

Warners intended to supply its German branch, Deutsche First National Pictures (Defina), with American-made covers. The experienced actor and director William Dieterle was in charge and was allowed to recruit actors in Berlin.²⁰ Hall, writing on *DER TANZ GEHT WEITER* (1930, adapted from *THOSE WHO DANCE*), opined that "the German cast . . . is uniformly competent and in addition the film has the advantage of perfect recording and imaginative photography and direction." Warners' most ambitious foreign-language cover was *MOBY DICK* (1930). Never leaving Burbank, Michael Curtiz directed a French version and most of the German version, *DÄMON DES MÈERES* (though Dieterle directed some scenes).²¹ Dieterle played Captain Ahab, John Barrymore's part in the original. Later he reminisced:

I was hired to make synchronizations. Sound had just come in, and Hollywood was afraid of losing foreign markets. So they hired German, French and Spanish units to make foreign versions of important features. . . . The four films we were to make had already been completed. All the sets were still standing and dressed—we used the same costumes and everything. The big difference was that we had just ten days to make each picture. The supervisor of all this was Henry Blanke. (Quoted in Tom Flinn, "William Dieterle, the Plutarch of Hollywood," *Velvet Light Trap* 15 [Fall 1975]: p. 6)

Warner Bros. soon tested its German connections by moving into overseas coproduction. With Nero-Film, Warners planned to make trilingual versions in Berlin of *THE THREEPENNY OPERA*, an adaptation of the Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill stage production, with G. W. Pabst directing.²² Though it seemed like a guaranteed hit, there were numerous production delays, not the least of which was caused by the famous lawsuit in which Brecht sued Pabst and the producers over their treatment of the script. He lost the case. In the German version, Rudolf Forster played Mackie Messer and Lotte Lenya played Jenny. In the French version, *L'OPÉRA DE QUAT'SOUS*, Albert Préjean and Margo Lion had these roles. The film was not released until February 1931. *Film Daily* described *DIE DREI GROSCHENOPER* as "all a wild jumble, poorly motivated and directed, with some good atmospheric scenes and acting far superior to the muddled and long-drawn-out and tiresome story." The English version was never made.²³

MGM boasted of the quantity of stars and directors on its payroll who could speak several languages. Louis B. Mayer promised at least six multilingual films for 1929–1930 and budgeted \$6 million for them. More than sixty international actors, writers, and directors were hired at a cost of \$40,000 per week.²⁴ The former German expressionist director Arthur Robison came to Hollywood, made a German-language *TRIAL OF MARY DUGAN*, and returned to Europe.²⁵ Belgian-born Jacques Feyder was the most prestigious discovery, having made several high-quality productions in France throughout the 1920s, capped in 1928 by *THÉRÈSE RAQUIN* (shot in Berlin, and *LES NOUVEAUX MESSIEURS*), which was notorious for having sustained heavy political censorship in France. Feyder directed Garbo in MGM's last silent film, the stylish and shocking (she gets away with murder) *THE KISS* (1929). After this auspicious beginning, he was assigned the multilingual productions. The first Culver City French release, *LE SPECTRE VERT* (1930) redid *THE UNHOLY NIGHT* (originally shot by Lionel Barrymore in 1929) and was well received in France.²⁶ Feyder remade John Gilbert's *HIS GLORIOUS NIGHT* (1929) with different casts in German (released in Berlin under its original title, *OLYMPIA*) and in French (*SI L'EMPEREUR SAVAIT ÇA!* [1930]). The German version was a