After writing the novel, Baum wrote the book and lyrics for the stage production. The story can be interpreted as a political allegory for the American government in the 1890s. This show’s importance is evident through its legacy.
The *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* written by L. Frank Baum in 1900 is one of the most influential children’s books ever written. This story is about a young girl from Kansas journeying homeward with the help of three friends. While designed to entertain children, *Oz* also appeals to adults via its political allegory of American government in the 1890s. Due to its massive literary success, a team of musicians joined Baum to create *The Wizard of Oz*: a musical extravaganza. While this stage production left an important legacy, as a whole it is greatly forgotten. Although the score is quite forgettable, the story is timeless and continues to be interpreted by contemporary Broadway composers.

The creative team working on the 1903 stage production included L Frank Baum and W.W. Denslow, the original creative team for the children’s book. L Frank Baum wrote the book and lyrics for the show while the music was written by a collaboration of A. Baldwin Sloane and Paul Tiejans. Sloane wrote select songs such as “Niccolo’s Piccolo” and “The Medley of Nations,” while Tiejans wrote “When You Love, Love, Love” and “I’ve waited for you in Loveland” (Lubbock). Other music in the show included interpolated songs such as “Sammy” by James O’Dea and Edward Hutchinson and “Hurrah for Baffin’s Bay” by Vincent Bryan and Charles Zimmerman. The inclusion of such interpolated songs was decided by Julian Mitchell, the director who made all executive decisions for staging and song options (Swartz). As the director, Mitchell was also responsible for the original staging of the show. While L Frank Baum was the primary force behind the script, Glen MacDonough offered aid writing jokes for the script. MacDonough was responsible for including references to big heads at the time such as President Roosevelt, Senator Hana, and oil magnate Rockefeller (Swartz). Fred R. Hamlin was the show’s producer, while Denslow, who illustrated Baum’s children’s book, was responsible for the scenery, costumes, and special effects of the show. His assistant costume designer was Caroline Siedle.

The stage production added different characters to the story that were not included in the original novel and then were removed in subsequent interpretations of the story. The main characters for the 1903 show included Dorothy, the Good witch of the North, Cynthia, Pastoria, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodsman, the Wizard of Oz, and the Good Witch of the South. The famous comedic duo, Fred Stone and David Montgomery, got their start by playing the roles of the Scarecrow and Tin Woodsman in this production. Unlike the book, the lion is a minor character who doesn’t have a single line, and neither of the wicked witches are prominently
featured. This stage production made a daring choice to include new characters such as Cynthia and Pastoria, who dramatically change the direction of the story.

In the stage production, Dorothy travels in a cyclone to the land Oz with their cow, Imogene (as opposed to Toto). Her house lands on the Wicked Witch of the East and all the munchkins rejoice. One of the munchkins, Cynthia cries about how her lover Niccolo Chopper disappeared. Another new character Dashemoff Dailey announces that Pastoria, the rightful king of Oz, will retake the throne from the wizard. The Good Witch of the North rewards Dorothy for killing the Wicked Witch of the East with silver slippers as well as a ring that will grant her three wishes.

When the munchkins leave, Dorothy wishes she had someone to talk to and the scarecrow comes to life. Meanwhile Pastoria and company come upon the cowardly lion whom they capture and use to disguise themselves as a traveling circus pretending the lion is a part of their act. Dorothy then encounters the Tin Woodsman who explains that the Wicked Witch of the West took his heart so he is now unable to love his Cynthia.

Dorothy and her two new friends reunite with Pastoria and company in the poppy field containing opium which makes them all fall asleep, except for the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodsman who are unable to smell. Then the Snow Queen and Snow Children arrive while a thick snow rains down and kills the poppies. They then transport the main characters to the Emerald City on their sleigh.

Once in the Emerald City, Cynthia wanders from Pastoria to the Wizard wondering if they are her Niccolo. Once the Wizard awards the scarecrow “a brain of the Mark Hana variety” and the Tin Woodsman a red, silk, heart, he declares these favors the greatest of all his achievements and consequently throws The Ball of All Nations. During the ball, the wizard performs a trick on Pastoria but Pastoria takes control of the situation and retakes the throne. The Wizard flees the scene in a hot, air balloon leaving Dorothy to seek out Glinda, the Good Witch of the South, for answers on how to return home. Dorothy and friends are welcomed at Glinda’s palace and the show ends with the cast celebrating the witch’s promise to send Dorothy home.

