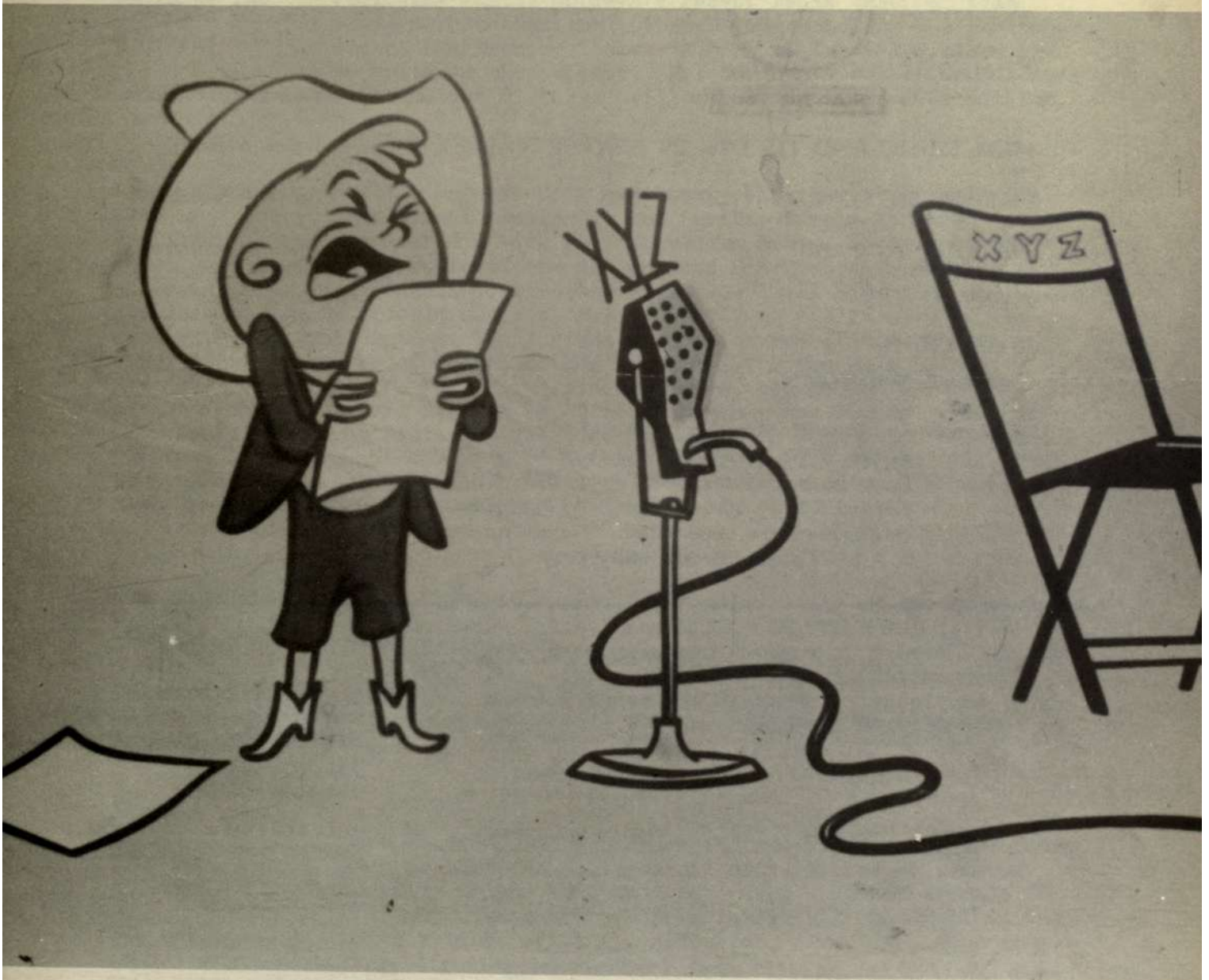
FILM MUSIC NOTES



GERALD McBOING BOING

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1950

VOLUME X NUMBER II

FILM MUSIC NOTES

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NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1950 VOLUME X NUMBER II

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Frederick W. Sternfeld, Professor of Music, Dartmouth College.
James Algar, Director Walt Disney, BEAVER VALLEY.
Edward Kilenyi, 20th Century-Fox Film Studio.
Quaintance Eaton, Asso. Editor, "Musical America"
R. F. Deke, Composer and Music Critic.

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ACADEMY MUSIC BRANCH

The Music Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has revised the rules governing the balloting on music awards in the forthcoming Academy Awards, it was announced by Johnny Green, chairman. Five nominations instead of three will be made for each of the two scoring awards. Preliminary ballots for the scoring awards will be sent to branch members who will vote for ten productions in each category in order of preference. For the final ballot, five productions are selected from each category. Five selections will be made in nominating the best song, as previously.

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MUSIC OF THE MOTION PICTURES

Following Samuel Goldwyn's recent radio talks on film music for the National Broadcasting Company, the publishers of the Grolier Society's Book of Knowledge asked him to write on the subject. Mr. Goldwyn's eight hundred word article " Music of the Motion Pictures" will appear in their 1951 edition.

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LOS ANGELES FILM INSTITUTE

The Los Angeles City and County Film Institute held its semi-annual meeting in the Carthay Circle Theatre, on November 4th with Mrs. Geraldine Healy, Supervisor of Vocal Music of the Los Angeles City Schools, serving as chairman. Mrs. Helen Rachford, Director of Audio-Visual Education of the Los Angeles County Schools and Mrs. Helen C. Dill of the faculty of the University of California at Los Angeles were in charge of the program. James Algar, director of the film, BEAVER VALLEY for the Walt Disney Studios, gave a talk on Paul Smith's music score, before the screening of the picture. Edward Kilenyi Sr. of 20th Century-Fox Studios spoke on Film Music of Recent Pictures, illustrating his talk with score excerpts. Portions of both talks are printed in this issue of FILM MUSIC NOTES. The Spring Film Institute will be held at the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, with Mrs. Helen C. Dill as program chairman.

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ROBERT FLAHERTY FILM ASSOCIATES

Robert Flaherty, producer of a long line of distinguished documentary films, from NANOOK OF THE NORTH to THE LOUISIANA STORY, has organized a company, Robert Flaherty Film Associates. Production will include documentary, industrial and institutional shorts, under Mr. Flaherty's direction. With Mr. Flaherty in the new company are his brother David and Kenneth Cofed of Kenco Films.

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MOTION PICTURE COURSES

Three Hundred motion picture and related courses are being given in American colleges and universities at present according to the Hollywood Reporter, compared to only 86 in 1946. These embrace practically all phases of motion picture work, including acting, writing, production, directing, cinematography, sound recording, lighting, designing, film editing,projection, distribution, animation, documentaries, film appreciation, films for television, films in visual education. There is an interest in setting up similar courses in high schools.

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE ANTHEIL

Lawrence Morton

(Early this year the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation commissioned Lawrence Morton to record in Hollywood fourteen interviews with film composers for subsequent broadcast on the CBC series entitled MUSIC FROM THE FILMS. Morton's interviews had been preceded by a series in which Muir Mathieson had discussed film music with British composers; a new British series is now current. MUSIC FROM THE FILMS is produced by Gerald Pratley in Toronto, and as a year-round program devoted exclusively to film music, it is unique in radio.

GEORGE ANTHEIL

The following interview with George Antheil was the eighth in Morton's series. His guests at other times were Constantine Bakaleinikoff, Maurice Depackh, Adolph Deutsch, George Duning, Hugo Friedhofer, Johnny Green, Gail Kubik, Alfred Newman, Andre Previn, David Raksin, Miklos Rozsa, Franz Waxman, Roy Webb.

MORTON: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My guest tonight is George Antheil, one of those versatile composers who can shuttle back and forth between the concert hall and the film studio with perfect composure, and without losing his sense of direction. He tells me that between film assignments he is working on an opera. It is sometimes considered indiscreet to ask a composer about the piece he is currently working on. Therefore, Mr. Antheil, I won't ask you anything directly about the opera. But I will suggest that if you feel like giving any clues, hints, or inklings about it, you have a large audience to whisper to. Are there any rumors that you would like to start circulating?

ANTHEIL: There's nothing secret about the opera, Mr. Morton. It's Ben Jonson's VOLPONE. I'm working from the original play, not the adaptation that has been so popular on the American stage.

MORTON: When you are working simultaneouslyon opera and film music, Mr. Antheil, do you find yourself leading a kind of Jekyll and Hyde existence? Do you have to keep your operatic right hand ignorant of what your left hand is doing in the studio?

ANTHEIL: No, not at all. I write all my music with my right hand, whether it's a film score or a symphony. Opera and film music, as a matter of fact, are very closely related, both being in the same category

of theater music. They are far less separated from each other than they are from another large category - music for the concert hall. Of course all these categories intertwine, and their techniques and styles are transferable.

MORTON: Are there any specific film techniques that you can carry over into the field of opera?

ANTHEIL: Yes, there are several. One is the technique of underscoring. In the old operas the voice and the orchestra always go together.and even when they are musically "counterpointed" they are still, in a dramatic sense, presenting different aspects of the same pattern. This is not so in the films. The characters in a film drama never know what is going to happen to them, but the music always knows. Hence an orchestral commentary is possible, but it can comment on the action without necessarily illustrating it. Film music can go against the voice - that is, against the dialogue - and also against the action. I did this in my early operas. and I was interested to notice that Menotti does it in THE CONSUL, which I saw in New York recently. Much of Menotti's music is underscoring and consequently it sounds a great deal like film music.

