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## **The Impact of Audiovisual Media in the Town of Utrecht. A Research Project at the University of Utrecht**

2000

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/15947>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version

Sammelbandbeitrag / collection article

### **Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:**

Hogenkamp, Bert: The Impact of Audiovisual Media in the Town of Utrecht. A Research Project at the University of Utrecht. In: Frank Kessler, Sabine Lenk, Martin Loiperdinger (Hg.): *Lokale Kinogeschichten*. Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern 2000 (KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films 9), S. 116–129. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/15947>.

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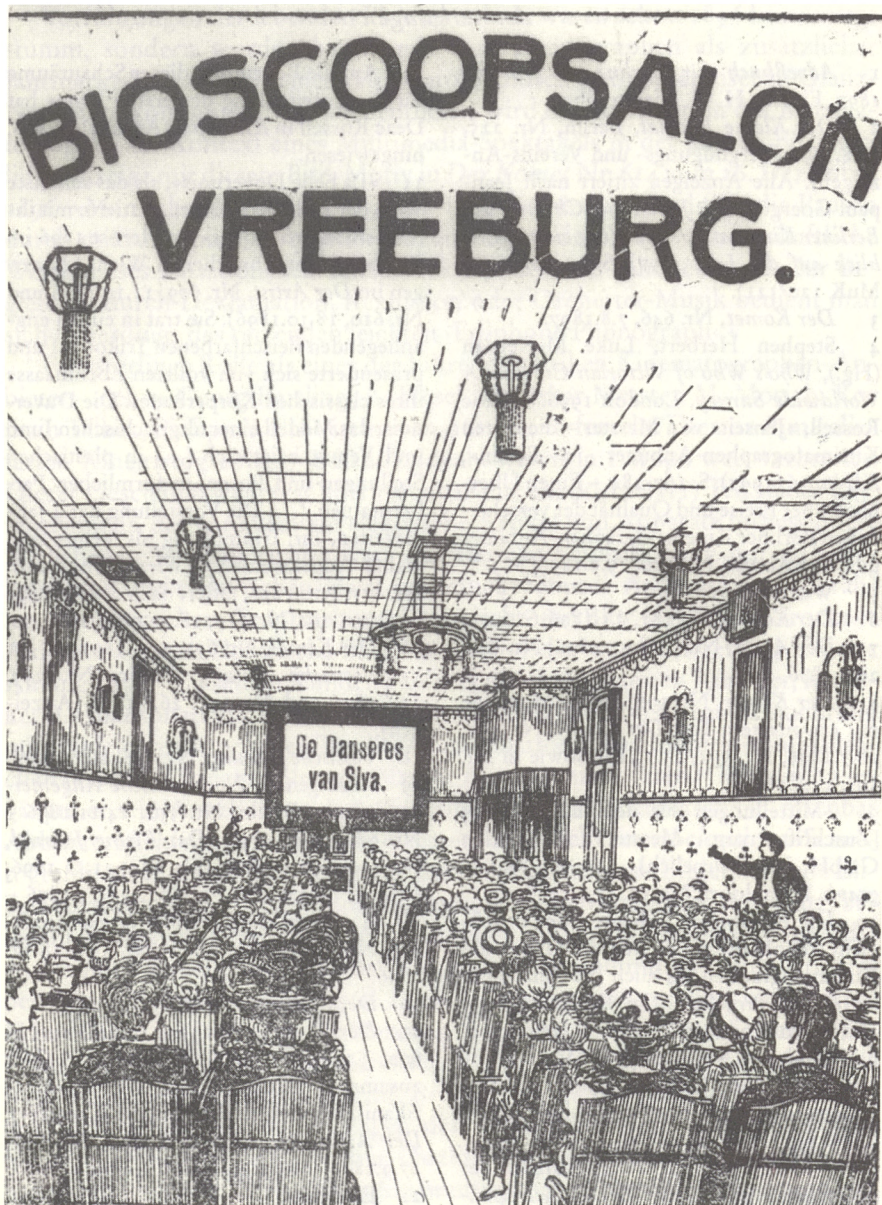
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Bioscoop-Salon, Vreeburg 8, with its main attraction: the lecturer (Louis Hartlooper)

