

The British Silent Film Festival Symposium 2024

British Silent Film
Festival Symposium
17th May 2024

Scan for abstracts



The Symposium will take place in the Lucas Theatre at King's College London, Strand, London, WC2R 2LS on Friday 17th May. Tickets will be available in due course.

CALL FOR PAPERS – We invite proposals for 20 minute papers on any aspect of film culture in Britain and its empire before 1930. This is an open call.

We are particularly interested in new research which reflects the diversity of film communities within Britain and its empire, including work which engages directly with the realities of British imperialism and colonialism and the production, circulation and reception of films in places across the globe subject to British colonial or imperial rule. We are also particularly interested in work that responds to pre 1930 film materials made available for research via the BFI Player, or through the digital platforms of the UK's regional film archives.

Send your 200 word proposals to Lawrence.1.Napper@kcl.ac.uk. The deadline for proposals is 1st of April.

British Silent Film Festival Symposium – 17th May 2024

Lucas Lecture Theatre, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS

Each session has space for 4 x 20 min papers and 10 mins of questions, or 4 x 15 min papers and 30 mins of questions. Scan the QR Code for full abstracts for each paper.

9.00 – 10.30 – Session One

1. Peter Domankiewicz – The Curse of Clovelly Cottage
2. Andrew Shail – Media Evolution: A Hypothesis
3. Mark Fuller – Augustus Rosenberg: Early Moving Picture showman and inventor
4. Denis Condon – The Explosion of Metaphor and Materiality in the Historiography of Early Irish Cinema
5. Questions



10.30 – 11.00 – Tea Break

11.00 – 12.30 – Session Two

6. Anushrut Ramakrishnan Agrwaal – The class-lens: Understanding the use of lenses as labour representations in early British Cinema
7. Peter Yeandle – War Fever on Film: London's West End in 1900
8. Ian Christie – A Great British Mystery: British Serials
9. Mark Fryers – British Fishing Communities on the Silent Screen
10. Questions

12.30 – 1.30 – Lunch Break

1.30 – 3.00 – Session Three

11. Wesley Kirkpatrick – 'Charlie Chaplin Wouldn't Have Done That': Oswald Mosley and the Mediagenic Politician's Threat to Democracy, 1918-1930
12. Laurence Carr – 'Appalling Silence' and Imperial Noise: British Imperialism and Implied sound in *The Great White Silence* (1924)
13. Llewella Chapman – 'Beauty and the Bustle': Costume Fashion and Promotion in *Pictures and the Picturegoer*
14. Marc David Jacobs – Forever Young: Searching for Violet Powell
15. Questions

3.00 – 3.30 – Tea Break

3.30 – 5.00 – Session Four

16. Martin Stollery – Two Forgotten days in November 1929: Oswald Blakeston, gossip and Eisenstein's visit to London
 17. Neil Parsons – Silent Cinema and Soviet Films in Wartime Bechuanaland Protectorate
 18. Lukasz Biskupski – Transnational Echoes and Identity Strategies in Silent Cinema: The Case of Jean de Kuharski and Charles Kean
 19. Laraine Porter - 'Dazzling Returns': silent cinema music publishing, theme songs and spin-offs
 20. Question
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Andrew Shail - Media Evolution: A Hypothesis

This paper will show that the history of entertainment venues in our period bears out the still-young theory of long-term change in human activities known as ‘cultural evolution’, by presenting preliminary observations suggesting that the emergence of the first cinemas in the UK was the cultural equivalent of a speciation event in biological evolution. A new biological species emerges not through a creation event but through the gradual splitting of a parent lineage into multiple daughter lineages over many generations, one or more of which then gradually becomes so distinct from the original lineage that it cannot interbreed with any member of that lineage. Just as, in biological speciation, no members of any generation are a different species from their parents’ generation, so, I will show, there was no first cinema; instead, I will use fine-grained surviving data about entertainment venues in Malvern and Hartlepool to sketch a process in the population of live venues where, after some of these live venues acquired the ‘gene’ of projected films as part of the ‘genome’ that was their weekly programme of entertainments, a small sub-set of this population then gradually increased the proportion of films on their programme, over the course of many weekly generations, to a point where live acts made up less than 50% of the programme, reaching the point where they became ‘Electric Theatres’ by gradually separating off from a parent population, in which the new ‘gene’ then became mere ‘junk’ DNA. Indeed, the surviving evidence indicates that even those venues that opened in a new building with the title ‘Electric Theatre’ and a programme made up of 100% films from the start, these venues were the ‘offspring’ of older local venues that had already transitioned either most or all of the way to a film-only programme of entertainment. There will be diagrams.

