

FILM MUSIC NOTES

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FOREWORD

Since the presentation of awards by the National Federation of Music Clubs to the musicians in the Motion Picture studios for their excellent music scores of last year, an urgent demand from educators in schools, universities, etc., has come for more detailed information regarding such music. FILM MUSIC NOTES will be issued monthly from October, 1941 to June, 1942, inclusive. Pictures recommended by the Hollywood and New York Committees, released during that interim, will be reviewed together with detailed information direct from the studios. The first issue will necessarily not contain much data about each picture owing to the fact that so large a number must be listed as released since May 1st, 1941. A charge of \$1.00 will be made for this year's service. Please return the blank at bottom of this sheet with remittance as soon as possible to FILM MUSIC NOTES, 6162 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, California.

Contents of this issue:

1. Comments of noted musicians on the importance of music in films
2. Article - "Things a Motion Picture Composer Has to Think About" - by Roy Webb - RKO Music Dept
3. Reviews of current motion pictures from the point of view of music interest.

Future issues to include, as regular series:

- Comments of noted musicians on film music
- Short articles by studio musicians
- List of films - 16mm and 35mm, available for schools, clubs and churches
- List of records available for use in schools, clubs and churches
- General news items on films and studio musician personalities
- Motion Picture reviews
- Questions and Answers - an open forum for criticism and comment

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6162 Hollywood Boulevard
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Film

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COMMENDATIONS BY NOTED MUSICIANS

"The demonstration of the importance of film music in the Hollywood Bowl at the Biennial Convention of the National Federation of Music Clubs in June, was one of the most impressive events of the entire week. The awards met with universal favor and it was most gratifying to all of us who are interested in film music to have this recognition paid to its conductors and interpreters, as well as the composers. You may quote me in most enthusiastic terms on this matter." Sigmund Spaeth, President National Association of Composers and Conductors, New York City.

"Motion Picture night in the Hollywood Bowl during the Biennial convention was an artistic triumph and a bright spot in the entire program. The most distinguished composers and conductors gave of their brilliant talents for this media-music for pictures. It gave a concrete idea of the entire score to the musician and the music lover, also a chance to evaluate the merits and fine work of those excellent composers working in Hollywood. It was fascinating as well as educational." Charles Wakefield Cadman, American Composer.

"The Festival of Motion Picture Music held in Hollywood Bowl Saturday evening was one of the most significant events in the history of the National Federation of Music Clubs. The recognition of composers, conductors and musical artists in the motion picture industry is very timely. Music in the films is the newest important musical development. It is here to stay and will definitely affect our educational and cultural life. Our encouragement and intelligent support should be given to every advancing step in this great art." Dr. John Warren Erb, Head of Symphonic Music Department, New York University, also of Choral Music, Lafayette College.

"Two things greatly impressed me about the Motion Picture Music program in Hollywood Bowl. One was the excellence of the orchestra itself and the amazing technical skill of the players. The other factor was the worth of some of the orchestral compositions. They were technically speaking, film music designed for the screen, yet some of them were worthy of being played in the finest type of concert. An exposition of a new art form which has great intrinsic value." Mrs. Edgar Stillman-Kelley, Concert Pianist and former President National Federation of Music Clubs.

"The National project is an important one and is sure to bring recognition to the fine work which is being done by musicians in the film studios as well as making a great many people more aware of the value of that contribution. The educational value of music as used in motion pictures is much greater than most of us realize - education none the less powerful because it is indirect and often unconscious." Marion Flagg, Director Music Education, Dallas, Texas, Public Schools

"You are doing a splendid piece of work. I certainly would be glad to have the monthly service as it would make the work in the high schools on the appreciation of music of the cinema more effective." Mabelle Glenn, Director Music, Kansas City Schools.

At last we are to have a publication devoted exclusively to Music in the Films. The importance of this cannot be overestimated for today the leading serious composers of the world are contributing to the screen. The studios are fast becoming aware of the growing interest to music on the part of the public. One studio has had the courage to fit action to music and others are sure to follow.

