

The Adventures of Prince Akhmed



1926 | 81m | PG | Silent

Director: Lotte Reiniger, Carl Koch

Starring: Hanna Schygulla, Dana Dempsey

This animative predecessor to the golden ages of Disney gives insight into the world of Middle Eastern folklore through a filter of Eurocentric views. Deriving from the *A Thousand and One Nights*; the collection of fables accumulated through the Persian Empire towards the Abbasid and Mamluk eras. Its influence runs deep and most prominently shows its face in works such as *Aladdin*; a film in which *The Adventures of Prince Akhmed* finds itself as an influence as well.

What places *The Adventures of Prince Akhmed* at such high acclaim, is its status as the first recorded animated feature film, with the exception of two earlier films made in Argentina by Quirino Cristiani; which have been presumed to be lost. Taking 3 years to be created from 1923 to 1926 this behemoth of animation was painstakingly created through the process of cutting cardboard to create silhouettes and conjoining them through thread; the traditional form in which these shadow puppets are found to be. Around 250,000 frames were made and only 96,000 would find themselves in the release of the film. It's through this incredible feat of precarious animation that can achieve its outcome, of an unfathomable range of animation movement in which the characters of Lotte Reiniger; the directors were able to move intricately amongst the creatures that possess the folklore world.

Notably, Lotte was only 26 at the release of the film and had begun the filmmaking process at the age of 23. It was before this that she would find herself working as an actress within the cinema industry and theatre. It is there where she had met her lifelong husband Carl Koch; who evidentially would become her lifelong cameraman till the end of her career. Lotte would go on to create many more creations, but never one so long and so potent.

As Robert Irwin would say in *A Thousand and One Nights at the Movies* "this sort of film work is, in effect, using magic to create stories that are about magic" (Robert Irwin, 2010)

"The film is littered with traces of its own physicality: variations in colour, specks of dust, and flickering light...The technique of metamorphosis – in which one shape tranforms seamlessly into another – plays out beautifully in a battle between the magician and the witch when they morph magically into animals."

The Guardian

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here



Excellent

Fair

Poor

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Did You Know?

- The Adventures of Prince Akhmed is the oldest surviving animated feature film.
- Director Carl Koch operated the multi-plane camera, which used two layers of glass tables and a strong backlight to create depth in the images. Lotte Reiniger, Director also, adjusted the movable parts of her silhouette puppets, crafted from black cardboard and connected by wire hinges, one frame at a time.

Continue Your Journey...

If you enjoyed this film, you might like:



Alice (1988)

With its magical silhouette animation and Arabian Nights adventure, you'll likely appreciate *Alice*, Jan Švankmajer's surreal take on 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. Both films feature inventive animation, unique visual styles, and blend fantasy with dark, strange twists, creating captivating experiences.



Song of the Sea (2015)

With its magical journey and striking silhouette animation, you'll enjoy *Song of the Sea*. This Irish folktale follows Saoirse, the last selkie, on an enchanting quest to free trapped fairies. Both films blend mythic storytelling with unique, captivating animation.

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