



FILM MUSIC NOTES

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FOREWORD:

Under the heading "The Triumph of Music over Gun Fire" John Kieran, writing as "One Small Voice" in The Sun, emits a veritable shout in behalf of the arts in general and music in particular, as speaking a universal language.

"There has long been talk of a universal language," he wrote, "and the problems created by this war have brought some pointed questions along that line. But there is seldom mention of the fact that the world for ages has had some forms of universal language in common use. Not Basic English, Esperanto, Volapuk, Ido or any of that group, but Music, Painting and Sculpture.

"We do not have to translate a statue from the ancient Greek to make it understandable to modern eyes. We do not have to translate an Italian painting or a Russian symphony before it can be offered to the general public in this country. Music, painting and sculpture speak for themselves in all languages - or in one universal language that has no alphabet and needs none.

"Hollywood makes movies that are shipped all over the world. Many of them are served up with music. 'Fantasia' could be offered as a striking example. But there have been many other movies with much musical accompaniment. The voice sound tracks of some of these movies have been changed over to as many as fourteen different languages for foreign consumption. But not a single note of the music has to be changed to make that part of the Hollywood product understood in any part of the world."

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COMMENTS....NEWS ITEMS

Sunday, February 19th, was a full day on the radio for film musicians, what with Maestro Daniele Amfitheatrof's powerful and impressive "De Profundis" being performed for the first time anywhere, by Stokowski and his orchestra, and Mr. Alfred Newman conducting the studio orchestra in excerpts from his beautiful score of the Song of Bernadette, for the radio version performed for Philco's "Hall of Fame." On the previous Sunday, Mr. Stokowski featured Mr. George Antheil's Symphony No. 4 in its world premiere. Mr. Antheil, an American composer, is best remembered for his sensational "Ballet Mechanique" with its array of instruments which included electrical pianos and even an airplane propeller! He has lived in Hollywood since 1936 and scored music for Cecil B. DeMille's "Union Pacific," "The Plainsman," etc. It was his startling idea that unobtrusive music by oboes, bassoons, etc., makes an actor look tall or short or gives a feeling of gayety or sadness.

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Lauritz Melchior, noted Metropolitan tenor, has been signed by MGM for his first motion picture role in "Thrill of a Romance," a comedy with music which Joseph Pasternak will produce. Also James Melton of the Metropolitan opera is a new addition to MGM's "The Ziegfeld Follies," and will arrive in Hollywood May 10 for rehearsals.

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An interesting spring production has been announced by Gordon Hollingshead, head of Warner Bros. short department, of the Easter MEXICAN FIESTA, a two-reel Technicolor film. This should contain some fine Mexican dances with appropriate music. Also Ary Barosa, Brazilian composer of world note, has arrived at Republic Studios to write the music for Robert North's production of BRAZIL.

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From M. Zalstein, Member Philadelphia Orchestra.

My dear Mrs Mabee: Thanks very much for the batch of FILM MUSIC NOTES which I received a few days ago. The notes and article sections are splendid, especially your notes on various film composers with distinguished backgrounds and your page of primary themes from current pictures. The only criticism I can make is the danger of getting too much long-hair opinion on your pages with a consequent over-emphasis on the "culture" interpretation. Why kid ourselves? Film music is utilitarian first. It may be "cultural" after that. Paraphrasing Bellows, in my opinion, film music should strive for workmanship and hope for beauty. Every "cultural" approach in the past seems to have done nothing but becloud the issue and prevent an intelligent accord between the two camps.

I have the feeling that I have missed some valuable material previous to these issues. Could you send me all back numbers? I am particularly interested in material on Korngold. I am getting up an article on him. I am planning to use much contiguous material, i.e. the development and improvement in screen music, its men and background. This, as a backdrop for Korngold - representative, modern film composing acc.

My last big article was on Stoky, printed in This Week section of the New York Herald Tribune (pre-schism).

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Albert Coates, distinguished symphony conductor, is leaving for London to take charge of a wartime entertainment program for the armed forces. He is taking with him a number of MGM film scores including Bronislau Kaper's "Bataan" and Herbert Stothart's musical tribute to China which was played during the visit of Mme. Chiang Kai Shek in Hollywood Bowl. Mr. Coates is greatly interested in the many fine musical scores coming out of the Hollywood studios. He coached Robert Taylor to conduct a symphony orchestra in "Song of Russia" and also appeared in that picture as well as in "Two Sisters and a Sailor."

