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## Silent Film in Interwar Cluj: Cinemas, Advertising Strategies, Sociocultural Campaigns

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**Abstract:** The Janovics filmmaking legacy is embedded in the cultural history of Kolozsvár. Located in the province of Transylvania the city was, under Austro-Hungarian rule, the site of a prodigious silent cinema production under the supervision of Jenő Janovics. Following World War I, Kolozsvár became part of the Kingdom of Romania as Cluj. The paper documents the status of silent film in Cluj from 1920, when cinema schedules started being printed in the local Romanian newspapers, up until 1929, the last year of exclusive silent film screenings in the city, from three complementary perspectives. Firstly, several new film venues opened, but functioned under the monopoly of a Bucharest based distribution company. Secondly, innovative advertising campaigns that promoted cinemas and films echoed those of international distributors. Thirdly, silent film was used as catalyst in sociocultural campaigns supported by world famous scientists and members of the academia. This case study displaces the canonical focus from European capitals to a provincial city with a pre-war filmmaking history that paved the way to a vibrant presence of silent cinema in the everyday life of the Cluj interwar society.

**Keywords:** Silent Film; Silent Cinema; Interwar Period; Cluj; Kolozsvár; Transylvania.

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During the summer of 1914, young Mihály Kertész directed three silent feature films in the Austro-Hungarian city of Kolozsvár. *Bánk the Regent* (*Bánk bán*) was a grandiose screen adaptation of the historical drama by József Katona, *The Undesirable* (*A tolonc*) was a screen version of the popular folk play by Ede Tóth, and *The Borrowed Babies* (*A kölcsönkért csecsemők*) was based on the farce comedy play *Baby Mine* by Margaret Mayo. On 21 January 1930, *Noah's Ark* (1928) directed by Kertész, this time in the Warner Brothers studio, under the name of Michael Curtiz, premiered locally in the Corso Cinema. The film heralded the era of sound cinema in the Transylvanian city of his early career.

In between these two moments, from 1914 to 1930, the sociopolitical climate of the city changed dramatically. Kolozsvár was officially renamed<sup>1</sup> Cluj when the province of Transylvania became part of the Kingdom of Romania at the end of World War I. This shift in political authority coincided with the abrupt end of the local film production lead by Hungarian artist Jenő Janovics. Numbering approximately 50.000 inhabitants, the city boasted a long-

standing cultural tradition. Here, the first Hungarian theatre company was formed in 1792 and by 1821 the first theatre in the country was erected. Motion pictures were demonstrated in the city as early as 1896. They enhanced an entertainment scene relevant enough for Cluj to become a stop<sup>2</sup> in the Europe tour of the *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World* traveling spectacle with two performances that took place on 18 and 19 July 1906.

In 1920, Hungarian artist Jenő Janovics ended his silent feature film venture that covered the period 1913–1920 and resulted in a catalogue of 66 titles. The void left by the Janovics legacy in terms of the local film production turns the spotlight on the complementary aspects of cinema as a multifaceted industry that includes film distribution, promotion and reception. In this paper I address several questions that aim to explore silent cinema in interwar Cluj from the standpoint of these aspects: If and how did the pre-war network of cinemas, as private enterprises, developed concurrent with the state policies regarding the reorganising of the cultural institutions in Transylvania under Romanian authority? What were the promotional strategies employed by cinema managers and film distributors targeting the city's multicultural film audience? Did silent film surpass its role of entertainment option for the Cluj society and its lifestyle in terms of the broader societal transformations derived from modernity during the first decades of the twentieth century?

The methodological approach correlated with these inquiries consists in a historical approach, the survey of an extended corpus of silent cinema related

content published in the local press within the time frame 1920–1929. In 1920, Romanian newspapers such as *Patria* and *Înfrățirea* started publishing the schedules of the Cluj cinemas alongside the Hungarian ones that had exclusively delivered this information up to that moment. While factual cinema related information began being printed simultaneously, for both Romanian and Hungarian readers, some events benefited from a mirrored research of their coverage in both languages, in order to render a complex and nuanced depiction of the 1920s as the last decade in the history of silent cinema in Cluj.

### Film Projection Venues in Cluj from 1896 to World War I

The history of cinemas in Cluj began on 31 December 1896 when a notice<sup>3</sup> of four lines, titled “Kinematograph”, printed at the bottom of the third page in the main local Hungarian language newspaper, informed its readers about the projection of “interesting moving pictures” that would take place in the Reduta building. Three consecutive performances were scheduled at 5, 7 and 8 o'clock in the afternoon and were to be reprised the following days. No details were given on the titles or subject of the projected films.

