

Even before Marlene Dietrich ascended to stardom as Lola Lola in *THE BLUE ANGEL* (1930), she embodied the role of femme fatale in Kurt Bernhardt's late silent melodrama. Bernhardt manages to subtly capture the character's mysterious erotic aura in all its ambivalence. It is Dietrich's first leading role.

„THE WOMAN MEN YEARN FOR is ultimately a tragedy and Dietrich its compromised tragic heroine, which makes the restraint of her performance all the more effective. She has her moments of feline seductiveness with Henri, but those eyes tell us this is less manipulation than desperation. She is almost a ghost here, sparking to life only when the hope of escape seems possible, returning to her fate when her hopes are extinguished. Sternberg would foreground the glow of her sexiness and the lure of her glamor, playing upon the power she knows she holds over men. Here though, the men yearn for her; she is not yet in command of her power, or at least not confident enough to apply it.“ (Sean Axmaker)

The story: Henri Leblanc (Uno Henning), scion of the Henri Leblanc, the scion of a bankrupt industrial clan, is to marry a rich heiress and thus save the family business. Everything seems to work out perfectly until Leblanc meets the beautiful Stascha (Marlene Dietrich) on his honeymoon at the Riviera. He immediately falls under the spell of the mysterious femme fatale. Stascha begs Henri to protect her against a certain Dr. Karoff (Fritz Kortner), to whom she is bound by a jointly committed crime. On the spur of the moment, Henri decides to abandon wife and company and flee with Stascha. Karoff, who is also slavishly dependent on Stascha, gets wind of her attempt to leave him behind and threatens her with the police. A fight ensues between the two rivals and Karoff beats Henri senseless. When the police arrive to arrest the wanted murderer and his accomplice, Karoff kills Stascha. Unable to believe his eyes, the still lightheaded Henri feels he is awakening from a nightmare. Repentant, he returns home and asks his wife for forgiveness.

THE WOMAN MEN YEARN FOR

The music: The main feature distinguishing Pascal Schumacher's new composition is its rich diversity. As a vibraphonist, Schumacher spices up the score with numerous solo passages, providing an unusual timbre that goes far beyond the normal silent movie accompaniment. Aside from jazzy passages, which add a certain frisson to the vibraphone sounds, Schumacher's score also features minimalist approaches. This stylistic diversity is used as a sophisticated device to illuminate the film's numerous nuances and ambiguities.

The music is available in two different versions: Schumacher will record the small orchestra version with the WDR Rundfunkorchester and the large orchestra version with United Instruments of Lucilin, Luxembourg.

Director:
Kurt Bernhardt
(GER, 1929)
Music: New composition
by Pascal Schumacher (2011)

Instrumentation
(large orchestra):
2.2.2.2 – 2.2.2.0 – timp.2perc
– hp – strings – solo: vibra-
phone/glockenspiel
Instrumentation
(small orchestra):
1/pic.0.2/bcl.0 – 1.1.1/tba.
– timp.1perc – hp – strings –
solo: vibraphone/glockenspiel
77 min.

A production
commissioned by the
Philharmonie Luxembourg.

