KINONIK

HE WHO GETS SLAPPED (1924)

Sunday February 16th 7pm

Live Scored by Carolyn Swartz



Disgraced scientist Paul Beaumont spends his days as a circus clown, performing his fall from academic grace and marital cuckolding to riotous applause. Having turned his misery into fame, he is finally brave enough to take another chance on love – only to be brutally reminded of his role in this life. Paul Beaumont is, after all, **He Who Gets Slapped**. The first film produced by the newly-merged Metro-Goldwyn Mayer, and the second American film by acclaimed Swedish director Victor Sjöström (The Phantom Carriage), **He Who Gets Slapped** (1924) is a tragic thriller in the vein of Pagliacci. Adapted from a popular Russian play, it was a wildly successful film critically and financially, and an important stepping stone in the careers of each of its cast.

One of only 32 complete films surviving from leading man Lon Chaney's career, it is a stellar example of his character acting and makeup work. Of Chaney's mastery of pathos, Ray Bradbury wrote, "The history of Lon Chaney is the history of unrequited loves. He brings that part of you out into the open, because you fear that you are not loved, you fear that you never will be loved, you fear there is some part of you that's grotesque, that the world will turn away from." In her breakout role as the unrequited love of this film, Consuelo, Norma Shearer finally surpassed the obstacles that had stood between her and stardom – she would go on to be the first actress nominated for five Academy Awards and become "the first lady of MGM". Too closely mirroring the downfall of Beaumont, John Gilbert would not make the same successful transition to talkies as co-star Norma Shearer. But here in He Who Gets Slapped he is in full force – and the three leads, along with their supporting cast, deliver a beautifully rendered tragedy under Sjöström's masterful hand.

A spectacular example of the art of adaptation, **He Who Gets Slapped** managed to translate a Russian stage play to the American screen, maintaining its heart while expanding on its possibilities (notably, the possibilities afforded by live lions). The character of Paul Beaumont, or HE, deserves to be remembered alongside Chaney's Hunchback and Phantom in the popular consciousness – a trio of tragedy, of sacrifice, and of love that pushes beyond all reason.

Carolyn Swartz will be live scoring **He Who Gets Slapped** on the fabulous Steinway B at the Portland Conservatory of Music. As always, projected from a 16mm film print.