



*Salutes :*

rouben  
mamoulian



Photo by Frank Merwald

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

"When I was a schoolboy, I remember a teacher of physics told us once that when a regiment crosses a bridge they have to break their step because the rhythmic step creates vibrations strong enough to destroy the bridge. And this stuck in my head.

"Well, any kind of a force can be used destructively, or constructively. Fire can cook a meal, keep you warm or burn a house down. And if rhythm is that strong that you can destroy a bridge then you can build something that is equally as powerful, but constructive."

Rouben Mamoulian has been a force, such as he has described. His directorial efforts in American theater and film since the 1920's have been a most positive force in bringing significant change to these popular mediums of artistic expression.

He was born in Russia, in the Caucasus region at Tiflis on October 8, 1899. Here, he was "born into the arts." His mother was president of the Armenian Theatre. Personally, and at school, he took great interest in the arts. It was through reading the great literary works from authors of many countries that Mamoulian developed his feelings of affinity for many nations other than his own. And, as he also learned through his studies of the arts, the experiences of different peoples are not really "national", but human.

Turning from the study of criminal law at the University of Moscow, he joined the Moscow Art Theatre and came under the influence of Stanislavsky's rule of naturalism for the stage. This principle he later abandoned, after directing his first play, in London, at the age of 24:

"I discovered I had no affinity for naturalism on the stage. In my subsequent work, my aim always was rhythm and poetic stylization."

An offer from George Eastman to direct the American Opera Company in Rochester was an opportunity for Mamoulian to develop his ideas of stylization in the theatrical arts. Success in this venture led to the important Broadway request that he direct a new play, Porgy. And from Porgy in 1927, through some four dozen other stage productions (the last in 1966) Rouben Mamoulian has also given his creative efforts to the American film:

"I feel the stage has joys of its own, and difficulties and challenges of its own. And the films have a different set of pleasures and challenges and difficulties. So, I love the two mediums for their differences, not for their similarity."

Through this retrospective we shall see Mamoulian's contributions to art in film, but his theatre works figure no less importantly. From his direction of Porgy and later Porgy and Bess through such others as Oklahoma!, Carousel, St. Louis Woman, Lost In The Stars, and Arms and the Girl the American theater advanced by his forward thinking. He gave audiences what were landmark accomplishments, leading American theater to a newer, more vivid life for more than a generation.

# *Delta Kappa Alpha*

*National Honorary Cinema Fraternity*



*Division of Cinema*

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS  
UNIVERSITY PARK  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007

Delta Kappa Alpha was established to further the art of cinema; to provide an opportunity for fellowship among film students; and to promote better relations between the academic and practicing members of the industry.

First organized in 1935, DKA received its national charter in 1936 at the University of Southern California. Alpha chapter began functioning immediately at USC. The fraternity, through the activities and fine reputation of its members and alumni members in filmmaking, is today recognized as a significant organization, working toward creating a strong bond between the academic and professional worlds.

Members of DKA must evidence a keen interest in cinema and have the intention of promoting the objectives of DKA through individual service.

This retrospective tribute to Rouben Mamoulian is a gift from Delta Kappa Alpha, to the cinema students of USC. Through the screenings and discussion sessions with Mr. Mamoulian and other invited guest artists, DKA hopes the students will be made more aware of the contributions Mamoulian has made to the art of the film.

Also, we hope the students will be made aware of the true function of DKA and that they will be encouraged to participate as members and cooperate in serving the department and students of USC cinema.

SCHEDULE\*

November 1:	7:00	APPLAUSE
	8:30	CITY STREETS
November 2:	7:00	DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1932) (director: Rouben Mamoulian)
	10:00	DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (1941) (director: Victor Fleming)
November 8:	7:00	LOVE ME TONITE
November 9:	7:00	GOLDEN BOY
	9:00	THE MARK OF ZORRO (1940)
November 15:	Noon	Picnic/pot luck lunch
	2:00	THE GAY DESPERADO
	3:30	HIGH, WIDE AND HANDSOME
November 22:	7:30	QUEEN CHRISTINA
November 23:	7:00	WE LIVE AGAIN
	8:30	SONG OF SONGS
December 6:	7:00	BECKY SHARP
	9:00	BLOOD AND SAND (1941)
December 7:	2:00	AH WILDERNESS! (1935) (director: Clarence Brown)
	7:00	SUMMER HOLIDAY (1948) (director: Rouben Mamoulian)
	8:45	SILK STOCKINGS

\*RINGS ON HER FINGERS will be scheduled at a date and time to be announced, during this retrospective.

SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON THE  
ART OF THE CINEMA, from  
ROUBEN MAHQULIAN

"A committee cannot paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, carve a sculpture, or write a novel. It takes one creative individual. The author works with his pen and paper, the painter has his canvas and brushes. In films it is not so simple or direct. The director's instruments are not only the mechanical ones of the camera and the microphone, but the human ones of his actors and all the other craftsmen who are artists in their own right. They are individuals ... but if you direct a film you cannot have six or more points of view. There must be one overall guiding conception to fuse all the human elements into one integral unity. And that point of view must be the director's."

"There are always some purists who object to any changes you may make in, for example, making a play for the screen, but they're missing the point that you must be unfaithful to the original. A play may beautifully fulfill the requirements of the stage. If you're going to distort it by transferring it to the screen, you're going to lose certain advantages and virtues that it had in its original form. But if you can bring to it something that makes up for what you lose, then you can make a fine film."

on Cinemascope: "the worst shape ever devised"

"Some directors rely a great deal on the editor but actually the director must be an editor himself, otherwise how can he direct?"

"When I was very young I believed in the 'art for art's sake' principle. By the time I was twenty, I outgrew it. I'm convinced that art, as everything else, is for life's sake."

"Naturalism is like prose, whereas stylization is more like poetry. Now poetry is the most foolish, unrealistic thing in the world if you always want two and two to make four. But in the realm of art two and two can have the magnitude of one thousand or the insignificance of zero. The purpose and effect of stylization is to reveal or enhance the inner, essential nature of something which the audience may intuitively sense, but which requires the artist to heighten, to make truer and even more believable than if it were presented in a realistic manner."

on actors: "You can't treat them like cattle, and that goes for the extras too. If they know you care about them, they eat out of your hand. Their affection is very important."

"On the stage, you have only one kind physical action: the movement of the actors on a three-dimensional stage. As against that, on the screen you have three kinds of action. One is the movement of the actors. The other is the movement of the camera -- the variety of angles, long shots, close-ups, and so on. And the third movement is the movement of the cutting, or montage."