(Andrew Shail – University of Newcastle Upon Tyne)

Denis Condon – The Explosion of Images of Metaphor and Materiality in the Historiography of Early Irish Cinema

Examining the arrival of cinema to Arklow, Co Wicklow, Ireland shows how evolving ideas of image, place and audience in the historiography of cinema have influenced work on early Irish cinema. Indeed, the first film shows in the town at Kynoch Munitions Works provide not only a useful starting point for the historiography of early Irish cinema but also a metaphor for cinema’s inception as a whole. Beginning in February 1898, Kynoch’s management organized a series of film shows designed to help keep a workforce skilled in the manufacture of explosives entertained, edified and occupied during their leisure hours. As a technology that produced the illusion of movement by presenting images at high speed and volume to its audiences, the cinema epitomized the explosion of images at the end of the nineteenth century that would bring an image-rich environment within reach of ordinary people for the first time. Factory personnel would be centrally involved when this occurred in a systematic fashion with the establishment of dedicated film-exhibition venues in the early 1910s. Seen from a historiographic perspective privileging place and audience, the explosion of images in a town dominated by an explosives factory invokes not just metaphor or the chemical link between the celluloid from which film was made and the cordite in which Kynoch specialized but also that cinema in this context was not primarily about attractions but distraction.

(Denis Condon, Maynooth University, Ireland)

Peter Yeandle – War Fever on Film: London’s West End in 1900

This paper undertakes a contextual analysis of a recently digitised Warwick Trading Company film: *Sir George White Leaving the London Hippodrome*.^{*} Originally filmed on 23 April 1900, the footage depicts cheering crowds surrounding White, the hero of the Siege of Ladysmith, as he departed the Hippodrome accompanied by the theatre proprietor. Crowd patriotism, evident in this footage, was to be witnessed on a much larger scale a month later during the so-called Mafeking fever of the weekend commencing May 18th. That weekend, the West End – according to the press – had become ‘an orgie of patriotism’. The cheering crowds of May were shown footage of the cheering crowds of April.

The jingo crowd and Mafeking fever has been subject of several academic studies investigating the domestic political impact of war. This paper explores how film footage might be used to consider crowd patriotism differently. We know film was used for propagandistic purpose. I want to suggest an additional role for film: shown in entertainment venues, film – along with theatrical productions – formed an integral component of wartime news broadcasting. If the wartime public sphere was theatrical, then that theatricality included film.

(Peter Yeandle, Senior Lecturer in History, Loughborough University)

^{*} The footage can be seen here: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-sir-george-white-leaving-the-london-hippodrome-1900-online>

Llewella Chapman – ‘Beauty and the Bustle’: Costume, fashion and promotion in *Pictures and The Picturegoer*, 1914 – 1925

Early issues of *Pictures and The Picturegoer* reveal a keen interest in highlighting the costumes created for film and the process behind this, and their wider influence on fashion for women. For example, an article outlines the process behind Irene Lee’s supervision of producing 15,000 costumes for *A Daughter of the Gods* (Herbert Brenon, 1916) in Jamaica: ‘In six weeks, during which the women worked day and night, every costume was finished to the ultimate stitch’ (19 February 1916, 474). In relation to promotion and consumption, ‘Movie Margerie’ noted: ‘The screen has long been responsible for more women’s fashions [...] Alma Reuben, of Triangle, presents to the feminine public a gown style which promises to revolutionise prevailing modes – and this is in spite of the war!’ (24 November 1917, 571). This paper will address these two interlinked themes – film costume and its wider influence on women’s fashion – by tracing the critical discussion surrounding the processes and promotion of costume in *Pictures and the Picturegoer* through focusing on critics including ‘Movie Margerie’ and Elsie Codd, and actresses such as Josephine Earle and Pauline Frederick.

Biography:

Dr Llewella Chapman is a visiting scholar at the University of East Anglia. Her research interests include film history, costume, gender and videogames. She has published two monographs: *Fashioning James Bond: Costume, Gender and Identity in the World of 007* (Bloomsbury, 2022) and *From Russia With Love* (2022) as part of the BFI Film Classics

series. Her next monograph, *Costume and British Cinema: Labour, Agency and Creativity, 1900-1985*, will be published by Bloomsbury in 2026.

