



SILVERSCREEN
PRIMARY
EDUCATION

Laurel & Hardy: A Celebration

*By Adam Pepper
Session 9*



Welcome to Session 9 of this celebration of the life, times and laughs of Laurel & Hardy! This year marks 60 years since the death of Stan Laurel, the English Vaudeville comedian who became part of the world's most famous on-screen double act.

Over these ten weeks, we will journey through their lives, their movies, their highs and lows, and immerse ourselves in the history of their time in Hollywood; a time when movies were only just beginning!

So, adjust your hat, wiggle your tie and let's follow 'the boys' on an adventure...

Session 9:

It's 1937 and, while the boys are reluctantly working on their features (some good, some very meh), a ticking clock is beginning to be heard.

On separate contracts at the Hal Roach Studios, the boys face having to work separately to keep them in food, golf clubs and wives! But what will that mean for the world's most famous double act?

Surely they wouldn't take work away from each other, would they? (That's right, I'm talking to you, Ollie!)

So, as with any struggling actor facing an existential crisis, there is only one thing for it – time to get close to the people! That's right, the boys are back in town...

Useful information for Session 8:

Harry Langdon

Henry Philmore "Harry" Langdon (June 15, 1884 – December 22, 1944) was an American actor and comedian who appeared in vaudeville, silent films (where he had his greatest fame), and talkies.

Born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Langdon began working in medicine shows and stock companies while in his teens. In 1906, he entered vaudeville with his first wife, Rose Langdon. By 1915, he had developed a sketch named "Johnny's New Car", on which he performed variations in the years that followed.

In 1923, he joined Principal Pictures Corporation, a company headed by producer Sol Lesser. He eventually went to The Mack Sennett Studios, where he became a major star. At the height of his film career, he was considered one of the four best comics of the silent film era. His screen character was that of a wide-eyed, childlike man with an innocent's understanding of the world and the people in it. He was a first-class pantomimist.

Most of Langdon's 1920s work was produced at the famous Mack Sennett studio. His screen character was unique and his antics so different from the broad Sennett slapstick that he soon had a following. Success led him into feature films, directed by Arthur Ripley and Frank Capra. With such directors guiding him, Langdon's work rivalled that of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd. Many consider his best films to be *The Strong Man* (1926), *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp* (1926), and *Long Pants* (1927). Langdon acted as producer on these features, which were made for his own company, The Harry Langdon Corporation, and released by First National Pictures.

Langdon's babyish character did not adapt well to sound films; as producer Hal Roach remarked, "He was not so funny articulate." Roach starred Langdon in eight sound shorts in 1929–1930, which were not popular enough to keep the series going. Langdon did land occasional one-shot roles in feature films, including *See America*

Thirst (Universal, 1930), opposite Slim Summerville, and *Hallelujah, I'm a Bum* (United Artists, 1933), opposite Al Jolson.

In 1938 Langdon returned to the Hal Roach studio for a surprise guest appearance in the screwball comedy feature *There Goes My Heart*. While at Roach he contributed to comedy scripts as a writer, notably for Laurel and Hardy. When Stan Laurel's contract with Roach expired, Oliver Hardy's contract was still in force, leading Roach to cast Langdon opposite Hardy in the 1939 antebellum comedy *Zenobia*.

Langdon was considered to be the live-action role model for Dopey in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, but Walt Disney rejected the idea. Eddie Collins played the role instead.

Marcel Marceau

Marcel Marceau (22 March 1923 – 22 September 2007) was a French mime artist and actor most famous for his stage persona, "**Bip the Clown**". He referred to mime as the "art of silence", performing professionally worldwide for more than 60 years.

Marcel Marceau was born on 22 March 1923 in Strasbourg, France, to a Jewish family. His father, Charles Mangel, was a kosher butcher originally from Będzin, Poland. His mother, Anne Werzberg, came from Yabluniv, present-day Ukraine. Through his mother's family, he was a cousin of Israeli singer Yarden Arazi. When Marcel was four years old, the family moved to Lille, but they later returned to Strasbourg.

After France's invasion by Nazi Germany, Marcel, then 17, fled with his family to Limoges. His cousin Georges Loinger, one of the members of the French Jewish Resistance in France (*Organisation Juive de Combat-OJC*, aka Armée Juive), urged him to join in order to help rescue Jews during the Holocaust. The OJC, which was composed of nine clandestine Jewish networks, rescued thousands of Jewish children and adults during the war in France.

He was schooled in the Paris suburbs at the home of Yvonne Hagnauer, while pretending to be a worker at the school she directed; Hagnauer would later receive the honor of Righteous Among the Nations from Yad Vashem. In 1944 Marcel's father was captured by the Gestapo and deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he was killed. Marcel's mother survived.

Marcel and his older brother, Alain, adopted the last name "Marceau" during the German occupation of France; the name was chosen as a reference to François Séverin Marceau-Desgraviers, a general of the French Revolution.

The two brothers joined the French Resistance in Limoges. They rescued a number of children from the race laws and concentration camps in the framework of the Jewish Resistance in France, and, after the liberation of Paris, joined the French army. Owing to Marceau's fluency in English, French, and German, he worked as a liaison officer with General George Patton's Third Army.

According to Marceau, when he was five years of age, his mother took him to see a Charlie Chaplin film, which entranced him and led him to want to become a mime artist. The first time he used mime was after France was invaded, in order to keep Jewish children quiet while he helped them escape to Switzerland.

He gave his first major performance to 3,000 troops after the liberation of Paris in August 1944.

Marceau performed all over the world to spread the "art of silence" (*L'art du silence*). It was the intellectual minority who knew of him until he first toured the United States in 1955 and 1956, close on the heels of his North American debut at the Stratford Festival of Canada.

Films to look out for:

County Hospital (1932) *Zenobia* (1939) *The Flying Deuces* (1939) *Great Guns* (1941)

The Tree In A Test Tube (1942) *Stan & Ollie* (2018)