

THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY / DER GOLDENE SCHMETTERLING

MICHAEL CURTIZ, GERMANY, 1926

Screening: Sunday 22 April, 11 am

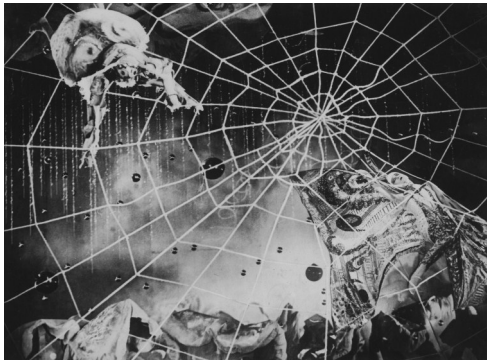


Image courtesy of bfi Stills, Posters and Designs

Der golden Schmetterling – released in Britain as *The Golden Butterfly* – was the final European film made by Michael Curtiz before he moved to find fame and fortune in Hollywood, where he is principally remembered for *Casablanca* (1942) and *Mildred Pierce* (1945). *The Golden Butterfly* is a coproduction between a number of European companies, countries and studios; based on a story by the quintessentially English author, P. G. Wodehouse (whose work was also adapted for *The Clicking of Cuthbert* series screened as part of this year's British Silent Film Festival programme), the film was financed by German and Danish film companies, directed by a Hungarian, and shot on location in Austria and England. The English location of choice was Cambridge, and so the film fits nicely into our programme of films screened at this year's venue, the Cambridge Arts Picturehouse.

The film was distributed in the UK by the Stoll Picture Company, who clearly had a fondness for P. G. Wodehouse adaptations; they were also responsible for the production and distribution of *The Clicking of Cuthbert* golf shorts released a few years

earlier. *The Golden Butterfly* was adapted from Wodehouse's 1915 short story, *The Making of Mac's*. Curtiz's film tells the story of Andy (Nils Asther), who takes a university place at Cambridge but quits in order to run the family restaurant following the death of his father. Andy becomes involved in a love triangle with a stage chorus (Lili Damita) and a playboy regular at his restaurant, Teddy (Jack Trevor). Upon the stage chorus' rise to fame, she begins to bring her theatrical friends into Andy's restaurant, making it a fashionable venue, but the old regulars begin to miss the quiet, local charms of the restaurant before the takeover of the luvvies. The tone of the film is very different to other popular Wodehouse adaptations of the silent era, as Brian Taves has argued:

The serious artistry of *Der Goldene Schmetterling* separates it from other Wodehouse adaptations. It succeeds as a product of very high cultural tone, far beyond the more populist, entertainment-directed aims of other adaptations and of Wodehouse's own writings. The new characters added a complexity that would otherwise have been lacking, endowing the story's development with romantic subplots appropriate to the casting of vampish Damita as the star. As a rendering of the story itself, *Der Goldene Schmetterling* would be regarded as a failure save for the fact that it entirely reinterprets the original for its own purpose, one that is memorable in its own right, more so than some attempts to simply imitate the source.

(Brian Taves, *P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood: Screenwriting, Satires and Adaptations*, p. 20)

CAST

Lily Damita -
Lilian

Jack Trevor -
Aberdeen

Hermann Leffler -
Mac Farland

Nils Asther -
Andy

CREATIVE
ENGLAND

Picture
house
ARTS
CAMBRIDGE

DE MONTFORT
UNIVERSITY
LEICESTER