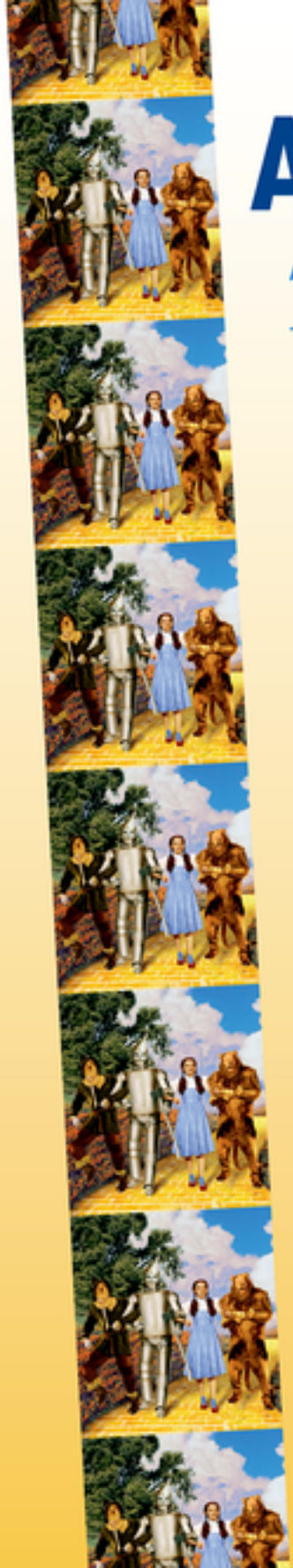

ADAPTING *The Wizard of Oz*

Musical Versions from Baum to MGM and Beyond

Edited by

DANIELLE BIRKETT

&

DOMINIC McHUGH

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Wizard of Oz has always been one of our favorite movie musicals. Several years ago we began to discuss the possibility of writing a new volume that celebrated our shared interest in this iconic film and offered a new academic discourse. We quickly agreed that gathering a range of writers from different perspectives would be the most effective strategy to produce a volume that considered early adaptations of Baum's novel, the MGM film, and its more recent reinterpretations. Producing such a broad volume would therefore not have been possible without the expertise of nine contributors: Jonas Westover, Benjamin Sears, Laura Lynn Broadhurst, Nathan Platte, Claudia Funder, Hannah Robbins, Ryan Bunch, Paul Laird, and Walter Frisch. We are extremely grateful for their commitment to the volume and their enthusiasm to collaborate with us: their hard work has made the editing process a delight.

We also owe a great debt of gratitude to Norm Hirschy at Oxford University Press, who has been tremendously supportive of the project from the beginning; his choice of several anonymous reviewers has also been significant in transforming the volume. Subsequently, particular thanks must go to these individuals: their detailed comments and guidance have made an important difference to the book and we are very grateful for their sound advice. Lauralee Yeary at OUP must also be thanked for her diligence in making this book a reality.

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INTRODUCTION—RAINBOW REFLECTIONS

THE WIZARD OF OZ AS A MUSICAL

Danielle Birkett and Dominic McHugh

More than a century after its first publication, L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has proved to be one of America's most enduring literary masterpieces. Although it is framed as a children's novel, the book is widely acknowledged to have transcended such a modest status. It has been called "America's greatest and best-loved fairy tale,"[1] pulling away from its European counterparts with its series of unusual landscapes and magical characters. Yet it also has wider implications as a philosophical text for all ages, with allegorical references to American society at the time of writing. Jack Zipes, among other scholars, explains how the book depicts a "socialist utopia" through Munchkinland.[2] Nobody wants for anything; everyone has his or her role, to provide food or services; everyone has somewhere to live; and there is broad equality. This vision for a place where society shares its riches is presented in stark relief to the Emerald City. Through the Wizard's apparent powers, almost anything can happen there; yet it transpires that everything is fake in the Emerald City. It is not even truly green: the Wizard forces visitors to don emerald-tinted spectacles upon their entrance and these are fixed to their faces so that he can control everyone's view of his world. Domination, currency, and manipulation define the Wizard's domain, and the possibility of obtaining happiness through financial transaction (money is visible in Oz, unlike in Munchkinland) seems empty after the gentle beneficence of the Munchkins. The role of technology in the maintenance of the Wizard's realm represents the threat of capitalism to the Munchkins' socialist paradise.

Baum's pro-socialist message is perhaps ironic, given his own entrepreneurial predilections: for his many innovations and businesses, he

is closely associated with the character of the Wizard. In the next two decades, he wrote a series of further books about the Land of Oz, expanding the characters and their experiences. Yet as important as the original novel remains, it is arguably as a musical that the story has achieved the greatest cultural resonance, with adaptations ranging from Baum's own early stage version to the celebrated 1939 MGM film starring Judy Garland in an iconic performance, and from the African American reinterpretation *The Wiz* to the more recent blockbuster *Wicked*. The musical genre's capacity to shape identity and heighten experience and emotion through song has repeatedly emerged as the perfect lens through which to view Baum's story. This phenomenon is the focus of the present volume.