Among the travelling film projectionists who reached the city at the end of nineteenth century the name of Mór Benkő (Stein) stands out. Archival sources such as playbills document his constant activity demonstrating the Cinématographe or the Edison Theatre in various cities in Transylvania. In Cluj, most notably, he borrowed titles from his collection to illustrate the film projection segment of the theatrical

performance *Moving Pictures* (*Mozgó fényképek*), directed by Jenő Janovics, in 1899.

The first permanent cinema in Cluj, a set-up for constant film projections in a location with a different main purpose, was opened to the public on 6 April 1906. The Urania Theatre-motion picture stage<sup>4</sup> (Uránia Színház-mozgó színpad) functioned within the ground floor restaurant of the Mezei Hotel, at 17 Miklós Wesselényi Street, currently Regele Ferdinand Boulevard. On 25 August 1906, it was reopened as the First Electric Theatre of Cluj<sup>5</sup> (Első Kolozsvári Villamos Színház), after the space had been renovated and rearranged.

As manager of the First Electric Theatre of Cluj, entrepreneur András Nagy Udvari opened an additional cinema, considered an extension of the first, on 12 March 1907. The Apollo Electric Theatre<sup>6</sup> (Apolló Villamos Színház) operated as a permanent cinema in a space dedicated solely to film projections, at 5 Hunyadi Square, currently Ștefan cel Mare Square. There, the spectators could watch films previously projected in the First Electric Theatre of Cluj at lower ticket prices. On 4 January 1908, it was announced that the Apollo Electric Theatre was being relocated<sup>7</sup> to where the Paris Electric Theatre (Párisi Villamos Színház) had functioned throughout most of the previous year, at 26 Mátyás Király Square, currently Unirii Square.

A genuine competition between Cluj cinemas emerged when the Uranus Scientific Theatre of Cluj<sup>8</sup> (Kolozsvári Tudományos Uránus Színház) opened on 8 May 1907, in the premises of the *Ujvilág* newspaper. They were situated near the

Central Park, in a building that was later demolished. This competition even took the form of public polemic<sup>9</sup> about the local film distribution network. On 19 October 1907, the Uranus Scientific Theatre of Cluj was relocated<sup>10</sup> at 5 Miklós Wesselényi Street, currently Regele Ferdinand Boulevard. However, a newspaper announcement<sup>11</sup> made on 7 November 1907 indicated additional changes, such as the ownership and the appointment of the same Udvari as manager. The name was altered from Uranus becoming Urania (Uránia). Two years later, the last film projections were scheduled<sup>12</sup> on 6, 7 and 8 December 1910, as the Urania Scientific Theatre of Cluj was moved to a more appropriate space. On 10 December 1910, it opened<sup>13</sup> on the ground floor of the Uránia Palace, at 4 József Ferencz Street, currently Horea Street.

Until the outbreak of War World I, two more cinemas were inaugurated in the city. One year before making his debut in silent film directing, Hungarian theatre artist Jenő Janovics opened a cinema in the building hosting the summer Theatre Circle (Színkör) he managed. The Theatre Circle Cinema (Színkör Mozgó)<sup>14</sup> opened on 1 October 1912 and would function continuously<sup>15</sup> up until the end of August 1923. By then, Cluj being under Romanian authority, it was named the Hungarian Theatre Cinema (Cinema Teatrul Maghiar). Last but not least, the University Cinema<sup>16</sup> (Egyetem Mozgó) opened on 30 October 1913, in the Sebestyén Palace, at 3 Universităţii Street. In 1923, it would be renamed Select Cinema. To this day, it remains the oldest operating cinema in Romania.

At the end of World War I, the city of Cluj numbered four permanent cinemas:

Apollo, Urania, Theatre Circle and University. It is unknown when the First Electric Theatre of Cluj closed, but its program stopped being printed in the daily press after Udvari took over the Uranus Scientific Theatre of Cluj.

### Cinemas in Cluj from 1920 to 1929

As part of the Kingdom of Romania, Romanian institutions such as such as a university, a theatre and an opera were soon established in Cluj on the foundations of the existing Hungarian institutions. The first post-war initiative to open a permanent Romanian cinema was an initiative on the part of the Culture of the People Society (Societatea Cultura Poporului). Founded<sup>17</sup> in Cluj, in 1920, it supported the strengthening of the national identity of the Romanian citizens of the city, particularly of those belonging to the working class, through various cultural projects. In the local press, its cinema was advertised in January and February 1921 as the Reduta Cinema, borrowing the name of the building where the projections were being held, the same where Cluj spectators were introduced to motion pictures in 1896. An additional detail indicated the Reduta Room as the exact location.

Lacking the polished reputation of the older venues, the Reduta Cinema was also referred to as the Culture of the People Cinema (Cinematograful Cultura Poporului) in an article<sup>18</sup> published in March 1921 that pointed out the ideals as well as the hardships of initiating such an endeavour. It urged spectators to attend its programs despite what was perceived as an inferior status by comparison to the other cinemas, due to the low price of the entry tickets.