MORTON: One of the most characteristic techniques of film music is the montage where, in perhaps a minute of film, the accumulative action of days or years is reviewed in quick camera shots. Can this technique be used in opera?

ANTHEIL: Yes, I used it in my opera TRANSATLANTIQUE in 1927. It's more a staging problem than a musical one, however.

MORTON: Let's shift into reverse here. Can you use operatic techniques in the films - the aria form. for instance?

ANTHEIL: Well, in opera an aria is most often a way of letting a character express lyrically his feelings about a certain dramatic situation. We do this in films very often. We might write a string melody with an orchestral accompaniment, to be played behind dialogue or a long speech. If there is time enough, the music can take on the actual form of an aria.

MORTON: Yes, I can see how this is possible in a lyric scene. But what about a highly dramatic one requiring the kind of expressiveness in, say, the "Credo" in OTELLO, or "Vesti la giubba" ?

ANTHEIL: That is also possible for the screen. In a recent score of mine, KNOCK ON ANY DOOR, there was just this kind of a scene. A boy is standing on a roof, watching on the street below the funeral of his sweetheart who had committed suicide. He can't go to the funeral because he is hiding from the police. The music I wrote for the scene was a kind of aria - an aria of despair and hatred. Of course there was no dialogue here and the sound track was clear. It is in scenes like this that film music functions most effectively, when it is doing something that neither speech nor photography is doing.

MORTON: What about the recitative technique, where a character sings unaccompanied except for a few strategically placed chords?

ANTHEIL: Recitative presents the question of where to put the chord. It's like punctuation. In opera it is used mostly to establish a harmony, but in films it can be used dramatically, to punctuate action as well as speech.

MORTON: Can you explain why the maintitle of a film score has not generally taken on the function of the operatic overture?

ANTHEIL: It really ought to. It should be one place in a film score where strictly musical form dominates. I can't explain why the maintitle hasn't become more overture-like, but everyone can observe that it has developed into a cliche, with a fanfare for the director, a louder fanfare for the producer, lots of noise. Maintitles seem to be telling the audience that every picture is a colossal epic. The most usual exception to the rule is when the maintitle plugs a love theme, in the hope, I suppose, that the plug might help the tune make the Hit Parade. I wrote a real overture recently, for a film called WE WERE STRANGERS. It wasn't acceptable to the front office, and so I had to rewrite it. By now, of course, everybody knows the story of how Aaron Copland's title music for THE HEIRESS was deleted from his score and replaced by an orchestral version of a little French song that is sung in the film. Copland felt obliged to write a letter to the press disclaiming responsibility for that part of the score.

MORTON: You just mentioned love themes. Do you have any particular feeling about them?

ANTHEIL: Indeed I do. They are the bane of the film composer's life. For the most part they are the kind that spells love L-U-V. I'm afraid that audiences and film producers alike have come to believe that that is the only kind of love that exists in the world. Actually it isn't that sickly sweet and sentimental except in the movies. What I consider my best score was written for a film that had no love story and therefore no love music. It was called THAT BRENNAN GIRL, but I'm afraid not many people heard about it.

MORTON: When you say you object to "luv themes" do you mean that you are a follower of the so-called "cult of the inexpressive?"

ANTHEIL: No, not at all. There was a period, say about twenty years ago, when all the leading composers were being non-expressive. And I went right along with them. All of us were in revolt against the ultra-expressiveness of the preceding generation which had brought music to a real orgy of extravagant emotionalism. Now we have achieved a kind of balance. Taste and judgment have been restored as the real criteria of expression.

MORTON: Can't that same taste and judgment guide you in the writing of film music?

ANTHEIL: To a certain extent, yes. But it can't help much against the industrial cliches of the "luv theme" and maintitle. Almost everywhere else it is possible for the composer to write just about as he pleases. At least, that is my experience. Most of my scores are, I believe, what the layman would call "modern". Their modern-ness doesn't seem to be a hindrance to my career in films. And there are passages in those scores

that I regard as my very best dramatic music. I mean things like the digging music in WE WERE STRANGERS and some passages in TOKYO JOE.

MORTON: Do you believe that the "serious" composer can handle cliche situations any better than the "commercial" Hollywood men?

ANTHEIL: He should be able to, but he doesn't always, I'm sorry to say. Perhaps I shouldn't publicly criticize my colleagues, but I must say that they have disappointed me many times by their failure to find new and better ways of handling cliches. What disappoints me most is that these failures are artistic mistakes, not errors due to lack of the special craft of writing for films. I had a really cliche situation to deal with in a recent score of mine, IN A LONELY PLACE. There was a series of brutal incidents - an automobile chase ending in a crash, and the crash leading to a fight between the drivers. Originally there was no music, only sound effects in the scene. But I wanted to score it because I felt I could bring something fresh-sounding to it. I prevailed on the producer to let me try it- he could always take the music out if he didn't like it. Eventually the scene had musicand no sound effects at all.

MORTON: Generally, Mr. Antheil, you have been highly critical of Hollywood music, through less so here tonight than in your book. Do you believe film music has a hopeful future?

ANTHEIL: Indeed I do. The problems of film music are very exciting. The composer is constantly challenged by dramatic situations which, however commonplace they may seem, all have their own peculiar and individual flavor. You have to have a real dramaturgical instinct. And there are purely musical problems too that keep a composer on his toes. Because there are so many short pieces in a film score, you have to find a way to make them stick together. There has to be cohesion just as there is in any other music. The most difficult job of all is to make it sound like music, not sound effects. The very fact that there are problems in film music is what gives one hope for it. If there were no problems the same thing would happen to film music as happened to old-fashioned opera. Opera died because composers had licked all the problems, and the whole form became a cliche. That is why composers today are trying to write operas of a new kind. Shows like SOUTH PACIFIC and operas like THE CONSUL are tremendously important in the search for new operatic techniques. Films are very quick in taking up new trends in the entertainment world. And I believe that out of such trends there will eventually come a way of writing opera directly for the screen - with music in the driver's seat.

MORTON: That is a hopeful note to end this interview on, Mr. Antheil. Thank you for the time and thought you have given to this discussion. I hope VOLPONE progresses speedily and successfully. And now goodnight to the CBC audience, until next week. This is Lawrence Morton, speaking to you from Hollywood.

KUBIK'S McBOING SCORE

with excerpts of score

Frederick W. Sternfeld

The music for the cartoon GERALD McDOING BOING departs happily from the routine score in ways more than one. First of all, it does not trail the action in the customary way, supplying the equivalent of sound-effects, runs and stops, hurry-ups and slow-downs, climbs and falls, squeaks and grunts. (Such musical mimicry, carefully co-ordinated and synchronized with the visual animation, is called, in the technical language of screen composers, "micky-mousing.") Instead, the musical fabric of this latest of Kubik's functional scores makes continuous musical sense. Far from impeding the show, this independence on the composer's part actually injects depth and intensity into the visual images and the unfolding of the story. It seems to me that this is so for reasons both personal and general. On the personal level, Kubik's"independence" does not represent the unauthorized self-assertion of an underling, for the producer and the director invited him to create the musical continuity from the script and a few colored pencil sketches. Only after he had composed the score did the animators and narrator take up their duties, mindful of the tempo and rhythm of the music. This procedure is in some ways reminiscent of THE RIVER where Virgil Thomson's score guided the spacing of Pare Lorentz' narration. The musician has always been part of the working team, and he would be both a fool and a knave to attempt otherwise. But the point is that in such old documentaries as THE RIVER and in the present cartoon he is an important and respected, rather than a subordinate member of that team.

On the general level the success of the co-operation between director, narrator, animator and composer is due, in considerable part, to Kubil's underlying philosophy concerning what constitutes the proper music for films. This philosophy enables him to endow his music with a self-assertiveness that is unusual under the customary working conditions of Hollywood. Yet, this prominence never steals the show, rather it helps it. (Lest I be misunderstood, I may add hastily that the resident Hollywood composer deserves the same conditions; it is through no fault of his that he does not at present enjoy them.)

Kubik's aesthetic creed may be summarized along these lines:

(1) Never write down to your public. A movie score is as serious a work as a symphony.

(2) Don't be afraid of using a contemporary idiom. Music of 1950 need not and , indeed, should not sound like Tchaikovsky. The Russian himself never aped a predecessor already in his grave for over half a century.

(3) Serious and modern as the score should be, don't forget that its first requirement is to be functional. A movie score is not written for a few smart people, it is written for the mass audience of today and is bound to fail unless it contributes to the film's success with that audience.

It is this third and last point that makes it necessary to evolve an idiom which is truly "filmic" while at the same time it is mature and genuinely contemporary. In McBOING, as well as in MEMPHIS BELLE,

THUNDERBOLT and C-MAN Kubik's procedure is to reduce his vocabulary drastically in order to make it fit the tempo of the screen and the ability of the audience to comprehend. This simplified musical language bears a relationship to the parlance of his symphony and piano sonata that is comparable to the relationship between Basic English and regular English.