Martin Stollery – Two forgotten days in November 1929: Oswell Blakeston, gossip and Eisenstein's visit to London

Oswell Blakeston is probably best known to film historians as the Gaumont-British insider who during the late 1920s contributed satirical articles to the film journal *Close Up* about incompetence and low standards in the British film industry. Blakeston helped cement a negative image of 1920s British cinema among cinephiles.

However, Blakeston's role as *Close Up*'s gossip columnist is worth revisiting in order to revise another standard narrative - Eisenstein's visit to London in 1929. This visit has been filtered through heteronormative accounts from figures such as Ivor Montagu and John Grierson, with the Film Society screening of *Drifters* and *Battleship Potemkin* on 10 November 1929 confirming the link between Soviet montage cinema and the British documentary film movement.

The two days Blakeston spent with Eisenstein, 20 and 21 November 1929, have until now been overlooked in standard historical narratives. They deserve reintegration into our understanding of Eisenstein's encounter with British film culture, because they resulted in Blakeston circulating some delightful gossip, first in private correspondence and then in print, which provides a different, distinctively queer spin on Eisenstein's biographical legend. From this starting point, Blakeston and his *Close Up* colleagues then elaborated some of the earliest British queer perspectives on cinema more generally.
(Martin Stollery, Independent researcher)

Mark Fryers - British Fishing Communities on The Silent Screen

Both the sea and the fishing industries were attractive early subjects for silent screens (Carolan, 2012), bringing motion to static early films. 'Actuality' British fishing films projected a vibrant maritime culture in Britain and suggested dynamic communities and industry.

By contrast, fictional fishing narratives, although predominantly lost, tended to focus on romance and melodrama - especially love triangles and inter-familial rivalry (as Hitchcock's *The Manxman* 1929, as a rare available example exemplifies). They also remain unexplored academically as a subset of films that illuminate early screen culture.

Typical examples include *Heart of a Fishergirl* (1910), *A Fisherman's Love Story* (1912) and *Calvary* (1920) or rescue narratives with fishermen as heroes such as *Saved from the Sea* (1907, 1908, 1914) or *The Tidal Wave* (1920). These films were admired for their pictorial qualities but served a purpose outside of a more dominant filmic maritime culture in service to nation and empire.

This talk will elucidate these lost examples, reconstructing their narratives through reviews, production stills and other archival material via both national, local (BFI, EAFA) and digital

archives (Mediahist) suggesting how they projected an alternative maritime culture that drew especially on art and literature.

(Mark Fryers – The Open University)

Neil Parsons – Silent Cinema and Soviet films in wartime Bechuanaland Protectorate (Colonial Botswana)

Silent and sound eras overlap in the cinematic history of the British Empire and its colonies. The fifty plush first-run cinemas showing Hollywood movies for white settler audiences in cities from Cape Town to Nairobi were converted to sound projection by the end of 1931. Smaller second-run cinemas followed, but the change-over to sound was by no means speedy or universal. The long-running weekly newsreel *African Mirror*, started in 1913, was not converted from silent to sound until July 1939. Sound films for African audiences in remote or up-country venues began with travelling cinema vans, but were not shown everywhere in small halls or against white walls in the open air until after the Second World War.

Two of these [silent] films — “The Planetary System,” and one showing a French tank and the mobilization of the French Fleet in 1914—were shown again on November 12, and as they were being shown Mr Wright explained them. This was done in response to a request from some of the pupils...As many of the films are simply unintelligible if they are simply run through the machine, this method of explaining them is recommended (*Tiger Kloof Magazine*, no.8, December 1926, p.39).

No doubt Mr Wright in this 1926 quotation about an African secondary school spoke in English. But knowledge of the language was slow to spread elsewhere—and in the South was preceded by the spread of Afrikaans-Dutch or Zulu (equally alien) as lingua franca among the proletariat. When English language captions flashed up on screen in silent films, there was usually a vocal interpreter to translate them into a local language, standing by the screen or standing behind it with an ability to read captions back-to-front. [1]

Interpreters were also still necessary during sound films to explain what was seen and heard—particularly in the Second World War when vital events were merely touched upon by the barking voice-over of a newsreel, which assumed that it was merely adding pictures to what had already been read in a newspaper. Audiences, still unfamiliar with English and its multiple accents, also took time to really hear the dialogue spoken on screen — enough to quieten down from the typical silent era hubbub of laughter and shouted comments from the hall.

