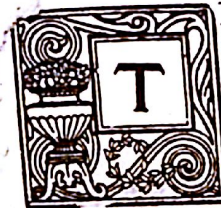


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## Preface



HIS BOOKLET was not gotten up to criticize any one's way of playing pictures, nor to teach you how to play the piano; but What and How to Play for Pictures is the object aimed at. The book also contains a little advice to beginners in this line of business.

The Booklet embodies my ideas of the business of playing the pictures. I do not claim to be infallible, but experience has shown me the wisdom of the views set forth. In the hope of assisting others in this particular occupation I offer the result of my own observations and study.

EUGENE AHERN.

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*Here's to the music-makers; may the  
world wake to a wider realization  
of their importance in our lives.*

—The Etude.

## How to Play

*These are the things I take into consideration first in playing pictures:*

FIRST: If convenient to the management of the house, have the operator run the pictures through in advance of the regular show, so you will be more able to play the pictures with appropriate music.

SECOND: In selecting your music, try and remember the scenes that necessitate the change of music.

THIRD: Appropriate music of course is the first requisite in playing pictures properly.

By appropriate I mean not only music that is in keeping with the atmosphere of the picture, but music that has two or more different movements, so you won't need to make an entire change of music to fit the scenes, but just play some other movement in the same piece. A little further along I



will illustrate my idea of appropriate music.

FOURTH: Second to appropriate music is keeping the tempo of your music with the action of the players. One can do this sometimes and save the trouble of a change of music.

The following is a criticism of the "Music Critic of the Motion Picture World" on a letter contributed to the Motion Picture World's Music Section by Mr. Metcalf, of Montana:

"We recently showed the Reliance feature, "The Bawler Out," in three parts, also a Keystone comedy. Below is the program used for that day: Liebergarten (Schumann); Humoreske (Dvorak); Serenade (Drdla), and several others."

This is the criticism:

This is a splendid program, musically. Unfortunately I did not see the picture in question, so cannot pass as to its fitness in regard to detail. Many leaders strive to carry out

the general atmosphere of the picture, rather than try to work every little detail. This, on the whole, is much the safer plan, for, as Mr. Metcalf says, it is difficult for an orchestra to follow closely to detail. Some leaders "humor" the scenes without changing the piece of music. Unless done with skill, this is risky, although I have known violinists who could so vary the music at times by means of retards, accelerate, diminish, crescendo, etc., that their work was a joy to hear. This, of course, in scenes where the contrasts were not too pronounced. It would hardly hold good in all situations.

This is what he says in regard to following the pictures by different changes of tempo.

FIFTH: Play your music pianissimo so as not to divert the attention of the audience from the picture to the music, but loud enough to be heard all over the house.

Play the tempo with the action of whoever on the screen is the central figure, not necessarily the leading man or lady, as sometimes the heavy or villain is the person that is attracting



attention. This is where some pianists will say that it will be necessary to change music, to follow the action of each player.

### APPROPRIATE MUSIC.

Here is what I mean about appropriate music:

To illustrate, here is a little scene from the picture "Notre Dame," second part of the first reel:

Scene 1. "Leading Lady is Waiting for Her Lover." Music, "Melody of Love," from "Gypsy Love" until the archdeacon appears (villain); then the first part of the same piece ("Gypsy Love,") which is in a minor key. (Tempo was moderato, but I hurried it to follow the heavy.)

Now you see I didn't make an entire change of music, but just changed from one theme to another, and both in the same piece of music. I alter-

nated these two movements according to whoever was on the screen, leading lady or the heavy. This is what I mean by select appropriate music, secondary to selecting music that is in keeping with the atmosphere of the picture.

Therefore, one has to be well acquainted with his library of music, as you know some pieces have two or three different themes or movements, so if one knows his music it won't be necessary to get different pieces of music altogether, but just change to a different movement.

Now don't think I never change music, for I do, but not as often as some pianists, because you know it takes from 15 to 18 minutes to run one reel, and if the pianist only played one or two pieces of music it would get tiresome.

Some pianists change music as often as from ten to fifteen times in one reel



or 1,000 feet of film. Here is where I don't agree with a lot of picture pianists. I believe where one changes music as often as that there isn't any real sense of music conveyed to the audience, and these are the ones we have to entertain, not ourselves—because if they weren't in the house we wouldn't be at the piano.

My idea is not to change music any oftener than is absolutely necessary, but to pick out the theme of the picture and play to it. You know there are some pictures that would drive a pianist to distraction if he or she would try to follow each scene. For instance, some of the Biograph dramas, where every four or five seconds there is a change of scenes. (I think I counted 47 scenes in this picture, "Sands o' Dee.")

### SHORT SCENES.

Now this kind of pictures are the kind I mean to pick out the most prominent scenes, and play to them. Of course if one of these scenes is long enough, well, I change music. To illustrate:

Biograph, "God Within" (drama).