Change in Musical Taste Seen as Result of Sinatra

Chatting the other day with Constantin Bakaleinikoff, musical director of RKO Studios, regarding the foibles of such singers as Frank Sinatra and Frances Langford, the thought emerged that these and others of their ilk unwittingly may be preparing the public for a great change that would affect all music. That change (one whose advent has long been prophesied) is the alteration of our present musical system from a minimum of semitones to a new minimum of quarter-tones. Theoretically there is no reason why quarter-tones should not be used. They exist, of course, as halfway points between the present semi-tones on a keyed instrument. And it is quite obvious that their employment would give twenty-four notes to the octave instead of the present twelve.

There has been a reasonable amount of experimentation in this field by serious composers. Perhaps the leader of the contemporaries is the Czech, Alois Haba, who had a double keyboard piano built for him over a decade ago. The keyboards were tuned a quarter-tone apart. With this instrument Haba toured Europe. He also published several compositions especially written for it. Hans Barth had a similar instrument in this country. Hugo Davise wrote a quarter-tone string quartet, which was performed locally several years ago, and David Zeikel wrote a study in quarter-tones to aid violinists in their mastery.

A few composers (Zeikel and David Rosson in their "Columnist Suite" for instance) have called for quarter-tones occasionally to achieve a certain desired effect, and they can be produced at will (or by beginners) on any of the viols or trombone. The fact remains, however, that audiences are not ready to accept these quarter-tone offerings because their ears, are not attuned to them. In fact, musicians are more upset over them than non-musicians, who have not formed the habit of thinking in tones.

But the continual, deliberate off-key singing by popular yodelers and crooners may have an eventual effect upon public taste and prepare the majority of ears to accept a new system in time to come. By Richard Saunders, Hollywood Citizen News.

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Academy Nominations for Best Achievement in Music

BEST SCORING OF A MUSICAL PICTURE

Coney Island, 20th-Fox, Alfred Newman	Stage Door Canteen, UA., Freddie Rich
Hit Parade of 1943, Rep., Walter Scharf	Star Spangled Rhythm, Para., Robt. E.
Phantom of the Opera, Univ. Edw. Ward	Dolan
Saludos Amigos, Disney-RKO. Charles	The Sky's the Limit, RKO. Leigh Harline
Wolcott, Edw. Plumb, Paul J. Smith	*THIS IS THE ARMY, WB. Ray Heindorf
Something to Shout About, Col. M. Stoloff	Thousands Cheer, MGM. Herbert Stothart

BEST MUSIC SCORE OF A DRAMATIC OR COMEDY PICTURE

The Amazing Mrs. Holliday, Univ.	Johnny Come Lately, Cagney-UA. L. Harline
Frank Skinner and H. J. Salter	The Kansan, Sherman-UA. G. Carbonara
Casablanca, WB. Max Steiner	Lady of Burlesque, Stromberg-UA. A. Lange
The Commandos Strike at Dawn, Col.	Madame Curie, MGM. Herbert Stothart
Morris Stoloff, Louis Gruenberg	The Moon and Sixpence, Loew, Lewin-UA.
The Fallen Sparrow, RKO.	Dimitri Tiomkin
Roy Webb, C. Bakaleinikoff	North Star, Goldwyn-RKO. Aaron Copland
For Whom the Bell Tolls, Para. V. Young	*SONG OF BERNADETTE, 20th-Fox. A. Newman
Hangmen Also Die, Arnold-UA. H. Eisler	Victory Through Air Power, Disney-UA.
Hi Diddle Diddle, Stone. Phil Boutelje	Edward Plumb, Paul J. Smith and
In Old Oklahoma, Rep. Walter Scharf	Oliver Wallace

The star (*) indicates the winner.

(COMMENTS...NEWS ITEMS cont'd)

From Bruce Hansen, Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Miss Purdy: FILM MUSIC NOTES is a fine publication. Really Miss Purdy, I could use many other words in the place of "fine," but at the moment I am at a loss for words.

There were two articles that stand out in my mind, and I feel that I must tell you how much they interested me. In the December issue, the article entitled, The Sixth Sense in Film Mechanics, set me to thinking a long, long time. Finally I typed it in larger print, and on a large sheet of paper and put it on our beautiful bulletin board. I placed at different places around it reproductions of some of the fourteen pictures from the Capehart Collection of Paintings. These give the interpretations of a few of the world's most beautiful masterpieces of music by well-known artists. In comments of my own, around these pictures, I gave ideas of how these might sound, if heard.

Did you think of Moussorgsky's Pictures from an Exhibition in connection with that article? I know that it reminded me of this piece of music, because Moussorgsky pictures each picture he saw at an exhibition, in music without any machine.

