

## Timing is Everything - The Comic Artistry

Perhaps the most difficult art form is comedy because nobody knows exactly what tickles people's funny bone and make them laugh. But then comedians have a way of perceiving and articulating the ridiculous and the absurd in a given epoch which transcend the cultural boundaries and time barriers as they are apt statements of what is hidden in the underbelly of given civilizations. Comedy makes people cope with the socio-political-cultural pretenses of a given civilizations as the comedian reveals the actualities in the most inimitable gestures. Comedy makes one look at life in its rawness and transforms it for the better. This screening presents to you the classical works of two great comedians Buster Keaton and Jacques Tati.

### About Buster Keaton

Buster Keaton is more famous and critically acclaimed today, than he was in the 1920's and the reason is simple: his films still seem awfully relevant and modern, maybe even more so than when they were first shown. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Keaton strips his films down to the bare minimum, no unnecessary subplots, his films zoom along in a way that today's audiences appreciate. His character is very Modern: quiet, steadfast, full of self deprecating humor. Keaton often uses that to his advantage. His gags have an elegant, organic logical quality that is coupled with Keaton's amazing athleticism. Most of all, Keaton loved film and all its possibilities and he loved to play and experiment with what it could do.

### About Jacques Tati

Jacques Tati's, real name Jacques Tati scheff, was a very well-known and beloved comedian in France in the first half of the 20th Century. Following World War II, he began getting involved in short films before finally directing his first feature. Tati only made six features in his career and appeared in all of them. His whole sensibility and way of thinking is there on screen. His comedy shines through, surely, but also his wistful way of looking at the slowly-modernizing world.

## Wednesday 27th December, 2017 - *Three short films by Buster Keaton*

### Back Stage

**Directed by Buster Keaton | USA | 26 minutes | 1919**

Buster and Arbuckle play two stagehands in a theater that is racked with labor troubles, touchy divas, and otherwise eccentric fellows. When practically the whole show walks out, Buster, Arbuckle and a few allies put on the show and this plot point thus allows Buster to showcase his amazing mimicry and athleticism. This was made just after Buster had returned from duty in First World War.

### The Goat

**Directed by Buster Keaton | USA | 27 minutes | 1921**

This delightful, often overlooked short of Keaton's, sums up his "Early Period" where his films follow the plot of conflict and chase that ends happily. Keaton plays the nameless main character down on his luck and through a series of Keaton-esque plot twists, ends

up being wrongly considered the murderer "Dead Shot Dan". Keaton navigates his way through a maze of mistaken identity, cops in pursuit and of course, loves. The famous shot of his entrance to the film's second part on a train's cowcatcher is both imaginative and surreal.

## **Cops**

**Directed by Buster Keaton | United States | 1922 | 18 minutes**

Often called Keaton's "Dark Masterpiece" represents the tone of his later works which were influenced by his unhappy marriage and the trials of his close friend, Roscoe Arbuckle. Keaton's youthful ideals were given quite a punch and Cops shows him reeling. Dark, cynical and even Kafka-esque in tone, the central plot's idea is that any honest person cannot get ahead in a world where everyone "has an angle".

## **Thursday 28th December, 2017**

### **The General**

**Directed by Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman | United States | 75 minutes | 1926**

One of the most revered comedies of the silent era, this film finds hapless Southern railroad engineer Johnny Gray (Buster Keaton) facing off against Union soldiers during the American Civil War. When Johnny's fiancée, Annabelle Lee (Marion Mack), is accidentally taken away while on a train stolen by Northern forces, Gray pursues the soldiers, using various modes of transportation in comic action scenes that highlight Keaton's boundless wit and dexterity.

### **Seven Chances**

**Directed by Buster Keaton | United States | 56 minutes | 1925**

Struggling stockbroker Jimmie Shannon (Buster Keaton) learns that he will inherit \$7 million by 7 p.m. if he can get married in time, lovelorn lawyer Jimmie Shannon sets off on a wild bride-chase. The hilariously inventive comedy culminates with one of Buster Keaton's most renowned set pieces that finds him pursued through the streets of Los Angeles by a gaggle of wannabe-wives - as well as scores of massive, dislodged boulders.

## **Saturday 29th December, 2017**

### **Mr Hulot's Holiday**

**Directed by Jacques Tati | France | 83 minutes | 1953**

Monsieur Hulot goes on a holiday to a seaside resort, but accidents and misunderstandings follow him wherever he goes. The peace and quiet of the hotel guests don't last very long with Hulot around, because although his intentions are good, they always turn out catastrophically.

**Saturday 30th December, 2017**

## **Mon Oncle**

**Directed by Jacques Tati | France | 111 minutes | 1958**

The hopeless Monsieur Hulot once again finds himself affecting people's lives without realizing what he has done. Hulot has taken his young nephew under his wing allowing him to play with other children. The boy's parents live in a ultra-modern house where the boy's overly pretentious mother will barely let him breathe. Concerned that he may be a bad influence on the boy, Hulot's sister and brother-in-law devise a plan to keep him occupied. Their attempt to introduce him to other people at their garden party doesn't work out as planned with hilarious results for everyone concerned.