

March 15 Sunday at 2pm Tonka at the Gallows (1930)

aka *Tonka Šibenice* 1930. Czechoslovakia. Directed by Karl Anton. Screenplay by Benno Vigny and Willy Haas, from a novel by Egon Erwin Kisch. With Ita Rina, Vera Baranovskaja, Josef Rovenský.

with soundtrack and English subtitles.

Australian premiere of the restored digital edition.

Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library NSW. 81 minutes

Tickets \$25/ \$20 at the website home page right hand side or call 0419 267 318.

The Festival acknowledges the assistance of Consul General of the Czech Republic, Hana Flanderová, and Czech Archive Národní Filmový Archiv.





“..... the Czech Archive has just unearthed a treasure of a film. The name of this treasure is Tonka of the Gallows, and it screened last night at MoMA as part of a month's program of Czech films.

In the beginning of the film we see city girl Tonka (played by an amazing Ita Rina) traveling by train back to her childhood home in the country, and the contrasts between city and country life are clearly marked, making comparisons between this film and Sunrise inevitable. Soon though, Tonka returns to the city and when we learn she has been able to earn a living only by being a prostitute, the film starts to become darker and more complex.

Things get very dark indeed for Tonka, when - from an act of pity - she volunteers to spend a night with a condemned man in his jail cell before his execution the next morning. Although her night with the man is one spent in innocent tenderness, as she allows him to relive his happy days as a child, to the rest of the world she is now a 'hanged man's widow' - a pariah to be shunned and avoided. Tonka has become a 'fallen angel,' cursed by her act of kindness, an act which threatens any chance she has of happiness.

All the acting in this film is superb, but especially wonderful is Ita Rina as Tonka, who is completely convincing as the woman who no matter how hard she tries, can never shake off or destroy the pure heart that is deep inside of her. She gives one of the greatest silent film performances I have ever seen, and if you need just one reason to seek out this film, it is to see her in this part.

But there are many other reasons. The art direction combines social realism with many elements of expressionism: the characters in this film are trapped by social convention, some are trapped by prison walls, but mostly, the characters are trapped by jagged lines, jiggles, and figures of darkness that spring up and surround them, cutting them off from escape and freedom, sometimes even prophetically displaying themselves on the walls and on their faces, like the dark hand of fate, symbolically forecasting their futures. This movie is a nightmarish wonderland of shadows.

And finally, in a thematic way, these shadows of confusion and concealment extend into the narrative itself - as a bruised and beaten Tonka sings for her supper to a crowd in the bar - they yell that all they want is to hear about her night of passion with the hanged man. The crowd care nothing about what really happened, and they don't care about her, they just care about what they already believe. The myth has become fact and Tonka must live in the myth or die. It's a cruel lesson to learn, and a lesson that seems more timely than ever." Nitrateville



“This major rediscovery creates a bridge between the social realism of G. W. Pabst’s *The Joyless Street* and the dark lyricism of F. W. Murnau’s *Sunrise*. The extraordinary Ita Rina (*Erotikon*) is the title character, a prostitute whose act of pity—keeping chaste company with a condemned man through the night before he is to be hung—returns to threaten her unexpected chance of happiness, as the bride of a young farmer from her native village. The director, Karl Anton, went on to a long career in France and Germany largely as a maker of light comedies; nothing else known in his filmography approaches the emotional power and bravura filmmaking of *Tonka*’s final sequence, in which the dying heroine imagines the life that might have been hers.” MOMA



See review at <https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/tonka-of-the-gallows/>

PRVNÍ ČESKÝ ZVUKOVÝ
FILM

TONKA SIBENICE

PODLE DIVADELNÍ HRV OD EGOMA ERVINA KISCHE

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