In the opening chapter, Jonas Westover addresses the earliest stage adaptation of Baum's book. The first musical comedy in 1902–1903 generated huge excitement and inspired Baum to continue with his second novel in 1904. The following two decades were full of interchange between novels, stage productions, and films, with each iteration fueling interest in the world of Oz and its fantastic characters. Westover's chapter examines Baum's first production, focusing in particular on the relationship between the stars chosen for the roles and the talents (dancing, singing, comedy, drama) they brought to the version they starred in. For example, Montgomery and Stone, a comedy duo popular in vaudeville and on Broadway, were the stars of the show, thus the Tin Woodsman and the Scarecrow were the focus. Westover proves that the key to putting the novel on the stage with success was by finding clever ways to allow star players to shine and showcase their talents while maintaining some element of the narrative.

It is this formula that would, in part, lead directly to the powerful impact of the 1939 film musical. Taking over this theme, Ben Sears's chapter (Chapter 2) offers insights into the adaptation of the original novel to a full-length feature film, addressing the issues of changing medium from stage to screen. It looks at alterations made to the story, including the deletion of episodes in the book for the film, and changes in (and deletions of) characters. Comparing the novel to the final screenplay, as well as exploring the stages of collaborative screenwriting that brought about the version seen in the film, Sears identifies the differences and similarities between the novel and the film by which the story is best known today.

The film itself provides the focus for the next few chapters, as befits its status as one of the greatest movies of all time. Three case studies address elements of the film that have not previously received much attention: the songs, the underscore, and the choreography. Laura Lynn Broadhurst's contribution (Chapter 3) describes the assembly-line process by which film musical scores were created during the studio era, shedding light on the culture in which Harold Arlen

and E. Y. Harburg wrote their extraordinary songs. Attention then shifts to the specifics of the creation of the musical numbers, using primary sources to consider the evolution of each song from conception through orchestration. This central section of the chapter therefore provides both extensive information on the collaborative method of Arlen and Harburg and also a commentary on their musical contribution to *The Wizard of Oz*. Finally, the discussion briefly considers post-orchestration developments, including how the songs were prerecorded and then shot to playback, and edited or cut for the final film.

Complementing Broadhurst's work, Nathan Platte offers an in-depth exploration of the film's underscore (Chapter 4). Contemporary discourse on the musical soundtrack emphasized its role in underscoring—literally and figuratively—the film's extraordinary content, often stressing its "special" and "effect"-like qualities. Studio publicists plugged the score's idiosyncratic length and complexity, and composer Herbert Stothart also drew connections between music and elaborate illusions, stating: "Music and sound must be highly imaginative, unreal while super-realistic. Here sounds must stir the fantasy. . . . The difficulty is to blend music and the special sound effects." Elsewhere Stothart averred that the striking hues of Technicolor warranted special musical treatment. Drawing on studio records, contemporary newspaper accounts, the conductor's score, and the film itself, Platte contemplates musical gestures in the underscore that work *as* and *in tandem with* special effects.

For her part, Claudia Funder delves into one of the film's most overlooked elements: the choreography (Chapter 5). As she reveals, the film's two most significant dance moments were cut before release, namely, the Scarecrow's dance to "If I Only Had a Brain" and the production number "The Jitterbug." Funder offers insights into these two dances and why they were cut, but she also explores the culture of the Hollywood musical at the time, where—despite the popularity of the Astaire-Rogers and Busby Berkeley films—it was common for the choreographer not to be credited, and choreography had little formal status. She also looks at other dance aspects of the film, such as Dorothy's skipping down the Yellow Brick Road, reminding us of how integral movement is to the film even after the deletion of the main dance moments.

After these case studies, the volume shifts attention to the legacy of the film. Danielle Birkett's chapter (Chapter 6) underlines the fact that the movie was made for prestige rather than to make money and that on its initial release it achieved neither a profit nor uniform popularity. Birkett examines the studio's approach to marketing the film and points to key topics in its critical reception, such as attitudes to casting and technology. A rave review in the *New York Times* recognized the film's special qualities, but many other reviewers were less enthusiastic, including Noel Langley, one of the credited screenwriters, who hated the

movie when he saw it. It was only in the mid-1950s, when Garland's career was fully established and the film was rereleased, that it started to be acknowledged as a landmark in the movie musical genre. Its debut on television in 1956, introduced by Bert Lahr and Liza Minnelli, reached a reported 45 million viewers, and *Oz* started to achieve wider cultural momentum.

Hannah Robbins homes in on a particular manifestation of the story's cultural importance in her chapter on the film's queer reception (Chapter 7). Using insights from personal discourses and queer theory, she appraises how *The Wizard of Oz* facilitates individual assimilation and celebrates nonnormative identities for generations of audiences. Associations between "Over the Rainbow," Judy Garland's star persona, the phrase "friends of Dorothy," and the Rainbow Flag have made the film important to the queer community; this has often been intensified by a perceived "queer aesthetic" in the making of the film. Both in and beyond the movie, *Oz* has come to represent a site of hope, friendship, and equality for many queer audiences.

