



FILM MUSIC NOTES

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FOREWORD:

"Our Allies who know war at its worst have found music, entertainment and morale to be inseparable. They know that morale motivates the crews of tanks and planes...inspires the hum of countless factories and drowns the freezing fear of falling bombs. They know that weapons are the tools of war, but also know that music arms a nation's will to use those tools. Today, England, China and the Soviet Union sponsor and furnish cultural morale to all sections of armed forces, all industrial workers and the balance of the civilized population. And the cost is considered but a fraction of the results obtained."

The many excellent motion pictures being released today by the Motion Picture Industry, through the cooperation of the American, British and the Soviet Union Governments, are those which bring to us the actual realities of conditions as they are throughout the world. Their aim is to increase our war fervor, so that we may give of ourselves, our money and everything possible in order that VICTORY may be ours. These Governments have recognized the uplifting power of MUSIC and have provided the best orchestras and the most serious musicians to furnish the music for these films.

FILM MUSIC NOTES will contain news of the best music in the pictures of the coming year with special articles by noted musicians. Music Educators are realizing the great value of this information and words of commendation are coming in daily. Your inquiries and suggestions are welcomed.

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Those wishing to subscribe to FILM MUSIC NOTES for the year, October to May, inclusive (eight issues) are requested to send one dollar to 6162 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, California.

NEWS ITEMS - COMMENTS

While your editor, Grace Widney Mabee, will be spending the winter months in New York City, FILM MUSIC NOTES will reach you from the Hollywood office, 6162 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, California. Miss Constance Purdy, associate editor will have charge of the Hollywood Preview committee and conduct monthly Councils featuring musicians in the studios. Mrs. Mabee with the cooperation of Mme. Adelaide Gescheidt, Eastern chairman of the preview committee and the assistance of the Advisory chairman, Dr. Sigmund Spaeth, President of the National Association of Composers and Conductors, will hold monthly Councils in New York City. Mrs. Mabee is also filling a demand for speaking engagements on the subject, "Musical Personalities in the Hollywood Studios." Three talks were given at Hunter College, one in Philadelphia and one in Montclair, New Jersey, during September and early October.

The first Council held in New York City was on October 13th when a group of leading musicians were guests of Gail Thompson Kubik, in the Office of War Information, Film Unit on 45th Street. Mrs. Guy P. Gannett, President of the National Federation of Music Clubs, was special guest, and spoke of the work of the Federation in behalf of the American composer. She urges every club to see the first Government sponsored film, THE WORLD AT WAR, which was shown to us that night. Mr. Kubik, composer of the music, told us of the splendid recognition being given to the serious music composers by the Government. Notice the message by this fine composer in this issue of FILM MUSIC NOTES. Excerpts of the music sound track of the film, THE WORLD AT WAR, were played without the picture which proved most interesting to the audience. All those living near Hollywood or New York are welcome to these Councils. Write to office for information.

Thanks are given to Mrs. Thomas G. Winter and Alice E. Field, of the Department of Studio and Public Service of the Motion Picture Producers & Distributors of America, for assistance in the publication of this bulletin. "The Motion Picture Industry's broad sphere of service in the war effort is without a parallel. In addition to providing entertainment and amusement, 'morale's vitamins,' the Motion Picture is democracy's weapon. It is used to instruct workers in our war factories; it is employed to school civilian defense workers; it is an unexcelled medium for the rapid presentation of the Government's message to the masses of people everywhere."

The following musicians in Russia have sent a cable to Benny Goodman, Honorary Chairman of the popular music division of Russian War Relief in this country, urging the musicians of America to activate a decisive struggle against Hitlerite tyranny: Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofieff, Reinhold Gliere, Dimitri Kabalevsky, Van Muradeli, Victor Biely and Tikhon Khrennikoff.

