EARL WILD GORES TO THE MOVIES

AN IVORY CLASSICS PRODUCTION

FEATURING THE MUSIC OF

LISZT  CHOPIN  ROZSA  RODGERS  STEINER  MOZART
Earl Wild Goes To The Movies

Music by Rodgers/Wild, Rózsa, Liszt, Chopin, Steiner, and Mozart

Music on the screen can seek out and intensify the inner thoughts of the characters. It can invest a scene with terror, grandeur, gaiety or misery. It often lifts mere dialogue into the realm of poetry. It is the communicating link between screen and audience, reaching out and enveloping all into one single experience.

— Bernard Herrmann

Although it can be argued that music written for films serves a utilitarian or cosmetic role – largely as continuity or support of the visual – there is much film music that outlives the film it was written for. As the history of film has evolved, so has the history of film music. From the primitive days of pianistic improvisation for silent cinema to today’s extraordinary and complex scores, audiences have been regaled by musical creativity of astonishing proportions. Some of the greatest classical composers wrote film scores – Sergei Prokofiev, Ralph Vaughan Williams, William Walton, Dmitri Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturian, Arthur Honegger, Toru Takemitsu, Virgil Thomson, Darius Milhaud and Aaron Copland. Hollywood also created a status and prestige to film composing, generating a formidable group of musicians who are largely know today for their extraordinary cinematic scores. These include Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Alfred Newman, Franz Waxman, Dimitri Tiomkin, Bernard Herrmann, Alex North, Elmer Bernstein, Leonard Rosenman, Roy Webb, Max Steiner and Miklós Rózsa. In most cases, these composers lived a double life – their Hollywood or cinematic career, and their concert hall and stage career, creating music in both arenas. Earl Wild’s program of piano concerti from the cinema, features three works written expressly for the screen and three works adapted from the concert stage as part of the films’ tapestries.

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) is largely remembered today for his fabulous musicals (in collaboration with Oscar Hammerstein II and Lorenz Hart): Babes in Arms (1937), Pal Joey (1940), Oklahoma! (1943), Carousel (1945), South Pacific (1949), The King and I (1951) and The Sound of Music (1959). On Your Toes (1936), based on the
Earl Wild, 1947
successful George Abbot play about an American composer/dancer who is mistaken for a traitor by a visiting Russian ballet company, featured Rodgers’ first extensive orchestral music for ballet sequences, choreographed by George Balanchine. The most famous sequence was *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*. The 1936 Broadway production featured Ray Bolger and Tamara Geva. The ballet had a comic emphasis when *On Your Toes* was made into a film musical in 1939 (featuring Eddie Albert, Vera Zorina and Donald O’Connor). When Rodgers revised the score for the 1957 movie entitled *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue*, featuring Richard Egan, Jan Sterling, Dan

Duryea, Julie Adams and Walter Matthau, the music, as background to a story about waterfront racketeering, was turned into a steamy melodrama. In 1965 Earl Wild was asked to rewrite the ballet music. He added a jazz-tinged piano score and re-orchestrated parts of the work, resulting in a fast-paced, exciting piano concerto, full of drama and sassy musicality.

Max Steiner (1888-1971) was born into a prominent Viennese musical family (his godfather was Richard Strauss). He conducted musical comedy in Paris, Berlin, and Moscow before coming to Broadway in 1914. In 1929 he moved to Hollywood. As a result of Steiner’s efforts and prodigious productivity, Hollywood began to value original composition as background scoring for the movies. He became one of the most prolific composers in Hollywood. His incredible full score to *King Kong* (1933) brought original film music into a new era. After, RKO Steiner joined Warners, beginning with his score for *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936). During the next ten years he averaged writing music for eight major films a year! In 1939 he wrote three hours of music for the epic *Gone With The Wind*, as well as providing music for another eleven films. Steiner scored his last film in 1965, resentful that he was forced to retire at 77 years of age, when he felt that he had so much more music in him. Without a doubt, he was the last of the great film composers of the golden age of Hollywood. Steiner composed his mini-concerto, *Symphonie Moderne* for the 1939 film, *Four Wives*. The film starred Claude Rains, Eddie Albert, Priscilla Lane,
Rosemary Lane, Lola Lane, Gale Page and John Garfield in what was a sequel to the 1938 film, *Four Daughters*.

