

Treasure Island

US : 1917 : dir. : Fox Silent : ? min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
Francis Carpenter; Violet Radcliffe; Buddy Messinger; Lloyd Perl; Lewis Sargent.....

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Kbytes	Ω □ € Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
3466a	1½	1	-	-	- - - - -	No	unseen

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Carpenter:

"This wide-eyed, curly-haired blond - whose real name was Francis Willburn Keef - was a leading star of the Franklin brothers' "Kiddie Pictures" troupe of miniature mummies. When he climbed up a beanstalk, emoting madly, the vegetable scarcely shook. He perished piteously, as Master Macduff, in the Beerbohm Tree's "MACBETH" of 1916. In 1920 he was signed up by Famous Players-Lasky, but the best of his career was over. All washed up at twelve!"

Excerpt from The Moving Picture Boy entry on Buddy Messinger:

"Melvin Joe Messinger was a great bruiser of a boy, inclining to fat though not in the Arbuckle or Joe Cobb class. He and his comelier sister Gertie sprang to fame around their ninth year in the Kiddie Comedies which the Franklin brothers, Chester and Sidney, turned out for Fox between 1915 and 1918. These delightfully robust romances, with the children taking adult parts and the larger girls sometimes donning moustaches and playing dashing gentlemen, had very much the air of end-of-

term school entertainments and often used the traditional pantomime stories.

While Gertie - who had a delicious sense of comedy - played heroines or floozies, her big brother was naturally cut out for bullying or villainous roles... Buddy could be superbly malevolent, or just touchingly thick. He would have enjoyed playing Long John Silver in the 1917 "TREASURE ISLAND": but the part went to the barnstorming Violet Radcliffe!..."

[no listing in "Classics of the Silent Screen", "Hollywood in the Twenties", "A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen", "Silent Movies: A Picture Quiz Book", "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Note that, despite an all-child cast, I have not regarded this as a children's production. I've assumed that the Franklin Brothers' "Kiddie Comedies" were produced for adult consumption, as the "Our Gang" shorts were. This raises the question of what was the first authentic children's production, made expressly for a child audience. I have no answer to that question, which is linked to the beginning of children's matinee performances in cinemas, but since no formal film rating system was adopted during the heyday of the silents, child spectators – certainly here in the UK – could be admitted (albeit accompanied by an adult) to any film at all, regardless of the content.

A roistering all-child **"TREASURE ISLAND"** would be a sight to see, and perhaps among the more entertaining adaptations. Carpenter, aged six, presumably played Jim Hawkins, while Lewis Sargent (14) was Ben Gunn.

Carpenter's earlier triumphs included **"THE BABY"** ('15), **"DIRTY FACE DAN"** ('15), **"THE CHILDREN IN THE HOUSE"** ('16) and **"THE LITTLE SCHOOL MA'AM"** ('16). Buddy Messinger (10) turned up later in **"THE OLD SWIMMIN' HOLE"** ('21), **"PENROD AND SAM"** ('23), and in 1924 had his own series of short comedies. Sargent and Lloyd Perl (age unknown) also made **"ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP"** with the "Kiddie Pictures" brigade that same year. Perl's other films included **"LET KATY DO IT"** ('15), **"LITTLE DICK'S FIRST CASE"** ('15) and **"A SISTER OF SIX"** ('16). Not qualifying in the category of "moving picture boy", nothing further is known of "barnstorming Violet Radcliffe".

Other titles from the Franklin brothers' "Kiddie Comedies" included **"ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES"**, **"THE BABES IN THE WOODS"** and **"JACK AND THE BEANSTALK"**.

See **TREASURE ISLAND - GENERAL NOTE** for many - very many - other interpretations, and subject index under **HISTORY, KIDS OUTWIT THE CROOKS, SEAFARING / PIRACY, SILENT CINEMA** and **TREASURE HUNTS**.