

I Believe...  
My Top 10 Favorite films from the 1940's Are...  
By Rhett DeVelay  
(c)2004-2009 Ardecy Music, R. DeVelay (Clements)

I Believe...the 1940's have more films that I love than any other decade. Choosing these top 10 films was very difficult and writing about them makes me want to sit down and see each one of them right now. I encourage you to check them out at your local film rental store and hope you like them, too.

- **“The Little Foxes”** (1941), B&W. Bette Davis, Herbert Marshall, Teresa Wright. William Wyler, again, directs a great cast in the Lillian Hellman play about a greedy Southern matriarch (Davis) and her family trying to get to her dying husband's (Marshall) wealth. Vitriolic dialogue and superb acting.
- **“Now, Voyager”** (1942), B&W. Bette Davis, Paul Henreid. Irving Rapper directs one of the greatest “weepies” from the '40s as a plain woman (Davis) discovers platonic love with a married man (Henreid) and helps his youngest daughter learn to like herself. Somewhat campy and corny...and wonderful. Smoking has never looked more erotic.
- **“The Uninvited”** (1944), B&W. Ray Milland, Ruth Hussey, Gail Russell. Lewis Allen directs this tale of a brother (Milland) and sister (Hussey) who purchase a haunted house. They meet the daughter of the woman who died in the house and that's where the suspense begins. Another goose bump film with an ending that isn't a cheat.
- **“Les Enfants du Paradis”** 1945 (French), B&W. Arletty, Jean Louis Barrault. Marcel Carné was a master storyteller and directed this film during WWII while trying to avoid being bombed by the Germans. This film has been called the “Gone With the Wind” of France because of its grand, emotional themes against a backdrop of uncertainty and change. It takes place in Paris in the mid-1800's and tells the tale of a theatrical family and the “useless” son (Barrault) who, over time, becomes a great and famous performer. Although he has everything any normal man would want (fame, fortune, loving family) he lusts after a free-spirited woman (Arletty) who shatters his and others' lives. Truly an amazing film that I never tire of seeing.
- **“La Belle et la Bête”** (1946 French), B&W. Josette Day, Jean Marais. Jean Cocteau was a great French writer and artist whose directorial version of the old fairy-tale becomes an adult fable of mesmerizing beauty and ingenuity. In watching this film you have to remember that “special effects” were still in their infancy, but what he accomplished with this story of the Beauty (Day) held captive by the misunderstood Beast (Marais) is nothing short of miraculous. A truly gorgeous film in black and white.
- **“The Ghost and Mrs. Muir”** (1947), B&W. Gene Tierney, Rex Harrison. Joseph Mankiewicz brings a splendid, magical touch to this beautiful tale of a lonely widow (Tierney) who is romanced by a sea captain's “ghost” (Harrison). This is my #1 favorite film but be sure you have plenty of tissues on hand. The end gets me every time.
- **“The Bishop's Wife”** (1947), B&W. Cary Grant, Loretta Young, David Niven. Directed by Henry Koster, this lovely, sweet and funny film revolves around a Bishop (Niven) who has cares less about his faith than raising money to build a Cathedral, and because of it is losing his wife (Young) but doesn't know it. After asking for guidance

he's visited by a very suave angel (Grant) who helps to make things right, until the angel starts to fall in love with the bishop's wife. Great!

- **“The Fallen Idol”** (1948), B&W. Ralph Richardson, Michele Morgan, Bobby Henrey. Carol Reed was one of the great English directors and he made his reputation with films like this one. An Ambassador's young son (Henrey) idolizes the household butler (Richardson) and incurs the wrath of the butler's shrewish wife who dislikes children. But when one of them mysteriously dies... Did the butler do it?
- **“Adam's Rib”** (1949), B&W. Katherine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy. George Cukor directed Hepburn in nine films, over the length of her career, and this hilarious battle-of-the-sexes comedy shows why she trusted him. She and Tracy play married lawyers on opposite sides of a murder case of a ditzzy blonde (Judy Holliday) who tries to kill her philandering husband. Naturally, Hepburn represents her and thinks she was right in shooting the husband. Tracy tries his best to convict the blonde but he's on the losing end with those two women.
- **“The Heiress”** (1949), B&W. Olivia De Havilland, Montgomery Clift, Miriam Hopkins, Ralph Richardson. William Wyler was one of those rare directors that couldn't be pigeon holed for any particular style. This amazing film, based on the Henry James novel *Washington Square* is one of the greatest adaptations of all time. A wealthy spinster (De Havilland) is courted by a young man (Clift) whom her father (Richardson) thinks is a fortune hunter. But, her aunt (Hopkins) thinks he truly is in love with her niece. Or is he? I've seen this film many times and the ending always gives me goose bumps.

Please feel free to contact me at: [Musical.Theatre@hotmail.com](mailto:Musical.Theatre@hotmail.com)