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The Man Who Laughs

N.C. Museum of Art—Victor Hugo's novel *The Man Who Laughs*—like his more popular work *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*—is the tale of a gentle man trapped in the body of a monster. The 1928 silent film adaptation, directed by Paul Leni, will be shown as part of the N.C. Museum of Art's winter film series. The title character, Gwynplaine, is played by Conrad Veidt; his laughing man's perpetual smile, angular face and slicked back hair famously inspired *Batman* creators Bob Kane and Bill Finger in their design of Batman's arch-nemesis, The Joker.



The Man Who Laughs

The film also is a prime example of German Expressionism (a precursor of modern horror) and is characteristically full of gloom—made all the more eerie by the contrast between Gwynplaine's manic grin and melancholy stare. Veidt himself starred in the definitive German Expressionist film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

For those whose idea of horror has been unfortunately shaped by the likes of last month's unnecessary remake of *Friday the 13th*, this Friday the 13th you should make your way to the N.C. Museum for some old-schooling. The film, which will be accompanied by live music by David Drazin, a professional silent film pianist, starts at 8 p.m. Visit www.ncartmuseum.org/events/films.shtml for more info. —*Hobert Thompson*

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