



TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

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

TUESDAY

FEBRUARY 27, 2018

7:00PM • WHITNEY

HUMANITIES CENTER

SHADOW OF A DOUBT

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



"Let's *look* at one another."

—Emily, in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*

"You're just an ordinary little girl, living in an ordinary little town. You wake up every morning of your life and you know perfectly well that there's nothing in the world to trouble you. You go through your ordinary little day, and at night you sleep your untroubled ordinary little sleep, filled with peaceful, stupid dreams. And I brought you nightmares."

—Uncle Charlie



Uncle Charlie doesn't realize that the "ordinary little girl" *has* been troubled—by the very ordinariness of small-town life: "We just sort of go along and nothing happens. We're in a terrible rut." Her hope of rescue was the excitement embodied in her worldly uncle, who, unfortunately, was the bringer of nightmares. Young Charlie's boredom is echoed in a morbidly comic way by her father Joe and Joe's friend Herb, who escape their mundane existence by fantasizing ways to commit the perfect murder. Be careful what you wish for: it may turn your movie into a film noir.

SHADOW OF A DOUBT began as a six-page story, *Uncle Charlie*, by Gordon McDonell, whose wife headed David O. Selznick's story department. The treatment was sketchy, but Hitchcock loved the premise, which he described as "bringing menace into a small town." To establish the milieu as vividly as possible, Hitchcock hired as screenwriter Thornton Wilder (YC '20), the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright of *Our Town* (1938), and shot extensively on location—an unusual practice at the time—in Santa Rosa, California (population 13,000 in 1942). Hitchcock and Wilder spent several days there in advance, so that Wilder could incorporate actual places into his script. After completing most of the work (which Hitchcock generously acknowledged in an unusual opening credit), Wilder left to serve in World War II, whereupon Hitchcock brought in another renowned portraitist of the small town, Sally Benson (author of *Meet Me in St. Louis*), principally to add humorous dialogue and homey family details. With finishing touches by Hitchcock's wife Alma Reville and the director himself (uncredited), the result is something of a "nightmare" version of Wilder's Grover's Corners and Benson's St. Louis.

Always a shrewd manipulator of audiences, Hitchcock cast debonair, charming Joseph Cotten (known for likable characters in CITIZEN KANE and THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS) as the shadowy Uncle Charlie. For young Charlie, Hitchcock had wanted Joan Fontaine, the star of the director's REBECCA and SUSPICION. But when Fontaine was unavailable, Hitchcock chose Teresa Wright, fresh from wholesome girl-next-door roles in MRS. MINIVER and PRIDE OF THE YANKEES. Coincidentally, Wright had been an understudy as Emily in the original Broadway production of *Our Town*. Her ingenuous, adolescent demeanor is perfect for the transition from innocence to experience: as much as it is a psychological thriller, the film is a coming-of-age story. As if heeding Emily's passionate plea, Charlie *does* look at her uncle, and what she sees is devastating (shown most dramatically in a close-up from her point of view that is as chilling as anything else in Hitchcock's oeuvre).

SHADOW OF A DOUBT premiered on January 12, 1943. We are proud to present this screening in honor of its 75th anniversary, and in conjunction with Professor Camille Thomasson's course, *Classical Hollywood Narrative 1920-1960*.

DIRECTED BY **ALFRED HITCHCOCK**
WRITTEN BY **THORNTON WILDER, SALLY BENSON, AND ALMA REVILLE**
CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **JOSEPH A. VALENTINE**
PRODUCED BY **UNIVERSAL**
(1943) 108 MINS.
STARRING **TERESA WRIGHT, JOSEPH COTTEN, MACDONALD CAREY, HENRY TRAVERS, PATRICIA COLLINGE, AND HUME CRONYN**

DID YOU KNOW: EDNA MAY WONACOTT, WHO PLAYS THE PRECOCIOUS ANN NEWTON, HAD NO PREVIOUS ACTING EXPERIENCE:

THE TEN-YEAR-OLD WAS A SANTA ROSA RESIDENT WAITING FOR A BUS WHEN HITCHCOCK HAPPENED TO NOTICE HER. AFTER APPEARING IN SIX OTHER FILMS, INCLUDING **THE BELLS OF MARY'S**, SHE RETIRED FROM ACTING IN 1953. WONACOTT, WHO TURNED 86 THREE WEEKS AGO, RECENTLY COMMENTED, "SHADOW OF A DOUBT IS ONE OF THE TRUE CLASSICS AND I FEEL REALLY PROUD TO HAVE BEEN A PART OF IT!"

NEXT UP: FOR MORE THAN FOUR DECADES, NORMAN WEISSMAN WROTE, DIRECTED, AND PRODUCED WORKS FOR FILM AND TV, INCLUDING DOCUMENTARY, EDUCATIONAL, AND INDUSTRIAL FILMS FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, UNIONS, TOURISM BUREAUS, AND MORE. THE FILM STUDY CENTER WELCOMES **NORMAN WEISSMAN** ON **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28 AT 7PM** FOR A SPECIAL SCREENING OF SEVERAL RARE FILMS MADE BETWEEN THE 1940S AND 1970S.