

Minnesota Orchestra

Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Friday, January 8, 2010, 8 pm	Orchestra Hall
Sunday, January 10, 2010, 2 pm	Orchestra Hall
Thursday, January 14, 2010, 11 am	Orchestra Hall

Charles Chaplin | *The Gold Rush*

ca. 92'

Film and Production Credits

The Lone Prospector	Charles Chaplin
Georgia	Georgia Hale
Big Jim	Mack Swain
Black Larsen	Tom Murray
Hank Curtis	Henry Bergman
Jack	Malcolm Waite
Georgia's friend	Betty Morrissey
Georgia's friend	Joan Lowell
Prospectors	John Rand Heinie Conklin Albert Austin Allan Garcia Tom Wood
Barman	Stanley J. Sandford

Written, produced and directed by Charles Chaplin
 Photography by Rollie Totheroh Camera work by Jack Wilson and Mark Marlatt
 Art direction by Charles D. Hall Music by Charles Chaplin
 Musical direction by Max Terr
 Score restored and adapted for live performance by Timothy Brock

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 THE GOLD RUSH © MCMXLII Charles Chaplin. Renewed © MCMLXIX Charles Chaplin. All Rights Reserved.
 Dramatic Composition © Restored 1996 The Roy Export Company Establishment. All Rights Reserved.
 Original Motion Picture © MCMXXV Charles Chaplin. All Rights Reserved.
 Restored version of The Gold Rush © 2003 The Roy Export Company Establishment. All Rights Reserved.

There will be no intermission.



music up|close

Chaplin's *Gold Rush* and More
with Phillip Gainsley
1/8 at 7 pm

Piano for Silent Film

Tom Erickson, piano
1/10 at 1 pm
1/14 at 10:30 am
Orchestra Hall Auditorium
Laurel and Hardy's *Big Business* (1929)



Osmo Vänskä, conductor

Profile appears on page 12.

at the same time...

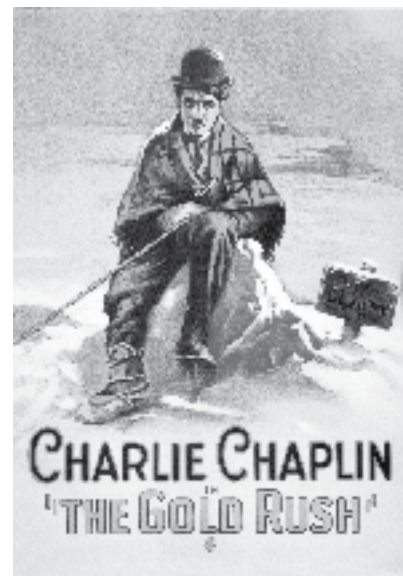
In 1925, when the original silent version of *The Gold Rush* debuts:

- Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming becomes America's first female governor
- At the "Scopes Monkey Trial," biology teacher John Scopes is found guilty of teaching Charles Darwin's theory of evolution
- The first volume of Hitler's manifesto *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) is published

The Gold Rush: synopsis

Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* (1925), one of many movies to feature Chaplin himself as the Little Tramp, tells the tale of a lone prospector (Chaplin) and his quest for love and wealth in the frozen tundra. The Tramp is driven by a storm into the cabin of outlaw Black Larsen (Tom Murray). Big Jim McKay (Mack Swain), who has just struck gold, soon follows. Larsen grudgingly accepts the two guests and departs alone to seek food. Nearing starvation, the Tramp and Jim find temporary nourishment in a boiled boot, but Jim, still hungry, hallucinates that the Tramp is a giant chicken. The Tramp saves the day by shooting a bear, providing sustenance until the storm blows over. Jim returns to his gold claim but is attacked by Larsen, who is soon killed in an avalanche. Dazed, Jim wanders away with no memory of his claim's location.

The Tramp travels to a mining town and falls in love with a dance-hall girl, Georgia (Georgia Hale), who is amused and touched by his advances. The boorish Jack Cameron (Malcolm Waite) also vies for her affection. Having found lodging, the Tramp invites Georgia and her friends to a private New Year's Eve dinner. She accepts, but when the evening arrives she forgets to show up, leaving the Tramp alone to imagine entertaining his guests with an ingenious use of forks and bread rolls. When Georgia finally arrives to apologize, the heartbroken Tramp has already left.



Big Jim comes to town and invites the Tramp to join him in searching for his gold claim. They return to Larsen's cabin and spend a night there, but another storm arrives and blows the house to the edge of a cliff. The two men escape just in time, then discover Jim's claim and agree to split the riches. Now millionaires, they get on a ship back to the mainland—and by chance, Georgia is also aboard. She is astonished to learn of the Tramp's new wealth, and, misunderstandings behind them, the two look forward to a bright future together.



Charles Chaplin

Born: April 16, 1889, London
Died: December 25, 1977, Vevey, Switzerland

The Gold Rush

ninety-six years after the Little Tramp’s first appearance, Charlie Chaplin’s cinematic alter ego remains among the most beloved and iconic characters in movie history. It was during the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression that the Tramp, clad in baggy pants, a tight-fitting coat, black derby and oversized shoes, came to symbolize perseverance and good humor in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and the image has never faded.