The following pictures released between May 1, 1941 and May 1, 1942, received the largest vote by the leading musicians throughout the country as having the best music:

HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY	20th C. F.	Music by Alfred Newman
SUSPICION	R.K.O.	Music by Franz Waxman
KINGS ROW	Warner Bros.	Music by Erich W. Korngold
SHANGHAI GESTURE	United Artists	Music by Richard Hageman
LYDIA	Korda-U.A.	Music by Miklos Rozsa
SERGEANT YORK	Warner Bros.	Music by Max Steiner
THE LITTLE FOXES	RKO-Goldwyn	Music by Meredith Willson
BLOSSOMS IN THE DUST	M.G.M.	Music by Herbert Stothart
LADIES IN RETIREMENT	Columbia	Music by Ernest Toch
HOLD BACK THE DAWN	Paramount	Music by Victor Young
THE INVADERS	British-Col.	Music by Vaughn Williams
DUMBO, best feature length cartoon, Disney		Music by Oliver Wallace and Frank Churchill
NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, best short cartoon, M.G.M.		Music by Scott Bradley
TELL TALE HEART, best short, M.G.M.		Music by Sol Kaplan

The following is from Dr. Walter H. Rubsamen, Assistant Professor of Music at the University of California at Los Angeles. We welcome such comments and suggestions.

"I am happy to comment upon FILM MUSIC NOTES and its use in my class, which is, I believe, the first University course on the History and Technique of Theatrical Music - that is, Music for the Legitimate Drama, the Cinema and the Radio Drama.

"FILM MUSIC NOTES is of value to my students primarily as a guide to current, worthwhile pictures for which serious music has been composed. I sincerely hope that its circulation and influence will grow so that more and more emphasis will fall on the quality and originality of scores to the films. The more we are able to develop a public sensitive to the appropriateness of musical backgrounds, the higher will be the standard of composition for the films.

"My students and I should welcome a certain amount of technical musical criticism in your reviews, criticism of musical content, which in many instances, is replete with romantic oliche's, or is in an obviously derivatory style. The criticisms voiced in your magazine will be taken into account by the film executives responsible for artistic policies, and can lead them to commission scores by our best and most original composers, many of whom, unfortunately, do not participate at all in writing of film music.

"The first year of FILM MUSIC NOTES has done much to draw attention to the fact that the motion picture can represent a perfect union of the arts and that it will be the most important medium of theatrical music in the future.

"Let us hope that the film will be as much the golden opportunity for artistic expression by modern composers as was the opera in 19th century Europe."

LOOKING FORWARD:

Louis Gruenberg, winner of the National Federation of Music Club's plaque for the best music score of a dramatic picture, SO ENDS OUR NIGHT (U.A.) in 1941, is writing the score for Columbia's COMMANDOS STRIKE AT DAWN, John Farrow directing.

Jose Iturbi, pianist and conductor will appear in the picture, PRIVATE MISS JONES, M.G.M., starring Kathryn Grayson and John Boles. Shostakovich's Marching Hymn, "The United Nations" will be played by the orchestra.

Phil Spitalny's orchestra and choir of "Hour of Charm" with Allan Jones and Gloria Jean will be featured in WHEN JOHNNY COMES MARCHING HOME (Universal).

Dennis Day will be a new addition to the screen, singing three songs in THE POWERS GIRL (U.A.).

We are extremely fortunate in having as Advisory Chairman of FILM MUSIC NOTES, Dr. Sigmund Spaeth, President of the National Association for American Composers and Conductors. No one is better qualified nor more interested in the work of the film composers. Dr. Spaeth is a lecturer of national reputation under the management of the Columbia Lecture Bureau; an author of such books as "The Art of Enjoying Music," "Great Symphonies," "Stories Behind the World's Great Music," "Music For Fun" and "Common Sense of Music," as well as having several film scores to his credit. He will assist with the New York Film Music Councils and do everything possible to promote the compositions of the musicians in the film studios.

The Importance of Motion Picture Music

By Sigmund Spaeth

"In the present crisis it is hardly necessary to emphasize the importance of motion pictures in general from the various angles of morale, propaganda, news, instruction and entertainment. They are playing a definite part in the winning of the war, not only in the public theaters, but in the training camps, on ships, and among the fighting men overseas.

"The music of the films thus also assumes a new importance, for it shoulders a vital responsibility in practically every picture of significance today. Often the audience is unconscious of the effect of the music, but the fact remains that every successful motion picture in recent years has had an excellent musical score, generally with some outstanding composer in the background creating the salient ideas and taking only a modest credit for his contribution to the film as a whole.

"Aside from the splendid musicians who are now working regularly for motion pictures, it may fairly be said that practically all of our leading composers have had a chance to express themselves through the medium of the screen. This is as it should be, for the films represent perhaps the most important of all outlets for the music of the future. It is particularly significant that the so-called documentary films, including those sponsored by the government, have all paid special attention to the quality and appeal of the musical score.

