

George Sidney's

Annie Get Your Gun

Annie: From Darke County To Silver Screen

By Miles Kreuger

Yes, Virginia, there really was an Annie Oakley. Although her life has evolved over the years into near legend, Phoebe Ann Moses was born on August 13, 1860, on a small Quaker farm in rural Darke County, Ohio. After her father's premature death, Annie (as she was known) soon learned to shoot his muzzle-loading rifle so skillfully that she could kill grouse, quail, and rabbits with a single shot.

Twice a week, her stepfather would tote the girl's quarry to town, where shopkeeper Charles Katzenberger would exchange it for groceries. Katzenberger, in turn, sold the game to hotels in nearby cities, where diners were delighted not to find buckshot in their food.

When Annie traveled to Cincinnati to visit a sister, Jack Frost, manager of the Bevis Hotel, arranged a shooting match between Annie and a dashing Irishman, Frank Butler, one of a trio of vaudeville marksmen appearing at a local theatre. The match, which Annie won, took place in a patch of countryside called Oakley.



The Little Sure Shot, Annie Oakley (1899)

Unlike the stormy, competitive relationship between the pair in the musical, Annie and Frank wed in 1876, when she was just sixteen, and the two remained happily married for the next fifty years. At first, Frank went on touring, while Annie stayed at home to continue her education; but in 1882, when his partner became ill, Annie joined the act and took the stage name Oakley to commemorate the place where they had first met.

The couple joined the celebrated "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" show in 1885. Annie, petite, attractive, and surprisingly shy, soon became the star of the show. She would shoot a cigarette from Frank's mouth or hit a dime in his fingers. In rifle competition, she hit 943 out of 1000 glass balls tossed into the air. Her appearance at Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 brought her international acclaim.

During a tour through Europe in 1889, she was showered with medals and gifts from the bedazzled European royalty.

Following the 1901 season, Annie was severely injured in a train wreck and temporarily lost the use of her shooting hand. After a partial recovery, she

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returned to Buffalo Bill, toured in the melodrama "The Western Girl," and lived a comparatively private life until her death on November 3, 1926. Frank followed her less than a month later.

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Annie appeared before the primitive Edison Kinetoscope movie camera on November 1, 1894 and in 1935 became the subject of a romanticized RKO film biography starring Barbara Stanwyck, with Preston Foster as Frank, his name curiously changed to Toby Walker.

The film's story was co-written by Joseph Fields, soon to become a major Broadway playwright ("My Sister Eileen," "Junior Miss," "The Doughgirls") in partnership with Jerome Chodorov, who not long ago recalled that Fields once suggested to his younger sister Dorothy that the saga of Annie Oakley might make an exciting musical.

A major lyricist since the late 1920's, and the co-author with her brother of four hit Broadway musicals, Dorothy envisioned that Ethel Merman would be the perfect Annie in a lavish stage musical. Rodgers and Hammerstein instantly agreed to produce the show and suggested Jerome Kern, whom Rodgers idolized, as composer. Kern arrived in New York from Hollywood on November 2, 1945,

to begin work, but three days later collapsed on Park Avenue. He died on November 11th.

To replace Kern, a songwriter of equal stature was required. Dick and Oscar suggested Irving Berlin, who always wrote his own lyrics. Dorothy agreed simply to co-author the book with Herbert. Because Berlin felt that their script inspired him to compose his finest stage score, he insisted that he and the siblings should have equal royalties and billing, even though he had been offered a larger share.

There is no better demonstration of Berlin's protean talents than Annie's collection of love, character, comedy, and production numbers, all spun in a vernacular, bucolic idiom, hardly natural to someone born in Russia and raised on the lower east side of Manhattan.

Starring Ethel Merman and Ray Middleton, "Annie Get Your Gun" opened to rave reviews on May 16, 1946, at the Imperial Theatre, where it continued to run for 1,147 performances and finally closed February 12, 1949. Mary Martin helmed the national tour that began in 1947.

As the hottest stage musical since "Oklahoma!," Annie was sold to M-G-M as an Arthur Freed production to star Judy Garland, with 6'4" Howard Keel, fresh from his triumphant London engagement in "Oklahoma!," in his first American film. The screenplay by Oscar-winning (for *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer*) Sidney Sheldon skillfully followed the Broadway original, but opened up the scenes to provide excellent frames for the Berlin songs.

Although Judy and the cast did record the entire score, and a few scenes were shot under the direction of Busby Berkeley, it quickly became apparent that she was neither physically nor emotionally up to the challenge of the role. Under the skilled direction of George Sidney, who replaced Berkeley, Betty Hutton, borrowed from Paramount, gave the best performance of her career. Closer to Annie's real age than the earlier stars, Hutton truly suggests a spunky, backwoods urchin, who matures into a wise, assured woman of the world.

