



## Lady in the Dark

*Director:* Mitchell Leisen  
*Production Company:* Paramount Pictures  
*Executive Producer:* B.G. De Sylva  
*Producer:* Richard Blumenthal  
*Screenplay:* Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett  
*Based on the play by:* Moss Hart  
*Music and Lyrics:* Kurt Weill, Ira Gershwin  
*Director of Photography:* Ray Rennahan  
*Editor:* Alma Macrorie  
*Art Directors:* Hans Dreier, Raoul Pene Du Bois  
*Set Designer:* Ray Moyer  
*Costumes:* Raoul Pene Du Bois, Edith Head  
*Make-up:* Wally Westmore  
*Music:* Robert Emmett Dolan

*Cast:*

Ginger Rogers (*Liza Elliott*)  
Ray Milland (*Claude 'Charley' Johnson*)  
Warner Baxter (*Kendall Nesbitt*)  
Jon Hall (*Randy Curtis*)  
Mischa Auer (*Russell Paxton*)  
Phyllis Brooks (*Allison Grant*)  
Barry Sullivan (*Dr Brooks*)  
Mary Phillips (*Maggie Grant*)  
Don Loper (*dancer*)  
Edward Fielding (*Dr Carlton*)  
Mary Parker (*Miss Parker*)  
Catherine Craig (*Miss Foster*)  
Marietta Canty (*Martha*)  
Virginia Farmer (*Miss Edwards*)  
Fay Helm (*Miss Bowers*)  
Kay Linaker (*Liza's mother*)  
Harvey Stephens (*Liza's father*)  
Rand Brooks (*Ben*)  
USA 1944  
100 mins

A BFI National Archive print

**Please note:** this film contains language, images or other content that reflects views prevalent in its time, but that may cause offence today.

### BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at [bfi.org.uk/join](http://bfi.org.uk/join)

### SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25\*  
\* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: [sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk](http://sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk)



### BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on [player.bfi.org.uk](http://player.bfi.org.uk)

### GINGER ROGERS: ALL THAT SASS

# Lady in the Dark

## Paramount production notes for 'Lady in the Dark'

As a play, *Lady in the Dark* opened on Broadway on 23 January 1941. It comes to the screen as one of the most lavish and spectacular productions in motion picture history.

The Moss Hart-Kurt Weill-Ira Gershwin 'drama with music' has been transferred virtually intact to the film medium, the principal difference being that photographic ingenuity has permitted a display of fantastic effects in the dream sequences which were not possible on the stage, and that the psychological basis of the main story has been expanded and elaborated slightly for the sake of clarity.

Director Mitchell Leisen, in conferring with author Moss Hart, learned that some material had to be omitted from the 'legitimate' version owing to stage restrictions. This material has been included in the picture.

Ginger Rogers, in her portrayal of Liza Elliott, the repressed, inhibited fashion magazine editor who works her way out of a mental blind alley through a psychoanalyst's interpretation of her dreams, met brilliantly a test of virtuosity which might have floored a less versatile actress, especially considering the hazards of stepping into a characterisation originally created by Gertrude Lawrence.

In addition to the fine shadings of interpretation required by the main story, Ginger plays a child of 12 in the circus dream and a schoolgirl of 17 in one flashback episode.

For the first time since she dissolved her dancing partnership with Fred Astaire after *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*, Ginger returned to the ballroom floor with Don Loper as teammate in an interpretative ballet. And she completes, as it were, a cycle by dancing the Charleston. It was as a Charleston contest winner in Fort Worth that Ginger began her vaudeville career in 1925.

'The Saga of Jenny', which Ginger sings in the story, always stopped the show as sung by Gertrude Lawrence.

The star worked for nearly 100 days, in addition to three weeks of dance rehearsals prior to Technicolor camera work. She had five days off during shooting. Three constituted a honeymoon with U.S. Marine Private John Calvin Briggs, whom Ginger married at Pasadena Methodist Church early one morning.

In vivid contrast to her own wedding, attended by only two witnesses in addition to the officiating minister, was the star's screen wedding in the golden dream sequence.

A bridal procession in Chaucerian costumes accompanies her through a medieval garden to a Gothic outdoor church with choir stalls of clipped hedges and trees, out of which grow giant candelabra, and as a 32-voice choir sings. Ginger, in a satin wedding gown trimmed with pearls, steps up to a 30-foot wedding cake which forms the altar.

On the sidelines, behind the 240 dress extras who were the wedding guests, stood Private Briggs, smiling as he watched his bride take the arm of Jon Hall and turn to face Ray Milland, in ministerial vestments!

