** Ivan Mosjoukine, Nathalie Kovanko, Jeanne Brindeau

Friday 11 September 8.30pm

## MICHEL STROGOFF (1926)

As we celebrate the centenary of Technicolor this Pathecolor spectacle shows what glories could be achieved with the stencil process



**Saturday 12 September 9.00am**

## **WINDJAMMER (1930)**

Adapted from the book *By Way of Cape Horn* by A.J Villiers, *Windjammer* is a beautifully-filmed record of the last journey of the Grace Harwar, a full-rigged Finnish Windjammer sailing from Australia to England via Cape Horn.

A hybrid of actuality and fiction, the real-life film of the journey was shot silent and later combined with dramatic 'talkie' sequences filmed in the UK. The real journey was fraught with difficulty as the ship encountered rough seas and becalming in the Doldrums, the crew ran out of food and water and tragically the cameraman, Gregory Walker, was killed on the journey.

*Windjammer* is a unique portrait of the last of the great sailing ships and the men who served on the most demanding but stunning sea voyages.

**Dir:** J.O.C. Orton, UK 1930, 58 mins, U. Sound

**Cast:** Tony Bruce, Michael Hogan, Hal Gordon, Sam Livesey

Introduced by Laraine Porter



**Saturday 12 September 11.30am**

## **THE WORLD IN 1915 – THE SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA**

2015 marks the centenary of the sinking of the passenger liner RMS Lusitania by a German U boat in the waters off Ireland resulting in the deaths of 1,198 people. This event marked the first step toward the United States' entry into the First World War.

Bryony Dixon will show footage, including rarely seen early British animation, relating to the sinking of the Lusitania and discover how the beautiful 'Lucy' intersects with the world of silent film. 40 mins

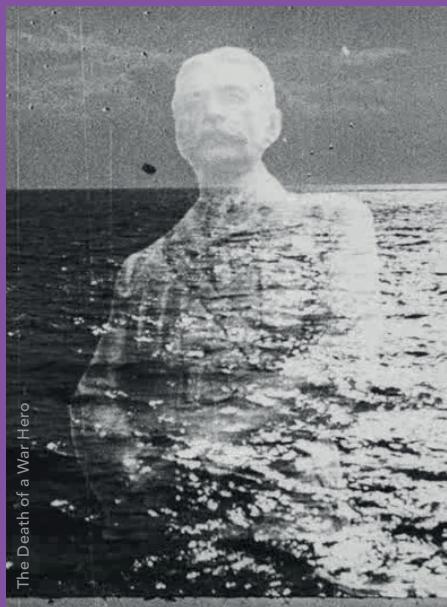
**Saturday 12 September 12.00pm**  
**THE DEATH OF A WAR HERO**

On 5 June 1916, HMS Hampshire was sunk by a German mine off the coast of Orkney. Among the 655 men killed was Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, and a national hero.

Mystery and speculation surrounded the sinking of the Hampshire and the death of Kitchener. Both aspects of this story – the mystery and the loss, are covered in two rarely seen films from the IWM collection, 'Earl Kitchener of Khartoum' (1926) and 'The Unveiling of the Kitchener Memorial, Orkney' (1926).

The second part of the programme will be a selection of animated films used for military training during the First World War.

Presented by Dr Toby Haggith, Senior Curator, Imperial War Museum, 30 mins



Steamboat Bill Jnr

**Saturday 12 September 1.30pm**  
**STEAMBOAT BILL JNR (1928)**  
**& BUSTER KEATON SHORTS**

Neil Brand analyses Buster Keaton's character, comedy, greatest stunts and his superb understanding of the camera in a mixture of clips, informed context and the complete, sparkling new restoration of Steamboat Bill Jnr, all accompanied live on the piano.

From his earliest films with Fatty Arbuckle, through his glory days, to the two stunts that really nearly did kill him, we meet Buster the man and the character, as well as enjoying some of the funniest moments in silent comedy.

**Dir:** Buster Keaton/Charles Reisner, US 1928,  
total running time 130 mins, U

**Saturday 12 September 4.00pm**

## **THE GREAT GAME**

Set in Chelsea's Stamford Bridge ground and featuring many real-life players from the day, this is the first film with football as its central theme.

It deals with the day to day dramas, conflicts and love interests of players and managers in the run-up to the Cup Final, where the Club Manager wants to introduce new, young players whilst the Chairman insists on signing older, mature players such as Jack Cock who played for Chelsea in real-life. Little has changed!

**Dir:** Jack Raymond, UK 1930, 76 mins, U. Sound

**Cast:** John Batten, Renee Clama, Jack Cock, Randle Ayrton, Rex Harrison, Billy Blyth  
Introduced by Bryony Dixon



**Saturday 12 September 6.00pm**

## **THE COSMIC VOYAGE (1936)**

Vasili Zhuravlov's film version of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky's book about a boy's involvement with the first Soviet moon shot (in 1946!) was intended to encourage a generation of cosmonauts, and with its breath taking model work, pacy action-adventure vibe, it certainly does that, or it would have done had it ever been released.

