

Orson Welles: A Centennial Celebration and Symposium
Opening Remarks and Introduction of James Naremore's Keynote Address
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie
President, Indiana University
IU Cinema
Indiana University Bloomington
Thursday, April 30, 2015
1:00 p.m.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Jon.

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us at Indiana University for this celebration and symposium to mark the 100th anniversary of the legendary director, actor, producer, and writer, Orson Welles. We are delighted that you are here for this centennial symposium, and we hope that your time on our campus will be productive, intellectually stimulating, and enjoyable.

While film is the most modern of arts, and perhaps the one great art form that arose in the 20th Century, the great works of the masters of the cinematic arts like Orson Welles, indelibly reminds us that film can be every bit as profound and sublime as the greatest literary works, poems, paintings, operas or symphonies.

Inspired by this university's longstanding excellence in film scholarship and our outstanding faculty, past and present in this area, I announced in my inauguration address in 2007 that we would convert this building—the former University Theatre—into a state-of-the-art cinema at the very heart of campus.

In just its first four and a half years of operation, the Cinema has become widely

recognized as one of the finest university cinemas in the nation. In fact, after her most recent visit to Indiana University to receive an honorary doctorate, three-time Academy Award-winning actress Meryl Streep told *Variety* “The IU Cinema is one of the finest projection houses I have ever seen: state of the art sight and sound facilities enclosed in a beautiful building which has been painstakingly restored and updated.”¹ She also praised the Thomas Hart Benton murals that are featured here at the front of the cinema and said that she was honored to be invited to screen films here.

Jon Vickers, the cinema’s founding director, and his staff truly have done an outstanding job, bringing such luminaries as Ms. Streep, IU alumnus Kevin Kline, Werner Herzog, Peter Bogdanovich, Claire Denis, Peter Weir, and many others to our campus—including Glenn Close just this week—and offering innovative programming, including this centennial symposium and exhibition.

As you may know, this symposium is being co-sponsored by the IU Libraries, whose holdings include a vast collection of 16mm films assembled by producer, director, and writer David Bradley over the course of his life; the correspondence, papers, and memorabilia of John Ford; the papers, scripts, and films of Peter Bogdanovich; and, of course, around 20,000 pieces related to Orson Welles.² I know that those of you who haven’t already seen the splendid exhibit of one-of-a-kind items from the Welles collection at our Lilly Library will enjoy the opportunity to do so later today.

And this is the inaugural symposium for Indiana University’s new Media School, one of six new schools established at IU in just the last three years. The Media School combines IU’s former School of Journalism and the departments and programs of telecommunications, film studies and communication and culture. We established the

¹ Andrew Barker, “Theater Director Jon Vickers Lures Legends to Indiana University Venue,” *Variety*, April 30, 2014, Web, Accessed April 26, 2015, URL: <http://variety.com/2014/film/news/theater-director-jon-vickers-lures-legends-to-indiana-university-venue-1201167024/>

² <http://viewpoints.iu.edu/art-at-iu/2013/05/01/are-you-popular-iul-film-archive-to-screen-vintage-social-guidance-films/>

new Media School in response to the dramatic change the media environment has undergone in recent years, including the emergence of entirely new platforms for content-delivery and new technologies that provide audiences with unprecedented control over when, how, and where they consume media. Of course, cinema is right at the heart of this media convergence.

IU's Media School will offer an integrated approach to communication-related studies that will prepare students for the rapid changes in these fields that require today's graduates to be fluent in a range of media competencies and tools.

And who better to illustrate that than Orson Welles, whose groundbreaking achievements in all the forms of mass media of his time we still study today?

2. INTRODUCING JAMES NAREMORE

Now, it is my great pleasure to introduce one of the organizers of the symposium and this afternoon's keynote speaker.

James Naremore is Chancellors' Professor Emeritus in Communication and Culture, English, and Comparative Literature at Indiana University. He retired from the faculty in 2005 after 36 years of distinguished service to the university.

Jim is a leading expert on Orson Welles. He also has expertise on Alfred Hitchcock and Stanley Kubrick, and has done extensive research on classic Hollywood cinema and modernist literature.

In the mid-1970s, Jim and a number of Indiana University colleagues helped found the IU Film Studies Program, one of the first such programs in the country. He served as

the program's director for several years and was instrumental in instituting its first course in film production.

Jim was also the first person I talked to about the idea of creating an IU cinema. I believe we first spoke about it in 2001—an appropriate year for one of the great scholars of Stanley Kubrick. Jim was extremely generous with his expertise, his time, and his advice as we worked to establish the IU Cinema.

Jim is a former Guggenheim and National Gallery of Art fellow. He is also a recipient of Indiana University's Tracy M. Sonneborn Award, which is given to faculty members who have achieved national and international acclaim both for their research and for their teaching.

He has published extensively on such topics as film noir, adaptations, and acting. Among his many books are the award-winning *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*, and *On Kubrick*, published by the British Film Institute.

His now classic book, *The Magic of Orson Welles*, has been widely praised as an outstanding and perceptive study of Welles and his work.

Princeton's Michael Wood predicted—justifiably so—in the *Washington Post* that the book “may, along with a small handful of other books, help to change the standards of scholarship and critical sophistication we apply to writing on film.”³

First published in 1978, the book has been translated into a number of other languages, including Finnish and Italian, and will be republished next month in an expanded Welles Centennial edition.

³ Michael Wood, as quoted by the University of Illinois Press, Web, Accessed April 26, 2015, URL: <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/46yhd8xm9780252039775.html>

Jim also edited and contributed an essay to the book, *Orson Welles' Citizen Kane: A Casebook*, which explores one of the most influential films of all time and one that is considered by many to be maybe the greatest film ever made.

His talk today is titled "Orson Welles at 100."

Please join me in welcoming Jim Naremore.