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### Title

Fostering a Public Appreciation of Film Music in the USA: The First Decade of *Film Music Notes* (1941-1951)

### Abstract

The American periodical *Film Music Notes* spurred a critical consideration of film music and of building public appreciation of the arts during its run from 1941 to 1958. This history of its first decade starts with the connections and efforts of a group of Hollywood women on behalf of the National Federation of Music Clubs, to their founding of the National Film Music Council, to the final stage in editor turnover from the founding editors. It contributes to histories of professionalization of artistic and cultural study through its analysis of how the editors experimented with structuring content in a way to encourage the public to appreciate film music. This was influenced by changing relations between *Film Music Notes* and Hollywood studios, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, and educational organizations. This context explains how prominent composers and critics came to contribute to the periodical and the larger debates that were shaping their writings.

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### Article

To Foster Public Interest in the Music in the Films;  
To Encourage Musicians Who Are Developing This New Art-Form;  
To Awaken Students to the Artistic and Practical Possibilities of this New Medium of Expression

– The “Aims and Purposes” of the National Film Music Council, May 1945.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The “Aims and Purposes,” as formatted here but in uppercase letters, were published in “Foreword,” *Film Music Notes* 4, no. 8 (May 1945).

The Hollywood studio system provided composers with the rare opportunity of a continuous salary, a guaranteed audience, and, sometimes, creative experimentation in the first half of the twentieth century. These working conditions were more secure than those of composers solely writing for the concert hall, but they were far from ideal. Most musicians and music critics seldom granted film music the artistic value they attributed to concert music, and as often as not were openly hostile towards it. Furthermore, Hollywood composers were often subject to tight deadlines and a lack of respect by studio executives and directors, who often treated them as a post-production afterthought. In the 1940s and 1950s, many film music composers and critics declared a need to address these issues, proposing solutions such as music critics reviewing films, film critics considering the role of music in motion pictures, and the public listening to film music more critically. They believed that such steps would validate the status of film music as an art and thereby put pressure on producers and directors to give composers greater creative freedom.<sup>2</sup> While many voiced these lofty goals to increase the appreciation of film music, only several actively developed the networks and forums to realize them. As film music criticism and study had yet to take shape, who was participating in these early ventures and what informed their critical discussions?

Efforts to foster a public appreciation of film music came from a number of circles in the US in the 1940s and 1950s including not only composers, scholars, and critics, but also music club leaders, educators, librarians, students, non-profit organizations, and others. Specifically the present study focuses on the contributions of the non-commercial American periodical *Film Music Notes* (1941-1951), subsequently entitled *Film Music* (1951-1956) and *Film and TV Music* (1956-1958).<sup>3</sup> Founded by Grace Widney Mabee with Constance Purdy and other leading members of the National Federation of Music Clubs (hereafter the Federation), *Film Music Notes* played a major role in organizing film music discussions and networks in the 1940s. In 1943, they further formalized these efforts with the creation of the National Film Music Council (NFMC).<sup>4</sup> The editors of *Film Music Notes* worked in cooperation with Los Angeles music critic Lawrence Morton, who became one of the founding editors of the *Hollywood Quarterly* in 1945, and Dartmouth College musicologist Frederick Sternfeld, who headed the College Committee of Film Music. They also worked with John Huntley, Muir Mathieson, and Hans Keller, who were developing British film music education and criticism through *Sight and Sound* (1932-) and other initiatives of the British Film Institute (BFI), as well as Gerald Pratley, who critically presented soundtrack albums, special film music

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<sup>2</sup> For more on how composers and critiques discussed the formal integration of music in film to forward this cause, see Elsa Marshall, “The Business, Collaborative Labour, and Techniques of Formal Integration in the Production of MGM’s *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954),” PhD thesis (University of Sheffield, 2022), Chapter 2, 47-98.

<sup>3</sup> Commenting on the increased international subscription base in a 1945 issue of *Film Music Notes*, editor Grace Widney Mabee noted that “We have no desire to commercialize our efforts even though he have had several attractive offers to issue our publication, FILM MUSIC NOTES, on a commercial basis,” “Foreward” (May 1945). While Mabee did not clarify what these offers entailed, *Film Music Notes* appears to have only been available on a subscription basis (rather than for sale in stores) and did not include any advertisements until the March-April 1955 issue onwards.

<sup>4</sup> Considering the National Film Music Council and the National Federation of Music Clubs have the same acronym, “the Federation” is used in this article to denote the latter.

recordings, and interviews with composers on his publicly-funded Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio show, *Music from the Films* (1949-1966).

Several recent anthologies and histories of Hollywood film music writings from the studio era provide insight into how Hollywood composers and renowned critics debated aesthetic considerations. While they cite individual articles and interviews from *Film Music Notes*, they overlook the editorial role of the journal itself in fostering early film music appreciation, criticism, and education, instead focusing on comparing select writings of already-recognized composers and critics such as George Antheil, Aaron Copland, Morton, Sternfeld, Bruno David Ussher, and Virgil Thomson.<sup>5</sup> This omission of the role of *Film Music Notes* and the work of Mabee and her colleagues in facilitating such rich film music writings and publications of score excerpts may be partly due to challenges in retrieving the remaining physical copies of the periodical. Regardless, it is important for such formative histories to reflect on the nature of the sources they are founded on and to clarify the scope of sources researched. As James Wierzbicki, Nathan Platte, and Colin Roust demonstrate in their introduction to the *Routledge Film Music Sourcebook*, better explanations of source selection can help future researchers better navigate existing research avenues and identify new ones.<sup>6</sup> Since 2007, most later issues of *Film Music Notes* (Sep. 1949 – Winter 1958) have been made digitally available through the Internet Archive, a development that extends the periodical's reach a whole new audience and started my own journey through its pages.<sup>7</sup>

This history of the first decade of *Film Music Notes* from 1941 to 1951 (vol. 1, no. 1 to vol. 10, no. 5) illustrates the differing views that informed early attempts to cultivate a public appreciation of film music<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the story of the magazine's development challenges current notions of a schism between academic and public discourse by further unveiling the social complications of the professionalization of the humanities in the US and Canada in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. During this period, study of the humanities

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<sup>5</sup> Mervyn Cooke, ed. *The Hollywood Film Music Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 257-258. James Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 147-159, 160-186.

<sup>6</sup> Wierzbicki, Platte, and Roust, eds. *The Routledge Film Music Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2012): xi-xiii.

<sup>7</sup> A full index of articles from September 1946 to May 1952 can be found in "Index," *Film Music Notes* vol. 11, no. 5 (May-June 1952): 19-23. *Film and TV Music* 16, no. 1 to 17, no. 1 (Fall 1956 to Fall and Winter 1957-1958), <https://archive.org/details/filmmusic0911natirich/>. *Film Music* 7, no. 1 to 15, no. 5 (September-October 1952 to Summer 1956), <https://archive.org/details/filmandtvmusic1215natirich/>. *Film Music Notes* and *Film Music*, 9, no. 1 to 11, no. 5 (September 1949 to May-June 1952), <https://archive.org/details/filmmusic0911natirich/>.

<sup>8</sup> Volumes 1 through 8 (October 1941 – May-June 1945), as well as special issues on *Henry V* (June 1946) and *The Red Pony* (February 1949) were reviewed from the University of Colorado and University of Wisconsin libraries. Further issues were consulted from the Internet Archive. Of note, while the several type-copied issues in the University of Colorado collection include quite judgemental comments from the anonymous copyist, such as "Why did I say I'd copy this ruck of nonsense" and other similar remarks in the November 1941 issue (vol. 1, no. 2). I was unable to locate the February 1945 (vol. 4, no. 5) and February 1946 (vol. 5, no. 6) issues.

developed from being an avocation largely undertaken by community groups into “a profession, something one did for a living” in university contexts.<sup>9</sup> As Donald Wright explains in his 2005 study of the professionalization of the discipline of history in Canada and as Tamara Levitz demonstrates in her 2018 study of the founding of the American Musicological Society (AMS) and other US music research groups during this period, the professionalization of these fields involved the “privatization of history”<sup>10</sup> and the creation of “rules that distinguished [musicologists] from the public as an intellectual elite.”<sup>11</sup> One crucial result of professionalization was the exclusion of the women who had constituted a larger proportion of the membership, and who had held more leadership roles, in early public music and historical study groups, the very groups that had provided the foundation for the scholarly societies that later rejected them.<sup>12</sup>

Levitz notes “how minute archival analysis, even of a small moment in the history of a discipline, can reorient perceptions and conceptual frames and provide the firm material ground needed for decolonization.”<sup>13</sup> In this article, I do not go as far as to propose methods of decolonization, but I do propose a reorientation of how expertise is identified and evaluated, particularly when selecting and reviewing historic sources, and demonstrate the importance of this through valuing a wider set of perceptions of film music. *Film Music Notes* is an example of collaborative film music study between a variety of professionals, students, and the public. This included, but was not solely defined by nor focused on, the involvement of academics. *Film Music Notes* grandly emerged and gradually disappeared in the second half of the studio era, decades before the establishment of current academic film music studies in the 1980s. While the *Hollywood Quarterly* (a journal now accessible through academic databases) described *Film Music Notes* as “primarily for use in advanced classroom discussion” and its reviews as “nonselective and insufficiently critical” in the 1940s, *Film Music Notes* was the primary means of communication between those who worked in film music and sound departments, and schools, universities, clubs, libraries, and other organizations across America in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>14</sup> Some may debate whether the content of *Film Music Notes* constitutes music appreciation or music scholarship (a division bolstered by US musicologists in the 1920s in the name of asserting the status of, and thereby

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<sup>9</sup> Donald Wright further delineates professions as involving “prolonged training in a definable body of knowledge, a credential system, a code of ethics, self-government, and legislated access to a particular labour market” and providing “privileged access to financial and social rewards for its members,” *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2005), 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Wright, *The Professionalization of History*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Levitz, “The Musicological Elite,” *Current Musicology*, no. 102 (Spring 2018): 12.

<sup>12</sup> See Levitz’s discussion of the work of Helen Heffron Roberts and her colleagues at the American Society for Comparative Musicology in “The Musicological Elite,” 21-24. See also Wright’s discussion of the leadership of women in local Canadian historical societies in the late 1800s in *The Professionalization of History*, 12-21.

<sup>13</sup> Levitz, “The Musicological Elite,” 12.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Rosenheimer, Jr. (assistant curator at MOMA Film Library), “A Survey of Film Periodicals, I: The United States and England,” *Hollywood Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (July 1947): 339. Robert U. Nelson and Walter H. Rubsamen, “Literature on Film and Radio,” *Hollywood Quarterly*, Annual Communications Bibliography (1946): 42. [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_film-quarterly\\_1946-07\\_1\\_4/](https://archive.org/details/sim_film-quarterly_1946-07_1_4/).

a place for, musicology in university music departments).<sup>15</sup> Whatever the designation, its history provides examples of alternative goals, networks, and practices in film music research. It therefore represents, to use Levitz's words, an overlooked "moment in the history of a discipline" that can help academics reflect on and reorient their research and outreach methods today.

