

Gish Film Theater Chronology

June 11, 1976

BGSU professor Dr. Ralph H. Wolfe suggested to President Hollis Moore that room 105 Hanna Hall be named after silent film actresses and Ohio natives, Dorothy and Lillian Gish commemorating both the Bicentennial of the U.S. and Lillian Gish's acting debut in *Rising Sun*, Ohio, a Wood County community twenty miles from Bowling Green. The naming of the theater complimented the recent establishment of the Film Studies program in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Gish Film Theater at Bowling Green State University was dedicated with Lillian Gish in attendance as guest of honor.

Lillian Gish received an honorary Doctor of Performing Arts degree from BGSU.

Lillian Gish presented her one woman program *The Art of the Film* at the Gish film Theater and kicked off the theater's inaugural season.

1979

Lillian Gish was presented the Popular Culture Association Achievement Award at BGSU. While visiting she endowed the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Scholarship in Film Studies in memory of Dorothy.

1982

Lillian Gish attended the Gish Film Theater dedication of a retrospective photographic exhibit of her career previously presented by the Museum of Modern Art in 1980. Eva Marie Saint (Class of 1946 and actress who made her Broadway debut with Lillian Gish) was among the guests paying tribute to Miss Gish. The photographic exhibit was the official unveiling of the first round of a two-part renovation of the theater which included a marquee entrance, foyer, installation of a movie projection booth, and the gallery for the photographs.

Eva Marie Saint was awarded an honorary Doctor of Performing Arts degree at the theater.

1984

Dr. Paul Olscamp, President of BGSU, appointed Dr. Wolfe, Curator of the Gish Film Theater.

1986

Eva Marie Saint endowed a scholarship in her name during BGSU's 75th anniversary.

1986-1987

Lillian Gish donated \$10,000 for the Gish Film Theater endowment.

1987

Dr. Wolfe began donating to the Center for Archival Collections (CAC), in Jerome Library, photos, posters, lobby cards, printed materials, and copies of Gish films, and memorabilia documenting the film careers of the Gish Sisters. This gift was designated the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Collection of Film History (referred to as the Gish Film Theater Collection). It was intended for film studies research. Included among the items were letters and a scrapbook belonging to Dorothy Hanson, a fan and correspondent of Lillian Gish, as well as a scrapbook of clippings about the Gish Sisters' film "Romola."

Dr. Wolfe also began donating Eva Marie Saint documents that would further enhance the Gish Film Theater Collection at the CAC and was instrumental in having the campus's main performance theater named in Ms. Saint's honor in 1987.

The Dorothy and Lillian Gish Scholarship in Film Studies at BGSU was awarded to its first recipient Dana Sergent.

Dr. Wolfe established the Jean Arthur Collection at the CAC. In 1984 Miss Arthur agreed to donate her own papers after her death.

1987-1988

\$250,000 was approved by the State for the renovation of the theater. In addition the star studded Gish National Advisory Committee was formed and co-chaired by Eva Marie Saint and Actor Roddy McDowall. With assistance from Marcia Latta, Alumni and Development, the committee would raise matching funds for such educational purposes as a retrospective film series, a film professorship, visiting lecturers/speakers, a student scholarship, and the purchase of Gish memorabilia.

1988

Lillian Gish donated \$10,000 for the Gish Film Theater endowment.

Dr. Wolfe presented actress Jean Arthur with an honorary Doctor of Performing Arts degree at her home in Carmel, California.

BGSU Presidents Club tribute to the Gish Sisters was held at the theater with special guests actress and model Lauren Hutton and film producer Mike Kaplan in attendance.

1989

Lillian Gish donated \$10,000 for the Gish Film Theater endowment.

The Mary Pickford Foundation donated \$30,000 for the Gish Film Theater endowment. This brought the theater's fundraising campaign to the halfway point with \$125,000 raised.

A birthday celebration for Lillian Gish was held at the theater.

Dr. Ralph H. Wolfe, founder of the theater, was honored as the first Gish Endowed Professor of Film Studies.

1990

Lillian Gish donated \$10,000 for the Gish Film Theater endowment.

The \$250,000 Gish Film Theater renovation begun early in 1990 was completed. This second part of the planned renovations of the theater included stage remodeling, projection area enhancements, a new enlarged exhibit gallery, 168 plush red velvet seats with brass donor name plates attached to each, and marquee lighting. The re-dedication of the theater was attended by Eva Marie Saint.

Anthony Slide, author and film historian, hailed by Lillian Gish as "Our pre-eminent historian of the Silent Era," was given an honorary Doctor of Letters degree. *He began donating his manuscripts, research files, etc. to the Browne Popular Culture Library in 1989.*

1991

Producer, director Jeffrey Hayden, husband of Eva Marie Saint, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree at the theater. A showing of his documentary, *Primary Colors: The Story of Corita* was featured.

Stuart Oderman, world renowned silent film accompanist, from the Museum of Modern Art, provided piano music for two Gish films.

