

Der Kampf der Tertia

("Battle of the Third Form")

Germany : 1928 : dir.

Silent : ? min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

Gustl Stark-Gstettenbaur.....

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The Moving Picture Boy entry on Stark-Gstettenbaur:

"August Ludwig Gstettenbaur, a cabinet-maker's son, was a jolly, lusty boy with a flair for acrobatics and a gift for imitating animals as well as humans. By the time he was ten he had won local fame as a gymnast, and when he was 13 his trainer, Joe Stark, became his manager and took him to Berlin. Gustl's father died in 1928, and Stark adopted the boy, who added his name to the front of his own for professional purposes.

In Berlin he appeared as an acrobat and entertainer in cabaret, and was spotted by the famous actor Eugen Klöpfer, who cast him as Falstaff's Page in "Henry IV" at the Lessing-Theater. Carl Zuckmeyer wrote a children's play, "Kakadu-Kakada", specially for him, and in 1930, after many Berlin shows, he created the role of the Page-Boy in Erik Charell's "Im Weissen Rössl" ("White Horse Inn"), which he played for 17 months. During its run he had a Hollywood offer, but Charell wouldn't release him.

Gustl had a real actor's face, precociously [*sic*] sly and subtle. His first film appearance was in Fritz Lang's "**SPIONE**", where he had little to do but demonstrate his gymnastic powers with a startling back-flip. Leading parts were to follow in "**DER PICCOLO VOM GOLD-ENEN LÖWEN**", "**DER KAMPF DER TERTIA**", "**DIE RÄUBERBANDE**", "**WOLGA-WOLGA**" (devoted servant to the rebel Stenka Razin) and - for Lang again - "**FRAU IM MOND**". This was the last of his 18 silent film appearances, and a memorable one as a stowaway on a moon rocket.

Gustl Gstettenbaur - he eventually dropped the "Stark" - remained a popular juvenile lead throughout the Thirties and beyond, usually playing the role of a healthy, humorous country lad. His 1931 films included "**ELISABETH VON ÖSTERREICH**", "**IM BANNE DER BERGE**", "**DIE KÖNIGIN EINER NACHT**", "**KYRITZ-PYRITZ**", "**SCHUBERTS FRÖHLINGSTRAUM**", and "**DER STORCH STREICHT**"

The following year came "**DAS GEHEIMNIS UM JOHANN ORTH**", "**MÄDCHEN ZUM HEIRATEN**" and "**STRICH DURCH DIE RECHNUNG**". And there were to be nearly 100 more. Among the later ones were "**DER LAUFENDE BERG**" ('41), "**DIE HEIM-LICHE BRÄUTE**" ('44) and the Franco-Italian co-production "**LA VACHE ET LE PRISONNIER**" ('60).

After the war Gustl and his wife (the revue artist Gracie Schenk, with whom he often toured in their own show) left the ruins of their house behind in Berlin, and moved back to his old home town, Hindelang in Bavaria. There, in the Allgäu, the pair of them ran the wine restaurant "Bei Gustl!"

[no listing in "Speelfilm Encyclopedie"]

No further information currently available. The extent and depth of Holmstrom's research is staggering, and often, as here, he throws up cascades of titles for which - to date - I can find no other mention. No doubt there are texts available in German on their early silent cinema, but it gives some indication of the scale of the task this archive has set itself. No details, alas, as to this particular film, which was remade as a talkie in 1953 with Wolfgang Jansen and Charles Knetschke. The formidably-handled Stark-Gstettenbaur (sounds like he ought to have been an ambassador's son, at the very least) was 14. How different his life and career might have been had the theatre manager released him to take up that offer from Hollywood. But then perhaps, like Peter Lorre and others, he would have become just one more stock European actor in an industry dominated by American names and faces. And Bavaria would have been poorer by one wine restaurant.

The film is additionally interesting in that – judging from the title at any rate – it is one of the earliest authentic *children's titles* in the archive, by which of course I mean a film explicitly made for a juvenile audience, as distinct from the “**Our Gang**” shorts, Jackie Coogan vehicles and the like, which displayed the antics of children for the amusement of an adult public.

See the 1953 remake, and subject index under **SCHOOL** and **SILENT CINEMA**, and very likely under **FOLLOW THE LEADER (Children's Gangs)**.