"A scene tells you how it should be shot. You place the camera where it will best express the idea, the inner feeling of a scene, both of the characters on the screen and of the viewers in the theater. That is the salient point about camera angles: they must be used to match the dramatic perspective of the scene."

"Sound can and should be employed not only as sound, but as the expression of a thought, a mood, or an emotion. Sound should be used selectively either in harmony or counterpoint to the visual to increase the impact of a scene. A good director should design and select his soundtrack as he does his camera angles."

"No one can make a star. Columbus didn't create America; he only discovered what was already there."

"Colors, when you use them on the screen, become emotions. They should be treated for their emotional and dramatic values. Only in that way would they serve to increase the impact of the acting, to intensify the mood of a scene and to impel the audience to feel what you want them to feel at any certain time."

"The camera is the heart of the cinema."

"Film is a peculiar art, the most social of all. The artist cannot stand alone; the audience must be part of it."

"While you are shooting a movie on the stage, or editing it in the cutting room, you feel that you are doing something very private and personal. When you travel, you become keenly aware of the fact that every country sees it and takes it to heart. This increases your sense of responsibility - not only to yourself, to your own integrity as a filmmaker but also to the multitudes of people all over the world who see your work."

APPLAUSE (Paramount, 1929)

Producers: Jesse Lasky, Walter Wanger. director: Rouben Mamoulian  
camera: George Folsey. script: Garrett Ford, from a novel by Beth  
Brown. sound: Ernest Zatorsky.

Helen Morgan (Kitty Darling), Joan Peers (April Darling), Fuller  
Mellish, Jr. (Hitch Nelson), Henry Wadsworth (Tony),  
Jack Cameron (Joe King).

Applause is a film of firsts: for Mamoulian, his first film; of historical significance, the first to have sound recorded onto two channels at the same time; Applause was a first in liberating cinema from the tyranny of wall-to-wall dialogue and the canned theater aspects so prevalent among early Talkies, adding to the medium proof that sound could be used effectively in film in as creative a way as the camera, the editing, and other areas of aesthetic consideration.

When Paramount engaged Rouben Mamoulian as a director they probably thought that coming from the theater he would make an excellent director of dialogue (largely what was expected of filmmakers as the Talkie Revolution swept the industry). But Mamoulian became fascinated by the camera and other tools of filmic expression. And he believed there was more to sound than just talk. Even silence could play a part in telling the story, in revealing character. Writing for The Arts in 1929, Thornton Delahanty described the film's opening as "eloquent in its simplicity":

"There is a deserted street of a small town. Scattered bits of newspapers and bill posters are blown about by the wind. That is all. But you can feel the bleakness of the day, the chill November winds that sweep through the vacant street. And then one of the bill posters is flattened momentarily against the side of a building. It is the advertisement of Kitty Darling and the burlesque troupe coming to town. You hear the music of a cheap band, growing louder as it approaches, and then the shouts and laughter of people. Around the corner the crowd sweeps into view. There is Kitty herself, sitting majestically in her faded brougham, lavishing bows right and left, while the crowd swirls around her ..."

Applause is not without flaws. Its detractors have suggested the camera "overacted" a bit at times, as did possibly a few of the supporting players. Yet knowing this picture was the first for almost every performer, the criticism may take on less significance. And no one has ever suggested that Helen Morgan (in her first film) is anything short of superb.

In selecting Applause, Mamoulian had chosen a melodrama. It was, as many pointed out, "a typical Hollywood story." But with melodrama, as with any story, it is the treatment of the tale, the depth, integrity and honesty of characterization, which is important, rather than a bare plot outline. Mamoulian rose to the occasion, demonstrating a mastery of the medium rare among first credits, even uncommon among many in their periods of maturity.

---Paul Kozak

## CITY STREETS (Paramount, 1931)

Director: Rouben Mamoulian. screenplay: Max Marcin, Oliver Garrett, from a story by Dashiell Hammett. camera: Lee Garmes.

Gary Cooper (The Kid), Sylvia Sidney (Nan), Paul Lukas (Big Fella Maskal), Guy Kibbee (Pop Cooley), Wynne Gibson (Agnes).

The day before Applause opened Adolph Zukor offered Mamoulian a seven-year contract. He declined, wishing to retain the freedom to divide his time between stage and film, selecting each project as it suited his artistic ambitions. He did not hear from Paramount again for one year. This time he declined a five-year contract proposal. Finally Paramount accepted Mamoulian's "one picture" deal:

"I had been asked to choose a subject, and I couldn't at first find anything suitable; I had met Dashiell Hammett. I liked him very much. I told him I was looking for ideas, and he put a suggested outline down in four pages. Dashiell wrote a familiar gangster story, and I accepted it, deciding to treat it in an original manner."

City Streets is indeed original. The only major film of the gangster genre preceding it was Little Caesar. The release of Public Enemy and Scarface completed the quartet of films establishing the conventions for the entire genre. Sternberg's Underworld might be added, as a fifth title. Links between that film and City Streets have been drawn in that Mamoulian and Sternberg were each concerned with stylization of the material. The treatment in the LeRoy, Wellman, and Hawks films were realized with a violence and harshness of strict reality.

Violence and murder in City Streets is treated symbolically, suggested rather than being shown in all its brutal detail. Through the imagery the audience is aware of each murder, yet its imagination must picture the specific details. It is this sort of participation between audience and film that involves one in the drama more deeply.

More than simply a gangster film City Streets is also a love story, employing the settings and characters of the gangster film as the structure by which the strength of the Sylvia Sidney-Gary Cooper romance is challenged.

Through her delicate and natural beauty Sylvia Sidney, in her first important film role, was established as a star. At one point in the film she recalls times spent with The Kid. Visually, the entire scene is a closeup of Nan over which is "superimposed" The Kid's voice and other related aural memories. Historically, this is the first use of the sound flashback or "audible thought" device, quickly adopted as a standard technique in film. And so, in his second film, Mamoulian extended the maturity of screen art.

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (Paramount, 1932)

Producer/director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: Karl Struss.  
script: Samuel Hoffenstein, Percy Heath.

Frederic March (Dr. Henry Jekyll/Mr. Hyde), Miriam Hopkins (Ivy Pearson),  
Rose Hobart (Muriel Carew), Holmes Herbert (Dr. Lanyon),  
Halliwell Hobbes (Brig-Gen. Carew), Edgar Norton (Poole).

