

A piano accompaniment for a film was said to be first heard in 1895 in France at one of the early presentations by the Lumière Brothers. The vaudeville houses, since they already had a pit orchestra, would sometimes accompany the short 10-minute film program used (at first) to clear the house before the next vaudeville show began. The Edison Company began issuing "Suggestions for Music" sheets as early as 1909.

Music accompanying films began to be standardised and the books of film music were developed into "cue sheets" which categorised the music by its various moods — love, hate, passion, frenzy, comedy, chase, sinister, *furioso*, cartoon, weird, *agitato*, sad, happy, mysterious, etc.

Some of the standard music used in accompanying early movies included "A Bird in a Gilded Cage," "My Buddy," "Hearts and Flowers," "O Solo Mio", "The Curse of an Aching Heart," "You Made Me What I Am Today," "Ragtime Cowboy Joe," "Wait for the Wagon", "Pony Boy" and "Chloë".

The classical repertoire was also raided, resulting in millions of moviegoers being exposed to the classics although most of them were not sophisticated enough to be aware of the fact. The chase sequences were invariably accompanied by Rossini's "William Tell Overture" and other familiar works included Herald's "Zampa Overture, Rubinstein's "Melody in F" and "Kammenoi-Ostrow", Schubert's "Erkönig" and "Serenade," Tchaikovsky's "Chant Elegiac" Wagner's "Evening Star," Chopin's "Nocturne in E," Puccini's "Un Bel Di," Grieg's "To Spring," von Suppé's "Poet and Peasant Overture," Chaminade's "Scarf Dance" and, of course, Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance."

The development of film music paralleled closely the development of the film as an art. When D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* appeared in 1915, it was premiered in a legitimate theatre on Broadway at \$2.00 a ticket. A special score was adapted for the presentation and it was played by a full orchestra. Many times, extra sound effects were added by a crew of "noise makers" stationed behind the screen.

The function of film music in the embryo stages was to underscore the action being presented on the screen. A really versatile pianist or a clever orchestrator could almost synchronise the music with the action, thus combining two arts into one. Much of the early film music became a cliché, but despite certain lapses of taste, the movie pianist was in a sense the predecessor of the film music composer. Although he did little or no actual "composing," he did manage to "arrange" standard music into its effective form to underscore the action on the screen. And most important, he paved the way for the entrance of the arranger who in turn gave way to the film music composer, many of whom became famous in the sound era.

Max Winkler: The Origins of Film Music

The year 1912 was the beginning of the greatest and most prosperous era in the history of the American amusement industry. Scores of theatres played on Broadway. Victor Herbert was at the peak of his fame. Irving Berlin had begun the ascent to his. Vaudeville prospered throughout the country and the big movie chains, such as Fox and Low's, had begun to hire vaudeville acts with guarantees that ran to as much as 104 weeks of continuous employment.

All this had tremendous repercussions on the world music publishing, and soon the exciting waves of prosperity reached the band and orchestra counter in the Carl Fischer store. We began to sell unheard-of amounts of waltzes and songs, of potpourris and marches, of overtures of interludes. Orchestra arrangements of the popular songs of the day arrived from the printers in staggering quantities and were disposed of quickly.

Nothing that happened in the rapidly expanding world of musical comedies, operettas and vaudeville was comparable, however, to the breath-taking development of the silent movies. The men who became the giants of the film industry were beginning to produce films on a large scale in Hollywood. Big movie theatres were being erected, not only in New York but in every town and village. This was of tremendous consequence to the music business. The silent film needed music to bring it to life.

"On the silent screen music must take the place of the spoken word" had become one of the credos of the film industry. Huge theatre orchestras were hired to play in the movie palaces of the big cities, and smaller ensembles, trios, or simply an organist or a pianist, were employed in thousands of towns and villages.

Only in a few isolated theatres in big cities was any effort made to coordinate the goings-on on the screen with the sounds in the musical pit. Thousands of musicians never had a chance to see a picture before they were called upon to play music for it! There they were sitting in the dark, watching the screen, trying to follow the rapidly unfolding events with their music: sad music, funny music, slow music, sinister, agitated, stormy, dramatic, funereal, pursuit, and amorous music. They had to improvise, playing whatever repertoire came to their worried minds, or whatever they made up themselves on the spur of a short moment. It was a terrible predicament — and so, usually, was the music.