After the film, the story has frequently been seen on stage in a variety of guises. Dominic McHugh's chapter (Chapter 8) focuses on three key adaptations of the MGM movie, each of which had its innovations and problems. The 1942 version presented by the St. Louis Municipal Opera used the movie's score (including the cut number "The Jitterbug") but provided an entirely new script that reduced the piece almost to a pantomime. In 1987, the Royal Shakespeare Company returned to the movie for inspiration, adopting most of the screenplay, songs, and even the underscore; but the physical production was firmly rooted in the 1980s and did little to acknowledge the movie. More recently, Andrew Lloyd Webber reunited with his most famous collaborator, Tim Rice, to provide several songs for a new adaptation of the movie, blending new and familiar material. Arguably, none of these adaptations quite resolved how to put the movie on stage, but they demonstrate the continuing appeal of the story to new generations.

While the Muny version was still popular, in the 1970s a fresh take on the story was presented in the form of *The Wiz*. Ryan Bunch's chapter (Chapter 9) analyzes this revolutionary African American adaptation, which rejects the whiteness of *Oz* as an American myth. Exploring both the 1975 stage production and the 1978 film adaptation of *The Wiz,* Bunch outlines how the *Wizard of Oz* story is reinvented as an urban, contemporary narrative of mobility informed by the African American and pan-African histories of diaspora and migration. At the same time, by examining the musical's production history, content, and reception, Bunch also shows *The Wiz* to be adaptable in its ability to speak to multiple, fluid, and intersectional identities. Promoted as the "Super Soul Musical" version of *The Wizard of Oz, The Wiz* engaged with authenticating images and

discourses of African American representation that were current in the 1970s, but it sustained broad appeal beyond a single demographic, resulting in an intriguing performance and reception history.

Almost forty years after *The Wiz*'s triumphant debut on Broadway, Stephen Schwartz struck gold with a new *Oz* musical. *Wicked* was adapted from Gregory Maguire's novel of the same name and retold the story of *The Wizard of Oz* from the perspective of the Wicked Witch. But despite their new interpretation of the familiar tale, the show's creators wanted to include as many resonances as possible from the famed MGM film, a crusade that took them into difficult legal waters resulting in unwelcome changes to the show, courtesy of lawyers at Universal Pictures, the show's principal producer. Paul Laird's chapter (Chapter 10) considers how Stephen Schwartz and Winnie Holzman, the writers of *Wicked*, appropriated narrative and musical aspects of Baum's original book and the 1939 film, where they ran into problems in doing so, and how some of those problems were solved.

In the final chapter (Chapter 11), Walter Frisch reflects on how the songs from the MGM movie have resonated in different performances, times, and places. Of particular importance is the use of "Over the Rainbow"—a song that was almost cut from the film before its release—at times of emotional vulnerability, such as Ariana Grande's performance after the Manchester bombings in 2017, released as a charity single. More controversially, sales of "Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead" in the United Kingdom rose sharply after the death of Margaret Thatcher in 2013. Frisch explores how the songs generally, and "Rainbow" in particular, have gone beyond their original dramatic context to form new meanings and associations.

In January 2015, a study at Northwestern University declared *The Wizard of Oz* to be the most culturally significant film in history, due to the number of times it is referenced in other films (565; the original *Star Wars* film came second with 297 references).[3] It is the most-viewed film in television history and was voted favorite film of the twentieth century in a *People* magazine poll.[4] In 2014, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the movie was marked by the international release of a new 3D rendering. The story has also been reinterpreted by The Muppets (2005) and Tom and Jerry (2011), and in a Japanese animated version (1982); more recently, Disney's *Oz the Great and Powerful* (2015) offered another retelling. Yet its cultural power has always been at its greatest in musical versions, from MGM to *Wicked*. Delving into archives, trawling through newspaper articles, and exploiting cultural theory, the eleven contributors to this book examine and celebrate that magical legacy, taking readers, like Dorothy before them, over the rainbow and into the Land of Oz.

Notes

1. Frank J. Evina, *The Wizard of Oz: An American Fairy Tale*, Library of Congress exhibition website (2000), www.loc.gov/exhibits/oz/. accessed October 10, 2017.
2. Jack Zipes, "Introduction" to *The Wizard of Oz and Other Wonderful Books of Oz*, Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition (New York: Penguin, 2012).
3. Max Wasserman, Xiao Han T. Zeng, and Luís A. N. Amaral, "Cross-evaluation of Metrics to Estimate the Significance of Creative Works," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112, no. 5 (2015): 1281–1286.
4. Evina, *The Wizard of Oz*, https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/oz/ozsect2.html, accessed October 11, 2017.

1 "STARRING MONTGOMERY AND STONE!"

