



FILM MUSIC NOTES



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FOREWORD:

American family life and historical incidents in the colorful tapestry of these United States, of Canada and our neighbors in South America, take on deeper significance in the films being released this year.

By way of escape from the world of reality, some gay musicals and romantic comedy help to brighten these days filled with the many sacrifices we all must make in order to maintain the American way of life.

MUSIC in the films conveys to the beholder-listener more than the camera does at a given moment, and still it must never be more than the voice of that camera. The pictures FILM MUSIC NOTES recommends to its readers are worthwhile ones and contain appropriate music by the best composers in the world.

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COMMENTS

HOW TO LISTEN TO FILM MUSIC

"I try to register the general artistic qualities of this music irrespective of its function as a background score. Is it vital and original and well made? To listen with 'both ears' for either objective is difficult in itself because attention is absorbed by photography, dialogue and the implications of the action as well as of the acting.

"To judge film music properly and in not too tentative a degree, one should know at least the plot of the film, if possible, have read the play, the book or the script. If film and music on the screen amount to anything jointly, then they constitute a kind of music-drama or drama with music. I would not dream of hearing a new opera without knowing the libretto and some of the score. Something of that consideration is due film-music-drama or dramatic film music, whatever designation be chosen."

Dr. Bruno David Ussher, Nationally known music critic

FILM MUSIC NOTES endeavors to give valuable information concerning the music of all good pictures with special articles by the composers who write this music.

THOSE WISHING THE ENTIRE YEAR'S FILE OF FILM MUSIC NOTES (Oct. 1941 to June 1942) MAY HAVE SAME BY SENDING ONE DOLLAR (\$1.00) to 6162 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif.

NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST

It is estimated that seven thousand musicians - musical directors, composers, conductors, arrangers, recording specialists, song writers, voice coaches, cutters, members of the orchestras, etc. - are engaged in the Hollywood Motion Picture Studios.

With the union predicting that more than thirty thousand musicians will be called to the colors during the coming year, music departments of the major studios are making plans to use girl musicians in studio orchestras.

Plans for a new type of eight-minute short subjects have been completed by Conductor Leopold Stokowski and Camera Wizard Slavko Vorkapich. They'll put out a series of one-reel films in which Stokowski musical scores will be interpreted photographically by Vorkapich, Hollywood's best known montage expert.

Arthur Lange, well-known composer and recording director of films, has entered simultaneously the phonograph recording and publishing field. CO-ART Recording Studio in Beverly Hills, has released a number of excellent recordings. Among them are Charles Cadman's "Trail Pictures"; also a two piano arrangement of "Dark Dancers of the Mardi Gras"; Clifford Vaughn's "Oriental Translations"; "Modes of Transportation" by George Tremblay; "Piece in the Form of a Rhapsody" for violin and piano by Sol Kaplan and a set of four tone sketches from Arthur Lange's own "Symphonic Suite" played by the Compinsky Chamber Orchestra. These are available at the CO-ART Studios, Beverly Hills, California.

The April issue of FILM MUSIC NOTES will carry an article on other composers not mentioned in the February and March numbers.

REVIEWS OF CURRENT PICTURES FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF MUSIC INTEREST COMMENDED BY THE MOTION PICTURE PREVIEW COMMITTEE OF HOLLYWOOD AND NEW YORK.

Grace Widney Mabee, Hollywood Chairman, Mme Adelaide Gescheidt, New York Chairman

BORN TO SING, MGM. Dir: Edward Ludwig. Musical Dir: David Snell and Lennie Hayton

An improbable story on a trite and often exploited theme form a poor vehicle for the talents of Virginia Weidler and the several clever children who from time to time enlighten an otherwise dull picture. It is a common fault among producers to rush promising young actresses into leads for which they are not suited or into weak, poorly constructed films which show every evidence of having been hastily put together for box-office purposes. This is a case in point - the finale, "Ballad for Americans," is well done and could with advantage be made into a "short." It has no relation whatever to the silly and unethical story which precedes it and should be eliminated from the film and used by itself. Busby Berkeley's direction is interesting in its groupings as was to be expected, and Douglas McPhail sings the Ballad beautifully. In justice to everyone concerned, it should not have been tacked onto the picture which certainly deserves no such fine ending. Family.

