



ORPHANS OF THE STORM

D W Griffith Productions 1921

Directed by D.W. Griffith

Cast

Henriette Girard: Lillian Gish

Louise Girard: Dorothy Gish

Chevalier de Vaudrey: Joseph Schildkraut

Danton: Monte Blue

Robespierre: Sidney Herbert



Photography: Hendrik Sartov, Paul Allen
and G.W. Bitzer

Art Direction: Charles M. Kirk

Set Design: Edward Scholl

Editing: James and Rose Smith



A tinted print

Duration: 154 minutes plus interval

Projection speed: variable

Aperture: Sound Academy

Musical score by

John Lanchbery (55 players)



'Vivid scenes of historically colored
melodrama flash one after the other
on the screen.' -

New York Times, January 1922



LIVE CINEMA

ORPHANS OF THE STORM

'It has the sweep of The Birth of a Nation, the remarkable tragic drive of Broken Blossoms, the terrific melodramatic appeal of Way Down East.'

Exhibitors Trade Review, January 1922

Griffith based his last great epic on the play *The Two Orphans*, an adaptation of the French play *Les Deux Orphelines* by Adolphe d'Ennery and Eugene Cormon. The play had been a smash-hit in America having received 100,000 performances since its introduction in 1874. Changing the title to *Orphans of the Storm*, Griffith set his film in Revolutionary France and transformed the melodrama into a sweeping historical epic.

Griffith was determined to outdo the European historical spectacles that had been so successful in America. He set about reconstructing 18th century Paris at his Mamaroneck studio and paid the local townspeople \$1.25 a day to become the Parisian *foule*. Production costs were enormous. The budget for wigs alone was said to have been more than the entire budget for Griffith's first five-reel film! Almost fourteen acres of sets were built including exact replicas of the Palais Royale, Notre Dame, the salon at Versailles and the Bastille. Pre-publicity claimed that twenty-six tons of artefacts had been imported from France and that the fountain in the Bel-Air sequence was, with the prohibition agent's permission, a real fountain of wine.

The film presented him with a perfect vehicle for two of his most popular actresses, the sisters Lillian and Dorothy Gish. The orphans of the title are foster sisters: the blind Louise, played by Dorothy, and Henriette, played by Lillian. The two girls leave their Normandy village for Paris to seek a cure for Louise's eyesight. They meet an unscrupulous Marquis who, entranced by the beautiful Henriette, abducts her. Whilst Henriette is paraded before the aristocracy, Louise wanders the backstreets of Paris alone. She is given shelter by La Frochard, an evil beggar woman. Henriette is rescued from the Marquis' clutches by the elegant Chevalier de Vaudray. They fall in love but are prevented from marrying because she is a commoner. Louise finds her champion in Jacques, La Frochard's crippled son. The people rise up against the aristocracy and, with the fall of the Bastille, the Revolution takes hold. Henriette herself becomes a victim of the Terror when she shields her aristocratic lover. Danton uses his popularity with the Parisian crowd to repay his own debt to her and, after a thrilling climax in the shadow of the guillotine, the sisters are reunited.

John Lanchbery's score encapsulates both the intimate and the historic nature of the film. Act I opens with an overture which establishes the theme of the Revolution itself, heavy and compelling. This theme is developed throughout the film until it provides an exhilarating climax. Interspersed are French songs which accentuate the plight of the two sisters, one of which is used for the Entracte which introduces Act II. Two themes have been retained from the original score by Louis F Gottschalk and W. F. Peters: the signature for Jacques-Forget-Not and an enchanting love theme from *Mignon* by Ambroise Thomas.