Scene 1. Mining Camp. Characters: Miners, gamblers, cow-punchers, etc. An innocent girl appears on the street, comes to front of picture, goes into a hotel.

Scene 2. Bedroom in hotel. Girl is crying. Landlady comes in and consoles the girl.

Now back to Scene 1 (men are dancing, playing cards, and drinking), then to Scene 2 (girl takes off her wraps), then back to No. 1. Each scene is about three or four seconds long. What



music are you going to play? No scene long enough to play—can't be jumping from one piece to another. Play a western or something solemn to suit the girl?

Here is what I played: Used western music for the first part of the reel. When Scene 1 was on the screen I played forte, lively; when No. 2 was on, pianissimo, moderato.

Now the reason I used a western for the first part of the picture was, the last part of the picture was very, very solemn, and I used Traumerei with lots of expression. You see if I played to the girl in the first part, and also in the last, the music would be altogether too slow and no life, where there was lots of vim and vigor shown; besides, I will show you later on how I arrange my music.

To further show you my idea of playing the pictures and this ever change of music, I will use a letter

that was published in the Motion Picture World, which is the following:

Mr. M. T. Schwarzwald, Bijou Dream, Chicago, sends the following: "As I promised you I am sending my program to the picture 'Satan.' Am sorry to say that, owing to the length of this, we were obliged to omit the second reel ('Satan in the Life of Christ'), but am told it requires practically all sacred music. I wish to state that there are parts of this picture I have not followed in detail—for example, the beginning of Part Three. I have made it a point, rather, to get the longest selections I could which would keep to the general theme of the picture. I believe that I can make my music just as effective in this way as by always following the picture scene by scene, and therefore try to make as few changes as possible in order to keep from diverting attention from the picture. I think if one changes the music too often he is not playing enough of any one number to convey the theme of it to the audience, and by this appropriates a large part of their attention which should be given to the picture.

"From remarks overheard I gather that the orchestra most appreciated is the one that can bring out and accent the characteristic points of the picture without diverting the attention of the audience, rather than the one that constantly attracts attention by its noisy blare, quick changes of music and stopping too suddenly at times instead of trying to 'weave'



their numbers gradually. Another thing I do not believe in, is that incessant grind heard in some theaters. I visited a house recently which has a three-piece orchestra and runs five vaudeville acts and two reels of pictures. The musicians instead of following the picture with appropriate music played a program of popular stuff. I noticed that the leader (pianist) never stopped from the time the picture started until it stopped—turning the music with one hand and playing with the other. Being acquainted with the manager I mentioned this. 'Why,' said he, 'those are my orders; if my orchestra stops for one minute I am down there to see what is wrong. I want that music going all the time.'

"Very good, Mr. Manager, but one of a party sitting behind me from whose conversation I judged to be a regular patron, said: 'Good Lord! Won't they ever quit? This is worse than having to listen to one of those piano machines.'

"Our manager gives us ten minutes' rest at the opening of each show, and we find that with this small lay-off we can do more justice to the music than these 'on forever' orchestras, and no complaints from our patrons. What do you think about this?"

I shall offer no comments beyond stating that the Bijou Dream, like all downtown houses in this city (and most other large places), runs a continuous show from 9 o'clock a. m. until 11 p. m. Regarding the long selec-

tions played, Mr. S. "humors" them more or less to fit the scenes, and in this way he often plays to details without changing numbers.—(Ed.)

By this letter you will see I am not alone in this way of playing. Of course about the ten minutes intermission, I don't believe when one is playing pictures straight, with four or five reels to a show, that a person ought to rest ten minutes at the beginning of each show, but to stop occasionally, but not where there is any lively action on the screen. They are running four reels here and I have about five or ten minutes intermission any time during the evening that I want it, but never take it when there is any war drama or any picture where the pianist can help out the situation in the pictures.



## CONTINUOUS PLAYING.

Now about this incessant grind, I will tell you of my experience. In one of the picture houses here there was a party that seemed to think the louder and longer he could play, without stopping, that much better for the house and the more people appreciated his endeavors. But, believe me, if I could extemporize like this party I would never play at a picture show or any other show, but would go to New York and give some of those "Sweet Melody Houses" (music publishers) a run for their money. As our show let out earlier than their place, sometimes I used to stop and hear the pianist. You can talk about some sweet melodies, but that party would play some of the prettiest little bits of music I ever heard. He would run along on some of these for two or three minutes, then jump onto something else that was no more connected with the first theme than milk and bricks are, but, as I say,

if I could fake like that party, me for the music publishing business. To shorten it up, the party lasted two weeks, and I was on pins for a while thinking I was due for a rest, but the proprietor said to me: "No; when I want that kind of music I will get an electric piano; it won't cost so much to run."