Let us wish Film Music Notes every kind of success and let us hope it will reach the far corners of the great musical world.

Alexander Steinert, Conductor-Composer
Conducted Gershwin's Porgy and Bess in New York
and entour, Conductor National Youth Orchestra
Los Angeles

THINGS A MOTION PICTURE COMPOSER
HAS TO THINK ABOUT

By
Roy Webb

There are many times in writing a musical score when the composer must subserve his music to the requirements of the scene for which he is writing. He has to be careful not to be carried away with the development of the musical qualities of his composition. A long sweeping melody may suddenly have to be interrupted by a comic theme or an equally foreign element of some kind, which, from the standpoint of composition, is very awkward. I have been told many times that some of my music on the recording stage sounds uninteresting in itself, but that playing it with the picture enhances it tremendously.

The treatment of a certain scene can only be taught by the lessons of experience and the extensive study of the works of our best synchronizers. There are very few composers who can enter the picture business and make an immediate success of it, unless they have had some previous theatrical experience; for after all, the motion picture is more of an entertainment expression than classical.

There is a story told about a famous composer and an equally famous producer which illustrates the inability of a fine artist to understand the requirements of the picture business. When called by the producer to write a score for a motion picture he said, "You give me the scenario; I will read it and after having thought about it I will write a score. Then you can make your picture to it."

To be a good musical scorer a man must be willing to forget any temperamental notions he may have, or otherwise become very unpopular with his co-workers! He may be called upon to work around the clock and to compose music which at the moment is not of the quality to which his mood may be dictating.

As an example of the many different ways to treat a scene, let's take one where two lovers sitting on the porch in the moonlight are discussing a difficult situation they have to face. The composer may have to decide that the night atmosphere may be best, or the love motive, or the troublesome situation, or the thoughts in the players' minds; but after all a radio playing a jazz tune might point up the scene better than anything.

I might go on and fill a book before I could cover all the different requirements of a motion picture musician's trade, but cannot do so now. Maybe next time!

ROY WEBB
RKO STUDIOS

Among the recent fine scores Roy Webb has furnished us are those for "Tom, Dick and Harry" and "Father Takes A Wife." He has gained a reputation for scoring comedy pictures.

REVIEW OF PICTURES RELEASED SINCE MAY 1st, 1941 and COMMENDED BY THE MOTION PICTURE
PREVIEW COMMITTEE OF HOLLYWOOD and NEW YORK
Grace Widney Mabee, Hollywood Chairman, Mme Adelaide Gescheidt, New York Chairman

BLOOD AND SAND, 20th Century-Fox, Music by Alfred Newman and Vincente Gomez

This superb production by Reuben Mamoulian is a masterpiece of color film. The story depicts the life of a son (Tyrone Power) of a Spanish matedor, his rise to fame and fortune as a celebrated bullfighter - his marriage to his childhood sweetheart and his final calamitous destruction brought about through his infatuation for a beautiful but wicked and heartless woman (Rita Hayworth). The music by Alfred Newman with the collaboration of the Spanish musician and singer, Vincente Gomez, is at all times most comprehensive. The gay festive mood of the taverns is vividly portrayed and in sharp contrast are the scenes of devotion with the music that of the old Gregorian chant played upon a typically antique chapel reed organ, which gives the effect of macabre foreboding. The violin solos by Louis Kaufman are beautiful and much of the background score is played by Vincente Gomez on the guitar and he is seen as well as heard which brings more interest in the entire picture. The borrowed Iberian Folk Idioms with special stress on very striking Flamenco or Spanish Gypsy airs are all most appropriate. Adult.

BLOSSOMS IN THE DUST, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Music by Herbert Stothart

An extraordinarily fine production of the true story of Edna Gladney (still living) who by her persistent and unselfish efforts succeeded in legally removing the brand "illegitimate" from birth certificates in the state of Texas. Greer Garson's portrayal of this great woman is truly inspiring. The music supplied by Herbert Stothart is especially fitting, his use of familiar nursery airs supplying the perfect background for the scenes in which the homeless children cared for through the efforts of Mrs. Gladney appeared. Family.

