

# **Silent Movie Music – art or annoyance**

**By Phillip W. Weiss**

Unlike talkies, in which music is an integral component of the production, for silent movies, that is, movies that do not have sound, the music is added after the production is finished, sometimes decades after a movie has been released. This paper will investigate the relationship between silent movies and these post facto musical add-ons. It is my hypothesis that the addition of a musical soundtrack onto a silent movie is a form of artistic tampering which manipulates the audience through audio cues thereby affecting the viewer's perception of the movie and significantly transforming the movie into something perceptually different from the original product. To prove my hypothesis, this paper will explore three questions:

1. Were silent movies originally intended to be exhibited with musical accompaniment?
2. What is the theoretical and practical rationale for superimposing a musical score onto a silent movie?
3. How does music affect sensory perception?

Before examining the historiographical relationship of music to film in the silent era, a preliminary question first must be answered: Does music influence perception? Scientific research suggests that the answer to that question is a yes, that music does influence perception. One study found that “the role of music in a motion picture is in direct relationship to the level of ambiguity in a particular visual scene. The more ambiguous a scene is, the more the filmmakers rely on

their composers to develop a musical score that interprets the meaning of the scene for the audience” (How Music Effects Mood ...,” 2005). Hence, most silentmovies will be accompanied by an array of musical numbers, each one meant to provide the audience with a clue as to how to understand a particular scene. In the movie *Broken Blossoms*, the cross-cutting is accompanied by music which heightens the audience’s emotions, which in turn affects the way the movie is perceived, this entirely due to the inclusion of a musical score (“How Music Effects Mood ... ,” 2005).

Music has a visceral effect on people. One study found that exposure to rock music with violent lyrics produced changes in the subjects’ attitudes and emotions. A researcher reported, “All of them were more aggressive toward political issues and toward their spouses, but necessarily in a negative way, but more aggression in speech and in their attitude in how they approached situations that involved emotional reactions” (“How Music Effects People,” 2007). The same form of musical manipulation is employed in the D. W. Griffith’s classic, *The Birth of the Nation*. As the violence associated with the Civil War and its aftermath unfolds before on the screen, strains of Wagner can be heard, its bombastic tones a clarion call for action, if only vicariously, as the outrages perpetrated against the white people of the South by the nefarious Union army and their carpetbagger dupes demand an immediate and decisive response, which comes in the form of the Ku Klux Klan. Here the role of the music is unmistakable; without it the audience could become confused or arrive at an understanding of the plot not originally intended.

Yet, while music can incite it can also produce calm and even relieve pain. In one study one hundred forty three subjects were instructed to listen to music tracks, follow the melodies and identify deviant tones. During the music tasks, each subject was given safe, experimental pain shocks with fingertip electrodes. The study found that music helped reduce pain by activating sensory pathways that compete with pain pathways, stimulating emotional responses, and engaging cognitive attention. (“Listening to Music Can be Effective ...,” 2012). The same phenomenon occurs while hearing the music that accompanies a silent film comedy. The musical score serves to calm the audience which makes them more receptive to laughter. Absent the music, these comedies, watched in silence, would seem flat and humorless. Charlie Chaplin’s gyrations as The Tramp or Buster Keaton’s deadpan motif would seem baffling, meaningless and annoying. But with the music, their performances seem amusing and often hilarious.

Music’s ability to induce feelings of happiness was again demonstrated in a study by Dr. Joydeep Bhattacharya conducted at the University of London. In this study volunteers listened to a short musical excerpt (15 seconds) and then judged the emotional content of a face. The research found that the prior listening to happy music significantly enhances the perceived happiness of a face and likewise listening to sad music significantly enhances the perceived sadness of a face (“Listening to Music Can Change...,” 2009). According to Bhattacharya, some of these perceptions can be consciously controlled and other’s possibly not. Chaplin’s Tramp is always smiling and even Buster Keaton’s gloomy-looking expression takes on a humorous glow when viewed in

conjunction with an upbeat musical melody. The music as well as the performances on screen put the audience in a jovial mood.