I don't believe people go to the picture shows to hear or see the pianist, but to see the pictures, accompanied by suitable music, not "music accompanied by the pictures." But what I do believe is that a pianist can play the pictures in such a way that people would rather go where there is a good pianist than hear one who does not follow the picture at all, or even pass a show where there is an orchestra of three or four pieces that have no regard for what is thrown on the screen.

I think there is as much of a knack in playing pictures as there is in teaching or any other line of musical en-



deavor. You know there are some pianists who can fairly make a piano talk, and especially some of the conservatory graduates, but put them in a picture house and they wouldn't last long, unless they would use their head as well as their fingers. That was what was the matter with this party I just spoke about. He could play all right but didn't use the gray matter in his head along with his fingers. He could read music just as well as he could play it, but played the whole evening without any attempt at following the pictures, and had his foot on the loud pedal all the time.

I don't believe a person needs be a great pianist, technically, to make good in this business; but use a little common sense along with one's playing, and mostly any one who can play at all can accompany the pictures. We all know that some of the most melodious music we have is the simplest and easiest to play, but how different does each one play it.

The following is a clipping from "The Musician":

#### AN ARTIST.

Who is an artist We hear the term in conversation, perhaps use it rather glibly ourselves; we read it in print, and are puzzled to know the true meaning, since in application it is accompanied by amazing contradictions. If A is an artist, how can we use the term with reference to B? If A and B are artists, how can C be one? And so on through many comparisons.

A paragraph by Ruskin bears on the question. He says: "He who works with his hands only is a mechanic; he who works with hands and head is an artisan; and he who works with head, hands, and heart is an artist."

We can classify musicians according to this statement of Ruskin's. He who exalts technic, whose end and aim it technic, is like the mechanic, he works only with his hands. The player who combines technic and intellectual qualities is like the artisan, he works with hands and head. But the one who adds to technic and intellect the warmth of the heart, who infuses poetry and beauty in what he plays or sings, who combines hands, head, and heart, approaches the stature of the true artist.



If one can play some of the simple melodies with feeling and bring out the poetry and beauty that is in them, why one is not necessarily a big artist, but might be a small one.

### DIFFICULT MUSIC.

I have some of the music suggested by some of the film producers, and it would take a pretty good-sized artist to play them—they are so difficult, and would require lots of practice and study to interpret the meaning of the composer. Therefore I say it isn't necessary to get the most difficult music, but something that is in keeping with the picture, and play this to the action of the theme thrown on the screen.

This next clipping is from one of the largest musical papers of the day, an editorial by Karleton Hackett in the Etude for 1905:

### TECHNIC IN ITSELF IS NOTHING.

Tone production, vocal technic in every sense, is worth something only so far as it enables a man to give utterance to the feeling there is in him. Of itself it is nothing. But most students, and far too many teachers, seem to lose sight of this fundamental fact and think and talk as though technic were an end instead of merely the means to an end. Over and over again you will hear pupils, and even older persons who should know better, praising or blaming an artist as some particular tone was well or ill taken, according to their conceptions of good tone production, seemingly utterly oblivious of whether or not the singer caught the spirit of the work and made its meaning clear. The general audience is much more just and artistic in its judgment. It neither knows nor cares whether a man sings with this method or with that, whether he studied with Signor This, or with Herr That, or with plain Mr. Jones, but it does know whether or not the singer interests, reveals the poetry, the meaning, the fire of the text, or whether he was dull, correct, perhaps, but monotonous. Art is a bit of life. We quickly tire of the display of mere dexterity, but to the man who really has something to say to us we will listen forever. This is right; the attitude of the student who judges of art by the technical skill shown is altogether false; this is the reason why, though so many thousands study art in its various forms, there are so few artists. Without a serviceable



technic the artist is, of course, fatally handicapped; but without artistic feeling, developed imagination, understanding of poetry and life, an excellent technic is as valueless as an engine without steam. Many students take the point of view that if they acquire technical skill the other qualities will come of themselves; consequently, they think and study nothing but technic, and the growth and development of those qualities which alone make the possession of technic valuable—imagination, musicianship, powers of expression—are left to chance to live or die as chance decides. This is false education, wrong in theory, worse in practice. In the high sense of the words, technic and expression go hand in hand—as the one grows, the other keeps pace. If you really have something in you to which you wish to give utterance you will find a way, and in so doing gain a technic that will mean something.