CAPTAINS OF THE CLOUDS, Warner Bros. Dir: Michael Curtiz. Music: Max Steiner

An absorbing drama of high adventure with superb photography making this a pictorial masterpiece of Canadian scenery. The story begins with the "Bush Pilots" of Dominion territory and their problems in dealing with a cocky sky-riding hijacker, portrayed by the star, James Cagney. Eventually he applies for duty in the R.A.F. only to be informed that he is too old for combat duty. After training cadets to fly by instinct rather than by rule, he is disqualified and from then on the picture moves swiftly to its inevitable climax. Additional interest is added by the appearance of actual R.C.A.F. cadets and personnel as well as background. Direction is outstanding, Cagney and Morgan excellent in their respective parts and the supporting cast is well chosen. Music is here given adequate significance and supports the action perfectly. The beautiful score is expertly enhanced with lavish orchestration, employing the lovely "Swan Lake" as a theme for the girl. Instrumentation is highly effective in episodes demanding varying sound elements, (notably in the scene depicting the landing in the fog.) The fog settles and he cannot see the bay in which to land his plane. Those on shore build fires to guide him but he cannot see these until he is within a few feet. Each time he tries to descend, the music begins quite high - gradually descends with repeated notes in the strings. About every two bars, trombones enter with a lower chord each time. This conveys an eerie fog-like feeling illustrating the descent of the plane. The song, "Captains of the Clouds," was effective and sung with spirit by Cagney and his colleagues. In the opening sequences Indian music predominates, giving gorgeous affirmation to the incomparable scenic grandeur. In the last part of the film, showing the night departure of the Bombers and their subsequent flight, beauty of photography in technicolor reaches new heights, with scenes that are absolutely breath taking, so nearly do they approach the sublime. Mature-Family.

THE INVADERS, Ortus Films-Col. release. Dir: Michael Powell. Music: Vaughn Williams

A compelling and dramatic study in contrasting ideologies, superbly enacted and photographed and set against a background designed to show the beauty, vastness and majesty of Canada in all its grandeur. The action begins in an outpost of the far north and carries us through the rolling wheat fields to the Canadian Rockies and back to Niagara Falls and an eminently satisfactory climax. The only feminine interest is provided by a new comer, Glynis Johns, but her "Anna" is a delicately etched and cameo like characterization of haunting poignancy and she more than holds her own with the justly celebrated actors who form the greater part of an exceptional cast. Music provided by the London Symphony Orchestra and Ralph Vaughn Williams, its director, is outstanding, perfectly suited in key and tempo to each episode as it occurs, drawing on folk music when necessary and employing with extraordinary effect the tinkle of a piano coming from a radio and the accordion of a guide, in the scenes with Leslie Howard. All in all a picture of beauty, worth and value, which will appeal especially to those who require more than mere entertainment. M. F.

MISTER V, U.A.-British Release. Dir: Leslie Howard. Music: Muir Matheson.

This is the first film to use the world wide "V for Victory" theme and one of the best of the British films seen thus far. Leslie Howard as director and actor proves himself a most sensitive hand in both fields of endeavor. He is cast as the high-minded and purposeful college professor whose aim it is to free German intellectuals from the terrors of the Gestapo, and his is indeed a superb and moving performance culminating in a stirring climax. The fine photography and beautiful musical setting by Muir Matheson, one of England's excellent composers, together with the lack of the usual horror scenes in this type of picture make this film an outstanding one. Mature-Family.

THE REMARKABLE ANDREW, Para. Dir: Stuart Heisler. Music: Victor Young

Good fantasy, enjoyably portrayed and excellently timed. The director has handled the story in such a manner as to make the whole humorous fable seem perfectly credible, especially since "Mr. Jordan" and "Mr. Scratch" have paved the way for us. The background of patriotic airs provided by Victor Young is fittingly stirring and the film is, as a whole, pleasant and wholesome entertainment. Mature-Family.

SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS, Para. Dir: Preston Sturges. Music: Sigmund Krumgold

This highly entertaining and effective story concerns the adventures of a successful young movie director who, in trying to gain firsthand knowledge about the lives of the underprivileged, learns in the end through his experiences that to make pictures which will make humanity laugh is more important than to depict its misery. In spite of the silly swimming pool sequences, the picture has some fine and genuinely moving moments, notably those in the negro church scenes. A very fine and appropriate and well-directed musical score supplies exactly the right background, so important to this type of picture. Adults.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE, Korda Production. Dir: Ernst Lubitsch. Music Dir: W. Heyman

A melodramatic comedy with more emphasis on drama than comedy. It is difficult to adjudge this production without allowing sentiment to exert a certain influence, particularly since some of the dialogue is so uncannily apropos of the situation involving Miss Lombard. Nevertheless the film is for the most part both entertaining and interesting and certainly never did Miss Lombard look lovelier nor act better. It can be truly said that it will be a fitting picture by which to remember her. In some ways, indeed, it steps out in front in projecting a make-believe situation in a Polish city wherein a theatrical troupe impersonate Nazi agents and the hero is forced for a time to pretend that he is a spy of the Gestapo. But the beginning is too realistic, with storm troopers invading Poland, to set any mood for riotous comedy and it is weird fun at best, and actually in the long run is far more analogous to melodrama. It is a controversial casting for Mr. Benny, but so too, giving him an opportunity for some straight acting assignments, which, it must be admitted he does surprisingly well. Direction is, of course, everything one expects in a Lubitsch film and photography is equally fine. Suspense is maintained throughout with just enough comedy and pathos blended for proper balance and perfect timing. The music is very well orchestrated and nicely adapted to emphasize national characteristics and the use of Chopin's Military Polonaise add special color both at the opening and at the close. Mature-Family.