# The Impact of Audiovisual Media in the Town of Utrecht

A Research Project at the University of Utrecht

In the Netherlands, the first film was shown to the public over a century ago, followed in the 1920s by radio broadcasting, in the 1950s by television and in the 1990s by the new digital media. Today the audiovisual media have extended their influence over virtually every aspect of Dutch society as we know it. All the same the national history of the audiovisual media in the Netherlands has not yet been the subject of an integrated research project. Such a project would have to address matters such as: an analysis of cinema, radio and television audiences; motivation to purchase a radio set, a television or a personal computer; public preferences for certain films, radio and television programmes, computer games or Internet sites; their influence on daily life in general and on cultural expressions in particular; their relative artistic merits; the dominant position of foreign programmes. To examine issues like these a local research programme has been formulated: the Utrecht Project. This project intends to draw a detailed map of the history of film exhibition, radio, television and the new media in a single town. Utrecht has been selected for that purpose because of its central location, both geographically and as the hub of transport (headquarters of the national railway system), commerce (seat of the Utrecht Trade Fair) and learning (Utrecht University), and finally also because of its social and political composition. The Utrecht Project is realised by the Department of Film and Television Studies of Utrecht University in close cooperation with the Netherlands Audiovisual Archive. The first results have been made public on the Project's Website (Dutch with English summaries): <http://www.let.uu.nl/tftv/UtrechtProject>

For the benefit of the readers of *KINtop* the following contribution will focus on the first decades of the cinema in Utrecht, to be more precise the history of the town's first permanent film theatres. Using information collected by Herman de Wit for his MA thesis,<sup>1</sup> by students at Utrecht University and by the author, this article will look into the ownership of these early cinemas, their location and their staff. Particular attention will be paid to the interference with the local authorities, resulting in a ban for children up to the age of sixteen to visit any cinema, unless it was showing a programme of films approved by a local censorship committee.

## *Travelling Showmen*

More than half a year after the first ›living images‹ had been shown in the Netherlands for the first time (Amsterdam, 12 March 1896), the inhabitants of Utrecht could acquaint themselves with this latest wonder of technology. For the occasion the Frisian travelling showman Christiaan Slieker had put up a marquee in the Tivoli Park. On the 29th November 1896 this Grand Théâtre Edison held its first show. Although the screenings did not attract the overwhelming numbers that Slieker had counted on, other showmen saw no reason to stay away from Utrecht. They either hired a hall or put up their marquees at the annual fair. There was an enormous rush to visit these shows. Herman de Wit concludes that »around 1900 [...] virtually the whole population of Utrecht must have been familiar with the new medium.«<sup>2</sup> Extremely popular were actualities shot in Utrecht, such as the newsreel of an exercise by the Utrecht fire brigade, produced by the travelling showman H. Grünkorn in 1899.

After the turn of the century a new generation of exhibitors took over. The refurbishment of their marquees was luxurious, the projection of a high standard with an ample choice of films, which were accompanied by a small orchestra and a lecturer. But Utrecht was also visited by exhibitors who regarded film as a means rather than an end. In the case of the Salvation Army it was to convert the spectators to the Christian faith, and in the case of the Van Houten Cacao Company to promote the sale of its Rono chocolate drink. The most colourful of these exhibitors was undoubtedly the ›people's missionary‹, Frederik de Keijzer, who set out to save the population of Utrecht from the vices of the fair with his annual ›anti-fair shows‹. Although the era of these travelling showmen did not immediately come to an end once the first permanent cinemas started opening their doors, the emphasis changed towards these new establishments. Seeing films in a building that was permanently fitted with screen, projection booth and chairs, now became the norm.

## *Permanent Cinemas*

On 31 October 1907 the first permanent cinema was opened in a property on the Oudegracht Weerdzijde 21 (today Oudegracht 144). This ›Cinematographe‹ was run by three Germans from Krefeld: H. Kirchhoff, Dr. Schaffrath and H. Kraemer. That German town was a centre of the trade in film prints, but whether the three founders of the ›Cinematographe‹ had any previous cinema experience is unknown.<sup>3</sup> The local newspaper *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad* praised the ›Bioscoop-Theater‹ – the name under which it soon became known: »Inside the small hall looks smart, the walls are hung with light-blue green paper, which works very pleasantly. There are two price categories, but