"Composers who have won only an artistic success with symphonic works and chamber music are now reaching an enormous public through motion pictures, in many cases thus adding a new human appeal to their work.

"The National Association for American Composers and Conductors is proud to number many such musical creators among its members and to express its practical interest in FILM MUSIC NOTES and the splendid work of the committee responsible for its publication."

Music in Government Films

by Gail Kubik

"The film activities of the Office of War Information gained their initial momentum with the present release and distribution of THE WORLD AT WAR which is being seen in 15,000 theaters over the country. This film, produced and directed by Samuel Spewack, noted playwright and war correspondent, under the guidance of Lowell Mellett took advantage of music as a powerful, emotional medium in a way that few documentaries have attempted.

"Certain outstanding films like 'The City,' 'The Plow that Broke the Plains,' or 'The Fight For Life' did use music to full advantage. It is extremely significant that the Office of War Information, in its first feature length film on the war, THE WORLD AT WAR, should choose to follow the distinguished tradition of these documentaries rather than to have taken the easier but fallacious attitude that music was just a sort of super sound effects that was merely tolerated rather than respected.

"Now, to our amazement, it seems that a number of the press critics seem to have taken the government's point of view. The New York Times, The Herald Tribune and the magazine 'Newsweek' all mentioned the contributing value of music in THE WORLD AT WAR. The newspapers PM, Herald Tribune and the World Telegram as well as the magazine, Cue, flattered the score with independent music reviews. Even papers like The San Francisco Chronicle were aware that music in films of this sort pointed up the drama unrolled on the screen. This press recognition is mentioned only because it seems to me that the press is here representing a large and important section of the film going public. It's conceivable that one of the aforementioned papers or magazines might have 'gone out on a limb' for a music score; when, however, eight or ten of the country's most important film and music critics go to bat for music, then one can believe only that those same critics are merely responding to a growing interest and demand on the part of the public that music be represented in films in a manner that realizes its real potentialities.

"In a later issue of FILM MUSIC NOTES it may be possible to go into detail on some of the interesting composition problems which THE WORLD AT WAR presented. THE WORLD AT WAR offered an opportunity for the use of music that is rarely given to serious composers in films. Here is a film history which cries out for a contemporary musical score. It is hoped that the music in WORLD AT WAR meets that challenge".

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We are to have the interest and cooperation of Gail Thompson Kubik, Head Consultant, Office of War Information, Film Unit, as to music in all Government films this year. Mr. Kubik is a young man with an outstanding background in music and well equipped to provide the type of serious music required for these Government films. Born in Kansas; graduate from Eastman School of Music, American Conservatory and Harvard University; a student in composition of Bernard Rogers, Howard Hanson, Leo Sowerby, Walter Piston and Nadia Boulanger; instructor in music, history, orchestration and advance composition in Teachers College, Columbia University and formerly musical program advisor and staff composer National Broadcasting Company. He has won many prizes, among them the MacDowell Fellowship, Sinfonia National Award, Chicago Symphony Award and the Jascha Heifetz violin concerto Award. His film scores are MEN AND SHIPS and THE WORLD AT WAR.

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

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

The following pictures are commended for their timely themes, spurring the war spirit to a higher degree of fervor. Music is given special emphasis.

THE WORLD AT WAR. Written and produced by Samuel Spewack. Narrator: Paul Stewart. Musical Score: Gail Kubik. Orchestra Conductor: Alexander Smallens. The United States Government presents this pictorial record of the decade of war which led inevitably to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Western Hemisphere. This is the first film to be turned out under the new Bureau of Motion Pictures set up in the Office of War Information, headed by Lowell Mellett. The material for it was taken from newsreels and from enemy films in the possession of our Government. The picture, which has a running time of one hour and six minutes, is distributed free to all theaters, so that every American can see it. The music, by one of our most serious young modern composers, furnishes a fine and fitting accompaniment, and that it can stand alone was demonstrated recently at a New York showing when the sound track was run without the film so that this unusually telling score might be judged on its own unusual merits. This film should be seen by everyone.

MARCH OF TIME. These films are always most enlightening and worthwhile. "India in Crisis" shows its ceaseless internal conflict and situation in relation to the rest of the world; and "India at War," an excellent piece of reporting, clarifies the gigantic issues facing Britain and the Indians themselves. Music is most appropriate.