With the aim of observing rather than affirming markers of intellectual status, this article adopts Wright's understanding of the professionalization of the humanities as a "flat-line," a variety of ways of "organizing intellectual life," rather than a narrative of improvement.<sup>16</sup> This approach not only provides room for understanding women's contributions to knowledge and artistic criticism outside of organizations with more academic credence, but also allows for a more critical evaluation of how the goals and methods of formal and informal organizations overlap or conflict. This study begins by explaining the contexts in which film and music, as well as the study of these media, were being valued in organizations of intellectual life in the US in the first half of the twentieth century. It continues to identify the many calls for film music appreciation and criticism in the 1940s before providing a history of the founding of *Film Music Notes* and an overview of its changing content, writers, and structure during its first decade. It also delineates a trend of professionalization within *Film Music Notes* itself and how this affected the periodical's content.

#### Organizations of Film and Music Criticism and Study by the 1940s

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, numerous composers and critics called for a greater recognition of film composers and film music, particularly in Hollywood. In part, their writings intersected with previous and contemporaneous American efforts to define film as an artform in intellectual and public forums and to delineate a field of music scholarship, aspirations tied to various social and commercial aims.

Since the 1910s, groups of critics, studio executives, and academics had attempted to heighten the status of film (or, rather, certain films) in different organizations. For Hollywood studio executives, there were clear business advantages to "defin[ing] films as enduring works of art and celebrat[ing] the skilled artistry that went into making them, two goals that simultaneously helped sell old films and postpone unionization."<sup>17</sup> For those in intellectual circles, film libraries could be used for a range of social purposes. For example, Harvard's Fogg Museum wished to revise "the basis for class distinction" away from birthright by promoting "specialized skills," such as expertise in curating a hierarchy of films, "as the criteria for inclusion in an elite class," and its 1927 Film Library proposal exemplified these efforts (the proposal was an unsuccessful collaboration with Hollywood executives just

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<sup>15</sup> Levitz, "The Musicological Elite," 29.

<sup>16</sup> Wright's proposal to understand "the professionalization of history as a flat line as opposed to a rising curve" builds on the writings of Thomas Bender, who "argues that an intellectual community is best studied on its own terms, not in relation to what succeeded it," *The Professionalization of History*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Decherney, *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 73.

before the formation of the Academy for Motion Picture Arts and Sciences).<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Marxist film critic Harry Alan Potamkin planned “to create critical filmgoers and citizens” with a library that would make “documentary material (scripts, critical literature, and stills)” publicly available and film education that would combine “manual training,” “training in social criticism,” and “aesthetic education.”<sup>19</sup> While these projects were unrealized, film curricula continued to be developed in American universities in the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> This was followed by more successful efforts to recognize film as art by American film critics who, in the 1940s, aimed to demonstrate how Hollywood film had “redefined what artistry was.”<sup>21</sup> According to David Bordwell, these critics “outflanked the mass culture debates by simply diving, quite self-consciously, into popular material” and their criteria for evaluating film set the foundation for the larger intellectual recognition of film criticism in the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

While these projects aimed to recognize film as an artistic subject, some forms of music (though not yet film music) were already recognized by universities and critics as art and worthy of studying. Nonetheless, in a similar manner to the discourses around film appraisal and study, there were debates over what constituted expertise in evaluating music in the run up to the 1940s, particularly in creating criteria for society memberships and funding that delineated *how* music should be studied and *who* should be studying it. In regards to the early work of the AMS and related societies, the building of musicology as a “status profession” that could attract funding and recognition by scholars within and outside of the field involved numerous tactics of curating exclusivity: benefiting from associating with established groups such as the Music Teachers’ National Association and comparative musicological societies before distancing historical musicology as superior to their work; similarly distinguishing musicology as separate from music appreciation, music theory, and composition; and creating hierarchies of societal membership, curricula, and scholarship even within the field.<sup>23</sup>

This attribution of higher status to music academics, which continues in scholarly research today, complicates a current reading of comments about *Film Music Notes* being “insufficiently critical” and for “classroom discussion” in the 1940s bibliographies of the *Hollywood Quarterly*.<sup>24</sup> This is not to say distinctions between more or less technical writing,

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<sup>18</sup> Decherney, *Hollywood and the Culture Elite*, 74, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Decherney, *Hollywood and the Culture Elite*, 90, 96. Dana B. Polan, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 251.

<sup>20</sup> See Polan, *Scenes of Instruction* for a detailed history of film courses between 1915 and 1935.

<sup>21</sup> Bordwell explains how critics Otis Ferguson, James Agee, Manny Farber, and Parker Tyler employed the precision and “close reading” of the New Criticism developing in literary studies and combined it with “the contagious enthusiasm of their rhetoric” to “[trace] the general outlines of an aesthetic specific to the Hollywood sound cinema,” *The Rhapsodes: How 1940s Critics Changed American Film Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3-4, 12, 31-34.

<sup>22</sup> Bordwell, *The Rhapsodes*, 25, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Levitz credits Philip Elliot with the term “status professional,” used by Elliot as a description of “a historic perspective that status had preceded other professional attributes in Great Britain,” Levitz, *The Musicological Elite* 25, 30, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Rosenheimer, Jr. “A Survey of Film Periodicals, I,” 42. Nelson and Rubsamen, “Literature on Film and Radio,” 42.

criticism, and research should not be made, but rather the larger contexts of such distinctions need to be understood. Notably, the opinion that *Film Music Notes* was “nonselective and insufficiently critical” was co-authored by University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) professor Walter H. Rubsamen, a proponent of *Film Music Notes* who had not only voiced this criticism to the editors already but had also contributed to the periodical and used it in his lectures. It is thus necessary to carefully reflect on the reasons behind and the resulting implications of making distinctions between more or less academic content and how that shapes our perceptions of opinions within different periodicals. Rubsamen appears to have wished for more detailed criticism in *Film Music Notes* but this did not negate his understanding of its use entirely. However, his comment in the *Hollywood Quarterly* could easily deter a current reader from approaching *Film Music Notes* seriously, potentially missing out on Rubsamen’s own description and reflection on his UCLA course in a 1945 issue, an early documentation of university film music education.<sup>25</sup>

It is within these formative contexts, which define early film and music studies in the United States, that we find some of the unique scholarly and critical circumstances that influenced the first decade of *Film Music Notes*. However, while *Film Music Notes* could be seen as an early example of interdisciplinarity and knowledge-exchange, its beginnings, quite like the wish of Hollywood leaders to have a library at Harvard, lay outside of academic grounds. Academic contributions were framed as part of, but not foundational, to a larger multifaceted endeavor of fostering a critical public appreciation of film music and bettering the working conditions and recognition of those creating it. Fulfilling these aims also required those who facilitated education such as librarians and teachers; those in the film business who could provide support, resources, and insider-knowledge; and the public itself.

### Calls for Film Music Appreciation and Criticism in the 1940s

What prompted critical, educational, and academic interest in film music in the 1940s? Partly, it appears, a growing worry that, no matter its status, film music was becoming the primary influence over how audiences listened to music in general and that the producers and executives in charge of the parameters of film music creation were not treating it with much seriousness. Such worries were vocalized by Hollywood composers as well as music critics. While many prominent film music writers wrote of the endeavor as though it was new throughout the 1940s, the editors of *Film Music Notes* had begun to organize and build a public appreciation of film music in the United States since the start of the decade. *Film Music Notes*’ focus on training and encouraging the public aimed to address these two concerns in a largely positive and constructive manner.

First, addressing the prominence of film music, actively listening to films was described as being in the public’s own interest as, for better or for worse, it was the leading way for mass audiences to be introduced to the “modern idiom” of music.<sup>26</sup> As Head of the MGM Music

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<sup>25</sup> Rubsamen, “A University Course in Dramatic Music, Including Music for the Cinema,” *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 3 (November 1945)

<sup>26</sup> Frederick Sternfeld, “Music and the Feature Film,” *Music Quarterly* 22 (1947), reprinted in *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, 302-316. This view of film as a tool to influence audiences’ musical tastes built on articles in newspapers and trade journals of the



Department, Nathaniel W. Finston, wrote in *Film Music Notes* in 1943, “Producers now realize that, while Mr. and Mrs. John Public probably wouldn’t take the trouble to go to the symphony, not realizing what it would give them in terms of enjoyment, they absorb symphonic music greedily in their picture scores – and love it.”<sup>27</sup> While Igor Stravinsky denounced the association of techniques of absolute music with film imagery, Frederick Sternfeld, George Antheil, and Hans Keller advocated for better critical listening skills instead, as they saw the influence of film music on how people listened as already occurring and its domination inevitable.<sup>28</sup> Keller, in particular, echoed the exaggerated tone of critics of middlebrow entertainment by describing mass media as a threat, a stark contrast to film critics’ dismissal of the mass culture debates in the 1940s. Arguing that there was a “need for film music criticism” in 1947, Keller described how “Multitudes grow up, musically (as otherwise), on the cinema” and how bad film music was already “corrupt[ing] musical understanding and taste.”<sup>29</sup> Whether to explore the potential of new musical possibilities in cinema or to avoid Keller’s worry of film music “becoming a weapon of musical mass destruction,” proponents of film music saw a need to prompt the public to critically listen.<sup>30</sup>

*Film Music Notes* was more optimistic in its promotion of the critical listening of film music, a tone established in letters published in its early issues of 1941. For example, Clyde Jay Garrett, Dean of the Hollywood Conservatory of Music and Arts, believed closer listening of film enhanced audiences’ experience overall, describing the guidance of *Film Music Notes* as “an instrument to awaken lay audiences to this necessary willingness to accept film music as a most essential, as well as delightful, element of modern entertainment.”<sup>31</sup> Others wrote of film as a vehicle for providing a far wider public with access to musical performance than

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1910s and 1920s that advocated for Western Classical music to accompany silent films in order to educate captive cinema audiences, Elsa Marshall, “Silent Film Music Research as Local Musicology: A Case Study of Musical Practices and Networks in Ottawa Theatres from 1897 to 1929,” MA diss (University of Ottawa, 2017), 20-25.

<sup>27</sup> Finston, “Screen Music Assumes New Stature,” *Film Music Notes* 2 no. 5 (February 1943).

<sup>28</sup> Ingolf Dahl, “Igor Stravinsky on Film Music,” *Musical Digest* 28 (September 1946), excerpt reprinted in *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, 277. Sternfeld, “Music and the Feature Film,” reprinted, 303. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1945; reprinted, with a new introduction by Charles Amirkhanian, New York: Da Capo Press, 1981), excerpt reprinted in *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, 270-271.