THE WIZARD OF OZ MUSICAL EXTRAVAGANZA (1902) AND THE BIRTH OF A BRAND

Jonas Westover

For many fans of *The Wizard of Oz*, the story begins with the 1939 movie. Its immense popularity was due in part to its excellent music and lyrics, the visual sepia and Technicolor display, and, of course, the impressive performances. And among the leading players, it would be difficult to draw attention away from Judy Garland's portrayal of young Dorothy Gale and her adventures. Her performance of "Over the Rainbow" has become one of the most iconic moments in film history, simultaneously displaying Dorothy's longing, vulnerability, and hope for the future. In the twenty-first century, however, it is difficult to imagine anyone other than Dorothy at the center of the story; Garland was already a major Hollywood star when she made the movie, and her character's journey is the central element of the narrative. In this way, the film's audience experienced the same plot as the readers of the original 1900 book by L. Frank Baum, which although still a favorite for fairy-tale enthusiasts is less commonly known than the movie.[1]

Some devoted followers know, however, that Dorothy was not the central protagonist in many of the sequels written by Baum himself. The author penned fourteen novels in total (or fifteen, depending on how one counts), featuring either new characters, such as Princess Ozma, or older supporting characters, such as Glinda the Good Witch.[2] With Baum's death in 1919, Ruth Plumly Thompson continued the Oz stories, adding nineteen titles to the collection. Numerous additional tales have been added by illustrator John Neill and others. Even the book enthusiasts might not know it, but the explosion of novels that built the Oz franchise was connected to a single event—the stage musical. *The Wizard of Oz* (1902, Chicago; 1903, New York) was adapted

by Baum himself, with music by Paul Tietjens. Instead of focusing on Dorothy, the musical became a star-making device for the vaudeville team of Montgomery and Stone, whose turns as the Tin Woodman and Scarecrow, respectively, were wildly popular. Baum realized there was a strong demand for more stories, musical productions, films, and novelties, and he quickly responded. Known for his business acumen, Baum wrote the follow-up story to the first tale and made the two star characters the central protagonists, capitalizing on the buzz created by the musical extravaganza. Baum's legacy, then, is not only as a literary luminary but also as one of the first brand ambassadors, building a multimedia franchise that relied on the interconnected popularity of his two theatrical stars and the extravaganza in which they starred.

Those familiar with this stage production are aware of its impact on the Oz universe, but there remain a number of unexplored questions. The first of these centers on just what, exactly, the stage show was. The songs changed over time, which was common for musical productions at the turn of the century, but what is interesting is that the story changed, too. There was a script, but it was regularly reworked, and this constant adaptation created difficulty in charting changes that took place over the course of the original show in Chicago, the various touring versions, and the multiyear run on Broadway. Examining descriptions of the show from these versions helps to give a sense of just what *The Wizard of Oz* was like on stage, and part of the answer lies with the term "extravaganza," which was an attempt to identify its genre at the time. Related to this is a consideration of Montgomery and Stone's early career and their magical transformation from vaudeville routine to international superstars. Their onstage antics were, like the story itself, considered "modern," indicative of the possibilities of the new century while simultaneously employing the best theatrical techniques from the past. Their relationship to their co-stars, especially Dorothy and the Wizard, will also be discussed. And finally, once the show became a smash hit, Baum embraced his role as businessman and "the Royal Historian of Oz," telling the stories of a real place, as told to him by the characters themselves. The combined success of the show, the stars, and the stories kept the Land of Oz vibrant and colorful in the popular consciousness for decades, laying the groundwork for the movie that has cemented Oz's place as the first and most enduring of twentieth-century fairy tales.

Baum's Interest in Theater

For those who knew Baum personally, the notion that he would combine his artistic aspirations with his business sense would have come as no surprise. His ventures during his youth often conflated the two interests, most notably

his childhood obsession with the theater—a love that never faltered. His father, Benjamin, a prosperous merchant in Syracuse, New York, recognized his son's drive for theatrical success, both as a performer and an owner.[3] Frank had joined an acting troupe in 1878 under the stage name of Louis F. Baum, and in 1880, Benjamin helped his career when he made Frank the manager of several small venues he himself owned. Shortly afterward, Frank was made the owner of these theaters. Thus, he set about writing several plays (referred to by one contemporary as "Irish dramas"), many of which are now lost due to a fire, ironically, during a performance of Baum's play, *Matches*.[4] The most successful of his plays was *The Maid of Arran* (1882), a melodrama that employed incidental music, songs, and scenic stage effects.[5] Journalism, raising chickens, and running a store all followed as vocations for Baum, but it was not until he moved to Chicago in 1891 and rethought his vision of selling goods that Baum found his greatest success to that point.

