

## Motion Picture Accompaniment Course

The course mentioned in the ATOS magazine has been presented in several different venues with distinctly different outcomes in mind. The version for the SVTOS chapter was presented strictly as a silent film accompaniment workshop. An expanded version was presented to the West Chester Film Society and was aimed at young film makers who were using computer aided music preparation software from Smart Sound.

Both courses were divided into three basic sections.

### Section 1. The Movies Before They Spoke

This a 20 minute video presentation that I put together to illustrate the beginnings of film and how the exhibition venues affected the type of accompaniment (if any) that was used. The video was scored using orchestral pieces and snippets of works to provide a musical underlayment and to begin to demonstrate some of the basic relationships between music, action on the screen and emotions.

### Section 2. At The Keyboard

The keyboard instruction section begins with the final exam for the course. Using some brief musical segments (without any visual cues) The participants were asked to close their eyes and visualize a scene suggested by the music, and then to describe what they saw in their mind's eye. (The entire class passed the exam. They always do.)

At this point we look at the relationship of chordal and scalar structure to the emotions that they evoke. We investigate the relationship of note displacement to emotional displacement.

We also delve into rhythm, meter and tempo as a method of entrainment of breathing and heart rates and how these musical characteristics are derived from activity on the screen and how they affect the emotional state of the listener.

Orchestration, and, in the case of theater organs, registration get their turn at this point. They are a critical element in creating a transparent accompaniment and get a they substantial discussion at this point.

We also take a part of this time for fun' things such as how to create sound effects using registration choices and playing techniques.

### Section 3. Putting it to use.

At this point in the program, using video clips of the same scene played on very different instruments, we tackle ways to accommodate a film score to differing instrumentation and venue. During this section, if possible I'll accompany a short film. We then catch up on any unanswered questions and time permitting work individually on scoring a brief film. We also spend some time with some of the "Stock Music" that was available in the 20s and is the model for most current film accompaniment

#### Notes:

The time required for the program is flexible and can run anywhere from an accelerated version of 90 minutes up to a four hour version. This assumes that the course needs to be done in one session.

There are eleven pages of information that follow along with the lecture portion and are a handy reference for the participants.

Contact: Don@SVTOS.org



DON KINNIER  
Popular Musician/ Classical Humorist

*<<<Drexel Institute 1963 ready to accompany The Phantom of the Opera*

*Don with wife / foley artist Judy Townsend, Philadelphia Film Festival 2007 >>>*

Philadelphia musician/composer Don Kinnier has become well known to concert, comedy and silent film audiences through his change-of-pace organ, piano and orchestra programs, his droll commentaries and extraordinary film accompaniment skills.



In addition to his ongoing work with the Betzwood Film Festival, since 1990, Don continues accompanying classic silent films at the Philadelphia Film Festival, providing original

scores for a broad selection of unique silent films at The Secret Cinema's showings at Moore College of Art and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. With his wife Judy, singer, comedienne and foley artist, the couple have maintained a long and fruitful relationship with Longwood Gardens, The Strand Capitol Theater and the Allen Theater .

*<<< Conducting the NRTO at West Chester Film Festival 2006 Resting before The Great Train Robbery S. Broad Street Phila. PA 2002>>>*



Most recently, adding to his organ and piano work, Don was named conductor and musical director of the New Reading Theater Orchestra, a thirteen piece salon orchestra dedicated to preserving the art of live motion picture accompaniment.



*Crowd on S. Broad Street for outdoor silents PFF 2002>>>*

Don's programs are easy-going and fun and contain a large dose of good-natured humor, both verbal and musical, combined with an uncanny knowledge of the musical capabilities of the instruments on which he plays. His use of tone color and his clever arrangements have helped to make his style distinctive

and unique. His playing is crisp, clean and understandable and includes samples of music from many periods and styles.



*"Don loves old films of all kinds and has a special fondness for the obscure and "forgotten" gems which he says are a great challenge to interpret and accompany. His style of film accompaniment is as authentic as one is likely to experience without the help of a time machine. He draws upon extensive knowledge of music both classical and popular for the themes, motifs, and moods he skillfully blends into a seamless score. It was often the case in the silent days that certain accompanists were so popular that people went to hear them play no matter what film was showing. Don has managed to add that bit of authenticity to his list of accomplishments as well."*

Joseph P Eckhardt author and film historian

*<<<Strand Capitol Performing Arts Center 2008*