One day in the spring of 1912 I went to one of the small movie houses that had so quickly sprung up all over town, to see one of the superb spectacles of the day. It was called *War Brides* and featured the exotic Nazimova in the role of a pregnant peasant woman. The king of the mythical country where Nazimova was living passed through her village. Nazimova threw herself in front of him, her hands raised to heaven. She said — no, she didn't say anything but the title on the screen announced: "If you will not give us women the right to vote for or against war I shall not bear a child for such a country." The king just moved on. Nazimova drew a dagger and killed herself.

The pianist so far had done all right. But I scarcely believed my ears when, just as Nazimova exhaled her last breath, to the heart-breaking sobs of her family, he began to play the old, frivolous favourite, "You Made Me What I Am Today."

The pianist was one of my customers and I just could not resist going backstage afterwards and asking him why he had chosen this particular tune at that particular moment. "Why," he said, "I thought that was perfectly clear. Wasn't it the king's fault that she killed herself?"

More and more musical mishaps began to turn drama and tragedy on the screen into farce and disaster. Exhibitors and theatre managers made frantic efforts to avoid the musical faux pas that made their films appear ridiculous. Carl Fischer's was probably the most famous and certainly the most successful house in the field of orchestra music. I began to understand their problems. We gave advice, we helped some of them, and when they described to us a particular scene in a film, we usually would know of a piece that would fit the mood.

All this had, of course, a very stimulating effect on the volume of business transacted by Carl Fischer's orchestra department, and as the orders came in I had visions of an even more magnificent future.

One day after I had gone home from work I could not fall asleep. The hundreds and thousands of titles, the mountains of music that Fischer's had stored and catalogued, kept going through my mind. There was music, surely to fit any given situation in *any* picture. If we could only think of a way to let all these orchestra leaders and pianists and organists know what we had! If we could use our knowledge and experience not when it was too late, but much earlier, before they ever had to sit down and play, we would be able to set them music not by the ton but by the trainload! The thought suddenly electrified me.

It was not a problem of getting the music. We had the music, plenty of it, any conceivable kind, more than anybody could ever want. It was a problem of promoting, timing, and organisation. I pulled back the blanket, turned on the light and went over to my little table, took a sheet of paper and began writing feverishly.

Here is what I wrote:

MUSIC CUE SHEET

for

The Magic Valley

Selected and compiled by M. Winkler

Cue

- 1** Opening play Minuet No.2 in G by Beethoven for ninety seconds until title on screen "Follow me dear."
- 2** Play "Dramatic Andante" by Vely for two minutes and ten seconds. Note: Play soft during scene where mother enters. Play Cue No.2. until scene "hero leaving room."
- 3** Play "Love Theme" by Lorenze for one minute and twenty seconds. Note: Play soft and slow during conversations until title on screen "There they go."
- 4** Play "Stampede" by Simon for fifty-five seconds. Note: Play fast and decrease or increase speed of gallop in accordance with action on the screen.

I kept on writing for hours. *The Magic Valley* was just an imaginary picture with imaginary scenes, situations and moods, but the music was real music. It was music I knew. The years of close contact with it, of carrying it around, of sorting it out, of hearing it, listing it, handling it, living with it, now began to bear unexpected fruit. I went to bed exhausted, and when I woke up the next morning took me a little time to remember how these densely covered sheets of paper had come into my room.

The next day I copied them cleanly and wrote a letter to the New York office of the Universal Film Company.

"If you would give me a chance to see your pictures *before* they are released I

could prepare such a cue sheet for each one of them," I wrote. "You could send them out before you release the prints of your films. It would give the local theatre time to prepare adequate musical accompaniment. It will help everybody, the industry, the musicians and the public." It would also, of course, help the orchestra department of Carl Fischer's, and there was still another party I was hoping the scheme might be able to help, but I didn't mention him in my letter.