CITIZEN KANE, RKO, Producer-Director, Orson Welles, Music by Bernard Herrmann

The life story of a dominating self-centered man, who in spite of unlimited power procured by enormous wealth fails to attain the success which brings happiness and contentment. The picture reflects none of the Hollywood's glamourization methods but is filmed with unbiased sincerity, consummate artistry and startling originality. We give Mr. Herrmann's own words in describing its musical setting: "The film was so unusual, technically, that it afforded me many unique opportunities for musical experiment. It abounded in montages, which were long enough to permit me to compose complete musical numbers, rather than mere cues to fit them. Mr. Welles was extremely cooperative in this respect, and in many cases, cut his film to suit these complete numbers, rather than doing what is ordinarily done - cut the music to suit the film. In the scenes of Kane's newspaper activities, I was able to write a kind of miniature ballet suite, the various photographic montages being presented in the form of complete little dance numbers of the 1890s, including gallops, polkas, hornpipes, schottisches, etc. Later on in the breakfast scene between Kane and his first wife, the montage showing the passage of years and the waning affection was expressed in the form of a theme and variations. The very style of the montage practically dictated this form.

The emotional impact of these musical numbers was much greater than that of background music which has no real beginning or ending. The audience receives, in addition to the effects created for the eye, the actual physical and mental impetus of a musical composition as well. I attempted to treat the familiar old forms in a modern way, so as to be consistent with the general musical style of the picture. The occasional "radio scoring" I felt was rather new. The movies overlook opportunities for musical cues which only last a few seconds, the reason being that the eye covers the transition. In radio drama, every scene must be bridged by some sort of sound device, so that even five seconds of music becomes a vital instrument in telling the ear that the scene is shifting. An example of this is found in the transition between Kane, the young newspaper owner, and Kane, as the middle aged man giving up his papers.

Although I am not a great believer in the technique of the "leit-motiv" for motion picture music, the nature of this film demanded some leit motifs in linking together the various time juxtapositions. The most important motif - that of Kane's power - is given out in the very first two bars heard. The second motif which should give away the secret of "Rosebud" to anyone who listens carefully, is also stated right at the beginning of the picture. It occurs after the sudden going out of the light, and proceeds Kane's statement of "Rosebud." These two motifs are the most important in the entire picture and they occur throughout the film in many phases and in many orchestrations. The motif of power becomes a vigorous piece of ragtime. It is transformed into a hornpipe polka. It becomes the very last part of the finale, likewise with "Rosebud." It personifies Kane's nostalgic return to his youth and is used to portray the best part of his nature. Only one other motif of importance is derived from the tune, "Oh, Mr. Kane," a theme used in a satiric sense. Many sections were written for odd instrumental combinations which avoided the conventional orchestral sound. I had sufficient time to orchestrate all of the music and to conduct it and think about it. Twelve weeks were devoted to the score as against the usual six weeks or even less given to other pictures of this length and importance. Thanks are given to Mr. Welles and Mr. Dreyer, also James Stewart, chief sound technician of the RKO Studios for wonderful cooperation and patience."

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Victor Fleming, Music by Franz Waxman

This is the finest treatment offered by the films thus far of this famous story and it shows us, furthermore, what tremendous strides have been made in motion picture technique since the first version appeared. Here psychological import is stressed and made clear by suggestion, thereby gaining immeasurably in strength. The photography with its exciting montage shots and those of laboratory scenes is exceptional. The musical score shows appropriate feeling for creating dramatic intent and Mr. Waxman has used again some of those remarkable sound effects with which we are beginning to associate him and which add so materially in establishing mood and interest. Some may protest the chorus of celestial nature heard at the opening of the film, on the basis that it is incongruous, given the theme and its treatment. Others feel it emphasizes the good in man rising triumphant over evil, as was so beautifully shown at the close. Adult.