In addition, it reassured the public that the program consisted of the best French films featuring the best artists of the day. The functioning period of the Reduta/Culture of the People Cinema remains unclear as no printed programs followed after February 1921. Over the next few years, the Culture of the People Society developed regular sociocultural soirées that ended with film projections. Between 1921 and 1930, it also edited the weekly magazine *Culture of the People* (*Cultura Poporului*). On 30 November 1924, the Society announced<sup>19</sup> the change of its legal status into that of a joint-stock company.

The lingering issue of a first Romanian cinema in Cluj continued to be debated in the press, mostly in the Romanian newspapers with a nationalist agenda. Supporting such a project, an editor even made the unsubstantiated claim that the future competition generated by a Romanian cinema in Cluj to be opened by the University was the reason behind the otherwise correct news<sup>20</sup> from late April 1923 that Jenő Janovics was selling his cinemas. Details started to emerge regarding the space of the old Wolves' Street Theatre (Farkas utcai színház/ Teatrul de pe Ulița Lupilor), belonging to the Regele Ferdinand I University, to be leased in order to house a permanent cinema.

In August 1923, it was reported that the rehabilitation works on the building had commenced. The delicate overtones of this process were soon revealed. For both the national and the local Hungarian cultural heritage, the site of the former Wolves' Street Theatre held a significant status as the place of the first permanent Hungarian theatre, that opened its doors in 1821. The rumours that in 1923 the building would

host not only a cinema, but also a cabaret were decried in a Hungarian language article<sup>21</sup> that traced a descriptive history of damages it experienced through the years and several failed attempts on behalf of the University to capitalise on this asset.

In response, the Vice-chancellor of the University, Nicolae Bănescu, issued a statement<sup>22</sup> in the fall of 1924, detailing the initial agreements to lease the building to a certain man named Petreanu for a fifteen years period. Besides the rent, the University withheld the rights to a percentage from the revenues of the cinema, to maintain control over the selected films and to use the hall for bi-monthly public conferences. As the building had a severely damaged roof, the lessee was to cover the expenses and operate all needed repairs. But the contractor had ceased the works alleging difficulties as the building accomodated the Botanical Museum and several unevacuated private suites. Legal measures were followed by a mutual agreement for the contract to be terminated. A permanent cinema never functioned in the building of the old Wolves' Street Theatre during the interwar period.

The next cinema to be opened in Cluj was called Dacia, a name that would be used in time by several other such venues. This particular one was advertised as a summer cinema belonging to the Dacia Garden (Grădina Dacia) managed by the Dacia Cooperative (Cooperativa Dacia). Beginning with 1 May 1924, the public was invited at 23 General Poetaş Street, currently Someşului Street, to enjoy select restaurant services to be enjoyed on the musical background of a live orchestra, as well as a varied entertainment program. The Cinema of the Dacia Garden<sup>23</sup>

(Cinematograful Grădinii Dacia) was presented as the main attraction alongside various performances such as magic tricks, telepathy, prestidigitation, illusions. Its adverts never included the films to be featured in the program, as they were most likely bought or borrowed from the local cinemas after their initial release. In fact, at a closer look the Dacia Garden was intended first and foremost as a cabaret addressed to both Romanian and Hungarian locals. An article<sup>24</sup> preceding its opening, that appeared in various newspapers, announced the main attractions consisting in the Niculescu-Buzău Variety Theatrical Troupe from Bucharest and the Steinhardt Comedy Troupe from Budapest.

During the summers of 1925 and 1926, the Principele Carol Royal Cultural Foundation (Fundăția Culturală Regală Principele Carol) organised several cinemas in various cities of Transylvania. In Cluj, the Principele Carol Cinema<sup>25</sup> (Cinema Principele Carol) functioned in the building of the Hungarian Theatre. The initiative echoed the broader cultural policies of the foundation that supported the progress of the Romanian nation through arts and sciences, with emphasis on the youth and rural communities. The Principele Carol Cinema featured succesful films of relatively recent date, such as Max Linder's *The King of the Circus* (*Max, der Zirkuskönig*, Édouard-Émile Violet, 1924) in a 1925 program and the Lilian Harvet and Harry Liedtke comedy *Love and Trumpets* (*Liebe und Trompetenblasen*, Richard Eichberg, 1925) in a 1926 program. Special sections for children included Harold Lloyd and Harry Piel comedies. Documentary films covering the official engagements of the Romanian Royal Family were integrated into the screening schedule.