The article from the January issue that impressed me above the others was, A Day on the Gershwin Set, which I think you did a splendid job on. George Gershwin with his "Porgy and Bess," "An American in Paris," and "Rhapsody in Blue" with countless others, have been my favorites of present day music. I shall enjoy "Rhapsody in Blue" very much more now that I have, through you, visited behind the scenes of the picture.

For now, I wish you and FILM MUSIC NOTES all the success possible, and I think that's quite a lot but maybe not enough. The FILM MUSIC NOTES portfolio offers very interesting studies.

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Music Credits on Coming Pictures of Special Interest

Columbia
ONCE UPON A TIME, Frederick Hollander
UNTITLED CHOPIN FILM, Miklos Rozsa
ADDRESS UNKNOWN, Ernst Toch

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
CANTERVILLE GHOST, George Bassman
AMERICA, Louis Gruenberg
GASLIGHT, Bronislau Kaper
SECRETS IN THE DARK, Bronislau Kaper
MRS. PARKINGTON, Bronislau Kaper
MEN IN WHITE, Nathaniel Shilkret
ANDY HARDY'S BLONDE TROUBLE, D. Snell
MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, Georgie Stoll
TWO SISTERS AND A SAILOR, Georgie Stoll
NATIONAL VELVET, Herbert Stothart
PICTURE OF DORIAN GREY, H. Stothart
DRAGON SEED, Herbert Stothart
KISMET, Herbert Stothart
THIRTY SECONDS OVER TOKYO, H. Stothart
THE WHITE CLIFFS, Herbert Stothart

RKO
DAYS OF GLORY, Daniele Amfitheatrof
SHOW BUSINESS, Constantin Bakaleinikoff
ARE THESE OUR CHILDREN?, Paul Sawtelle
MARINE RAIDERS, Roy Webb

Paramount
THE HITLER GANG, David Buttolph
TILL WE MEET AGAIN, David Buttolph
BRING ON THE GIRLS, Robert Emmett Dolan
I LOVE A SOLDIER, Robert Emmett Dolan
RAINBOW ISLAND, Roy Webb
FRENCHMAN'S CREEK, Victor Young
AND NOW TOMORROW, Victor Young
THE STORY OF DR. WASELL, Victor Young

20th Century Fox
HOME IN INDIANA, Hugo Friedhofer
WILSON, Alfred Newman
KEYS OF THE KINGDOM, Alfred Newman
GREENWICH VILLAGE, Emil Newman
EVE OF ST. MARK, Emil Newman and
Cyril J. Mockridge

Warner Bros.
DEVOTION, Erich Wolfgang Korngold
BETWEEN TWO WORLDS, Erich W. Korngold
ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN, Max Steiner
RHAPSODY IN BLUE, Max Steiner and
Ray Heindorf
MR. SKEFFINGTON, Franz Waxman
THE HORN BLOWS AT MIDNIGHT, Franz Waxman

(continued in the next issue)

INTERVIEW WITH FRANZ WAXMAN

From "Tales of Hoffman," Hollywood Reporter -

The music in Hollywood goes on and on and it comes out soft and schmaltzy for the love scenes and loud and brassy for the Bogart-Garfield-Gable stuff. But music, in case you haven't thought about it much, is really one of the most important ingredients in the motion picture potpourri. Listen to Franz Waxman, who's been scoring pictures for fifteen years, and who is now one of Warner's crack composers: "In the beginning," says Waxman, who is soft-spoken, thirtyish and bespectacled, "motion pictures started with music and with music alone. There were few titles on the screen in those early days, but it was the proper musical accompaniment - whether a piano player or symphony orchestra - that made audiences laugh or cry. The silent film had great emotional power and sometimes our producers seem to forget that."

Waxman has done scores for such noteworthy pictures as Rebecca, Fury, The Philadelphia Story, Suspicion, Tortilla Flat, Woman of the Year, Air Force, Destination Tokyo and many others. He stresses that he has a tremendous respect for Warners and for Leo Forbstein, who runs the music department of this studio, for their belief in music as a very important part of the motion picture production. Take a picture like Destination Tokyo, for example. When the picture was completed and was in rough cut, Waxman read the script, saw it in a projection room and decided on the form his score would take. He went to work immediately and within five weeks the score was written and recorded on a sound track.

"We movie composers work mostly under pressure," he says. "We work for an industry and we do not work alone. We are dependent upon dozens of other individuals and vice versa. All of these factors have to be taken into consideration when evaluating a film score."

Waxman's work is dependent upon the visual image. The camera movement cues his score. A long shot moving towards a close-up might necessitate a crescendo to point it up. Eighty-five percent of Destination Tokyo is musically scored. Even war pictures, Waxman says, need scores. The sounds of guns, for instance, can become very monotonous unless they are given variety and climax by music. Waxman believes there should be less dialogue and more movement and music and sound in a film.

