



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Camille

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Director: George Cukor

Mob Scene Director: E. Mason Hopper *

©/Production Company:

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corporation

Associate Producer: David Lewis

Unit Manager: Ulrich Busch *

Assistant Director: Edward Woehler *

Screenplay: Zoë Akins, Frances Marion, James Hilton

Based on the play and novel by:

Alexandre Dumas, fils

Directors of Photography: William Daniels, Karl Freund

Editor: Margaret Booth

Art Director: Cedric Gibbons

Associate Art Directors: Fredric Hope,

Edwin B. Willis

Props: Harry Edwards *

Gowns: Adrian

Musical Score: Herbert Stothart

Dances Staged by: Val Raset

[Sound] Recording Director: Douglas Shearer

Research: Nathalie Bucknall *

Cast:

Greta Garbo (*Marguerite Gautier*)

Robert Taylor (*Armand Duval*)

Lionel Barrymore (*Monsieur Duval*)

Elizabeth Allan (*Nichette*)

Jessie Ralph (*Nanine*)

Henry Daniell (*Baron de Varville*)

Lenore Ulric (*Olympe*)

Laura Hope Crews (*Prudence Duvernoy*)

Rex O'Malley (*Gaston*)

Russell Hardie (*Gustave*) *

E.E. Clive (*St Gadeau*) *

Douglas Walton (*Henri*) *

Marion Ballou (*Corinne*) *

Joan Leslie (*Marie Jeanette*) *

June Wilkins (*Louise*) *

Elsie Esmond (*Madame Duval*) *

Fritz Leiber Jr (*Valentin*) *

Eily Malyon (*maid*) *

Edwin Maxwell (*doctor*) *

Mariska Aldrich (*friend of Camille*) *

John Bryan (*DeMusset*) *

Rex Evans (*companion*) *

Eugene King (*gypsy leader*) *

Adrienne Matzenauer (*soprano*) *

Georgia Caine (*streetwalker*) *

Mabel Colcord (*Mme Barjon*) *

Chappell Dossett (*priest*) *

Elsbeth Dudgeon (*attendant*) *

Effie Ellsler (*Grandma Duval*) *

Sibyl Harris (*Georges Sand*) *

Maud Hume (*Aunt Henriette*) *

Olaf Hytten (*croupier*) *

Gwendolen Logan (*governess*) *

Ferdinand Munier (*priest*) *

Bary Norton (*Emille*) *

John Picorri (*orchestra leader*) *

Guy Bates Post (*auctioneer*) *

Zeffie Tilbury (*old Duchess*) *

Dorothy Granger, Lita Chevreton

(*women in theatre box*) *

USA 1936©

109 mins

Digital

* Uncredited

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

On Broadway, a new generation is thronging to Garbo's *Camille*. The actress, for whose return one has never given up hope, is proving that a 19-year-old film has preserved her splendour undimmed – indeed, it is memory that has proved unequal to preserving her magic quality. The film is now being reissued in England, and after 15 years of retirement the Oscar, which has stopped some strange doors in its time, has been awarded to her, rectifying the persistent omission that has made its presentation a joke.

That the uncompromising artistry of this great actress should have flourished for as long as it did, is to Hollywood's – or, more particularly, MGM's – eternal credit. To sell her highly uncommercial quality, one of the cinema's greatest publicity campaigns was devised, in which the normal working conditions upon which she insisted were made to seem the caprices of an outlandish goddess. The protective privacy she exacted was no extravagant demand; a stranger's intrusive stare would instantly have shattered the defenceless creative concentration she employed – for her personality was the most economically expressive the screen has evolved, owing allegiance only to the cinema, its potency conceived entirely in the medium's purest terms.

Dumas' Marguerite still remains a great role for a great actress, a dated piece of romantic artifice for the less than great. In *Camille*, Cukor's direction led Garbo deeper into the heart of the situations than ever before, and into the greatest triumph of her career. Deserting the Olympian private world in which she often created alone, she moves here in constant and fluent relationship with everything and everyone around her. The period costumes reveal her splendid shoulders and the liquid grace of her most typical movement – her head thrown back in abandoned laughter, or her eyes closed in an anguished ecstasy of love.

Even before her talent, Garbo's prerequisite for her creations is the quality of her imagination. The need is not that the qualities of sweetness, nobility and radiance should exist in her as a person, but that their imaginative apprehension should evoke in her the powerful creative response that they do. These qualities, fused into the glorious character conception we know as the screen Garbo, moving through the situations, illuminate the ideal conception of womanhood – no longer of this age: a figure of a romantic stature deriving from the 19th century rather than from today.

She is the sound cinema's greatest possessor of the tragic gift. Her end is always in her beginnings; the intensity of her happiness with Armand in the country is exquisitely shadowed by the moving overtones of her tragic end. (In the comedy *Ninotchka*, this quality explains why, when she fell in love and bought the frivolous little hat, the absurd delight one felt was not without a lump in the throat: a comedy tone only Hepburn has equalled.) Her renunciation scene is desperately affecting, and the death of Camille is the greatest thing she has ever played. There have been actresses who have brought a more dazzlingly intricate texture to their work but no one has ever equalled Garbo's emotional authority or sheer screen-filling power.

One leaves the cinema after *Camille* uncertain for the moment where familiar bus routes pass, unwilling to dissipate the awed and uplifted certainty that one has been in the presence of greatness.

Derek Prouse, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1955