## GINGER ROGERS: ALL THAT SASS

### Gold Diggers of 1933 + Office Blues

Mon 27 Mar 18:20; Sat 15 Apr 12:30

### Shall We Dance

Tue 28 Mar 18:20; Sat 8 Apr 14:00 (+ illustrated talk on the magic of Fred and Ginger by Miles Eady, film writer and curator)

### The Major and the Minor

Wed 29 Mar 20:40; Tue 11 Apr 20:30;

Sat 22 Apr 12:40

### Backwards and in High Heels

Thu 30 March 18:20

### Vivacious Lady

Sat 1 Apr 15:40; Fri 14 Apr 18:20

### Stage Door

Sun 2 Apr 15:30 (+ intro by Sandi Toksvig);

Tue 4 Apr 20:40; Fri 7 Apr 18:10

### Black Widow

Wed 5 Apr 20:40; Sat 22 Apr 20:45;

Sun 30 Apr 18:45

### Bachelor Mother

Fri 7 Apr 14:20; Tue 18 Apr 20:50; Sat 22 Apr 15:30

### The Barkleys of Broadway

Sat 8 Apr 17:30; Mon 10 Apr 12:50;

Tue 25 Apr 20:40

### Monkey Business

Mon 10 Apr 15:30; Fri 21 Apr 18:30;

Sun 30 Apr 12:00

### 25 & Under: Introduction to Ginger Rogers

Wed 12 Apr 19:00

### Lady in the Dark

Wed 12 Apr 20:30; Fri 28 Apr 18:10

### Primrose Path

Sat 15 Apr 15:10; Wed 19 Apr 20:50

### Kitty Foyle: The Natural History of a Woman

Sun 16 Apr 12:20; Thu 20 Apr 20:40

### Roxie Hart

Mon 17 Apr 18:30; Sat 29 Apr 14:30

### Storm Warning

Sun 23 Apr 15:30; Sat 29 Apr 18:00

### City Lit at the BFI:

#### Ginger Rogers and All That Sass

Tue 4 Apr 18:30; Tue 11 Apr 18:30;

Tue 18 Apr 18:30; Tue 25 Apr 18:30

Promotional partner

**ALFIES**  
ANTIQUÉ MARKET

London's Best Kept Secret  
[www.alfiesantiques.com](http://www.alfiesantiques.com)

## BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop. We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Ray Milland, with whom Ginger was teamed in *The Major and the Minor*, appears as Charley Johnson, the advertising manager of her magazine, with whom she continually battles. In a third, or circus dream, Ray makes his most spectacular appearance as the ringmaster. In this sequence he also displays a vibrant baritone, singing his lines, as do all other members of the cast. This is Milland's first singing role.

The picture marks Warner Baxter's return to the screen for the first time in two years. He is to be seen in the role of the magazine publisher, which was played in the stage version by Bert Lytell.

Jon Hall plays Randy Curtis, the 'beautiful hunk of man' first impersonated by Victor Mature. Among the beautiful models appearing in the film are four six-foot showgirls, Bunny Waters, Susan Paley, Helen O'Hara and Dorothy Ford.

Barry Sullivan, Broadway leading man, is one of Paramount's most promising newcomers. He is soon to be seen with Dorothy Lamour in *Rainbow Island*, Technicolor musical, and in the Rachel Field story, *And Now Tomorrow*, starring with Loretta Young, Alan Ladd and Susan Hayward.

There was no ceiling on imagination in designing the costumes to make *Lady in the Dark* the gay and glittering piece of screen magic that it is. Fur dresses and sequined shorts, with plenty of accent on accessories, came from the inspired drawing boards of Edith Head, Mitchell Leisen, Mme. Karmska and Raoul Pene Du Bois.

To costume the production cost Paramount 185,000 dollars. The mink costume worn by Ginger Rogers accounted for 10,400 dollars, the blue sequin gown 3,300 dollars, and the wedding gown 2,800 dollars. The 48 blue dream dresses cost 16,000 dollars, while the 15 bridesmaids' dresses amounted to 10,000 dollars. Labour and material cost the studio 95,000 dollars, while such items as salaries for designers and wardrobe people, rental of furs, cleaning and dyeing accounted for the rest of the total cost.

The cast of *Lady in the Dark* numbered 654 persons, with 57 speaking parts. Some 528 property items were required by the film, almost all of them intricate contrivances calling for all the ingenuity of the 'prop' shop to develop.

The 'props' included a 170-page issue of the fashion magazine, *Allure*, complete in every detail, from sketches and galley proofs to printed edition. Mitchell Leisen and property man Dick Brandow spent a month preparing this item alone.

All drapery and costumes were hand-dyed to match the sketches of art director Raoul Pene Du Bois, and were then flame-proofed with calcium chloride to remove any danger of fire due to flimsiness of material.

Problems faced by construction engineer Luis Vance were:

A two-ring circus with concentric revolving platforms;

A circus audience consisting of three-foot papier mâché Easter eggs with painted faces, which had to twist and turn to watch the action;

A 'love temple' of intricate fretwork covered with peach blossoms.

To photograph the three dreams – the first in blue, the second in green and gold, and the third in rainbow circus hues – cameraman Ray Rennahan had to assemble more arc lights than had ever been focused on a single stage before.

Paramount Pictures