FANTASIA, Walt Disney. Musical Dir: Edward H. Plumb. Conductor of Orchestra: Leopold Stokowski. Narrator: Deems Taylor

Fantasia has been revised with happy results for popular showing. The new running time is eighty-two minutes instead of over two hours, as before. The Bach "Toccata and Fugue" is deleted, also many of the shots of Mr. Stokowski conducting the orchestra. It loses none of its charm and all its loveliness and beauty will be a delight to all. Family.

REAP THE WILD WIND, Paramount. Producer-Director: Cecil B. DeMille
Music: Victor Young

Cecil DeMille, whose pictures are considered a one-man institution, has produced a gorgeous sea drama with under ocean battles with the monsters that inhabit the deep. However, he has surrounded himself in the making of REAP THE WILD WIND with most skilled men in each field of production, even to the musician, Victor Young, who has provided an outstanding musical background to this mystery story.

The story deals with America's fight to whip a little island empire of pirate wreckers that ruled the strategic Florida Keys a century ago, before the railroad era, when the sea route was the lifeline of the nation, linking the rich Mississippi Valley with industrial New England. Actual paintings were made by DeMille's artist friend, Dan Sayre Groesbeck, of twenty-five key scenes of action on board sailing vessels, on the old wharves, in the streets and homes of Charleston, South Carolina, negroes loading cotton in Havana, a hurricane at sea, a romance in the moonlit garden shaded by the clinging moss of the South. In Charleston, the company found Old Church Street looking exactly as it did one hundred years ago with exception of telephones, electric light wires and fire hydrants. These modern devices were removed by the Mayor of the city for three days while shooting the picture. Hospitality indeed! Mature-Family.

The musical score of a motion picture should be felt but not heard. That's the orchestral philosophy of Cecil B. DeMille as applied to the purely dramatic art of the screen. He believes the score of a picture should enhance and point up the dramatic values of the action, but that the moment the audience becomes conscious of the music, the overall effect is weakened through the division of attention.

His favorite composer and conductor is Victor Young. "Because," says the producer, "of three important reasons. First, Victor is highly gifted; second, he is not a musical grandstander, but understands the importance of teamwork in picture making and is always cooperative; third, he is the only composer I know who seems to understand my language in discussing music. I describe what I want, in the rather groping terms of an utter layman, and Victor is always able to give me what I want."

Four main dramatic themes interplay throughout Young's musical score for DeMille's current technicolor sea saga, REAP THE WILD WIND.

One is the love theme for the romance of Paulette Goddard and Ray Milland, another for that of Miss Goddard and Milland's rival, John Wayne, a third is a tragic theme that dogs Susan Hayward, who plays Paulette Goddard's cousin, to her death in the hold of a sinking ship, and the fourth is a menacing musical characterization tailored to the role of Raymond Massey, the "heavy" of the piece.

There is a fifth theme, but that doesn't come in until the last reel, which it entirely consumes. This is the bizarre retributive sequence in which Milland and Wayne, searching for Miss Hayward's body, descend into the hold of the sunken ship in diving suits and are attacked by a tentacled monster of the deep - a giant squid, which has two more tentacles than an octopus, is twice as swift and nearly three times as big.

It is the eerie technicolor effects of this scene which, setting off the deadly action and breath-taking suspense, causes DeMille to term the motif "beautiful terror." It is a canvas of predominating greens of varying shades, with sharp shafts of sunlight stabbing through the water and shimmering with the current; of brilliantly hued little fish (live ones) flashing by; of bolts of lovely silks and satins that make up the cargo of the ship; tipped over and unraveling before your eyes, and of the lobster-like red and white of the giant squid. The slow motion of the human divers beneath the surface of these tropic seas adds to the weirdness.

A few sounds - as of Milland's muffled call for help, the gentle thud of falling bales, and the scraping of the ship's keel as she starts to slide off the sunken coral reef on which she lies suspended - actually were recorded under water.

To heighten the effect of the scene audibly DeMille wanted music that would increase the suspense, heighten the effect of deadly menace, and at the same time, enlarge upon and sharpen the note of retributive justice that underlies the visible

action of the story at this point, when John Wayne, seeing his mortal enemy about to be destroyed by the squid, as though by the hand of fate, goes to Milland's aid in spite of himself, and is himself destroyed.

