The Modern Maid of Orleans (1905)

Abstract

This short silent comedy titled “The Modern Maid of Orleans” is essentially a sketch about Johanna, a cook in an upper-class household, who gets carried away while reading about Joan of Arc (the film’s title alludes to Schiller’s drama *The Maid of Orleans*) and starts imagining herself as Joan courageously fighting her adversaries. “The Modern Maid of Orleans” plays with gender norms (with Johanna's strength and battle-prowess far outstripping that of the men) and social-class roles (with the upper class overly solicitous of the cook). The film was directed and produced by Max Skladanowsky (1863-1939), an inventor and early filmmaker. Playing Johanna is one of Skladanowsky’s brothers, Eugen. Between 1895 and 1905, Skladanowsky and his brothers made about 30 silent short films shot on self-built cameras. Max would usually operate the camera and direct while his brothers Emil or Eugen performed. The brothers soon began to organize commercial screenings using an early movie projector they had invented, the Bioscop. Initially, these motion picture shows were part of larger entertainment revues featuring several variety acts before film screenings became a form of entertainment in their own right.

Source

Source: *Die moderne Jungfrau von Orleans*, dir. Max Skladanowsky, 1905. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv; https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/video/29191/700648

BArch

Recommended Citation: The Modern Maid of Orleans (1905), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:video-5160> [October 13, 2026].