

The BOOKMAN

MR. WOGGLEBAUM COOKS AN OPERA

By Roy L. McCardell

From Literary Department

**PYRAMID
PREMIER PERFECTION PICTURES**

Superfeatures That Stupefy
(TRADE MARK)

Hollywood, California
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*For Mr. Mortimer Schwanenfluegel,
General Manager and Vice-President
in Charge of Productions.*

Report on
"JURGEN"

A Comedy of Justice

By James Branch Cabell

Published by McBride, N. Y.

This opera is a bughouse, costume-period fairytale, laid back in the old dago days in Spain or somewhere. As screen stuff it's a lot of tripe, its only value being a ton of s.a. But it would get the ax in the Ioways, even if Hays didn't hop on it, the way the lead cops the janes. He makes them all along his route. All the other Don Johns with their pay in their pockets on Saturday night, would only be loitering along the lane picking posies, competing with this gink Jurgen as a moll buzzer, plus. Every dame is easy for this gazabo. He Jack Barrymores them all down the line, to a fare-you-well.

The opera, according to the book, opens up

with Jurgen as an old horse collar of a hockshop keeper, who was a song writer when he was a greaseball. He does a favor for the Devil in the first sequence, and his ball and chain is taken off him by the Devil and she fades out of the opera except for a few flashes, till she makes a come-back at the clinch. She's a sour skirt, a small bit Flora Finch. So Jurgen's wife is nix as the menace. In fact, this opera, as is, ain't got no more menace than a news reel.

The lead has lots of Doug.-Bagdad business, but there is no more motivation in the original script than there is menace. The cross-fire is weak because the lead talks to hisself mostly, and there ain't no strong conflicts in any of the confronts. The names of the types is highbrow from history, and the exhibitors would squawk and the fans would mob the box, wrangling for their jack back.

If we wanted to cook this opera for production, we'd find the sets all Notre Dame and the princess's palace, calling for grande dame and hawbuck harness. Exterior locations is in Fairyland, Hell and Heaven, calling for million dollar false fronts, as well as fancy technical stuff with glass cheater work and miniatures. This would run into so much money that it would make grief with the estimates, till even Cecil de Mille would read 'em and weep.

In fact the whole gag is Fausty. It *might* be a big blow-off for Broadway, at that, but that don't mean nothing when the sticks would never stand for it.

There is a Centaur in the first sequence that drops out. A Centaur is a half man and

half horse, a character from the Bible and Shakespeare. This would be a big novelty for the screen, but in the original script it's only a bit.

If the New York office *has* been gypped into slipping the b.r. for this opera, it *might* be made a b.o.a., at that, by casting Lon Chaney as this Centaur gimmick. This means starring Chaney through, of course, and letting him hog everything by giving him all the fat, and gagging in big new situations for him, like a leap for life across a chasm, with the main jane on his back. Then a close-up of him weeping at the fade-out because he can't give the skirt the love strangle at the clinch, and has to turn her over to the sissy-boy juvenile lead.

As it lays, this opera Jorgen is the boloney. A lot of highbrows who read books all the time might know what it's all about, but the exhibitors would loop it for a gool, and cancel our whole program for evermore.

But as I dope it, if the Head Cheese *has* been nicked into buying it by them literary yes men on The Big Apple, it *could* be made the picture panic of the world, and knock "The Big Parade" for a flock of flat fish, if the story is changed a little to run the Centaur all through as the focus, with Lon Chaney in the rôle, as I say.

Here's another treatment that would be oak.

The scene *could* be laid like a regular horse opera in the cattle country, and it could have a happy ending if it was showed that the Centaur was only the hero doing a hide-away in disguise in the desert, in order to save his crippled father or idiot brother from the hoosegow for having embezzled the bank or murdered somebody. This gives the Centaur the sympathy.

After the Centaur saves the rich heiress for the third or fourth time, he can disclose his identity and throw off his make-up. Lon Chaney as the Centaur could be called Jorgen, to keep the author from squawking, because few of the fans, and nobody in the picture business at all, knows what a Centaur is. They'd think it was a penny slot machine. But

LON CHANEY!

in

"The Half-Horse Man"

Would be the real McCoy as a title, billing like this:

Doug.-Bagdad business = *Oriental scenes and action — from Douglas Fairbanks's "Thief of Bagdad"*.

Menace = *The villain; acute or persistent peril, or constant obstacle that hero or heroine has to fight against.*

Cook the opera = *Preparing story for moving picture production.*

False fronts = *Façades of houses as backgrounds and as constructed to represent buildings or streets of foreign cities, etc.*

Hawbuck harness = *Mediaeval court costumes for men; for instance, Hamlet's attire is hawbuck harness. From the word "hauberk"*.

Glass cheater work = *Glass painted screen attachment for cameras, to fake impressive distant backgrounds — such as mountains,*

PYRAMID PREMIER PERFECTION PICTURES

Presents

LON CHANEY

In

"THE HALF-HORSE MAN"

Adapted from James Branch Cabell's
"Jorgen"

*The Story of a Great Love in the Great West
Better Than "Tarzan of the Apes"*

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"Superfeatures That Stupefy!"

(Trade Mark)

This would bring the story up to date and the menace we'd write in would work through the entire opera, being a Greaser millionaire mine and ranch owner, who has branded the Half-Horse Man when he has had him in his power. The big scenes would be the branding of the Centaur and a wallop at the climax — suspense stuff — leading up to the clinch, when Don Manuel, the menace, is kicked off the cliff by the Centaur, just as he's going to brand the jane, to show he owns her, body and soul!

This branding gag was the wow in "The Cheat", and them other oriental operas, and is always sure-fire to panic the customers. This way this opera of "Jorgen" would be oak. But if even a sequence of the author's original script is shot — Fooey!

Submitted by

Milton Wogglebaum,
Managing Editor-in-Chief.

That Mr. Wogglebaum's report on Jorgen may be wholly clear to the uninitiated, the following is appended:

GLOSSARY

Opera = *A moving picture, story or play.*

S.a. = *Sex appeal.*

Get the ax in the Ioways = *Be censured and banned by rural moralists.*

Moll buzzer = *Suave male flirt.*

Old Horse Collar = *A tedious old or middle-aged man.*

Hockshop keeper = *A pawnbroker.*

Greaseball = *A dressy young man, a drugstore cowboy.*

Ball and chain = *A wife.*

rivers, distant cities, castles — anything on horizon.

Fausty = *After the manner of the opera "Faust" in scenes, costumes, characters or magically renewed youth.*

B.r. = *Bank roll. Big money, the financing of pictures.*

B.o.a. = *Box office attraction — any popular and profitable picture.*

Gimmick = *Word for anything.*

Loop it for a gool = *Throw it out; knock it dead.*

Head Cheese = *President of company, business manager, the boss.*

On the Big Apple = *In New York City.*

Horse Opera = *A Western cowboy picture.*

Hoosegow = *A jail.*

Real McCoy = *The very best.*

Oak = *o.k.*