The film was closely linked with the Soviet space race and its amazing futuristic design and technology is closely linked with the ideas of Soviet Constructivism. Its visionary achievement predicts real-life developments in space exploration with uncanny accuracy.

Neil Brand's new electronic score channels Ron Goodwin and Hans Zimmer and premieres here at the British Silent Film Festival.

**Dir:** Vasili Zhuravlov, USSR 1936, 75 mins, U

**Cast:** Sergei Komarov, Vasilii Kovrigin, Viktor Gaponenko, Nikolai Feoktistov

**Saturday 12 September 8.30pm**

**at Leicester Cathedral**

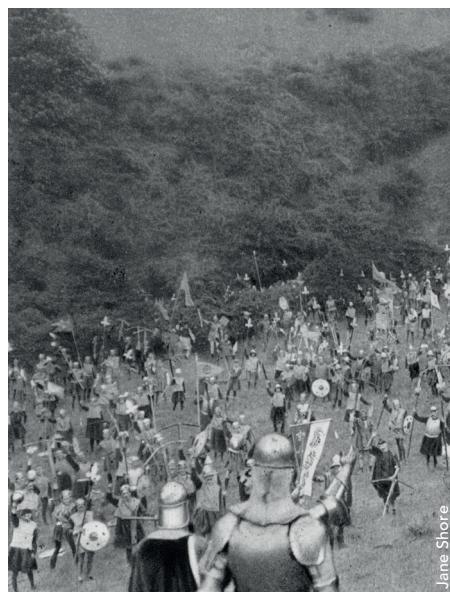
## **JANE SHORE (1915)**

A cast of thousands is used to great effect by Will Barker in his ambitious 1915 version of the much-told story of Jane Shore, a goldsmith's wife who becomes mistress to Edward IV and then falls foul of the future Richard III.

With gorgeous location work at the Devil's Punch Bowl and Chepstow Castle. Newly transferred with its original tints from a nitrate print, this is a rare chance to see this early classic from the BFI National Archive on the big screen, presented with a new score by Laura Rossi in Leicester Cathedral which recently saw the reinternment of Richard III himself.

**Dir:** Bert Haldane, F. Martin Thornton, UK 1915,  
80 mins, U

**Cast:** Blanch Forysthe, Roy Travers, Rolf Leslie,  
Robert Purdie



Jane Shore



The World in 1915

**Sunday 13 September 9.00am**

## **THE WORLD IN 1915 – GALLIPOLI**

The centenary of Gallipoli has poignancy for Australia and New Zealand for whom it was a defining nation-building episode. It was no less traumatic for the Allied troops of Britain and France with their racially-diverse regiments or indeed for the Turks who were defending their homeland at appalling cost.

You have to look hard at the morale-boosting films made during the campaign to see any of its horrors but the myth-building on which subsequent films such as *Tell England* (1931) and *Gallipoli* (1981) draw is as clear as daylight.

Screenings and presentation by Bryony Dixon  
90 mins

**Sunday 13 September 11.30am  
TELL ENGLAND (1931)**

'Tell England, ye who pass by, we died for her and we died content'.

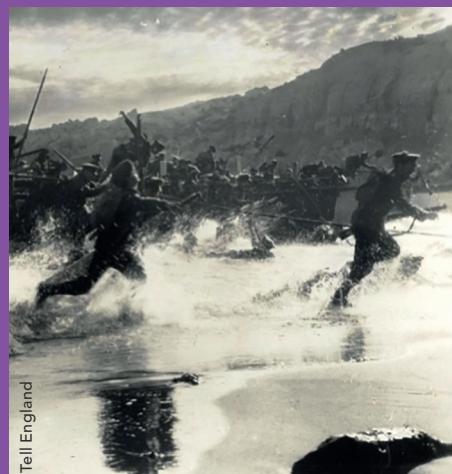
Anthony Asquith and Geoffrey Barkas directed this adaptation of a 1922 novel by Ernest Raymond in which two friends find themselves in the middle of the terrible events at Gallipoli.

Despite the compromised quality of the 1931 soundtrack this is a beautifully made film – the beach landings sequence is one of the finest action sequences of early British cinema. If the story rings a bell it's because it was the inspiration for Peter Weir's celebrated Gallipoli (1981).

Asquith's older brother fought at Gallipoli burying his friend Rupert Brooke who died on the way there.

**Dir. & Scr:** Anthony Asquith, Geoffrey Barkas, UK 1931, 88 mins, PG. Sound

**Cast:** Carl Harbord, Tony Bruce, Fay Compton, Dennis Hoey



**Sunday 13 September 1.30pm  
THE SILENT PERSUADER: EARLY  
BRITISH ADVERTISING FILMS**

A dip into the forgotten world of British motion picture advertising.

Did you know that there were advertising films even before cinemas? Join Steve Foxon (BFI Curator) for a light hearted look as we explore the growth of the cinematic advert right up to WWII and see some of the finest and sometimes bizarre products that British consumers were exposed to at the cinema.

