

"Great Grandpa of Movies" Press Release-- Halloween



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Immediate Release

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Great Grandpa of the Movies "The Victorian Halloween Magic-Lantern Show!" Coming To the Heritage Center

Get ready to travel back in time -- with a Magic-Lantern Show. National Public Radio says, "It's an incredible experience. . . If they come to your town, don't miss them. They're a living national treasure."

A hundred years ago, everyone joined in the fun of watching these Magic-Lantern Shows on the big screen, clapping and stomping one minute, moved to tears the next. Colors swirled, animated cartoons cavorted, ghost stories unfolded. And everyone joined in singing "The Worms Crawl in, The Worms Crawl Out" as a beautiful woman on screen dissolved into a skeleton. Young and old sat mesmerized, mouths agape.

An early Halloween movie? Not at all. This was a Magic-Lantern Show, the great grandpa of the movies. It came before the silent films, yet it was in color, and had sound and spectacular special effects. Now the American Magic-Lantern Theater (www.MagicLanternShows.com) has re-created this popular Gay Nineties entertainment, and is bringing its "Halloween Magic-Lantern Show" to **the Heritage Center on October 11, 2007.**

The Magic-Lantern Show was, in fact, the direct ancestor of the movies. A huge brass-and-mahogany projector lit with gas "limelight" rapidly projected hand-colored slides on the screen. The slides -- many of them animated -- illustrated stories and songs and comedy, just as the movies would later. A live showman and musician provided the soundtrack, and the audience joined in creating sound effects, playing horns and tambourines, chanting and clapping, booing and cheering, just as in a

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melodrama. In fact, the content of the melodramatic early movies was often lifted from successful magic-lantern shows, and many of the earliest movie projectors were simply adapted magic-lantern projectors.

The re-created "Halloween Magic-Lantern Show" is produced by The American Magic-Lantern Theater, the nation's only theater company specializing in this popular form of Gay Nineties entertainment. In the show, Little Orphan Annie tells how goblins "come ta git ya." Poe's famous raven drives a lover mad with its slow tap tapping. The audience tries to read its future in the swirling colors of the magician's crystal ball. Animated cartoon monsters cavort. And Papa, exhausted by all the Halloween festivities, snores soundly . . . until a rat runs down his throat. Gulp!

Terry Borton, lead showman of The American Magic-Lantern Theater, became interested in the magic-lantern because his great-grandfather had one, which was passed down in the family. "When I was a child," says Borton, "my father put on shows for us, using the same slides and dramatic style that his grandfather had used two generations before, at the turn of the century. Some of those same slides are in our shows today, a hundred years later. And I hope that my style is just as dramatic and memorable as great-grandpa's was back then!"

The magic lantern came in an incredible number of shapes and sizes, from professional lanterns and slides used in touring Magic-Lantern Shows, to simple black projectors used in school libraries and fraternal organizations, to small children's toys. Many are still around. Anyone having a lantern or slides is invited to bring it to the Magic-Lantern Show for comment by the show's director. Any slides of the local area would be of particular interest, and, with permission, will be projected before the show begins.

"The Halloween Magic-Lantern Show!" will appear at **the Heritage Center of Clark County, 117 South Fountain Avenue, Springfield, OH, Hellmuth Rotating Gallery on October 11, 2007 at 7:00 P.M.** There is no admission charge. For information, please call **937-324-0657, ext 231.**

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PICTURE CAPTIONS

Editor, Please Note: *Black-and-white photos, and color transparencies are available for all the pictures captioned below. We send a different assortment to different publications. If you would like something other than what you received, please call.*

(1) Terry Borton operates an antique magic-lantern, an 1890's multi-media projector that is the centerpiece of the "great grandfather of the movies," an authentic "Halloween Magic-Lantern Show."

(2) The showman and musician of "The Halloween Magic-Lantern Show!" project one of the 150 antique slides used in their re-creation of "the great grandfather of the movies."