Scala Bioscoop, in the Hotel de l'Europe, separate entrance Lange Viestraat 12

in both cases the spectators sit on comfortable chairs. The images are beautiful and hardly glitter or flicker.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, within a year the ›Bioscoop-Theater‹ had to close its doors.<sup>5</sup> However, at that moment there was already another venue where films were screened on a permanent base. The owner of the Auction Rooms (Venduhuis) at the Vreeburg 8, Richard Bresser, had converted one of the rooms into a ›Bioscoop Salon‹, which opened its doors on 3 October 1908. The biggest attraction of this cinema was its lecturer Louis Hartlooper. This former actor provided the images with a running commentary, a form of ›dramatisation‹, which was highly appreciated by the audience (without fail he ended the show with the formula ›Keep fit‹).<sup>6</sup> Although the ›Bioscoop Salon Vreeburg‹ could only be reached by entering a small alley, the location was ideally suited for a cinema, with hotels, bars and other forms of entertainment in the direct vicinity. The next permanent cinema in Utrecht, the ›Flora Bioscope Theater‹ at the Oudegracht Weerdzijde 9 (today Oudegracht 156), was surrounded by shops. In fact, the building had previously housed a carpet shop. The ›Flora‹ held its first screening on 22 December 1909. Its managers were two Germans: Heinrich Lübbe (born 1884 in Neuburg) and Ernst Wulff (born 1877 in Kuddevorde). The latter's younger brother Heinrich (born 1882 in Kuddevorde) acted as bookkeeper and joined his brother as manager after Lübbe's departure for Berlin in 1911. Lübbe and Wulff had started their cinema careers in Emden, so it was said.<sup>7</sup> In 1908 they had opened the Bioscope Theater in Groningen, to be followed in 1910 by the Friso Theater in Leeuwarden and De Kroon in Zwolle in 1911, thus creating one of the first cinema chains. Like the Vreeburg Cinema the Flora's main attraction was its lecturer: actor Piet Wigman who was engaged in October 1910.

While Bresser and Lübbe and Wulff had sufficient business acumen to make a success of the cinemas that they were running, others found it harder to make ends meet. J. de Haan for example, who owned the bar-restaurant Vinicole in the Voorstraat 8. In order to get the coveted licence the building was extensively renovated. In October 1910 the ›Cinema Parisien‹ started its screenings. Although located centrally it was not as successful as anticipated and within two years De Haan had to close it down. In July 1912, it reopened as ›Cinema Union‹, which again lasted less than two years and held its last show in May 1914. A similar fate underwent the ›Apollo Bioscoop Theater‹, Oudegracht Tolsteegzijde 85 (today Oudegracht 255). It started in March 1912, under the management of Charles Raasveld, a former lecturer at the ›Cinema Parisien‹. Within a couple of months, the cinema was taken over by G.H. van Royen, a former Amsterdam shopkeeper, and reopened as the ›Witte Bioscoop‹ (White Cinema). The so-called White Cinemas offered programmes that were vetted by the Roman Catholic clergy and therefore offered acceptable fare to the faithful instead of ›sinful love, suicide and divorce‹.<sup>8</sup> The ›Witte Bioscoop‹ had the strong support of the local catholic daily newspaper *Het Centrum* which called upon its readers to pay a regular visit to the cinema.



Louis Hartlooper, lecturer

This call was obviously not heeded, for early in 1913 the ›Witte Bioscoop‹ had to close its doors. Van Royen had come to the conclusion that the formula which had proved such a success for his ›Witte Bioscoop‹ in Amsterdam did not work in Utrecht. The place was reopened in April 1913 as the ›Centrum Bioscoop‹, a name which suggested a link with the aforementioned catholic daily. This was denied in the strongest possible terms by the newspaper which stated bluntly: »We will rejoice when this cinema will disappear as soon as possible.«<sup>9</sup> It did, only to reopen under yet another name as the ›Splendid Bioscoop‹. This again had only a short life. In May 1914 the premises were fixed up as a carpenter's workshop. The ›Thalia‹ at the Steenweg 37 was another example of a cinema without a future. Like the ›Cinema Parisien‹ it was the initiative of a bar owner, C. B. ten Bosch, who converted his drinking establishment into a film theatre. The ›Thalia‹ started its activities in the spring of 1913, only to end them again in the spring of next year.

