

SOUND DESIGNER'S COMPANION



BY BILL RAOUL

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FOREWORD

Bill Raoul has created an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the history and evolution of sound and music. I am honored to introduce such an incredibly well researched and desperately needed reference guide. To my knowledge, there is no other publication that so thoroughly identifies and categorizes music's development in relation to its appropriate time and place. Bill's long and successful career as a professional scene designer and theatre professor makes him uniquely qualified to write this book, but it is his lifelong love affair with music that makes this book a "must read" for any student of sound.

Bill presents in a clear and articulate manner the challenges of the play or film encountered when creating the *world* of the piece—the who, what, when, where and why that are necessary to make the theatrical experience a powerful and lasting one. It is these aural references that help the audience connect emotionally. One only needs to hear a few notes or a phrase of a movie score to bring the experience vividly back to life.

Bill also stresses the advantage of involving the sound designer from the very beginning of the creative process, as very often the sound and music can contribute to and influence the tenor of the entire production. Bill illustrates how both music and sound effects can "score" a production, creating perfect timing for maximum effect, be it dramatic or comedic. For example, he explains how the sound effects in the weekly radio play, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, heightened the audience's anticipation of a wonderfully entertaining running gag when Fibber McGee would open the closet door and everything inside would tumble out. The effect was prolonged because of the audience's laughter and would continue to build until it ended in a solitary, comical "plink."

Just as silent films were presented with a musical score—from live orchestra, single organ player or lone piano—Bill shows us that all productions have benefited from the composer's contribution, be it Franz Waxman's brilliant score for *Suspicion*, or Woody Allen's use of Gershwin's uniquely American music for *Manhattan*.

A chronological listing of the more popular songs from the 1800s through the mid-twentieth century, and a charmingly detailed

description of bands and singers, ranging from the obscure and forgotten to the popular and renowned, completes this invaluable guide. Also included is a chronological overview of classical composers with many examples of their music. From the earliest Edison cylinder recordings through 78s, LPs and 8-tracks, to today's CDs and DVDs, Bill amusingly and informatively tracks the history and practice of sound recording. It is extremely doubtful that there is a more comprehensive reference for anyone needing to research any period of time or style in an effort to reproduce a music track or sound landscape.

I highly recommend, without hesitation, this incredibly thorough reference guide. It is an invaluable addition for the most seasoned musicologist (armchair or otherwise), as well as any professional or student of music and sound. But more importantly, because of Bill's unique sense of humor, it is great fun to read. It is a resource every library, theatre department, film school and working professional should have on his or her book shelf.

Cecelia Hall

Senior Vice President, Sound Post Production
Paramount Pictures, Los Angeles

Academy Award Nominee – *Top Gun*

Academy Award Winner – *The Hunt for Red October*

PREFACE

“Who the hell would want a book like this?” was the honest response I received from a young man after trying to explain what this “mighty tome” was trying to be. The response gave me pause: who and why, indeed. I paused to reflect. Paused several years in fact until the obvious hit me: The young man needed this book. He wanted to be a sound designer but had no time to master an instrument, study classical music, or the related history of his popular music heritage from the recent past. He could operate any piece of sound equipment presented to him. He was a whiz kid working in a void. Hopefully this book will become his companion and guide when discovering the diverse other half of his job...finding the right sounds needed to enhance the production.

There are many people I must thank, including the young man who made me pause. Stacia Graham suffered mightily pulling me through a first draft. I hope she has recovered. I was next blessed with the hard work and wicked wit of Desirée Twigg who pushed me through additions and revisions. Thanks must also go to Carol Morris who proofed many more pages than are bound herein. My colleagues at the Department of Drama/Dance of The University of Montana who supported my Sabbatical leave, lo these many years ago, and to the Sabbatical Committee which has been overly patient awaiting the results. The staff of the Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, especially those blessed souls in Interlibrary Loan; Hariette Ranney, former music librarian, and the indefatigable Sebastian Derry, the School of Fine Arts librarian, who evaporated vast quantities of ether with his electronic assistance.

Many individuals have helped but Derek Van Heel was a great source of information. Gus Chambers of the Broadcast Media Center pointed me in good directions. The knowledgeable staff of Rockin' Rudys, one of the last, well-stocked, private record stores in the United States did yeomen duty in ordering the obscure, rare and obtuse CDs which shaped many opinions. Of course, without the support of Dale and Ray, their unceasing hospitality and cozy guest room, the many trips to Los Angeles would have not been possible. In addition, they

introduced me to their friend, Cece Hall, who somehow managed to find time in her extraordinarily busy life to read this book and write such a complimentary foreword. Many thanks to her.

Lastly, my deepest thanks go to David Rodger and N. Deborah Hazlett of Broadway Press. Their dedication to this project has never wavered and my procrastinations were always countered by words of encouragement.

To all of the above and the many I have inadvertently left unnamed, my thanks. All the blood, sweat, toils and tears remind me of Alexander Wolcott: “I must get out of these wet clothes and into a dry Martini.”