It had been a dozen years since the screen had last seen Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In 1920, Stevenson's Jekyll/Hyde was changed from the child-beating murderer of the novel to one whose desire for two loves lend his character a sexuality of greater complexity. But in 1920, the dimensions of this area are treated simply. Barrymore as a twisted, physically misshapen Hyde is brilliant. Unfortunately director John Robertson did not have enough of a sense of style to treat the material in any but a rather routine fashion and sadly, Barrymore's characterization is weaker for it.

Mamoulian seized fully upon the aspects of sexual repression. The feeling struggles to burst forth from just under the surface. Jekyll's passions are checked by the pressures of morality which surround him. With his experiments he hopes to rid himself of these lustful urges and as Mamoulian says, "if he can somehow separate the animalistic from this nature he will become all one -- totally spiritual and good."

In Mamoulian's conception it is not simply Good and Evil represented by Jekyll and Hyde. For society, Jekyll seeks to rid man of his basic animal urges which have remained through the evolutionary process. As Mamoulian discusses his approach:

"Hyde is not a monster or animal of another species but primeval man. I took our common ancestor, Neanderthal Man, as a prototype for Hyde. Jekyll turns into Hyde who is not the evil but the animal in him. Animals know no evil; they're completely innocent. The first Hyde is this young animal released from the stifling manners and conventions of the Victorian period. But of course, he's partly a human being, and a human being is a very perverse creature. So because he is part human and possesses a human brain he gradually loses his animal innocence. Hyde changes into a human monster. Throughout the film you see Hyde getting worse, both physically and psychologically; and you see Jekyll, instead of becoming liberated, deteriorating with Hyde."

Barrymore effected the transformation from Jekyll to Hyde without trick photography, in long shot, by dislocating his regular features and resetting them. There is a cut. Barrymore completes his makeup in the dressing room. And next we see a closeup of Hyde. Mamoulian, with the help of inventive cameraman Karl Struss achieves the transformation in one continuous shot, without cuts, mechanical dissolves, or arrested frames. The physical change is remarkable, shocking and the image change is strengthened by the extraordinary use of the camera (though it is one take. the camera is far from static) and the startling "unnatural" sounds devised by Mamoulian to accompany the visual.

LOVE ME TONITE (Paramount, 1932)

Producer/director: Rouben Mamoulian. script: Samuel Hoffenstein, Waldemar Young, George Marion Jr., from a play by Leopold Marchand and Paul Armont. songs: Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart. camera: Victor Milner.

Jeanette Macdonald (Princess Jeanette), Maurice Chevalier (Maurice Courtelin), Charles Ruggles (Vicomte de Varese), Charles Butterworth (Count de Savignac), C. Aubrey Smith (The Duke), Myrna Loy (Valentine).

"They had no story, no theme, no songs, and needed a film in a hurry because the two stars were on a salary of \$5,000 a week. I didn't want to do it but Mr. Zukor came out from New York and pleaded with me, telling me how the company was in dire straits, how he needed me and I was part of the Paramount family, and then lo and behold, he started to cry! Perhaps I was a little naive then; if I saw tears today I might not have been moved."

It is fortunate Mamoulian was seduced by Zukor's ruse. Love Me Tonite ranks easily with the best four or five screen musicals ever made. The blending of the elements of screen movement, dance, acting, singing, decor, music, and lighting is flawless. Where Lubitsch seemed always, in terms of technique, to treat his subjects in a fairly conventional manner, Mamoulian played with the formal aspects, giving them a spirit which is as fully alive as the imaginative and free-flowing words of the script and lyrics of the songs.

The Rodgers and Hart score employs rhythmic dialogue and verse, in addition to song, to bridge normal speech so brilliantly that, as described by Tom Milne, the film flows as "one long, unbroken production number." Pare Lorentz praised the integration of image and sound as an "illustrated musical score, something some one in Hollywood should have done long ago." Inspiration for the treatment of the story and songs came also from Mamoulian's memories of childhood fairy tales.

The film's opening, an inspired "overture", depicted the awakening of Paris. The sequence was a filmic re-working of the awakening of Catfish Row which Mamoulian had staged for Porgy in 1927. In Love Me Tonite as described by Pare Lorentz (in Vanity Fair):

"You see, as of yore, the chimney's swept with morning mist, a bell tolls the hour. A workman appears, throws his pick to the ground and starts to work. A chambermaid appears, glances at the sky, and sweeps her doorstep. You hear the bang of a pick, the swish of the broom. A cobbler sets up at last and pegs his shoes. Bang, swish, crack -- and then the music fades in and gradually the city wakes up with the orchestra until, finally, with the chimneys smoking, hucksters crying their goods, cabs cawing at one another, the orchestra in a loud crash provides a raucous, lively entrance for M. Chevalier, who gets out of bed, opens the window and sings a little chorus to the city."

--- Paul Kozak

SONG OF SONGS (Paramount, 1933)

Producer/director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: Victor Milner.  
script: Samuel Hoffenstein, Leo Birinski from Sudermann's novel.

Marlene Dietrich (Lily), Brian Aherne (Richard Waldow), Lionel  
Atwill (Baron von Merzbach), Alison Skipworth (Mrs. Rasmussen).

In 1933 Paramount felt it wise for Marlene Dietrich to get out from under von Sternberg's direct influence. They chose a subject for her, Sudermann's Song of Songs, and told Rouben Mamoulian he was the only person they would consider as director. First he declined; the story was too old-fashioned. Besides, who would accept Dietrich, a most knowledgeable "woman of the world" - as from *Lola-Lola* to *Shanghai Lily* - as a shy, unspoiled virgin? Paramount pressed hard. Mamoulian accepted, probably less due to pressure and more because the idea of casting against type was one in which he firmly believed. The challenge might prove most interesting. Mamoulian's assessment of the film is modest:

"It was all right, but there was nothing new in it. I couldn't open any doors in it creatively."

The New York Times was far more lavish in its praise:

"Dietrich floats through it with the lyric grace of that apparition sent by Heaven to be a moment's ornament. Mr. Mamoulian has the eye of a poet, and Victor Milner the poet's skill."

The Italian sculptor, Scarpitta was commissioned to create the nude marble statue of Lily used so strongly by Mamoulian as a dramatic visual symbol of the rise and fall of Lily's and Waldow's relationship. Early in the film Waldow caresses the shoulders of the statue while his model, Lily, undresses. As the relationship weakens the statue is covered, and later smashed as the affair ends.

On a less serious note, audiences were curious as to whether Dietrich actually posed nude for Scarpitta. Paramount's answer to the torrent of letters was tactful: Scarpitta was an artist and, though Dietrich had visited the sculptor several times, the work of art was simply that -- an artist's expression of his inspiration.