But the cinema trade in Utrecht did not only attract losers. Just around the corner of Richard Bresser's ›Bioscoop Salon‹, another cinema was opened in

July 1912. The proprietor was Joh. de Liefde, who had fitted out one of the halls in his Hotel de l'Europe as a luxury film theatre. It included such novelties as a curtain that could be opened and closed electrically and lights that faded slowly. The Hotel de l'Europe was located at the Vreeburg, but a separate entrance for the cinema had been created around the corner in the Lange Viestraat 12. The ›Scala Bioscoop‹ offered an early example of media concentration, for De Liefde was the owner of the local newspaper *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad*, which inevitably carried a lot of free publicity for the Scala. Moreover, the *Scala-Bioscoop-Courant*, a weekly carrying news about the Scala only, was printed at the *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad* presses and delivered free of charge to every household in Utrecht.

A few hundred yards from the Scala, at the Oudegracht Weerdzijde 114 (today Oudegracht 73), another luxury cinema, the ›Rembrandt Bioscoop-Theater‹, opened its doors in January 1913. It was managed by Leonard Lorjé, owner of an office stationary shop, and David Hamburger, travelling tradesman. Both belonged to the small Jewish community in Utrecht. That Lorjé and Hamburger only wanted the very best for their cinema, was not only exemplified by the size of the screen, the ›enchanting illumination‹ of the theatre and the quality of the films, but in particular by their poaching of the most successful lecturers from other cinemas. First they lured Piet Wigman away from the ›Flora Bioscope-Theater‹. When he decided to return to his old den after only seven months, the actor Ko van Sprinkhuizen was booked. But a real coup was the transfer to the ›Rembrandt‹ of the popular Louis Hartlooper who had been offered such a pay rise that he had no other option but to leave the ›Bioscoop Salon Vreeburg‹ in the Spring of 1914.

The importance of having a first-class lecturer was demonstrated by the advertisement placed in the local press, on the occasion of the opening of the ›New-York Bioscoop‹ on 19 July 1913.<sup>10</sup> In it the lecturer Hijman Croiset featured prominently. Croiset, a colourful entertainer with outspoken anarcho-socialist sympathies, would soon leave the new cinema to be replaced by André de Jong who had taken the place of Wigman at the ›Flora‹ during the latter's short stint with the ›Rembrandt‹.<sup>11</sup> The ›New-York‹ was the last of the cinemas to open in Utrecht in the 1910s. Its landmark was a replica of the Statue of Liberty on the roof of the building, which was illuminated at night. In the same year, N.J. Dussenbroek, the owner of the ›New York‹, opened a cinema with the same name in the nearby town of Hilversum.

### *Employers*

By the Summer of 1913 there were eight film theatres operating in Utrecht. Three of these had to close within a year. Whether they were typical ›fleapits‹ is unclear. This was the type of cinema that helped to give the trade such a bad



name because of the cheap thrills on offer – not to mention the vermin and the odours distributed by their customers. Obviously their owners had been unable to invest sufficiently. Two of them for example were nothing but drinking establishments converted into cinemas without a clear ›business plan‹. They could not provide the atmosphere of luxury and modernity that made the other five cinemas so appealing. And they certainly were not in a position to offer the kind of wages that top-class lecturers who, in Utrecht at least, were so instrumental in creating a loyal clientele, were expecting.

With the exception of Lübbecke and Wulff, the managers of the five had their base in Utrecht. And when the Wulff brothers were forced to return to Germany in August 1914 as a result of the outbreak of the First World War, the running of the ›Flora‹ was taken over by Anton Hoogenstraaten, the man who had been the owner of the carpet shop which was located on the premises before the cinema opened in 1909.<sup>12</sup> With their knowledge of local circumstances these entrepreneurs aimed to offer their audiences the right blend of the familiar and the unusual. There is no evidence that religious denomination, otherwise such a dominating factor in the pillorised society that the Netherlands were becoming in the first quarter of the twentieth century, played a significant role. Only the ›Witte Bioscoop‹ was openly displaying its Roman Catholic character, but this was no guarantee for commercial success as we have seen.