The film was staged and edited with such vigor that when this writer cut school to see the first New York screening on the morning of Wednesday, May 17, 1950, at the Loew's State, the entire audience spontaneously broke into applause after every musical number, as if they were watching a stage play. This phenomenon has been repeated at every screening I have seen since that day and is likely to be repeated today. With almost all of the Broadway songs retained, the film of *Annie Get Your Gun* is a prime example of studio-system film-making at its finest. ■

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March 26, 2008
Los Angeles



Miles Kreuger and his Hirschfeld honor.



Judy Garland's troubles were clearly evident in early wardrobe tests. After two months of work, Garland was suspended and soon ended her career at M-G-M. Only two production numbers were completed with Garland: "Doin' What Comes Naturally" and "I'm an Indian Too" and these were released to the public for the first time in the 1990s in That's Entertainment III (M-G-M).

for more information, contact:
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ANNIE GET YOUR GUN




Betty Hutton



ANNIE GET YOUR GUN



Cast

Betty Hutton..... Annie Oakley
 Howard Keel Frank Butler
 Louis Calhern..... Col. Buffalo Bill Cody
 J. Carrol Naish..... Chief Sitting Bull
 Edward Arnold..... Pawnee Bill
 Keenan Wynn Charlie Davenport
 Benay Venuta Dolly Tate
 Clinton Sundberg Foster Wilson

Dorothy Abbott..... Carriage Woman*
 Bette Arlen Carriage Woman*
 Evelyn Beresford..... Queen Victoria*
 Eleanor Brown..... Minnie Oakley*
 Bridget Carr Carriage Woman*
 André Charlot..... French President Loubet*
 Mae Clarke Mrs. Adams, Party Guest*
 Diane Dick Nellie Oakley*
 Helen Dickson..... Sour-Faced Wife*
 Phil Dunham Cynical Man*
 Edward Earle..... Footman*
 Herbert Evans..... Dignitary with Queen Victoria*
 Budd Fine..... Immigration Officer*
 Elizabeth Fournoy Helen*
 Lee Tung Foo..... Chinese Cook on Train*
 William Hall..... Tall Cowboy Boarding Boat*
 John Hamilton..... Ship captain*
 James Harrison..... Mac*
 Dell Henderson..... Hotel guest in hammock*
 Tom Humphries..... Indian warrior*
 Nolan Leary..... Immigration Officer*
 Robert Malcolm Train conductor*
 Charles Mauu Indian warrior*
 Brad Morrow Little Jake Oakley*
 John Mylong Kaiser Wilhelm II*
 Susan Odin Jessie Oakley*
 Anne O'Neal..... Miss Willoughby*
 Nino Pipitone..... King Victor Emmanuel*
 Charles Regan Barker*
 Al Rhein Barker*
 Carl Sepulveda Cowboy*
 Dorothy Skyeagle Mrs. Little Horse*
 Sandra Spence Carriage Woman*
 Shooting Star Indian warrior*
 Riley Sunrise Indian warrior*
 Chief Tahachee..... Indian*
 Tony Taylor Little Boy Holding Poster*
 Ellinor Vanderveer..... Sour-faced party guest*
 John War Eagle..... Indian brave*
 Frank Wilcox..... Mr. Clay, Party Guest*
 Marjorie Wood Constance*
 Chief Yowlachie..... Little Horse*
 Stunts Donna Hall*

* (uncredited)

Technicolor – 1950 – 107 minutes

An M-G-M Production

Print Courtesy of Warner Bros Classics

Directed By..... George Sidney
 Book Written By..... Dorothy Fields & Herbert Fields
 Screenplay By..... Sidney Sheldon
 Produced By..... Arthur Freed
 Stage Production By..... Oscar Hammerstein II
 Richard Rodgers
 Associate Producer Roger Edens*

Director Of Photography..... Charles Rosher
 Technicolor Color Consultants ... James Gooch & Henri Jaffa
 Edited By..... James E. Newcom
 Montage Peter Ballbusch*
 Art Directors Cedric Gibbons & Paul Grosse
 Set Decorator Edwin B. Willis
 Associate Set Decorator Richard Pefferle
 Production Manager..... Edward Woehler*
 Assistant Directors..... Al Jennings & George Rhein*
 Men's Costumes..... Walter Plunkett
 Women's Costumes Helen Rose
 Makeup Artists Jack Dawn
 Ben Lane*
 Hair Stylists..... Sydney Guilaroff
 Martha Acker*
 Sound Supervisor Douglas Shearer
 Sound..... Norwood A. Fenton*
 Special Effects A. Arnold Gillespie
 Warren Newcombe
 Camera Operator John M. Nickolaus Jr.*
 Still Photographer..... Ed Hubbell*
 Gaffer..... M.D. Cline*
 Grip..... Leo Monlon*
 Choreographer Robert Alton
 Musical Director Adolph Deutsch
 Original Music By..... Roger Edens*
 Orchestrators Alexander Courage*
 Maurice De Packh*
 Robert Franklyn*
 Paul Marquardt*
 Conrad Salinger*
 Vocal Supervisor Robert Tucker*
 Assistant Choreographer..... Alex Romero*
 Script Supervisor Jack Aldworth*