Most have agreed, as Steve Greenberg, that Dietrich, with von Sternberg, had become as a love goddess, a glamorous icon remote from the normal sensations of mortality. In Song of Songs she turns, under Mamoulian's direction, fully human and vibrant. Allowed to descend from her pedestal, she assumed the warmth and vulnerability of a human being.

--- Paul Kozak

## QUEEN CHRISTINA ( M-G-M 1933)

Producer: Walter Wanger. director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: William Daniels. script/dialogue: Salka Viertel, H. M. Harwood, S. N. Behrman.

Greta Garbo (Christina), John Gilbert (Antonio), Ian Keith (Magnus), Lewis Stone (Oxenstierna), C. Aubrey Smith (Aage), Reginald Owen (Prince Charles), Akim Tamiroff (Pedro), Cora Sue Collins (Christina, as a child).

"What, when drunk, one sees in other women, one sees in Garbo sober."

So wrote Kenneth Tynan in the opening of his published tribute to Garbo a number of years ago. His statement comes closest to capturing by the written word, Garbo's very special appeal, at least for her male admirers. No one can completely explain "Garbo," but one can understand, even if that understanding cannot be put into words. In 1933, Garbo personally requested Rouben Mamoulian to direct Queen Christina. In his direction he demonstrated an understanding which, on the screen, resulted in Garbo's strongest and best film.

Mamoulian: "Garbo is a wonderful instrument which must be treated right. She is completely intuitive...The key to directing Garbo is to have her trust."

Garbo did learn to trust Mamoulian, and his judgement. The results are remarkable. Not only for the great drama in the life of the Swedish queen, but also for the humor. In the scenes of mistaken sex and mistaken identity Garbo reveals such facility for comedy, such perfect timing, that many writers have wondered what all the fuss was about with Lubitsch, Ninotchka, and "Garbo laughs!" (and, of course, Garbo laughs far more grandly, and naturally, in Queen Christina).

For the exquisite sequence at the inn when Garbo, preparing to leave the place in which she has found love, walks around the room touching, caressing everything, committing it to memory, Mamoulian chose to direct the sequence musically, rhythmically:

"To my mind, it's a sonnet. It was done to a metronome. I explained to her: 'This has to be sheer poetry and feeling. The movement must be like a dance. Treat it the way you would do it to music.'"

Usually, one thinks of any film with Garbo as a "Garbo film." All other contributions, including that of the director, seem secondary. But Queen Christina is also a Mamoulian film. Without his unique sensibilities the film would be, as with so many of Garbo's films (as extraordinary as she is), simply another vehicle for Garbo, and not an artistic whole in which every element contributes to its unity.

--- Paul Kozak

WE LIVE AGAIN (Samuel Goldwyn, 1934)

Producer: Samuel Goldwyn. director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: Gregg Toland. script/adaptation: Leonard Praskins, Maxwell Anderson, Preston Sturges; from the novel by Leo Tolstoy.

Anna Sten (Katusha Maslova), Frederic March (Prince Dmitri Nekhlyudov), Jane Baxter (Missy Kortchagin), C. Aubrey Smith (Prince Kortchagin), Jessie Ralph (Matrona Pavlovna), Sam Jaffe (Simonson).

In the mid-1930's Sam Goldwyn struggled to find new faces - especially female - he hoped would find favor with the American public. There was Frances Farmer, and Sigrid Gurie. Goldwyn's highest hopes rested on Anna Sten. But after three most carefully chosen subjects, each tailored to Sten's special abilities (each entrusted to fine directors -- Dorothy Arzner, Rouben Mamoulian, King Vidor) Goldwyn gave up, never understanding why his protege was not the sensation in this country that she had been in Europe.

In 1934 Rouben Mamoulian (of the Caucasus region of Russia) directed Anna Sten (of Ukrainian heritage) in an adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's Resurrection (also Russian). The novel belonged to Tolstoy's later period when his obsession with social reform had taken hold over his earlier, more disciplined artistic expressions. The great difficulty in reducing Tolstoy to 84 minutes lay in making Dmitri's changes of heart credible. Telescoping what even in the novel's later pages was shaded with a bit too strong a melodrama may make certain events in the latter half of the film seem a trifle too coincidental. On achievements worthy of note, Tom Milne has written:

"the atmosphere so perfectly captures that peculiar Russian dichotomy - a dark night of the soul matched with an exquisitely luminous daylight of the senses - that for once one is not embarrassed by a Hollywood attempt to deal with Tolstoy's revolutionary ardours and peasant simplicities ... It is remarkable how much of Tolstoy Mamoulian has managed to preserve in what was obviously designed to be consumed as a romance with happy ending."

For a meeting place of the young lovers Mamoulian drew upon a fond childhood memory:

"I remember at the country home we had in the Caucasus I had a favorite wild cherry tree. I used to take a pillow and a book and climb up to a fork in the trunk where I would sit and read, swaying in the wind and looking down over a beautiful garden. When we came to a scene in We Live Again with that same feeling. I used it."

Mamoulian's direction of the Tolstoy material is indeed fine. He emphasizes character and atmosphere rather than plot, which is as it should be. The result is a work with many strengths, even if its subject seemed a bit remote from the values of American audiences, who did not flock en masse to the picture.

--- Paul Kozak

BECKY SHARP (Pioneer Pictures/ RKO, 1935)

Director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: Ray Rennahan. script: Francis Edward Faragoh, from the novel by Thackeray.

Miriam Hopkins (Becky Sharp), Cedric Hardwicke (Marquis of Steyne), Nigel Bruce (Joseph Sedley), Alan Mowbray (Rawdon Crawley), Frances Dee (Amelia Sedley), Billie Burke (Lady Bareacres).

If Becky Sharp were only the first full-length feature using the 3-strip Technicolor process, it would be of historical significance, perhaps as only a footnote. But as with Mamoulian's other films which broke new ground Becky Sharp is more than simply an historical landmark, it is an exceptional film too, one standing as a fine work on its own. The historical significance adds but a point of interest.

Mamoulian was not Pioneer Pictures' first choice to direct the film. Lowell Sherman had begun the work but three weeks into shooting, he died suddenly. Mamoulian was asked to take over the project, and he agreed. Accepting the challenge of pioneering a new aspect of film art, Mamoulian decided everything already shot had to be scrapped. The script was as wrong as the color, which had not been used creatively. In five weeks the script was re-written and the sets and costumes re-designed for a specific color plan:

"My whole interest in doing Becky Sharp was in trying to use color dramatically and emotionally, rather than merely decoratively. The whole first scene of the schoolroom was originally designed in red. Now that's like starting Othello with the murder of Desdomona -- how do you build up after that? My idea was to start as close to black and white as I could possibly get on color stock, then add color gradually as the story's dramatic content increased."