Some of Waxman's unusual effects can be seen in Destination Tokyo. There is an underwater shot with three torpedoes heading for a Jap battleship. Waxman scored this by striking a cymbal and then reversing the sound track so that the volume increased instead of decreasing. When the sound track ran against its own frequencies, the effect was forceful and frightening. The "Radar" device sound in that same picture was done by a combination of instruments with the high frequencies eliminated and not played at a steady, but at a variable speed.

Waxman believes in the recognition of music in films. He points out that film scores frequently have an independent value as works of art, that the Philadelphia Orchestra has offered a suite of Bernard Herrmann's original music from "All that Money Can Buy," that Aaron Copland's melodies from "Our Town" have been performed by the New York Philharmonic. The NBC Symphony has performed the Prokofieff Suite "Lt. Kiji" from the Russian picture, "The General Wanted to Sleep," and has also done excerpts from "Alexander Nevsky" by the same composer. Waxman's own score for "Rebecca" has been played by various symphony orchestras more than a dozen times.

The importance of the emotional contribution music makes to films can best be measured by the fact that long after a picture has played the last outpost and has gathered dust in the storage room, the musical portion of that picture - if a work of art - is the only ingredient that has a chance to live on forever and continue to give enjoyment to audiences.

Waxman also makes the interesting observation that horror and whodunit pictures offer the composer some of his finest opportunities. The average picture is cued to two emotions: love and hate, but the shudder epics afford a springboard for less conventional effects. Another interesting development, says this champion of movie melody, is the intention of recording companies to wax scores from motion pictures. This should go a long way towards perpetuating film music and letting the composer assume his rightful place in the Hollywood hierarchy.

AFTERTHOUGHTS
By Sigmund Spaeth

Granting the brilliance of the screen's LADY IN THE DARK in its use of color, costumes and elaborate sets, with a brilliant performance also by Ginger Rogers in the Gertrude Lawrence role, it seems a pity that the original score by Kurt Weill has been practically discarded. The theme song, "My Ship," is never heard in its entirety; the "Saga of Jenny" becomes a mere rhythm number; and Danny Kaye's Tchaikowsky is gone, with most of the lines and action of the comic part. Robert Emmett Dolan and Robert Russell Bennett have created something new in musical impressionism, and there is a popular interpolation, "Suddenly it's Spring," but LADY IN THE DARK is essentially a drama rather than a musical picture.

That a dramatic picture can get along with a minimum of music is again demonstrated by Hitchcock's tour de force, LIFEBOAT. Here there is an elaborate orchestral introduction, running through the title and the opening scene of the sinking ship. Then the music stops abruptly, and thereafter nothing is heard except a tin whistle played by Canada Lee and some German songs by Walter Slezak. The concentration on dialogue and sound effects is undeniably effective. Perhaps music sometimes lives up to the old saying that "absence makes the heart grow fonder."

SONG OF RUSSIA is a good example of the motion picture whose music is absolutely essential to the action. Tchaikowsky's compositions supply a wealth of material, both for background and for actual performance by the characters in the story. Robert Taylor, who was once a cellist and has good musical instincts, does surprisingly well in his portrayal of an orchestral conductor, and Susan Peters is completely convincing in her pretended playing of the familiar Piano Concerto. A rare bit of comedy is the introduction of "The Music Goes Round and Round" as the popular hit in a Moscow night club.

It would be difficult to quarrel with the award of an Oscar to Alfred Newman for his musical score to THE SONG OF BERNADETTE, even in a year when film music repeatedly reached the highest artistic levels. His job was more difficult than usual, for he had to reflect an atmosphere of almost unique spirituality, with a great variety of dramatic emotion. Newman's music has a consistently ethereal, mystic glamour, conveying a true sincerity of religious feeling.

Two recent films concerning Poland, IN OUR TIME and NONE SHALL ESCAPE, naturally suggest the use of Chopin's music, and both have been well scored. In the former, a short Chopin theme is actually used as a signal for the underground, whereas the second picture gives more latitude to the original work of Ernst Toch.

Dimitri Tiomkin once more establishes his eminence as a composer for the screen in the masterly score that he has fashioned for THE BRIDGE OF SAN LUIS REY. Here the music definitely saves a picture which admittedly has many faults. Tiomkin's resourcefulness is emphasized not only in the general musical background, which is always distinguished and original, but in special scenes calling for music of a comic or sentimental character.