The music had to have body, vigorous momentum and climactic emotion, yet no Wagnerian volume to obtrude upon the absorption of the audience in the picture itself. It was a mighty task, and Young completely scored the scene four times before DeMille finally gave his approval.

For the rest, the score had to be in keeping with the period and locale of the picture - 1840; in Key West, Florida and Charleston, South Carolina. This involved considerable research. Hundreds of sea chanteys, negro spirituals and popular tunes were sorted and examined. None was used. Young wound up by writing a saucy capstan tune himself, with Troy Sanders of the Paramount music department supplying the lyrics, the burden of which runs:

"So heave-ho, haul away, just the same as me,
For you're nothing but a packet rat
Aboard the Nellie B."

Paulette Goddard sings six stanzas of this chantey, and Lynne Overman a couple more. Martha O'Driscoll also sings a song, "'Twas But a Humble Little Flow'r," by Sanders, who also wrote two spirituals, "Bye and Bye" and "Who's Going to be My Honey?"

All in all, it was a major assignment to write the music for REAP THE WILD WIND. The written score fills a volume an inch and a half thick, which is about the size of some of the full length operas.

Young will record some of it as mood music for Decca Records.

WOMAN OF THE YEAR, MGM. Dir: George Stevens. Music by: Franz Waxman

This picture sets a high standard in production, ethical value and entertainment. The story is a good one. A star newspaper woman (Katharine Hepburn) marries a colleague (Spencer Tracy) but continues her hectic career, placing political and social duties above those of her home. She finally learns she must lead a more balanced life if she would keep her husband and home. The dialogue is crisp and witty and the accompanying music, while one might wish for more of it, is, as usual with Franz Waxman, beautifully prepared and presented. Especially interesting are the orchestral effects used to accompany the main theme and also those used in conjunction with the flashes of news headlines. In several places, the music for the moment is the most important actor, especially in the shadowed scene in Tess' apartment when the characters are not visible. Here the music is lifted to an almost abstract height and beautifully sets the mood of the following scene. Comedy is also intensified by humorous notes. (Mature-Family).

The following timely films are commended for family:

ON THE SUNNY SIDE, 20th C.F.
FIESTA, U.A.-Hal Roach
THE FLEET'S IN, Paramount
SONG OF THE ISLANDS, 20th C.F.
THE GREENIE, M.G.M. "Miniature"
WE DO IT BECAUSE, M.G.M. Short
THE REMARKABLE ANDREW, Paramount
ALWAYS IN MY HEART, Warner Bros.
TO THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI, 20th C.F.

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THE CALIFORNIA JUNIOR SYMPHONY, Warner Bros. Director: Jean Negulesco.
Musical Conductor: Peter Meremblum

A new short just released by Warner Bros., features this talented California Junior Symphony-Orchestra, which has had such a phenomenal success the past few years. Their appearance in "They Shall Have Music" with Jascha Heifetz, also in "There's Magic in Music" (Interlochen setting) will be remembered by our readers. Originally this group numbered fifty-five pieces. In this short, eighty pieces are used, but the organization now numbering one hundred and fourteen was rotated so that all players were included from time to time in the film. The orchestra and young pianist played superbly. The music is well chosen and performed including "Trepak" from Tchaikowsky's "Nutcracker Suite"; "Finale from Tchaikowsky's Fifth Symphony"; "Meistersinger Overture," Wagner; "Sonatina," Clemente; "America Marches On," Bromberg; and a symphonic arrangement of "Pop Goes the Weasel" by Lucien Caillet. Little eight year old Jackie Horner, child prodigy, played the piano arrangement of the Sonatina with orchestra conducted by Gregory Stone.

This picture will bring inspiration to thousands of youngsters who are studying music and it will be interesting to all musically-minded people as its players are serious about the business of music. Its value as a training ground is certified by the fact that the members within the orchestra have gone directly into major orchestras of the country. Others have received scholarships at Curtis Institute, Oberlin Conservatory. Paul Sure was chosen as concertmaster of the Stokowski All-American Youth Orchestra on its tour of South America.

Four world famous conductors have conducted this Junior Orchestra, (all under 21 years of age) - Stokowski, Bruno Walter, Albert Coates and Jose Iturbi. To the founder-conductor, Peter Meremblum, goes the credit for this country's most unique aggregation because for two years he carried all expense of music, rents, printing and other incidentals.

Thanks are due Jack Warner for his far-seeing judgment in filming this worthy group of young musicians. We recommend this picture to students all over the country.

Naomi Reynolds, member of Hollywood Preview Committee