<sup>29</sup> The latter quote is part of a reference Keller makes to an unspecified earlier writing: “I wrote some time ago that ‘either film music will corrupt music understanding and taste, or musical understanding will have to demand better, and more sensitively used, film music.’ Don’t you already notice the corruption in our ‘proper’ musical life?”, *The Need for Competent Film Music Criticism. A pamphlet for those who care for FILM AS ART, with a final section for those who do not* (London British Film Institute, October 1947), reprinted with edits in *Film Music and Beyond: Writings on Music and the Screen*, Christopher Wintle, ed. (London: Plumbago Books and Arts, 2006), 15.

<sup>30</sup> Keller, *The Need for Competent Film Music Criticism*, reprinted, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Garrett, “Comments and Open Forum,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 3 (December 1941): 1, typed copy, University of Colorado Library.

ever before. For example, conductor Werner Jensen explained that “pictures today present the broadest and most important use of music in history and in doing so provide millions with an understanding of the art which has never before been attained.”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, nine years later, librarian Delinda Roggensack declared that new forms of communication (“sound motion picture, recordings, radio, television, and modes of travel”) had changed “the ‘cultural aristocracy’ of the 1890s into a universal culture developing from all walks of life.”<sup>33</sup> Amongst these positive declarations that often aligned film music appreciation with music appreciation in general, *Film Music Notes* also provided room for critical debate over the distinctions between film music and concert music, notably with Gail Kubik questioning how to correct cinemagoers’ belief that film music was contemporary music in 1944.<sup>34</sup>

Second, addressing Hollywood’s general lack of regard for the role of music in film, many film music advocates believed that if audiences listened more critically and were more vocal about their opinions of film music, Hollywood producers and directors would have to start paying attention and treat their music departments with more respect (i.e. allow them to contribute suggestions in pre-production, provide more time to complete their scores, and allow more creative freedom). It was thought that these measures would create better music in films and, consequently, more recognition of film music as an art form. Copland repeatedly voiced this call for movie audiences to “Remove those ear-muffs” in several writings and talks in the 1940s, suggesting teachers and critics were important in this endeavor.<sup>35</sup> This was similarly conveyed in *Film Music Notes*, such as in a 1946 article where Kubik ruminated on how the public understood and could influence film music, encouraging readers to not only write to studios about music they have heard “but about the kind which they have not heard.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise, in a 1942 letter, Rubsamen explained “The more we are able to develop a public sensitive to the appropriateness of musical backgrounds, the higher will be the standard of composition for the films.”<sup>37</sup>

Intriguingly, *Film Music Notes* contributed to this promotion of a critical public appreciation of film music in the name of bolstering film music quality in the same way that early women film writers encouraged the public to be more critical of film in the name of bolstering film quality, a pattern noted by Richard Abel in his recent study of the writings on film by US

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<sup>32</sup> Jensen, “Comments and News on Films,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 2 (November 1941): 1, typed copy, University of Colorado Library.

<sup>33</sup> Roggensack, “Uses of Film in Music Education,” *Film Music Notes* 9, no. 4 (March-April 1950): 22.

<sup>34</sup> Gail Kubik, “Film Music and Public Taste,” and “Biography of Gail Kubik,” both in *Film Music Notes* 3, no. 9 (June 1944).

<sup>35</sup> Copland, *Our New Music: Leading Composers in Europe and America* (New York and London: Whittlesey House/McGraw-Hill, 1941), excerpt reprinted in *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, 91. Copland “Tip to Moviegoers: Take Off Those Ear-Muffs,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1949, reprinted in *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, 326. Copland raised this point again in a January 2, 1948 Music Teachers National Association meeting. The session was reported on by Committee on Audio-Visual Aids member Frederick W. Sternfeld, “Film Music Session at M. T. N. A. In Boston,” *Film Music Notes* 7, no. 4 (March-Apr 1948): 5.

<sup>36</sup> Kubik, “Movie Audiences: Musically Mature or Adolescent?” *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 6 (May 1946): 12.

<sup>37</sup> “News Items – Comments,” *Film Music Notes* 2, no. 1 (October 1942).

women newspaper reporters of the 1910s and 1920s. Abel demonstrates how Kitty Kelly, Louella O. Parsons, Dorothy Day, and Genevieve Harris “ponder[ed] the principles one should use to evaluat[e] a feature film” and “share[d] those means to ‘train’ fans for thinking and talking more knowledgeably and persuasively about the films they like or dislike.”<sup>38</sup> The purpose of training audiences to be critical was stated directly by Harris, a film critic for the *Chicago Post*, in 1918. Explaining a positive approach where audiences “[boost] the good instead of knocking the bad,” she wrote, “if we would each individually take upon ourselves the courteous little obligation of appreciating what producers and exhibitors may do for us, we would quickly reap our reward in having better, stronger stories presented in more artistic fashion.”<sup>39</sup> The editors of *Film Music Notes* likewise engaged a range of writers to propose and reflect on how to train the public to listen to film and how to “[p]ersuade the industry of the value and function of a good score.”<sup>40</sup> The tone of the first editors of *Film Music Notes* was often open and encouraging in this regard. For example, Margery Morrison believed “You need no special qualifications to enjoy this music. Go to your neighborhood movie with open ears and an open mind.”<sup>41</sup>

Organizing a public appreciation of film music was thus a matter of providing a variety of readers with the tools, opportunities, and encouragement to critically reflect on what they listened to and watched. The first aim, making sure audiences were critically listening to film music and not becoming ambivalent to how their listening practices were shaped, aided the second, making film music better recognized as a factor to a successfully renowned film. However, improving the status of film music could occur in a number of ways, not all involving public opinion, and *Film Music Notes* slowly moved towards featuring the opinions of and framing specific writers as experts. While the engagement of librarians and educators in developing public training would always be a key part of *Film Music Notes*, the professionalization of the journal, particularly from its September-October 1946 issue (vol. 6, no. 1) onwards, illustrates how its formalization led to a loss of opportunities for its non-professional readership to more substantially engage in critically considering film music.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Abel, ed., *Movie Mavens: US Newspaper Women Take on the Movies, 1914-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 5.

<sup>39</sup> “Comments and Open Forum,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 4 (January 1942): 1. Genevieve Harris, “Two Views on Film Problems,” *Chicago Post* (December 7, 1918): 9, reprinted in Abel, *Movie Mavens*, 102.

<sup>40</sup> Lilla Belle Pitts, Professor of Music Education at the Teachers College at Columbia University, wrote that the role of educators was to “[p]ersuade the industry of the value and function of a good score” and to “[set] up value judgements in reference to music in our motion picture theaters, as well as in out concert halls,” “Film Music,” *Film Music Notes* 10, no. 5 (May-June 1951): 19. See, for example, Bruno David Usher “Comments: How to Listen to Film Music,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 6 (March 1942).

<sup>41</sup> Morrison, “Getting Acquainted with Some Film Music Scores,” *Music Publishers Journal* 3, no. 5 (September-October 1945): 49, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_music-journal\\_september-october-1945\\_3\\_5](https://archive.org/details/sim_music-journal_september-october-1945_3_5).

<sup>42</sup> The overlaps and tensions in contributing to the three aims of the NFMC (seen at the start of this article) are apparent in the special issue of *Music Publishers Journal* created with the aid of the editors of *Film Music Notes*, particularly in comparing Grace Widney Mabee, “Work Purposes of the National Film Music Council,” 31 and 67 and Morrison,

Thus, the more collaborative relationship between reader and writer was eventually revised into a more top-down didactic publication, closer to Keller's proposal of a "continuous, generally accessible, and competent film music criticism" as the primary way to curate public taste and better film music.<sup>43</sup> The history of the changing organizations and editors behind *Film Music Notes* partly explain this change in content.

### The Beginnings of *Film Music Notes* and a Committee Review System (1939-1941)

12 MUSICAL AMERICA for June, 1941

## Clubs Take New Interest in Film Music

### Federation Inaugurates Awards for Musical Merit in Pictures

By MRS. GRACE WIDNEY MABEE

IT is startlingly significant that the third and fourth largest industries in the world are two of the most important contributors to mass development—music and motion pictures; and that the first and second largest industries, oil and steel, furnish motive power for their audiences.

Even in nickelodeon days motion picture theaters recognized their dependence upon music to create acting mood. Finally, with the development of sound pictures, the union of the two arts was accomplished. That comparatively few of the 85,000,000 weekly picture patrons consciously hear the music is evidence of the completeness of that union. In the days of silent pictures the great com-

son for the best explanation of music's purpose in the films. His conception is—the score supplies a sort of human warmth to the figures on the screen. The quickest way to the heart and feelings is through the ear. Dr. Bruno David Ussher says, "Music makes a contribution without which, even the best plot, speech, action and photography in their combined appeal, remain incomplete". Thus, music on the screen with almost twenty million dollars spent upon it annually, is one of the most important artistic movements in America today.

The National Federation of Music Clubs, with over one-half million members, encourages every phase of constructive music development which might play a part in the permanent happiness and spiritual growth of the people in this nation. The Federation has recognized the great development of music in films, the necessity of giving thought and study to this new idiom of musical composition. Names and personalities of many of the fine musicians working in the studios are unknown to the general public, and credit is not always given to those deserving com-



Sergis Alberts  
Mrs. Grace Widney Mabée  
Chairman, Motion Picture Music

selected after preliminary balloting. will

**Figure 1.** Headline of *Musical America* article, "Clubs Take New Interest in Film Music," by Grace Widney Mabée, Chair of Motion Picture Music at the National Federation of Music Clubs, where she outlines the purpose of the Federation's new film music awards, 16, no. 2 (June 1941): 12, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_musical-america\\_1941-06\\_61\\_11/](https://archive.org/details/sim_musical-america_1941-06_61_11/).

The creation of *Film Music Notes* was spurred by the success of a film music awards night launched by the National Federation of Music Clubs (the Federation) in 1941 because its membership believed "that musicians ha[d] not been adequately recognized by the Academy awards."<sup>44</sup> An article in *Film Daily* explained how the adjudication would function:

Artistic values of musical pictures and music in pictures are to be judged by state previewing committees now being formed throughout the country. A super-committee, with Mrs. Grace Widney Mabée, Los Angeles, as chairman, and Mrs. Edgar Stillman-Kelly, New York, as Eastern preview chairman, will supervise.<sup>45</sup>

"Getting Acquainted with Some Film Music Scores," 38 and 39, both in *Music Publishers Journal* 3, no. 5 (September-October, 1945).

<sup>43</sup> Keller, *The Need for Competent Film Music Criticism*, reprinted, 3.

<sup>44</sup> "Music Clubs Federation Plans Own Film Awards." *The Film Daily* 7, no. 107 (May 31, 1940): 1, <https://archive.org/details/filmdail77wids/>.