Another outstanding score of the year is Bernard Herrmann's for JANE EYRE. Here again a difficult feat has been brilliantly achieved. The music reflects every mood of the complicated story, pointing up the dramatic climaxes and often saving what might otherwise have seemed an artificial, unconvincing situation. JANE EYRE proves that a Victorian thriller can be made appealing to modern audiences if properly handled, particularly from the musical standpoint.

SYNCHRONIZATION

From a Thesis by Ruth Parker Weldon

A musical score, either already existing or specially composed, is synchronized with the visual film. The following methods may be employed for the most part simultaneously or successively in a single film, or they may occur alone:

1. The imitative use in which the score imitates natural sounds or the tonal use of speech.
2. The commentative use in which the score takes the part of a spectator commentating on the visual film, usually ironically.
3. The evocative use in which the synchronized score is given its fullest positive value. Silence, as well as sound, is deliberate. Leitmotifs act emotives and assist the visual film towards insight into the characters to which they are attached.
4. The contrastive use which does not stand alone, but is combined with 2 and 3. The score contrasts with, and so may heighten the effect of, the visual film.
5. The dynamic use in which a dynamic correspondence of sight and sound brings out the rhythm of the cutting rates.

The media used by the sound film are the photography of sound and phonographic reproduction synchronized with the projection of visual image. The producing studios have developed two procedures of filming: 1, the recording of the sound simultaneously with the taking of the scenes, and 2, the recording of the sound separately from the taking of the scenes.

By the first method a simultaneous recording is made of the visual and aural parts of a scene or action. Since the microphone records everything it hears, innumerable difficulties presented themselves in the first apparatus. Directors, assistants, and operators had to learn to keep quiet. Cameras had to be turned silently or placed in soundproof containers. Soundproof rooms and equipment had to be secured.

Chavez (5, p. 98) explains that:

Synchronization is the solution of two purely mechanical fundamental problems - that of discovering the relative normal speed at which the apparatus of sight and sound should function; and that of discovering the manner of recording on the two apparatus at that uniform speed. Electrodynamics solves these problems without further difficulty.

The recording of sound separately from the taking of the scenes is a great help in the production of musical pictures. Singers and orchestras are rarely recorded during the actual filming. The music is pre-scored on special stages built for musical recording, and the many microphones are placed to the best advantage, since they are not pictured. Usually the acoustically perfect stage is lined with sound absorbant padding and drapes.

Often facial expressions necessary to the correct production of tone are not attractive enough for close-up shots. When we see a musical star - and also the operatic star in motion pictures - singing in a picture we may feel confident that the musical selection was recorded separately from the filming of the picture. The fact that we can learn a great deal of vocal technique from the pictured singer is an erroneous one, but quite universally believed by those who have not studied film music production. The singer, desirous of perfect tone production as well as being photographed, to the best advantage, finds the pre-scoring method a boon to his art. What we actually hear is good vocal technique; but we see a beautiful face and attractive expressions which are decidedly to the actor's advantage.

(SYNCHRONIZATION cont'd)

What is called the re-recording process is an interesting and valuable development in sound recording technique. Sometimes the sounds originally recorded at the taking of a scene may be incomplete or inadequate, and the re-recording process is used to add other sounds. All or parts of the sounds can be amplified, the tempo corrected, and certain passages accented or weakened. There may be several sound tracks to be combined. One track may have spoken dialogue; one the music; one the general noise of a crowd; and one the noise of a thunderstorm.

In a projection room near the re-recording apparatus, a technician sits before a bakelite board having more than a dozen knobs which are operated up and down in separate slots. Each knob controls the volume of one sound track. The technician watches the picture closely. If the scene is a shot of the crowd, he moves the knob to pick up the crowd noise. In a close-up of an individual player, he reduces all other sounds and brings out the player's dialogue.

The sound from each track, controlled in volume by the technician, combines with the sounds from the other tracks and is recorded in one recording machine which produces the final releasable track. It is from this secondary recording operation that the process of re-recording derives its name. The method of adding dramatic values by appropriate music played quietly under dialogue to help intensify the attention of an audience would be impossible without the special sound recording technique discussed above.

Let us take for example the symphony orchestra. The strings, woodwinds, brasses, basses, and drums are divided into groups and each group has one or more microphones over it. Each "mike" leads back to a separate monitor panel of the sound recording machine. Several tracks are made, and the musical director can record the music of each group at exactly the intensity he desires. If a singer is performing with the orchestra, he or she stands away from the orchestra behind a screen, usually made of felt, where he or she can see the conductor. Later this sound track is combined with that of the orchestra.

The mixing of several sound images is an action which, even when done by an engineer or operator, requires a well-developed and well-defined musical sensitivity. It involves giving each sound-image its precisely correct proportion by means of the amplifiers and filters.

