

## Robert Shields

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**From:** Jeff Rapsis <silentfilmmusic@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 15, 2021 9:36 AM  
**To:** silentfilmmusic  
**Subject:** Silent-era 'Risky Business,' 'Wizard of Oz' highlight Kansas film festival relocated to N.H. due to Covid-19  
**Attachments:** B\_the\_round\_up.jpg; A\_little\_church.jpg; C\_the\_show\_off.jpg; D\_risky\_business.jpg; E\_wizard\_of\_oz.jpg; F\_navigator.jpg  
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### **Upcoming film festival includes silent-era 'Risky Business' and 'Wizard of Oz'**

Relocated due to Covid-19: New Hampshire version of Kansas festival offers three days of silent film with live music, Feb. 26-28

WILTON, N.H.—It's not the 1980s version with Tom Cruise, but a 1926 comedy/drama about a rich socialite in love with a poor country doctor.

It's 'Risky Business,' co-starring Kansas native Zasu Pitts, and it's on the program of the Covid-19-inspired "Kansas Silent Film Festival in New Hampshire" later this month.

With the annual Kansas festival suspended due to coronavirus, the pop-up New Hampshire version is being staged as a tribute 1,500 miles away.

The three-day festival will also feature the rarely screened silent film version of 'The Wizard of Oz' (1925), a slapstick comedy that includes Oliver Hardy as the Tin Man.

The Granite State version of the Kansas Silent Film Festival will run from Friday, Feb. 26 to Sunday, Feb. 28 at the Town Hall Theatre, 40 Main St. Wilton, N.H.

Admission is free, with no reservations required. To support the Town Hall Theatre's silent film programming and the Kansas Silent Film Festival, a donation of \$10 per person is suggested.

The Town Hall Theatre has been operating safely since last July by following all state and CDC public health guidelines.

All films will be shown with live music by silent film accompanist Jeff Rapsis, who usually travels to the Kansas festival each year to practice his craft.

"With no in-person event in Kansas this year, I felt we had an opportunity to recreate the festival's special magic here in New Hampshire," Rapsis said.

Video introductions to each feature will be provided by Denise Morrison, a Missouri-based film historian who serves as emcee at the Kansas Silent Film Festival.

During intermissions, movie-goers will be invited to sample imported delicacies such as hot pickles from Porubski's Polish Deli in Topeka, Kansas.

The three days of programming spotlight films with connections to the Sunflower State, which produced a bumper crop of early Hollywood stars.

Kansas-born screen icon Louise Brooks stars in 'The Show Off' (1926); and Buster Keaton (born in Kansas when his parents were in a traveling medicine show) in the classic silent comedy 'The Navigator' (1924.)

The festival also includes a rare screening of 'The Little Church Around the Corner,' a 1923 melodrama featuring Kansas-raised Claire Windsor paired with actor Walter Long, a native of Milford, N.H.

Also on the festival's program: the original silent film version of 'The Wizard of Oz' (1925), with comic actor Oliver Hardy playing the Tin Man. Hardy would later be paired with Stan Laurel to form the immortal comic duo Laurel and Hardy.

"People are surprised to learn that there's a silent 'Wizard of Oz,' " Rapsis said. "But it's completely different from the MGM musical from 1939—it's a slapstick comedy that was created as a vehicle for roughhouse comedian Larry Semon, who plays the scarecrow."

In Kansas, in lieu of live performances this year, the Kansas Silent Film Festival will host a program of virtual screenings for online viewing. For more info, visit [www.kssilentfilmfest.org](http://www.kssilentfilmfest.org).

In New Hampshire, each day of the relocated tribute festival includes two feature films separated by an intermission:

- **Friday, Feb. 26, 2021**, 7:30 p.m.: Claire Windsor in '**The Little Church Around the Corner**' (1923) and Fatty Arbuckle in '**The Round-Up**' (1920). Kansas-born star Claire Windsor stars in 'The Little Church Around the Corner' (1923), a labor relations melodrama with a role for Milford, N.H. native Walter Long; followed by 'The Roundup' (1920), a rarely screened feature film starring Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle (also from Kansas) that wasn't released in the U.S. following accusations of murder against the comedian, leading to a notorious series of court trials that exonerated Arbuckle, but left his career in ruins.

- **Saturday, Feb. 27, 2021**, 7:30 p.m.: Kansas-born silent screen icon Louise Brooks stars in '**The Show-Off**' (1926) and Zasu Pitts (also from Kansas) appears in '**Risky Business**' (1926). In 'The Show Off,' Brooks (from Cherryvale, Kansas) stars in the story of a working-class family's reluctance to accept their daughter's suitor. In 'Risky Business,' Zasu Pitts (from Olathe, Kansas) co-stars with Vera Reynolds in a comedy/drama about a rich socialite who falls in love with a poor country doctor—a relationship the girl's family is determined to break up, with unforeseen consequences.

- **Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021**, 2 p.m.: The original silent '**Wizard of Oz**' (1925) plus Buster Keaton in '**The Navigator**' (1924). In the final program, we're definitely not in Kansas anymore with the original silent version of 'The Wizard of Oz,' starring comedian Larry Semon as the scarecrow and featuring Oliver Hardy as the Tin Man! Then it's the timeless visual comedy of Kansas-born Buster Keaton, often called the most silent of the silent comedians. In 'The Navigator' (1924), Buster sets sail on a deserted ocean liner, riding a high tide of hilarity. Classic silent film comedy!

"Thanks to everyone at the Kansas festival for giving us permission to stage this socially distanced tribute," said Rapsis, who has attended every Kansas Silent Film Festival since 2000. "We may be 1,500 miles away, but our hearts are in the same place."