<sup>45</sup> "Music Clubs Federation Plans Own Film Awards," 6.

Mabee and Kelly collected an extraordinary number of opinions from Federation members and from an additional “Two hundred-odd authorities on music,” including university, college, and conservatory music department faculty as well as student groups.<sup>46</sup> The awards were presented at the Hollywood Bowl on June 21, 1941 as part of the “Festival of Motion Picture” at the Federation’s biennial American Music Festival.<sup>47</sup> The event was organized in partnership with the Association of Motion Picture Producers (AMPP), the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), and the Community Service Department of the Motion Picture Producers & Distributors of America (MPPDA) with an organizing committee comprising of Federation executives and top Hollywood music personnel (Finston, MGM; Constantin Bakaleinikoff, RKO-Radio; Leo Forbstein, Warner Bros.; Alfred Newman, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox; Charles Previn, Universal; Morris Stoloff, Columbia; Mrs. Thomas G. Winter and Alice Evans Fields, MPPDA).<sup>48</sup>

Grace Widney Mabee (1872-1965) spearheaded the awards night. A renowned opera singer in her youth, Mabee had gained a prominent standing in Los Angeles music circles thanks to her achievements such as assembling a “chorus and pageant” at the Hollywood Bowl for the 1932 Olympics, founding the Southern California Festival of Allied Arts, and serving as a Federation board member since 1926.<sup>49</sup> In 1939, she became the Federation’s Chairman of Motion Picture Music, which involved heading a film music previewing committee in Hollywood and giving talks on film music in department stores and for women’s clubs in Los Angeles.<sup>50</sup> In 1941, she led the organization of the Biennial Convention and film music awards night in her additional role as Chairman of the Los Angeles Local Committee (see Figure 1).<sup>51</sup> Several months later, Mabee launched *Film Music Notes* with fellow editors

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<sup>46</sup> “Film Composers to Get Oscars,” *Motion Picture Herald* 142, no. 3 (January 18, 1941): 38, <https://archive.org/details/motionpictureher142unse/>. For a list of music faculty members who took part, see “Music in Films Gets Recognition,” *Latrobe Bulletin*, January 31 1941, 15, Newspapers.com.

<sup>47</sup> “Music Clubs Meet in Los Angeles,” *Musical America* 61 no. 2 (June 1941): 4, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_musical-america\\_1941-06\\_61\\_11/](https://archive.org/details/sim_musical-america_1941-06_61_11/).

<sup>48</sup> “Industry to Cooperate With Music Festival,” *Boxoffice* 8, no. 5 (March 29, 1941): 80, <https://archive.org/details/boxofficejanmar138unse/>. “Time-Table of Convention Events,” *Musical Courier* (June 1941): 4, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_music-magazine-and-musical-courier\\_1941-06\\_123\\_11/](https://archive.org/details/sim_music-magazine-and-musical-courier_1941-06_123_11/). Mabee, “Clubs Take New Interest in Film Music,” 12.

<sup>49</sup> For a short biography of Mabee, see “Artist Happy Despite Lost Opera Career,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1938: IV, 10, Newspapers.com. Eoline Aldrich, “Cancellation of Plans for National Biennial Next Spring Disclosed,” *Morning Sun*, Long Beach, September 11, 1942, B-6, Newspapers.com.

<sup>50</sup> Mabee provided a brief history of *Film Music Notes* and the NFMC in “Work and Purposes,” 31. “Music Federation Hails Peace Motive,” *Musical America* 65, no. 16 (October 25, 1939): 21, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_musical-america\\_1939-10-25\\_59\\_16/](https://archive.org/details/sim_musical-america_1939-10-25_59_16/). “Business Girls Alert, National Leaders Find,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1940, 8, Part 2, Newspapers.com. Advertisements for Mabee’s talks at Bullock’s appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, as per “Events At Bullock’s,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 25 1940, 7, Part 2, Newspapers.com.

<sup>51</sup> Mabee, “Clubs Take New Interest in Film Music,” 12. Richard Drake Saunders, “Hollywood Ready for Invasion by Federation’s Hosts,” *Musical Courier* 123 no. 11 (June 1941): 5, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_music-magazine-and-musical-courier\\_1941-](https://archive.org/details/sim_music-magazine-and-musical-courier_1941-)

Naomi Reynolds (the Federation's "radio chairman"), Constance Purdy (singer for films and translator of songs for the Oliver Ditson Company), and Alexander Steinert (Broadway and Hollywood composer and conductor) as well as "with the assistance of the Department of Studio and Public Service" of the MPPDA, a valuable connection that would largely be credited to Alice Evans Fields in the periodical's first five years.<sup>52</sup>

In the foreword to the inaugural issue of *Film Music Notes* (Oct. 1941, vol. 1, no. 1), the editors explained that the publication came out of the requests from music educators for resources and advice on how to teach their students about film music after the awards night.<sup>53</sup> While the foreword for the second issue (Nov. 1941, vol. 1, no. 2) described a more direct aim, that judges of the new awards should use its reviews to select which films to attend and to send in their own opinions, the periodical quickly developed broader goals than those stated in these first issues and the focus on the Federation's awards dwindled.<sup>54</sup> The editors sought ideas from its readership ("We welcome reports from all our readers, also suggestions as to information you would like to have carried in FILM MUSIC NOTES. Let us hear from you") and began organizing its content and lists of resources based on requests.<sup>55</sup>

The awards night and *Film Music Notes* built on the Federation's existing structures and resources. The Federation had collaborated with film studios in the past, such as in 1936 when it helped circulate "an adult discussion guide based on the music" of MGM's *Romeo and Juliet* as part of a large-scale educational promotional campaign.<sup>56</sup> It had also promoted dialogue between exhibitors and the public in 1935, calling for "local music clubs" to "contact managers of theatres and try to lower sound effect [sic] at least ten points" in order for film music and sound to be heard without distortion.<sup>57</sup> That year, the Federation also co-organized a members competition with Audio Productions Inc. and First Division Exchanges, Inc., for best scenario ideas for the short film series *Musical Moods* ("musical entertainment with visual accompaniment") and for best theatre promotion of the competition.<sup>58</sup>

With Mabee as Chairman of Motion Picture Music, the Federation also demonstrated a strong relationship with the Hollywood elite. In 1940, it hosted film music composers as guests of honor at a luncheon of "More than 750 civic leaders" and it appointed actress Dorothy Lamar as its Hollywood representative (Lamar's first task was hosting "a one-day institute of music

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06\_123\_11. "Mrs. Mabee Last Rites Wednesday," *Citizen-News*, Los Angeles, February 11 1965, BH-B1, Newspapers.com.

<sup>52</sup> Constance Purdy, "Russian Music," *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 8 (May-Jun 1942).  
"Foreword," *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 5 (February 1942).

<sup>53</sup> "Foreword," *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 1 (October 1941).

<sup>54</sup> "Foreword," *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 2 (November 1941), typed copy, University of Colorado Library

<sup>55</sup> "Foreword," *Film Music Notes* (November 1941).

<sup>56</sup> "Producers Aim Classics at 36,000,000 Audience," *Motion Picture Herald* 124, no. 7 (August 15, 1936): 18, <https://archive.org/details/motionpictureher124unsel/>.

<sup>57</sup> "Music Clubs Now Seek to Regulate Sound Effects," *Philadelphia Exhibitor* 17, no. 9 (May 1, 1935): 11, <https://archive.org/details/philadelphiaexhi17jaye/>.

<sup>58</sup> "\$1000 in Prizes for Musical Moods Contest," *Philadelphia Exhibitor* 17, no. 21 (January 1, 1935): 25, <https://archive.org/details/philadelphiaexhi17jaye/>. "Better Films Form: 'Musical Moods' Contest," *National Board of Review Magazine* 10, no. 1 (January 1935): 11-12, <https://archive.org/details/nationalboardofr8910nati/>.

in films at the Ritz Theater in Los Angeles”).<sup>59</sup> After the success of the 1941 convention, Mabee hosted a breakfast in honor of Charles Previn, a fellow member of the film music awards organizing committee, who “spoke of the desire of Universal Pictures to co-operate with the National Federation, and told of the records of music written for pictures and conductors’ scores which will soon be available upon request for further study and enjoyment of film music by organizations all over the country.”<sup>60</sup> These Hollywood connections are apparent from the very first 1941 issues of *Film Music Notes* where reviews by previewing committees were supplemented by reflections on production processes by prominent Hollywood composers. Contributions included Bernard Hermann commenting on *Citizen Kane*, Richard Hageman on *This Woman is Mine* and *Paris Calling* and Franz Waxman on *Suspicion*.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, Erich Wolfgang Korngold and Irving Berlin provided “Advance notes” for *King’s Row* and *Louisiana Purchase* respectively.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to these connections, *Film Music Notes*’ reviewing and awards system utilized the Federation’s Hollywood and New York previewing committees established for the MPPDA’s Department of Community Services as part of Hollywood’s systems of self-regulation.<sup>63</sup> Alongside its Production Code work, the MPPDA compiled the “Green Sheet,” a rating of the suitability of film content for different ages “based on reviews submitted by representatives of the member organizations” that was “disseminated to newspapers, schools, libraries, and churches” from 1933 to 1969.<sup>64</sup> The Green Sheet was an antecedent to the association’s 1968

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<sup>59</sup> “Cinémarks,” *Boxoffice* 37, no. 6 (June 29, 1940): 23, <https://archive.org/details/boxofficeaprjun13637unse/>. Helen Barrett, “Film and Television Gossip,” *Journal-Every Evening*, Wilmington, Delaware, February 9 1940, 27, Newspapers.com

<sup>60</sup> Virginia Balinger, “Old Friends Meet at Convention,” *The Sunday Journal-Herald Spotlight*, Dayton, Ohio, July 6, 1941, 7, Newspapers.com

<sup>61</sup> “Reviews of Pictures Released Since May 1st, 1941 and Commended by the Motion Picture Review Committee of Hollywood and New York.” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 1 (October 1941): 3. “Reviews of Current Pictures from the View Point of Music Interest Commended by the Motion Picture Preview Committee of Hollywood and New York,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 2 (November 1941), 6, typed copy, University of Colorado Library. “Reviews of Current Pictures from the View Point of Music Interest Commended by the Motion Picture Preview Committee of Hollywood and New York.” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 2 (December 1941): 4, typed copy, University of Colorado Library.

<sup>62</sup> “Reviews of Current Pictures” (December 1941), copy, 2-3.

<sup>63</sup> When “twenty-two censorship bills had been recommended in various state legislatures” in 1921, the MPPDA was set up the following year as an industry self-regulation organisation in order to avert government regulation and to address “public reactions against an increasing number of films that were objectionable,” Clarence Schettler, *Public Opinion in American Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 294-295, <https://archive.org/details/publicopinionina0000sche>. “The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America: Activities In 1940,” *The 1941 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures*, ed. Jack Alicoate (Wid’s Films and Film Folk, Inc., 1941), 679 and 681, [https://archive.org/details/filmdailyyearboo00film\\_10/](https://archive.org/details/filmdailyyearboo00film_10/).