Academy Awards®

Bold: Nominated

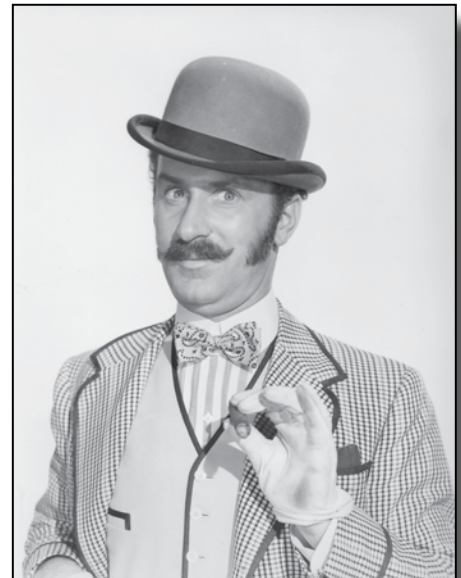
Red: Won



Photo Gallery



Stills from the Institute of the American Musical collection, courtesy of Miles Kreuger.



Special thanks to
AFS member Sue Heim
for framing the Annie Poster
on view in the Lobby.

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THOSE M-G-M MUSICALS

A durable leading man, Howard Keel would cap his career with a ten year stint (1981-91) as Clayton Farlow on the hit CBS drama "Dallas", but it was his wonderful singing voice in a series of M-G-M productions that left his mark on film history.

Kismet (1955)

Jupiter's Daughter (1955)

Seven Brides For Seven Brothers (1954)

Rose Marie (1954)

Kiss Me Kate (1953)

Calamity Jane (1953)

Show Boat (1951)

Pagan Love Song (1950)



Society News



Before our March 2008 meeting, a group of current and former board members sat for a picture in front of the Alex. Current Board members are *Italicized*.

Front (l-r) *Frank Gladstone, Connie Humberger, Andrea Humberger, George Crittenden, Pamela Ellis, Brian Ellis*
 Rear (l-r) *Mark Wojan, Pam Elyea, Ron Bonk, Jim Elyea, Beth Werling, Randy Carter*. Current Board members who were unable to attend the photo session include *Linda Harris, Daryl Maxwell and Dean Briggs*.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

08_04

mail with check to: **ALEX FILM SOCIETY**
 P. O. Box 4807, Glendale, CA 91222-0807

Name(s)
 (please print)

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E-Mail

I (WE) CAN VOLUNTEER, Please call.

Enclosed is my (our) donation of \$

(discount admissions good for every screening)

Patron \$100
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Individual \$25
 (Two discount passes)

Senior/Student \$15
 (One pass) Senior over 60,
 F/T student graduation date:

Please list your two favorite films:

www.AlexFilmSociety.org

Tickets: 818.243.2539

Saturday, July 26, 2008 at 1 pm and 7 pm

Best Picture of the Year and Winner of 7 Academy Awards®

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

David Lean's 1962 film, based on T.E. Lawrence's autobiography, "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom", is one of the greatest epic films ever made. Shot for nearly two years on location, the film introduced us to newcomers Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif. Freddie Young's cinematography raised the bar for all films to follow. Lawrence of Arabia won seven Oscars® and is listed seventh on the American Film Institute's top 100 films of all time. The Alex Film Society will screen the restored original cut in 35mm. (Columbia 1962)



Saturday, September 20 at 8 pm only

Five 5 Live Acts of Music, Magic and Mayhem plus a classic comedy on screen!

9th Annual VAUDEVILLE EXTRAVAGANZA



For the 9th time, the grand tradition of Vaudeville returns the Alex Theatre to its roots when we present 5 live acts of period music, magic and mayhem. With much anticipation, we welcome back **Ian Whitcomb and his Bungalow Boys** with their classic brand of Vaudeville period music. Our evening will be capped off by a cartoon and two comedy classics on the Big Screen: one from

Charlie Chaplin (title tba) and a Technicolor short, **The Royal Rodeo** (Vitaphone 1939). A family program not to be missed, come see what it's all about!

Saturday, October 25, 2008 at 2 and 8 pm

The Most Awesome Thriller Of All Time!

Carl Denham Presents KING KONG

The classic monster picture that spawned the rest is not simply a cinematic relic. King Kong was created to grip and thrill like no movie before, and these basic principles hold surprisingly true today. From Willis O'Brien's amazing technical effects to Max Steiner's score, the details add up to more than the pieces. King Kong has been remade, but never made better. As is usual, our Halloween show will be sure to delight both fans and families.



VOICE of the THEATRE

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