

Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus*

Thursday, April 11 – 8 pm

William Eddins, conductor

CHAPLIN

The Circus

(71')*

Music by Charles Chaplin

Associate Arrangers: Eric James and Lambert Williamson

The song "Swing High Little Girl" composed and sung by Charles Chaplin

Score restored for live orchestral screenings by Timothy Brock

NOTE: There is NO intermission in tonight's performance

program subject to change

*indicates approximate film duration

The Circus

Charles Chaplin

(b. Walworth, London, 1889 / d. Corsier-sur-Vevey, Switzerland, 1977)

As a movie, Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus* dates from 1928. As a film score, Chaplin's music dates from 50 years later. This is a story of how the two came together.

Chaplin regarded French filmmaker Max Linder as a great talent, and certainly there are similarities to Chaplin's film and Linder's final completed film (Linder had died in 1925) *The King of the Circus*. To be fair, Chaplin had a film like this in mind as far back as 1920. But even when it came time for him to begin filming, more delays pushed the production back time and again. There was a fire at the studio, Chaplin's mother died, and his second wife, Lita Grey, served him with divorce papers during filming, launching a bitter divorce procedure.

All told, production was stalled for over eight months, which in the early days of Hollywood, was forever. Nevertheless, the film that resulted is regarded as one of Chaplin's finest comedies, and is the seventh highest-grossing silent film in history. But there's that word again – silent. It wasn't, really.

Just like such Chaplin classics as *Modern Times* and *City Lights*, *The Circus* was released after sound had come to film – *The Jazz Singer* had been released the year before. So there was “sound” in the silent film; music was written for the theatrical release by Chaplin – who was a talented composer and wrote scores for many of his films which have soundtracks.

In 1947, composer Hans Eisler adapted music he had already written, along with original music, for *The Circus*. And then in 1969, Chaplin himself, now 80, wrote a whole new score for his film, and it is this version which most presentations of the film now include, and which will be heard tonight.

The comedy of *The Circus* is broad, ingenious slapstick at its best, and yet the story itself is bittersweet. The plot needs no description here – the film itself will allow the story to unfold to best effect. *The Circus* was written, produced, directed, and stars Charles Chaplin, who also wrote not one, but two scores for the film, 50 years apart. His talent was immense, and after having accompanied other Chaplin greats in seasons past (*The Gold Rush*, *City Lights*, *Modern Times*), we are thrilled to present yet another testament to Chaplin’s genius.

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