<sup>64</sup> Film scholar Robert Henry Stanley explains that “Although the *Green Sheet* [...] was disseminated to newspapers, schools, libraries, and churches, it had minimal impact on

ratings system, known today as the Motion Picture Association film rating system and still prominently in film presentation and advertisements across North America. The Federation contributed to the Green Sheet as one of the “eleven leading women’s organizations [who were], through studio courtesies, given early showings of pictures on which they pronounce[d] unbiased opinions which in turn they sen[t] to their membership.”<sup>65</sup> The female-led Federation previewing committees also provided regular music-specific opinions that were collected by the editors of *Film Music Notes* (the composition of the committee was not detailed, but did include both women and men). These were summarized and published in the periodical in a section titled “Reviews of Recent Films from a Standpoint of Musical Interest,” which formed a majority of the content in its first volumes and continued to be a regular section until it was replaced entirely by reviews by individuals from the September-October 1947 issue (vol. 7, no. 1) onwards.

Most of the published previewing committee reviews were positive about the music and some only provided plot summaries or general praise rather than much commentary. When they did add detail, it was often to guide readers in their listening rather than to critique the film with reviews including information of scoring details in specific scenes, thematic treatment, or orchestration.<sup>66</sup> The focused reviews received praise from music teachers including Stanlie McConnell, who saw them to be an “unbiased” contrast to studio publications, and Hans Rosenwald, of the Chicago Musical College and critic for the *Chicago Sun*, who wrote with praise of the “practical suggestions as to WHAT to SEE and WHAT to HEAR in motion pictures of the month.”<sup>67</sup> However, in the January 1946 issue, the editors noted that, when they started *Film Music Notes*, they were “frequently criticized by serious musicians for making [their] reviews ‘too saccharine’.” They continued to explain how the review system operated and announced that the review editing process would allow for negative opinions from that issue onwards:

In the early days of FILM MUSIC NOTES our previewing group was small and comprised few, if any, professional musicians. For this reason and also due to our limited space, we seldom included adverse criticism, judging it better to use the space

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movie attendance,” *Mediavisions: The Art and Industry of Mass Communication* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 117-118, <https://archive.org/details/mediavisionsarti0000stan>.

<sup>65</sup> Stanley, *Mediavisions*, 118.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, reviews of Adolph Deutsch’s use of the Novachord (played by Jack Raymond Haines, Jr.) in *The Maltese Falcon*, “Reviews of Current Pictures” (November 1941), copy, 5-6. See also reviews of Herbert Stothart’s score for *The Human Comedy*, of Max Steiner’s score for *Mission to Moscow*, and of the orchestration of Bronislau Kaper’s score for *Keeper of the Flame*, “Reviews of Current Pictures from the Viewpoint of Music Interest Commended by the Motion Picture Preview Committee of Hollywood and New York,” *Film Music Notes* 2 no. 7 (April 1943); 2. No. 8 (May 1943); 1, no. 2; and 2, no. 4 (January 1943) respectively.

<sup>67</sup> Stanlie McConnell, “Can Film Music Be Used Educationally?” *Music Educators Journal* 13, no. 4 (February-March 1947): 31, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_music-educators-journal\\_february-march-1947\\_33\\_4/](https://archive.org/details/sim_music-educators-journal_february-march-1947_33_4/). McConnell’s view of *Film Music Notes* as unbiased is an interesting one, complicated by the periodical’s regular work with studio composers and occasional publication of studio press releases, “Comments and Open Forum,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 4 (January 1942): 1.



to build up the music rather than find fault with it. Our aim was then, and incidentally still is, to serve the best interests of music in the pictures and the men who make it.<sup>68</sup>

This positive editorial decision by the editors, which they described as “stress[ing] the good music in films” in the January 1942 issue (vol. 1, no. 4), echoed Harris’s 1918 call for moviegoers to “[boost] the good instead of knocking the bad.”<sup>69</sup> While *Film Music Notes* would quickly change in format and content and would gradually separate from the Federation and the MPPDA, this initial foundation organized by female clubwomen and their Hollywood and educational connections was fundamental to its early success.

#### The First Five Years of *Film Music Notes* and the Creation of Original Public Endeavors (1941-1946)

*Film Music Notes* was initially quite descriptive, with the committee reviews complimented by articles explaining film music professions in Hollywood, listing films of musical interest, and featuring composers and other musical personnel. Its primary aim was “to encourage film music and build up an appreciation among audiences and the public in general for what the musicians in the studios (some of them among the finest of our day) are trying to do.”<sup>70</sup> The editors’ requests for ideas, questions, and feedback (initially published under a regular “Open Forum” section) quickly created a dialogue with their readership that developed into an expansive network including composers, librarians, educators, and students across the US, Canada, and the UK. During World War II, this also included soldiers in training camps, war zones, and rehabilitation facilities.<sup>71</sup> *Film Music Notes* adapted to suit responses from readers throughout its first five years. The editors reported on and implemented ideas of how the public appreciation of film music could be improved, primarily through descriptions of creative processes; articles reflecting on how to listen to film music; and lists of 16mm films, publications, and records on film music accessible to the public. Initially this included proposed calls for reader contributions that had different degrees of success. A 1941 contest for student reviewers was announced but not reported on further.<sup>72</sup> Another project was proposed by RKO senior music director Constantin Bakaleinikoff, who, in May 1944, offered to lead a question-and-answer column.<sup>73</sup> A variation on this idea was carried out from January to May 1945 (vol. 4, no. 4-8) when *Film Music Notes* ran a column titled “A Musician’s Fan Mail” where the editors published and answered letters sent to studios and

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<sup>68</sup> “Foreword,” *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 5 (January 1946).

<sup>69</sup> “Comments and Open Forum,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 4 (January 1942): 1. Harris, “Two Views on Film Problems,” 9, reprinted in Abel, *Movie Mavens*, 102.

<sup>70</sup> “Foreword,” *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 1 (October 1945).

<sup>71</sup> The following were all published in *Film Music Notes*: “News Items . . . Comments . . . . Commendations” 3, no. 2 (November 1943); “Letters from Our Readers,” 5, no. 2 (October 1945).

<sup>72</sup> The winner was to have their review published and, if in Hollywood, be given the opportunity of “hearing the recordings at the studios.” It appears the winning review was not published as the editors did note the authorship of the few individual reviews they did publish, and none were from students. “Foreword,” *Film Music Notes* 1, no. 3 (December 1941).

<sup>73</sup> “News Items . . . . Comments,” *Film Music Notes* 3, no. 8 (May 1944).

music personnel. Thus, *Film Music Notes* generated a public appreciation of film music by showcasing examples of such appreciation and creating them through dialogues between readers and Hollywood composers.

In its third year, the periodical developed its identity as not only a forum for composers and audiences to reflect on film music and production processes, but also as an innovative resource. Addressing the difficulty the public faced in listening to a film's music after its run, *Film Music Notes* began a "Portfolio" series, publishing score excerpts and musical themes from its October 1943 issue to May 1946 (see Table 1). The idea of the new section was credited to Korngold, who thought the publication of themes from his works would be a way to address the frequent audience requests he received for information on where they could listen to a film's music again.<sup>74</sup> Advertised to "composers, students and music lovers," the "Portfolio" series proved to be a hit and attracted new readers.<sup>75</sup> The series was initially presented at the end of each issue and accompanied by a short biography of the composer and sometimes a few comments by them as well. Starting with themes from Korngold's score to *The Constant Nymph* (Oct. 1943, vol. 3, no. 2), *Film Music Notes* published themes and excerpts from over 30 films showcasing a variety of techniques and genres, including Scott Bradley's detail sheets for *Tee for Two* (Dec. 1944, vol. 4, no. 3), Louis Applebaum's and Ann Ronell's orchestral score of the "Church Battle" cue of *The Story of G.I. Joe* (Nov. 1945, vol. 5, no. 3), and Lennie Hayton's conductor score for the "Astaire Dream Ballet" in *Yolanda and the Thief* (Dec 1945, vol. 5, no. 4). In this regard, *Film Music Notes* followed previous and existing efforts to make film scores more accessible, such as Previn's 1941 announcement of Universal's co-operation with the Federation, and the Free Library of Philadelphia's attempts to secure scores for lending since 1935 (the March-April 1948 issue of *Film Music Notes* lists the scores in the Free Library).<sup>76</sup> It also preceded the interlibrary score service of the College Committee on Film Music, founded by Sternfeld in 1946 and consisting of a group of music academics with links to learned societies and Hollywood studios.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Alice Evans Field, "Greetings and Salutations," *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 8 (April 1946).

<sup>75</sup> Film music portfolio advertisement, *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 8 (April 1946). Of note, the visual attraction of seeing these scores in library display cases was noted several times. Donald D. Warman Jr. wrote that a display case at the Cleveland Public Library led him to looking at back issues and subscribing, "News Items . . . Comments . . . Commendations," *Film Music Notes* 3, no. 2 (November 1943). Gladys E. Chamberlain, of the New York Library's music division, described using Sternfeld's analysis of Virgil Thomson's score for *Louisiana Story* within a display case on the film, Chamberlain, "Film Music and the Music Library," *Film Music Notes* 8, no. 4 (Mar-Apr 1949).

<sup>76</sup> Arthur Cohn, "Film Music in the Fleisher Collection of the Free Library of Philadelphia," *Film Music Notes* 7, no. 4 (Mar-Apr 1948): 11-13.