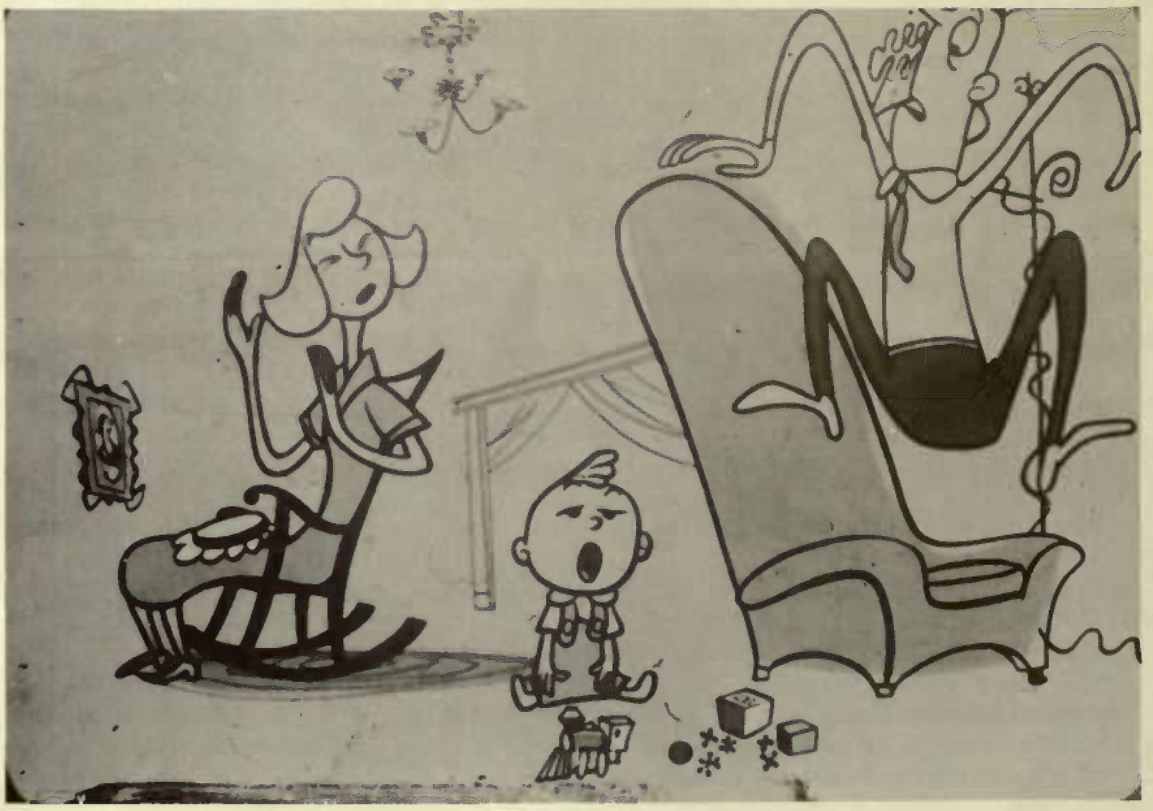
Basic English restricts the vocabulary to about one -fifth of the words we generally use in our daily verbal and written communication. It does so with a conspicuous emphasis on simple and short terms. But reducing musical or verbal phraseology to its lowest common denominator of communication enables the author and composer to reach the mass audiences which prefer the tabloid to the serious newspaper, the funnies to the letterpress, the Hit Parade to the N. B. C. Symphony. That we must adjust our modes of expression to reach these audiences has never been denied. Some composers and arrangers have departed so radically from the standards of the concert hall that the new idiom is an altogether different language, comparable, let us say, to Esperanto rather than Basis English. Others have reduced, stripped and simplified the language of the concert hall; have grafted upon it new ways of sound, texture and counterpoint, peculiar to the microphone and the dubbing process : yet, they have preserved a stylistic rapport between their "absolute" and their functional music. This rapport has made it possible for Kubik to utilize passages from his documentaries in his piano sonata and for Copland to borrow, for his violin sonata, material used in his feature films. Both composers, with a keen awareness of the dictates of either medium, have transformed their musical stuff, not merely transferred it mechanically. Yet, that transformation could not have taken place had there not existed a fundamental similarity in their styles of functional and so-called "absolute" music.

The challenge here is to create a form of expression which, in its time dimensions and its sonorities, satisfies the cinema at the same time that it maintains general musical standards in its integrity and craftmanship. The musical purist will extol the composer who writes complex long-spanned music without much concern for the dramatic exigencies, and the "film only" boys will claim that whether the style is quite irrelevant. A synthesis of the two is always difficult to achieve, and it is not for the critical bystander to belittle the achievement from his narrow vantage point. Patently, the true objective lies between the two extremes, though a little nearer the second: in good film music, as in any dramatic music, the show comes first. But if the essence of the script permits and even demands full-bodied and full-blooded music, then the excellence of the score, in terms of the medium of music, is certainly one of the relevant standards of judgment.

The basic outline of the McBOING story calls for a musical rather than a verbal organization. Gerald McBoing Boing is a little boy who does not talk in words, - he makes sounds instead. To characterize this unusual child, to depict the bewilderment of his parents over their freak off-spring, to express his loneliness and dejection; these are subjects that cry for music. Indeed, music can mirror them poignantly and briefly, and with more understanding than a

whole volume of psychological probings. The conclusion of the plot is a satire on the radio industry and on those who have more faith in the hucksters than in their own children and pals. For when little Gerald proves a sensational success on the air, where his non-verbal suggestiveness goes over big, parents and playmates reverse their earlier attitudes and fete him. Here, again, is a cue for the composer to ridicule the conventional music of the radio with its overly assertive fanfares and its barren substances.

Kubik's first job was to create the personality of Gerald in musical terms. This he did by identifying him, in rhythm and sonority, with the percussion group of the orchestra. Just as the speechless Gerald in the script is surrounded by talking humans, so the percussion group, with its incisive rhythms and few variations of pitch is surrounded by the melody-carrying instruments of the orchestra. As a matter of fact, the whole score is basically a concerto for percussion and orchestra, just as Stravinsjy's "Petrouchka" is a concerto for piano and orchestra, and neither the American cartoon nor the Russian ballet yield any of their dramatic punch to the music, although the music is foreground, rather than background, in both cases.



The very beginning of the Main Title (or the Overture, if you like) introduces Gerald by way of three percussive chords (Example 1). This little theme sets the mood for the entire piece: its rhythm is incisive, its sonority recaptures the sound of a drum. I say "recaptures" because this is not a mechanically accurate reproduction of a drum-sound; after all, a single drum would serve that purpose best. Rather, it is a stylized impression, translated into orchestral terms: vigorous sounds at the bottom of the tonal range (cello, bassoon, left-hand of piano), supplemented by brisk

overtones at the high end of the gamut (flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, right-hand of piano), with a comparative absence of the middle range(represented by inconspicuous doublings in French horn and viola). Of course, the three chords at the beginning of Example 1 lend themselves very well to paralleling the metrical pattern of the sounds which little Gerald emits, and at times the narrator relates the hero's "boing- boing- boing" in precisely the same rhythm as these three chords. Such deliberate timing is used but rarely in the score and it is quite effective when it occurs, as at bar 126. (Thanks to the considerable musical interest of McBOING a concert arrangement is to be performed during the 1950-51 season by the Little Orchestra Society under Thomas Scherman. The orchestral score has been published by the Southern Music Company of New York City. Thus, readers of FILM MUSIC NOTES can easily supplement the musical quotations at the end of this analysis.)

