



# Breaking Plates

a new film directed by  
Karen Pearlman



A raucous documentary about the not-so-silent women of the silent film era.

THE PHYSICAL TV COMPANY & LA BRIQUETERIE-CDCN DU VAL-DE-MARNE "BREAKING PLATES" VIOLETTE AYAD  
 RICHARD JAMES ALLEN EMMA WATKINS cinematographer JUSTINE KERRIGAN ACS production designer CAMILLE OSTROWSKY  
 costume designer CLAUDIA KRYSZKIEWICZ costume supervisor GEORGIA ATTEWELL-MOORE editor KAREN PEARLMAN ASE  
 composer ANGELA LITTLE sound designer LIAM MOSES mixer CRAIG BECKETT co-writer SAMUEL LUCAS ALLEN  
 co-producer MARTIN THORNE producers RICHARD JAMES ALLEN & KAREN PEARLMAN writer & director KAREN PEARLMAN



CINEMA'S FIRST  
NASTY WOMEN



la briqueterie centre de développement  
chorégraphique national  
val-de-marne



DOCUMENTARY  
AUSTRALIA



Project Title: **Breaking Plates** Format: Docudrama Duration: 25 minutes  
Writer/Director: Karen Pearlman Producer: Richard James Allen A Physical TV Company production

Logline: A raucous documentary about the not so silent women of the silent film era, *Breaking Plates* defiantly asserts the principle that if we want to tell different stories, we have to tell stories differently.

Synopsis: Move aside Wonder Woman. Drop the pretence, Doris Day. The film images that confine women to a 'realistic' role as housewife, nag, babe, or bitch have defined us for too long. Especially because in early cinema, before narrative conventions were iron-clad, there were so many more ways to behave. For decades, movies were made almost exclusively by men in Europe and the USA after 1925. So, the slapstick comediennes and cross-dressed cowgirls of early cinema, who were wild, powerful, rude, funny, and utterly out of male control, got forgotten, or worse, erased. *Breaking Plates* collaborates with the curators of *Cinema's First Nasty Women* to bring them back into view. *Breaking Plates* puts early films on the screen and then we talk to the characters in them, re-animate their antics, emulate their mayhem moves. As we wear their clothes and battle their haywire machines, exploding gags, and eruptive bodies, we learn to wield humour as a weapon against the structures that contain us.

*Breaking Plates* is an international collaboration with the curators of the groundbreaking four DVD/Blu-Ray set *Cinema's First Nasty Women*. The rambunctious 99 films that inspired *Breaking Plates* were made between 1896 and 1926 and brought together by Maggie Hennefeld, Laura Horak and Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi into a collection *The New York Times* describes as:

"A mind-expanding endeavour ... a triumph ... These are not the polite, weak sisters of cinema — there's a lot of muscle and mischief to go with those long skirts!" Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*, 19 August, 2022.



*Breaking Plates* advance quotes:

"There are some amazing, never seen before, never tried before, things in the film. Bravo!"  
Alan Berliner, award-winning documentary filmmaker (*Letter to the Editor*, *Wide Awake*, *The Sweetest Sound*)

"Utterly...utterly fascinating. My head is reeling! You are onto something extraordinary here. Production values, choreography, performance. All of it! And best of all, revisiting those not so silent women of the silent era."  
Sue Maslin, OA, multi-award-winning producer (*Brazen Hussies*, *The Dressmaker*, *Hunt Angels*, *Japanese Story*)

"A complete joy, *Breaking Plates* is an interrogative, celebratory, and cheekily riotous exploration of women and cinema." Bill Mousoulis, "an independent film legend" *The Age* (*My Darling in Stirling*, *Wild and Precious*, *Desire*)

**Karen Pearlman's *An Editor's Anthology*, a trilogy of short films about historical women editors** (2016, 2018 & 2020), won 34 highly competitive national and international awards from peak industry bodies and film festivals, including 3 for best editing, 3 for best directing and 6 for best documentary. Her 2020 film, *I want to make a film about women*, was longlisted for an Oscar and nominated for an Australian Academy Award. The special jury prize citation from the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival reads: "a film of innovative brilliance, celebrating the inexhaustible, essential tenacity of suppressed artists everywhere".

Karen is the author of the widely used textbook on editing, *Cutting Rhythms* (Focal Press), now in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition and with translations into Chinese, Korean, Arabic and Turkish. Her work has reached audiences of over one million people through collaboratively made research YouTube videos called *The Science of Editing*. Karen is a director, with Richard James Allen, of *The Physical TV Company*, whose documentary, drama, and dance films have been broadcast on ABC and SBS-TV, screened at almost 500 film festivals on six continents, garnering more than 100 awards or nominations, and added to the collections of 10 major film archives around the world.

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