Baum became a national sensation as a designer and business "guru" for store window displays.[6] It was the perfect choice for someone who had written pieces for the theater that included visually enticing stage machinery. The move to the Windy City just before the tremendous World's Fair there in 1893 allowed for some new ventures. Using his combined interests in business and art, Baum began to look past buying goods on a need-based system and instead focused on a means of moving inventory by sparking the desires of the consumer. There was a magic in wanting, Baum suggested, and this could be most effectively tapped by creating magnificent displays in the windows of stores, triggering new sales. William Leach, in his pioneering study on the rise of American consumerism, states that Baum did this by "lift[ing] taboos on the expression of desire," transforming the experience of purchase from a utilitarian exercise into a carnival of pleasure.[7] Baum achieved this through his work designing store windows, and he took to journalism, one of his former vocations, to entice merchants to follow his advice. He started a magazine called *The Show Window* in 1878, and within only "a few short months, its circulation was in the tens of thousands."[8] Baum realized that it was the visual splendor of design that captured consumer attention, and he was correct, given that this device is still a central part of American merchandising.

Making a Musical

Given this powerful awareness of mercantile entertainment, when Baum published *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), he capitalized on the theatrical possibilities inherent in his modern fairy tale. Mark Evan Swartz's book, *Oz*

before the Rainbow, is the definitive study of the pre-MGM film Oz productions; the author recounts several versions of the genesis of the musical but found the most reliable source for these early days to be the diaries of Paul Tietjens, the composer.[9] Tietjens and Baum had been working together on other projects when the composer suggested using Oz as the basis for a project, and Baum eventually agreed. One wonders why mounting the story on stage would have made the author hesitate, given his love of the theater and his remarkable imagination, but by the summer of 1901, the two men began work in earnest on the undertaking. William Wallace Denslow, the book's illustrator, joined the group as a designer of costumes and sets, and by September, the contracts between the three were signed.[10] Two figures in Chicago's theatrical community were soon attached to the project: Fred Hamlin, a young and inexperienced producer, and Julian Mitchell, a seasoned director who could be trusted to transform the project into a reality. Swartz's examination of the materials includes early drafts of the script and traces the path to the stage, including several changes that were made over time.[11]

These alterations and deletions from the novel and from the early script eventually set up the relationships that would come to define this version of Oz and would lead directly to the expanding Oz universe that continues today. In the book, it is the emotional connection to Dorothy and her journey that creates the primary narrative thrust. Her connection to Toto, her developing friendships along the way, her conflict with the Wicked Witch of the West, and her return to Kansas all seem essential elements to fans now. But in the version of the musical that was produced in Chicago in the summer of 1902, Dorothy's journey is merely an overarching skeleton that frames the musical rather than making it the focus of the story. Instead, a multitude of subplots was introduced, involving a barrage of new characters and concerns. The most prominent of these was about the deposed King of Oz, Pastoria, and his quest to get rid of the Wizard, who had stolen the throne from him years before. In the process, a number of other elements are deleted to make room for these new components. One of the biggest surprises is that Toto is replaced by a dancing cow named Imogene. Another is that the Wicked Witch is entirely expunged, along with any real threat to Dorothy's path to the Wizard. The silver (or ruby) slippers are replaced by an ineffective magic ring, and finally, many sequences from the book, such as the encounter with the Field Mice and the attack of the Kalidahs, were removed because they were considered impossible to stage.[12] Conversely, there are also some scenes that would be familiar to the modern audience member, including the opening cyclone/tornado sequence, the reception of Dorothy by the Munchkins, and the sleep-inducing poppy field that halted Dorothy's progress. This last was presented as a transformation scene, with the flowers wilting and dying after the Good

Witch calls down a freezing snowstorm to punish them for causing Dorothy and her group to sleep.

Swartz explains that many of the alterations were made at the behest of Mitchell, who worked closely with Baum and Tietjens during rehearsals to turn the plot-based book into a loose-knit collection of moments that only intermittently returned to the main plot.[13] One of the reasons for the sweeping changes was that the production team based *The Wizard of Oz* on a variety of genres; Hamlin told the *Chicago Daily Tribune* that the show "combines the elements of comic opera, spectacle, [English] pantomime, and extravaganza in a unique degree."[14] This would have surprised theatergoers at the time because the American musical was still finding its shape during the turn of the century, and it was not uncommon for shows to adhere to the comic opera formula exemplified by Gilbert and Sullivan. The pantomime was seen mainly as a children's genre, and both spectacle and extravaganza were considered relics, more akin to the 1860s or '70s than the modern era. One of these was *Evangeline* (1874), an important landmark of American musical theater, which was marketed as an extravaganza. Just what an extravaganza *was* or *is* remains a matter of debate and had been such even in the nineteenth century; many modern authors avoid trying to give any official definition, and others identify components of the shows bearing the title that tie them together.[15] Cecil Smith identifies the term as a means of including comic elements of burlesque while distancing itself from the racy opéra-bouffe.[16] Larry Stempel goes further, emphasizing the importance of visual splendor through two means: the "sheer spectacle and scenic effects" as well as the visual display of the female form.[17] For Mitchell, who was directing *Oz*, the storyline was only a means to an end, creating an excuse for an array of sumptuousness, be it songs, dance, or scenic wonders. He told one reporter that scripts were "rather tiresome," and the press was quick to point out this weakness in the show, with most agreeing that it did not harm the overall experience for the audience.[18]

An Extravaganza!