WOMEN IN DEFENSE, Produced by the Office For Emergency Management. A short with narration by Katharine Hepburn shows the distinct contribution women are making in National Defense, in munitions plants, airplane factories and chemical laboratories.

WINNING YOUR WINGS, Warner Bros. Highly informative short, wherein James Stewart, as narrator, gives conviction to a text excellent in its approach. Fine music, especially the "Song for Airmen."

WINGS AND THE WOMAN, RKO. An authentic record of achievement made possible by the British Government and Air Ministry, depicting the life of Amy Mollison (played superbly by Anna Neagle.) The music is outstanding, scored by one of England's best known composers, William Alwyn, and performed by the London Symphony Orchestra.

WAKE ISLAND, Paramount. Stark realism and human interest interwoven make this picture one which everyone should see and remember. The problem between construction engineers and the Army is well presented and developed and the Marines are portrayed with fidelity and true to tradition. The music is well handled by David Buttolph - bugle calls, shellings and bombings cuing into the fighting background with telling effect, with "The Song of the Marines" stirringly treated throughout.

WINGS FOR THE EAGLE, Warner Bros. The real interest in this film lies in the graphic showing of bomber construction and working conditions in the huge Lockheed Airplane plant. It is well cast, acted and directed and the orchestral sequences, arranged at the plant by Frederick Hollander, are noteworthy.

JOURNEY INTO FEAR, RKO. Pro-Dir: Orson Welles. Music: C. Bakakeinikoff, Roy Webb. This picture is superbly acted, photographed in the low key for which Welles is famous, and contains some thrilling moments. The Oriental atmosphere is flavored and heightened by the music which is admirably provided with fine sound effects. The score, from its first bitter notes right through to the end, contributes greatly to the mood.

EAGLE SQUADRON, Universal. Director: Arthur Lubin. Music: Charles Previn

A splendid picture in every way, authentic in background and sincere of purpose. It is well deigned to stir one's profound emotions, bringing out vividly the courage and morale of a country which will never admit defeat, while at the same time showing the essential differences in temperament between English and American flyers and their common reactions in time of danger. Interest and suspense are sustained up to the final shot. Musical direction insures a score of dynamic tempo and value, being consistently rich and dramatic and so contributing largely to the emotions invoked. With the "Sky Song" used as the theme throughout, it is developed in its most telling form in the sequence where the Americans take off for their first flight to England. Another important scene is that in which Chuck wanders off into the grounds, with the music accompanying his faltering steps so subtly that it amply conveys the mood of the entire episode. "Booms-a-Daisy" and the songs the children sing as they play on the cliff are also characteristic in rhythm and feeling. Mature-Family.

MRS. MINIVER, M.G.M. Director: William Wyler. Music: Herbert Stothart

This is one of those films that ranks with a great painting, a symphony or a fine piece of sculpture...creative artistry at its best. Mrs. Miniver epitomizes the gallant England of today. A faithful transcription of life as it must exist in a civilized land with beautiful characterizations by each member of an outstanding cast; perfect timing in dialogue, suspense and anguish, with silences as impressive as sound effects. The music score is one of Stothart's finest. From its gay and witty start in the opening sequence, gradually becoming more sombre and menacing with the unfolding of the story, to the lovely church music in the finale, it has great beauty and dignity. In fact, it could well be made into a tone-poem entitled "England." Mature-Family.

SUICIDE SQUADRON, Republic (British). Director: Brian Desmond Hurst. Music: Addinsoll
Highlighted against contrasting scenes of bomb shelled cities, an American concert tour and sky-flying war, this picture shows us a Polish flyer, whose civilian occupation is that of composer-pianist. In flashbacks the story unwinds to tell us of the mental struggle he undergoes in deciding whether to continue to serve his country in the war or confine himself to his music by giving concerts for Polish relief. Anton Walbrook is ideally suited to the role and he plays it with authority and realism. Excellent synchronization is achieved in piano solos beautifully recorded. Bits of Liszt's "Liebestraum," the Schumann Piano Concerto with visible symphony orchestra add tremendously to the music values. The Concerto by R. Addinsoll, written especially for the production, serves as a theme motivating the love interest and could well become a fine concert number apart from the picture. The use of Chopin's "Military Polonaise" emphasizes the dramatic importance this composition played in Poland during the siege. The title of the picture is unfortunate as it indicates a picture primarily dealing with war, whereas the story is actually concerned with the love and musical life of the hero. Family.