Further research is clearly needed into the kind of programmes the Utrecht cinemas were exhibiting in the 1910s. Little is known for example on how the change from a programme consisting of a range of short films to one centred around a feature film took effect in Utrecht. Feature films were certainly becoming more important as the 1910s progressed. In May 1913 the ›Flora‹ even booked the large hall of Park Tivoli for ten days in order to screen the Italian blockbuster *QUO VADIS?* (Cines, 1913), thus stressing the film's exceptional character and, of course, generating more income from larger audiences and higher ticket prices. The example was followed later in that year by the ›Rembrandt‹ with *GLI ULTIMI GIORNI DI POMPEI* [*THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEI*] (Ambrosio, 1913).<sup>13</sup>

The population of Utrecht was increasing steadily during the decade. Amounting to 119,006 in 1910 it went up to 136,602 in 1918. Moreover as a market town Utrecht attracted large numbers of visitors on a regular basis. In 1917 710,665 tickets (5.25 per inhabitant) were sold for theatrical and non-theatrical film shows. The figure for 1918 is slightly down: 681,526 (4.99 per inhabitant). This drop was undoubtedly due to the economic malaise resulting from the neutrality of the Netherlands in general and a rise of municipal Entertainment Tax (from 5% to 10%) in particular. As all the cinemas were concentrated in the centre of town (Utrecht's first and only neighbourhood theatre, the ›Olympia‹, did not open until 1929), a good public transport system was essential. Locally an efficient electric tram service was run by a municipal

corporation, while a wide selection of regional trams and trains provided regular services to surrounding villages.<sup>14</sup>

There was a remarkable consistency in the management of the five cinemas. John Fris was managing director of the ›Scala‹ from 1912 to 1935, Hoo-genstraaten (›Flora‹) from 1914 to 1928, Hamburger (›Rembrandt‹) from 1913 to 1927, B. van der Heuvel (›New York‹) 1913 to 1936 and Jan Nijland (›Vreeburg‹) from ca. 1917 to 1963 (!). The cinemas were family-run enterprises. An amusing correspondence has survived between John Fris and the Mayor of Utrecht about the behaviour of Mrs. Fris towards a member of the local Censorship Committee. The director's wife had a serious altercation with the honourable member, when she started removing his bicycle from the aisle of the cinema after tripping over it in the dark! When the latter tried to prevent this, Mrs. Fris let him know who the boss in the house was. Evidently her language was so strong, that the member felt obliged to report the case to the Mayor!<sup>15</sup>

### *Employees*

Family members could be used for manning the ticket office, for selling refreshments and doing other odd jobs, but for the essential positions of projectionist, musician and lecturer, specialists were required. An article that lecturer André de Jong wrote in 1913 for the *Bioscoop Courant*, a weekly for the cinema trade, reviewing six Utrecht cinemas, gives an idea of the order of merit at the time.<sup>16</sup> De Jong mentioned two projectionists by name. The musicians of three film theatres were singled out (and praised). But for each and every cinema he passed judgement (generally positive) on the lecturer, modestly refraining from praising his own performances in the ›Flora‹.

The predominant position of the lecturers was reflected in the Dutch Union of Cinema and Theatre Employees (Nederlandsche Bond van Bioscoop- en Theaterpersoneel). In November 1916 the Utrecht branch had thirteen members, of whom not fewer than six were lecturers.<sup>17</sup> Among them were Hartlooper, chairman, and Kaljee, secretary of the branch. Of the other members four were projectionists and three held other positions. In November 1918 the membership stood at 23. This was a considerable rise but compared to Amsterdam (505 members), Rotterdam (224) and The Hague (167) the Utrecht branch was tiny.<sup>18</sup> The reports in the union journal *De Lichtstraal* of the branch meetings (usually held at 11 p.m., after the last performances had come to an end) show how members and officials wrestled with articles of association, elections and expulsions. But in contrast to the national leadership the politics of the Utrecht branch of the union were remarkably conciliatory. The language used was devoid of any reference to the ›class struggle‹. In March 1917 the branch reported proudly that thanks to »the actions of our chairman, the management of the Rembrandt Cinema had decided to give its staff *four*

