
LOUISE BROOKS

Pandora's Box is based on two plays by the German playwright Frank Wedekind: *Der Ergeist* (1895) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1902), which, at the time, were deemed immoral and created a scandal. Thus it is hardly surprising that, when it was released, Pabst's film was banned in nearly all European countries except France, where the censors imposed sizeable cuts, delivering a toned-down version: the son becomes a simple secretary, the lesbian friend a childhood friend, and Lulu is acquitted at the trial and joins the Salvation Army at the end of the film...



During the Occupation, Langlois fortunately succeeded in exchanging a print with the Reichsfilmarchiv. La Cinémathèque française would long remain the only film archive in the world to own this unique print, which, moreover, Langlois considered one of the treasures of his collection.



More than Garbo, Louise Brooks's face, eyes and haircut à la Joan of Arc, and her smile.

Those who have seen her cannot forget her. She is the modern performer par excellence for she is like ancient statues: timeless.

It suffices to see her to believe in beauty, life, the reality of the characters; she has the naturalness that only primitives keep in front of the lens.

As soon as she is in a film, the fiction disappears with the art: we have the impression of witnessing a documentary; the camera seems to have surprised her without her knowing it.

She is the intelligence of cinematographic acting; she is the most perfect embodiment of photogenic; she sums up by herself all that the final years of silent pictures sought: extreme naturalness and extreme simplicity.

Her art is so pure that it becomes invisible.

Pabst was a very great director, one of those who did the most for this return to classicism that characterized the end of the silent era, but he could not free himself of lingering Expressionism and a certain heaviness, except when he had Louise Brooks as an actress. As soon as she appears, artifice disappears. Without her, he would never have been able to become universal; he would never have been able to achieve this direct, bare, objective style; he would never have been able to go so far and deal with such shocking subjects with this elegance, this way of saying and analyzing everything without seeming to touch it.

Excerpt from the exhibition catalogue '60 Years of Cinema', presented from June to September 1955 at the Museum of Modern Art

Pandora's Box / Die Büchse der Pandora

Germany, 1928 – 108 minutes

Direction: Georg Wilhelm Pabst

Script: Ladislaus Vajda

From *Der Ergeist* (1895) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1902) by Frank Wedekind

Production: Nero-Film

Photography: Günther Krampf

Set: Andrej Andrejew and Gottlieb Hesch

Cast: Louise Brooks, Fritz Kortner, Franz Lederer, Carl Goetz, Alice Roberts, Krafft Raschig, Gustav Diessl, Daisy d'Ora, Michaela von Newlinsky, Siegfried Arno

Beautiful, capricious Lulu, insouciant and innocently perverse, is a creature who lives only for love. She performs in a revue sponsored by her lover, Ludwig Schön, a powerful press and music-hall magnate who is engaged to the Minister of the Interior's daughter. The evening of the premiere, Lulu forces Schön to break off and gets him to marry her. But on their wedding night, he catches her unawares in her bedroom in an equivocal situation. Furious, he wants to force her to commit suicide, but in the struggle, it is he who is killed accidentally. Accused of murder, Lulu manages to flee...

Film restored by Martin Koerber of the Deutsche Kinemathek and the George Eastman House (Rochester, New York) at the Haghefilm and Big Sound laboratories. La Cinémathèque française provided the duplicate made by Henri Langlois in 1960.

