

Humanities Seminars Program

Forgotten Stars of Vaudeville 1900 - 1955

July 2017

Thursdays 9 -11 am

Regents Professor David Soren

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Recommended Texts:

- Trav S.D. *No Applause—Just Throw Money*. Faber & Faber, 2006.
ISBN-10: 0865479585. ISBN-13: 978-0865479586
- Soren, David. *Vera-Ellen*. Midnight Marquee Press, 2009.
ISBN-13: 978-1887664813

This course will trace the roots of vaudeville from its presumed origins in France and England through its early years in America, developing from riverboat mini-plays of the type shown in plays and films such as *Showboat* (1936), minstrel shows such as those created by Big Daddy Rice, Honeyboy Evas and Lou Dockstader. Emphasis will also be placed on precursors such as Dime Shows, Chatauqua and the circus.

Outstanding but forgotten performers of the golden age of vaudeville (1880-1925) will be highlighted including such geniuses of the entertainment world as Joe Cook who was known as a one-man show (singing, dancing, comedy, acrobatics, juggling, high-wire walking and ore) and whose clown assistant Dave Chasen became the owner of a famous Hollywood restaurant. You will see never before seen footage of Fred Stone, whose 1900 performance as the scarecrow in the original play of *The Wizard of Oz* became the model for Ray Bolger in the 1939 movie version of Frank Baum's story.

We will trace the evolution of vaudeville into film through the artistry of such visionaries as Busby Berkeley and the unsung pioneer of the movie musical John Murray Anderson who transformed how we view musicals on film in his 1930 *King of Jazz*. The importance of Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. will also be highlighted and his concept of "Glorifying the American Girl", launching the careers of Marilyn Miller, W. C. Fields, Eddie Cantor, Will Rogers, Lillian Lorraine and many more.

Special never before seen footage of vaudeville super swimming star Annette Kellerman will be presented, and her movies which were the forerunners of the Esther Williams extravaganzas of the 1950s by Busby Berkeley and the Billy Rose Aquacade Productions of the later 1930s.

Finally, Dr. Soren will recount his own experiences as a vaudeville headliner in the early 1950s and his work as a regular on the CBS-tv series *The Horn* and *Hardart Children's Hour* which launched the careers of Connie Francis, Frankie Avalon and many other stars.

Schedule:

- July 6:** THE ROOTS OF VAUDEVILLE
July 13: FROM THE ZIEGFELD FOLLIES TO BUSBY BERKELEY
July 20: THE GREAT DANCERS OF VAUDEVILLE
July 27: FROM ANNETTE KELLERMAN TO THE END OF THE ROAD