



# **A Woman of Affairs**

**MGM (1928)**

**Directed by Clarence Brown**

## **Cast**

**Diana Merrick ... Greta Garbo  
Neville Holderness...John Gilbert  
Hugh...Lewis Stone  
David Furness...John Mack Brown  
Jeffry Merrick...Douglas Fairbanks Jr.  
Sir Morton...Hobart Bosworth**



**Produced by Metro-Goldwyn-  
Mayer**

**Screenplay...Bess Meredyth  
Titles...Marian Ainslee,  
Ruth Cummings**

**Photography...William Daniels  
Film Editor...Hugh Wynn  
Art Director...Cedric Gibbons**

**Duration: 97 minutes  
Projection speed: vari-  
able**

**Score by Carl Davis (18 players)**



**LIVE CINEMA**

# A Woman of Affairs

Garbo was the obvious choice for tragic play-girl Diana Merrick. Dressed luxuriously by couturier Adrian, she is the epitome of that lethal combination wealth and beauty. Hair blowing in the wind, she is impetuous, brave and seemingly unstoppable. But her very freedom and courage destroys her. Diana Merrick was Garbo's favourite role, being more complex and admirable than the temptress she usually played.

The film was based on the notorious best-seller *The Green Hat*, whose heroine was described as a nymphomaniac. At a time when neither sex nor alcohol were allowed on screen, director Clarence Brown and writer Bess Meredyth had to find ways to keep the temperature high without alerting the censor. They also had to contend with the on-screen chemistry of Garbo and Gilbert. Although ex-lovers by the time this film was made, their mutual attraction still ignites the screen.

MGM cast the film perfectly. Douglas Fairbanks Jr is every inch the dissipated Oxford graduate. Gaunt and tormented, he leaves us in no doubt that he is an alcoholic, yet is never seen actually drinking. John Gilbert is perfect as the feckless playboy, Neville Holderness. His dark intense eyes captivate us just as they do Diana, but there is something weak and untrustworthy in his obsequious manner. Dorothy Sebastian as the innocent, faithful Constance serves to highlight the ravages of both Diana's and Neville's past. Hobart Bosworth as Sir Morton lends a comforting presence to an otherwise dissolute array of characters.

Childhood sweethearts Diana Merrick and Neville Holderness plan to marry but Neville's family dissuade him from doing so. Without explanation, he leaves the country. On the rebound, Diana marries her brother's friend, David Furness who, on their wedding night, jumps from a window to his death. He jumps to avoid facing his own sordid past but society believes he was driven to suicide by Diana's past infidelities. Alienated and distraught, she embarks on a prolonged foreign tour during which she is linked with various international play boys. Returning to England to attend her sick brother, she is reacquainted with Neville. Despite his recent marriage, Neville pursues Diana who is still in love with him. Her brother dies and, once again, Diana withdraws from society. Some months later Sir Morton and Neville are called to a hospital in Paris. Diana is recovering from an operation and trancelike, she declares her love for Neville. Sir Morton takes her back to England to convalesce. Neville realises that he cannot live without Diana and once again plans to run away with her...

Diana's swirling, unfulfilled emotions are echoed in Carl Davis's score which is based on themes from Franz Liszt's 'Sonnets de Pétrarque'.