*The Wizard of Oz* is said to be “a political allegory for grown-ups neatly encased within a fairytale for children” (Meyerson 121). This analogy became evident in 1964 when Henry M. Littlefield published “The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism” in the *American Quarterly* which
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outlines his theory on the Baum’s underlying symbolism. According to Littlefield, Baum wrote the story in order to relay a social commentary on the American government of the 1890s. Dorothy is representative of the American people being led astray. The Tin Woodsman represents the urban industrial workers while the scarecrow symbolizes the collation of farmers. The cowardly lion who throughout the show does not speak and only holds the minor role is characteristic of William Jennings Bryan, the Washington coward. The Wizard represents the federal government and its scheming politicians, while the wicked witches are meant to symbolize the forces of finance. More specifically, the Wicked Witch of the East is the eclipse of Eastern financial interests such as Wall Street (Meyerson 122).

Baum’s social commentary extends to parallel the yellow brick road and the gold standard at the turn of the century. The gold standard deemed the value of the dollar to be based on the value of gold. The Populists preferred gold along with silver to set the standard. This may also explain why in the show, Dorothy is awarded silver slippers by the Good Witch of the North. In the book, Baum is also so daring as to make explicit references to contemporary politicians such as Mark Hana, Theodore Roosevelt, and John D. Rockefeller. Mark Hana is referenced when the Wizard awards the scarecrow a “brain of the Mark Hana variety.” Mark Hana was a senator who worked quite closely with William McKinley as his wealthy industrialist campaign manager. Maintaining consistency with Littlefield’s theory of the Populist allegory, Hana was crucial to winning the White House for McKinley when he was running opposed to William Jennings Bryan (the cowardly lion). John D. Rockefeller was a prominent businessman at the turn of the century as an oil magnate. His explicit reference in the stage production is apparent when the Tin Woodsman worries he will run out of oil. The scarecrow comments that “You wouldn’t be as badly off as Rockefeller. He’d lose six thousand dollars a minute if that happened” (Swartz). The purpose of these references is to add a bit of adult humor to the children’s story.

The spectacular extravangza that took place on stage was especially innovative with its use of special effects that had never before been seen on stage. Fantastical special-effects scenes include the cyclone scene that transports Dorothy from Kansas to Oz, Fred Stone’s boneless Scarecrow walking around the stage on his ankles, the all-female chorus dressed as the Poppy field, the snow storm that cascades the Poppy field, and the glittering Emerald City. During the storm in the beginning of the show, Dorothy and her cow, Imogene, take shelter in the farmhouse
which is whisked away in the sky. At the time, this particular stage trick was new and impressive to theatre critics of the era. The colorful poppy field consisted of chorus girls wearing enormous hats in order to depict a field of bright poppies (McLamore 50). In the history of musical theatre, people were ordinarily not used as scenery. Dressing the female chorus members as a field of Poppies was innovative thinking for the period.

Unfortunately, the score could not match the phenomenal quality of the visual spectacle. The songs comprising the score have been deemed “meaningless” and “forgettable” (McLamore 51). The show’s director, Julian Mitchell, envisioned a fantastical spectacle complete with catchy tin-pan-alley style pop tunes but Tiejans was unable to deliver the types of songs Mitchell expected (Reside). In fact, when Arlen made the musical into a film in 1939, he rewrote the entire score. Some of the more popular songs of the stage production include “Carrie Barry” sung by Dorothy after the poet laureate of Oz writes a song about her name. The joke is that the poet misunderstood her name to be Carrie Barry instead of Dorothy Gale. Another popular song from the show is “Niccolo’s Piccolo” sung by Cynthia about her love for her disappeared lover. “Niccolo’s Piccolo” was her lover’s favorite ballad, so she sings it in remembrance of him. The Scarecrow’s introductory song is “Alas for the Man without Brains” used to reveal his conundrum of being brainless. Upon meeting the Tin Woodsman, he sings “When You Love, Love, Love” which explains how he has no heat so he is unable to love Cynthia. Baum and Tiejans wrote the music and lyrics for this song. The music begins in 9/8 time in andante espressivo then adjusts to listesso tempo near the end of the song. The lovely lines sung by the Tin Woodsman include: “love makes the world go ‘round and makes our lives worth living, we are all lost till love is found” and “there’s nothing half so fine as the gladness of your madness when you love, love, love” (Baum). The internal rhyme of that last line lends to the characterization of the Tin Woodsman’s desire to love his Cynthia and the madness that accompanies love.

