

After the final showing of *The Big Lebowski* on the Saturday evening they had to clear everything away to leave the courtyard clear for the morning. Hard work, but fun, and a change from the regular round of projection work.

It is great to know that our industry still attracts people who are skilled, keen and enthusiastic, and also good to know that film projection can still provide an interesting and worthwhile career.

My thanks to Steffan and Barry and to all the other team members who worked to make Film4 Summer Screen at Somerset House such a success. If you haven't been before, look out for next year's event and do go along - any film enthusiast will love it.

Jim Slater



The Phantom Returns

Mark Trompeteler reports on a brilliant evening at Covent Garden using a combination of live orchestra and a restored 1925 film print

After a gap of 85 years, this year Cinema returned in grand style to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, on the evening of Sunday 8th October.

In the 1921/22 season, Walter Wanger presented a season of silent films accompanied by the Covent Garden Symphony Orchestra. The season included Douglas Fairbanks in *"The Three Musketeers"* and *"The Glorious Adventure"* billed correctly or not, as the first colour picture play ever made.

In an inspired piece of programming, this year Lon Chaney returned in the most fitting of auditoria and appeared on the screen in the 1925 Universal production of *"The Phantom of the Opera"* directed by Rupert Julian.

On October 8th a 35mm restored print of the film, originally commissioned for the Channel Four TV Silents season, was shown. The London based Photoplay Productions undertook the production work originally for this Channel Four initiative.

It was a tinted print with very early Technicolour sequences.

The film was accompanied by Carl Davis's score, and he was conducting the Royal Opera House Orchestra. Carl Davis has now composed orchestral scores for some thirty classic silent feature films. Prior to the screening there were two rehearsals with the orchestra in rehearsal rooms and on the day there was a dress rehearsal with the orchestra on the afternoon of the

show, in the auditorium with the film running. Synchronisation was achieved purely through the conductor's baton, apart from the percussionist, who had an additional dedicated tv monitor in order that a particular sound could be made at exactly the right moment.

This classic film came totally to life in this most beautiful auditorium. Carl Davis's wonderful orchestral score breathed melodrama, humour, spectacle and the full range of emotions into the experience. The film played to a full house.

Bell Theatre Services supplied both projector and projectionists. The projectionists were Barry Wright and Steffan Laugharne operating a modified Kinton FP20 Projector, and it is interesting to compare the arrangements made at the Royal Opera House with those at the outdoor showings at Somerset House by the same projection team, described elsewhere in this issue of Cinema Technology .

A rear projection arrangement was set up, with the screen set quite deeply into the stage, resulting in significant parts of the audience having very limited visibility. People who were standing "in the gods" would have seen very little of the film and presumably had come both for the sense of occasion and to listen to the score. Sir Jeremy Isaacs, a former Director General of the Royal Opera and former Chief Executive of Channel Four Television attended. As for future silent film screenings at the



Opera House - the press office replied - "we were happy with the response and will be looking at possibilities"

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Recommended Related Websites:
www.archive.org/details/ThePhantomoftheOpera
(the entire 1925 film can be viewed via streaming at this site)
<http://members.aol.com/ChaneyFan/141.htm>
www.bell-theatre.com