Miklós Rózsa (1907-1995) was born in Budapest. He graduated from the Leipzig Conservatory *cum laude*, and saw the premiere of his *First Violin Concerto* and the publication of his *String Trio*, Opus 1 before moving to London in 1935. There he began writing music for a number of Sir Alexander Korda’s films eventually moving to America in 1940. He settled in Hollywood where he continued writing for the films and teaching at the University of Southern California. He won the Academy Award three times — for *Spellbound* (1945), *A Double Life* (1948) and for *Ben-Hur* (1959). He entitled his autobiography, *Double Life*, because in parallel with his Hollywood creations, Rózsa was always actively composing non-film music. Among his other works are the *Concerto for Strings* (1943), the *Piano Sonata* (1949), and the *Violin Concerto* (1953, composed for, premiered and recorded by Jascha Heifetz). Without a doubt, one his best known works remains the *Spellbound Concerto*. It was written for the 1945 Alfred Hitchcock film, starring Ingrid Bergman, Gregory Peck, Leo G. Carroll, John Emery and Rhonda Fleming. Rózsa recalled that “in *Spellbound* Salvador Dali’s designs for the central dream-interpretation sequence immediately suggested a musical complement, and literally colored my concept of the score as a whole.” To create a musical sound-picture of Gregory Peck’s amnesia-paranoia, Rózsa utilized one of the earliest electronic musical instruments, the theremin, which was invented by Russian scientist, Léon Thérémin in 1919 and patented in the USA in 1927. Since the theremin has a vertiginous, swooning sound quality, the four dream-sequences in the movie contain some of the most compelling and original film music ever written. In this 1965 recording, the London Promenade Orchestra used a theremin, which is not typically the norm in recordings today.

In his autobiography, Miklós Rózsa wrote, “I have always tried in my work to express human feelings, assert human values... tonality means line; line means melody; melody means song, and song, especially folksong, is the essence of music because it is the natural, spontaneous and primordial expression of human emotion.” When original film scores were not called for, Hollywood (and the film producers around the world) relied on the well-tested music of the classics. The music of Chopin and Liszt became perennial favorites, to be used when passion and romance was on the screen. Chopin’s was portrayed by Pierre Blanchar in a silent
film directed in 1927 by Henry Roussel entitled *La valse de l’adieu*. In 1934 Jean Servais played the composer in a film directed by Géza von Bolvary, entitled *Abschiedswalzer*. Perhaps the best known treatment of Chopin’s life (albeit somewhat romanticized and superficial) is the Charles Vidor film of 1944, *A Song to Remember*, starring Cornel Wilde, Merle Oberon and Paul Muni. Chopin’s music was performed by José Iturbi and the scoring of the music in the film garnered an Academy Award. In 1952 the Polish director, Aleksander Ford produced a film featuring Czeslaw Wollejko as Chopin. The film, entitled *Young Chopin*, featured also works of Bach, Mozart, Paganini and Lanner. In 1957 the French filmmaker and historian, Jean Mitry created a film short, *Chopin*, which featured performances by Witold Malcuzynski. Chopin’s music was also featured in the following films: *Jutrzenka: A Winter in Majorca* (1971); *La Note bleue* (1991) which explored the passion between Chopin and Sand; and *L’innocente* (1976), a Luchino Visconti film for which Franco Mannino played and conducted the music of Chopin and Liszt. Although Chopin’s music was not used in the 1945 film *Un ami viendra ce soir*, the French composer Arthur Honegger was commissioned to write a piano piece in the style of Chopin, resulting in the delightful piece of pianistic fluff entitled *Souvenir de Chopin*. Liszt’s music has also been featured in a number of films, including the 1957 tearjerker *Interlude* (with June Allyson and Rossano Brazzi); *Lisztomania*, the outlandish Ken Russell extravaganza from 1975 starring Roger Daltrey, Sara Kestelman, Paul Nicholas, Fiona Lewis and Ringo Starr; the 1934 Franz Osten film, *Rhapsodie*, in which Liszt is portrayed by Wolfgang Liebeneiner; and the lavish Charles Vidor/George Cukor 1960 film, *Song Without End*, starring Dirk Bogarde, Genevieve Page, Patricia Morison and Lou Jacobi. In *Song Without End*, Liszt’s music is superbly interpreted by Jorge Bolet.

Like his Romantic colleagues, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was not ignored by the film industry. Mozart’s life and music have been the subject of inspection in more than two dozen films, including *Mozart (Whom the Gods Love)* (1936) with John Loder, Victoria Hopper and Liane Haid; *Wen die Götter lieben* (1942), a film by Karl Hartl, featuring Hans Holt as Mozart; *Unsterbilcher Mozart* (1954) directed by Alfred Stöger; and most recently, the exquisitely filmed, *Amadeus* (1984), directed by Milos Forman, starring F. Murray Abraham and Tom Hulce. Mozart’s music has been resplendently featured in many other films, including the Jean Renoir masterpieces,
La Marseillaise (1939) and Le règle du jeu (1939); the Robert Bresson film Un condamné à mort s’est échappé (1957); and the 1967 Swedish film, Elvira Madigan, which featured a lush interpretation of the second movement of Mozart’s Piano Concerto No.21 in C Major, K.467 played by Géza Anda. The film was a big hit in its time, but thirty years later what only remains is the memory of Mozart’s haunting music which was so effectively used in the film. To the consternation of musical purists, many recordings of Mozart’s concerto simply title it the “Elvira Madigan” concerto as it has become known in popular culture.