FATHER TAKES A WIFE, RKO, Music by Roy Webb

This sophisticated comedy, well acted and excellently directed, is a clever bit of entertainment that should appeal to almost everyone. The old theme reversed is a novelty: Father (Adolphe Menjou at his best) shocks his staid son and daughter-in-law (John Howard and Florence Rice) by falling in love with an actress (Gloria Swanson.) Their individual egos make the road a rocky one and both families are almost broken up through the zealous efforts of the wives to promote a talented young singer who is typically self centered and oblivious to the trouble he is causing. Audiences will undoubtedly welcome Gloria Swanson back to the screen for she looks almost as she did twenty years ago and possesses definite appeal. The musical background by Roy Webb is well done, its orchestral arrangements and execution enhancing the humorous and emotional development of the film. Webb is unusually good in music for comedy. Adult.

IT STARTED WITH EVE, Universal, Music directed by Charles Previn

A romance built on the Cinderella theme which will undoubtedly find favor with the Durbin fans. The comedy gets off to an excellent start, largely due to Charles Laughton, who in the earlier scenes is delightful as the father who on his supposed death bed takes a fancy to the girl introduced to him as his son's fiancée. Some of the complications which ensue when he insists on a new lease on life are exceedingly amusing and well done. When he finds that the fiancée he has met is not the real one, he determines to turn his son's affections to her, nevertheless, and his efforts provide the basis for a wholesome and refreshing comedy-romance. The night club scene detracts from the picture's value. Deanna Durbin sings her songs with

poise and her usual charm. Her voice seems to have gained considerably in volume which may be due to the recording. The songs used were "Clavelitos," Valverde, "Going Home," Dvorak, and the waltz from Tschaikowsky's "Sleeping Beauty" ballet.

LADIES IN RETIREMENT, Columbia, Director, Charles Vidor, Music by Ernest Toch

All the elements of a most exciting melodrama are in this picture. The insane Creed sisters, flawlessly played by Elsa Lanchester and Edith Barrett, the rich recluse who had formerly been a lady of easy virtue, the good for nothing thief, Albert, and the noble minded sister who stooped to murder to protect her unfortunate kin - these are all here, against an eerie background of the Thames estuary. The cast is exceptional. A very fine musical score accompanies this picture. Toch is a specialist in creating weird music. "He believes symphony orchestras can achieve new expressiveness by incorporating sounds of nature. One instrument he tried out in this picture - the common flower pot. For the scene in which Ida Lupino contemplates dark deeds - rides in a wagon along a snowy road, he suspended a dozen flower pots of varying sizes upside down from a high metal frame. Toch attached clothes pins to the pots until they attained the approximate pitch he required and then wrote out the score for the pots, on the ordinary music staff. A musician using small mallets played the pots with the orchestra. The result was a thin brittle sound of musical tonality, like that of cartwheels on pebbles." Adult.

LADY BE GOOD, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Director, Norman Z. McLeod, Music and Lyrics by Ira and George Gershwin. Additional songs by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, Roger Eden and Arthur Freed.

THE LITTLE FOXES, RKO, Producer, Samuel Goldwyn, Music by Meredith Willson

Lillian Hellman's bitter and dramatic character study, has lost nothing in the screen version. The skilful portrayals of an exceptional cast, headed by Bette Davis and Herbert Marshall in the story of the Hubbards and their sister, Regina, make this absorbing and never-to-be-forgotten, film fare. Outstanding even in the brilliant company of "The little foxes that destroy the vines," is the beautiful and touching performance of Patricia Collinge as Burdette. Meredith Willson's fine music score, while entirely original, draws largely on the folk idiom for its effects. It is conceived with appropriate feeling for the background, particularly in the use of clever instrumentation, perfectly fulfils the composer's desire to aid in the creation of a mood, rather than to concoct lavish orchestral effects where motion picture music is concerned. Willson composed an original negro spiritual, sung by the chorus. Adult.