DESPERATE JOURNEY, Warner Bros. Director: Raoul Walsh. Music: Max Steiner

A picture of compelling interest, tense and exciting with original and significant photography (one shot, a masterpiece, depicts the light on the face of a man about to release a carrier pigeon, just as death comes.) The score is one of Steiner's best and most characteristic. He uses many familiar themes as a starter for original development and low frequencies with plucked strings prevailing for suspense. M.F.

PRIDE OF THE YANKEES, Goldwyn-RKO. Director: Sam Wood. Music: Leigh Harline

Deeply moving, inspiring story of the life of Lou Gehrig and the baseball diamond with its many thrills and excitement but showing the unswerving standards which brought him the love of all ball fans. Good music appropriately rendered. Family.

"THE PIED PIPER, 20th C. F. Director: Irving Pichel. Music: Alfred Newman
Directed with sensitive feeling and good taste, this picture is a realistic document of the times and locale. It is convincing, absorbing and filled with human interest with quiet touches of humor and restraint, while from a propoganda standpoint it puts across some telling points yet avoids over-emphasis or seeming exaggeration. Acting, photography, construction of sequences and music are all in the domain of art, and values are beautifully presented with the music. knitting the story together, helping to build the situations and with the nursery rhymes delightfully woven into the background. Thrilling and worthwhile. Family.

SEVEN SWEETHEARTS, M.G.M. Director: Frank Borzage. Music: Franz Waxman
A refreshing and different type of light musical which gives a sense of ease and enjoyment throughout. Music is gay with catchy melodies sung in artistically balanced sequences. Kathryn Grayson is charming as Billie. The background music descriptively lifts the action into "fades," bridges each episode, and otherwise assists in illustrating each scene. A sacred solo, "Lord Make Us Free," adds significance and it is beautifully sung. Popular numbers are woven into a colorful musical montage. Family

SPRING SONG, Artkino-Republic. Music: Dmitri Kabalevsky
Spring Song is a joyous music-comedy drama of a people who preserve the arts of peace in time of war. Music is important to the Russians and it reflects and often satirizes the principal musical attitudes common to contemporary Russia. The story is of a "die-hard" classicist who approaches his music with reverence but without realism. The characters represent between them the wholesome realistic attitude which holds that people need all kinds of music - light opera and fox trots as well as chorales and oratorio. The music is so artistic that it becomes an "old fashioned masterpiece." The Bach Chorals and Gounod's Romeo and Juliet waltz are used with excellent taste, and the young singer, Simi, has one of the most beautiful voices heard on the screen, and the innovation of using it as an instrument and part of the orchestra in the symphony was thrilling and may be an example for other composers to follow. The operetta themes by Kabalevsky should by all means be recorded. The sound did not give the richness of tone to the music that a more natural reproduction would, but even that did not lessen the enjoyment of this film which we hope all will see.

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Space forbids giving much detail on a number of pictures released during the summer. A few are especially recommended:

THE LOVES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE, 20th C. F. Music: Emil Newman. An idealized portrait

TAKE A LETTER DARLING, Para. Dir: Mitchell Leisen. Music: Victor Young.

A smart, sophisticated comedy with clever satirical music.

YANKEE DOODLE DANDY, Warner Bros. George M. Cohan and his time, which all can enjoy
HOLIDAY INN, Para. Irving Berlin songs for each holiday. Witty dialogue, tuneful music, expert dancing.

TALES OF MANHATTAN, 20th C. F. Music: Sol Kaplan. Story of a tail coat. Brilliant acting by an all-star cast.

THE TALK OF THE TOWN, Columbia. Good music by Morris Stoloff

THE BIG STREET, RKO. Cinderella fantasy with excellent music by Roy Webb

EYES IN THE NIGHT, M.G.M. Good detective fare including a seeing-eye dog as a scene stealer.

A YANK AT ETON, M.G.M. Pleasing school story stressing international relations. Good for family.

ICELAND, 20th C. F. Music: Emil Newman. Romance, skating and charming folk dances.

MEN OF TEXAS, Universal. Reconstruction days in Texas, featuring the popular tune, "Deep in the Heart of Texas."