

# Classic films capture Christmas magic

"Christmas is a good time of year for looking backwards," an aging Professor Wutheridge (Monte Wooley) says in the 1947 Christmas classic "The Bishop's Wife."

Some of the biggest and best movies of the Christmas season are more than 40 years old, and are still faithfully watched and loved, such as "It's a Wonderful Life" and "Miracle on 34th Street." These two perfect Christmas

manages to carry himself in his typical manner, capturing the hearts of passers-by.

"The Bishop's Wife" carries all the sentiment and humor that "It's a Wonderful Life" had a year earlier. Some of the best scenes are created by the on-screen electricity between Dudley and Julia Brougham.

"The world changes, but two things remain constant: youth and beauty. You know, they're really one and the same thing," Dudley says.

"Yes . . . " answers Julia. "The trouble is, people grow old."

"Not everybody. The only people who grow old were born old to begin with. You were born young — you'll remain that way."

Dudley embodies the spirit of Christmas, challenging each person to be ideal; to be the best that he or she can be.

"The Bishop's Wife" has granted the perfect Christmas gift to audiences for more than 40 years — the power of the Christmas smile.

In 1939, eight years before "The Bishop's Wife," MGM studios released a charming film adaptation of "The Shop Around the Corner."

This film isn't typically considered in the group of classic Christmas films, but it spends its time moving toward Christmas, using all aspects of the human spirit — representing the Christmastime victory of the divine spirit of human nature over the despicable.

"The Shop Around the Corner" is a Hungarian tale of a middle-class leather and gift shop. James Stewart plays Alfred Kralik, the head clerk in the shop. The bachelor Kralik longs for the perfect mate, and answers a girl's ad for correspondence in the paper. The letters between the two are signed only "Friend," and the relationship between them grows strictly by correspondence.

Klara Novak (Margaret Sullivan), Kralik's corresponding "Friend," unknowingly enters the Matuschek gift shop and is hired for the Christmas rush.

Neither Novak nor Kralik are aware that the other is their pen pal, and the two do not get along well at first. Working together, they constantly argue and insult each other. As correspondents, however, they finally decide that they should meet.

Kralik goes to the restaurant ren-

deavors where his mysterious "Friend" is to be waiting, marking a dog-eared copy of Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina" with a red carnation. Kralik sees that Novak is his mystery-pal, and decides not to reveal himself.

Hugo Matuschek (Frank Morgan) fires Kralik because he mistakenly thinks he is having an affair with Mrs. Matuschek. After learning the truth, Matuschek rehires Kralik, and fails in his attempt to shoot himself in shame. Kralik fills in during his absence, and desires to further reveal himself to Klara.

Christmas Eve finds Kralik finally revealing himself to Novak as they close up the shop after everyone else has gone.

Stewart carries the movie, making the scenes come alive as he enters the set. He bounds about with youthful enthusiasm — never aloof, but always with a purpose — to reach the next scene, the next line.

"She's expecting a pretty important man. Well . . . I'm in no mood to act important tonight."

"The Shop Around the Corner" fits and feels like a stage production, with most scenes filmed in or just outside of the Matuschek store. Producer/director Ernst Lubitsch, one of the best directors of this period, internalizes the script by keeping almost all the filming in the shop and making scene changes seamless. The seamlessness maintains the mood of the scene and makes it easier to carry the mood from character to character. This makes the tension and the passion real.

"The Shop Around the Corner" is the third of four films that Stewart and Sullivan made together, and the only one that ends happily, which isn't surprising, considering Ernst Lubitsch's fascination with amorous whimsy.

The scenes shared by Stewart and Sullivan are particularly endearing and effective, whether they are the protagonist/antagonist scenes prior to Stewart's revelation of his identity, or the closing scenes.

The film was not a big winner at the box office in 1939, but Lubitsch's tender direction and Stewart's youthful enthusiasm propel "The Shop Around the Corner" into the category of truly "classic" classic movies of the Christmas season, or any other season.

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## Michael Stock

movies dominate television air time from Thanksgiving to Christmas, playing on various stations as many as 10 times a week. But these movies are not the only classics that effectively capture what Christmas was like.

The black-and-white photography of films of the 1930s and '40s seem to be particularly preserving, like an aged scrapbook for reconsidering the "Christmas Past." "The Bishop's Wife," made in 1947, weaves an emotional tale of humor and situation and is set a few days before Christmas. Bishop Henry Brougham (David Niven) is a distraught Protestant bishop, so determined to have an enormous new cathedral built that he fails to see his marriage crumble around him.

Cary Grant serves as an omniscient angel named Dudley whom no one seems to remember, but everyone seems to know. Dudley is called into the service of Bishop Brougham by his prayers to save a failing marriage.

When Dudley introduces himself to the doubting Bishop, Brougham believes that Dudley is to aid him in getting his cathedral built.

Julia Brougham (played by Loretta Young) is especially endearing in her role as the powerless wife and witness to her husband's all-involving obsession of the cathedral. She and the angel Dudley are the only ones who question exactly who this incredible cathedral is to glorify: the wealthy self-serving benefactors to whom Bishop Brougham will sacrifice anything to serve himself or God. Even in the role of an angel, Grant

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one of its three auditoriums open to the public.

When the other two auditoriums open, the total number of first-run screens in the downtown area will reach 14.

Armed with a list of projected movie release dates, Livingston said he believed that there would be plenty of movies to fill the 14 screens.

"We're confident that the product is going to be there," he said.

The Lincoln Theatre has many technological advantages, such as

Spectral Recording Dolby sound and a computerized box office and concession area, Livingston said.

While these features add to the quality, the average movie-goer won't go to the movie for the sound or the convenience of being able to buy tickets in advance, Perez said. At first, most will go out of curiosity or because the movie they want to see is playing at that theater, she said.

With movie prices running as much as \$5, Lincoln needs a dollar theater, said Todd Steele, a senior electrical engineering major. Many college towns have theaters that show movies that have been out for a month or two for a dollar, he said.

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