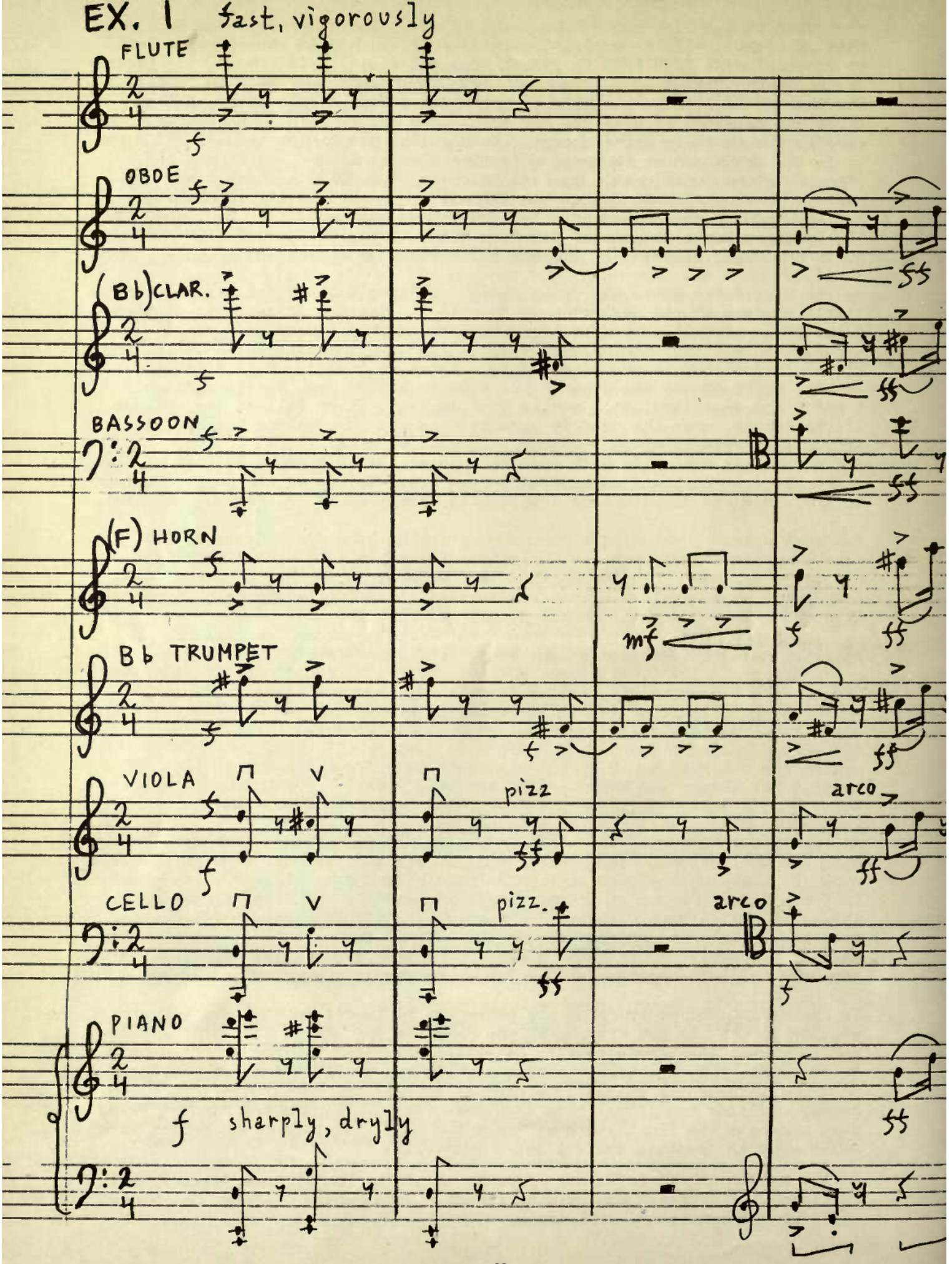
In the Main Title music the three chords of Example 1 are followed by the little fanfare at the beginning of Example 2. The chords reappear at bars 5 and 9 and then the overture introduces us quickly (Examples 3 and 4 - square brackets indicate related motives) to some characteristic variations of the fanfare before the story proper begins at bar 43. This first sequence, which states the case of the strange little boy, develops Example 1 and 2 and adds the little motive of Example 5. There follows the episode of the doctor, whom the unhappy parents consult. Dr. Malone has his bit of tune, Example 6, which is stated quite a few times (bars 91, 106, 132) and which vies musically with various appearances of Example 4, just as the very unconventional and unexpected boing- boing-boings of the boy. Needless to say, Example 4 and Gerald win, and the exasperated Dr. Malone withdraws.

The next episode, which pits our non-conforming hero against the public school system, develops a new variation of Example 3 to depict Gerald in his new environment (quoted as Example 7 below). A plaintive oboe phrase, introduced when Gerald's mother reads the distressing report card, appears throughout the seqience (Example 8; cf. bars 171,193, 202 of score).

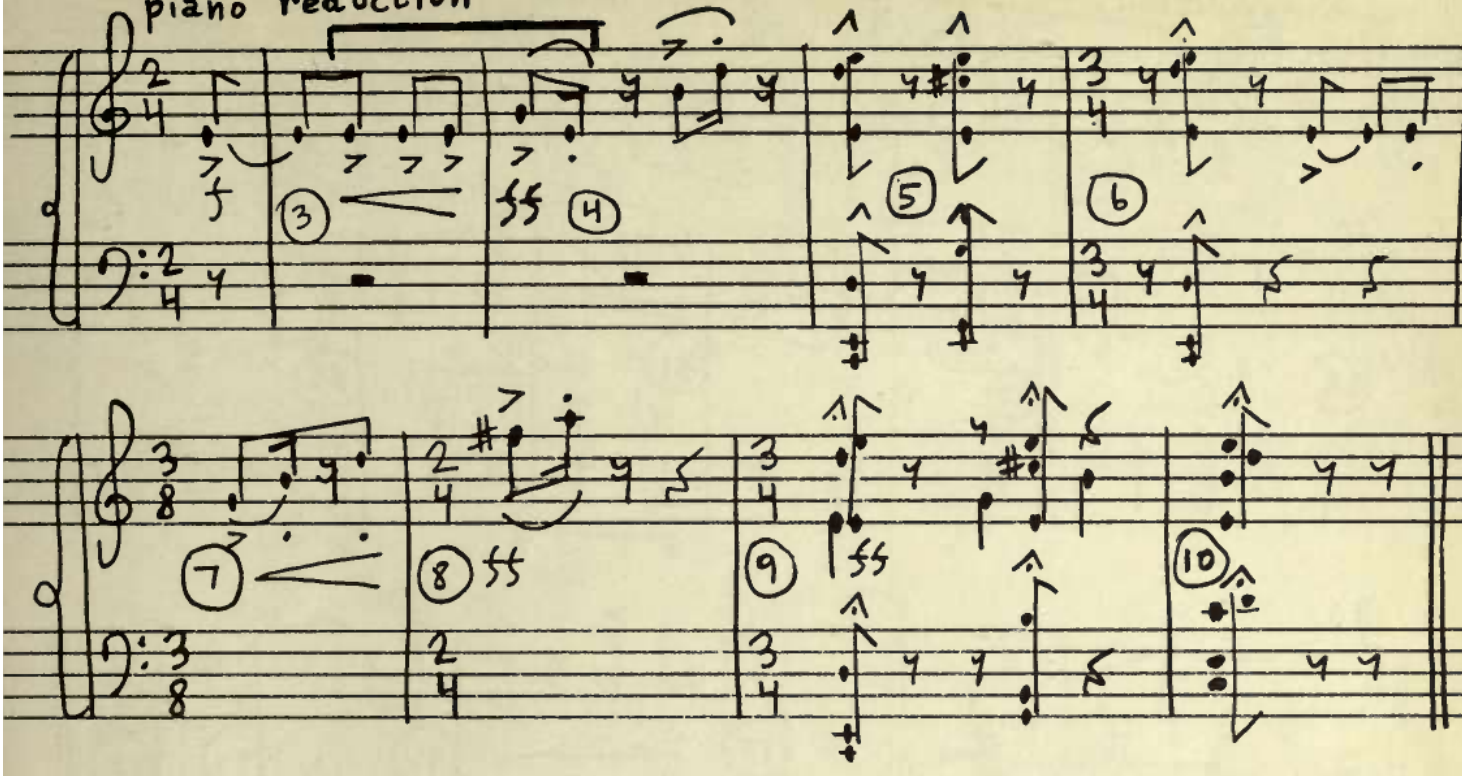
We reach the tragic climax of our story: the rejected Gerald in a state of utter despair. The dirge starts out quietly, with subdued instrumentation (oboe, French horn, viola, cello: Example 9). Violent tone colors ensue when the short-tempered father loses his patience, and the height of the boy's loneliness is again expressed in a single oboe line (which derives its awkward melodic skips from Example 9.) As Gerald walks in the snow toward the railroad depot shrill sixteenth-note figures make us fear the worst. The unexpected happy ending arrives by way of the owner of a radio station. At last Gerald's qualities are appreciated: "Your gong is terrific, your toot is inspired." At this point the composer follows the proceedings partly by illustrating what might be called non-descript radio-music, partly with tongue in cheek. The musical station signals(bar 243), the empty scale runs to accompany the build-up of the commentator (bars 256-273), all come in for a gentle ribbing. And now we listen to Gerald's star performance which, in the cartoon, consists of a sound-effects concerto in which percussive elements are prominent; in the concert suite it is an outright percussion concerto. After this one-man show Gerald's vindication is quite properly reflected by the triumphal reappearance of Example 1, 2, 3 and 4.

In re-hearing and re-studying the score one is impressed with the composer's ability to capture the essence of the dramatic problem in the first few bars and to mirror the hero's trials, dejection and final victory so poignantly in the music. By the time the listener returns to the themes of the beginning the intervening stages have been so intense and convincing that one hardly realizes how little time they have taken. But the ten minutes or so that separate the first statement from the final peroration are packed with music of both dramatic and stylistic integrity.