You see this criticism is on singing, but can easily be applied to piano playing. Here is a little more of what he says:

#### BRING OUT MEANING.

Take the simplest song and sing it in such a manner as brings out its meaning; so that an audience hearing it for the first time will feel the poetry of the words and the beauty

of the music; this is art. People will come again and again to one who can make a song a thing of reality to them, something that actually touches their hearts and moves them to laughter, to tears, or to the calm perceptions of beauty. But if one sings the most elaborate and difficult music he can find, and sings it well, too, and yet does not seem thereby to give expression to sincere emotion, but rather to be displaying his technical skill, the hearers quickly tire. Singers rebel against this and call audiences stupid, unmusical because they so frequently turn away from great technical display without interest, but the audience is more nearly right than the singers, more just and artistic in its judgment. The singers, being of the profession, can appreciate and admire a feat of technical skill, just because they realize how difficult it is, but the general audience knows little and cares less for technical difficulties as such; it is only moved when great skill is employed to give expression to great emotion. This is right. This is the law of life. There is no thing in the world worth doing at all that has not its technic, which is of vital importance to the people of that profession, but of no interest in the world to anybody outside. Use this skill to portray something, to illustrate, to stimulate, to take a piece of printed music and make it fairly live; then something is done. Too many musicians are hurt because people are not impressed with difficulties just because they are difficult; but they might as well reconcile themselves to the simple fact



that people do not care. You ride on a railroad, an engineering feat of the most extraordinary kind, which cost the labor of years and its toll of human lives; your train is half an hour late and what is your feeling of solemn awe before this stupendous work? Merely that it is the worst railroad and the biggest botch of a job you ever came across. When the public comes to a concert they desire to get somewhere and on time, and they care nothing for the difficulties of the way. If there were no difficulties, if anybody could do it at will instead of demanding the best years and earnestness of a life, there would be no value in it.

I am just using these clippings to help illustrate to you my idea of playing the pictures, only you don't have to entertain the audience, like a singer or a solo musician. All we have to do is to accompany the pictures with appropriate music and use our ability as a harmonist and accompanist.

The pictures that worry me are the more classic ones, like "Il Trovatore," "The Bride of Lammermoor," etc., as I am not up enough on technic to master some of the movements that are in this grade of music, and as there is

always some one in the audience who can play this class of music better than I, and can pick flaws in my technic, therefore I feel a little bit uneasy when one of these pictures looms up. But in this business, if one intends to hold down his place, you have to jump in and do the best you can—one minute playing the "Last Hope" and next the "Barber Shop Chord."

Some time ago there was a picture filmed by a large company. It was a series of classic dances. The music for each dance was thrown on the screen preceding the dance. The first and second, I could catch the step of the dancer, with the music suggested, but in the third the dancer worked too fast for the rhythm of the music mentioned, so I substituted a fairy dance, and with this I could follow her steps. Of course she might have danced the music suggested, but I had to get the swing of her action into the music. Anyway, after the show the proprietor



said: "Say, you didn't play the music as it should have been." I had to explain to him that if I didn't keep time with the dancer the audience would think I was out about half a beat.

### PRODUCERS' SUGGESTIONS

Some of the producing companies are giving music suggestions for the picture, which in itself is all right, but I don't agree with this party when he advises about eighteen pieces of music in order to follow the picture. The pianist would have to change music every four seconds, and imagine what kind of music a person in the audience hears.

Now from the foregoing talk I don't want any one to think that you have to go into "ecstasy" in playing the pictures, but there are a lot of pictures that a pianist can make 50 per cent. more impressive by appropriate music. Nor do I mean for a pianist to play

the better class of music for all of the dramas, because I say there are a lot of pictures that aren't good enough to use this kind of music for.

I use only my better music, such as the "Melody in F," "Fifth Nocturne," or "Tosti's Goodbye," and the like, on only real good pictures, because you know it isn't every picture that these pieces can be fitted to. Some suggestions offered by some of the film producers, use such music for every little solemn scene in the pictures.

This is the way I arrange it: I never use such music unless I can finish playing at least half of it or more. If I can't do this, I wait until I get a scene long enough so I can play it. That way I don't spoil a good piece of music by only playing just parts of it.

Here is another thing to take into consideration in using some of this better grade or in fact any kind of music that is set to words. Take for in-



stance "The Rosary," which nearly every one knows is very pretty, both the music and the words. And there are a lot of people who know the words, and it would be out of place to play for some scenes, say for instance where a soldier was dying, or some scene on this order; the music would suit the occasion, but the words would be out of place.

This clipping from the Motion Picture World will help to show you what I mean:

Thomas Bruce, of the Majestic Theater, North Yakima, Wash., whose letterhead reads, "Musical Interpreter of Pictures, Pipe Organ, and Piano," writes: In the February 1st issue of Moving Picture World, under heading, 'Thoughts for Pianists,' in your department, Mr. Aiken says: 'Picture playing does not consist as some suppose of merely fitting song titles to the scenes.' I fully agree with him, for to play a modern song to some pictures would be out of place, and inartistic; on the other hand, it would be worse to play Grieg's 'Ich Liebe Dich' to some light modern drama when 'I'd Love to Live in Loveland' would be more suitable.

