

One Cue Sheet Facet

by
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The delightful article "Authentic Accompaniment", by John Muri, in the December 1971 issue, brings to mind an interesting facet of this era. Quoting Mr. Muri: "Musical scoring of films began early in 1912, the Kalem Film Company provided piano music for their film *The Shaughran*. One of the first full scores to be released was Kalem's "Midnight at Maxim's" in 1915... In 1916 musical cue sheets were available free to managers at film exchanges."

The cue sheet was born of necessity and no doubt conceived in need at various sources but one source, seldom known, is found in a most interesting book. In 1951 Mr. Max Winkler, one of the founders of the Belwin Music Publishing Company, authored a book entitled "A Penny from Heaven" in which he gives an account of his experience with cue sheets.

Mr. Winkler tells first about his early life and how he came to New York from Carpathia, near the Eastern border of Austria, with absolutely nothing of this world's goods except a strong body and the clothes covering it. Young Winkler was nineteen years old at the time but his body was that of a man for he had worked at the saw mill of which his father was manager. He came in 1907 when immigrants were admitted to the United States without quota if each would state he had relatives in the U.S., and had five dollars in his pocket — neither of which had to be produced!

Answering a blind advertisement stating a music publishing house needed a boy, young Winkler miraculously got the job. The music house was the Carl Fischer Company on Cooper Square. If any business man ever started at the bottom and worked up certainly Max Winkler did. His job at the Carl Fischer store was in the cellar, a room hardly worthy of the name basement, but he soon became ac-

customed to sorting music by title, mood, and composer as well as overcoming innumerable insults to his well-being.

In this cellar Winkler learned the instrumentation of bands and orchestras, the various composers and their compositions — such men as Goldman, Kreisler, Auer, Elman, Heifetz, Seidel — all Fischer composers. He learned the pop tunes as well — "Everybody's Doing It," "Alexander's Ragtime Band", and the "Hesitation Waltzes".

At this time the Fischer catalog contained about 50,000 items — all kinds of arrangements of all kinds of musical numbers. All these young Winkler came to know intimately, being able to recall each number instantly without checking the catalog index. As he advanced in the Fischer ranks this knowledge was extended to include publications world-wide.

As the movies of 1912 began to show some permanance, the pianists who accompanied the pictures began to show a more serious, and accurate, approach to appropriate music yet there was so little knowledge of mass musical numbers available. This state of affairs was of considerable concern to Mr. Winkler who had reached the conclusion that some way, somehow, the pianists should become acquainted with the thousands and thousands of Fischer publications which were suitable for cueing pictures.

Suddenly an electrifying thought came to Winkler! It was a matter of promotion, timing and organization. Arising from his bed in the middle of the night with this thought in mind he turned on the light, went to the table, got pencil and paper, and began to write a mythical cue sheet for a mythical movie he called *Magic Valley*. In this cue sheet he details each scene, the appropriate music to be played with it and for what length of time, then the next cue for the next scene.

He continued far into the morning. The scenes and cues were imaginary but the designated music was real.

With cue sheet enclosed, Mr. Winkler wrote a letter to the New York office of Universal Films, stating his ideas. The result was that Mr. Winkler signed an agreement with Universal for a sample four week period during which he was to preview and write cue sheets for Universal films produced in that period. The previews were every Tuesday night and Winkler's pay was thirty dollars per session. These Universal cue sheets were so popular that the sessions were increased to twice weekly, covering all Universal pictures both new and old, and the pay went up to \$40.00 a week for this "sideline."

The big break came when he was asked to do a special score for *Carmen* to be shown on a specific theatre circuit. Hugo Reisenfeld, musical conductor at the Rivoli Theatre had turned down the job because of lack of time. Max Winkler did the score and was paid \$750.00 but the greatest remuneration was a telegram he received from the circuit management stating that *Carmen* and the score was a tremendous success and that he, Winkler could look forward to much more picture scoring.

What had started with Universal as a wild idea was now a necessary fact and Winkler was now writing cue sheets not only for Universal but for such movie moguls as Goldwyn, Fox, and Metro!

Mr. Winkler's story of the cue sheet is of particular interest to those of us who came through that era. I knew Mr. Winkler many years ago and his book, "A Penny from Heaven" published by Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951, is a most interesting, easily read, Horatio Alger success story, which all will enjoy. □