Certainly the film's most celebrated sequence - and deservedly - is the Duchess of Richmond's ball, on the eve of Waterloo. Again, as planned and described by Mamoulian:

"A messenger arrives and quietly informs Wellington that the French army is forming. The news is passed around the room and the guests gradually begin to leave. Now, logically, the first to leave should be the military; but that would mean all the red would be drained out before the other colors, the colors of the civilians' clothes. Color possesses such subconscious potency, that if the gradation were wrong it could destroy the fundamental reality of the scene. What I did was to sort the extras into color groups. Then, one by one, each color group left the ballroom, until only the red were left. Hence the officers were the last to go instead of the first. And no one has ever remarked on it; because it makes such sense dramatically."

But the strength of the dramatic use of color would be weakened if the other elements of Becky Sharp were not as carefully prepared. Adapting the lengthy Thackeray novel for the screen - any long novel - is difficult. But here, as Milne states, is also an extraordinarily appreciative and intelligent adaptation of Thackeray.

----- Paul Kozak

THE GAY DESPERADO (Pickford-Lasky/United Artists, 1936)

Producers: Mary Pickford, Jesse Lasky. director: Rouben Mamoulian.  
camera: Lucien Andriot. script: Wallace Smith, from a story by  
Leo Birinski.

Ida Lupino (Jane), Nino Martini (Chivo), Leo Carillo (Pablo Braganza)  
Harold Huber (Campo), Mischa Auer (Diego).

For his work on The Gay Desperado, the New York Film Critics selected Rouben Mamoulian as the year's Best Director. The project came into being through a happy, curious set of accidents and incidents.

"I was exhausted after Becky Sharp and I went to Mexico for a two-week vacation. I fell in love with Mexico, its beautifully stylized landscapes, its skies always filled with cumulus clouds. I decided I would never rest until I made a film there."

When he returned to the United States, Mamoulian received a call from Jesse Lasky. He had opera star Nino Martini under contract. Lasky asked Mamoulian to direct Martini in Gounod's Faust but Mamoulian found the script "all wrong." Lasky was desperate. Martini was signed to an expensive contract. His first film had failed to generate excitement and Lasky needed a hit. Then, as Mamoulian recalls, a man named Birinski happened into the office with an idea:

"Mexican bandits see American gangster films and realize how out-moded their methods are and go to the movies as a night school and try to follow the gangster methods of America. A bandit kidnaps a radio singer. The idea caught my imagination: a great premise, and charming as a subject for a satire; but the rest of the story was the dreariest you have ever heard. Jesse wanted to throw the whole thing out but I said, 'Let's use the opening scene and the idea.' Lasky said, 'If you'll direct, I'll buy it.' I agreed... The Gay Desperado was a change of pace; a poetical satire, a difficult mode for the screen... I loved making the film."

The 30's saw a rash of opera stars brought to Hollywood, from Lawrence Tibbett to Lily Pons to Grace Moore, etc. Most made but a few films, then retreated to the opera houses, assuming their appearance in "movies" (considered akin to a cheap sell out by some purists) hadn't darkened the opera public's opinion of them. The opera star vehicles were disasters generally, almost always in terms of their artistry and frequently at the box office. Mamoulian's Gay Desperado is likely the greatest artistically creative film success of its type largely because Mamoulian possessed enough film sense to realize Martini was not going to be the film's greatest asset, but rather the elements of satire, which are so cleverly devised and executed throughout the film. The picture is exceptionally brilliant when it comes to the treatment of the gangster genre conventions. Mamoulian breathes new life into what were now cliché, as he twists the form to his satiric will. And, as Milne writes:

"From the opening shots... he keeps the action whisking along so airily that its feet barely touch the ground."

--- Paul Kozak

HIGH, WIDE AND HANDSOME (Paramount, 1937)

Director: Rouben Mamoulian. script: Oscar Hammerstein II.  
camera: Victor Milner, Theodor Sparkuhl. music: Jerome Kern.  
Songs: Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II.

Irene Dunne (Sally Watterson), Randolph Scott (Peter Cortlandt), Dorothy Lamour (Molly Fuller), Alan Hale (Walter Brennan), Charles Bickford (Red Scanlon), Akim Tamiroff (Joe Varese), Ben Blue (Samuel), William Frawley (Mac), Irving Pichel (Stark).

Tom Milne writes of this delightful musical as "the most persistently underrated of all Mamoulian's films."

Not only is High, Wide and Handsome neglected, but it is also hard for many to "define." Frank Nugent felt "this richly produced, spectacular, and melodious show" simply "defies classification" -- though he did kick around such terms as "musical romance," "operetta," and "rugged historical saga." It was the Hollywood writer Idwal Jones who finally coined the phrase "symphonic drama" for the film.

But however defined High, Wide and Handsome displays all the style, opulence, and high spirits of that which has come to be associated with the work of Rouben Mamoulian. Irene Dunne and Randolph Scott -- she, the former circus singer and he, the independent farmer who brings to this Pennsylvania farmland area the first oil gusher on their wedding day -- certainly are caught up in the film's spirit, as is Alan Hale as the odious railroad czar who conspires to ruin the farmers with excessive freight charges. The independents (played by a fine group of character actors) realize that the nation needs oil, and no monopolies -- or Pittsburgh conservationists -- can stop the construction of their cross-country pipeline to combat the acute pre-Civil War energy crisis.

Mamoulian's concept of the integrated musical, interweaving the spectacular story with Kern and Hammerstein's bright score, continues its development here. The humorous tone of the musical is set with the opening barnyard sequence in which Irene Dunne sings a romantic ballad, accompanied by the farm's charmed animals.

What is more, the film captures vividly the tone and scene of heartland America, 1858. As such, it is another fine example of the Mamoulian film which is evocative of another era in itself, and at the same time is one which theme of forever enduring and timeless.

--- Jim Hall

GOLDEN BOY (Columbia, 1939)

Director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: Nick Musuraca, Karl Freund. script: Daniel Taradash, Lewis Meltzer, Sarah Y. Mason, Victor Heerman; from the play by Clifford Odets.

Barbara Stanwyck (Lorna Moon), William Holden (Joe Bonaparte), Adolphe Menjou (Tom Moody), Lee J. Cobb (Mr. Bonaparte), Joseph Calleia (Eddie Fuseli), Sam Levene (Siggie).