<sup>77</sup> For recent research on Sternfeld and the committee, see William H. Rosar, "Film Studies in Musicology: Disciplinarity vs. Interdisciplinarity," *Journal of Film Music* 2, no. 2-4 (Winter 2009): 117-119. Sternfeld announced the purpose, aims, and composition of the College Committee in "Preliminary Report on Film Music," *Hollywood Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (Apr 1947): 299-302. While many of these values overlapped with *Film Music Notes* and the NFMC, of which he was also a member of in 1946, he made no mention of either in the *Hollywood Quarterly* article. However, he did report on the resources of the College

More substantial changes began when Mabee moved to New York in the winter of 1942, making what was at first very much a publication produced by a network of Los Angeles club women, teachers, and studio personnel into a broader endeavor. Associate editor Purdy took charge of the Hollywood preview committee and Councils with Hollywood studio musicians, while Mabee worked with Adelaide Gescheidt, Eastern chairman of the Federation preview committee, and Sigmund Spaeth, *Film Music Notes*' new advisory chairman, on monthly Councils in New York (see Table 2 for list of events connected to *Film Music Notes* from 1942 to Spring 1951).<sup>78</sup> While Mabee was still highly involved in the Federation in May 1943, introducing two MGM short films and a talk by Spaeth at a session during a three-day Federation business meeting, the editors appear to have left the Federation when they formed a new organization, the National Film Music Council (NFMC) and announced its creation and aims in the October 1943 issue of *Film Music Notes* (see epigraph at the start of this article).<sup>79</sup> The foreword of the October 1943 issue highlighted the NFMC's focus on "The use of films for fundamental educational objectives" and listed a mostly New York-based "Advisory Committee" (see Table 3).<sup>80</sup> The Federation was thereafter discussed as a separate entity, but the editors' connection with the MPPDA was clearly maintained.<sup>81</sup>

**[Tables 1 to 3 placed here]**

Members of the NFMC Advisory Committee had held roles in other organizations. For example, Spaeth was also the President of the National Association of American Composers and Conductors and Helen C. Dill was the Chairman of Film Music for the Music Educators National Conference. *Film Music Notes* regularly featured information on talks and activities of these connected organizations and the NFMC often co-organized events with them in 1944 and 1945. The NFMC's new connections with educators appear to have begun the planning of more structured and accessible resources for the teaching portion of its membership. These included the publication of a study guide for *Rhapsody in Blue* and the creation of "an extensive program which will give detailed information, publicity, bulletin board sheets, stills and study outlines on certain recommended films containing good music, to those who send in request for it" in 1945.<sup>82</sup> While content for educators was still just a portion of *Film Music Notes* at this stage, the NFMC's new formal program was an early indication of the periodical's growing focus on its third aim, described more pragmatically as "work[ing] out a

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Committee in *Film Music notes* such as in "Film Music Session at M. T. N. A. in Boston," 6, and in "Louisiana Story: A Review of Virgil Thomson's Score," *Film Music Notes* 8, no. 1 (Sept-Oct 1948): 10.

<sup>78</sup> "News Items – Contents," *Film Music Notes* 2, no. 1 (October 1942).

<sup>79</sup> "News Items . . . . Comments," *Film Music Notes* 2, no. 9 (June 1943).

<sup>80</sup> "Foreword," *Film Music Notes* 3, no. 1 (October 1943).

<sup>81</sup> In January 1945, *Film Music Notes* announced that the Federation had "restored the chairmanship of motion pictures, naming Werner Janssen and Spaeth co-chairmen, covering the west and east respectively." The chairmen sent a letter to state presidents explaining they would have a "a special department" in each issue of *Film Music Notes* and encouraged members to subscribe, "Letters from our Readers," 4, no. 4 (January 1945). This only resulted in Spaeth's April 1945 (vol. 4, no. 7) article "For the Attention of Music Clubs" and sporadic reports of Federation activities thereafter.

<sup>82</sup> "A Message from the National Film Music Council," *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 1 (September 1945).

practical plan of instruction in this new and important development in music education” over its primary aim of “creating public interest in the music of the films.”<sup>83</sup> By May 1946, the editors described the NFMC as being “organized to serve the educational field and prepare such outlines of study as will be helpful to teachers and organizations wishing to further the cause of film music,” further communicating an identity closer to that of a mediator between industry and educators rather than between the industry and film music audiences in general.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to educational materials, from Volume 3 to 5 (September 1943 to June 1946), *Film Music Notes* continued to highlight Los Angeles composers and practices. Some of its notable original content was written by Purdy (then head of the Hollywood previewing committee) and Margery Morrison (voice coach and singer for opera shorts; associate editor of *Film Music Notes* from September 1943 to 1946). Their accessible insider accounts, such as Purdy’s detailed description of her experience as a singer during the recording process of *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim* at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and Morrison’s account of the recording of Max Steiner’s score for *Mission to Moscow* at Warner Brothers, bared similarities with the written descriptions of studio tours by women film critics in the 1910s.<sup>85</sup> There was also a keen consideration of practices of film music study not only in clubs and schools but also in universities: *Film Music Notes* reported that it was being cited in graduate theses, published a theorization of “Synchronisation” from Ruth Parker Weldon’s 1942 master’s thesis, inquired into the study of “Cinematics” in university music departments, and included proposals and reflections on university curricula such as those authored by Miklós Rózsa and Rubsamen.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Explaining their wish to not commercialize *Film Music Notes*, the editors asserted their aims again in May 1945. Interestingly, they described them in relation to one another with the first aim as primary and in the name of the second (as per the common idea that better appreciation would create better films and film music during this time), and with the third looking forward into influencing the future: “Our one desire is to assist in creating public interest in the music of the films; to thus encourage the fine musicians who write this music (over three-fourths of them born in America) and to work out a practical plan of instruction in this new and important development in music education. Students of today will become the film musicians of tomorrow,” Grace Widney Mabee, Constance Purdy, Margery Morrison, “Foreword,” *Film Music Notes* 4, no. 8 (May 1945).

<sup>84</sup> “A Message from the National Film Music Council,” *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 1 (September-October 1946).

<sup>85</sup> Abel, *Movie Mavens*, 5. The following were all published in *Film Music Notes*: Morrison, “A Visit to the Music Recording Stage at Warner Bros.,” 2, no. 7 (April 1943) and “An Afternoon in the Home of Erich Wolfgang Korngold”; Purdy, “Rhapsody in Blue (Warner Bros.): A Day on the Gershwin Set” 3, no. 4 (Jan 1944) and “Behind the Musical Scenes of The Shocking Miss Pilgrim,” 5, no. 5 (Jan 1946). See also the editors’ description impromptu tour of the Warner Brothers music library, recording stage, and Max Steiner’s office when they went to retrieve a reproduction of part of Steiner’s *Mark Twain* score published in the same issue, “News Items . . . Comments,” 3, no. 8 (May 1944).

<sup>86</sup> The following were all published in *Film Music Notes*: “News Items . . . . . Looking forward,” 2, no. 2 (November 1942); Weldon, “Synchronization” 3, no. 6 (March 1944); Rozsa, “An Outline of University Training for Musicians in Motion Picture Work” 5, no. 2 (October 1945); Rubsamen, “A University Course in Dramatic Music.” Margery

During this period, the periodical also refined and revised its awards process, now dissociated from the Federation. Readers were still invited to send in their ballots, but the system changed following two lengthy requests from composer Adolph Deutsch. In February 1944, Deutsch wrote “This is a friendly caution. I want you to avoid the same errors that are now bedeviling [sic] the Academy members,” when choosing which film had the “best music” (a task he believed overlooked the variety of film scores and techniques).<sup>87</sup> By request of the editors, he expanded on his concern in October 1944 (the editors also asked readers to write in with their thoughts on the matter). Deutsch recommended the periodical adopt “a comprehensive set of questions calculated to provoke some deliberate thought by the groups of people being polled.” Alongside the public being provided “all the guidance and information that FILM MUSIC NOTES can give,” he believed such focused questions could create a wider “intelligent appraisal and criticism of film music.”<sup>88</sup> In the June 1945 issue, the editors adjusted their system by not having specific awards but listing 33 “Best Pictures of the Year from a Musical Point of View” as selected by the previewing committee with a line for each film explaining its selection.<sup>89</sup> In spring 1946, a more thorough system was implemented that followed Deutsch’s suggestions. The NFMC committee provided nominations of seven categories of awards from which readers were invited to vote on. The criteria reflected discussions previously appearing in *Film Music Notes*: (1) best “musical material from the point of view of harmony, counterpoint and rhythm”; (2) “Best Continuity”; (3) “Score which best supports the picture”; (4) “Pictures which bring classical music to the screen”; (5) “Pictures which contain the most integrated and well-planned production numbers” that generate audience interest in musical characteristics; (6) best orchestration; and (7) best recording.<sup>90</sup>

These debates and changes in the periodical from Volume 3 to 5 exemplified a the beginning of a “slow and uneven” transition of professionalization spurred by a wish to better define criteria for evaluating film music and to showcase examples of the serious consideration of film music.<sup>91</sup> At this stage there was still a rather broad range of contributors and much encouragement for the public to engage in what Mabee described as a “united effort” between the NFMC, the editors, and “our many new readers, music educators, club members and individuals.”<sup>92</sup>

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Morrison, “Cinematics,” 4, no. 9 (June 1945). Weldon’s full thesis is available through the University of Cincinnati, “Music in the films,” (master’s thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1942).

<sup>87</sup> “Letter from Adolph Deutsch,” *Film Music Notes* 3, no. 5 (February 1944).

<sup>88</sup> Deutsch’s lengthy comments on structuring an award system for film music prompts questions that are still relevant. For example, his observation that a film with a “melodic score” is more likely to win an Academy award than an “atmospheric” one because it is more likely to be “remembered at poll time” requires further investigation and reflection, “Letters from Our Readers,” *Film Music Notes* 4, no. 1 (October 1944).

<sup>89</sup> “Best Pictures of the Year from a Musical Point of View,” *Film Music Notes* 4, no. 9 (June 1945).

<sup>90</sup> “Nominations for Film Music Notes Citation and Award,” *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 8 (April 1946): 3-4.

<sup>91</sup> Wright, *The Professionalization of History*, 27.

<sup>92</sup> “Foreword,” *Film Music Notes* 4, no. 4 (January 1945).

## The Professionalization of *Film Music Notes* and its Revised Reviews System (1946-1951)

A stark demonstration of professionalization came in the September-October 1946 issue (vol. 6, no. 1) guest edited by Sternfeld, a newly listed member of the NFMC Advisory Committee. The issue demonstrated a new effort to define and create a delineation between experts, who were permitted to write on film music and suggest criteria for evaluating and teaching it, and non-experts, who were expected to only read and learn from the periodical.<sup>93</sup> Volume 6 listed the Advisory Committee at the start of each issue and, for the first time, included photographs and short biographies of article writers, emphasizing the prominence of contributors and their professions and visually highlighting the rather equal contribution of both women and men at this stage.<sup>94</sup> It continued to bring insider information about Hollywood film music, but, more often than not, provided articles particularly for expert discussion and classroom use, including the new “Teaching Possibilities in Current Films” series by McConnell. In November 1946, The National Motion Picture Council commended Mabee and the NFMC for the “new ‘Film Music Notes’” as a resource where its membership can find answers “by specialists in the field of film music – composer, authors, lecturers and teachers” and in the September-October 1947 issue, Mabee described a narrower group of readers as writing letters: “Musical organizations,” “Schools,” and “Teachers.”<sup>95</sup>

A more critical, scholarly discussion of film music appeared in the analyses and reflections on compositional techniques. This began with Sternfeld’s analysis of George Antheil’s music for *Specter of the Rose* in the September-October 1946 issue and included musical transcriptions or score excerpts that replaced the Portfolio series.<sup>96</sup> These articles exemplified the traits of modern scholarship (“ability in primary research, a skeptical approach, and a critical faculty”) and reflected on the role of music in film and how it could be studied.<sup>97</sup> This was demonstrated most strongly when several practitioners and/or reviewers commented on the same film score, as demonstrated in articles by Ann Ronell and her colleagues Harry Geller, Steve Previn, and Harold Rubenstein on the “precision timing” and synchronizing considerations behind the score of *Love Happy*; and the pairings of David Raksin’s notes on his score for *Force of Evil* with Morton’s review and of Deutsch’s notes on his score for

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<sup>93</sup> For further discussions of divisions and exclusivity created in the professionalization of disciplines see, for example, Levitz’s explanation of the AMS’s initial debates over membership and its changing ties to the Music Teachers’ National Association in “The Musicological Elite,” 25-27, 37-42. See also, Wright discussion of the development of the *Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada* (Chapter 2) where “the professionalization of history as a process of differentiation between professional and amateur and as a gendered process that posited men as the ideal historian can be seen,” *The Professionalization of History*, 29.