In 1926 and 1927 the need for a new permanent cinema was still being discussed in the press in vague terms within the context of the urban development plans of the local authorities. In the spring of 1927 there is a brief mention<sup>26</sup> of a Dacia Cinema belonging to the Cluj City Hall that functioned in the events room of the Dacia Hotel at 49 Mareşal Foch Path, currently 21 Decembrie 1989 Boulevard. But the year 1927 was the long awaited turning point in the development of the cinemas in Cluj as four new ones were opened to the public: The Hungarian Theatre, Opera, Carmen, and Edison.

On 8 May 1927, the former Színkör Cinema reopened<sup>27</sup> under the same name for the Hungarian locals and as The Hungarian Theatre Cinema (Cinema Teatrul Maghiar) for the Romanian locals. It was managed by Jenő Janovics in partnership with SARPIC. The opening film was the comedy *Millionaires* (*Grønkebings glade gavtyve*, Lau Lauritzen Sr., 1925) starring the comedy duo Pat and Patachon. The characters Pat & Patachon, played by Danish actors Carl Schenstrøm and Harald Madsen, were also known as Ole & Axel to American audiences and Long & Short to British audiences.

The Opera Cinema<sup>28</sup> was intended to cover the summer entertainment of Cluj, approximately from 1 June to 15 September, as most of the other cinemas preferred reruns of successful films. The management was undertaken by the Trade Union of the Romanian Press from Transylvania (Sindicatul Presei Române din Ardeal) subordinated to the Ministry of Cults and Arts. As it was hosted by the National Theatre and Opera, in the early twentieth century neo-baroque theatre designed by Austrian

architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer, the Opera Cinema was advertised as a venue of superior standards in exchange of an accesible entrance fee. Discounted ticket were offered to students and state employees, as well as free entrance for journalists. The initial date for the grand opening was set on 15 June and postponed for 18 June, because of the imposed timetable in obtaining all required permits. The opening gala<sup>29</sup> was held on 20 June 1927 featuring the films *The Holy Mountain* (*Der heilige Berg*, Arnold Fanck, 1926) and *Volcano!* (William K. Howard, 1926).

On the festive day of 25 December 1927, the Carmen Cinema<sup>30</sup> opened at 1 Gării Square, on the premises of an entrepot belonging to the Albina Bank. This cinema was founded by ASTRA-The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture of the Romanian People (Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român), a cultural institution founded in Sibiu, in 1861, that played a significant role in the assessment of a Romanian identity through cultural initiatives in the province. Situated on the outskirts of the city, the Carmen Cinema primarily addressed<sup>31</sup> the working-class citizens of Cluj, offering low priced tickets and a program that included matinée performances to attract spectators regardless of their work shift. It could accommodate 300 people and offered buffet and wardrobe facilities. In time, the Carmen Cinema gradually attracted spectators from all over town, with its pleasant atmosphere and a relatively up to date film offer. The official opening program might have been a prediction as it featured the early career Marlene Dietrich drama *Café Elektric* (Gustav Ucicky, 1927).

At the end of 1927, the Edison Cinema<sup>32</sup> became the first purpose-built cinema building in the city, at 39 Londrei Street, currently Ploiești Street. As the final stages of the construction works were still in progress at the time, an official opening<sup>33</sup> was postponed for after the 1928 Easter celebrations. During the second half of May, a series of promotional articles highlighted intriguing production details related to the films *Aloma of the South Seas* (Maurice Tourneur, 1926), *The Red Mill* (Roscoe Arbuckle, 1927), *The Nameless Castle* (*Névtelen vár*, Márton Garas, 1920), *Her Sister from Paris* (Sidney Franklin, 1925) and *The Red Raiders* (Albert S. Rogell, 1927). The first two films were preceded by English respectively Dutch dance demonstrations performed by artists of the Hungarian Theatre.

During 1928 two more cinemas further developed the cinema network of Cluj: Corso and Grand. A formal inspection at Corso led by the mayor of the city was followed by a special screening<sup>34</sup> organised for the members of the press, on 20 January, with *Fabulous Lola* (*Die tolle Lola*, Richard Eichberg, 1927). The Corso Cinema opened for the public<sup>35</sup> on 2 February 1928 with *Love* (*Liebe*, Paul Czinner, 1927), a German drama starring Elisabeth Bergner and Cluj born actress Ágnes Eszterházy. It was installed in a building erected with this very purpose that was situated in the courtyard of the Bánffy Palace, at 30 Regele Matia Square, currently Unirii Square. It was in the property of Baroness Charlotte Bánffy and physician Ioan Buia.