LYDIA, United Artists, Director, Julien Duvivier, Music by Miklos Rosza

Julien Duvivier has given us in "Lydia" a beautiful and tender picture touched with imagination and charm. Never has Merle Oberon, as the spinster who never married, played with such feeling and insight, nor has Edna May Oliver, with her salty lines of pungent dialogue and her dramatic death scene, ever risen to greater heights. A newcomer, Hans Yaray, makes the role of the blind pianist both moving and effective. Lydia, having grown old in unselfish service to the cause of blind children, relates in detail the story of her love life. The photography, especially in the earlier New England scenes, the ballroom sequence and the closing scenes on the terrace are lovely. A superb musical score never obtrusive but always establishing the perfect relation between background and action, makes this picture a joy to the discriminating. Adult.

NEW WINE, United Artists, Director, Reinhold Schunzel, Musical Arr. Miklos Rosza

A charming story, delightfully told, even though some liberties are taken with the facts of Schubert's life. Musically the film uses Schubert's music exclusively and Miklos Rosza has so beautifully arranged it to make a definite contribution to the best screen music. Among the favorite numbers are Serenade and Impatience, sung by

(New Wine - continued)

Ilona Massey. The Ave Maria and Marche Militaire, sung by St. Luke's Choristers, who are members of the Federation of Music Clubs, the Rosamund Ballet and portions of Symphonies No. 5 and 7. The Unfinished Symphony played during the visit of Schubert's sweetheart to Beethoven (Albert Basserman) in behalf of the younger musician (Alan Curtis as Schubert) is thrilling in the extreme. Family.

SERGEANT YORK, Warner Bros., Director, Howard Hawks, Music by Max Steiner

A timely war drama based on the life of Alvin York, the hero of the Argonne in World War No. I. This picture might well be sub-titled "American Saga" so truly does it delineate for us the biography of a simple religious American (Gary Cooper) of the backwoods Tennessee mountains who found himself, largely through the influence of a country preacher (Walter Brennan.) He did his duty as he saw it and he still lives unspoiled by any of the adulation he received when acclaimed as a hero. The music by Max Steiner is skilfully set by a master craftsman, through the use of familiar hymn tunes and original melodies splendidly orchestrated by Hugo Friedhofer. Beulah Land, the Tennessee state song, "Sweet By and By" and "I've Got at the Hill of the Hollow" are all interwoven into the background score most effectively. We hear that the score is to be published in the form of a symphony of the Tennessee Mountain Folk Songs. Mature-Family.

SMILIN' THROUGH, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Music Arranged by Herbert Stothart

This is the new version of the popular musical produced by the Selwyns on Broadway in 1919 with Jane Cowl in the lead, also a film version was made several years back which did not give opportunity for many songs. The story provides the favorite Jeanette MacDonald with a number of beautiful songs of yesteryear and undoubtedly will please her many movie fans. Technicolor is used lavishly. The sentiments about Britain are most timely. Altogether a fine picture commended for the entire family. Gene Raymond does a splendid piece of acting. Stothart's arrangement of the music is excellent and everyone will love the familiar "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," "Smilin' Through" and "There's A Long, Long Trail."

UNFINISHED BUSINESS, Universal, Director, Gregory La Cava, Music by Franz Waxman

Excellent acting and direction make good entertainment out of a story perhaps rather questionable from an ethical standpoint. Robert Montgomery as the wastrel and Irene Dunne as his wife, contribute their usual smooth performances and as the film ends with the young couple trying to make a lasting thing of marriage which began under poor auspices, adults can afford to overlook the film's weaknesses for the sake of the good points. The picture is highlighted by sound effects of the types which are used more and more in modern productions to point up the psychological value of certain sequences. Adults.

WHEN LADIES MEET, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Music by Bronislau Kaper

The screen revival of Rachel Crother's brilliant social drama and high comedy skilfully enacted by Greer Garson and Joan Crawford and Robert Taylor, will be welcomed by their many admirers. The significant "Ich Liebe Dich" by Grieg used as a theme song and sung by Miss Crawford and Miss Garson was charming. The apt use of musical sound effects, all inter related added appreciably to the picture. Kaper is giving some good musical scores. Adult.

A word of appreciation must be given to the Department of Studio and Public Service of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, and to the Public Relations Department of Fox West Coast Theaters for their cooperation in making this bulletin possible.