This paper attempts to come to terms with these transformations in the cinema history of an African town situated on the edge of the Kalahari, in colonial Botswana during the 1930s-40s—with a special focus on the apparent incongruence of a festival of Soviet short films organised by the local district commissioner in 1945-46.

Neil Parsons is a former Professor of History at the University of Botswana. His publications include with Alois Mlambo *A History of Southern Africa* (Bloomsbury 2019), *Black and White Bioscope: Movies Made in Africa 1899-1925* (Intellect 2018), *Clicko the Wild Dancing Bushman* (Jacana 2009), *King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain through African Eyes* (Chicago 1998), with Thomas Tlou & Willie Henderson *Seretse Khama, 1921-1980* (Macmillan 1995), *A New History of Southern Africa* (Macmillan 2nd

edn. 1993, 1st edn. 1982), and with Robin Palmer *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (Heinemann 1977).

(Neil Parsons parsonsqn@yahoo.com)

Łukasz Biskupski – Transnational Echoes and Identity Strategies in Silent Cinema: The Case of Jean de Kuharski and Charles Kean

This paper transcends the conventional confines of film culture in Britain and its empire before 1930, shedding light on the intricate transnational currents that molded early cinema. It examines the lives of Jan Kucharski (1893-1964) and Karol Konecki (1903- post 1983), Polish actors who became British citizens, whose careers spanned Germany, Poland, France, and Britain. Adopting the pseudonyms Jean de Kuharski and Joshua Kean, their involvement (in production, direction, acting) in "Emerald of the East" (1929) provides insights into the era's colonial imagination of India, reflecting broader themes of identity and cultural representation within imperial cinema. This work epitomizes the strategic self-stylization employed by actors on the imperial periphery to carve out niches within its cinematic domain. Kucharski's self-orientalisation and Konecki's attempt at assimilation highlight diverse strategies for navigating the evolving landscapes of the early 20th-century film industry. The transition from silent to sound films, after some unsuccessful projects, marked the end of their cinematic presence.

This study further emphasizes the importance of digital archival research in reconstructing their obscured filmographies and biographies, revealing the intricate connections between their transnational careers through investigations in Polish, German, French, British, and Swiss archives. By examining their multifaceted identities and contributions to colonial-themed cinema, this paper enhances our understanding of early cinema's global interconnectedness.

Łukasz Biskupski, PhD is an associate professor at the Faculty of Cultural Research, University of Łódź, Poland. His research primarily focuses on the history of cinema and popular culture, particularly emphasizing the economic, social, and cultural aspects of Polish cinema. Dr. Biskupski completed his PhD at SWPS University, Warsaw, and pursued a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Gdańsk. His notable publications include "Miasto atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Kino w systemie rozrywkowym Łodzi" (2013), an exploration of cinema's rise in Łódź and its influence on popular culture around 1900. His 2017 work, "Kinofilia zaangażowana. Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Filmu Artystycznego 'Start' i upowszechnianie kultury filmowej w latach 30. XX w.," examines the 1930s activities of the "Start" film society. Additionally, he co-edited "Papierowi bandyci. Wypisy z powieści obiegu brukowego do 1939 roku" (2017), which delves into Polish pulp fiction up to 1939.

Ian Christie – A Great British Mystery: Britain's Crime Thrillers

Given that we now know Britain had its own vein of racy crime-based cinema in the same era as *Fantomas*, *Zigomar* and American cliff-hanger serials – in the shape of Ivy Martinek as Three-Fingered Kate and Ultus, 'the man from the dead' – why does there seem to have been a distinctive lack of engagement with this new popular culture in Britain? Surely we can't continue blaming the anti-populism of Low or Leavis for this apparent absence? But are idiosyncratic outliers like Barrie's lost *The*

Real Thing at Last (1916), Brunel's Gainsborough spoofs, and the Montagu-Wells comedies a true record of Britain's response? Or have we been looking in the wrong places for the kind of enthusiasm for popular genres that galvanised avant-gardes in Soviet Russia, France, Germany and elsewhere?