From Rudge bicycles to Rufflette curtain tape we delve into the lucrative medium that was the Silent Persuader.

Screenings and presentation by Steve Foxon  
75 mins



The Kingdom of Rye

Sunday 13 September 3.15pm

## **THE KINGDOM OF RYE / RÅGENS RIKE (1929)**

Based on a Finnish poem, *The Kingdom of Rye* is a gorgeous romantic drama set in rural northern Sweden during the harvest.

It features a young couple whose love affair is fraught with Hardy-esque complications alongside the woes of the unhappily married wife of the landowner. Dealing with universal themes such as humankind's dependence upon nature, masculine rivalry, love and passion, it's also underscored with sexual tension.

The eerie atmosphere of the wife's lonely night time walks and the frenzied drinking duels between rival farmers are contrasted with the beauty and tranquillity of the Nordic summer nights and its sumptuous landscape.

**Dir:** Ivar Johansson; Sweden 1929, 128 mins

**Cast:** Mathias Taube, Eric Laurent, Märtha Lindlöf, Margit Manstad

Sunday 13 September 6.30pm

## ARSENALE (1929)

The second part of Ukrainian director Alexander Dovzhenko's trilogy is set during the 1918 Russian Civil War in the bleak aftermath of WWI.

Timosh, a demobbed soldier, survives a devastating train crash on his return from the War to find that Ukrainian freedom is being prematurely celebrated. He becomes increasingly disenfranchised with the governance of the munitions factory in which he works and calls for the adoption of the new Soviet Collectivism.

Dovzhenko was commissioned by Stalin to make Arsenal in an attempt to win the Ukrainian people over to the Soviet cause. The film's ultimate failure to do so, is possibly a reflection of Dovzhenko's own divided loyalties.

**Dir:** Alexander Dovzhenko: USSR 1929,  
92 mins, PG

**Cast:** Semyon Svashenko, Amvrosi Buchma,  
Georgi Khorkov, Dimitri Erdman, Sergei Petrov

**The British Premiere of a stunning new  
music score by Guy Bartell of Brontnt  
Industry Kapital**



**Arsenal print restored by the Oleksandr Dovzhenko National Centre (ODNC) in Kyiv and Guy Bartell's score co-commissioned by The British Council and ODNC.**

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ОЛЕКСАНДРА  
ДОВЖЕНКА

BRITISH  
COUNCIL

The Festival is organised by Laraine Porter, Bryony Dixon, Sue Porter, Neil Brand and Pete Groschl with musicians Neil Brand, Guenther Buchwald, Stephen Horne and John Sweeney. Special thanks to BFI, Paul Marygold, Kevin Brownlow, Tony Fletcher, Geoff Brown, Charles Barr, Alain Kerzoncuf, Gosfilmofund (Russia) Pablo Rossello (British Council, Ukraine), Svenska Filminstitutet (Sweden), EYE Film (Netherlands), Cinémathèque française, Phoenix Cinema and De Montfort University.

## AT A GLANCE TIMETABLE

### Thu 10 September

- 9.00am+ Registration in the Phoenix foyer
- 10.30am The W Plan + Introduction
- 1.30pm Was Blackmail Britain's First Talkie?
- 2.30pm Dark Red Roses
- 4.00pm Splinters
- 6.00pm High Treason
- 8.30pm The Guns of Loos

### Fri 11 September

- 9.00am The Rocks of Valpre
- 11.00am Not for Sale
- 1.30pm The Man from Home
- 3.30pm The Strongest/Den Starkaste
- 6.00pm Three Live Ghosts
- 8.30pm Michel Strogoff

### Sat 12 September

- 9.00am Windjammer
- 11.00am The World in 1915:  
The Sinking of the Lusitania
- 12.00pm 'The Death of a War Hero' highlights  
from the Imperial War Museum
- 1.30pm Steamboat Bill Jnr and  
Buster Keaton programme
- 4.00pm The Great Game
- 6.00pm The Cosmic Voyage
- 8.30pm Jane Shore at Leicester Cathedral

### Sun 13 September

- 9.00am The World in 1915: Gallipoli
- 11.00am Tell England
- 1.30pm The Silent Persuaders:  
Early British Advertising Films
- 3.15pm The Kingdom of Rye/Ragens Rike
- 6.30pm Arsenal

## TICKETS AND BOOKING

### TICKETS

Festival 4-day pass £105 full (£90 concessions)  
Festival 1-day pass £50 full (£40 concessions)  
Individual tickets vary, please call the Box Office  
for information.  
Festival passes include lunch, tea and coffee  
each day and entrance to all events.

### BOOKING

Online at [www.phoenix.org.uk](http://www.phoenix.org.uk)  
or call 0116 2422800

Festival website and further information  
[www.britishsilentfilmfestival.com](http://www.britishsilentfilmfestival.com)

### PHOENIX



Phoenix, 4 Midland Street, Leicester LE1 1TG

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