Feelings and moods can be associated with different tempos. One researcher concluded that slow tempos express dignity, calmness and sadness while fast tempos indicate happiness and restlessness. Another research confirmed these findings and speculated that tempo might have more influence over the emotional suggestiveness of music than any other single factor. And yet another researcher placed great emphasis on the effect of rhythm in bringing about mood change through the use of music (LeBlanc, 1981, 145). For instance, the opening credits of the television show *The Lone Ranger* opens to the tunes of the William Tell Overture announcing the dramatic arrival of the masked rider and his trusty horse and instilling a sense of excitement and anticipation. Further, music is not only capable of framing emotions but of bringing meaning to emotions too. According to Vladimir J. Konecni *et al*, “Through the appropriate choice of register, dynamics, event density mode, rhythm, melodic contour and harmonic change, among other structural means, music can express, depict, allude to and evoked both the differential auditory patterns commonly associated in the abstract with the fundamental emotions (such as joy, sadness and anger), and the specific physical and vocal behavior of a human or animal experiencing and displaying such emotions. In short, music can tell a story about emotions ....” (Koencni, 2008, 290). Hence, in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942), a biopic about the life and career of George M. Cohan, James Cagney’s energetic renditions of “Yankee Doodle Dandy” or “Give My Regards to Broadway” not only

produces a feeling of joy but conveys to the audience why they are feeling joy (i.e., patriotism, love of country). This is an example of the phenomenon called “emotion-driven behavior” akin to a skilled guitarist who takes a folk song, performs it in four versions – happy, sad, angry, and fearful – and expects that these intended emotional expressions will be correctly identified by the listeners (Koencni, 2008, 290).

Not only does music affect our emotions, it produces physical changes which intensify the emotional response. Physiological theories suggest that intense emotions are quantitatively different from normal emotions in that their intensity is determined by the person’s level of arousal. Common physiological responses include activation of the sympathetic nervous system and the release of arousal hormones from the adrenal glands (Rikard, 2004, 372). This produces increased heart rate, blood pressure, respiration rate and muscle tension, and decrease in skin temperature. These physiological changes account for why individuals report having such strong experiences with music, accompanied by either high or low subjective arousal, depending on the nature of the music. The arousal can either induce a buildup of tension or a feeling of internal peace that is indescribable. In the iconic scene from *Gone With the Wind*, in which Rhett and Scarlet embrace and kiss as they near Tara, the non-diegetic music from the Max Steiner score wraps the scene in a shroud of sound producing a physical response analogous to the passion felt by the lovers on the screen. The pleasurable effect of such a vicarious reaction is undeniable. Other equally striking examples of emotive film numbers are Paul Robeson’s rendition of

“Old Man River” in the 1936 musical drama *Show Boat* and the non-diegetic instrumental chords of “Off We Go into the Wild Blue Yonder” heard at the conclusion of the 1944 World War Two drama *The Purple Heart*. In all three movies the music not only creates a euphoric mood but summarizes the themes of the stories. Without such musical presence, watching American airmen in *The Purple Heart* being marched to their execution would be depressing, but with the music added, the exact same scene becomes a source of patriotic pride. And without “Old Man River” to inspire feelings of hope and optimism in a story about racism, *Show Boat* would come off as a contrived melodrama. That the song is diegetic to the story enhances its effectiveness as a means for influencing mood.

Emotional response to music is also shaped by cultural factors, which, in a country as culturally diverse as the United States, has significant social and commercial implications. A series of studies that measured cultural differences in preference for music found that there are significant cultural differences in preference for music for therapeutic purposes. In one study, sixty percent of the Caucasians chose orchestra music while fifty percent of African-American chose the piano; in another the study, thirty-one percent of Asians chose the harp; and in a third study, thirty-one percent of Caucasians chose orchestra music while forty-nine percent of African-Americans chose jazz (Good, 2000, 249). These results suggest that audiences from different cultural backgrounds respond differently to the same music. Hence, what may be considered an inspirational melody for one group, for instance a gospel song performed in a church, may provoke derision and scorn in another group.

Feelings of hope can also be influenced by music, even by the key in which a tune is performed. Naomi Ziv writes: “Enhanced performance on cognitive tasks has been found when background music was played in a major as opposed to a minor mode (inducing positive mood), and in a fast as opposed to slow tempo (increasing arousal)” (Ziv, 2010, 5). Research on the effect of positive music on dispositional hope found that positive music generally affects hope, although individual differences in personality influence this effect (Ziv, 2010, 13). Thus, while watching a movie, the music itself could illicit or intensify a feeling of hope. For example, in the scene from *Casablanca* in which the French patrons energetically sing “La Marseillaise” in reply to the Germans singing “Die Wacht am Rhein,” the positive emotional affect and the concomitant feeling of hope produced by the music transforms the movie into powerful source of inspiration.