Up until 1929, one last cinema opened in Cluj and it would function during the summers of 1928 and 1929. The Grand Cinema<sup>36</sup> was located in the double courtyard

of the City Hall in Unirii Square, currently 2 Eroilor Boulevard. It featured a jazz band and an orchestra of artists belonging to the Romanian Opera, conducted by Austrian born "theatre musician" Ede (Otto) Urbasch. Set up as a summer garden decorated with exotic plants, it offered bench and box seats, it included a cold buffet and allowed smoking. The Grand Cinema opened<sup>37</sup> on 4 July 1928 with a program<sup>38</sup> that consisted in the *Koko Explores* (1927) episode from the *Out of the Inkwell* animated film series created by Max Fleischer, the drama *The Woman Disputed* (Henry King, Sam Taylor, 1928) starring Norma Talmadge and Clara Bow's star vehicle "*It*" (Clarence G. Badger, 1927). By mid-July 1928, the Select Cinema signed a partnership<sup>39</sup> with the Grand Cinema in order to move the late evening screenings to its open space, providing audiences with comfort during the hot summer months.

### *Orphans of the Storm* starring Buffalo Bill

The press coverage dedicated to the openings of cinemas in Cluj during the interwar period varied greatly, depending on the newspaper it appeared in. This happened despite the fact that all of them promoted exciting programs and promised comfort in terms of number of seats, heating and ventilation systems, buffet or wardrobe facilities. During the early 1920s there was a nationalist undertone related to all articles discussing the need for a Romanian cinema. This might have been the reason for complete lack of information in the Romanian press on the opening of the Edison Cinema, built and managed by Hungarian entrepreneurs, at the end of

1927. At the beginning of 1928, the opening of the Corso Cinema was deemed unnecessary<sup>40</sup> in the pages of the same *Patria* newspaper that covered the event extensively. However, a status evaluation of Cluj cinemas can be traced in their ranking on the list of prizes in various contests. In a 1926 questionnaire<sup>41</sup> titled “What films did you like most? What films did you want to see again?”, addressed at the readers of *Patria*, winners were promised tickets to two cinemas, with Select ranking higher than Urania in terms of prestige. But overall, all cinemas were the subject of advertising strategies and some film premieres were the subject of complex advertising campaigns.

The *Înfrățirea* newspaper printed the most controversial advertisements for films screened in Cluj cinema during the interwar period. As early as 1921, a fake news<sup>42</sup> announced a census ordered by the authorities that was explained in the context of a predicted overflow of people from all over Transylvania eager to see Erna Morena in the drama *Diary of a Lost Woman* (*Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen*, Richard Oswald, 1918) screened at the Reduta Cinema. A few years later, in February 1924, in an even more sensational tone, the readers were informed<sup>43</sup> that the comedy trio Fatty Arbuckle/Charlie Chaplin/Larry Semon emigrated to Romania after the Paris Police Prefecture banned their film *Fatty-Charlot-Zigoto* after a certain Miss Jeana Dupuis had laughed so hard that she became speech-impaired, while a certain Miss Beaulie had regained her speech on the same reason. Apparently, a Council of Psychiatrists allowed the screening of this film in Cluj citing its benefit for public health, but on several conditions:

that the screenings would be held at the Select Cinema and attended by people of old age, overwhelmed by sadness, in debt, in love or married, but forbidden to other comedians who might be tempted to steal the ideas of the three artists. There is no evidence of a silent film starring Fatty Arbuckle, Charlie Chaplin and Larry Semon, therefore *Fatty-Charlot-Zigoto* was most likely a selection from their filmographies. To top these hilarious adverts, on 23 May 1924, the premiere of *Lodgers of the Seventh Heaven* (*Blandt byens børn*, Lau Lauritzen Sr., 1923) was edited in the form of an obituary<sup>44</sup> for the Pat & Patachon comedy duo. Three memorial services<sup>45</sup> were announced beginning with 26 May, when mourners were invited to gather at the Select Cinema.

These samples of controversial takes on film advertising were surpassed by the intriguing coverage of an alleged trial between SARPIC and the Urania Cinema, in July 1924, in the pages of the same newspaper. Set up in 1920, SARPIC-The Romanian Joint-Stock Company for Cinema Enterprises<sup>46</sup> (Societatea Anonimă Română pentru Întreprinderi Cinematografice) was the Romanian branch of the Italian Joint-Stock Company Cito Cinema (Societa' Anonima Cito Cinema) that had agencies in most European capitals. In Bucharest, it was managed by the Italian representative Paolo Tempesta<sup>47</sup> and the lawyer Victor Rațiu<sup>48</sup> on behalf of the Romanian shareholders.

The four articles that covered the SARPIC-Urania Cinema litigation referred to an event that had taken place half a year earlier, namely the premiere of *Orphans of the Storm* (W. D. Griffith, 1921) at Cinema Urania, a film that was advertised

as starring Buffalo Bill. It was no printing error, as the program appeared with the same information between 3 and 7 February 1924. The careless use of Buffalo Bill's name could be linked to the famous 1922 trial<sup>49</sup> of W. F. Cody ("Buffalo Bill") Historical Pictures Corporation against the Universal Film Exchanges Inc., resulting in a win for the latter. The verdict stated that the name Buffalo Bill had become public property after the copyright term had reached expiration, but also that it had already gained a secondary meaning related in a broad sense to the American Wild West.