Two days later I found myself in the office of Mr. Paul Gulick, publicity director of Universal, in the Mecca Building, 1600 Broadway. It was late in the day. I had not dared to leave my job at the store, not even for so exciting an appointment. Gulick had my letter and the cue sheet for *The Magic Valley* before him on his desk. He began asking questions. What was I doing? What made me think that I would be the man to fit music to pictures? It wasn't just an occasional picture, he explained, there might be ten, fifteen, twenty every week — I wouldn't have time to go home and think and consult catalogues or listen to a lot of tunes till I found the right one.

"Just give me a chance," I said. "Let me try. I'll show you."

"All right, come up tomorrow night. Be here at seven. We'll see."

Between seven o'clock and a half hour past midnight the next night I was shown sixteen different subjects — slapstick comedies, newsreels, a trip through the Sahara, a Western. I had been provided with a little desk, a stop watch, a stack of paper, a little mountain of pencils. I looked and stopped my watch and wrote. As the pictures flashed by, the bins in the Fischer store appeared before my eyes. I not only *heard* the music that would fit perfectly to the camels slowly swaying through the sand, I *saw* the bin that stored Tchaikovsky's "Dance Arab," and the title I had printed on the card over the bin, and while the camels trotted across the screen I wrote it down on the cue sheet without a moment's hesitation.

Gulick sat there, watched me, and never said a word. When I had finished at last, everything was going in circles before my exhausted eyes. Gulick took my notes. "We'll let you know," he said, yawning. "Good night."

The next day — it was 3:30 in the afternoon and I will never forget it — a messenger boy strolled into the Fischer store. He came over to the orchestra counter. He didn't have to ask for me. Before he could say a word I took the letter he held in his hand, signed a receipt with a trembling scrawl. I tore open the envelope. It contained a letter signed by a live vice — president of Universal, engaging me for a four-week period to preview "the films made by this company in advance of actual release date and to prepare music cue sheets for said films, regardless of character or length, such cue sheets to contain only musical compositions published and easily available to our distributors and exhibitors. The films will be shown to you every Tuesday night Projection Room C in our offices at 1600 Broadway. Your remuneration for said services will be \$30 per session. If this meets with your approval please sign the enclosed copy in return same for our files.

During the following weeks I saw more silly comedies, blood-curdling murders and tear-milking melodramas than any other human being has ever been condemned to see. But nobody ever enjoyed them more! Each night Universal fed my feverishly scribbled notes to the printer and the next day thousands of copies went out to every theatre manager, pianist, organist and orchestra director in every movie theatre in America.

The response was overwhelming. Everybody was delighted. It seemed as simple as Columbus' egg — why had nobody thought of it before? Soon Universal was swamped with requests for cue sheets for films which had been released prior to my appearance on the scene, and Gulick asked me to work an extra night on his old pictures. For two evening sessions he offered me a salary of forty dollars

week...

[Mr. Winkler's cue sheets were soon imitated, and he himself worked for other companies than Universal. He Fischer's and formed a partnership with S. M. Berg, one of his earlier imitators. — Ed.]

Soon we went places. Berg and I had, in the past, been the real stars in the cue sheet world and now that we had become united, we established a virtual monopoly. We supplied the musical cue sheets for Universal, Triangle Films, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. (then, of course, very much Jr.), William S. Hart, Fox Films, Vitagraph and Goldwyn, and the Great M stars: Mabel Normand, Mary Garden and Mae Marsh.

Every scene, situation, character, action, emotion, every nationality, emergency, wind storm, rain storm and brain storm, every dancer, vamp, cowboy, thief and gigolo, eskimo and zulu, emperor and streetwalker, colibri and elephant — plus every printed title that flickered in the faces of the five-cent to twenty-five-cent audiences — had to be expressed in music, and we soon realised that our catalogue of so-called Dramatic and Incidental Music was quite insufficient to furnish the simply colossal amounts of music needed by an ever-expanding industry.

We searched for composers who would supply what we needed and we found them. They were fine musicians, but they were specialists in just one phase of music, film music, and most of them are forgotten today. Who still knows the compositions of Walter Simon, Herman Froml, Gaston Borch, Charles Herbert, Irene Bergé, Leo Kempinski, Maurice Baron, Hugo Riesenfeld? Very few, if any, still remember them and yet, in those days, gone only a few decades, their music was heard by more people in this country than was the music of all the great masters combined.