Marc David Jacobs - Forever Young: Searching for Violet Powell

When British International Pictures announced its first slate of films in 1927, three of its four features carried writing credits for Violet Elsie Powell (1883-1959), who would go on to pen several more of BIP's most prestigious silents, starring the likes of Betty Balfour (*Paradise*) and Jack Buchanan (*Toni*). Although her work was dominated by the complexities of her female protagonists - including the title characters of two early Victor Saville successes, *Tesha* and *Kitty* - it also crossed over into war films (*Poppies of Flanders*) and, in her initial Hollywood career, a string of vehicles for Richard Barthelmess. Yet, despite Powell's impressive filmography, almost nothing has been written about her, and particularly her fate after apparently disappearing from the industry in 1934. This paper will examine not only the full range of Powell's foundational work at Elstree, but will also finally shed light on her biography, from her birth in Gloucestershire and her family's emigration to America, through her marriage to troubled screen idol David Powell, and continuing into the 1930s and 1940s, when she wrote for film and radio under the name Sherard Powell, becoming one of the most prolific women screenwriters in British cinema. And it will look at the difficulties of tracing Powell through the archival record, with challenges not only including changes of name (and possibly one male pseudonym) but also her habit of shaving anywhere up to two decades off her age.

Marc David Jacobs is a freelance film nerd with over a decade's experience in film exhibition, including as a co-founder of the Scottish Queer International Film Festival. His film history work has been featured by, amongst others, the BFI Reuben Library, Hippodrome Festival of Silent Cinema, Edinburgh International Film Festival, Doing Women's Film and Television History, Studiocanal Vintage Classics and BBC Arts. He is currently writing a book on British cinema of 1929.

Peter Domankiewicz – THE CURSE OF CLOVELLY COTTAGE

At the 2019 BSFFS, *Whatever Happened at Clovelly Cottage?* traced the story of the very first 35mm film shot in Britain and attempted to reconstruct it, revealing significant new discoveries about the first British films along the way. *The Curse of Clovelly Cottage* is the sequel no one demanded but which is, nonetheless, necessary.

After a brief recap - including new evidence about the exact date that first film was shot - the talk moves on to cover precisely what happened between Birt Acres, who shot the films, and Robert Paul, who sold those films, over the next few days and weeks: a series of successes, arguments and deceptions that would lead not only to the breakdown of their business relationship but to a lifetime of enmity which lasted to the death of Birt Acres in 1918. Since 2020, I have been working with Deac Rossell and Barry Anthony on *Finding Birt Acres*, a book covering in detail the work of this pioneer, who has been under-studied and consequently poorly understood. This research has brought a new clarity to the first stages of moving pictures in Britain, facilitating a more precise account of the Acres and Paul relationship.

As with the previous talk, I will be taking a forensic approach, to find the devil in the detail, whilst aiming to engage with a story that is full of drama and consequence for the emerging British film industry. Telling the story with greater clarity also involves identifying issues

with previous accounts and moving away from the binary, ‘pick a side’ approaches of previous film histories.

Laurence Carr: “Appalling Silence” and Imperial Noise: British Imperialism and Implied Sound in *The Great White Silence* (1924)

Herbert Ponting’s *The Great White Silence* (1924) is a silent documentary film that chronicles the British Antarctic Expedition. The principal aim of the mission, which was led by Captain Robert Falcon Scott, was to be the first expedition to reach the South Pole and to plant the Union Flag in the ice. This imperialistic endeavour ultimately ended in failure as a Norwegian team got to the South Pole first and the English explorers died on their return journey. Although the expedition ended in disappointment and death, Ponting’s patriotic silent film celebrates the determination and ambition of the explorers and frames Captain Scott as a national hero.

The title of Ponting’s film reflects on the quietness of Antarctica and an early intertitle specifically refers to it as “appalling silence”. The explorers break this sonic tranquillity with gunshots, tractors and the grinding sounds of the camera, amongst other things. Although we cannot *hear* these noises acoustically when we watch the film, they *can* be perceived visually and textually. I will position these implied sounds as imperialist pollutants of Antarctica’s sovereign ambience that indicate the British Empire’s desire to control and influence landscapes *and* soundscapes around the world.