Music’s impact on the human psyche can resonate for years, even for a life time. The first commercially successful feature length movie talkie, the *Jazz Singer* (1927), is remembered not only because it pioneered sound and its controversial use of black face, but for Al Jolson’s historic performances of the songs “Toot Toot Tootsie (Goodbye)” and “My Mammy” as well as for the famous line, “You ain’t heard nothing yet!” Regarding the critical importance of Jolson’s singing to the movie, *Variety* wrote: “Minus the voice feature, the film would only be a contender for Jewish neighborhoods” (Williams, 2002, 148). The 1936 cinematic extravaganza *The Great Ziegfeld*, a three-hour long biopic about the life of the theatrical impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, is remembered not for the movie’s actual story or for Luise Rainer’s Academy Award winning performance as

Anna Held but for the eight and a half minute sequence showcasing the Irving Berlin classic standard “A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody” sung by Alan Jones. The 1942 movie *Holiday Inn* would be an obscure curio piece if not for the Stirring Bing Crosby – Martha Mears rendition of one of the most well-known and often-sung songs in the world today: Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas.” *The Wizard of Oz*, a 1939 fantasy, is today honored as one of the greatest movies in the history of cinema not because of its story, which is based on a children’s fairy tale, but because of its cavalcade of brilliant musical numbers, including “Over the Rainbow” which became Judy Garland’s signature song and the tune that propelled her to super stardom. That these songs, performed decades ago, are still remembered – and performed – today is evidence of music’s lasting power.

However, the most well-known examples of music’s ability to influence mood are to be found in the theme songs of popular television sitcoms. For example, the theme song for *All in the Family* evokes nostalgic feelings of bittersweet loss:

Boy the way Glenn Miller played,  
Songs that made the Hit Parade,  
Guys like us we had it made,  
Those were the days.

And you knew who you were then,  
Girls were girls and men were men,  
Mister we can use a man  
Like Herbert Hoover again.

Didn’t need no welfare state,  
Everybody pulled his weight,  
Gee our old LaSalle ran great,  
Those were the days.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Those Were the Days" by Charles Stouse and Lee Adams

Sung in a shrill staccato style at the start of the show by the show's two principal characters, Archie and Edith Bunker, this song generates an empathetic response to the two disgruntled protagonists who are emotionally entrenched in the past and hostile to change in a society where everything is in flux. Other popular sitcoms which make equally effective use of their theme songs to prep the audience include *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Gilligan's Island* and *The Jeffersons*.

Why does music have such a profound effect on people? There are various explanations. Herman Helmholtz claimed that music is "pure sensation" which is directly apprehended "without any intervening act of the intellect" (Kalinak, 1992, 23). Richard Wagner asserted "that music was accorded the power to express emotion 'quite independent of the restraint of logical laws of thought'" (Kalinak, 1992, 24). Theodore W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler argue that "because the ear is indefinite and passive, it is better able to resist the rationalization of commodity culture and can embody a regression toward a nonobjective perception" (Kalinak, 1992, 27). Kathryn Kalinak writes: "Film music depends on the same mechanism which binds the visual and the aural into interdependence. This is to say that while certainly music affects the image, it is likewise the case that the image affects the music" (Kalinak, 1992, 29-30). Music appeals to the emotions, and which transcends logic and which resonates within the very core of the human psyche. And although music's effect is readily acknowledged and felt, the etiology of its effectiveness defies empirical explanation.

Because of music's profound appeal to the emotions, it has been an important component of movie production since the start of the industry. Kalinak

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writes: "A relationship between moving images and music seems inherent in the very concept of the motion picture." (Kalinak, 1992, 40) For Thomas Edison the moving pictures were a marketing strategy for the phonograph. Because movies were silent, film makers felt compelled to provide musical accompaniment. This was the case for several reasons: 1. Music covered over the noise of from the projectors. 2. Accompanists used music to provide a wide range of sound effects, such as the sounds of water, winds, bangs and crashes. 3. Music added a sense of reality to the two-dimensional quality of the black-and-white images, making the movie more pleasurable to watch. On this point, Hanns Eisler and Theodor W. Adorno wrote: "Music was introduced as a kind of antidote against the picture. The need was felt to spare the spectator the unpleasantness involved in seeing effegies of living, acting, and even speaking persons, who were at the same time silent" (Kalinak, 1992, 45). In other words, by cancelling out the silence, the music makes movie watching a more enjoyable experience.