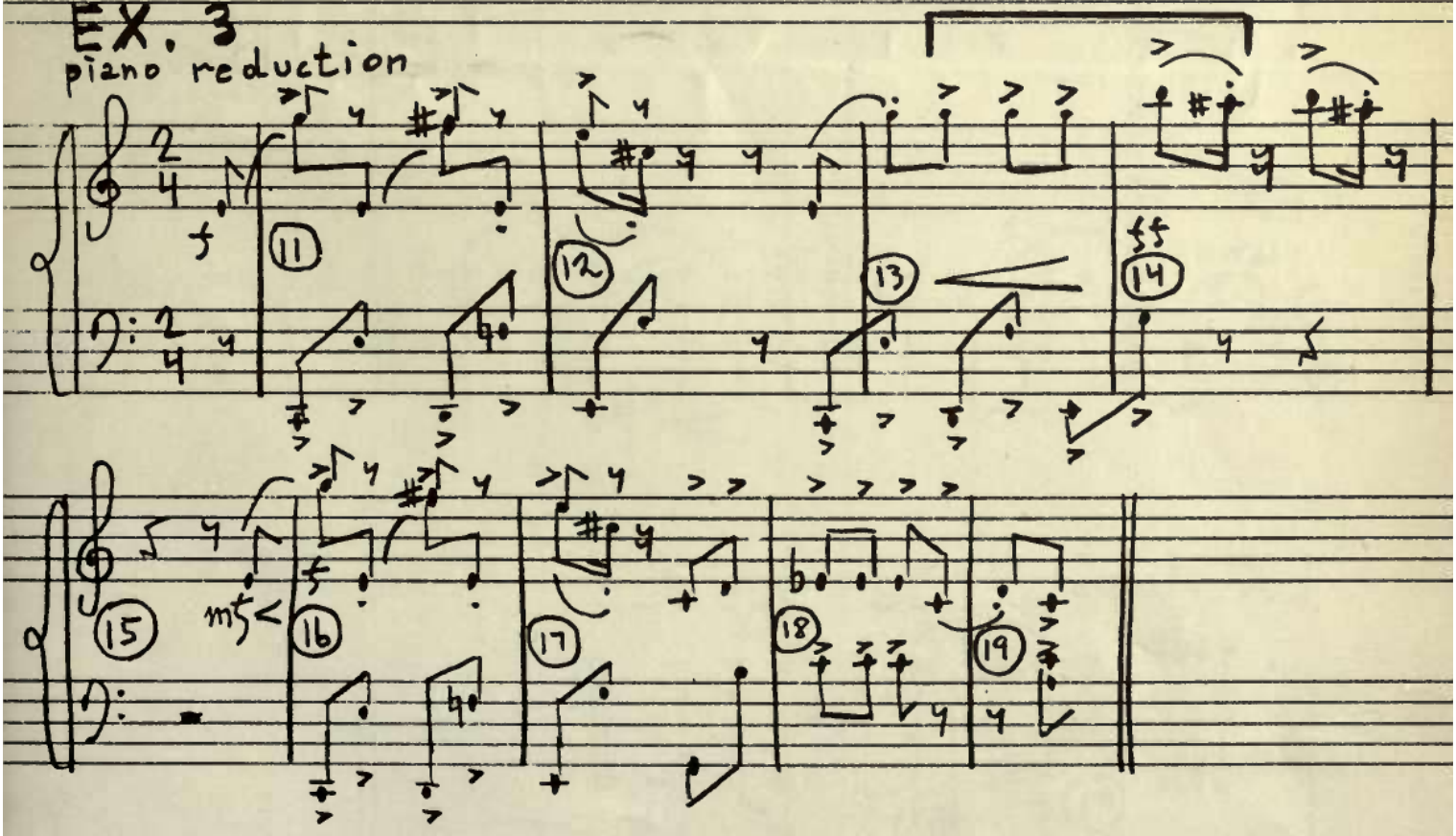
GERALD McBOING BOING .. United Productions of America cartoon, distributed by Columbia Pictures. Supervising director, John Hubley, Story, Dr. Seuss, Composer and conductor, Gail Kubik.


EX. 1 fast, vigorously
FLUTE
OBOE
(Bb) CLAR.
BASSOON
(F) HORN
Bb TRUMPET
VIOLA
pizz
arco
CELLO
pizz.
arco
PIANO
f sharply, dryly