Critics in both Chicago and New York resorted to elaborate descriptions to explain what they had seen, often stating that this extravaganza was not necessarily held together by a plot. Amy Leslie, the drama expert for the *Chicago Daily News*, wrote that the "book does not amount to much," but dismisses this as unimportant given the "modern amazements" with "gorgeous panoramas of mystic scenes and fairy incantations, jovial processions of funny men and bright, sweet girls and such indescribable achievements of light, movement, and color."[19] When the show went on tour, similar comments were made; a critic in Milwaukee said, "Spectacular extravaganza is not so common a form of entertainment as it

was ten or fifteen years ago when 'Evangeline' and 'The Black Crook' were in their prime. . . . It might be said that nonsense stories and light music framed in magnificent scenery and costumes are a thing of the past. But 'The Wizard of Oz' . . . proves extravaganza is still in the lists." As the show prepared to open in New York, a pamphlet advertising the new piece declared "There Is Something New Under the Sun" and featured a drawing of the Tin Woodman and Scarecrow on the cover. It called the show "a new development of the field of extravaganza . . . a [*sic*] agreeable relief from the bombardment of inane musical comedies which have held the boards in recent seasons."[20] Finally, when the show opened, it was the first production in the New Majestic Theatre, and the hype surrounding its first night brought a sold-out crowd as well as the usual bevy of critics. Alan Dale wrote in the *New York Journal* that "it purports to be a 'musical extravaganza.'. . . And perhaps it is one. It may be that and it may be anything. Whatever you call it, nobody can possibly dispute your word. For 'The Wizard of Oz' is . . . anything. . . . The piece itself is absolutely inexplicable."[21] These reviews provide insight into the complicated world of musical theater at this time—one that relied not on genre conventions but on finding inventive new ways to entertain, something that *The Wizard of Oz* accomplished admirably.

The hodge-podge of terms used as descriptors for the show also points to a very important development in theatrical categories that was just beginning to take shape. Although the extravaganza had held an important place in the nineteenth century, it was not a driving force in the following era. Instead, by the middle of the decade, a clear distinction was made between two major genres, and these would define musical theater until the Second World War: the "book" musical (or musical comedy) and the revue. The former relied on narrative cohesion for the basis of its dramatic thrust while the latter could unfold in a variety of ways depending on how a director shaped the production. A few revues (pieces that carried the descriptor) had already taken place in the 1890s, most notably *The Passing Show* (1894), but they would not become repeated events until Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. began his annual *Follies* series in 1907. What is surprising about Leslie's report of *The Wizard of Oz* is that it carries almost all the hallmarks of these early revues: the use of a script, but one that was not the essence of the show; visual spectacle (in terms of both stagecraft and the display of the young female form); a reliance on comedy; and—although not mentioned above—a musical fabric that made significant use of interpolations.[22] Some scholars have mentioned the connection between these large-scale nineteenth-century pieces and the revue, but none of the earlier examples provides as clear a connection as this Chicago-based show.[23] *Oz*, then, is a perfect example of a proto-revue, demonstrating conclusively that the elaborate extravaganza was the precursor to one of the central entertainments of the twentieth century.

Another vital connection between the genres is that *The Wizard of Oz* eventually became a star vehicle, allowing two vaudevillians to transition out of the rough, two-a-day bills across the country and into regular work on Broadway. Both men, Fred A. Stone and David Montgomery, experienced nearly instant stardom from their respective roles as the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, and the theatrical flexibility they found as members of the *Oz* cast forever changed their lives. For so many entertainers, revues provided a similar path out of intermittent work on the country's many vaudeville stages and onto national fame; Ethel Merman, Al Jolson, Ed Wynn, Fanny Brice, Bob Hope, and literally hundreds of others made the jump from the revue to greater stage and screen prominence. That the team of Montgomery and Stone would pioneer this path years before by using similar techniques only makes the connection between the extravaganza and the revue more significant.

When *The Wizard of Oz* was in preparation, the initial announcements placed the strongest emphasis on one person, and it was not anyone in the cast. Instead, the name that appeared largest in print was Julian Mitchell. Since he was such a highly respected personality in Chicago, it is not surprising that Mitchell was one of the main reasons people flocked to see the show. He was known for his work as a director for the comedy team of Weber and Fields and the more elaborate spectacles of Charles Hoyt (including the hit, *A Trip to Chinatown*), who was based in Chicago.[24] Mitchell had begun as a Shakespearean actor, but his approach to being a "stage manager" or the one who "staged" productions (both terms were used interchangeably, while the term "director" was not used in programs of the day) was to "concentrate . . . on the chorus numbers, sets, and costumes."[25] The scene designer for *The Wizard of Oz*, Walter Burridge, was also featured in a number of articles praising his work, but he never overshadowed Mitchell in press releases, interviews, or reviews.[26] Leslie praised Mitchell's work repeatedly, noting his creativity as the main reason for the success of the extravaganza:

> Costumes embroidered in jewels and thrones all gold and precious metals, prancing reindeer and dancing cows, lions, beasts, wise birds and speaking flowers all help the actors. Storms, bewildering fairy groves and grottos, and lively vagaries of elfs and sprites belong to Mitchell and the painter's [Burridge's] fertile inventive genius. Mr. Mitchell has gathered all about him all the pretty girls he could find idle and given them gay dances and resplendent robes, he has selected his comedians practically and they fit the roles assigned them as if they had dropped in a groove. He has generaled the ensembles with enormous evidence of the marshalling gift so rare and his tableaux alone are worth staying in town a while to see.[27]

It is not surprising, given this impressive fanfare, that Mitchell's name in the advertisements for the Chicago run was larger than anyone else's. This was *his* production at the outset, and this was what Hamlin, a young and untried producer, was hoping would ensure an audience.

Hamlin need not have worried, though, because the cast was solid, too. John Slavin played the Wizard himself, and he was given some attention by critics; he was considered "tremendously funny" and "the only human being in the cast who can sing" with a "clear, punctual and convincing barytone [*sic*] of a buffo singer."[28] Dorothy was portrayed by Anna Laughlin, a young woman rather than a girl. Laughlin had been appearing with Dan Daly in vaudeville in Chicago before the show, and she was considered suitable, if not impressive. One critic said, "With her small face . . . her small figure, which twists its way into odd dances, and her small voice, which wavers through a half-dozen songs, she was assuredly one of the features of the production."[29] A few of the other cast members were given accolades as well, including Helen Byron (Cynthia Cynch), Aileenn May (Good Witch of the North), Bessie Wynn (Sir Dashemoff Daily), and Neil McNeil (Pastoria).[30] But above all else, the reviewers from early in the run, on tour, and in New York all identified the stars of the show as David Montgomery and Fred A. Stone.

Montgomery and Stone

The two men had been a vaudeville duo for several years by the time they were engaged by Hamlin for his new show. One of the earliest articles about the extravaganza included the two but did not identify them because, according to the producer, "as they are in the service of other managers, I am not at liberty to disclose their names."[31] He was right; not only were they otherwise engaged, but they were also not yet in the United States. They were just ending a run of performances in England as part of Robert Arthur's Sixth Liverpool Pantomime when Hamlin contacted them about the roles. Although they were well received, even performing three times for King Edward VII, the pair carried no particular distinction among their vaudeville counterparts. This was the case for them in both England and America. An article in *Leslie's Weekly* pointed out that "nobody east of Chicago, unless it were a few vaudeville devotees, knew anything at all about these two young men when they came to New York as the Scarecrow and the Tin-man . . . , but now they are stars in the ascendancy that are just beginning to gleam on the horizon of public approval. In time we may expect to see them moving upward in the welkin just as Weber and Fields, Rogers Brothers, and other 'teams' have done."[32] This rise in popularity is exactly what happened; *Oz* was, for Montgomery and Stone, their star-making moment.

In the flurry of activity that surrounded *The Wizard of Oz*, the vaudeville pair went through three stages of popularity. First, the reviews were released in Chicago, then on tour, and eventually in New York. As the critics responded to the elements of the production that worked best, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman (whose name was identified as Nick Chopper) were consistently pointed out as the most compelling reason to see the show. As the second stage began to unfold, interviews with the two began appearing everywhere, although more attention was given to Fred Stone than to Montgomery, largely because of the nature of the Scarecrow's part, especially the physical eccentricities the role demanded. The final phase saw the show modified over time to incorporate new skits and songs, with the duo offering some highly peculiar new material to keep the show fresh and new.

So how did two nondescript comedians become poised to make such a memorable impression on audiences across America? Much of the answer lies in their training. Although it seems improbable, Fred Stone was actually from Kansas (specifically, Wellington), and he began as an acrobat in the circus. With his father acting as manager, Fred and his younger brother, Edwin, worked their way throughout the territories doing tightrope walking and trapeze acts, dancing, and singing minstrel songs in blackface; Stone recalls that "those circus experiences through the West were terrifying to us boys. It was during the days when the cowboys were especially free with their revolvers and whenever anything in the entertainment pleased them they shot a hole through the top of the tent by way of applause."[33] Montgomery also started in the circus but then focused on singing, becoming one of the "end men" in Haverly's Minstrels, a troupe run by Billy Rice.[34] The two men had met in St. Joseph, Missouri, while part of these separate groups, but when Stone's circus disbanded unexpectedly leaving him in Galveston, Texas, they met again when the minstrel troupe came to town. Montgomery had appreciated Stone's talent, and he convinced Rice to hire his friend. The two eventually formed their own blackface act and went into vaudeville. Montgomery explained that this work prepared them for their future in an essential way:

> In the old days everyone was a good blackface minstrel, and then made his mark as a funmaker of one sort or another in whiteface. It was a hard, practical school. Boys were taught to dance in blackface minstrelsy as they have never been taught since. Dancing is after all the foundation of musical comedy funny work. The blackface work taught a youth what was funny—or at least what an audience thought was funny. It was a practical school, above all. I wish there were such a training for young men on the stage nowadays.[35]

Performing in "whiteface" meant that they continued to sing minstrel songs but without the burnt cork makeup. By the mid-1890s, tunes called "coon songs" became all the rage in Jim Crow–era America, and many performers, including the boisterous May Irwin, made a career out of performing these numbers. Coon songs were often sung in black dialect and included lyrics about stereotypical black life, and these were the main types of melodies Montgomery and Stone performed in vaudeville. Most of their touring was throughout the far West, but by the turn of the century, they had also been seen throughout the Midwest and East. A description of their act in Buffalo, New York, in 1899 predicted their reception in *Oz*: "[They] are as uproariously funny as ever, [Stone] being just as ungainly, loose-jointed, and limber as of yore, with 'rag-time' cropping out of every pore, from his giddy 'plug dice' to his musical toes."[36] As they continued to hone their act, they were noticed and engaged for Charles Frohman's production of *The Girl from Up There* (1901), which took them to London early in the year. It was during this show that they started performing in whiteface, and they developed a new act over the course of the production.[37] According to contemporary reports, this new version of their performance was a distinct improvement, and it substantially increased their popularity; their dancing was "the feature of the act" and the new makeup was "funnier than their black work" with material that was "a pleasant variant of rag time singing."[38] They again returned to England in the winter of 1901, and that was where they were officially approached by Hamlin just after the New Year. Stone claimed that he had learned about the extravaganza earlier, though, when he ran into Mitchell on the street in New York just before the transcontinental journey, and the director, who had worked with them in *The Girl from Up There*, told the actor that he had a part for him that would match his uncanny flexibility.[39] The years the pair had worked together had made Montgomery and Stone seasoned performers who had polished their eccentric dancing, well preparing them for the roles they would play.

The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman

It did not take long for the duo to be singled out from the rest of the cast for their remarkable abilities. Early reviews make it clear that although Baum's story and Mitchell's fame were instrumental in packing the Grand Opera House, there was no question who the stars of the show were. Even with Slavin and Laughlin's past accomplishments (and thus their top billing in promotional material for the engagement), Montgomery and Stone quickly became the audience favorites. Stone's specialty included bending one leg underneath him followed by the other in a comical attempt to walk, and oversized gloves and wild movements with his

arms also added to the fun. Montgomery would at times play the flute and offer huge smiles but always keeping his motions robotic, as befitted a metal man. One reviewer's take after opening night was that these two were the real stars, noting that "the honors of the evening were carried off by David Montgomery and Fred Stone, who . . . not only introduced two characters virtually new to the comic stage, but by their irresistibility funny presentment of them scored an immediate and pronounced 'hit.' Their dancing, singing, and funmaking gave the chief life to the performance and reached culmination in the 'Cockney Negro Song,' which they interpolated in the last act."[40] Other critics agreed, and although they generally found some praise for the other cast members, they gushed over Montgomery and Stone throughout the sixteen-week Chicago engagement. It was not just that they were funny but that they were inventive, and it was the freshness they brought to the roles and in their particular style that gave them a unique edge. One newspaper declared that "something absolutely new on the stage is rare. But to [these two] the *Tribune* awards the honor of pioneers in absolutely original comedy. These young men . . . landed right in the front row—and practically the head of the class—of eccentric comedians."[41] As the show developed in the first few weeks, changes were made to cut songs, shorten dialogue, and add touches to the production. For example, several ineffective songs were dropped, including "The Many Ways of Making Love," a duet between Cynthia and Dorothy. Some character changes were made, too, the most significant being Slavin's transformation of the Wizard into a "German comedy character."[42] But no matter what others did, audiences wanted as much Montgomery and Stone as they could get.

By the end of the third week, Hamlin announced that he had arranged for a five-year contract with his new stars. At least one critic was surprised at this, saying, "It is obvious that Mr. Hamlin would not engage [them] for five years in order to retain them in 'The Wizard of Oz.' It is fair to assume that these players will be utilized in another presentation next summer after a road tour in their present success."[43] There was no way to know that Montgomery and Stone would work with the producer to reshape the production repeatedly over multiple years, developing effective alternative scenes that brought repeat viewers back from season to season to see what new comedic turns the two had invented. Tweaking things over time became easier because eventually the show left its home at the Grand Opera House and went on tour throughout the upper Midwest and the East. At this point, the advertisements had changed, and instead of Julian Mitchell's name, the large type was used for Montgomery and Stone. Since the show's structure was flexible, new songs were allowed to move in and out (and sometimes back in) of *The Wizard of Oz*, and sometimes whole original scenarios were developed to place the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman in new situations. *Oz before the Rainbow* chronicles the many transformations of the production,