By referencing the February misleading promotion of *Orphans of the Storm*, on 15 July 1924 it was announced<sup>50</sup> that SARPIC was preparing to sue the Urania Cinema for unfair competition. SARPIC accused the management of Urania of trying to play down the huge success of the film premiere in Bucharest, while being unable to acquire the actual Griffith title and screening instead *In the Days of Buffalo Bill* (Edward Laemmle, 1922). In response,<sup>51</sup> the management of Urania placed the responsibility on the distributor, the Transylvania Film Factory Joint-Stock Company (Societatea Anonimă Transilvania Fabrica de Filme), for allowing them to use any title they wished for a film they distributed, due to the lack of a legal framework in this matter.

A reporter for *Înfrățirea* expressed his eagerness for a final verdict<sup>52</sup> that became public quicker than expected as it was printed on another page of the same issue. As president of an unidentified court house, the great American director D. W. Griffith took into consideration the depositions of the Gish sisters of never having starred in the Buffalo Bill film and ruled that the Urania Cinema be closed for a period of

one month. Additionally, the Apollo Cinema was obliged to abide by the same sanction, in order to allow filmgoers to attend imposed screenings of *Orphans of the Storm* at the summer Hungarian Theatre Cinema.

The facts overshadowed by this trick film promotion were much simpler. The Transylvania Film Factory and subsequently the Urania Cinema were owned by SARPIC, having started negotiations<sup>53</sup> for buying the previously named Transylvania Film Factory Joint-Stock Company (Societatea Anonimă Transilvania Fabrica de Filme), from Jenő Janovics, as early as 1922. An agreement<sup>54</sup> was signed by both parties on 18 April 1923, with Janovics splitting the film production department from the film exploitation one, that was sold to SARPIC. Thus, the Bucharest distribution company undertook the management of the Urania and University cinemas. The content of the document also covered future summer film screenings held in the building of the Hungarian Theatre. As manager of the institution, Janovics would provide logistics, namely the hall, the projection equipment and the personnel needed, while SARPIC would provide films and cover the content and costs of outdoor and press promotional campaigns. A special clause ensured minimized competition, with SARPIC agreeing to close one of the two cinemas during the schedule of screenings at the Hungarian Theatre. Thus, the "*Orphans of the Storm* starring Buffalo Bill" February 1924 press promotional campaign anticipated the July circumstances when the Hungarian Theatre reopened as a cinema venue during the summer and the Urania Cinema was closed for renovations.

Other newspapers followed suit, such as *Patria*, with misleading news and jokes

sometimes preferred to the more conventional film advertisements. In 1927, it printed what seemed to be a missing child case.<sup>55</sup> In a black framed text, a concerned parent was pleading for the return of his son, Liviu, promising to oblige to his wish of attending the Sunday matinées for children at the Opera Cinema, the apparent reason for his runaway adventure. In 1929, a fictional dialogue<sup>56</sup> between a convict sentenced to death and the prosecutor revolved around the former's last wish to see the film screened at the Carmen Cinema and the latter giving firm instructions for it to be fulfilled.

Gradually the cinemas in Cluj developed partnerships with local shops in order to boost ticket sales. Children received free candy, women were offered flowers and sometimes contests had prizes consisting in film-themed merchandise such as a Zigoto statue. In some cases, the name of the shops were promoted. In July 1927, on a weekly basis, the Fischer Store<sup>57</sup> rewarded every twenty fifth ticket buyer at the screenings of the Austria-German coproduction *Grandstand for General Staff* (*Der Feldberrnhügel*, Hans Otto and Erich Schönfelder, 1926) at the Opera Cinema with Rosenthal pieces of chinaware, crystal glassware and various household items. On some occasions, the partnership took the additional form of product placement, with the Rozsa Royal Drugstore<sup>58</sup> spraying a perfume called The Black Narcissus during the 7 July 1927 screening of the German comedy *The Violet Eater* (*Der Veilchenfresser*, Frederic Zelnik, 1926). Likewise, the Cyclamen Flowershop<sup>59</sup> offered a Biedermeier style bouquet for each female member of the audience present at the screenings of *The Princess of the Riviera* (*Die Fürstin der*

*Riviera*, Géza von Bolváry, 1926) on 8, 9 and 10 July 1927. Both films played at the Hungarian Theatre Cinema.

