

# THE 5TH HIPPODROME FESTIVAL OF SILENT CINEMA

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WEDNESDAY 18TH MARCH - SUNDAY 22ND MARCH 2015

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Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March | 20:00

## Annie Laurie

Dir: John S. Robertson | US | 1927 | 1h 53m

With: Lillian Gish, Norman Kerry, Creighton Hale, Joseph Striker  
Accompanied live by Shona Mooney (fiddle), Alisdair Paul (guitar),  
Amy Thatcher (accordion)

“‘Annie Laurie’ seems almost a footnote among Lillian Gish’s achievements during her four year tenure at MGM. Yet, like other of her more obscure silent features such as ‘Romola’, ‘Annie Laurie’ turns out to be a neglected gem. Gish had both cast and director approval, and chose for the project John S. Robertson, regarded in his time as one of Hollywood’s most capable directors. The film brims with the best elements of silent melodrama: surging passions and rousing battle scenes enervate this saga of warring clans in the Scottish highlands. Abetted by sweeping camera work and a finale in two-colour Technicolor, as well as a thrilling Gish performance, it provides a rare experience - a near-classic that easily fulfils all expectations.” - Jere Guldin Pordenone catalogue, 1998.

It depends on how you see the Hollywood-eye view of ‘Scottish’ as to how you might enjoy this film. It feels close to the ‘Brigadoon’ end of the spectrum of general nonsense filtered through Walter Scott-like romances. This is nothing to do with real Scotland, its history or people. It is Scotlan-desque – Scotland with baronial halls, tartan, glens, warring clans and... yes that’s about it. So ok, forget the limitations of MGM’s Lot One ‘castle’ set and surrender to the Hollywood-ness, for there is much to enjoy, in this Scottish Romeo and Juliet, the charming Lillian Gish, one of the great actresses of silent cinema, of course but also great character actors like David Torrence, born in Edinburgh in 1866 (brother of the more famous, super creepy,

*continues overleaf*

Ernest Torrence) and Brandon Hurst, a Londoner and regular on Broadway, playing (of course) the villainous chief of the Campbells. Apparently, if you look hard you can see a young John Wayne as an extra.

What really impresses though, and what makes the Hollywood treatment so enticing, is the scope and scale, particularly in the battle scenes, added to the well-paced plot which builds nicely and makes good use of a story we all know: about the treachery of the Campbell's against the Macdonald's, leading to the massacre of Glencoe. It's a simplified version of course but the race against time for the MacDonalds attempting to comply with a royal command to swear an oath of loyalty, after which the King decrees they are fair game for the Campbells, adds great tension. Josephine Lovatt's clever scripting weaves Annie (a Campbell) into the story as the agent of rescue, trying desperately to warn her disappointed (MacDonald) lover, of the situation while he derides her. It's a rollicking good yarn which most recently inspired the 'Red Wedding' episode of 'Game of Thrones' by author George R R Martin.

By Bryony Dixon - Curator of Silent Film BFI National Archive.

**Cast:**

Lilian Gish	Annie Laurie
Norman Kerry	Ian Macdonald
Creighton Hale	Donald
Patricia Avery	Enid
Joseph Striker	Alastair
Hobart Bosworth	MacDonald chieftain
Russell Simpson	Sandy
Brandon Hurst	Campbell chieftain
David Torrence	Sir Robert Laurie
Frank Currier	Cameron of Lochiel

Produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Scenario by Josephine Lovett, from a screen story by Josephine Lovett.

Art direction by Cedric Gibbons and Merrill Pye.

Costume design by André-ani.

Cinematography by Oliver T. Marsh. Released 11 May 1927.

Colour and B&W: Nine reels / 8163ft