Another crowd-pleasing song is the “Poppy Song” sung by the Poppies about how they bloom and are fragrant bringing peace to mankind. The lines sung by the poppies are interesting because the poppies are “bringing peace to mankind” (Baum) with their opium that immediately puts the main characters to sleep. Baum and Tiejans also wrote this tune. “The Medley of Nations” is sung during The Ball of All Nations thrown by the Wizard after he awards the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodsman with the brain and heart. This medley includes anywhere up
to twelve songs sung by various characters (Lubbock). “The Traveler and the Pie” is a call and response number sung by the Scarecrow and the chorus. The song is a story about a weary hungry traveler asking a woman for food and she gives him her pie. The scarecrow sings a line from the traveler’s ventures and the chorus responds asking “Did he?” and the scarecrow answers saying “I think he did!..” before continuing with the next line of the story (Baum).

A prominent theme in the show is the issue of fantasy versus reality. Raymond Knapp argues that Oz is just a reconstruction of Dorothy’s mind. Knapp contends that Oz is a fantasy land seducing Dorothy from her reality, and at the end of the story, Knapp argues Dorothy’s desire to return to Kansas is indicative of her desire not to die (Knapp 137). The innovative special-effects support the mind-altering drug dimension of the story perceived by Knapp. Knapp theorizes that Oz provides an indulgence in surreality through the animate apples trees and fantastical flowers (Knapp 134). This surreality is furthered by the Snow Queen and Snow Children in the poppy field when they initiate a magical snowstorm to resurrect the group. The visual stage spectacle allows the audience to indulge in the fantasy of such a magical phenomenon.

This show’s importance is evident through its legacy. Starting in 1910, a ten-minute-long silent film version of the Wizard of Oz was produced by the Selig Polyscope Company. This film included features for the stage production such as Imogene the cow instead of Toto, the Tin Woodsman use of the piccolo, and an all-female production number (Reside). The special effects of the original stage production inspired future stage productions to be more explorative with their visuals. For example, the 1903 musical Babes in Toyland was a visual masterpiece featuring an opening storm and a magical land much like the Wizard of Oz. While Babes in Toyland equated the visual spectacle of The Wizard of Oz, it had a much more developed score (McLamore 51).

The 1939 film version of the Wizard of Oz starring Judy Garland as Dorothy was designed to compete with Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Meyerson 119). In response to competition from Disney’s Snow White, MGM needed to be cutting-edge by releasing The Wizard of Oz (1939 film) as the first integrated movie musical (Zinnser 147). The plot of the film is more similar to the book than the stage musical, but the creative team retained certain features of the 1903 stage production such as the poppy field scene and the social commentary on American politics. The yellow brick road analogy was still applicable in 1939
with the Great Depression. The scarecrow song “If I Only Had a Brain” is a reference to Franklin D Roosevelt’s good neighbor policy (Alonso 82). Arlen chose to rewrite the entire score, so none of the original music was retained for the film. The 1939 film left a legacy of its own especially with influential characteristics reappearing in future shows such as *Cats* (1980) and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). The influence in *Cats* is primarily seen in the use of humans as felines. The idea of putting actors in animal costumes began with the 1939 film’s Bert Lahr dressing in a lion costume. The connection between *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and the 1939 film is much more complex. *Rocky Horror* is characterized by its dance craze and campy science fiction narrative both of which are drawn from the 1939 *Wizard of Oz* film. Knapp argues that *Rocky Horror* took after the 1939 film in its quotable script in which audiences are able to recite lines during screenings of the show (Knapp 136). Knapp also argues that Brad and Janet are version of Dorothy. Both shows feature the main character of innocence venturing through a storm and arriving to a strange place where they must “Enter at your own risk” (Knapp 140).

The legacy of *The Wizard of Oz* can also be seen in its influence of the modern musical especially in *The Wiz* and *Wicked*. *The Wiz* (1975) was composed by Charlie Smalls, a Juilliard trained African-American composer. Smalls retained the basic plot of *Oz* making only minor adjustments to make the show’s storyline more modern. *The Wiz* was instrumental in its existence by casting only African-American actors including Diana Ross and Michael Jackson. The uniqueness of this cast brought a wider demographic to the Broadway spectacular. *Wicked* (2003) is a musical stage production based off the 1995 Gregory Maguire novel that parallels Baum’s 1900 children’s book. Stephen Schwartz wrote the music and lyrics for *Wicked* while Winnie Holzman is responsible for the book. Instead of telling the story of Oz from the perspective of an outsider, *Wicked* is from the perspective of two of the witches and their unlikely friendship and eventual fallout. Approximately a century later and *The Wizard of Oz* is still exerting its influence on the Broadway stage.
Sources


