



THE MYSTERIOUS LADY

MGM 1928

directed by Fred Niblo

Cast

Tania: Greta Garbo

Karl: Conrad Nagel

General Alexandroff: Gustav von Seyffertitz

Max: Albert Pollet

Col. Von Raden: Edward Connelly

General's Aide: Richard Alexander



Scenario: Bess Meredyth
Photography: William Daniels
Set design: Cedric Gibbons
Editor: Margaret Booth
Wardrobe: Gilbert Clark

Duration: 81 minutes
Projection speed: standard
Aperture: full

Musical score by Carl
Davis (69 players)



LIVE CINEMA

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY

Sexy, sensuous and lustrous, *The Mysterious Lady* is a Garbo vehicle. 'The dream princess of eternity - the knockout of the ages,' said critic Robert Sherwood of her performance. Photoplay Magazine noted, 'The first reel lays on Garbo's sinuousness with a lavish hand.'

Tania, an exotic Russian spy, seduces Karl, an Austrian captain, to gain access to secret documents. They fall in love. Karl is imprisoned for losing the documents but escapes to look for Tania. The lovers reunited, Tania turns traitor. She gives Karl papers stolen from her superior, General Alexandroff, who discovers the theft. Tania shoots him in order to escape to safety in Austria with Karl.

Following MGM's success with *Flesh and the Devil* and *Love*, *The Mysterious Lady* was intended as a vehicle for Garbo and John Gilbert. Not wishing to devalue their top male star by making him play a decommissioned soldier opposite Garbo's exotic, man-eating spy, MGM cast the young Conrad Nagel as Karl instead. He is perfect as the naïve and impressionable lieutenant. Fred Niblo, usually associated with action pictures after *Ben-Hur*, was an unusual choice as director. However, his direction helped to redress the balance between Garbo's sex appeal and the serious business of international espionage. Photoplay said, 'Fred Niblo gives us a gripping story of war intrigue.' Cinematographer William Daniels, who was influential in fashioning Garbo's glamorous image, seems to have been given carte blanche to create unusual lighting effects: Garbo is first seen in silhouette, illuminated by flashes of lightning, then by candlelight. She looks ravishing throughout.

The opera *Tosca* figures strongly in the film so in his score Carl Davis quotes from Puccini. The music is lusciously romantic as befits the high drama and Viennese setting.