In those days of the silent film these men created the connecting link between the screen and the audience, and the film companies and large theatres which employed orchestras clamoured for more and more music. Their instructions to us were: "Once we play a piece of music we don't want it duplicated for at least three months."

This, of course, made our task even more difficult. Our composers were writing film music by the mile, and in order to augment their unceasing efforts we began to import music from Europe, where a whole battery of writers were busy turning their talents to picture music. Among them were: A. W. Ketelby, world-famous composer of "In a Persian Market"; Ricardo Drigo, whose Serenade from "Les Millions d'Arlequin" is still being played throughout the world; Giuseppe Becce; Patou; and even some of the works of the great Sibelius. Our catalogue of Agitated, Animal Cartoons, Church Music, and such subdivisions as Sinister, Chase, Sad, Happy, Gypsy, Mysterious, Furious and Majestic, grew and grew.

But no matter how hard we pushed our composers, they had only twenty-four hours a day to put music on paper and that just wasn't enough. We were not only working for the film companies in New York, we had arrangements with some seventy theatres all over the country to view the pictures they booked and to make special musical cue sheets for their orchestras. The cue sheets plus the actual music were to be in their possession a week before the picture went on. The demands upon us grew into staggering dimensions.

In desperation we turned to crime. We began to dismember the great masters. We began to murder the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Grieg, J. S. Bach, Verdi, Bizet, Tchaikovsky and Wagner — everything that wasn't protected by copyright from our pilfering. The immortal chorales of J. S. Bach became an "Adagio Lamentoso for sad scenes." Extracts from great symphonies and operas were hacked down to

emerge again as "Sinister Misterioso" by Beethoven, or "Weird Moderato" by Tchaikovsky. Wagner's and Mendelssohn's wedding marches were used for marriages, fights between husbands and wives, and divorce scenes: we just had them played out of tune, a treatment known in the profession as "souring up the aisle." If they were to be used for happy endings we jazzed them up mercilessly. Finales from famous overtures, with "William Tell" and "Orpheus" the favourites, became gallops. Meyerbeer's "Coronation March" was slowed down to a majestic pomposo to give proper background to the inhabitants of Sing Sing's death house. The "Blue Danube" was watered down to a minuet by a cruel change in tempo. Delibes' "Pizzicato Polka" made an excellent accompaniment to a sneaky night scene by counting "one-two" between each pizzicato. Any piece using a trombone prominently would infallibly announce the homecoming of a drunk; no other instrument could hiccup with such virtuosity.

Today I look in shame and awe at the printed copies of these mutilated masterpieces. I hope this belated confession will grant me forgiveness for what I have done. But in those days these pieces saved our lives; no composer could ever catch up with me, blue-pencilling and re-creating with scissors and paste a section of Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony." Soon we produced these "works" at a breathtaking speed and our list of Dramatic and Incidental music covered almost any situation the most extravagant film writer could think of.

Our firm had grown with the movie industry, for music had become one of the big features of the tremendous movie palaces which had been built all over the country. Hundred-thousand-dollar organs and 60-piece orchestras were advertised in screaming letters everywhere. Also, it was an era of prosperity and a publisher who specialised, as I did, in music for films, and stayed away from other adventures, was bound to prosper. And then, suddenly, it was all over. Completely, with terrifying speed, and with absolute, crushing finality.

There had been rumours about an invention that could make pictures talk. We had shrugged them off. But after attending the grand opening of the first sound film, *The Jazz Singer*, we couldn't shrug any more. A few weeks later I had to realise that what had been an industry, what I had made my own and very special business, music for the silent films, would within a short time be a thing of the past. I went home dazed. Again I was faced with the fact that there is no such thing as security. What I had thought was a solid foundation for my life was crumbling.

Within a few months 15, 000 film theatres throughout the U.S. were clamouring for sound equipment. If one theatre in a town was able to obtain it, every other house immediately turned into a morgue. Nearly 100,000 musicians found themselves without jobs. It was a grim, sweeping, disastrous collapse.

