



Music Virtual Learning

Music Appreciation/History of Film Music

May 20, 2020



Lesson: May 20, 2020

Objective/Learning Target: Students will be introduced to the history of music in films.

Bell Work:

Answer the following questions as we begin our lesson today.

1. What are the different ways music can play a role in films?
2. What is the importance of music in our lives?
3. How can music impact a film?
4. What do you think films would be like if there was no music?

Watch this early silent movie short film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpjEyBKSfJQ>



Purpose of Music in Film

Let's review from yesterday the role music plays in films.

1. Creating the atmosphere for a time or place.
2. Creating psychological implications for characters or situations.
3. Background music.
4. Creating continuity in a film.
5. Creates a build up of action and also a sense of finality.



Where it All Began!

In 1889, Thomas Edison invented the kinetoscope. It was a simple crank operated machine that contained about 50 feet of film. People paid a coin or two to activate the machine and then they could watch the very short movie. No story was told, just actions or different circus, dance or other entertaining acts were played. Here is a short video about the kinetoscope and what you might have seen if you used one.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sf10NVC0hLU>



The First Movie!

The Great Train Robbery was the first movie ever released in 1903. It was the first film to tell a complete story and was only 11 minutes in length. That was quite a feat for that time period! It was a “silent” film meaning there was music but no dialogue. The story was told through acting only and no words.

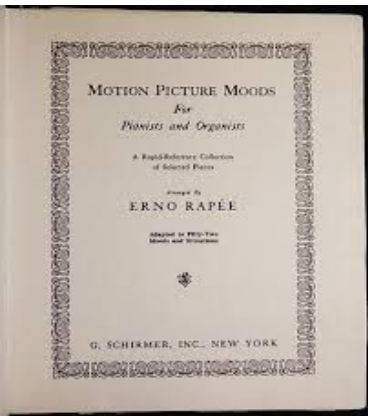
Watch it Here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuto7qWrplc>



The First Musical Scores

Enro Rapee was a pioneer in writing music for silent movies. Movies were accompanied by the organ or the piano. Rapee wrote, “Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists”. It contained 200 themes organized into 52 different moods so that musicians could choose what music to play during the movie. These scores would be played live, meaning the pianist or organist would play the score in the theater while the film was playing.



Talkies!

Silent movies began to move to a new Thomas Edison invention called the vitascope. It was invented in 1927 and had the capability of putting the movie on one reel and the sound on another so that dialogue could be added to the movie. Hence the nickname, "Talkies." It was extremely difficult to align the two reels to where the sound and the picture were synchronized. Because of this, most movies remained silent.



The Jazz Singer

The Jazz Singer was the first talkie in 1927. This created a public fascination with showtunes and paved the way for singing and dancing in musicals. It was in this same year that Show Boat, America's first musical, debuted.



Music Critics

Those who composed music for films were looked down upon. Films were relatively new, risky, and not deemed an important part of society. There was not much hope that this genre would survive and therefore was considered a waste of time. We know the critics were very wrong about that! There were two exceptions that legitimized soundtracks.

Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1939) was the first American original soundtrack released on record. It was a smash hit and reached the Billboard Top 10.

The Wizard of Oz (1939) by Herbert Stothart won an Oscar for the best original score. It reached "Your Hit Parade". It is not considered a true movie soundtrack because it only contained highlighted songs, however, it was very popular and successful.

Movie Soundtrack Composers

Herbert Stothart-1885-1949- Composed over 100 movie scores between 1930-1949. His most notable work was The Wizard of Oz.

Max Steiner-1888-1971-Composed for RSO pictures and the Ziegfeld Follies. Composed over 250 movie scores. Most famous movie scores were King Kong and Gone With the Wind.

Bernard Herrmann-1911-1975- He wrote music for musicals and was the resident conductor for CBS. His most famous movies are Citizen Kane, Vertigo and Psycho. He worked very closely with Alfred Hitchcock.



Lesson Recap

Thomas Edison invented the kinetoscope and the vitascope, which started the movie trend. In the beginning, movies were short in nature, in black and white, and rarely had any dialogue. Later, movies were inspired by books and musicals and soundtracks began to be written for these movies. Films became an integral part of entertainment for the masses and were extremely popular. The remaining lessons for the week will discuss how film music has evolved during modern times.

