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## A long yellow brick road

Friday, September 1, 2006

By Maggi Smith-Dalton / Naumkeag Notations

Mayor Kim Driscoll cuts ribbon at opening of CinemaSalem May 2006.

Inset or box

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Dream new dreams and continue the traditions at CinemaSalem, 1 East India Square, owned by Paul Van Ness and Bill Collins. For information call 978-744-1400 or visit [www.cinemasalem.com](http://www.cinemasalem.com).

The "gathering storm" of the Second World War was evident even in the sedate headline of the Salem Evening News for October 14, 1939, rather matter-of-factly outlining the tragedy.

Although the war at that time was dubbed "phony," it certainly wasn't phony for the victims found by horrified Royal Navy divers the day after disaster. Torpedoed by German U-boat U-47, the British warship "Royal Oak" lay at the bottom of Scapa Flow with hundreds of her men forever entombed within. Some were even found wedged into portholes, evidence of last-ditch desperation to survive the sinking vessel.

First, the Depression; now, war. Who could be blamed for wanting to escape to a happier world? Escape could be had, with a short walk downtown.

Sharing front-page space with the account of the Royal Oak sinking is an advertisement for that escape. Here too was a saga, albeit fictional, about ordinary people swept up in a cataclysmic storm.

Premiering Aug. 12, in Oconomowoc, Wis., and opening in New York a few days later, MGM's "The Wizard of Oz" blew into Salem smack dab in the middle of Halloween month.

Proclaimed as the "Miracle Hit of 1939" and double-billed with "The Forgotten Woman," "The Wizard" promised that "Dreams Come True" - in Technicolor - and all this could be found on Essex Street, at the majestic Paramount Theatre.

A true jewel of Salem, the Paramount Theatre was reportedly constructed as the first movie house in the country to be built for films with sound. The Paramount, however, was host not only to movies but to live performance as well.

Movies and live performance coexisted from the very beginning of cinema. The live show was the draw, the moving picture a novelty - exhibited simply as "turns" in a night of vaudeville or other live performance. Later, a film was simply woven into the evening's fabric as just one more bright thread.

The Paramount thus continued a grand tradition even as it stood testament to the rising status of moviemaking and movie-viewing by its opening in April 1930. Seeing the "Wizard" at the Paramount would be quite the event.

Though most of us reading this are undoubtedly hearing, in our minds, the incredible score from MGM's opus, with songs written by E.Y. Harburg and Harold Arlen, sung by Judy Garland and company, the history of musical adaptations of "Wizard" is long and fascinating.




Early staging of the novel, originally published in September 1900 as "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," was adapted as a musical comedy by the author, L. Frank Baum and composer Paul Tietjens. Baum filed a U.S. copyright application for "all musical numbers under the title given" in 1901. Their sheet music, sold in theater lobbies, was published with emerald green covers.

On June 16, 1902, the musical play opened in Chicago's Grand Opera House. The show went on to open in New York in 1903 and became a "smash hit," with a decade-long road show following its success on Broadway.

The yellow brick road led to Salem soon enough.

"The Wizard of Oz" musical stage play was mounted at the Salem Theatre, (another shining gem of Salem's past) on April 23, 1904. Designed by Broadway producers Fred R. Hamlin and Julian Mitchell, the extravaganza starred Isabel D'Armond as "Dorothy Gale, a Kansas girl, the victim of a cyclone." The show also featured two brothers of comedic fame, Bert and John Swor, who went on to perform in radio and film.

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The dramatization bore little resemblance to the original Baum story.

In 1908, Baum produced a "fantasy travelogue" entertainment: "Fairytale and Radio-Plays." Films followed. The first commercial Oz films were silent one-reelers, produced in 1910 by the Selig Polyscope Company; actress Bebe Daniels played Dorothy. Daniels, who lived until 1971, pursued an amazing career, which spanned stage, silent screen, talkies, radio - and even TV.

Baum himself founded a Hollywood film company in 1914 to further the success of film adaptations of his stories; alas, like many, if not most, of his ventures, it did not prove successful financially, folding in 1915.

The company did, however, produce several movies based on some of the 13 additional Oz books, including 1914's faithful-to-the-story "The Patchwork Girl of Oz." The music for this film, and others, was by Louis F. Gottschalk, friend of Baum's and nephew of the famous 19th-century American composer.

"Patchwork Girl" was distributed by Paramount, which, at that time, was not the studio with which we are familiar today. (In June 1916, with the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation merger, the modern "Paramount Pictures" studio was born.)

In 1925, a slapstick version of "The Wizard of Oz" was released by Paramount, starring Dorothy Dwan, and featuring Oliver Hardy as the Tin Woodman. A variety of companies and directors gave the world interpretations of the "Oz" stories between the silent film era and the 1939 remake.

Salem's many theatres were prime candidates for showing these productions as part of a regular bill of variety fare.

The historical collection of The Salem Theatre's programs document that, while the theater's mainstays were "straight" or comedic plays and musical programs, vaudeville was combined with moving pictures in due time.

At various stages of our city's history, in fact, one could sample a mind-boggling abundance of offerings - which could include (very popular) illustrated songs, minstrel shows, and psychic/occult "white magic exhibitions," in addition to movies. One could patronize the Empire, the Star, and the Novelty on Essex, and the Comique on Washington, to name a few besides those already mentioned. At the venerable Mechanic Hall at Crombie and Essex, one could enjoy "refined vaudeville" and American Biograph motion pictures, acrobats and orchestra music right up to the week of its sad demise by fire - which was started by "flames from the picture apparatus."

