

CHRONOLOGY

- 1906 Born as Samuel Wilder in Sucha, Galicia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- 1909 The family moves to Krakow where the father opens the “Hotel City.”
- 1914 The assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo leads to the outbreak of World War I.
- 1916 The family flees to Vienna from fear of invasion by Russian troops. In November, ten-year-old Billie—as his mother calls him—witnesses the funeral of Kaiser Franz Joseph, which signals the coming end of the monarchy.
- 1918 The end of the war brings political turmoil to Vienna and an increasing polarization between nationalist and socialist parties. As Eastern Jews from the province, the Wilders experience the rise of anti-Semitism.
- 1919 With the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Wilders, as residents of the former Galicia (now part of Poland), have the choice to apply for Austrian citizenship, but they are turned down because they “fail to prove to belong by race and language to the German majority of Austria.”
- 1924 Billie Wilder graduates from high school. Defying his father’s wishes that he study law, he becomes a reporter for the yellow press tabloid *Die Stunde*, and later also *Die Bühne*.
- 1926 Serving as tour guide for the American Jazz band leader Paul Whiteman, Wilder leaves for Berlin where for the next seven years he will work as a freelance journalist for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, *Nachtausgabe*, *Tempo*, and *BZ am Mittag*, as well as ghost writer and later credited writer for numerous scripts.
- 1929 The stock market crash on Wall Street touches off a worldwide economic crisis and the withdrawal of U.S. loans from Germany. Wilder receives his first writing credit for *Der Teufelsreporter*.
- 1930 *Menschen am Sonntag*, based on Wilder’s script, is premiered and becomes a surprise success with Berlin audiences. Wilder is subsequently offered a contract by Ufa.

- 1931 Five million are unemployed in Germany.
- 1932 July elections see the Nazis victorious with 37.8 per cent of the vote. Hitler demands to be named chancellor. In the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt wins his first term.
- 1933 Von Schleicher resigns as chancellor and Hindenburg names Adolf Hitler new chancellor. One day after the Reichstag fire, on 27 February, Wilder flees to Paris.
- 1934 Together with Alexander Esway, Wilder directs his first feature, *Mauvaise graine*, during his exile in Paris. Through the help of Joe May, he lands a contract with Columbia Pictures and is able to travel to Hollywood. After his visitor visa expires, Wilder stays for a while in Mexicali, Mexico, before he can reenter the United States on a permanent visa.
- 1936 Wilder signs a contract with Paramount, changes his first name to Billy, and begins his longterm collaboration with Charles Brackett, which will result in thirteen cowritten scripts. Wilder marries Judith Coppicus Iribe.
- 1938 "Anschluss" of Austria to Nazi Germany. During the "Reichskristallnacht," Synagogues and Jewish stores are burnt all over the German Reich.
- 1939 Germany invades Poland. Wilder becomes a US citizen.
- 1941 After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the US enters the war.
- 1942 Wilder's directorial debut in Hollywood with *The Major and the Minor*.
- 1944 *Double Indemnity*, cowritten with Raymond Chandler, opens to positive reviews, but is overlooked at the Academy Awards.
- 1945 As a colonel for the Psychological Warfare Division of the U.S. Army, Wilder is back in Germany for the first time since the beginning of the war. There he oversees the editing of *Die Todesmühlen/ The Death Mills*, a documentary about the concentration camps. The Red Army liberates Auschwitz where Wilder's mother, stepfather, and grandmother have been killed.
- 1946 Wilder wins Academy Awards for director and best screenplay (with Charles Brackett) for *The Lost Weekend*.
- 1947 The Wilders divorce.
- 1948 In the so-called Paramount decision, the Federal Court rules in favor of the dismantling of the corporate structure of the studio and its movie theaters. The deregulation initiates the end of the classic studio era.
- 1949 Wilder marries Audrey Young.

- 1951 Wilder and Brackett win an Academy Award for best screenplay for *Sunset Boulevard*.
- 1954 Wilder leaves Paramount and freelances.
- 1957 With *Love in the Afternoon* Wilder begins collaboration with I. A. L. Diamond that will result in twelve scripts.
- 1960 Wilder wins three Academy Awards in one year—for producer, director, and screenplay (with Diamond)—for *The Apartment*.
- 1968 Court cases in the United States lead to the replacement of the Production Code with the Code of Self-Regulation.
- 1969 Charles Brackett dies.
- 1973 Wilder is signed by Universal to direct *The Front Page*.
- 1977 Wilder leaves Universal; makes *Fedora* with German tax-shelter money.
- 1981 Wilder's last film, *Buddy Buddy*, is released through MGM.
- 1988 I.A.L. Diamond dies.
- 1989 The auctioning of Wilder's art collection fetches \$32.6 million in New York City.
- 2002 On 27 March, Billy Wilder dies at the age of 95 in Beverly Hills.