"Then, of course, there are pictures when no songs can be used. One I have in mind is 'At Napoleon's Command' (Cines), which I improvised through entirely with the exception of 'Marseilles.' To have played 'Just Before the Battle, Mother' at the title, 'The Eve Before the Battle,' would have been comedy. The summary of all this is that the picture player must have ingenuity and artistic judgment and an unlimited repertoire."

When the "Manger to the Cross" was exhibited at this house, I was asked and advised to play the "Holy City," but have to explain why this could not be used in any part of the picture. The music was appropriate enough, but not the words, and you know that it would be improper to play "Hosanna in Excelsis" for any of the picture, except at the "Entrance to Jerusalem," and especially where our singer wanted to sing it, that was "On the Way to Calvary."

Now some will probably object to this, as the management did, but these are my ideas of playing the pictures. But if the proprietor wants things



done his way, do it that way. My present employers are fine men to work for, and anything in the music line is always left to me, and anything I do is O. K. with them.

### POPULAR MUSIC

Here is where some pianists would have some difficulty in following my ideas. As you know, there are some exhibitors who want the popular hits played incessantly, regardless of the picture on the screen. It might do in some houses, but not here. I use the popular music between reels, opening the show and closing, on weeklies, educational, travelogues, scenic, and some comedies—that is, where they fit the picture. Not criticising, but as an illustration: In one of our nicest and most up-to-date picture palaces in the west the orchestra played "Brass Band Ephram Jones" and "By the Saskatchewan" (from the Pink Lady) for a comedy, the "Punkinville Boys," a

rube comedy. Here is where my idea of playing the pictures would get a severe jolt. To me it doesn't make any difference how popular a song is, I don't use it unless it can fit a picture, or be played for some of the aforesaid rules.

I have a certain piece of instrumental music in my library that I have used only three or four times, not popular, but semi-classic. When I can fit it to a picture it sounds 100 per cent. better than to just play it any time just because it is pretty.

In regard to old music (popular), it is well to have quite a number of them meroized, if not all the melody, just enough to let the audience get the drift of it. I used the other evening "The Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back," and you would be surprised to know the number of people in the audience that remembered it.

One can use just the title of these popular songs, or the first few lines of



the chorus, as "Everybody's Doin' It," "Fiddle Up" (just that much), to a better advantage sometimes than the whole song.

I don't believe it is necessary to memorize all the late "hits" this way, but just the "big hit," as there are a lot of people who don't know all the late popular music.

In playing in small towns it is sufficient to know what are the hits just in your own locality, not what is the rage in Chicago or New York, because some pieces play out in these cities before they reach the smaller places, and especially in the west. In fact, there are lots of hits that die—we never hear them at all.

Therefore it would be useless to try and work this way of playing in such places. A pianist can play a song hit for a month or more in one of the small towns where there is no way of popularizing a song, and unless it is

sung, he could never make it as popular as a singer can.

There are always some of these "high brows" criticising the song hits and rags, but in this business one has to use them as well as the classy ones. I take the same stand as a large exhibitor in the south does. He says: "People don't go to a picture show to hear a concert, but to see the pictures, accompanied by good music."

The following is from the "Motion Picture Story Magazine":

#### THE APPEAL OF "BEULAH LAND."

By William Lord Wright.

We are told in the Arabian Nights' Entertainment that when Mr. Sinbad, the Sailor, returned from one of his particularly exciting adventures and rested, he was soothed by the sweet strains of music. When some twenty-odd millions of photo-show fans seek relaxation after the cares of the day, they also wish to be soothed by melody. To the discriminating, the music in the motion picture theatres has been anything but soothing.



During the enaction of the dignified production of Biblical times the incessant tapping of the triangle and roll of the snare-drum have rudely detracted from uplift and refining atmosphere. When Bob, the brave lieutenant who gives his life for his country, is breathing his last on the stricken battlefield, the enlivening strains of "Everybody's Doin' It" on the pianoforte has quickly sundered the chord of sentiment connecting the audience with the picture screen, and has transformed an appealing scene into incongruous comedy. But there is promise of better things.

The refining atmosphere cannot be too carefully fostered in the motion picture theatre. I frequently visit a theatre where the musical director requests the audience to name the songs. The favorite selections of children are particularly desired. One little girl the other evening asked for "Beulah Land." That song is close to the child's heart. It's an old-fashioned song; a song of the home. "Beulah Land" has beautiful words and lovely melody. It is a vision of a life Over Yonder; a dream of a joyous future; it is the strongest evidence of immortality there is.

The night "Beulah Land" was sung there immediately followed "The Star of Bethlehem." Never had the films seemed so appealing; the sacred atmosphere had been unconsciously prepared by "Beulah Land," and that large audience was made better for it all.

And there are other songs touching the life

immortal that are not out of place in the motion picture theatre when morality pictures are the program. There is the "Home of the Soul," "The Sweet By and By," and a score or more like them, all of which appeal powerfully to the child's heart, and that come into the life of the most cynical with vision unobscured.