It was the need to drown out the silence which made the inclusion of music so essential. Silence itself can be distracting, disconcerting and disturbing; it connotes isolation. One of the more oppressive features of solitary confinement is the imposition of silence. That feature alone is considered a form of torture, and since the purpose of movies is to entertain and not to torment, movie producers and distributors went to elaborate lengths to ensure that the audiences did not watch the silent movies in silence. On December 20, 1980, NBC Television tried an experiment. The network broadcast an NFL football game without play-by-play coverage, replacing the commentary with graphics. The results were

dismal. Regarding the esthetic problems associated with the broadcast, one of the announcers, Brian Gumbel, said: "It lacks a degree of drama, unless somebody is there to say, 'All right, here's why we're going to shut up and just watch this. Here's what's at stake.' Whenever they do the match-play championships in golf, on paper it looks like a wonderful idea. In truth, what you find is there's a lot of dead space in between shots" (Garber, 2010). It was the dead space due to the lack of sound in silent movies that the early movie industry promoters wanted to eliminate.

By the late nineteenth century the technology and resources required to provide musical accompaniment to the movies was available. First, and perhaps most important, people were available who could play music. In 1880 there were 30,477 musicians in the United States, or one musician for every 1,650 Americans. By 1910, the number of musicians had increased 139,310, or one professional musician for every 660 Americans. Finding musicians was not a problem; it was this abundance of musicians that contributed to keeping their wages low. In Washington, Buffalo, Cleveland, Kansas City, and Denver in 1907, band-member pay ranged from \$15 to \$21 for six shows a week and \$21 to \$28 for fourteen shows (Altman, 2004, 28-29).

Musical accompaniment was based on several entertainment models. First, there was stage music. By the late nineteenth century, live music had become an important part of the American theater. The orchestra would furnish opening, closing and entr'acte (i.e., in-between acts) music. Relying on the European operatic tradition, theatre orchestras would play such upscale overtures as

Bizet's *Carmen*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Gounod's *Faust*, Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, or Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. Another model was musical theater. After the Civil War, there was a rapid proliferation of minstrel shows, variety shows, dance spectacles, European operettas, and burlesque. In the late-nineteenth century these venues required the regular use of interpolated songs and dances throughout theatrical performances of the most varied nature (Altman, 2004, 34). A third model was melodrama, that is, theater whose goal was to heighten dramatic effect. Melodramatic music, such as music to express discontent and alarm, hunting music, music to express chattering contention, music to express pain and disorder, and music to express confusion, were most often played at the beginning or ending of an act or to highlight the entrance of a principal (Altman, 2004, 36-37). Melodramas also featured two other common uses of music: source music and scene change music, such as, for example, marching music to synchronize the stage marching of soldiers. In addition, melodramas included sound effects, most often produced by back stage personnel. For instance, shaking a large piece of sheet iron created an imitation of sharp, rattling thunder (Altman, 2004, 41).

Early movie theaters, known as Nickelodeons, employed a kind of music that soon came to be known as Nickelodeon music. Film producers wanted to provide specific scores for specific pictures; emphasis was placed on providing quality scores. Composers systematically plundered classical composers, with the ultimate goal of effecting fluid scene-to-scene transitions (Altman, 2004, 204). Some scores were "reminiscent of nineteenth century melodrama and

pantomime scores, rich in modulations and thematic transformations, and systematically supportive of the film's narrative line" (Altman, 2004, 204). The piano was the overwhelming instrument of choice in the early nickel theaters. Not only could pianos be used for a variety of musical needs – illustrated song accompaniment, intermission music, incidental music for films – but pianists of all types were readily available.