*days of leave of absence per year on full pay*«. <sup>19</sup> In November 1917 a campaign for higher wages was discussed. The conclusion was revealing: »The wages in Utrecht are such, that only a few members agree with the need for a campaign. To pursue higher wages for non members does not appeal to the meeting at all.« <sup>20</sup> Again there was praise for the management of the »Rembrandt« (where the core of the branch membership was employed) for raising the wages of its staff twice within a short span of time. This attitude irritated more radical sections of the union and led to letters in *De Lichtstraal*, in which the Utrecht branch was depicted as the laughing stock of the union. The radicalisation of the trade-union movement as a result of deteriorating economic circumstances during the course of 1918 was at least reflected in the language used by the Utrecht branch (there was a reference to »Comrades theatre and cinema slaves« in September), but it remained thoroughly reformist with regard to its political aims. <sup>21</sup>

### *Censorship*

With their staff hardly causing any problems, the employers had time on their hands to fight an enemy that proved more difficult to deal with: the local Censorship Committee. As in other cities in the Netherlands the teachers campaigned against the harm that film shows might cause to children. Their concern was not so much the dangers of inflammable nitrate film stock, for stringent safety regulations had to be complied with in Utrecht. It was films »whose subject and plot should definitely be kept out of the realm of thought of the child, and, even more, films, which through the sensation and excitement of the performance and through the titillation of the imagination have an unhealthy effect on children, both physically and mentally«, that they were worried about. These words can be found in an advice prepared by the Legal Commission of Utrecht Town Council. It followed a submission by the Utrecht branch of the Union of Dutch Teachers, in which much was made of the undesirable influence of the cinema on school children. The exhibitors could not turn the tide. Their arguments were weak. Hamburger for example sent a two-page letter to the municipal authorities in which he contended that there was no need for measures as there was already close co-operation with the police! Although some councillors felt that it was the parents' responsibility to decide which films their children were allowed to see, the majority heeded the advice of the Legal Commission and voted in favour of a bye-law which banned children under the age of sixteen from visiting any film show in Utrecht. <sup>22</sup> An exception was made for so-called children's screenings, comprising of a programme of films that had been passed by a censorship committee installed by the municipality. On 6 February 1915 the bye-law (»Lichtbeelden-verordening«) came into force.

The members of the Censorship Committee were recruited among teachers' unions and organisations catering for youth. Among them was the school teacher W.G. van de Hulst, whose children's books were extremely popular in Reformed circles. But at the centre of attention was another Protestant, Andrew de Graaf, chairman of the Censorship Committee. After years of campaigning against prostitution and moral decay, this inspector of the Central Federation for Internal Missionary Work and Christian Philanthropic Institutions had discovered a new challenge: the cinema. De Graaf held the view that because of the principle of mechanical reproduction, film could by definition not be a form of art. He dismissed the ›dramatic film‹ and only approved of the educational film. Lastly he campaigned for an even stricter by-law banning anyone under 18 from visiting the cinema. The policy of the Utrecht film Censorship Committee was clearly affected by De Graaf's views. It was no surprise that he rose to the top of the exhibitors' list of most hated men, especially after he started disseminating his views nationally.<sup>23</sup> Not only did the cinema owners object to De Graaf's views, they were annoyed by the extra fuss that censorship involved. Members of the Censorship Committee had to be offered complimentary tickets and to be provided with short content descriptions of the programme. Extra films had to be booked for the cinemas to fall back on in case the Committee did not pass a programme. The exhibitors retaliated, for example by presenting the films in unheated cinemas (›why bother to put on the heating for three members of the Censorship Committee?‹), which forced one of the committee members suffering from rheumatism to resign! There were more resignations. The new weekly programme started on Friday evening and as the prints arrived only early in the afternoon, the Censorship Committee was left no other choice but to hold its viewing sessions on Friday afternoon. However, quite a number of the schoolteacher members were refused leave of absence on what was a normal schoolday. The result was an extremely high turn-over of the committee. Only De Graaf remained.<sup>24</sup>

After a while some exhibitors no longer bothered to submit their programmes to the Censorship Committee, taking the loss of income (those of under the age of sixteen were automatically banned) for granted. Still they were left with the tricky problem of preventing those youngsters from entering their premises, for the Utrecht police held regular inspections. On 26 January 1916 a thirteen-year old boy was arrested for attending a programme consisting of KONINGIN ELISABETH'S DOCHTER [QUEEN ELISABETH'S DAUGHTER], KNOPJE MOET TROUWEN [PEG HAS TO MARRY] and DE VIERVOETIGE VIRTUOOS [THE FOUR-FOOTED VIRTUOSO] in the ›Flora‹. Managing director Hoogenstraten was found guilty by the Court. Symbolic as the fine of merely half a Guilder may have been, it was cause for Hoogenstraten to appeal. The case ended in the Supreme Court, where the verdict was quashed on 9 October 1916.<sup>25</sup>