My tremendous stock of music became worthless overnight. There was nothing to do but to face facts. I sold no less than 70 tons of printed music to a paper mill for 15 cents a hundred pounds. \$210 for the entire lot! But two days before it was to pay the \$210, the mill went bankrupt, after having been in business for over 90 years. I never received a penny for my entire stock, the fruit of ten years of toil.

For a little while there was just nothing to do but to sit and wait and think. I did not despair. I had seen too many of these changes, and I had acquired enough hope and confidence to take what was coming and to make the best of it.

And then the talkies, which had dealt me so crushing a blow, helped me to catch my breath. The film companies soon realised that nobody could better help them with their new, uncharted task of fitting music to the sound track of pictures, than the men who had done the same type of work for silent pictures. Soon fabulous prices were offered for the services of such men as Hugo Riesenfeld, conductor of

the Rivoli Theatre in New York, Ernö Rapée of the Roxy, and Nat Finston of the New York Rialto. Within a short time these men found themselves in Hollywood preparing musical scores for sound film. And what was more logical than for them to fall back on the material they had used in the past and knew so well the mood music, dramatic and incidental, that would fit the situation in sound pictures as it had fitted the situations in silent ones?

The men who were selecting and recording music in Hollywood were all my friends. They knew every piece in my catalogue. It was a lifesaver for them and for me. I didn't sell sheet music any more. I now sold film companies the right to use my music on sound tracks. This soon became a general practice. I was in business again.

But I knew it couldn't last long. The film companies were paying millions of dollars to publishers and composers for the use of published music. They soon found it more profitable to hire composers to write original music and to organise their own publishing houses. When Warner Brothers spent a million dollars to acquire the old established catalogue of M. Witmark and Sons, with thousands of valuable copyrights, the rush was on. Soon most of the major film companies were in the music publishing business and were not interested in outside publications any more. My catalogue was again heading for the junk pile, this time for good. I knew that if I wanted to survive I had to draw a final line under the past and find an entirely new field of activity.

Jack Shaindlin: 'Don't Shoot the Piano Player'

As I recline in a plush semi-mobile seat in my favourite movie house and enjoy the velvety sound of music emanating from the screen and surrounding me, thanks to all the wonders of the latest engineering developments, I can't help thinking back to 1926.

I was 16 years old and played the piano in a barn that had been converted to a movie house in a Chicago suburb. It was a one-story structure with an ominously slanting cement floor. The pianist's chair was frail and the extent of its mobility depended on the weight and sense of balance of the player. The hours were from 6 to 11 p. m., seven nights a week, fitting in perfectly with my conservatory studies during the day. I even had several 15-minute breaks for refreshments. A player piano attachment filled in during my rest periods, hammering out the popular tunes of the day. On one occasion as the villain was dying on the screen, my relief robot was helping him out by playing "Linger Awhile."

The manager sat in the last row watching the film at almost every performance and his chastisement of the "sandwich eaters" was heard above my valiant effort to sustain the proper musical mood of the film. In those days the motion picture, being a relative newcomer to the entertainment media, attracted many "repeaters" who invariably brought their lunch and "made a day of it." Little did the manager know that one day the very "munching" he was trying to discourage would keep many a house from shutting down.

The average film fare in 1926 consisted of a feature picture seldom exceeding 60 minutes in length, a one or two-reel comedy, featuring the popular comedians of

the day (Larry Semon, Snub Pollard, Carter DeHaven, Lloyd Hamilton, Our Gang, and others), Aesop's Fables, a five-minute compilation of static reading matter consisting of 15 or 20 jokes, and that inevitable paragon of enlightenment, the sometime topical "International Newsreel," its slogan "The World at Your Feet" promising a "magic carpet" excursion into the unknown. I still remember some of its fascinating captions: "Federal Agents Smash 600-Gallon Still in New Jersey hills," "Cuties from 48 States Vie for Beauty Honours", "\$10, 000 Fire Destroys Warehouse," "A World at Your Feet" indeed! The style of my playing matched the subtitles of the subject matter on the screen, often resulting in 10 bruised fingers at the evening's end.