Although the early movie theaters utilized musical standards and techniques borrowed from the theater, there were certain differences in the way the music was played. While the theater would feature pianists from the classical musical world, many of the players in movie theaters were music teachers, failed performers, and unemployed concertizers (Altman, 2004, 205). For example, a former student of the Berlin Conservatory of Music played the piano in Harry Altman's theater at 108<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Avenue in Manhattan. At the Senate Theater in Chicago a reporter was "surprised and delighted" to hear refined classical music, including Schumann's "Traumerei" (*sic*), and Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" in a five-cent theater. Yet, the offering of such rich classical musical programs in the early movie theaters was unusual. If a classical composition was to be offered, it would be played by a violinist because it would have been more likely that the violin players had some classical training (Altman, 2004, 206). The musical accompanist has served as the subject for a number of films. Two major motion pictures about violinists are *Golden Boy* (1939), based on a play by Clifford Odets, with William Holden, Barbara Stanwyck and Lee J. Cobb, and *Humoresque* (1947) with Joan Crawford, John Garfield,

and Oscar Levant (who plays a pianist). The dreams and aspirations of a concert pianist are dramatized in *City for Conquest* (1940), with James Cagney, Ann Sheridan and Arthur Kennedy. The story of two struggling piano accompanists who are brothers is dramatized in a 1989 movie *The Fabulous Baker Boys* with Beau Bridges, Jeff Bridges and Michelle Pfeiffer.

Many pianists were women (Altman, 2004, 206). Their training usually included European light classical music. In 1910, Edison lecturer and demonstrator George House commissioned his daughter to play Rubenstein, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven to accompany his Orange, New Jersey, programs. Often their repertoires included folk tunes, popular songs, and ragtime. In 1907 a *Saturday Evening Post* article on “Nickelodeons” reported that “Most of the shows have musical accompaniments. The enterprising manager usually engages a human pianist with instructions to play Eliza-crossing-the-ice when the scene is shuddery, and a fast ragtime in a comic kid chase” (Altman, 2004, 206).

But mastering the art of matching the music to the characters’ emotions or narrative moods on the screen took time. Nickelodeon pianists would usually play “fast ragtime in a comic kid chase.” At the time the term ragtime meant any music with a syncopated, that is, off beat, melody. In 1909, one of Irving Berlin’s first hits was “Yiddle, on Your Fiddle, Play Some Ragtime,” which included the following lyrics:

Yiddle in the middle of your fiddle, play some ragtime;  
Get busy, I’m dizzy, I’m feeling two years young,  
Mine, choc’late baby, if you’ll maybe play for Sadie,  
Some more ragtime. (Altman, 2004, 207)

Not until 1910 was there a widespread call for music carefully matched to the film (Altman, 2004, 208).

Popular songs were also used to provide musical accompaniment. Some pianists developed a repertory of several hundred songs which they sang while playing. Hit songs like “After the Ball,” “She’s Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage,” or “Everybody Works but Father” were familiar to every spectator (Altman, 2004, 220). Popular songs were considered useful in sentimental pictures and comedies. Film accompaniment included such popular tunes as “Auld Lang Syne,” “A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight,” “He’s a Jolly Good Fellow,” “Oh You Beautiful Doll,” “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp,” “Annie Laurie”, “Rosary,” “and “Good-bye” (Altman, 2004, 223). On January 15, 1910, the Edison publication suggested using “The Man That Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo,” and “Maggie Murphy’s Home” to accompany gambling and dance hall scenes in *Pardners*, and “He’s a Jolly Good Fellow,” “Red, White and Blue,” and “A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight” for *A Warrior Bold* (Altman, 2004, 223). Popular songs were recommended for comedies while ballads were suggested for melodramas (Altman, 2004, 224).

Composers also started scoring original music specifically for films. Termed “special music,” original compositions distributed with films served to market prestigious films selected for special treatment (Altman, 2004, 251). The majority of early musical scores were borrowed directly from operas. In 1904, Melies distributed *Faust and Marguerite*, a “New and Magnificent Cinematographic Opera in 20 Motion Tableaux.” At the end of 1907, the

producers of a film based on Franz Lehar's operetta, *The Merry Widow*, unable to secure the original Viennese cast, were able to offer "a complete musical score synchronized with the picture" (Altman, 2004, 251). Movie studios Kalem and Vitagraph distributed scores composed almost exclusively by Walter Cleveland Simon, a former pianist for a traveling troupe. These scores were offered for a modest fee with some two dozen films released between November 1911 and May 1913 (Altman, 2004, 254).