– Marina and Victor Ledin, ©1998
Earl Wild Biography

Earl Wild is a pianist in the grand Romantic tradition. His career, so distinguished and long has continued for over 70 years. Born in 1915, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Earl Wild’s technical accomplishments are often likened to what those of Liszt himself must have had. Born with absolute pitch he started playing the piano at 3 years old. Having studied with great pianists such as Egon Petri, his lineage can be traced back to Scharwenka, Busoni, Ravel, d’Albert and Liszt himself.

The Wild career is dotted with musical legends. As a young pianist he was soloist with Arturo Toscanini. Since then he has performed with virtually every major conductor and symphony orchestra in the world. Rachmaninov was his friend and important idol in his life. It has been said of Earl Wild. “He’s the incarnation of Rachmaninov, Lhevinne and Rosenthal rolled into one!” In 1986 after hearing him play three sold-out Carnegie Hall concerts, devoted to Liszt, honoring the centenary of that composer’s death, one critic said, “I find it impossible to believe that he played those millions of notes with 70-year-old fingers, so fresh-sounding and precise were they. Perhaps he has a worn-out set up in his attic, a la Oscar Wilde’s ‘Picture of Dorian Gray.’”

As an American pianist, he is only one of a handful to have achieved international and domestic celebrity. He’s performed for six Presidents of the United States, and in 1939, was the first classical pianist to give a recital on the new medium of television. At fourteen he was performing in the Pittsburgh Symphony with Otto Klemperer as well as working at radio station KDKA playing all the major repertoire as well as his own compositions. As a virtuoso pianist, composer, transcriber, conductor, editor and teacher, Earl Wild continues in the style of the great artists of the past.

This eminent pianist has built an extensive repertoire, which includes both standard and modern literature and has won renown in particular for his brilliant performances of the virtuoso Romantic works.

Today at 82, Mr. Wild continues to record CDs on a regular basis and perform concerts around the world. In 1997, he won a GRAMMY® Award for Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (without Orchestra) for his CD entitled, The Romantic Master - 13 piano transcriptions on the Sony Classical label. When he was 79 he recorded a well received Beethoven disc which included the very difficult ‘Hammerklavier’
Sonata, as well as a disc of the complete Rachmaninov Preludes. Now an exclusive IVORY CLASSICS™ artist, his immediate plans are to record four 20th century piano sonatas by well known composers as well as a sonata of his own.

Credits

Rodgers/Wild: Slaughter on Tenth Avenue was recorded in London, August 19, 1965
Steiner: Symphonie Moderne was recorded in London in April 1965
Liszt: Un Sospiro was recorded in London in April 1967
Rózsa: Spellbound Concerto was recorded in London, August 19, 1965
Chopin: Grande Polonaise Brillante, Opus 22 was recorded in London, May 10, 1963
Mozart: Piano Concerto No.21 in C Major, K.467, was recorded in London, April 3, 1982.

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Photo of Eva Gabor and Earl Wild, Palm Springs, CA, 1969

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Earl Wild Goes To The Movies

Music by Rodgers/Wild, Rózsa, Liszt, Chopin, Steiner and Mozart

1 Richard Rodgers/Earl Wild: *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* (1936/1957) 9:11
   Earl Wild, Pianist • London Promenade Orchestra • Harry Rabinowitz, Conductor

2 Max Steiner: *Symphonie Moderne* (1939) 8:12
   Earl Wild, Pianist (and Celeste) • RCA Symphony Orchestra • Eric Hammerstein, Conductor

3 Franz Liszt: *Un Sospiro* (Étude No.3 in D flat) 5:30
   Earl Wild, Pianist • Gamley Orchestra • Douglas Gamley, Conductor

4 Miklós Rózsa: *Spellbound Concerto* (1945) 8:00
   Earl Wild, Pianist • London Promenade Orchestra • Charles Gerhardt, Conductor

5 Fryderyk Chopin: *Grande Polonaise Brillante, Opus 22* 8:31
   Earl Wild, Pianist • Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Russell Stanger, Conductor

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Piano Concerto No.21 in C Major, K.467* (“Elvira Madigan”) 28:06
   Earl Wild, Pianist • Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • Anthony Randall, Conductor

6 I. Allegro maestoso (Cadenza by Earl Wild) 14:40
7 II. Andante 7:03
8 III. Allegro vivace assai (Cadenzas by Earl Wild) 6:23

Total Playing Time: 68:00

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