And the magic of Oz has continued to enchant us in Witch City to the present day.

On Wednesday, May 31, 2006, Salem's newest entry in the long line of distinguished movie theatres, CinemaSalem, did history proud by combining a little improvised "live" action before the picture-show. And what was that show?

You guessed it. That was some long yellow brick road ... from 1904 ... to traveling "over the rainbow" at CinemaSalem, showing MGM's 1939 "The Wizard of Oz."

In Salem's downtown, it's still a short walk to find "some place where there isn't any trouble."

As L. Frank Baum said in Chicago in April of 1900: "... The story of 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' .... aspires to being a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out."






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Musician Maggi Smith-Dalton is a confirmed believer in happy bluebirds and wishing on stars; she knows for a fact that rainbows lead directly to hearts' desires. Anyone wishing to bestow upon her a pair of silver shoes (silver, as in the original Oz story) can join her on the yellow brick road, by e-mailing maggi@singingstring.org.

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# Jim and Maggi Dalton

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## ABOUT JIM & MAGGI

Jim and Maggi Dalton perform music of popular/vernacular, folk and cultivated traditions, covering time periods from the Middle Ages to the present, focusing largely on American, Celtic and British Isles repertoire. They specialize in music of the 19th and 20th centuries. Instrumentation: mostly plucked strings and voices.

Concerts and programs contain commentary designed to place the music performed in historical context for the audience. Programs reflect the continual and ongoing research in which the two delight. They also perform original songs and compositions.

Jim and Maggi have released two recordings to date, and have designed a full spectrum of programs which they present nationwide. They have been featured often on radio and television. (*PBS, ABC, NBC, CBS affiliates, Cable Networks; NPR stations, NewsRadio, interview programs across the USA; feature stories in newspapers and magazines, i.e., The Philadelphia Inquirer & Courier-Post*) They have performed at nationally-known venues (i.e., Colonial Williamsburg, Seneca Falls, the Harriet Beecher Stowe House) and countless local and regional venues nationwide.

They have served as artists-in-residence at various colleges, public history sites, community and educational centers, presenting series addressing American history and other topics in the humanities, using music as the core of each session.

*Previous audiences and sponsors have said:*

"engaging, scholarly, delightful, warm, intelligent, flexible, humorous, talented, versatile, enthusiastic, personable, joyful ..."



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in our "sunny yellow folder" for  
descriptions of our programs, classes,  
and concerts ~

Multi-instrumentalist *Jim Dalton* is an educator, conductor and award-winning composer and arranger.

As a performer, he specializes in historical and ethnic playing styles on a variety of plucked string instruments including guitar, mandolin, banjo, mandocello, Renaissance lute, bouzouki etc.

He also plays piano, organ, recorder and tin whistle.

In addition to duo performances with his wife, soprano and guitarist Maggi Smith-Dalton he maintains an active career as a freelance musician -- playing in chamber music ensembles, jazz and world music groups and in opera/theater and symphony orchestras.

He is a member of the New England Mandolin Ensemble.

His compositions have been performed across the U.S. and Canada and in Europe.

His choral composition, "The Rocky Road to Dublin," won first prize in the 1997 Toronto Camerata Competition. Two of his pieces for carillon have been published in anthologies by Fenwick Parva and the Friends of the Albany Carillon.

His composition for solo mandolin, "Gifts of the Bard," is published by Wolfhead Music.

His works are available through these publishers and Singing String Music Publications.

Jim is on the faculty of The Boston Conservatory, teaching music theory, ear training and world music courses for both the Music Theory and Music Education Departments. He has written articles for Blues Revue Magazine and is the author of *Mandolin for Beginners*, published by Workshop Arts, Inc./Alfred Publishing.

He is a frequent guest lecturer on topics such as composition, choral arranging and Irish traditional music. In the 2004-2005 year Jim received a MACRO research grant (Univ. of Wisconsin) to study and analyze palindromic compositions in concert music repertoire and presented this work at the 2005 Macro Musician's Workshop in Madison, WI.

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Singer and musician, independent scholar, author and educator, *Maggi Smith-Dalton* has sung as a soloist with choirs and choruses both here and abroad, acted and sung in professional theater productions and produced/participated/performed in radio and television projects and programs.

She is a frequent guest lecturer -- on the integration of humanities and the arts, on folklore, and on American music and history, to name a few topics.

She has given lecture/demonstration programs at the college level (i.e., The New England Conservatory, The Boston Conservatory) and in numerous professional-development courses for educators and teachers at all grade levels.

Maggi enjoys an active performing career, which, after eleven years of work in cabaret, musical theater, and nightclub singing, has included more than two decades of concert performance nationwide and abroad, in partnership with her husband and as a soloist with choirs and in concert.

In addition, she authored a prize-winning short story and writes often for newspapers and magazines (including history and cultural/arts/educational feature articles, and a regular history column for the *Salem Gazette*).

Maggi's work in mainstream media included producing a cable TV series and programming and hosting musical theater, arts interview, and classical music shows for NPR public radio, commercial, and community stations.

A former Chairperson of the Haverhill Cultural Council, Maggi served as Musical Theater Director at Hill House (a community Arts Center) in Boston's Beacon Hill; as Director of "Adventures in Art," a summer arts program; and as a director of children's choirs.

With a background in teaching multiply-handicapped children, Maggi continues interest in and study of music therapy. She is working on a children's book; and is always working on a variety of writing projects.