In Golden Boy Rouben Mamoulian tackles an important American theme dealing with a cocky young pugilist who slugs - and finally murders - his way to the top of a brutal profession. Golden Boy is the Horatio Alger credo gone wrong -- a talented musician trades his violin for a chance to push leather and scale the heights of fame and fortune.

When Harry Cohn rejected Mamoulian's request to film Porgy and Bess, he chose instead the Clifford Odets stage success. Production began April 1, 1939 following a three month talent search in which Mamoulian selected 21-year old Bill Beedle (the name was changed to William Holden) for the title role, over Cohn's objections. Holden's contract paid \$50 a week.

Preparations for the role of Joe Bonaparte included several weeks of boxing lessons, music training, and dialogue coaching -- up to 17 hours a day. Holden was cast opposite the solidly professional Barbara Stanwyck, as the worldly-wise "dame from Newark," Lorna Moon. Holden and Stanwyck enjoyed an off-screen harmony that shows on film as a classic example of cinematic chemistry. (Holden still reportedly sends her roses each year on the anniversary of the film's start date).

Mamoulian brought to Golden Boy his talent for creating stylish, literate, and romantic films as he transformed the tragic, stiff, and sometimes preachy social allegory of Odets' play into a more viable form. He shifted the focus from the play's larger, impersonal struggle between labor and capitalism to a compact study of personal conflict. Joe Bonaparte's toughest fight is not in the ring, but within himself as he measures an impoverished future devoted to his musical gift against society's yardstick which demands material proof of success and worth. In pugilistic terms the choice is a classic one -- whether to fight your own fight or that of the other guy. And however naive and sentimental the outer trappings may seem today, the kinds of choices that involve basic values and priorities is the essence of Mamoulian's film.

THE MARK OF ZORRO (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1940)

Director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: Arthur Miller. music: Alfred Newman. adaptation/script: Garrett Fort, Bess Meredyth, John Tainton Foote; from the novel by Johnston McCulley.

Tyrone Power (Diego), Linda Darnell (Lolita Quintero), Basil Rathbone (Captain Esteban Pasquale), Gale Sondergaard (Inez Quintero), Eugene Palette (Father Felipe).

Though long known for his flair for action, Mamoulian's first venture into the realm of the swashbuckling adventure film came in 1940, as a result of Darryl Zanuck's invitation to direct Tyrone Power in The Mark of Zorro. The invitation came as a surprise since Zanuck had previously stated Mamoulian was "too independent" to work at Fox. The offer was accepted but the relationship between the two men proved a stormy one. At first conflict came over the script, on which Zanuck himself had spent two years. Mamoulian convinced Zanuck revision was needed and seven weeks were granted for re-write.

Mamoulian later confronted Zanuck over his reputation for not allowing directors to cut their own pictures. Finally, after much discussion, Zanuck decided to spend time in Palm Springs while Mamoulian cut the film. But this was not the end.

As with his earlier films, Mamoulian had made what was really a romance encased in the form of, in this case, a swashbuckling adventure. Since reading the stories of Bret Harte as a child Mamoulian had become enchanted with the lore of Old California. In its visual design, he gives the film the proper romantic and atmospheric look. The heart of the picture is the love between Diego and Lolita, not Diego's conflict with Captain Pasquale. The tranquility of the love scenes is used in contrast with the excitingly-paced sequences of swordplay. This structure was the source of a final conflict. Zanuck wanted the love scenes removed, leaving only the action. Mamoulian threatened to have his name taken off the picture if this were done. In the end, the film was previewed twice. First Mamoulian's cut, then Zanuck's. With Zanuck's cut the film died. And it was Mamoulian's version that went into general release.

As Milne remarks:

"It is one of the masterpieces of the genre...The Mark of may be 'only' a swashbuckler, but it is one of Mamoulian's most elegant and intelligent films."

--- Steven D. Robertson

BLOOD AND SAND (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1941)

Producer: Darryl F. Zanuck. director: Rouben Mamoulian.  
script: Jo Swerling. from the novel by Vicente Blasco Ibanez.  
camera: Ernest Palmer, Ray Rennahan.

Tyrone Power (Juan Gallardo), Linda Darnell (Carmen Espinosa),  
Rita Hayworth (Dona Sol), Nazimova (Senora Augustias),  
Anthony Quinn (Manola de Palma), J. Carrol Naish (Garabato),  
Laird Cregar (Natalio Curro), Lynn Bari (Encarnacion),  
Vicente Gomez (guitarist).

Since style -- unique, permeating, witty -- is the hallmark of the Mamoulian film, it is not surprising to find the innovative use of color when that element is introduced. Technicolor improvements had enhanced that filmmaker's palette since Recky Sharp, but the concept of "color with a purpose, always selective, always stylized" as Mamoulian would say, remained unchanged for that cinemaestro.

So it is that in this rags-to-riches (and subsequent corruption) tale of the young Spanish bullfighter Juan Gallardo, Mamoulian calls upon the artistry of the great Spanish masters while designing his scenes. We see the somber blacks and browns of Murillo in the opening scenes of Gallardo's impoverished youth, Velasquez' black and white in the banquet scene, the vivid reds and golds of Goya in the arena, Sorolla in the marketplace, El Greco in the chapel.

"With infinite care, Rouben Mamoulian has arranged his cast in striking tableaux," commented New York Times critic Theodore Strauss. Indeed, the cast supporting Power is as stylish as the rest of the production: sympathetic Linda Darnell as Juan's wronged but faithful wife, Rita Hayworth as the exotic siren Dona Sol, Nazimova as Juan's forboding mother, and a host of others.

Color, pageantry, and romance are as much an inherent part of Blood and Sand as courage, honor, and appearance are to the life of the matador himself. But it is the quality of the director's vision that fuses these elements into a stylized whole -- and the melodrama of a celebrated bullfighter is elevated to a higher order.

--- Jim Hall

RINGS ON HER FINGERS (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1942)

Director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: George Barnes. script: Ken Englund, from a story by Robert Pirosh, Joseph Schrank.

Henry Fonda (John Wheeler), Gene Tierney (Susan Miller), Spring Byington (May Worthington), Laird Cregar (Warren).

Rings On Her Fingers probably figures least significantly into a scheme of the cinema of Rouben Mamoulian. It is a film he dismisses, and when he does he is usually challenged, much to his surprise. The picture is not weak for as Greenberg writes, is is "a pleasant enough and engagingly performed comedy."

For all the complication of plot, incident and character (many of which are a delight) the principal complaint was one of overloading the story with too many intricacies. It is the performances which were most frequently praised, especially that of Gene Tierney. Previous to this she had been used as something of a mannequin in her films, only a little more animated than a fashion show model. The New York Times noted the change:

Miss Tierney is allowed to resemble a human being, if not an actress."