Mark Fuller – Augustus Rosenberg, early Moving Picture showman and inventor

German-born Augustus Rosenberg, and his Rosenberg & Co., was never one of the Big Beasts in the jungle of the Victorian Moving Picture world, but rather a smaller creature flitting between their legs. Nevertheless, from his initial base in Newcastle he and his company went from exhibiting Kinetoscopes to projecting films using a self-designed projector at least as early as May 1896, very soon indeed after RW Paul, and Messrs Lumiere, via Felicien Trewey, had started to exhibit in London. I intend to share the results of my research, thus far, into his life and work to show that this lesser figure in the ecology of that time is worthy of our interest - and by extension so might others be.

Wesley Kirkpatrick – ‘Charlie Chaplin Wouldn’t Have Done That’: Oswald Mosley and the Mediagenic Politician’s Threat to Democracy, 1918-30

In the footnotes to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), Walter Benjamin damningly surveys the recent shift in methods of political communication: interpreting ‘a crisis in the conditions governing the public presentation of politicians’ as the true ‘crisis of democracies’. In Western democracies, the increasingly mediated postwar political landscape had favoured politicians embracing ‘innovations in recording equipment’ to directly address the mass electorate – whether audibly (radio), visually (silent film), or later combined (sound film). In short, the delineations separating the actor from the politician were now blurred as demagogues – or ‘dictators’ – disregarding parliamentary procedure were elevated to the rank of ‘the star’ and ‘the champion’.

Here, I present Oswald Mosley as a key example – neglected by both his contemporaries and subsequent historical scholarship. Whether seeking (control over his) film and media representation, situating his own politics alongside and/or against film and media empiric

hegemony, or eventually producing his own media texts – I argue that Mosley’s early acts of political manoeuvring through film and media reveal a mediagenic politician keen to embrace new vehicles of mass political communication, allowing the naturally individualistic and opportunistic politician to establish himself beyond the traditional party machine, on his journey towards fascism.

Anushrut Ramakrishnan Agrwaal – The class-lens: Understanding the use of lenses as labour representations in early British cinema

In Charles Urban’s *Cheese Mites* (1901-1903), a bespectacled man reads his newspaper using a magnifying glass while eating cheese. The glass then stands for a microscope as it shows the man miniscule mites all over his stilton. *Cheese Mites* invites viewers to observe the microscopic world of science. Alternately, in R.W. Paul’s *Cheese Mites/Lilliputians in a London Restaurant* (1901), a man (without spectacles) drinks beer and sees his cheese turn into small human figures; the Lilliputian ‘mites’. The films respond to and parody each other. However, the differences between them also represent divisions in British screen audiences: Urban’s film is for an audience keen to be perceived as ‘educated’, and Paul’s shares an affinity with temperance media cultures designed for ‘uneducated’ working classes.

Analysing the two *Cheese Mites*, I argue that in early British film culture, lenses – spectacles, magnifying glasses, microscopes – signify a lineage of scientific/intellectual labour dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. Lenses foreground the desire to appear ‘learned’ – a reader of books/images – and their absence indicate ‘illiteracy’. The paper here connects the history of British scientific and educational cultures to the representation of intellectual and physical labour in British screen cultures. It also shows how the division of labour extends to differentiation of colonial identities. The paper builds on materials available via the BFI Player and BFI Archives.

Biography Anushrut Ramakrishnan Agrwaal is an Associate Lecturer at the Department of Film Studies, University of St Andrews, whose research interests include nineteenth and twentieth century British educational and visual culture, non-theatrical film, film technologies, science and cinema, and colonial cinema.

Laraine Porter – ‘Dazzling Returns’ silent cinema music publishing, theme songs and spin-offs

Caches of silent cinema sheet music held at libraries and in museum collections, attest to the scale of the music industry’s links to British silent cinema. The Performing Rights Society (PRS), founded in 1914 to collect royalties on behalf of composers and publishers, also quickly realised that cinema was their major revenue stream. The title of this presentation quotes one of its board members referring to the potential of income from British cinemas who were now playing around sixty hours of live music each week. Music publishers also exploited the market for domestic sell-through of theme songs and spin-offs from popular silent films with love songs like ‘Chico’ (1927), a British musical response to Frank Borzages’s *Seventh Heaven* (1927) to ‘March on’ (1929) loosely based on *High Treason* (1929) and sold in an effort to ‘combat Bolshevism throughout the Empire and promote the immediate policy of “Awake and Work”’. This presentation examines the relationship between cinema and the business and culture of music publishing and at the practices and products that characterised the 1920s silent cinema music performance and its domestic sell-through.

(Laraine Porter April 2024, De Montfort University, Leicester)