In some exceptional instances, open air Cluj became part of the advertising campaigns. Such was the case in 1929, when a Fokker military aircraft<sup>60</sup> was placed in the Unirii Square, facing the Corso Cinema, seemingly attracting attention to the local premiere of *Wings* (William A. Wellman, 1927). But prior to this, on 25 October 1925, all shops owners were invited<sup>61</sup> to participate in a window display contest as part of a campaign for the local premiere of *Quo Vadis* (Arturo Ambrosio, Gabriellino D'Annunzio, Georg Jacoby, 1924) that was set for 9 November. Promotional materials were supplied by the film distributor, namely SARPIC via the Transilvania Film Factory. All other type of decorations were the choice of the shop owners, as long as the name of the film was clearly visible and the overall design was related to its theme. All participants were to be announced in the local press and would each receive an invitation to the premiere. The winners<sup>62</sup> were a fashion store owned by a certain Jenő Szabó that came on the first place, followed by the Royal Candy Store and a men clothing store.

The 1924 film adaptation of *Quo Vadis* starring Emil Jannings was promoted as a spectacular achievement in all film markets where it was purchased. For example, the American distributor, First National, secured a sixteen days campaign<sup>63</sup> in the *Bollettino della Serra* that printed two column front page articles in red ink and a ten pages coverage of the film inside the newspaper, targeting the 900.000 Italians living in the New York area. Likewise, the premiere of *Quo Vadis* at the Liberty Theatre in New

Orleans expanded the First National press-book aids with a campaign<sup>64</sup> that included “every conceivable medium of audience appeal”, radio, book clubs, libraries, Italian societies, alongside a billboard campaign that used several thousand sheets of lithographs. While window display contests related to a film were not uncommon in the era, in the case of interwar Cluj the *Quo Vadis* contest was the most complex advertising campaign, one that fell in line with the promotional strategies that accompanied the film worldwide.

#### From *Menace* to the *Harmonies of Paris*

The use of silent film for scientific purposes was initiated in 1898 by Romanian Professor and neurologist Gheorghe Marinescu who, together with camera operator Constantin M. Popescu, recorded patients suffering from a neurological disorder in *Walking Troubles of Organic Hemiplegy (Tulburări ale mersului în hemiplegia organică)*. It stands as the first scientific film ever made. In this tradition, by 1921, the 150 seats auditorium of the Faculty of Medicine belonging to the Regele Ferdinand I University had been equipped with “installations for projections, epidiascopy and cinematography”.<sup>65</sup> Various courses such as the ones dedicated to Social Hygiene and General Pathology also relied on film to illustrate the clinical manifestations or treatments concerning various conditions such as syphilis and rabies, or the stages in the process of phagocytosis.

Prior to this moment, world renowned inframicrobiologist Constantin Levaditi replaced the university auditorium with the University Cinema, inviting medical students and physicians to participate

to a first “cinematographic session”<sup>66</sup> supporting his course on Experimental Medicine, that took place on 30 October 1920. On 27 November 1920, a second session of “microscopic cinematography”,<sup>67</sup> was linked to the course of General and Experimental Pathology. While this series addressed professionals in the field of medicine, Levaditi also included lectures in a social hygiene campaign targeting the syphilis epidemic in post-war Transylvania. His guidelines on the prophylaxis of this disease complemented the screening<sup>68</sup> of the Romanian-Hungarian co-production *Menace (Din grozăviile lumii/Vilagrém, Jenő Janovics, 1920)* that took place on 29 December 1920, in the National Theatre.

It was not unusual for academics to be guests of various cultural associations such as the Red Cross or the Association of Orthodox Women that organised educational events aimed at various segments of the population. In 1921, Professor Gheorghe Pamfil delivered the lecture “Social Parasitism”<sup>69</sup> on the occasion of one of the social soirées organised by the Culture of the People Society in the Reduta building. As in many more such occasions that followed, the program ended with an unnamed film. In 1924, Professor Iuliu Hațieganu presented modern perspectives on tuberculosis<sup>70</sup> before the screening of a scientific film on this subject. Professor Gheorghe Popoviciu focused on children’s healthcare<sup>71</sup> in the rural area, also referencing a collection of films and images curated by Professor Iuliu Moldovan, the head of the Social Hygiene Institute. Intended as an itinerant museum, these visual resources were intended to educate the illiterate peasants in Transylvania on the dangers and beneficial habits in raising their children. Professor

Nicolae Minovici lectured on the dangers of imorality. As opposed to his colleagues, he discussed films for their potential negative impact, including cinema in a synthesis of the sources of imorality. According to Minovici, “taking into consideration that cinema can successfully compete with all novels, all theatres, we can easily understand how, when their essence is immoral, they [films] become more dangerous and more widespread than alcohol.”<sup>72</sup> In 1927, Professor Titu Gane and physician Dominic Stanca presented “The Peril of Syphilitic Heredity”<sup>73</sup> in the Prefecture Hall, illustrating the lecture with projected photographs and films.

