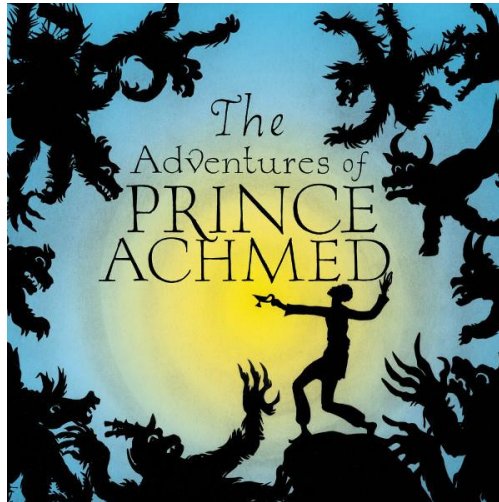




***Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed (The Adventures of Prince Achmed)* is a Spring 2026 LVCA dvd donation to the Ligonier Valley Library in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that silent feature animation.**

16 of a possible 20 points = ** = a minor classic**

Weimar Republic 1923-1926 black-and-white with color tints 67 minutes

Comenius-Film GmbH Berlin Producer: Walter Türck

a Milestone Film and Video dvd release

Key: *indicates outstanding technical achievement

Points:

Direction: Carl Koch and Lotte Reiniger (Mrs. Carl Koch)

1 Editing: Lotte Reiniger, Alexander Kardan

2 Animation Camera: Carl Koch

1 Lighting

2 Special Visual Effects: Walther Ruttmann (Wak-Wak fight), Walter Türck

**1 Intertitles: Lotte Reiniger, based on Antun Yusuf Hannā Diyab stories
added to Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights***

1 Music: Wolfgang Zoller

2 Animation: Lotte Reiniger, Berthold Bartosch

2 Production Design: Lotte Reiniger, Carl Koch, and Berthold Bartosch

2 Layouts: Lotte Reiniger

2 Creativity

16 total points

Long before Walt Disney and associates experimented with three dimensional optics, Berthold Bartosch designed and constructed a primitive multiplane camera. Working in Berlin in the mid-1920s with Carl Koch and Lotte Reiniger, he put his mechanical expertise to stunningly good use in creating illusions of depth for what is now the only surviving silent feature animation. With a story cobbled together from three preexisting fantasy tales, *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed* offered what seemed a truly epic narrative in the form of a filmed shadow play. Black paper figures drawn and cut out in silhouette fashion by Lotte Reiniger enacted a romantic adventure in exotic locations. China, Persia, even volcanic jungle islands of the South Pacific served as backdrops to magical intrigues involving a witch, mechanical flying horse, movable castle, lamp crammed with genies, and an African sorcerer-inventor.

For plot, innovators ransacked “Aladdin,” “The Ebony Horse,” and “Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Peri-Banu” from tales told to French anthologist and translator Antoine Galland by a Maronite Christian storyteller named Antun Yusuf Hannā Diyab. The middle of these appears to have originated in a Panchatantra fable from India, while Aladdin seems to come from the Abbasid Caliphate of Babylon. “The Ebony Horse” may have been a Diyab creation.

As for the actual filming itself, a breakdown of who did what is certainly in order. Besides Bartosch and Reiniger, other collaborators were Carl Koch, Walter Türrck, Walther Ruttmann, and Alexander Kardan.

Kardan managed timing and recording of individual shots, Türrck masterminded special visual effects on glass plates, Koch manipulated the multiplane camera, and Ruttmann utilized Oskar Fischinger’s vertical wax and clay slicer to supply backgrounds which seemed to move.

Divided into five acts, the film opens with an African magician manufacturing a mechanical flying horse, which he proceeds to bring for a gift to the Caliph. Of course, he expects to be paid handsomely for his craftsmanship, rejecting cash and jewels in favor of marrying the monarch’s daughter Dinarsade. Meanwhile Dinarsade’s brother Achmed is enticed into making a demonstration journey on the magic steed. He receives instruction only on how to make the machine rise. Descent is another matter. That’s left in mystery, sending feckless rider on a perilous trip through a thunderstorm.

By the time experimentation leads him to learn how to point his mount's nose downward, Achmed is hundreds of miles from home. He finally lands on the island of Wak Wak, where he encounters a bevy of beauties attempting to seduce him. These he rejects, making his way to a forest. When the ruler of Wak Wak comes to his hideaway beside a pool to bathe, Achmed attempts to forcibly kidnap her. Meeting with resistance, he softens his approach to one of passionate pleading. That works much better.

Intentions of marrying the lady are short-circuited by the arrival of spoilsport African sorcerer, who transforms from bothersome bat to bouncing kangaroo, leading Achmed into a pit. Soon an enormous snake emerges from a cleft in one of its sides. While the prince battles that hostile reptile, his nemesis absconds with Peri Banu, whom he sells to the Emperor of China as a bridal candidate. Making off with several bags of money, the sorcerer then turns those into demons which attack Achmed after he has managed to kill the menacing serpent, recovered his beloved's feather cloak, and is despairingly lamenting her loss. The prince is carried off by these imps to a distant mountain. Their African overlord follows and pins him to the rim of that volcanic peak, then departs to harass Dinarsade's husband Aladdin.

Investigating who is trespassing on her private territory, the Witch of Flaming Mountain accosts an uninvited stranger. She becomes an ally, however, upon learning who has left him there. For the Witch is conveniently both rival and foe of the African prestidigitator. Thanks to her magic, liberated Achmed is rapidly back on the trail of his stolen equine and kidnapped lover.

He shortly recovers Peri Banu, saving her from becoming the bride of the Chinese Emperor's unappealing favorite courtier.

Not for long, though. Demons from Wak Wak overwhelm the rescuer and carry their sovereign back to their native land. Achmed manages to capture one of their number and forces it to fly him back to its home base.

Alas, entry is sealed off. It can only be obtained through the medium of Aladdin's lamp. So sorceress and noble journey to find Aladdin, who's trying with little success to rid himself of a vexing monster.

Achmed rescues Aladdin, not realizing the youth is his brother-in-law. Aladdin recounts his misadventures and the prince discovers the same wicked protean spirit that transported away Peri Banu and the flying horse has stolen wife, palace, and magic lamp from a Baghdad tailor.

The Witch determines to challenge their common enemy to battle, matching her shapeshifting to his and ultimately annihilating him. Aladdin's lamp is recovered. The victorious trio then sets out to liberate Peri Banu.

Will they succeed in defeating the fairy's captors? Well, you must watch the rest of the film to find out.

Notable special features on the Milestone Film and Video dvd release of this animation's restored version are 1. an optional audio track with spoken intertitles in English, 2. a sixty-minute color documentary titled *Lotte Reiniger: Homage to the Inventor of the Silhouette Film* from 1999, 3. a 1921 silent black-and-white advertising short (two minute runtime) silhouette animation for the Nivea soap and cold cream company, and 4. a gallery of stills from the feature film. The hour-long documentary by Katja Raganelli features three narrators (Jenny Evans, Hilary Owens, and David Kahoe) of interviews with Walter Schobert, Louis Hagen, Jr. of Primrose Productions – whose father produced *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, Alfred Happ, David Kehoe, and Hartmut Redottée. Auditors will learn exactly what each assistant contributed to the making of Carl Koch and Lotte Reiniger's landmark achievement.

Due to its emphasis on kidnapping and lusty romance, the film is recommended only for teens and adults. For them, this is essential viewing. Certainly one of the supremely gorgeous productions of world cinema, it should be seen by every mature film connoisseur.