Howard Barnes, in New York's Herald Tribune elaborated on the film's stronger points:

"This offering dresses up an old screen yarn with new faces. It has some incisive and amusing acting by Henry Fonda, Laird Cregar and, or all people, Gene Tierney. The Tierney performance is probably the most distinctive thing about this show, for the much publicized young actress finally gives some justification of the promise which rocketed her to stardom. She is still no star but she does a bit of acting for a change. Fonda contributes an occasionally inspired performance. His wooing of Miss Tierney is restrained and effective ..."

The New York Times added:

"Laird Cregar floats about the screen like a buoyant elephant and Spring Byington brings a ladylike touch to the female swindler."

But to write of Rings On Her Fingers as a Mamoulian film is almost not possible. As Milne states:

The film "turned out to be the only film in which one could not instantly recognize his hand. It is not so much that the film is bad - in fact it is often elegant and amusing - as that it is un-Mamoulian in its reliance on dialogue."

Rings On Her Fingers was made only to complete a three-picture contract with Twentieth Century-Fox or, as Mamoulian put it several years ago, "to fill in time." And to that comment he added his own terse critique:

"I saw it the other day on television, and it meant nothing to me."

--- Paul Kozak

SUMMER HOLIDAY (M-G-M, 1946, released 1948)

Producer: Arthur Freed. director: Rouben Mamoulian. camera: Charles Schoenbaum. script: Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett, from the play by Eugene O'Neill. music: Harry Warren.

Mickey Rooney (Richard Miller), Gloria De Haven (Muriel McComber), Walter Huston (Nat Miller), Frank Morgan (Uncle Sid), Butch Jenkins (Tommy), Marilyn Maxwell (Belle), Agnes Moorehead (Cousin Lily).

When O'Neill wrote Ah Wilderness!, a semi-autobiographical, nostalgic comedy recalling the growing pains of adolescence, his stated purpose was to write a play true to the spirit of the American small town at the turn of the century. The play had been filmed by MGM in 1935, under Clarence Brown's direction. In 1946, Rouben Mamoulian undertook to direct an adaptation of the play as a film musical, and in Technicolor. For Summer Holiday Mamoulian applied his exceptional talents toward the screen, opening the play's possibilities, affectionately re-designing it into as fine a work of art for the film, as it was originally for the theater. There were advantages on the screen not available on stage, as Milne notes:

"Mamoulian can show the world of nostalgia instead of merely suggesting it: the radiantly green lawns which are inseparable from summer and young love not as they were but as they are remembered;... the little street tidy and expectant with its rows of flags awaiting Independence Day."

To aid in capturing the period a color structure for Summer Holiday was prepared by Mamoulian in the form of a color-chromatic script, largely based upon the paintings of American artists like Grant Wood, Thomas Benton, and John Curry. ( Or, as in an "Arabian Nights" dream sequence, cut from the film's release prints, the number was designed from the colors of Persian print miniatures. )

Additionally, colors were used imaginatively for their dramatic and emotional significance, as in the celebrated saloon sequence where Mickey Rooney first experiences certain "sins" (here described by Greenberg):

"As the boy becomes drunker and drunker, the dingy walls of the drab saloon are suffused with a gaudy green and orange glow, while the flesh tones and crimson dress of the prostitute across the table grow brighter and more garish. Finally, everything turns a ghastly shade of green as nausea overwhelms him."

Summer Holiday is a masterwork, one clearly demonstrating admiration and fondness for the source material. Mamoulian had conferred with O'Neill about the intended alterations. At first he was suspicious, but as Mamoulian discussed the plans, O'Neill understood, agreed, and appreciated the loving concern shown by Mamoulian in his plans to adapt the play's spirit most effectively for the advantages of the screen.

SILK STOCKINGS (M-G-M, 1957)

Producer: Arthur Freed. director: Rouben Mamoulian. music: Cole Porter. camera: Robert Bronner. script: Leonard Gershe, Leonard Spiegelgass, from the musical play by George S. Kaufman, Leueen McGrath, Abe Burrows, and from the film Ninotchka. choreography: Hermes Pan, Eugene Loring.

Fred Astaire (Steve Canfield), Cyd Charisse (Ninotchka), Janis Paige (Peggy Dainton), Peter Lorre (Brankov), Jules Munshin (Bibinski), Joseph Buloff (Ivanov), George Tobias (Commissar).

Rouben Mamoulian's dazzling color and Cinemascope version of Lubitsch's classic, Ninotchka, is no less of a film for being more extravagant. The cynicism of Lubitsch's work has been considerably mellowed, and the warm steel of the 1939 version was melted down to a molten consistency.

Silk Stockings is a more flexible, vitally satisfying, and profusely stylish film, as well as one of the key musicals of the 1950's. It is also one of the most fluidly imaginative uses of Cinemascope, in a genre which has a tendency to inflate disastrously when the space is widened. The staging of the musical numbers reflects a modesty of tone, but a strong intricacy of movement, providing the ideal effective balance in the placement and choreography of the performers. Every emotion - from joy, to warmth, to sensuality, to reflective moods - is expressed vividly in terms of the frame and the relationship of the actors to it.

Comedy and light drama are blended in such delicate fashion that the whole film, even when no one is singing, is "musical." Cole Porter's songs are all appropriate, gently melodic.

Every facet of the film is carefully, exquisitely blended. The resulting organic entity is immensely satisfying. And, like all the best musicals from Minnelli, Donen, Cukor, and Sidney, Silk Stockings never sacrifices true human emotion for mindless vitality.

This was Mamoulian's last film (to date), but there is enough flair and consciousness for filmmaking here to indicate that he was far from through. Silk Stockings is also a testament to the fact that even though a fine filmmaker ages physically, his artistic and creative sensibilities are not weakened.

Mamoulian's best days were not at all behind him.

--- Dale Winogura



SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ARTISTRY OF

ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

"Despite his theater background, Mamoulian sensed at once the differences between the two forms ... For him, the camera was far more than a passive observer looking on while actors recited their lines -- and the function of the director was more than merely helping the actors to say their lines better. He had to help the audience find what was dramatically significant in a scene, picking out what was important with his camera, making it seem fresh and illuminating through the imagination and inventiveness of his visuals ... Mamoulian best exemplifies those talented men of the early thirties who were consciously seeking to transform the talking picture into a genuinely cinematic art."

--- Arthur Knight

"With the possible exception of Orson Welles, no one ever utilized sound in the cinema as creatively as Mamoulian, and certainly no one has contributed more to its technique."

