

TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26
7 P.M. • HUMANITIES
QUADRANGLE
LECTURE HALL

THE WIZARD OF OZ

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 PH.D.



After Disney's 1937 masterpiece *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS* proved that adapting children's fantasy stories for the screen could lead to critical and commercial success, MGM bought the rights to L. Frank Baum's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* from Samuel Goldwyn, who had originally envisioned it as an Eddie Cantor vehicle. Under MGM producer Mervyn LeRoy, *THE WIZARD OF OZ* went through five directors, starting with Norman Taurog for pre-production and early Technicolor tests before he was reassigned to *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER*. Richard Thorpe helmed the film for two weeks of shooting before being replaced by George Cukor during a shutdown. Cukor shot nothing, but his significant creative contributions included revising the looks for Judy Garland's Dorothy and Margaret Hamilton's Wicked Witch. Victor Fleming—the director throughout most of the production—stuck with Cukor's choices, but could not finish the film as he was pulled away to replace Cukor on yet another 1939 release, *GONE WITH THE WIND*. At that point, King Vidor came in to complete the film, working mainly on the sepia-tinted Kansas scenes. Beyond the work of the film's three credited screenwriters—Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson, and Edgar Allan Woolf—the story and script were developed through input from LeRoy's assistant (and one-time Oscar nominee) William H. Cannon, Herman J. Mankiewicz (who disliked the project but contributed the idea of shooting the Kansas scenes in black and white), poet Ogden Nash, the film's various directors, lyricist Yip Harburg for intros and outros for the musical numbers, and actors Jack Haley and Bert Lahr for their Kansas dialogue.

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If casting had gone differently, we could be watching a very different film: among the actors under consideration were Shirley Temple and Deanna Durbin for Dorothy, W.C. Fields and Wallace Beery for the Wizard, Fanny Brice for Glinda, a glamorous Gale Sondergaard as a Wicked Witch originally styled after the Evil Queen from *SNOW WHITE*, Buddy Ebsen first as the Scarecrow and then as the Tin Man (after changing roles with Ray Bolger), a human actor for Toto, and a trained lion with human voiceover for the Cowardly Lion. The music could have been very different as well, as some songs were rewritten as dialogue (as was the case in the scene where the Wizard hands out honors before leaving Oz) or dropped entirely. Even "Over the Rainbow"—which would win an Oscar for Best Original Song and top AFI's list of the greatest film songs of all time—barely made it into the final cut. As told by Harburg, "Over the Rainbow" was taken out of the picture because the director and producer decided (after the 1st preview) that it was too slow and disturbed the pace of the show. It was deleted for the next few previews. [Composer Harold] Arlen and I pleaded, begged, ranted, clamored for this song to be reinstated—without success. Arthur Freed—associate producer and himself a songwriter—used his influence and friendship with Louis B. Mayer to give it a go. Without this push, the song would have been out."

DIRECTED BY **VICTOR FLEMING**

SCREENPLAY BY **NOEL LANGLEY, FLORENCE RYERSON, AND EDGAR ALLAN WOOLF**

BASED ON A BOOK BY **L. FRANK BAUM**

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **HAROLD ROSSON**

PRODUCED BY **MGM** (1939), 102 MINS.

STARRING **JUDY GARLAND, RAY BOLGER, JACK HALEY, BERT LAHR, MARGARET HAMILTON, BILLIE BURKE, AND FRANK MORGAN**

The six-month shoot was notoriously difficult, leading Jack Haley (the Tin Man) to say, "Like hell it was fun. It was a lot of hard work. It was not fun at all." The three-strip Technicolor process required so much lighting that the temperature on set frequently exceeded 100°, which was a particular burden on Bert Lahr, whose 90-pound lion costume included 50 pounds of real lion fur. Production injuries caused the hospitalization of Buddy Ebsen (leading to his replacement with Haley), Margaret Hamilton, and her stunt double Betty Danko; several Winged Monkeys were hurt when the piano wire holding them aloft snapped; and even Terry (Toto) was off set for two weeks after she was stepped on by one of the Wicked Witch's guards. Makeshift methods included using 35 feet of muslin for the tornado, chocolate syrup for the Tin Man's oil, talcum powder for the "steam" from his hat, Jell-O powder to tint the "horses of a different color", and—even though it was known to be unsafe at the time—asbestos for the burning broomstick and the snow that covered the cast in the poppy field. Despite the challenges, *THE WIZARD OF OZ* is now claimed to be the most-seen film of all time, and is one of the few films on UNESCO'S Memory of the World Register. Whenever Ray Bolger (the Scarecrow) was asked whether he received additional compensation in light of the film's phenomenal success, he would always respond, "No. Just immortality."

DID YOU KNOW: YALE'S IRVING S. GILMORE MUSIC LIBRARY IS THE REPOSITORY FOR THE PAPERS OF *WIZARD OF OZ* LYRICIST YIP HARBURG, GIVING FANS AND SCHOLARS ACCESS TO TREASURES SUCH AS A HAND-WRITTEN, COFFEE-STAINED COLLECTION OF LYRICS ON NOTEBOOK PAPER WITH THE WONDERFUL PHRASE "WIZARD OF OZ (FIRST DRAFT)" PENCILLED ON THE COVER PAGE.

NEXT UP: THE FIRST FEATURE FILM SHOT ENTIRELY IN SAUDI ARABIA, HAIFAA AL-MANSOUR'S *WADJDA* (2012) TELLS THE STORY OF A YOUNG GIRL WHO DREAMS OF BUYING A BICYCLE. ALSO THE FIRST FEATURE MADE BY A SAUDI WOMAN, IT SCREENS IN 35MM **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2 AT 7 P.M.**