During 1909-10, publication of music collections specifically aimed at film accompaniment began in earnest (Altman, 2004, 258). In Lafayette, Indiana, Gregg A. Frelinger published *the Motion Picture Piano Music: Descriptive Music to Fit the Action, Character, or Scene of Moving Pictures*, a collection of fifty-one pieces, which cost one dollar, then cut to fifty cents. In July 1910 in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Groene Music Publishing Co. advertised *The Emerson Moving Picture Music Folio*, a collection of over 125 pieces for one dollar (Altman, 2004, 258). In 1913, the Sam Fox Publishing Co. of Cleveland, Ohio, offered for fifty cents the first volume of *Sam Fox Moving Picture Music*, with twenty-three original compositions by J. S. Zamecnik. The range of music played included dance music, from classical numbers like the gallop, gavotte, and the mazurka to modern numbers like the maxixe, tango, and hesitation waltz. Pianists were instructed to choose an appropriate caprice, chanson, intermezzo, nocturne, reverie, romanze, serenade, song without words, or tone poem (Altman, 2004, 268). By 1915, virtually all musical suggestions recommended specific numbers, with designation of the publisher (Altman, 2004, 269).

These suggestions were communicated through cue sheets and photoplay music which provided detailed instructions on how and when music should be played during the showing of a film and catalogued the scores that should be performed. For example, Winkler's program for Part V of World's adaptation of Flaubert's *Salammbô*, included these directions:

Andante Misterioso (No. 15) from Lakes' Dramatic Set, until War Scene Starts;

Hurry (No. 1) from Lake's Dramatic Set, as long as War Scene lasts;

"Dawn of Love," Bendix, until the end of the part. (Altman, 2004, 347)

The New York City musical publishing company G. Schirmer, Inc. published the *Schirmer Photoplay Series*, "a loose leaf collection of dramatic numbers specially written for motion pictures" (Altman, 2004, 349). The Balaban and Katz music library, located in the Chicago Public Library, contains a collection of theater orchestral music from the 1920s. The collection includes 14 selections from Beethoven, 20 from Tchaikovsky, and 26 from Verdi. There are also 57 entries by Irving Berlin, 42 by Rudolf Friml, and 81 by Victor Herbert. Works by less familiar names include 141 numbers by M. L. Lake and 116 numbers by J. S. Zamecnik (Altman, 2004, 355). The sheer volume of music that was published was astounding.

So, is the additional of a musical soundtrack a form of artistic tampering? The answer is yes. Scientific and historiographical evidence indicates that music influences mood and that the film industry, from its inception, recognized the value of music as a tool that could enhance the pleasure and quality of the movie viewing experience. Hence, early movie makers were willing to add a musical accompaniment to their silent films in order to make them more palatable to the

public. For film makers, music became an indispensable tool for marketing their product. The addition of music transformed the silent movie from an entirely visual art form into something that was both visual and aural. This in turn influenced the audience's subjective reaction to what they were watching, and hearing, which thereby altered how the movies were received and perceived.

The effects that music has on human perception are profound. Remove the music and we feel uncomfortable. This is the case because music is like a drug, and like any drug it affects the brain, producing an emotional high which clouds the senses and distorts our perception of reality. This process can be represented by the following algorithm:

**MUSIC → MOOD → PERCEPTION → REALITY → TRUTH**

Replace the music with silence and, the Platonic concept of truth notwithstanding, a different truth emerges.<sup>2</sup>

Soviet film maker Dziga Vertov believed that a movie need not have a formal plot, script or even actors to tell a story. Instead, a story could be told entirely through use of montage, a visual technique. Through the steady and unbiased eye of the movie camera the truth would be revealed. Vertov based his belief on the premise that everyday life should be depicted unfiltered in order fully reveal is worth, a goal that could be achieved through observation of places, persons or objects in motion, and themes irrespective of a particular person or place (Hicks, 2007, 18-19). In contrast, D. W. Griffith produced elaborate epics with opulent sets, detailed inter-titles, and casts of thousands, all accompanied by bombastic music. *The Birth of a Nation* uses excerpts from nineteenth century symphonic pieces, patriotic tunes, and a romantic melody to intensify the movie

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<sup>2</sup> Plato argued that truth is objective. "Plato, Socrates, and the Truth," 2012. *Voices.yahoo.com*

(Evans, 1979, 9) and instill a feeling of hostility toward the North, thus preparing the audience to accept as facts a new set of truths: that the South was a victim of Northern greed; that slavery was beneficial to the nation; that the Ku Klux Klan was a force for good; and that the Civil War was a sectional conflict provoked by abolitionists.