1992

Wilna Krisher, a fan of Lillian Gish, donated letters to the CAC written by Miss Gish to the West Unity, Ohio Carnation Literary Club between 1984-1993.

1993

Lillian Gish died. A series of movies was shown at the theater to commemorate the centennial of her birth. Stuart Oderman provided accompaniment.

1994

BGSU open house at the theater featured a full day of movies and piano accompaniment by Michael Peslikis.

1995

Personal property, film awards and honors, artwork, photographs, apparel, suitcases, and the like from the estate of Lillian Gish were donated to the theater. The CAC houses a large portion of these artifacts with the exception of items on display at the theater.

Actress and Lima, Ohio native Maidie Norman donated to the CAC scrapbooks chronicling her film career .

Actor Roddy McDowall received an honorary Doctor of Performing Arts degree at the theater.

The National Advisory Committee initiated a fundraising effort to expand the theater's gallery space to accommodate the display of personal belongings from the estate of Lillian Gish.

Brett Holden began assisting Dr. Wolfe at the theater. By 1998 he became assistant curator.

1996

The gallery expansion project at the theater was completed and items from Miss Gish's estate were placed on display in celebration of the theater's twentieth anniversary. Eva Marie Saint was a special guest.

Theater owner, Ed Prusiecki, donated 700 movie posters to Browne Popular Culture Library.

Jean Arthur's personal mementoes including the photo publicity books from her films were placed in her collection at the CAC. She died in 1991.

Author and film collector, Jan Wahl, was given an honorary Doctor of Letters degree at the theater.

1997

Jean Arthur biographer, John Oller, donated to the CAC photographs and research materials used in writing his book on the actress.

1998

Artist and Gish Film Theater benefactress, Dorothy Bryan, was given an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree at the theater. A viewing of the WBGU documentary about her Chemo Paintings was presented.

1999

Sunday matinees began in the spring to honor Dorothy Gish's birthday March 11. Jan Wahl began introducing the series in the fall commemorating Lillian Gish's birthday October 14. Pianist Michael Peslikis provided accompaniment.

Dr. Wahl began donating to the CAC movie star photographs, Gish films, and his written introductions for the Sunday matinee programs.

Eva Marie Saint's archivist, Richard E. Weigle, donated to the CAC memorabilia relevant to Ms. Saint's career. Some of which was displayed at the Eva Marie Saint Theater, established on campus in 1987.

2001

Eva Marie Saint and Lillian Gish's manager, James Frasher, presided at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration at the Gish Film Theater where visitors saw the performance of both actresses in the 1953 television play of *The Trip to Bountiful*.

Stuart Oderman began providing regular piano accompaniment for film programs during the fall Sunday matinee season at the theater.

2002

Such donors as Scott Daniels and Mrs. Hollis Moore, widow of President Moore, donated Lillian Gish memorabilia to the CAC.

2003

UCLA Film and Television Archives Preservation Officer, Robert Gitt, presented *A History of Motion Picture Color Film and its Preservation* at the theater.

2004

Film historian and author, Anthony Slide presented a program at the theater featuring his latest book *American Racist: The Life and Films of Thomas Dixon*.

2005

Culturologist, Dr. Ben Urish of Michigan State University, presented a program, *Women, Music, and Song* at the theater.

2006

October 15, 2006, Miss Gish's manager, James Frasher honored her October 14 birthday and the thirtieth anniversary of the theater with his presentation – *Life, Lillian Gish and Me*. Mr. Frasher had presented a similar program in the Fall of 1997 and 1998.

2008

The film viewing center was installed across from the Gish film Theater.

2009

The Stuart Oderman Collection was donated to the CAC. In a 2011-12 addition, celebrity correspondence between Mr. Oderman and such film stars as: Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Minta Durfee Arbuckle, Blanche Sweet, Madge Bellamy, Vivian Blain, Eli Wallach, and others was given by Mr. Oderman's wife Gladys Oderman.

2010

Lillian Gish's financial adviser of many years, Wilhelmina Pilger, donated to the CAC a collection of personal correspondence and memorabilia. Final arrangements for their transfer were handled by her executor, Terence Bowman.

Eva Marie Saint donated various awards and honors to the CAC.

The Ralph H. Wolfe Film Viewing Center was dedicated by BGSU President Carol Cartwright. James Frasher was on hand to honor Dr. Wolfe.

2011

Dr. Ralph Wolfe donated his personal papers to the CAC.

The Edgar Fisher Daniels Prize in Filmmaking was established a year after his death in honor of this scholar, Chair of the English Department, and friend of the Gish Film Theater.

2012

Friend of Lillian Gish, Todd Hunter Light, donated to the CAC his collection of Gish correspondence, photographs and printed materials dating from 1914 to 1993.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Gish Sisters' film debut in – *An Unseen Enemy*. It is also the twenty-fifth anniversary of the making of Lillian Gish's last film – *The Whales of August*. The theater is thirty-six years old. James Frasher and Eva Marie Saint will be on hand for the celebration.