The day of the illustrated song, with its insincere sentimentality, is waning in Film-land. Musical bills-of-fare are being selected with thought and care, and this, I unhesitatingly assert, is one of the most important steps forward.

Let us taboo the "popular" songs, many of them winning by their suggestiveness, and return to the good, old-fashioned airs of everyday people, just as the pictures are turning from false standards of life to real people and human sympathy.

And it will not be long before Cinematography will be responsible for a revival of the classic light operatic music. The photo-opera is expected to make its initial bow before so very long. Then selections from "Il Trovatore," "The Bohemian Girl," "Carmen," "Faust," and the lilting airs from Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mascot," "Mikado," "Pinafore," "Patience," etc., will add tone and good taste to the motion picture show.

There is nothing as demoralizing in this world of ours as poor or suggestive music.



The little girl asked for "Beulah Land," and tears shone in the eyes of many in that audience. The exhibitor of moving pictures can teach other little girls and boys to request "Beulah Land," and then where will the "reformer" turn for material for criticism?

Now about the singing of "Beulah Land." These things can be done once in a while when there is a big feature like the "Star of Bethlehem," but it would soon get old if done too often. But, as you see, there is more demand for good music at the picture show every day—the audiences expect it.

The next from the same magazine:

The most common words in every-day use are frequently misspelled in the announcements on either side of the screen and in the films themselves. Motion picture audiences are now made up of the most educated and cultured people, and it is rather jarring on one's nerves to have such titles as "A Cureable Disease" boldly displayed on the screen, especially as motion pictures are supposed to be educational as well as entertaining.

I entered one of our theatres the other day,

after seeing the announcement of the film, "The Bride of Lammermoor," outside. This is my favorite opera, and I fully expected to hear the beautiful and familiar music while the film was being run. Not so! The picture was beautifully acted, and the sextette was all there, according to Hoyle, but the orchestra played "Ramona Waltzes" and "Moonlight Bay" while the despairing Lucia was acting the "Mad Scene." Do you wonder that I left with a keen sense of disappointment?  
Memphis, Tenn.

### ARRANGEMENT OF THEMES.

On getting up my program for each picture I arrange not to play one waltz right after one other. To show better what I mean, say we have a full reel of solemn or impressive scenes that require solemn music. I use a waltz, a 4-4 andante movement, and possibly a nocturne. You see in that way I break the monotony of the rhythm, but the music is still in keeping with the picture. This is what I referred to in that Biograph picture in the fore part of the book. Of course there are times one can't do this, as some two-reel sub-



jects will take up one reel for battle scenes, so have to do the opposite.

This plan I follow out for a full show, of which ours is four reels:

Ask the proprietor, for the benefit of the music, that when two or three of these dramas are included in a show, to kind of mix them up, so that the dramas don't follow one another. In this way the music does not seem to be all of the same tempo.

Just now there are a lot of music publishing houses that have gotten out "incidental music" to play for the pictures. I use them, but a pianist can't sit and play one of these pieces over and over again, because they would get tiresome, and you can't use them every time one has an Indian picture, as it would be the same thing. I follow this order on all this incidental music. This is what I mean: Last evening I had a picture of a robbery. I used one of these incidental sheets. Tonight a

new show or an entire change of pictures. We have one of these pictures on the same order (blue light and a man slinking along the bushes). Now I just played this incidental stuff last night and surely can't play the same thing tonight, although it fits the picture. So I get a piece of music written in a minor key, and follow the burglar, if he is sneaking. If running or in an auto, or the action is fast I use a galop.

We all know there is quite a difference in playing pictures in the city to what there is in a place of say 6,000 or 8,000. In the smaller cities the pianist has to cater to the same crowd right along, while in a city one can use the same music over and over again before it gets tiresome to one in the audience; but where one has to play to the same audience one week after another (and try to hold down the job by the year), he can't use the same music as often, but has to have new material right along. This



amounts to something, and it is hard to find suitable music, unless one gets the higher class, which I find is a little expensive for every-day use or for the general run of the pictures.

If there is any one thing that the audience will complain about, it is the constant use of the same old music. Where a certain well-known piece like "Silver Threads Among the Gold" will fit the picture, it is all right.

Here is one way I make my "Rags" go a little way further:

First: Play it as it is written.

Second: Play part of it 8<sup>va</sup> in treble clef.

Third: Play part of it 8<sup>va</sup> in bass clef.