The decision of the Supreme Court forced the authorities to rewrite the bye-law, which offered the exhibitors another chance to take the edge off it. This time at least they managed to get together for a concerted campaign, sending one address on behalf of all of them to the Town Council. On the other hand, De Graaf and his Committee, idle until the new bye-law had come into force, saw it as an ideal opportunity to appeal for raising the age from sixteen to eighteen! In the end both parties were disappointed: the old bye-law, rewritten so as to make it more legally waterproof, was adopted. It came into force on 15 October 1917, more than a year after the Supreme Court's decision. The war between the exhibitors and the Censorship Committee was resumed. The surviving correspondence is full of rumours that children were admitted, of demands that cinemas should be closed for not complying with the bye-law, of complaints that members of the Committee were treated unfairly and of moaning that it was impossible to run a business. Given the fact that the Committee judged only a handful of films suitable for those under sixteen, it did indeed hardly pay to organise children's matinees and in the early 1920s the ›Vreeburg‹ was the only cinema to offer such shows.<sup>26</sup>

This constant bickering with the local authorities proved to be excellent training though for the Utrecht exhibitors. Although few in numbers compared with Amsterdam or Rotterdam, their executive qualities were highly appreciated on a national level. It was no coincidence that it was David Hamburger, the managing director of the ›Rembrandt‹, who invited his colleagues to a national meeting in Amsterdam on 11 February 1918, where they discussed ways of joining forces against the obstacles put in their way by church and secular authorities. As a result of this meeting the Union of Managers of Dutch Film Theatres was founded, later renamed the Netherlands Cinema Association (Nederlandsche Bioscoopbond), of which Hamburger was to become the chairman for many years.<sup>27</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Many of the developments described above are not typical to Utrecht but can be discerned elsewhere in the Netherlands (or, for that matter, abroad). To what extent the films which were exhibited in those early years of the cinema helped to forge a national identity is a question that obviously needs to be addressed. In that respect the extreme popularity of news items depicting local events (such as the exercise by the Utrecht fire brigade) must not be forgotten. The names given to the film theatres indicate the continuation of the traditions of variety theatre on the one hand and the association with Americanism on the other. The ›New York‹ with its Statue of Liberty offers a good example of the latter. The rise of the cinema meant the emergence of new professions and of new professional associations. The occupational boundaries were not al-



ways clear: was a lecturer an actor first and a cinema employee second, or vice versa? And what about a projectionist: was he (sic) a mechanic or a cinema employee, i.e. did he belong to a craft or a cinema trade union? Another fruitful area of research concerns cinema's gradual embedding in the ›fabric of society‹ with its regulations and those who monitor their compliance.

One of the questions that the Utrecht Project will hope to answer once further research has been carried out concerns the effect of the early developments on cinema culture in Utrecht. Despite repeated campaigns by the exhibitors the bye-law which banned children up to the age of sixteen from visiting film shows remained in force until 1941, when the German occupying forces (!) decided to suspend it. After a national Cinema Act had come into force in 1928, Utrecht had been the only town to retain such a strict bye-law. Why the political support for the ban was so strong in Utrecht is another question that will need to be answered. It has been pointed out above how stable the number of cinemas in Utrecht was after 1914. In the 1930s not only their number increased, but most of the existing film theatres were extensively renovated or even completely rebuilt. The most conspicuous change was that of the ›Vreeburg‹ in 1936, which architect and designer Gerrit Rietveld made into a temple of light and modernity. The relationship between the artistic élite and the cinema ›milieu‹ in Utrecht is obviously an area that begs further research. Finally, today's cinema culture in Utrecht can be characterised as vibrant compared to many other towns in the Netherlands. On average the inhabitant of Utrecht pays 4.1 visits to the cinema per year, which is far above the national average of 1.0. It is the home of the Netherlands Film Festival, the Dutch Animation Film Festival and the Impact multimedia festival. It is tempting to look for continuity, but to what extent is today's cinema culture really a legacy of the achievements in the early days of cinema in Utrecht?