--- Steven Greenberg

"I consider Mamoulian a pioneer and as important a personage to the development of the modern cinema as D. W. Griffith. Like Griffith, he has contributed to film technique what are today are considered basic elements of directorial acumen."

--- Richard Anobile

"Witty, elegant, supremely stylish in the best sense of the word, Mamoulian films have as their real distinguishing mark their unerring sense of rhythm in exploring the sensuous pleasures of movement ... one is almost tempted to say that every Mamoulian film is a musical. It isn't true, of course, but with every action and every line of dialogue conceived in terms of stylized rhythm - choreographed rather than directed - it feels as though it were ..."

"Movement to Mamoulian is like a brush-stroke to a painter: the delicate, infinitely variable factor which can bring life to a still life, beauty to a human face, emotion to a landscape, transforming dross into gold. A rose is a rose until Renoir paints it. The Mark of Zorro is just another historical romance until Mamoulian films it."

--- Tom Milne

"If he was an idealist, he was one without any false illusions ... although not all of his films had conventionally happy endings, they were all at least hopeful ones which affirmed the potential of the human spirit."

--- Steven Greenberg

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Delta Kappa Alpha wishes to extend its warmest appreciation to all who contribute to the success of this very special retrospective. It is not possible to name each and every person, and their specific contributions. There were, for example: private collectors who have loaned us certain of the films and other materials; dedicated runners who pick up and return prints; nervous dowers who work with the nitrate during projection; cooperative members of USC's cinema faculty and staff; welcome volunteers who perform rather routine tasks without a grumble (cleaning up, folding programs, carrying equipment, etc.); those who happen along in the nick of time to solve minor crises; friendly persons who added their treats to the picnic; our alternate projectionists; the designers and writers of this program -- and so many more.

Delta Kappa Alpha would like to call to your attention certain companies and individuals whose help was both unique and invaluable:

at Mary Pickford Films: Matty Kemp

at Samuel Goldwyn Productions: Tom Bodley, Tom Seehof

at Universal: Bill Hornbeck

at UCLA: Bob Epstein

at USC: Arthur Knight

and, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

Special Consultant: Don Reed

our guest artists for  
the weekend of November 1 & 2: George Folsey  
Lee Garmes  
Karl Struss

also, from Delta Kappa Alpha:

Paul Kozak	program coordinator
Tim McHugh	for recording discussion sessions cover designs picnic co-chairperson
J. Brent Shroyer	chief projectionist
Jim Hall	driver, for Mr. Mamoulian
Leilani Empeno	picnic co-chairperson
Rick Victor	film booker, for the department

AND, of course, a gentleman who gave so generously of his time and of himself throughout this entire series:

ROUBEN MAMOULIAN

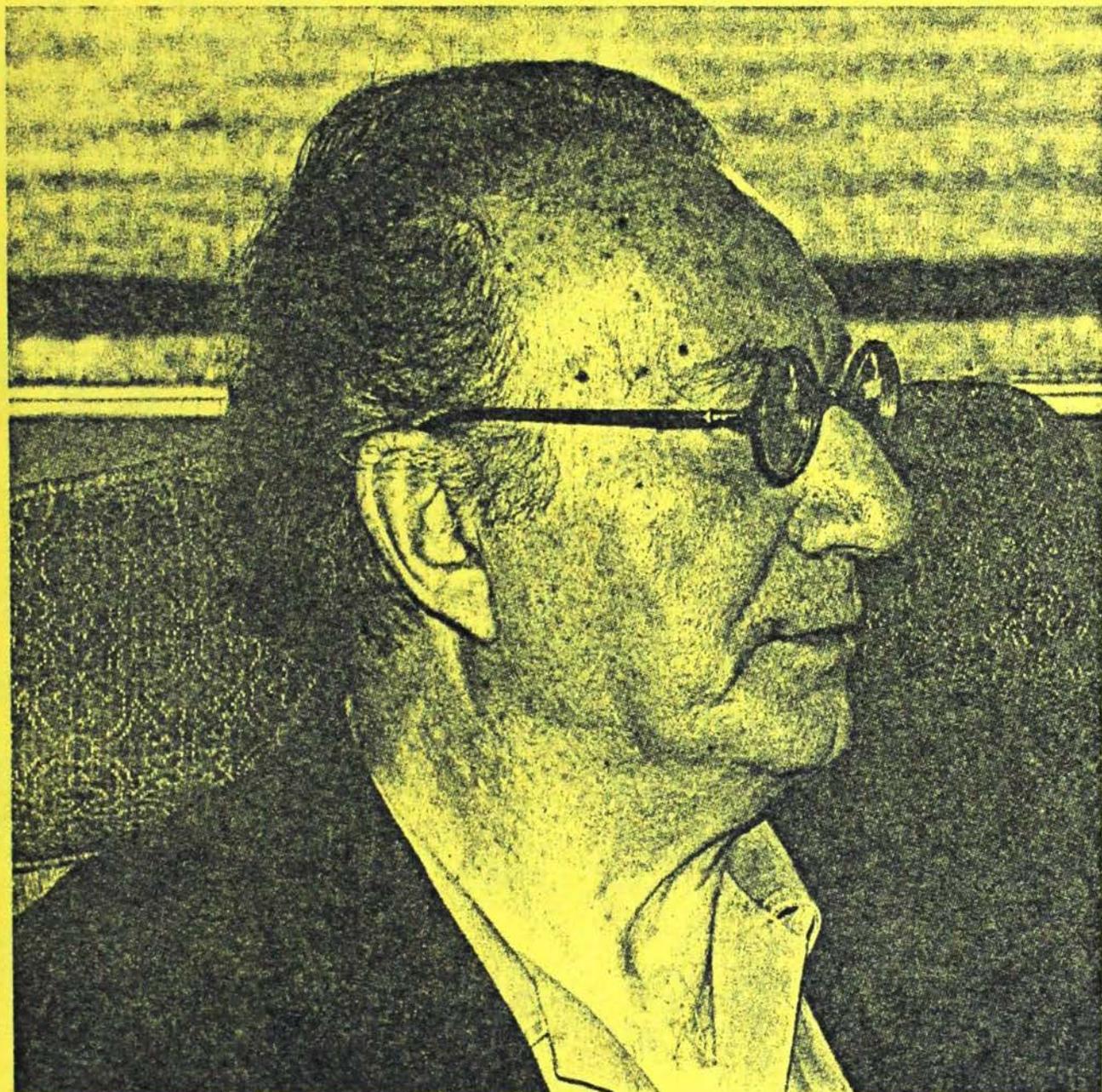


Photo by Frank Merwald