<sup>94</sup> This volume also introduced production and film stills.

<sup>95</sup> “Congratulations to the National Film Music Council from the National Motion Picture Council on its new ‘Film Music Notes’,” *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 2 (November 1946): 4. Grace W. Mabee, “Message from the National Film Music Council,” *Film Music Notes* 7, no. 1 (September-October 1947).

<sup>96</sup> F.W. Sternfeld, “George Antheil’s Music for *Specter of a Rose*,” *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 1 (September-October 1946): 7-14.

<sup>97</sup> Wright, *The Professionalization of History*, 20.

*Whispering Smith* with William Hamilton's review.<sup>98</sup> Overall, the new analytical articles were more of an addition to rather than an alteration of the periodical: they provided more context to published themes and score excerpts as well as more specific guidance as to what to listen and watch for.

In the reviews section of *Film Music Notes*, however, an overhaul was taking place. As previously explained, the collected reviews of the New York and Hollywood previewing committees were initially edited to "build up the music rather than find fault with it" with the aim of building up respect for Hollywood music personnel in the industry, and thereby, in theory, improving working conditions and consequently the quality of film music in general.<sup>99</sup> The editors nonetheless adapted this system as they received feedback, such as Rubsamen's October 1942 request for more "technical musical criticism," rather than "romantic cliché's [sic]," for use in his UCLA courses.<sup>100</sup> The editors included more musical details in the reviews of Volume 2 onwards. For example, Spaeth provided additional commentary on select reviews in the April 1943 issue (vol. 2, no. 7), a precursor to his regular "Afterthoughts" column (Jan. 1944, vol. 3, no. 4 to Mar.-Apr. 1954, vol. 13, no. 4), and the editors printed more negative opinions in subsequent years (a notable negative review of Hanns Eisler's score for *None But the Lonely Heart* appears in the November 1944 issue [vol. 4, no. 2]).<sup>101</sup> Addressing further criticism by "serious musicians," the editors formally announced a change to not filtering negative reviews in January 1946. As previously noted, they explained that the earlier group of previewers was "small and comprised of few, if any, professionals." Now that the periodical was "solidly established" with many of the reviewers having "a solid musical background," they felt more comfortable including negative critiques.<sup>102</sup>

While some film music critics praised the reviews section, as British film music critic and educator John Huntley did in 1945, the editors continued to receive criticism even after the

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<sup>98</sup> The following were all published in *Film Music Notes* 7, no. 5 (March-April 1950): Ann Ronell, "The Score of the Month – Love Happy: Composer's Notes," 4-5; Harry Geller, "An Article on Love Happy: Part I. Comments on Ann Ronell's Score with excerpts," 5-10; Paul Smith, "An Article on Love Happy: Part II. On Precision Timing," 10-12. The following were all published in *Film Music Notes* 8, no. 3 (January-February 1949): David Raksin, "A Note on the Music of Force of Evil," 6; Lawrence Morton, "The Force of Evil: A Review of David Raksin's Score," 7-10; William Hamilton, "Review of Whispering Smith," 11; Adolph Deutsch, "Notes on the Score of Whispering Smith," 12-14.

<sup>99</sup> "Foreword," (January 1946).

<sup>100</sup> "News Items – Comments," (October 1942). Nelson and Rubsamen, "Literature on Music in Film and Radio," 42.

<sup>101</sup> "Reviews of Current Pictures," *Film Music Notes* 2 no. 7 (April 1943). The editors conceded the negative Eisler's score for *None But the Lonely Heart* as being of "the lay mind." It was followed by an exceptional note from the editors explaining that they had written to Eisler to ask him to respond with an explanation of the score and suggested readers wait to judge the score: "as Mr. Eisler is a devotee' [sic] of 'pure' music and therefore presumable writing in a new idiom we should perhaps defer judgement until we are better acquainted with what he had in mind for a film background," "Reviews of Current Motion Pictures from the Viewpoint of Music Interest," *Film Music Notes* 4, no. 2 (November 1944).

<sup>102</sup> "Foreword," *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 5 (January 1946).

January 1946 revision.<sup>103</sup> In a May 1946 letter, composer Ingolf Dahl requested “that you should become more and more specific in your esthetic and technical analyses” and “that you should improve the literary style of your magazine through more careful editing.” The editors responded that they were in accord with Dahl but wished to maintain the inclusive approach of the committee review system: “it has always seemed wiser to encourage our previewers to write in their own way and, consequently, we have purposely edited them as little as possible.” As per their usual encouragement of dialogue with readers, they “welcome[d] other opinions on the subject at this time.”<sup>104</sup> The editors’ thorough explanation of review practices and decisions, as well as their response to Dahl in 1946, demonstrated a careful consideration of the balance between promoting film music and its composers, bettering the critical evaluation and study of film music, and maintaining a communal discourse with a broad public readership. They showed a keen awareness to the danger that the periodical could alienate its readership and become, as Wright describes of the professionalization of historical study in Canada, “a private conversation between experts speaking a technical language.”<sup>105</sup>

Despite the revision and defense of its review system, the collated reviews by the previewing committees were less regular in Volume 6 (1946 to 1947) and gone altogether by Volume 7 (1947 to 1948). While the exact events behind this change were not explicitly detailed, no reviews were provided in the September-October 1946 issue (vol. 6, no. 1) when it was announced that Purdy was leaving her roles as a lead editor of *Film Music Notes* and as chairman of its Hollywood previewing committee (she would continue on as a member of the NFMC Advisory Committee).<sup>106</sup> The “Preview Committee” reviews returned for the following issues, but sometimes with initials at the end of select reviews, several corresponding with members of the Advisory Committee. The committee reviews were gone altogether from the September-October 1947 issue (vol. 7, no. 1) onwards, with an unusual omission of an explanation of the change by the editors. From the November-December 1947 issue (vol. 7, no. 2) onwards, they were replaced by similarly formatted short reviews now by individual contributors. The new “Current Films Reviewed and Recommended” section reflected the use of more technical language that critics had requested and often included transcriptions of musical themes. The section was divided by genre and gender from March-April 1948 onwards, with choral director William Hamilton becoming the lead reviewer of the “Current Films” section (dramas), and his sister and Director of the New York Schools Motion Picture Committee, Marie L. Hamilton, becoming the lead reviewer of the “Lighter Films” section (musicals and comedies) and the 16mm films section, a stark contrast to the female-led previewing committee reviews that *Film Music Notes* was built on.<sup>107</sup> Other than

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<sup>103</sup> “Letters from Our Readers,” *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 2 (October 1945).

<sup>104</sup> “Letters from Our Readers,” *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 9 (May 1946): 5.

<sup>105</sup> Wright, *The Professionalization of History*, 5.

<sup>106</sup> “Announcements from the National Film Music Council,” *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 1 (September-October 1946): 2-3.

<sup>107</sup> “Lighter Films” were described as “films of no great dramatic or musical distinction, but pleasant light entertainment nonetheless,” in the first iteration of “The Lighter Films,” *Film Music Notes* 7, no. 8 (March-April 1948): 20. While the Hamilton’s conducted most reviews, others, such as Louis Applebaum and Harold Brown, also contributed to the “Current Films” section instead, and the “Lighter Films” section was often anonymous. Of note, the relation between William and Marie L. Hamilton is not explained in *Film Music*



the 16mm film reviews, these short review sections became irregular features and stopped after the September-October 1950 issue (vol. 10, no. 1).

The change in reviews corresponded with changing relations between the MPPDA, the Federation, and the NFMC. A notice on the “reorganization of the previewing committees” in the December-January 1946-1947 issue (vol. 6, no. 3) announced that Abbie Norton Jamison, California chairman of motion picture music for the Federation, was assuming the chairmanship of the Hollywood Previewing committee and that Rose Gores Rockwell would be Jamison’s New York equivalent in both roles.<sup>108</sup> In describing the cooperation of the Federation’s previewing committee and “the special previewers” of the NFMC, the editors also made a distinction between the two for the first time that may explain the new inclusion of initials after select reviews.<sup>109</sup> Field, however, appears to have framed the NFMC preview committee as having been the same as the Federation’s “National Film Music Preview Committee” in her last article for *Film Music Notes*, published in the last issue of Volume 6 (Apr.-May 1947, no. 5).<sup>110</sup> Field announced that Purdy was now Jamison’s associate chairman and reviews editor. One of the two would meet weekly with other organizations to compile the “Estimate on Current Motion Pictures” report, and the Film Music Preview Committee reviews would appear in a Fox West Coast Theatres bulletin and be sent to Federation film music clubs across the country. Field concluded “to the National officers of the N. F. M. C. Copies will also be sent to you for reprinting in ‘Film Music Notes’, if you so desire,” suggesting a new division between the periodical and the Federation’s previewing committees.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the lack of articles mentioning Fields and the MPPDA following

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*Notes.* The only mention I could find of the two names elsewhere was in a 1993 obituary for Marie L. Powers (née Hamilton), which described William Hamilton as her late brother, “In Memoriam,” *Buffalo News*, March 24, 1993, F-8, Newspapers.com. William Hamilton is described as “a musician of standing – a choral director, and critic who contributes many reviews of films from a musical standpoint,” in “The Advisory Council,” *Film Music Notes* 9, no. 3 (January-February 1950): 23.

<sup>108</sup> “Holiday Greetings from the National Film Music Council,” *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 3 (December-January 1946-1947): 2.

<sup>109</sup> The editors continued to thank the Community Service Department of the MPPDA and the National Board of Review as well, “Holiday Greetings.”

<sup>110</sup> Field wrote “It was with great pleasure that we welcomed the addition of the National Film Music Preview Committee (organized by the National Federation of Music Clubs) to the national and state organizations previewing pictures here in Hollywood,” “Letter from Alice Evans Field,” *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 5 (April-May 1947): 4.