## Notes

1 Much of the information collected by Herman de Wit for his MA thesis *Film in Utrecht van 1895 to 1915* (1986) is now available on the Utrecht Project Website <http://www.let.uu.nl/tftv/UtrechtProject>

2 Herman de Wit, *Film in Utrecht van 1895 tot 1915*, MA thesis Theatre Studies, Utrecht University, 1986, p. 139.

3 In his dissertation Ivo Blom gives a detailed description of the trade between the Dutch distributor and exhibitor Jean Desmet and the Westdeutsche Film-Börse in Krefeld. Cf. Ivo Blom, *Pionierswerk. Jean Desmet en de vroege Nederlandse filmhan-*

*del en bioscoopexploitatie (1907-1916)* [Jean Desmet and the early Dutch film trade and cinema exhibition (1907-1916)], Amsterdam 2000, pp. 125-130.

4 *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad*, 19 February 1908, quoted by Herman de Wit, op. cit., p. 83.

5 It is unclear whether an attempt to revive the Bioscoop-Theater in April 1909 was successful. The local authorities granted Henri Marie Bourre, an agent for the Parisian firm Cinéma-Fix, permission to run a cinema on the premises, but whether (and if so, for how long) film shows were

given remains a mystery. Cf. Herman de Wit, op. cit., p. 99.

6 Cf. Ansje van Beusekom, »Louis Hartlooper (1864-1922). Explicateur te Utrecht«, in: *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 6, Amsterdam 1995, pp. 182-194.

7 Rob de Kam, Frans Westra, *Eene zeer interessante vertooning... 80 jaar bioscopie in Groningen*, Groningen 1983, p. 21.

8 *Het Centrum*, 8 July 1912, quoted by Herman de Wit, op. cit., p. 115.

9 *Het Centrum*, 14 April 1913, quoted by Herman de Wit, op. cit., p. 117.

10 *Utrechtsche Courant*, 18 June 1913, reprinted in: Herman de Wit, op. cit., p. 124.

11 For a short while Hijman Croiset showed his skills as a lecturer in the Amsterdam »Rode Bioscoop« (Red Cinema), run by his anarcho-socialist political friends from September to December 1913. Cf. Bert Hogenkamp, »De Roode Bioscoop«, in: *Skrien* 136 (Summer 1984), pp. 33-35.

12 The fact that Lübke, the Wulff brothers and Hoogenstraaten were all Lutherans may have played a role in the foundation of the »Flora« and in its continuation after the departure of the brothers to Germany in 1914.

13 Herman de Wit, op. cit., p. 127.

14 Between 1942 and 1964 a special railway cinema (»Sporbio«), in a disused railway carriage at Utrecht's Central Station, catered to those who had some spare time before catching a train.

15 Documents regarding the supervision

of cinema performances (Stukken betreffende het toezicht op bioscoopvoorstellingen), 1916 - May 1918, in the Utrecht Public Record Office (HUA), VI 1059.2.

16 *Bioscoop Courant*, 1 February 1913, pp. 5-6.

17 *De Lichtstraal*, November 1916.

18 *De Lichtstraal*, February 1919.

19 *De Lichtstraal*, April 1917.

20 *De Lichtstraal*, December 1917.

21 *De Lichtstraal*, September 1918.

22 Twenty members voted in favour of the proposal and thirteen against.

23 De Graaf published his views in various periodicals. A summary appeared under the title *Het bioscoopvraagstuk* [The Cinema Question], Utrecht 1919.

24 Documents regarding the supervision of cinema performances (Stukken betreffende het toezicht op bioscoopvoorstellingen), December 1913 - December 1915, in the Utrecht Public Record Office (HUA), VI 1059.1.

25 Documents regarding the supervision of cinema performances (Stukken betreffende het toezicht op bioscoopvoorstellingen), 1916 - May 1918, in the Utrecht Public Record Office (HUA), VI 1059.2.

26 Documents regarding the supervision of cinema performances (Stukken betreffende het toezicht op bioscoopvoorstellingen), 1916 - May 1918 and June 1918 - February 1928, in the Utrecht Public Record Office (HUA), VI 1059.2 and VI 1059.3.

27 »In Memoriam: D. Hamburger«, in: *Officieel Orgaan van de NBB*, 1947.