### WAR DRAMAS.

In playing "civil war dramas," where the scenes are long enough, I use a march and fake in some Southern or Northern airs (according to the situation in the picture), and continue on the march. Whenever there are any of these lively scenes on the screen, and there is heavy cannonading, I play the melody in the bass, and in that way can imitate, after a fashion, the cannonading, but still have a little music. I don't believe in sitting at the piano and just making a rumble in the bass, trying to imitate a cannon, as people don't expect one man to play the piano and do effect work too. But a pianist can do a little good by using fast music and heavy bass work in these war pictures. But say, deliver me from some houses that have one of these war pictures every change. I would get dippy if I had to follow one of these pictures any longer than four or five changes. Two or three times is



enough for yours truly. By the by, whenever there are any impressive parts, and as most of the scenes are laid in the South, instead of a waltz or some other like movement, I generally use some old familiar Southern melodies. Where the house has quite a run on these pictures, do not use the Southern melodies too much, but just enough to give the picture a Southern atmosphere, so to speak. Keep your tempo of the music in accord with the action of the play.

In playing sneaky or mysterious pictures I use something in a minor key—try and follow the step of the person on the screen. Where these scenes are short and not long enough to change music, play *pp*, and staccato whatever piece you were playing for the previous scene.

If a book drops from a table, or a door slams and startles the burglar, or whatever party is attracting attention, hit one or two keys a little

harder than the rest and stop abruptly for an instant. This helps out the picture quite a good deal.

### SOCIETY PLAYS.

For society dramas, where there is no dramatic music required, I generally use a novelette or a 6-8 moderato, such as "Faces and Graces," or "Cozy Corners"; that is, where there is no heavy or solemn parts. In moonlight or lovers scenes (you know what I mean), play the same kind, or popular song hits that fit the occasion.

For ball-room scenes, as most dances are waltzes, give the music a little more snap in order to differentiate from the andante or moderato time.

Military pictures, to my way of thinking, require 6-8 music more than 4-4 or 2-4. My reason is, it seems more of a swinging march time and easier to catch the step of the marchers. Of



course this doesn't hold true in hurry-up fighting scenes. Then I use a 2-4, as one can keep up with the action of the play more easily.

When playing a picture with a bugle call in it, generally get a suitable march with a bugle call written in it; then one can imitate the call without changing to another key. As for me, it is rather hard to fake a call in more than one or two keys, and still keep right on playing without making a discord, unless you are good at modulation, and you can hardly do it then and keep up the same tempo.

In playing the picture the pianist should be able to play and watch the screen pretty closely so as to get in all the cues, also able to improvise a little in order to fit some of the short scenes.

This is one method I use in following these short scenes: If I am playing a piece of music in 6-8 or 2-4 I

switch it into a waltz or whatever time it requires, but play the same melody.

For Weeklies I find that, as most of the pictures are used upon marches or parades, it is best to use 6-8 and 4-4 more than anything else. When funeral scenes are long enough, use a funeral march of some kind, but if not, cut down on the tempo of whatever piece you are playing. As some of the late Weeklies contain a lot of the Turkish war views, use some Turkish Patrol, if scenes are long enough.

For the Mutt and Jeff part of the reel I try to fit with a suitable popular song or a rag. When there is enough to use two marches, play a 6-8 and 4-4; that is, where there are no foreign parts.

You will notice that all the way through this book I try to keep away from changing music any oftener than is absolutely necessary. The reason I



have tried to explain in several places. But there are exceptions to all rules. To show you how I broke this rule all to smithereens, the following is the way I played for *Oliver Twist*:

Scene: "Room in Fagan's House."  
 Characters: Street toughs, thieves, and a couple of rough women, all carousing. Music: A Russian Mazurka (allegro maestoso) until Fagan appears, then used Electric Waltz (published by Chappell) andante, mysterioso; then

Scene in Oliver's home, "Enchanted Nights" (Moret). Now these scenes were medium long, and there was so much of a contrast between the two that one had to make a break in the music. This was nearly all the way through. During these short scenes I had both copies of music open and would skip from one to the other, or when Fagan was cut out of the picture I would play the Russian number, that is, when scenes were in his apart-

ments. So one can not follow any fixed rule. This is the way I follow any of the kind of pictures that have characters as Fagan, Shylock, or their like. When this type of characters appears on the screen I never use any music with pretty melody, but more of a mysterious order.

For Dante's *Inferno* I had to hustle in order to get enough music of a mysterious air to it, so as to give the picture the right atmosphere. So I used *The Ghost Dance* (published by Ros-siter), *Electric* (published by Chappell), *Mystery Waltz* (Witmark), *Spooky Spooks* (Witmark), *A Dream Triste* (Chappell), and several others of the same kind.

For the opposite kind of pictures, such as Selig's "*Cinderella*," or the Vitagraph's "*As You Like It*," we played gavottes, novelettes, pastorals, rustic dances, and idyls to give the picture a gay and mirthful atmosphere.



## BRIGHTER PROSPECTS.

Looking into the future, there never were brighter prospects for pianists who will concentrate their efforts to this one line of business for steady employment, than there is at the present time.

The demand is growing day by day for musicians who can play the pictures; not only cue them, but also give the audience a little music along with the pictures.