My next job at 17 was a cultural, if not a monetary, advancement. I was the leader of a trio consisting of violin, piano and cello in a downtown "grind house." I didn't particularly like the discipline imposed upon me in this job as improvising was out of the question. It is with nostalgia and embarrassment that I recall the girl cellist who straddled her instrument in cowboy fashion, pushing up her dress and revealing her garters.

In those days the musical accompaniment, whether dispensed by a pianist, a trio or an abortive symphony orchestra in the pit, usually duplicated the action on the screen without adding further dimensions. Not that there weren't my "trailblazers" in the orchestra pit at that time. There were many fine mood music makers — Ernő Rapée, William Axt, Hugo Riesenfeld and others who pioneered in this field. The patterns they established provided motivations and modus operandi for the men working in the medium now. Many of these who started in the motion picture business in the 20's 'have gone on to great things. Eugene Ormandy, who conducts the Philadelphia Orchestra, was the assistant conductor in the Capitol Theatre in New York City and was "allowed" to conduct the newsreel while the "main event" maestro stood in the wings adjusting his white tie.

Since those days, many of the arts involved in film — like writing, directing, lighting and sometimes acting — have gone through various stages of advancement. However, I feel that the improvements in screen music have been technological rather than intellectual (which is not too surprising since the culture of science and the arts have always been incompatible). Even the widespread use of jazz in film backgrounds seems to be more of an "added attraction" for the paying public than a desire on the part of the composer set the proper artistic and emotional tone for a film.

Some of the music involved in film (particularly television) scoring today does not differ greatly from the "cueing" done in the mid-1920's when a sizeable pit orchestra in a "deluxe" house gave a good performance of the specially composed music for such films as *The Big Parade* and *What Price Glory?*

The other day while watching a Western re-run on television my six-year-old ventured, "I knew he was the robber when I heard the music." Very little has changed from the days when my piano clichés identified the characters. (White hat — good guy; black hat — bad guy.) Sometimes the real "giveaway" on television is the music. This, of course, is a generalisation. There are some fine craftsmen composing for the screen now who often succeed in making a point where the script has failed. They are the ones who are giving film music what validity it has.

Unlike the silent film pianist who tried to "Mickey Mouse" the action on the screen (and usually was either late or early with his cues), the juxtaposition of soundtrack and images on the same piece of film makes exact cueing a relatively simple matter. This is particularly important when music is used to annotate dialogue. However, tight schedules in film-making and lack of rapport and collaboration on the

part of directors and writers often make it impossible for the composer to set the proper mood for a film.

Today, in my opinion, the arch-enemy of a "perfect movie score" is its illegitimate cousin, the LP soundtrack album. Performing societies pay handsomely for the radio and television performances of film themes. It is not unusual for the composer of a theme that catches on to make more money than the producer of the picture. This has produced a situation in which the tail is wagging the dog. I know a busy and successful composer who turned down an offer to write a score for a film because he did not think it had possibilities as a "hot selling" LP. "I don't think anyone would go for an album of 49 bridges," he declared.

He was right, of course. Most film scores, by their very natures, cannot possibly stand on their own as music that would interest a hi-fi or stereo fan. The story development may require deliberate balance distortions and yards and yards of unobtrusive music which complements or (as is usually the case), mirrors it. This music cannot possibly interest an LP customer who is looking for "sound." Quite often, too, a composer must subvert the music to the requirements of a particular scene so that he can only express himself through the dramatic content of the picture.

In the view of many composers, the requirements of a successful LP are more important than the requirements of the film. They would rather be "on the beat" than "on the beam." I have nothing to lose by saying this because I am well aware that in today's market three nasty letters from Tiomkin can easily be traded for one from Mancini.

My own career, which has involved serving as musical director for hundreds of films, conducting Philharmonic Pop Concerts at Carnegie Hall, and lecturing on film music, has now swung full circle. For a recently televised NBC "Today" show saluting Mack Sennett, the kingmaker of silent screen comedy, I was asked to accompany the shots of slapstick comedy on the piano. The only difference that the passing of 40 years has made is that this time I was heard by millions. So, if you find yourself looking at a movie in a converted barn in a Chicago suburb — don't shoot the piano player. It might be me.