Chaplin’s life story is one of rags to riches. Born Charles Spencer Chaplin, Jr., into a destitute family of London entertainers, Chaplin joined a touring comedy troupe and migrated to the U.S. in 1912. He soon entered the nascent motion picture industry and soared to stardom worldwide. His Tramp character had universal appeal: mime, requiring no translation, was understood everywhere around the globe.

an epic – “the greatest!”

In 1923 Chaplin became intrigued by photos and stories of the Klondike gold rush of the 1890s, and the seeds of a new film were planted. It would be no ordinary cinematic undertaking. “This next film must be an epic!” he exclaimed, “The greatest!” And epic it was: *The Gold Rush* became the most expensive silent comedy ever made, costing nearly a million dollars. Chaplin’s original intent was to film the movie’s outdoor scenes in the mountainous California town of Truckee. But when this proved impractical, the production moved to a

Hollywood back lot where the blustery elements of winter were simulated with 200 tons of plaster, 285 tons of salt, 100 barrels of flour and four cartloads of confetti.

Midway through filming, a scandal threatened to derail the entire project: the film’s leading lady, 16-year-old Lita Grey, became pregnant with Chaplin’s child. Playing damage control, he replaced her with a little-known actress named Georgia Hale, then quietly married Grey to prevent further ignominy. The marriage was fated to last only three years, but for the moment Chaplin’s mind was clear and production of *The Gold Rush* resumed.

The rest of the filming went comparatively smoothly, as some of Chaplin’s best-known (and often-imitated) scenes were captured on celluloid, including the cooking and eating of a shoe, the show-stopping dance of the dinner rolls, and the escape from a cabin teetering on the edge of a cliff.

The Gold Rush was a huge success upon its initial theatrical release in 1925, earning about six million dollars—the equivalent of a \$175 million blockbuster today. *The New York Times* called it “the outstanding gem of all Chaplin’s pictures,” and Chaplin himself declared that it was the film he wanted to be remembered by.

“a symphony orchestra is much better . . .”

With the advent of films with spoken dialogue in 1927, Chaplin’s pantomiming Tramp became something of an anachronism, but the king of silent cinema found a way to adapt his films and his signature character to the era of synchronized sound. His 1942 project is one such example: Chaplin re-released *The Gold Rush* with several

adjusted scenes, spoken narration and a musical score credited to Chaplin himself.

Chaplin was not a composer by the



Upper left: The Little Tramp (Charlie Chaplin), famished and stranded, making a meal of his boot.

Left: Chaplin, out of costume, performing the dance of the dinner rolls.

traditional definition; he had no formal music training and could not read or write notes on a staff. He was, however, an adept keyboard improviser and had experimented with stringed instruments as a teenager.

Beginning in 1923, he began to help compile anthologies of previously published music that were distributed for live performance with his silent films, a common practice at the time. But he found this approach inadequate, and in frustration declared that “[recorded] music which has the quality of a symphony orchestra is much better as an accompaniment than feeble vamping on a piano or the excruciating efforts of an incompetent or ill-led orchestra.” Starting with his 1931 film *City Lights*, he enlisted the aid of Hollywood arrangers to compose full orchestral scores.

the music: playful and heartfelt

For the *Gold Rush* re-release, Chaplin collaborated on the score with composer-arranger Max Terr. The process capitalized on each man’s strengths: the director sat at the piano, singing or playing snippets of melodies. Terr would then expand on those ideas, and together they would meticulously revise the passages until Chaplin was satisfied. But regardless of whose pen touched the page, it was Chaplin who retained creative control throughout the compositional process. He relied on others to develop arrangements and complex orchestration. Still, as biographer Jeffrey Vance declared: “The musical imperative is his, and not a note in a Chaplin musical score was placed there without his assent.”

Chaplin’s *Gold Rush* score is playful, heartfelt and well suited to its story. As with much of his music, it is heavily influenced by popular songs of the day as well as classical music. It quotes several themes verbatim: Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Flight of the Bumblebee* accompanies two frenetic action sequences, Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty* Waltz underscores a dance scene, and a recurring love theme comes from a lesser-known

Right: The Tramp, foreground, glimpsing his beloved Georgia (Georgia Hale) in a crowded dance hall.

work, Brahms’ *Romanze* in F major. But the score is no mere pastiche: it is mercurial, with many dimensions, and its dark strings, colorful woodwinds and forceful brass serve to enhance an already powerful film. In particular, the dance of the dinner rolls sequence, with its brilliant visuals and infectious music, is a classic movie moment sure to be remembered by film fans for generations to come.

Chaplin’s film scores rank alongside the Tramp as one of his great contributions to cinema. His sole competitive Academy Award, in fact, came in 1972, recognizing his score to the movie *Limelight*. Throughout his career, Chaplin was equally productive and versatile: he acted in 87 films, directed 75, wrote screenplays for 62 and composed original scores for 15. Even today, three decades after his death, very few artists have been involved in so many facets of filmmaking, and none have matched the extraordinary range and degree of his success.

Today’s presentation of *The Gold Rush* combines music from the 1942 edition, adapted by contemporary composer Timothy Brock, with visuals from a reconstructed version of the original 1925 release.

— Synopsis and program note by Carl Schroeder.