Not surprisingly, Griffith himself took a personal hand in writing and developing the music (Evans, 1979, 9). But strip away the music and the movie can finally be revealed for what it fundamentally is: a series of images, each one silent and each containing a kernel of truth, unadorned by sound, waiting to be discovered. Whether embarking on such a journey of discovery would be a pleasant or worthwhile experience is another matter.

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### Filmography

***All in the Family.* dir. Paul Bogart, others. perf. Carroll O’Connor, Jean Stapleton, Rob Reiner, Sally Struthers. Bud Yorkin Productions, Norman Lear/Tandem Productions. 1971-1979**

***Broken Blossoms.* dir. D. W. Griffith. perf. Lillian Gish, Richard Barthelmess, Donald Crisp. D. W. Griffiths Productions. 1919**

***Casablanca.* Dir. Michael Curtiz. perf. Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains. Warner Brothers. 1942**

***City for Conquest.* dir. Anatole Litvak. perf. James Cagney, Ann Sheridan, Arthur Kennedy, Donald Crisp. Warner Brothers. 1940**

***Gilligan’s Island.* dir. Jack Arnold, others. perf. Bob Denver, Alan Hale Jr., Jim Backus, Tina Louise. CBS Television. 1964-1967**

***Golden Boy.* dir. Rouben Mamoulian. perf. William Holden, Barbara Stanwyck, Adolph Menjou, Lee J. Cobb. Columbia Pictures. 1939**

***Gone With the Wind.* dir. Victor Fleming. perf. Clark Cable, Vivian Leigh, Leslie Howard, Olivia de Haviland. Selznick International Pictures, MGM. 1939**

***Holiday Inn.* dir. Mark Sandrich. perf. Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, Marjorie Reynolds, Virginia Dale. Paramount Pictures. 1942**

***Humoresque.* dir. Jean Negulesco. perf. Joan Crawford, John Garfield, Oscar Levant, Tom D’Andrea. Warner Brothers. 1946**

***Man With a Movie Camera.* dir. Dziga Vertov. VUFKU. 1929**

***Show Boat.* dir. James Whale. perf. Irene Dunne, Alan Jones, Paul Robeson, Helen Morgan, Charles Winninger. Universal Pictures. 1936**

***The Beverly Hillbillies.* dir. Joseph Depew, others. perf. Buddy Ebsen, Irene Ryan, Donna Douglas, Max Baer, Jr. Filmways Television, McCadden Productions. 1962-1971**

***The Birth of a Nation.* dir. D. W. Griffith. perf. Lillian Gish, Mae Marsh, Henry B. Walthall, Miriam Cooper. David W. Griffith Corp., Epoch Producing Corporation. 1915**

***The Fabulous Baker Boys.* dir. Steve Kloves. perf. Jeff Bridges, Beau Bridges, Michelle Pfeiffer, Xander Berkeley. Gladden Entertainment, Mirage, Tobis. 1989**

***The Great Ziegfeld.* dir. Robert Z. Leonard. perf. William Powell, Myrna Loy, Louise Rainer, Frank Morgan. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). 1936**

***The Purple Heart.* dir. Lewis Milestone. perf. Dana Andrews, Richard Conte, Farley Granger, Richard Loo. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. 1944**

***The Wizard of Oz.* dir. Victor Fleming. perf. Judy Garland, Frank Morgan, Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). 1939**

***The Jazz Singer.* dir. Alan Crosland. perf. Al Jolson, Mae McAvoy, Warner Oland, Eugenie Besserer. Warner Brothers. 1927**

***The Jefferson's.* dir. Jack Shea, others. perf. Sherman Hemsley, Isabel Sanford, Marla Gibbs, Franklin Cover. Embassy Television, Ragamuffin Inc., TAT Communications Company. 1975-1985**

***The Lone Ranger.* dir. Hollingsworth Morse, others. perf. Clayton Moore, Jay Silverheels. Apex Film Corp., Wrather Productions. 1949-1957**

***Yankee Doodle Dandy.* dir. Michael Curtiz. perf. James Cagney, Joan Leslie, Walter Huston, Irene Manning. Warner Brothers. 1942**