"Dubbing" is the joining together for the montage of a film of those practices and procedures of re-recording which are not precisely those related to the synchronous taking of light and sound. "Dubbing" includes pre-scoring, post-scoring, and the various kinds of re-recording. "Dubbing" is also the procedure by which the movie musician integrates his orchestra of music, sound, words and noises, the most complex orchestra man has thus far developed. The final result, however, of all sound film finds the "sound track" photographed on the film.

However, the way sound is controlled in the picture theatre is often unsatisfactorily managed. The tonal volume of a picture is not set for all time; no mechanical device permanently fixes the loudness or softness of the music. The person who decides on the sound levels is not even the film operator but the individual theatre manager who is susceptible to advice from Tom, Dick, or Harry, sitting anywhere in the house. People who love music tend to prefer it played loudly, and those who do not care for it especially desire to have it at a low level. So no matter how much care is taken in the dubbing room to fix the proper levels of volume, the situation will remain unsatisfactory until a method is found to control the casual and arbitrary way in which the dials are set in the operators' booths of the local theatres.

REVIEWS OF CURRENT MOTION PICTURES FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF MUSIC INTEREST

IN OUR TIME, WB. (Family Portrait). Director: Vincent Sherman

Music by Franz Waxman

Superb characterizations by a master cast, headed by Ida Lupino whose sensitive and sure delineations are always a joy to the discriminating, mark this absorbing social drama set against a Polish background. Unusual settings, lovely photography and subtle direction further make this a timely and worthwhile picture. A Waxman score is sure to spell distinction. With the Chopin A Major Polonaise as the central motif he here displays his special gift for "cuing in" music from the terrible vibrations of war and destruction. National characteristics persist in spite of revolution, conquest, territorial division, new masters and new approaches to life! So as Tchaikovsky expresses subconscious characteristics of the Russian race, Chopin has proved his cosmic sense: the great Polonaise is still magnificent in prophetic power, like the Marseillaise. In the picture this theme is sparingly used but points the pride of race, the dashing courage and the lurid background of a noble people. The identity of the Chopin concerto under discussion provides an original presentation: the strain played by Jennifer, at the home of the Countess, is charmingly done with innate sense of value; the ballet "Les Sylphides" well chosen entertainment for the opera sequence; and lastly, the peasant harvest celebration at the castle, with its folk songs and dances, is fine and sturdy contrast to the romantic and nostalgic Chopin. Mature-Family.

THE IMPOSTER, Universal. (France Forever). Director: Julien Duvivier

Musical Score and Direction by Dimitri Tiomkin

A stimulating and timely picture of the Free French, understandingly directed and with the display of human emotions well handled by a fine cast headed by Jean Gabin. One senses throughout the authentic and sympathetic French touch (it could scarcely be otherwise), for director, lead, photographer and musical director know and have a great love for France. The first two are French and one feels that something more than routine has gone into the making of the film. Never, for instance, has the Marseillaise been heard to more thrilling advantage than when Mr. Tiomkin has here interpolated it into the jungle sequence. The African angle is of unusual interest and photography of these scenes is especially fine, being outstanding for its depth and beauty of composition. In the first part of the picture everything is subordinated to sound effects of bombing and destruction. The music makes no particular impression from then on until the jungle sequence, then the roar and rhythm of the mighty machines carving out an airfield gradually blends into the noises and chatter of the jungle, until it becomes a strange, hybrid music with a central vibration of its own which projects cosmic power and mystery, an effect very strange and exciting. The chorale at the end denoting moral victory is less original but also beautiful. Mature-Family.

LADY IN THE DARK, Paramount. (Photographic Extravaganza). Dir: Mitchell Leisen

Music by Kurt Weill. Music scored and directed by

Robert Emmett Dolan. Lyrics by Ira Gershwin

This is a gorgeously spectacular fantasy, with color running riot, plus the added worth of a good story. Ginger Rogers in the role made famous by Gertrude Lawrence is at her best. She gives a performance that is not only sincere but smooth and clever, and her dancing, as always, is delightful. Everything in the way of elaborate settings and costumes has been given the picture. The Raoul Pene du Bois colors are violent and modern, but some of the dream sequences are nevertheless remarkably beautiful. Music throughout is gay and pleasing, with that in the scenes just mentioned apparently a roar of many instruments leading into different octaves on one note, novel and expressive. At all times it is entirely in keeping with the requirements of a picture which ranks high in entertainment and production values. Mature-Family.