There are too many piano players who think that all you have to do is to go down and sit at the piano, get their foot on the loud pedal, and proceed to tear out the entrails of the instrument, and then sit down and wait for applause, which is so seldom forthcoming that the day is past. Far be it from such.

The demand is for a pianist who can weave his music into the pictures, and

so interest the audience in the photo plays that you could hear a pin drop in some of the situations.

Did you ever get so interested yourself in one of these Revolutionary War plays, say where the American army had the Red Coats on the run, and the audience was clapping, hurrahing, and some yelling, while you were playing the "Stars and Stripes" with all the patriotic vim and vigor that was in you? I say, did you become so interested, too, that you felt like hurrahing, and shouting, too? If you did, it was a cinch you were playing the pictures like they should be played. Why? Because! I have seen a pianist sit at the piano during some of these war pictures, and nearly go to sleep or was looking at the audience. There wasn't even a hand-clap, where if the pianist were on the job like he should be, the crowd would go wild and on leaving the theatre would congratulate the proprietor on what a good show he had.



These are the kind of musicians that have no trouble keeping positions. As we all know, it is easier to keep employed as a bookkeeper or any other clerical work than it is as a pianist, therefore I believe when one is at the piano why not put your whole heart and soul in playing and try and make the pictures talk? Of course if you are not particular whether you work or not, all well and good. Go ahead and go to sleep as soon as the pictures are thrown on the screen, but be sure to have the ushers wake you after the show.

I would suggest to all picture players to subscribe to *The Etude*, *Musican*, and *Jacob's Orchestra Monthly*, as these magazines contain a lot of music that one seldom runs across in any other way, and all of it is very appropriate for the pictures at some time or other.

### EFFECT PLAYING.

A few of several effects that can be used by the pianist:

To imitate a violin or mandolin: Strike A and E together; strike D and G together.

Imitation of a caliope, street organ, or music box—Play *Rainbow* or *Good Old Summer Time* in treble clef, both hands; play bass real loud and jerky.

Thunder or heavy seas; can also be used for short struggle scenes—Bass clef, "right hand," F, A flat, B, sustain with loud pedal, a chromatic with left hand. To break the monotony if scenes are too long, play F sharp, A natural, and C sharp (right hand); tremolo, F sharp octave, or trill (left hand); crescendo, diminish, both, according to picture.

On comedies, if O. K. with the exhibitor, one can work quite a few ef-



fects, such as a fall, slide, or anything on this order, by making a glissando.

If you ever work with a drummer, watch him. See what he uses. There are quite a number a pianist can do himself. This is where you are playing alone.

(Note.) Don't try to work any effects if you have to stop playing any longer than half a second or so, and if not done at the proper time it will spoil the picture.

Now don't use these effects on all pictures, but just occasionally. Where there are too many of these things in a picture, like the Alkali Ike comedies, when he gets on one of his dish-breaking streaks, I never try any of these effects.

Some of these things can be used more often in the cities than in the smaller towns, for in the smaller places one has to play to the same people, and where you play for the same crowd

each week one has to be careful and not do the same thing over and over again, and also the same with music, keep getting new music right along.



## Specimen Program

### Four Reels

#### *Drama.*

Waltz. Mazurka or Redowa.  
Nocturne.

#### *Comedy (Split Reel)*

Rag. Popular Song. Lively Waltz. Rag.

#### *Society Drama.*

Novelette. Song Ballad. Waltz.

#### *Scenic or Travelogue.*

Comic Opera or Standard Selections.

The above was just gotten up to show how I arrange my music. The idea is not to have two pieces of music alike, following one another. It depends upon the pictures how each one

of these movements arranges itself, in order to suit the action of the players. Where one waltz follows another they both have the same rhythm, and sound like the same piece of music, and gets monotonous. Therefore try and avoid this if possible. This holds true in all kinds of music.



**Don'ts**

**DON'T**—Play the "Flower Song" for every pathetic scene.

—Go to sleep during a war drama. Let the ushers do that.

—Play "Everybody's Doin' It" unless two or more parties die in the same scene.

—Keep your foot on the loud pedal all evening.

—Play on one melody any longer than 20 or 30 minutes.

—Try to silence a baby's cries by playing loudly. The softer you play the sooner the mother will quiet it.

**Don'ts**

**DON'T**—Look at the audience all the time, as the picture requires your attention now and then.

—Chew the "rag," as there are "minors" in the "flats" above and below.

—Play so loudly the patrons can't see the picture.

—Argue with the proprietor, even if you are wrong.

—Play continuously. Give the audience a chance to think (unless requested to do otherwise).

—Ridicule a person, by your gaze, when he is enthusiastic about the pictures.



**Don'ts**

DON'T—Play a waltz for an Indian  
unless a dead one, and not then.  
—Come late. Be on time.

Here's to music and melody  
—may they never be divorced.  
—The Etude.