EX. 2
piano reduction

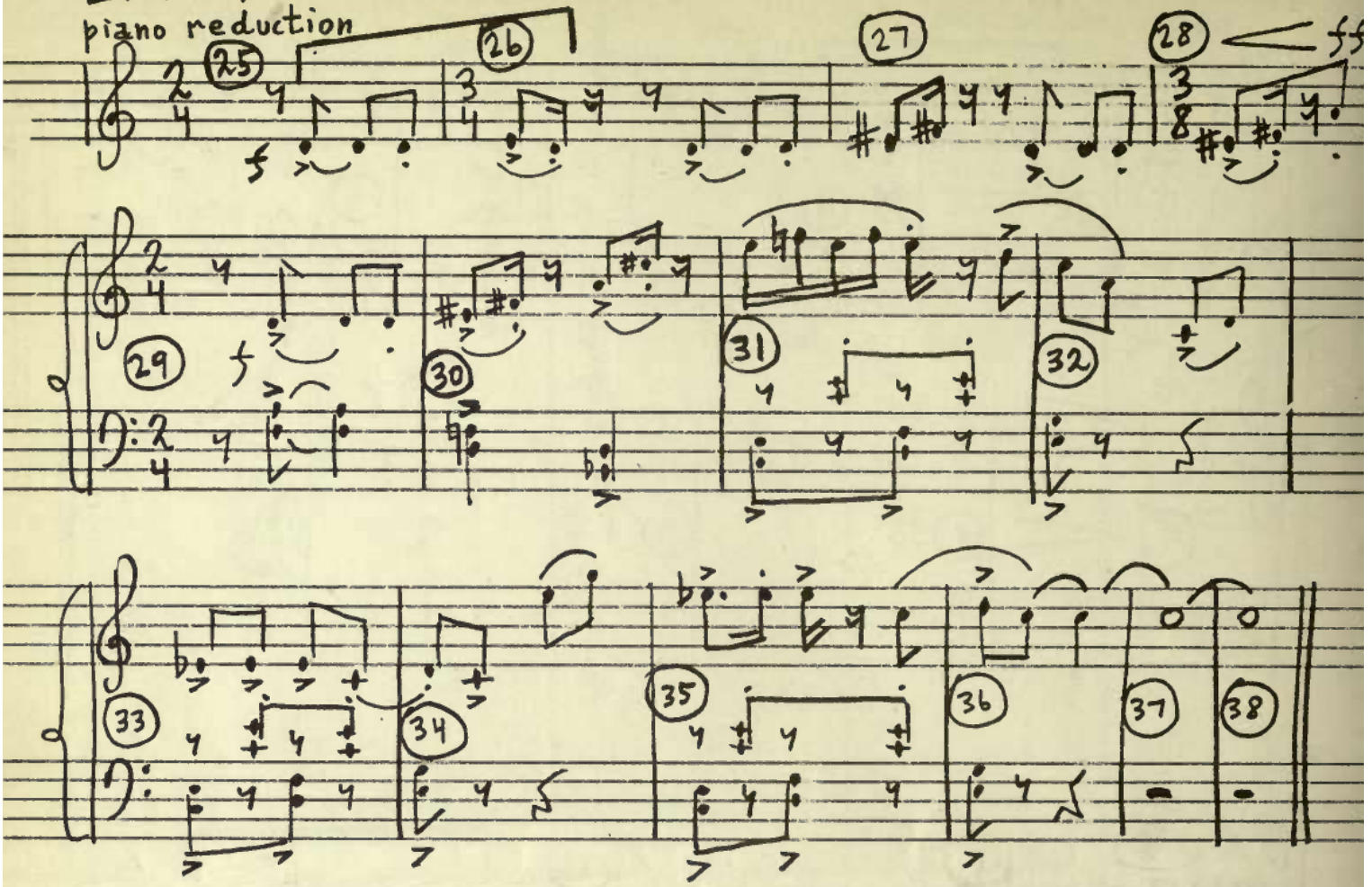


EX. 3
piano reduction



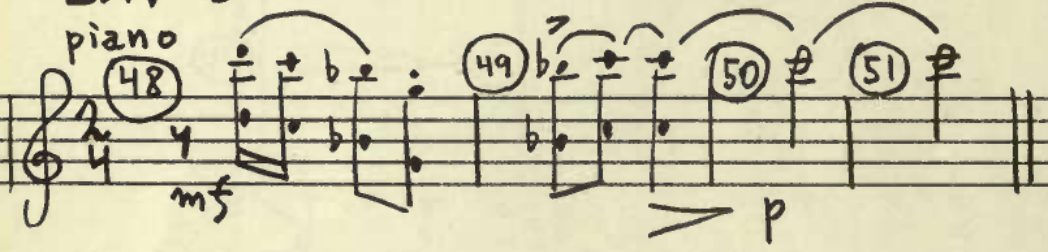
EX. 4

piano reduction

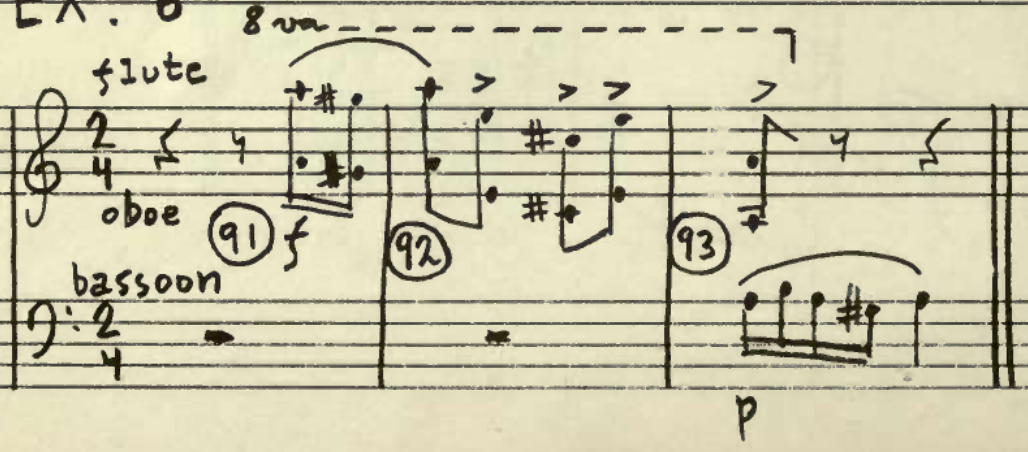


EX. 5

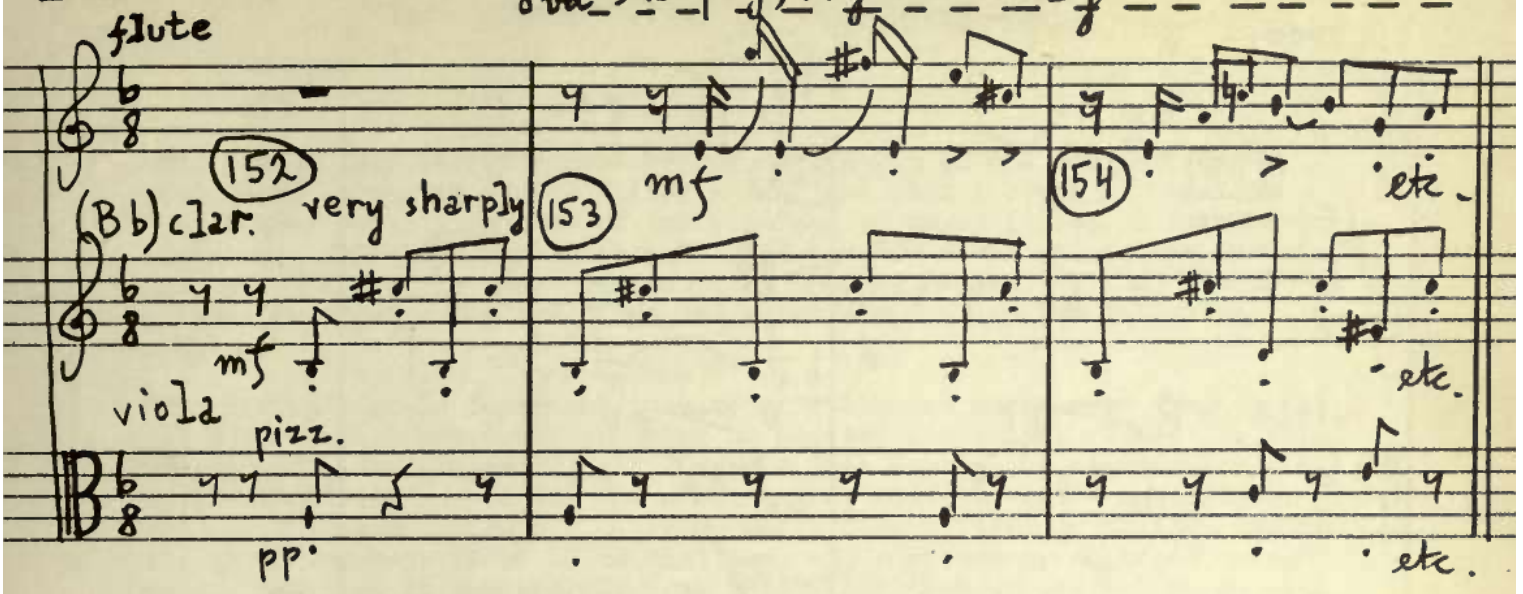
piano



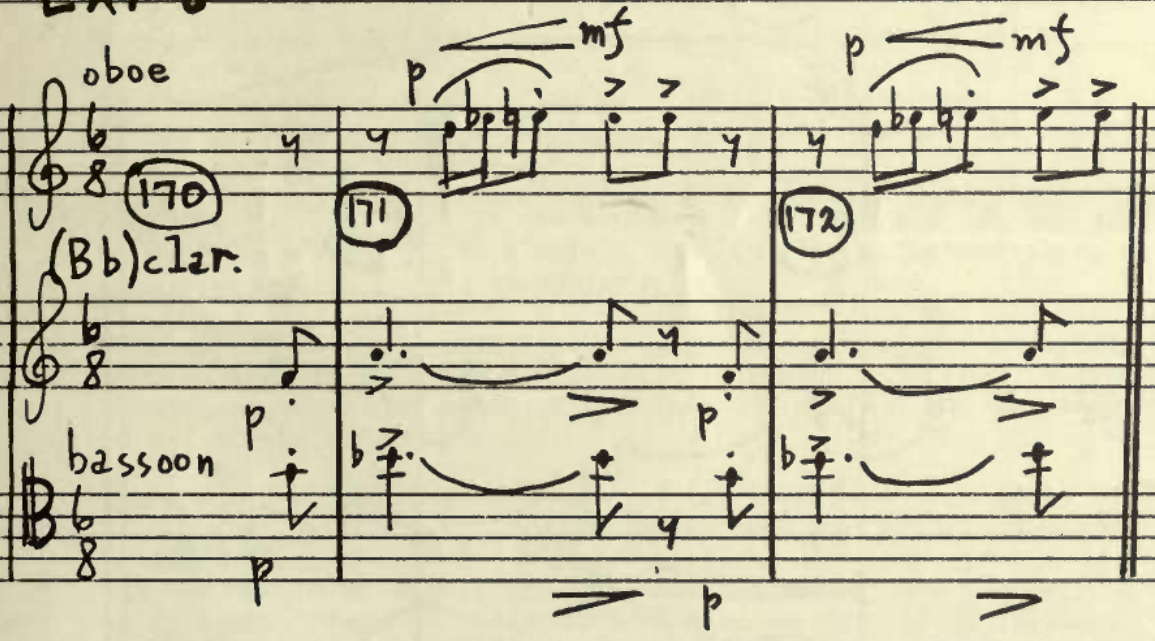
EX. 6



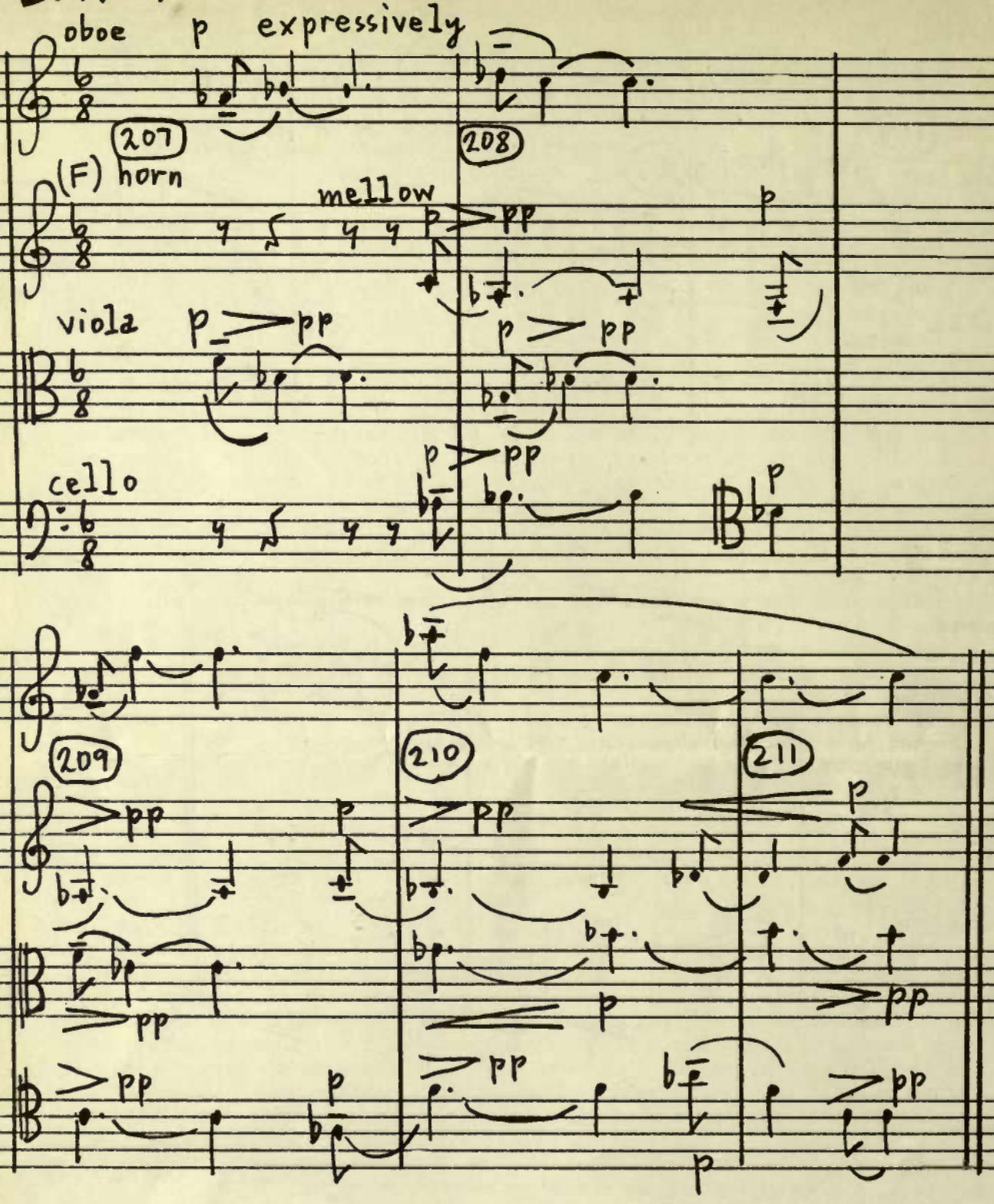
EX. 7


flute
8va sharply, rhythmically
152
153
154
(Bb) clar.
very sharply
mf
viola
pizz.
pp
etc.