UP IN ARMS, Goldwyn-RKO. (Color, Glamour and Gayety). Director: Elliott Nugent
Musical Director: Louis Forbes. Musical numbers arranged
and conducted by Ray Heindorf

The immensely clever and amusing Danny Kaye, with his marvelous gift of timing, is the shining light of a musical, studded with star names and prodigal in production value. It is really a study in color - no harsh, clashing tones here, but the designers have instead blended lovely soft tints, made pastels predominant and correlated costumes, sets and, in fact, everything in the picture to harmonize. It is perhaps the first film not to ruin the color sensitivity of the audience! There are two sensational sequences in the extravaganza: Danny Kaye's streamlined description of a movie against the original background of the foyer crowds, and the Embarkation scene which is as fine a production number as has been shown on the screen to date. From the camp announcement to the departure of the ship, the tempo of the converging stream of supplies, ammunition tanks, men, girls, the mass rhythms and oppositions, all culminate in the Troop Song led by Donald Dickson. Each dream sequence and every episode has its own musical comedy specialty score. The music is facile, opportune and deftly orchestrated throughout. Excellent entertainment of its type. F.

PASSAGE TO MARSEILLE, WB. ("Allons Enfants"). Director: Michael Curtiz
Music by Max Steiner

With the collaboration of James Wong Howe and Max Steiner, and a cast headed by Humphrey Bogart and Claude Rains, which will make the story live, Warner Brothers have again turned out a masterpiece. Under the superb direction of Michael Curtiz, this powerful and poignant picture blended into a smooth symphony of humanity crying in the dark for justice and freedom, and leaving us with the feeling and the hope that men all over the world are not now dying in vain. The score is fittingly introduced by the Marseillaise and the familiar "En Passant par la Lorraine" (also used most tellingly in "The Impostor"). The latter folk song, with its sturdy peasant quality, makes it a symbol, and both themes have interesting developments. There is an unusual train rhythm and a main theme embodying action and fate gives backbone to the whole, with photography, music and plot all welded together. Perspective and lighting of the office where Captain Freycinet sits with his back to us when Manning enters the room; the airfield at night with the rhythmic movement of the planes; the glimpses of little villages so unmistakably French; the fantastic angle of the gas lamps overlooking the bench by the wet pavement - these are scenes to be collected like etchings. This is not just another war picture, but a vital and absorbing document of a world in war time. Mature-Family.

THE NAVY WAY, Paramount. (Anchors Aweigh). Director: William Berke
Music Score by Willi Stahl

Presented in a very human way is what is practically a documentary of Navy training at the Great Lakes Naval Station. The types are well drawn. The flashback story of home environment sympathetically handled; cast and direction are good and there is a straightforward musical score, stemming from Anchors Aweigh. The fine choral singing carries the same sturdy, unaffected quality that marks the broadcasts from this base, and the whole is a convincing picture of training experiences and reactions, with the story giving sufficient motivation. Family.

ACTION IN ARABIA, RKO. (Plots and Counterplots). Director: Leonide Moguy
Music by Roy Webb

An unusually good cast featured in a story which is of interest chiefly for its excellent background music and fine photography. The former transports us at once to the far East by its oriental rhythms, mysterious atmosphere. Nothing banal about it nor anything especially original. But the intrigue, the hurly-burly, the duplicity, the feel of the crowded streets is sensed as much by the music as by the photography. Family.

SEE HERE, PRIVATE HARGROVE, MGM. (How to Make the Most of Army Life). Dir: W. Ruggles
Music Score by David Snell

This timely comedy of Army life in America is amusingly concocted and well carried out, with the exuberant and dependable Mr. Benchley as an added attraction. The music, mostly military, is used simply for background. It is all wholesome and sufficient entertainment. Mature-Family.

THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE, RKO. (Childhood Magic). Dirs: Gunther V. Fritsch and Robert Wise. Music: Roy Webb. Music Dir: C. Bakaleinikoff

The music and photography in this picture are expertly synchronized to develop mood and suspense. Little Ann Carter is most appealing as the child to whom the story seems so real that one wonders how its abnormal quality would affect a sensitive organism. Amy's playground and the Sleepy Hollow sequence are completely beautiful. Light and shade, movement and mood stem from a central vibration all in the magic frame of a child's imagination. The score is sensitive and illuminating. An interesting device for suspense and mystery is the one of a descending series of four notes repeated in circles of various degrees of speed and of tonal qualities. The Calypso singer, though he has little to sing, is an integral part of the story as is the intelligent teacher who acts as a psychiatrist in the strange relationship of father and child. Music is moody and tempestuous as befits the tale. Mature-F.