<sup>111</sup> “Letter from Alice Evans Field,” *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 5 (April-May 1947): 4. The divisions (or lack thereof) of the previewing committee(s), their composition, and their relation to *Film Music Notes* reviews were never clearly outlined. Purdy continued to be listed as part of the “N.F.M.C. Preview Comm” in *Film Music Notes* from the September-December 1947 issue to the November-December 1949 issue, and the *Consumers’ Research Bulletin* listed the NFMC previewing committee reviews as a separate source than the General Federation of Women’s Clubs in their monthly “Ratings of Motion Pictures” from January 1945 to November 1949. The range of *Consumers’ Research Bulletin* issues comes from searching “National Film Music Council” within the “Consumers’ Research Magazine 1931-2004” digital collection on the Internet Archive. See, for example “Ratings of Motion Pictures,” *Consumers’ Research Bulletin*, January 1945, 27-28, [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_consumers-research-magazine\\_1945-01\\_15\\_1/](https://archive.org/details/sim_consumers-research-magazine_1945-01_15_1/).

her April-May 1947 piece (apart from an October 1948 NFMC event in Los Angeles that she helped to organize; see Table 2) suggests that *Film Music Notes* had reduced its connection with that association as well.

From Volume 6 onwards, the building of a public appreciation of film music thus changed from a small group of editors encouraging readers of any musical ability to willingly listen and think about film music in the first place (through opportunities to interact with composers and for opinions to be published), to a large group of experts teaching a more musically-literate readership to study film music and how to teach it to others.<sup>112</sup> A slight change in wording in the NFMC's aims and purposes, published at the start of every issue of Volume 6, showed this narrower scope: the first aim was no longer "To foster a public interest in music in the films" but more ambiguously "to foster interest in music in the films." Furthermore, the "Letters from Readers" section (a development of the "Open Forum" of the first issues) ceased at this point with comments from readers only irregularly appearing in the "Film Music News" section, which itself was moved to the back of each issue from the May-June 1953 issue (vol. 12 no. 5) and ceased altogether by the September-October 1953 issue (vol. 13, no. 1).

The professionalization of *Film Music Notes* did not necessarily make it more critical. For example, the awards section returned to a list of films with "scores of merit" or "distinguished contribution" chosen by the NFMC in 1947 and 1952 (much like the preview committees' list of 1945).<sup>113</sup> In 1950, *Film Music Notes* momentarily returned to a reader poll but with the new categories of "best background music score," "best film using music as a subject," "best light musical film," "best score in a 16mm film," and largest library collection of films on music.<sup>114</sup> While the categories reflected the regular sections of *Film Music Notes*, their focus on genre and media left behind Deutsch's critical questions on the nature of film music itself of several years earlier and the invitation for readers to participate and learn from the exercise of thinking about how films were scored.

By 1951, *Film Music Notes* consisted of "Film Music Profiles" on specific composers by Lawrence Morton and regular analytical articles; articles on British film music by John Huntley and on Canadian film music by Gerald Pratley; Sigmund Spaeth's "Afterthoughts" column; and articles on methods and resources for film music study in libraries, schools, and universities. Most of the content consisted of analytical articles on and production accounts of particular films. From its early reach of subscribers from at least 39 US States and a few in Australia in 1944, *Film Music Notes* grew to have had a large international reach by 1950, credited to "its use by the Unesco Library in Paris, the Canadian Broadcasting System and the Air Bulletin of the Department of State which reaches sixty countries."<sup>115</sup> It appears that the

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<sup>112</sup> The curation of the Hollywood Film Music forum to be primarily for teachers in its 1946-1947 season further indicated this change (see Table 2).

<sup>113</sup> "Scores of Merit," *Film Music Notes* 6, no. 5 (April-May 1947): 9-10. "Film Music News," *Film Music Notes* 11, no. 2 (January-February, 1952): 3.

<sup>114</sup> "Film Music News," *Film Music Notes* 9, no. 5 (May-June 1950): 3 and 9, no. 1 (September-October 1949): 3.

<sup>115</sup> "Comments . . . News Items," *Film Music Notes* 3, no. 7 (April 1944). In a June 1944 call for subscribers, the editors used patriotic phrases of unity that they often employed during WWII: "In checking over our subscriptions list we note that our readers are scattered all over the United States . . . thirty-nine states are represented but alas, nine are still in utter

NFMC Advisory Committee focused solely on *Film Music Notes* and sending educational materials upon request at this point as events stopped being mentioned after December 1948 (see Table 2).

The loss of the welcoming communal tone of early issues is evident when looking at Volumes 10 (1950-1951) and 11 (1951-1952). While the early editors of *Film Music Notes* celebrated its milestones each year, reflecting on its growth and voicing gratitude for the collaborations which made it possible, these later volumes included no celebration, nor mention, of the periodical's tenth anniversary and the readers, writers, and organizations responsible for its long run.<sup>116</sup> Mabee continued to be listed as "founder-chairman" of the NFMC until she was noted more practically as an Executive Secretary from 1951 onwards. Marie L. Hamilton took over the editorship of *Film Music Notes* in January 1950 and became Vice-President, with her brother William simultaneously becoming President in the fall of 1951 (all continued in these roles until the periodicals concluding 1957-1958 issue; see Table 3). This represented the final phase of editor turnover from the initial group of Los Angeles Federation club women who had sparked an excitement for film music in other club members, educators, students, soldiers, and many other filmgoers and who had ensured American film music composers and their colleagues that their work was being heard and valued in the 1940s and 1950s.

### Conclusion

While this article has provided an overview of the changes in the organization of *Film Music Notes* in its first decade and how it interacted with the public, it is by no means comprehensive. Beyond the articles noted here, areas for further research include the contribution of librarians to the journal and their presentation of film and music in their collections;<sup>117</sup> the periodical's response to the entry of the US into WWII at the end of 1941 and how its content focused on patriotic films and music until the war's end in 1945 (often

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darkness so far as we are concerned. These are Washington, Maine, Rhode Island, New Mexico, Montana, Idaho, North and South Dakota and Alabama. May we not hope this error will be rectified in the near future so that we may present a united front to the world?" "News Items . . . Comments," *Film Music Notes* 3, no. 9 (June 1944). In 1950, countries with subscribers included "Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, England, France, Hawaii, Holland, India, Italy, the Philippines, and the West Indies," "Film Music News," *Film Music Notes* 9, no. 5 (May-June 1950): 4. The following year, the editors wrote that there were "readers in more than twenty countries," "Film Music News," *Film Music Notes* 11, no. 1 (September-October 1951): 3.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Field's overview of the first five years of *Film Music Notes* where she notes the importance of the previewing committees and focuses on the roles of Mabee, Purdy, and Morrison in "Greetings and Salutations," *Film Music Notes* 5, no. 8 (April 1946).

<sup>117</sup> Librarians regularly reported on the use of film, music, and film music in their collections and regular activities, often in regard to film providing an opportunity for music dissemination. In a similar vein to Roggensack, who described film as being one of several new communication forms creating a "universal culture developing from all walks of life," Mary Louise Alexander commented on the importance of recital films in "cities which lack concert series such as metropolitan centers offer," "Films in Public Libraries," *Film Music Notes* 9, no. 2 (November-December 1949): 22.

praising the Office of War Information's serious consideration of music);<sup>118</sup> and the manner in which international and indigenous music and film were discussed (see, for example, Purdy's report on a May 26, 1945 NFMC event on Latin American music in Hollywood film where Jose Rodriguez, then working for Disney, discussed how it was used in cartoons).<sup>119</sup> *Film Music Notes* has potential as a current scholarly resource and educational tool; as an example of potential ways of forming dialogue and community between the public, industry, and a variety of organizations (scholarly, social, governmental, etc.); as a historical object of research; and as a map indicating further resources and individuals involved in film music practice, research, and education in the 1940s and 1950s. In many ways it is the areas where, and moments when, there was a lack of professionalization and standardization in *Film Music Notes* and in other examples of film music study during this period that we find many possibilities and questions that we still need to explore.

This is not to say professionalization or criticism is inherently good or bad, but rather to acknowledge the complications that come when organizing or reorganizing intellectual life. The public appreciation of film music encouraged by *Film Music Notes* transformed from the promotion of conversations between audiences, students (secondary and university), educators, and creators, to educators and creators collaborating on more detailed educational content primarily written for their colleagues and for students. Both approaches served the NFMC's second aim, "To Encourage Musicians Who Are Developing This New Art-Form" with the former doing so through showcasing fan appreciation and questions and the latter showing more scholarly and critical interest in film music. However, as the periodical's first decade progressed, the first aim, "To Foster Public Interest in the Music in the Films," became secondary to creating articles and tools that served the third aim, "To Awaken Students to the Artistic and Practical Possibilities of this New Medium of Expression." In other words, there was a move from training the public and students to appreciate and talk critically about film music, to providing a more thorough education of music students.

The first ten years of *Film Music Notes* exemplify how the goal of building a public appreciation or study of a topic is not necessarily separate from organizing and reflecting on critical discussion. Such questions of who can appreciate, who can study, and who is heard in various forms of intellectual life still resonate today. For example, Levitz questions "the current trend towards public musicology," asking, for example, "Does public musicology not evade the crisis of professionalism by embracing a faux populism? Does it not ignore the fact that knowledge about music history *was* public in the United States before musicology professionalized in the mid-twentieth century [ . . . ]"<sup>120</sup> Particularly with the 1946 adaptation of its awards system and revisions within the committee reviews system prior to Volume 6, the editors of *Film Music Notes* demonstrated how the development of critical evaluation in a new field could take place without explicit divisions between experts and non-experts. With its professionalization, it also demonstrated a complex change that, while removing the communal tone of its earlier issues, contributed to the new scholarly analysis of film music

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<sup>118</sup> See, for example, the report of the October 13, 1942 Federation event featuring Gail Kubik and his score for *The World at War*, "News Items – Contents," *Film Music Notes* 2, no. 1 (October 1942).

<sup>119</sup> Constance Purdy, "Notes on May Music Forum," *Film Music Notes* 4, no. 9 (June 1945).

<sup>120</sup> Levitz, "The Musicological Elite," 48-49.

and thereby aided in the effort to give the seemingly middlebrow medium a higher artistic status.

Beyond the gems to be found in its individual articles and scores, the publishing and editorial changes to *Film Music Notes* provide an opportunity to question how we approach and evaluate sources from periods and cultures with different ways of organizing intellectual life that differ from ours and to reflect on the degree to which the current structuring of academic discourses is useful. Who are scholars writing for? How do the hosts of film music YouTube channels and podcasts and online reviewers fit into our communities and work? Are they subjects of study, are they examples of outreach, or are they our mutual collaborators? Indeed, how do the roles of audience, practitioner, commentator, educator, historian, librarian, and theorist overlap and where can they better aid one another? Perhaps by discussing and debating such questions, as Mabee, Purdy, Morrison, and others did in editing *Film Music Notes*, we can better and more deliberately shape and develop our work.

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