EX. 8


oboe
mf
p
170
171
172
(Bb) clar.
bassoon

EX. 9


oboe
p expressively
207
208
(F) horn
mellow
p
pp
viola
cello
209
210
211

FILM MUSIC AND ITS USE IN BEAVER VALLEY

James Algar

When I went back in retrospect to our discussion of the music before Paul Smith began the BEAVER VALLEY score, and when I began to consider the task of explaining some of our problems to an audience, I remembered an article by Robert U. Nelson published several years ago in The Pacific Spectator. Its title was: "The Craft of the Film Score." Mr. Nelson pointed out that music for films and concert music are two different mediums:

"The distinction is important. In writing concert music, the composer is all-powerful; he may write anything he chooses . . In the films, all this is changed. The composer is no longer a free agent; he must follow the split-second timings of the cue sheet and he must carefully subordinate his music to the dialogue. . . Film music cannot possible follow, excepting in spots where there is no dialogue, an independent, abstract development. Its form is necessarily less tight than that of concert music, its themes and motifs less rigorously worked out. The difference in structure between a film score and a symphony is so apparent as to cause some people to conclude that film music has no form. This is not true, yet the presentation of ideas in a film score is undeniably loose and fragmentary."

Suppose we see how these observations apply to BEAVER VALLEY.

If the composer must play "second fiddle" to the screen. . .
If his music must follow the tempo, the pantomime and the other accidentals of screen story-telling. . .
And if he must give way constantly to narration and dialogue, how can he be expected to accomplish anything? Well, the composer can and does make important contributions to a film. Certainly Paul Smith's score was tremendously effective in BEAVER VALLEY!

Film music gives a continuity and a cohesion to screen material; this was particularly true in BEAVER VALLEY. It contributes mood, a feeling of warmth, an emotional tone. It "points up" action, and as you have seen, it definitely adds humor.

The music for BEAVER VALLEY was written after the continuity of scenes had been worked out, after the editing was done and after the narration was written. And so one of the first problems the composer had to cope with was the amount of narration. The audience must hear the narrator, or there is no story, thus the music must be subdued when he is talking. This problem is partially solved by the right kind of orchestration during such passages. But of course the real solution lies in having a plan ahead of time so that the narrator is not talking in those sections where the music is to be most effective. It's a compromise situation of give and take. Indeed, in many spots throughout BEAVER VALLEY the music became the story-telling voice, acting ,for the moment, as a second narrator.

In terms of the story he had to help tell, the composer was faced with many other problems when he first sat down to score the picture. These included a hero in the beaver who was so busy and plodding he was unspectacular ; a villian in the coyote who threatened but never quite caught up with his intended victims ; a miscellaneous cast of characters in terms of the number and variety of animals; a quality in the humor that was sometimes gentle, sometimes playful but rarely ever slapstick. Finally, it had to be remembered that these were real animals, not the usual Disney animals of fantasy. Thus the music couldn't be too weird, or too fantastic or too extreme in direction.

In the beginning, certain musical themes were discussed in terms of the personalities of the animals involved or of the character of the material the music would accompany. It was decided that four main themes would recur throughout the picture.

First the setting of BEAVER VALLEY itself seemed to call for a descriptive theme. We came to refer to this as the "Nature Theme". It was to have simplicity, a certain pastoral quality, dignity, and in general a feeling of the bigness of the outdoors. At the same time it had to be flexible enough that it could stand a bit of musical "embroidery" later when the various animals were introduced. The chipmunk, the moose, the marmot, the raccoon all were brought into the story during this part of the musical development.

Next came the problem of a "Beaver Theme", an important motif that would be heard several times in the picture. It seemed to call for a certain plodding, even tempo'd progression to fit the busy animal's personality. And it had to lend itself to development and new coloration as we followed the beaver's fortunes through the seasons.

When the coyote entered the story, we knew we needed a warning note of menace; still the motif had to be short and immediately recognizable in a few notes, for the coyote's entrances and exits were to be sudden and brief.

And lastly the playful otters, whose personality was the exact opposite of that of the busy beaver, demanded a theme of their own. They were everything the beaver wasn't. Where he was serious, they were gay; where he moved cautiously, they went at things with abandon. Otters have as much nervous energy as any animals alive, and apparently never sit still. And so their music was made riotous and lively. The tempo was a lively march tempo, full of spirit and movement; the otter theme was purposely patterned after circus music. In fact, an arrangement was written for the U. C. L. A. band of 110 pieces and the number has become their entrance march at football games. The otter theme also has been adapted in a popular version. Lyrics were written and it now is heard under the title of "Jing-a-ling Jing-a-ling." The original theme was such a catchy tune it seemed to lend itself naturally to such exploitation.

There were other somewhat incidental themes in BEAVER VALLEY. They were incidental only in that they solved the problem of a particular episode but were not used again in the score; they proved to be highlights musically. One of these situations was that of the young ducks learning to fly. The music for this bit of action was definitely tongue-in-cheek and written to heighten an already humorous situation. Even the quacking of the baby ducks was made "musical," - - that is, was made to follow the tempo of the theme.

Then there was the Frog Symphony. In this instance humor was derived from the very seriousness of the music. The orchestra played the Sextet from Lucia absolutely straight, and the frogs carried their parts as soberly as opera singers. The effect of course was quite the opposite.

Here then were two instances in BEAVER VALLEY wherein the music definitely heightened the humor. In contrast the episode of the spawning salmon found music called upon for something quite different. Here it had to capture the excitement of the magnificent leaps as the salmon fought their way through the rapids; at the same time it had to suggest some of the menace of the bear; and above all it had to underscore the poignant quality of the salmon's valiant fight.

There is one thing perhaps which sets the BEAVER VALLEY score apart from others of its kind. I believe one of the reasons the music is effective is the fact that we used an animated cartoon technique in a live-action film. Musically speaking, I mean by this that we synchronized our music to our screen pantomine more often and more closely than is generally done in live action movies. This was attempted not only in the major sequences where the ducks quacked to a tempo and the frogs croaked in unison with the orchestra, but all the way through the picture in little individual situations. The composer once told me he had written his score with a "loving touch". He meant, I'm sure, the musical effects in such scenes as the one where the marmot on the rock yawns and stretches . . . where the raccoon caught the crayfish, and where th otter poked his head up through the thin ice.

To get this close synchronization requires patience, time and careful planning. It involves a thorough study of the picture by the composer. It means running the picture back and forth on a movieola while the action is observed scene by scene; it means timing these actions with a stop-watch; it means coping with the mathematics of the problem of so many feet passing through the projector in so many seconds accompanied by so many bars of music to such and such a tempo.

Paul Smith once told me that he definitely tried to write a score that was not pretentious. He said, "I tried to write music that was in keeping at all times with the picture. I simply tried to do an honest job of scoring." In this, I believe he succeeded.

BEAVER VALLEY.. RKO-Radio, Walt Disney Productions ; True Life Adventures. Direction, James Algar. Photographed by Alfred G. Milotte. Music by Paul Smith.

FILM MUSIC OF RECENT PICTURES

Edward Kilenyi

It often happens that members of music staffs of film studios are asked "What is good film music?" My own answer to such a question is always the same: "Any good music is good film music". No better storm music can be written for the screen, opera or symphony than the storm music of Wagner in "The Walkyrie" or of Beethoven in his "Pastoral Symphony". And for musical expressions of sadness or sorrow, Sibelius' "Valse Triste" and Grieg's "Asa's Death" very often accompanied scenes demanding such type of music. And these nineteenth century composers wrote those two romantic, semi-classics before they even heard of the invention of motion pictures. To supplement this type of standard music, musical directors started to find substitutions for the too-often repeated selections. Then, when all available material- orchestrated for theatre combinations - was exhausted, orchestra directors started to compose original music appropriate to their pictures.

Now, we have advanced to a high standard of almost absolute musical quality because we use newly composed music for every picture. The creator of the type of film music we need and use has the task of interpreting the mood and the main idea of the story correctly as well as every detail of the story told on the screen. He has to express in his music the same feeling which the future audience will have. To illustrate, let us analyze some music taken from the recently produced picture by Twentieth Century-Fox Films, ALL ABOUT EVE. I have selected this picture because at its premier presentation it was hailed as one of, if not the most intellectual picture about the theatre yet produced.

It is about people of the theatre. New York critics said that this picture was more theatre than theatre itself. Not only is it a story about actors, critics and stage-struck girls, but the spectator leaves the show with the feeling of having attended a thrilling play on the stage. Therefore, it was the "theatre" that the composer had to express. This we can realize and feel as soon as we hear the overture (referred to as the Main Title) to the picture. After the last scene on the screen Alfred Newman, the composer rearranged the same music by playing it in a livelier tempo, which admirably intensifies the audience's feeling about what they have seen, and sends them home with the satisfying impression of having enjoyed and been entertained by a play.