KNICKERBOCKER HOLIDAY, PCA-UA. (Peter Stuyvesant and Friends). Dir: Harry J. Brown
Music Score by Werner R. Heymann. Music by Kurt Weill.
Musical Dir: Jacques Samossoud.

A refreshing interlude in these grim days of war is this easy-to-take picture of life in early New York, with its timely and well-turned dialogue and light opera pattern presented with humor and charm by an excellent cast. When we realize how Gilbert and Sullivan took their modern world, got away from demodé psychology and tradition, satirized politics and human nature, we can see what a field present-day conditions the world over offer for a newer form of movie opera! This picture is a step in the right direction! Mr. Samossoud's direction of the music is dynamic and that music, if not distinguished, is rhythmic and tuneful, with Nelson Eddy doing full justice to the songs. Family.

THE PURPLE HEART, 20th-Fox. (Valor Beyond the Call of Duty). Dir: Lewis Milestone
Music by Alfred Newman

The production, direction and cast of The Purple Heart all give one the overwhelming feeling of having been an eye witness to the trial of these, our Tokyo flyers. This picture is strong and bitter medicine, well prefaced by the text of The Purple Heart citation, and "My Country 'Tis of Thee." The atmosphere from the first is disquieting, apprehensive, and there is a crescendo of suspense that is hard to take - in fact, at times the picture seems dragged out, but in reality it is the feeling of time hanging in suspense that makes us realize what those boys must have gone through mentally in their last hours, and probably only by slow tempo can this be transmitted to us. It is this sensitive and understanding direction throughout which makes the whole thing so deeply moving. The stringent instructions about admission to the trial, the procedure of its opening - in these scenes photography plays an important part, climaxed by the entrance of the American prisoners in barbaric glyph. The architecture, the lighting, the sinister "rising sun" behind the judges, all place the period irrevocably as NOW. Music is properly used only as necessary, but the Battle Hymn of the Republic is most beautifully brought into one sequence, and in the hands of Mr. Newman the Air Force song becomes an immortal utterance of youth, high courage and inspiration. Superbly arranged in various ways it is a choral background when it makes its entrance. It gains in power, richness and authority and gives assurance at the end that there is a great Cosmic Center - a true vibration beyond all static. Mature-Family.

VOICE IN THE WIND, UA. (De Profundis). Director: Arthur Ripley

Music Score by Michel Michelet

This macabre tale of Czech refugees, drawn in somber hues and without one light episode to lighten its dark shadows and tragic moods, is not entertainment in the popular sense of the word. It took courage to make this picture for the producers must have known that it would appeal only to those who seek something besides mere amusement in their films and plays. Francis Lederer, a Czech himself and a gifted and sensitive actor, lives the part of the tortured young pianist, and every member of the cast contributes outstanding support to the perfection of the whole. In its utter simplicity and lack of Hollywood exaggeration this terrible depiction of what is going on in our time is unique. Especially beautiful and haunting is the mood established by music and photography at the very beginning, and the score throughout is interestingly treated with Beethoven and Chopin arrangements, in particular the Piu Lente of Etude Op. 25, No. 5, which becomes the heart theme of the picture. In the flashback to the Prague concert hall this is beautifully orchestrated in the manner of a concerto and the Moldau of Smetana is so cleverly photographed that Lederer appears to play the entire number. Records are incorporated in original fashion and music throughout expertly handled. Absolute despair, squalor and misery pervade the entire locale in the Caribbean. The motivation of the brothers and the end of the path which brings the lovers to the same place - these are of absorbing and melancholy interest and part of the struggle between opposing forces where storm waves all but extinguish the candle of faith and hope. A valuable addition to the best in film production. Adults.

GOING MY WAY, Paramount. (Human and Delightful). Director: Leo McCarey

Music Score by Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen

This has been a good film season for Irish pictures, what with the Iron Major, The Sullivans, The Keys of the Kingdom (shortly to be released) and Going My Way, all fine, clean productions and good box office as well. To many the appearance of Charles Bickford, ex-villain and gangster, in the Song of Bernadette was the surprise of the year, but now Bing Crosby as a priest is an even greater one, and a good performance his, too, in a picture which has charm, humor and entertainment capitally blended. Music, both secular and religious, is excellently done, including an aria from Carmen by Miss Stevens, sung with appropriate verve and, above all, style (which should serve as a shining example to all aspiring singers) and two numbers by the Mitchell Boy Choir, in addition to those of Bing's. The characterization of Barry Fitzgerald, as the old priest, is a gem in itself, and the other members of the cast all fit into their roles perfectly. Photography is fine and direction outstanding and, in addition, the picture has tremendous popular appeal. It is "tops" of its kind. Family.

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