

The Wizard of Oz: A Whiz of a Score

When M-G-M decided to produce a film musical version of L. Frank Baum's 1900 children's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the studio's intention was for the film to have cross-generational appeal, appropriate for adults as well as children. M-G-M intended to present Baum's classic fantasy with a Broadway sensibility, utilizing the best performers of the theater and film worlds. The movie's budget was set at 1.7 million dollars, but by the time it was completed, the total had risen to 2.7 million, 65% over budget. When it was released in August 1939, it met with virtually universal acclaim, but didn't go into the black until its theatrical reissue in 1949. *Oz* didn't start reaping substantial profits until 1956, when it was first broadcast on television. Subsequent annual presentations on television, which began in 1959, helped secure the film's status as one of the best-loved motion pictures of all time.

Today, *The Wizard of Oz*, with its enchanting story and memorable songs, has become a cherished tradition in millions of households. The film's groundbreaking musical score includes a number of unforgettable classics, and is considered one of the masterpieces in film music history. Towering among the songs is "Over the Rainbow," which was named Song of the Century on a list compiled by both the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the National Endowment for the Arts in 2001. Three years later, it was selected as the number one movie song of all time for the American Film Institute's "100 Years... 100 Songs" chart. (Another song from the film: "Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead," came in at number 82.) The songs and the background music were primarily the work of three remarkable men: lyricist E. Y. "Yip" Harburg, composer Harold Arlen, and musical director Herbert Stothart. Together, they fashioned the memorable songs and musical themes that have remained in our collective consciousness for 70 years.

Yip Harburg

Born as Irwin Hochberg in New York's lower East Side, Edgar Yipsel Harburg (1896–1981) grew up in poverty. Along with his parents, he worked in a ladies' garment sweatshop, in addition to doing other odd jobs in the neighborhood. As a youth, Harburg fell in love with the Yiddish theater (his nickname, "Yip," was short for "Yipsel," a Yiddish term for a squirrel), and he often went to shows to laugh at the uproarious comedies and cry at the devastating tragedies.



Original Decca 78 rpm record album of songs from *The Wizard of Oz*.

While attending Townsend Harris Hall (which enrolled both high school and college students), Harburg befriended a young Ira Gershwin (1896–1983), who introduced him to the music of Gilbert and Sullivan. Lyricist W. S. Gilbert, who wrote the hilarious lyrics to the patter songs in their operettas, became Harburg's first idol. In later years, Harburg discovered the works of other literary wits, including George S. Kaufman, Dorothy Parker, and Marc Connelly, and he voraciously read Franklin P. Adams's "The Conning Tower," an influential column in the *New York World*.

After graduating from the City College of New York, Harburg wrote poetry and spent much time with Ira Gershwin, who had begun a lucrative career writing lyrics for his brother George's Broadway musicals. In 1929, inspired by Ira Gershwin's success, Harburg decided to try his hand at writing lyrics, and thanks to Ira's introduction, began writing songs with composer Jay Gorney (1894–1990). Before he settled into his partnership with Harold Arlen, Harburg wrote songs with 31 different composers. His breakthrough came in 1932 when he wrote lyrics to three revues, including *Americana*, for which Harburg and Gorney wrote one of the most evocative songs of the Depression years, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" While working on *Americana*, Harburg met composer Harold Arlen, and although the two collaborated on just one inconsequential number for the revue ("Satan's Little

As Coroner, I Must Aver

Music by Harold Arlen
 Lyrics by E.Y. Harburg
 Arranged by Dan Coates

Moderately bright

C F

As
mf

cor - o - ner, I must a - ver. I thor - ough - ly ex -

4 G7 C/E D7 C/E F C/E

am - ined her, and she's not on - ly mere - ly dead, she's

7 F G7 C F G7 C

real - ly most sin - cere - ly dead.

mp *rit.* *p*



Judy Garland and the Munchkins.

MGM/Photofest



The Lullaby League ballerinas, with Judy Garland, during the Munchkinland sequence.

MGM/Photofest

We're Off to See the Wizard

Music by Harold Arlen

Lyrics by E.Y. Harburg

Arranged by Dan Coates

Moderate march tempo

The musical score is presented in a grand staff format (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/8 time signature. It includes piano accompaniment and vocal lines with lyrics. The score is divided into four systems, each starting with a measure number in a box (5, 9, 13). Chord symbols are placed above the staff, and fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Dynamics such as *f*, *p*, and *mf* are used throughout. The lyrics are: "Fol - low the yel - low brick road, fol - low the yel - low brick road. Fol - low, fol - low, fol - low, fol - low, fol - low the yel - low brick road. Fol - low the rain - bow o - ver the stream, fol - low the fel - low who fol - lows a dream." The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): Chords: G7, C/G, G7, C/G, G7. Dynamics: *f*, *p*. Includes the instruction "with pedal".

System 2 (Measures 5-8): Chords: C, G7, C, G7, C. Dynamics: *mf*. Lyrics: "Fol - low the yel - low brick road, fol - low the yel - low brick road."

System 3 (Measures 9-12): Chords: Am7, D7, G. Dynamics: *mf*. Lyrics: "Fol - low, fol - low, fol - low, fol - low, fol - low the yel - low brick road."

System 4 (Measures 13-16): Chords: F, C, G7, C. Dynamics: *mf*. Lyrics: "Fol - low the rain - bow o - ver the stream, fol - low the fel - low who fol - lows a dream."

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If I Only Had the Nerve

Music by Harold Arlen
 Lyrics by E.Y. Harburg
 Arranged by Dan Coates

Moderate swing (♩ = ♪³)

The Cowardly Lion:

4 Gm7 C7

mf

Yeah, it's

3 F Dm7 Gm7 C7 F B♭ F 5

mp

sad, be-lieve me, Mis-sy, when you're born to be a sis-sy with-out the vim and verve.

6 B♭ F B♭ Gm7 C7 C7/E

mf

But I could show my prow-ess, be a li-on, not a "mou-ess" if I

10 F B♭/F F Gm7 C7 F Dm7

mf

on-ly had the nerve. I'm a-fraid there's no de-ny-in', I'm

The Merry Old Land of Oz

Music by Harold Arlen

Lyrics by E.Y. Harburg

Arranged by Dan Coates

Moderately, with spirit

F B \flat Gm7 F/C C7 F
 1 3 3 1 3 4 1
mf
 5 2 1 2 5

5 Gm C7 F C7
mp
 2 2 5

9 F Gm7 C F Am
 4 4 2 3 1
mf
 2 4 2 4

12 B \flat /D C7 F B \flat Gm7 F/C C7
 4 3 1 2 1 3 4 3 1
 las. That's how we laugh the day a - way in the mer-ry old Land of

The image shows a piano accompaniment for the song 'The Merry Old Land of Oz'. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 1-4) starts with a treble clef staff containing a melody and a bass clef staff with chords and bass notes. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the accompaniment with a mezzo-forte (mp) dynamic. The third system (measures 9-11) includes vocal lyrics: 'Ha - ha - ha! Ho - ho - ho, and a coup - le of tra - la -'. The fourth system (measures 12-15) continues the accompaniment with lyrics: 'las. That's how we laugh the day a - way in the mer-ry old Land of'. Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff, and fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Dynamics like 'mf' and 'mp' are also present.

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