The Association of Medical Students (Societatea Studenților în Medicină din Cluj), founded in 1923, also initiated a rural sanitary and cultural campaign<sup>74</sup> by means of film projections with consistent support from the institution it belonged to. Financial resources were enabled by Professor Titu Gane, projection devices were provided by Professor Iuliu Moldovan and guest lectures were delivered by many academics including Antarctic explorer Emil Racoviță. Professor Mihail Dragomirescu presided over the Friends of the Cinema Association<sup>75</sup> (Asociația Prietenii Cinematografului) that organised regular meetings for its members, with lectures complementing various films. Schools in Cluj were included in the medical educative efforts. Such was the case when the pupils of the Primary School No. 8 attended a cultural gathering that included poetry declamation, violin and cello recitals, followed by the lecture “On the Peril of Tuberculosis in Children”<sup>76</sup> delivered by physician Axente Iancu, illustrated by the screening of a film provided by Dominic Stanca.

Silent film was also integrated into cultural initiatives outside the academia. Congresses organised in Cluj by the Romanian Naturalists<sup>77</sup> or the Romanian Naval League<sup>78</sup> enriched their program with film screenings. In 1927, at the National Theatre, Colonel aviator Andrei Popovici detailed<sup>79</sup> the famous 1925 Rome-Australia-Tokyo-Rome flight of Italian aviator Francesco de Pinedo in the opening of the program that included the screening of two aviation films.

During the last two years of the silent cinema exclusivity in Cluj, some cinemas competed to include in their programs what were advertised as “cultural”<sup>80</sup> and “sports films”.<sup>81</sup> In 1928, the Corso Cinema took the lead with the documentary *A Motorcycle Trip Among the Clouds* (*Mit dem Motorrad über die Wolken*, Lothar Rübelt, 1926) and the sports comedy *The Freshman* (Fred C. Newmeyer, Sam Taylor, 1925). In 1929, this initiative started in May with the Sunday morning matinées screening<sup>82</sup> of a documentary covering the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics. It was presented to the audience by Cornel Angelotti, the founder of the local Tennis Club, that despite the name covered various types of sports, alongside gymnastics coach Iuliu Andrăsi. In November, encouraged by the success of a film documenting the trip of the Hamburg-America Shipping Line, Corso also screened<sup>83</sup> *Around the World by Zeppelin* (1929) and *Harmonies of Paris* (*Harmonies de Paris*, Lucie Derain, 1929).

### Interwar Cluj as Cinephile City

Interwar Cluj strived to walk in the footsteps of the pre-war silent films that had been shot on its streets, in its hotels

or restaurants. The pre-war Hungarian cinema legacy turned out to be difficult to reconfigure during the interwar period. At the beginning of the twentieth century, industrialization had determined the re-shaping of the urban architecture in Cluj, with permanent cinemas functioning in dedicated spaces integrated to impressive buildings such as the Uránia and Sebestyén Palaces. The interwar years, dominated by a nationalistic political discourse, failed to quickly establish Romanian cinemas of equal status, so the transfer to Romanian management of the Apollo, Urania and University cinemas was received with enthusiasm. However, subsequently built cinemas continued to reflect the multiethnic population of Cluj, with the Edison Cinema being a Hungarian initiative and the Corso Cinema being a Hungarian-Romanian one. So did the cinema schedules that were printed in both language newspapers, proving film intertitles were translated into both Romanian and Hungarian. In addition, various film related contests addressed spectators of both nationalities.

But over the decades, the defining aspect of the cinema landscape in Cluj remained the recurrent monopoly. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the local network of venues dedicated to film projections was initiated and developed by entrepreneur András Nagy Udvari.

The second decade saw the management of the main local cinemas integrated into the broader cultural endeavours of Jenő Janovics. The third decade marked the transfer in the management of all the permanent cinemas to SARPIC. Surprisingly, this shift determined decisions to replicate the dynamics in the international networks of distribution and promotion, despite the circumstances that were often less than ideal. But as SARPIC became the pivotal force in the local film business, by 1927 it became the target of public accusations<sup>84</sup> of favouring profit over film quality. Just a few months earlier, a scandal<sup>85</sup> related to the manufacturing of false entry tickets at the three main cinemas, Select, Urania and Apollo, brought to light the extent the local mismanagement could reach.

These contradicting circumstances defined the interwar cinematic landscape of Cluj during what was to become the last decade in the history of silent cinema worldwide. But ultimately, in a similar manner to all corners of the world, silent film entertained and educated Cluj audiences. Perhaps the local screenings of *Around the World by Zeppelin* and *Harmonies of Paris* in the late autumn of 1929 mark a suited farewell metaphor for a complex decade in a provincial city where moving pictures successfully seized the world within the edges of the silver screen.

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## NOTES

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