The motion picture composer has other more difficult tasks to solve in writing music to problem plays such as NO WAY OUT. The very opening to the Main Title should sound to the listener as if a thinker were asking in a loud voice, "Can the race problem be solved now?" When you listen to the musical Finale of this picture the Postlude ends vigorously and definitely, yet at the same time, through the sudden and unexpected harmonic change, the final loud chord should still leave the listener up in the air, as if saying, or thinking out loud, "Where is the way out? The tonality is D major. The bar before the last chord is in the tonic. To this tonic chord in its last quarter-note, the sixth, the B is added, thus becoming VI^7 - a seventh chord on the VI. Then, the final crashing end-chord enters and sustained D flat major, which is a striking imprint, if not almost a shock of uncertainty -of futility.

Will you agree with me that nationally or internationally acknowledged composers, having created movie scores, their music has enhanced, not only the pictures for which they composed, but also their own fame and reputation? Which, incidently, should prove the high musical standard of motion picture music.

PRELUDE TO FAME

Quaintance Eaton

PRELUDE TO FAME takes up the ticklish subject of child prodigies and handles it about as well as possible, given the premise that prodigies appeal to you. This one is played by a talented child actor, himself a phenomenon of mental achievement, and with a strong personal attraction. Although his name is given as Jeremy Spenser, the boy looks like the Italian he is supposed to be, and a more lovable little boy you never saw. He is the son of farm tenants of a rich man and his shrewish wife, the Bondinis. Signora Bondini discovers the boy's talent in the home of an English philosopher and amateur musician, who has encouraged young Guido's amazingly competent and tasteful first steps towards knowledge of symphonic music. The woman determines to exploit him for her own satisfaction, and secures a conducting career for him all over the world. Her cruelty and selfishness go as far as to suppress letters from his home, so that, believing himself unloved, he is driven to the extreme of attempted suicide. Rescued by the professor and the sadly awakened husband the boy goes home to lead a simple life until such time as he can pursue his talent in a mature way.

The story is the purest melodrama, with all the organ stops pulled out and every cliche of the music business - and the prodigy business -- used without shame. Orchestral selections - purported to be conducted by the lad and dubbed with amazing aptitude by young Spenser - are splendidly performed in reality, by the Royal Philharmonic and the Orchestra of the San Carlo Theatre at Naples, conducted by that veteran of British musical films, Muir Mathieson. The works heard are portions of the Overture to Weber's "Oberon", the "Rakoczy" March by Berlioz, Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony, and the "Polovtsian Dances" from Borodin's "Prince Igor". The last-named, with chorus, is the work the boy abandons in his last concert in Albert Hall, London, leaving the leader(concertmaster) to carry on. The music continues as a postlude, grpwing louder and louder, until it is deafening, besides being highly inappropriate to the final scenes - the boy's flight and return to his country home in Italy.

The British have treated the subject with more restraint than the Americans might have ; still it remains a highly improbable tale, and its execution, while underplayed in typical British fashion, is still stagey enough to arouse a modicum of disbelief. It is hard, for example to credit the extraordinary power of a child to play a Bach organ fugue on the piano after hearing it once in an orchestral version. It might be done - possibly has been done, but it asks a lot of credulity from us. Also, we find the woman's blind cruelty an overstatement, tending to make the other characters too angelic. If, in the midst of this atark black-and-white characterization, you find some delight in the little boy's acting and simulation of musicianship (whether it is a gift of his own or merelyly has been drilled into him) you may feel rewarded for the 78 minutes spent in the musical capitals of the world.

PRELUDE TO FAME.. Two Cities Film: J. Arthur Rank. Directed by Fergus McDonnell. Music played by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by David McCallum, and the Orchestra of the San Carlo Theatre, Naples, conducted by Muir Mathieson.

PARIS WALTZ

R. F. Deke

If nothing else, one gets a large dose of Offenbach's music in this film, PARIS WALTZ. According to a foreword, it hasn't been tampered with either. It is really a pleasure to go to a musical and hear sounds in a consistent style throughout.

The film as a whole is marvelous to relax to - neither the plot nor the music (both typically French in their effervesance) makes any great intellectual demand but all is wonderfully put together. The editing by M. Beydts seems to have consisted in choosing the right Offenbach melodies to accompany the prevailing mood. Since Offenbach was such a prolific composer, I don't think the job could have been too difficult. The music fits well in all cases, and I only wish I knew the titles of the background songs to find out if they had any relation to the action of the moment.

Since the film is a conjectured up "incident" in Offenbach's life, one finds a lot of theatre atmosphere, and quite a few operetta performances. The singers are all fine, the diction is exquisite, the orchestra follows well. And why not? Everyone is from the "Opera Comique". Hollywood might learn another lesson here, instead of trying to force us more good-looking small voices. Incidentally my one quibble is with some faulty synchronization. Every time I saw someone conduct, the sounds were somewhere else from the visual beat. Somewhat disconcerting in an otherwise admirable film.

THE PARIS WALTZ.. Lux Film Corp. Yvonne Printemps and Pierre Fresnay. Directed by Marcel Achard. Music by Jacques Offenbach.

16 mm FILMS

Marie Hamilton

THIS IS BRITAIN is the title of an extensive group of short films released by the British Information Services, 30 Rockefeller Plaza,New York. The 115 subjects, each from three to five minutes long, have been broken down into various categories. Several noteworthy films are listed under the heading "Art and Music".

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET SCHOOL.. Starting with the eight year olds, at work on fundamental exercises, then through two more advanced classes to a bit of LES SYLPHIDES, this presents a most attractive picture of the famous school and catches the quality of its training.

SHERBOURNE MUSIC SCHOOL.. Each summer the Music Teacher's Association sponsors a one week course for youthful orchestra players, which enables boys and girls to learn in the enjoyable setting of a big country estate. Little beginners as well as the older students are seen at work, practising goes on in the school gardens, and finally a moment of the week's closing performance of "Pomp and Circumstance" is heard.

MUSIC IN THE PARKS.. At an open air concert given in the lovely gardens of Hampton Court, Handel's "Water Music" is played.

THE DOLMETSCH FAMILY.. The making and playing of 16th and 17th Century instruments is carried on by this famous family, as this all too brief film records. Details in finishing wind, string and Keyboard instruments are glimpsed between performances that include a quartette of recorders playing a "Bouree" by Tallett and the last movement of a "Sonata" written by Handel for harpsichord and recorder.

The Arts and Music section of THIS IS BRITAIN has a film on wood engraving, one on the"Old Vic Theatre School"and one on costume and set design for the Olivier "Hamlet", which may also interest FILM MUSIC NOTES readers. Rental costs are $1.00 for the first item. Any combination of items will be spliced free of charge.

D.D. Livingston, 220 Clinton St.New York, has a number of films with musical interest in his latest listing. He has assembled six pictures, mounted on two 1600 foot reels, to make a Film Concert Program, with a running time of about 90 minutes. The titles are COOLIDGE QUARTET, (Fugue from Beethoven's Quartet in C Major), A TIME FOR BACH(rehearsal of Bach Aria group), PADEREWSKI (Chopin Polonaise), SHOSTAKOVITCH (final of piano concerto), STEPS OF THE BALLET(Arthur Benjamin score, London Philharmonic) Sadlers Wells), FIDDLE DE-DEE(musical abstractions). With the exception of the Paderewski and the Shostakovitch, these excellent films have been reviewed in FILM MUSIC NOTES. The rental is $17.50. Also available from Mr. Livingston is a delightful new English dance film with effective musical background.

LES SYLPHIDES.. 8 minutes. Rental $5.00. From back-stage a youthful London ballet-dancer watches a performance by her idol,Margot Fonteyn. The great Sadler's Wells ballerina is seen in a passage from"Les Sylphidas" that is a pleasure both visually and musically.

The Columbus, Ohio, Public Library has a new movie department which opened last May with an initial stock of 146 films. A $15,000 appropriation was received from the Franklin County Intangible Tax fund. These films are loaned to all who have Columbus Public Library cards. Borrowers must provide the sound projector and operator. Films may be shown at any meeting at which no admission is charged. They must be returned within 24 hours and a 25 cent an hour fine is charged for those overdue. These films were selected with the advice of Dr. Edgar Dale of the Ohio State University and the help of the Columbus Film Council. Musical films include Jose Iturbi, Mildred Dilling, Arturo Toscanini, Jan Peerce and Paderewski. Films with such musical backgrounds as PICTURE IN YOUR MIND and BOUNDARY LINES both with music by Gene Forrell.

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The public schools in Omaha, Nebraska showed 3,313 films in their class rooms last semester. They were provided by the school board's department of visual education. P. T. Thompson, visual education supervisor, said "We are not trying to entertain the youngsters. These films are shown for their instructional merit" He said "wise use of films increases educational possibilities by 40 percent."

The board has 175 films -25 in color and they average 11 minutes each in length. Each school has its own projection equipment and nearly all the films are in constant use. The visual education department will have a $6,500 budget this year. This is exclusive of salaries of the supervisors and two part-time clerks.

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The public library of Peoria, Illinois, observed informally the first anniversary of its audio-visual department with an anniversary cake and one candle. Miss Bertha Landers, National secretary of the Educational Film Library Association has served as director of the library. She has recently established a film service under the Board of Education of Kansas City.

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The public school system of Indianapolis, Indiana have authorized the expenditure of $17,000 for sound films. Through the donations from the Parent-Teacher Association fifty-six elementary schools have been provided with sound projectors. Six others are being loaned out from the central office. Miss Doris Lynn is serving as director of Visual Education for the public schools.