While sundry so-called "agents" flourish by advertising that they'll "sell your song to the movies," the bus. . of supplying music for filmdom's screen offerings actually is vested in 15 men. Typical of this highly specialized group are the above two song writers, Ralph Rainger, left, and Leo Robin, right, who form one of the ace teams. The sketch tells the story of some of their many hits and the stars who sang them—but back of that is a tale of long, hard work before they hit the success standard.

"Songs For Movies" Racket Profitable For Everyone But Would-Be Composer

Survey Shows That 15 Men Are Producing All Screen Music and None Is Bought From "Outsiders;" Even "Tin Pan Alley" Veterans Fail to Hit Right Note!

By Jean Jacques

RACKETEERING song agents offer extraordinary bait for would-be song writers on the fallacious premise that motion picture producers are seeking new songs and musical scores from outsiders. This is an erroneous "come-on" for, if it is difficult to crash the screen with an original story, it is next to impossible for embryonic song writers to sell their immature efforts to producers.

While thousands of persons have spent hard-earned money with gyp song agents in the hope that their efforts would reach the screen, this astounding fact prevails — some fifteen individuals compose almost all of the musical and lyrical numbers of today's talking pictures!

In none of the departments which function in the making of motion pictures, is there a branch requiring more training than in composing music and lyrics.

So unique is the training for film composers that a number of men who have written song and instrumental successes for Tin Pan Alley and the stage have "flopped" at composing for the screen.

Writing music and lyrics for motion pictures requires an extraordinary knowledge of the mechanics of cinema production. While the continuity or dialogue writer is permitted to write until the story idea has run its course, the composer must make his music fit exactly a pre-arranged number of film feet.

THE most consistent composers, working in teams, are Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed (the oldest song writers, in point of service, in pictures); Harry Warren and Al Dubin; Sam Coslow and Arthur Johnston; Mack Gordon and Harry Revel; Walter Donaldson and Gus Kahn, and Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin. In addition to these teams, there are three or four other consistent composers, most notable of whom is Richard Whiting.

It is interesting to note that, in the recollection of an authority in the business, no major motion picture company has ever purchased a musical number or song from an unrecognized writer. The reason for this is simple. With the minimum average cost of an ordinary full-length major picture in the neighborhood of $250,000, a producer cannot afford to gamble on untried efforts.

Work — endless work — is the lot of the song writers. A picture, for example, used four songs—but the composers wrote more than twenty to get those four! It is not unusual for one team of composers to be working on the musical numbers of from three to five productions at the same time. Due to the enormous use of songs in radio, the life of a modern hit, except in rare instances, is but three or four months.

TO explain the qualifications necessary for success in writing music and lyrics for the screen, consider the experience and background of two successful writers, Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin.

Robin and Rainger entered the field when the musical picture was a mere infant. Today, some five years later, though still in their early thirties, they are the deans of the music department at the Paramount studio!

Robin, born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, once entered the University of Pittsburgh to study law, but gave this up for editorial work. In his spare time he studied dramatics at Carnegie Tech and soon left for New York to become an actor.

On Broadway, Robin discovered that there were far more actors than parts. Disheartened, but not discouraged, he turned his hand to writing lyrics. His first success, "Whistle Away Your Blues," found a spot in the final edition of the Greenwich Village Follies. Two years after his arrival on Broadway, the young Pittsburgher gave to the world, through the stage success "Hit the Deck," the number, "Hallelujah," which attracted the attention of Paramount officials, and resulted in a year's contract.

Ralph Rainger, a native New Yorker, found more detours on the road to success. Ralph entered Brown University, but left it to attend the New Jersey School of Law at Newark. After graduating, he joined a prominent New Jersey law firm, but began to devote more and more time to music. He studied piano with Paolo Gallico and later was admitted to the select Damrosch Institute of Musical Art, studying under Clarence Adler.

THEN came stage engagements. He was a member of a featured two-piano act in "Queen High," the "Ziegfeld Follies of '27," "Rosalie" and the first "Little Show," for which he composed his first published number, "Moanin' Low." On the strength of this one hit, Rainger was given a Paramount contract.

In Hollywood, Robin and Rainger became close friends.

Robin's first assignment when he came West was to write, with Richard Whiting, Maurice Chevalier's first picture song, "Louise." Then followed "Beyond the Blue Horizon," for Jeanette MacDonald; "My Ideal," for Chevalier; "True Blue Lou," for Hal Skelly, and "One Hour With You," for Chevalier and Miss MacDonald.

When Paramount contracted Bing Crosby for his first picture, "The Big Broadcast," officials teamed Robin and Rainger. Since that time they have never been separated and have composed such hits as "Please," "Here Lies Love," and "Love in Bloom" (which promises to surpass anything they have done to date), for Bing Crosby; "A Park in Paree," for Chevalier; "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Love," for Claudette Colbert; "Take a Lesson From the Lark" and "Do I Love You," for Ben Bernie; "Low-Down Lullaby" and "I'm a Black Sheep Who's Blue," for the late Dorothy Dell; "Laugh, You Son-of-a-Gun," for Shirley Temple, and "Love Divided by Two," for Carey Grant.

Over a period of approximately five years they have averaged almost two published songs a month!

ADD to this some 300 numbers that died shortly after birth, the "situation" songs and "special material," which is of important value to a picture, but never sees the light of publication, and you have a fairly good idea of what is expected of a composer of music for screen production.

The tax upon the versatility of the writer of music and lyrics for the screen is far greater than in any other form of musical composition. In this field the composer is called upon to write for many types of characters; to compose numbers ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

To illustrate this: In "Little Miss Marker," there were two vastly different types of characters which called for songs. The childish, tomboy characterization, played by Shirley Temple, and the none-too-pure girl character, played by the late Dorothy Dell. For Mistress Temple, Robin and Rainger had to write a number that would fit both the characterization and the youthful actress. The result was "Laugh, You Son-of-a-Gun!"

"I don't mean a snicker—'heh, heh, heh.'
I don't mean a giggle—'hee, hee hee.'
I don't mean a chuckle—
No, no, no, no,
What I mean is 'ho, ho, ho, ho.'"

Miss Dell played a worldly young woman whose better qualities were touched by the child. Such a person, in real life, would not sing a typical lullaby. So the composers wrote "The Low-Down Lullaby":

"Go to sleep you gorgeous little rascal,
Thank your lucky stars you've got a bed;
You better get some shut-eye while the gettin'
is good.
You've go some tough nights ahead,
You'll grow up and find it's all a racket,
Cards are stacked against you from the start,"
etc.

Another test of versatility for screen composers and lyrists is writing "down" to the limited vocabulary and pronunciation of foreign stars. Chevalier, for example, has had a hard struggle with English words over three syllables.

From this it may be seen that, regardless of advertisements of certain "song services" for revising, arranging and composing music for your lyrics, the road to success is not through any racketeering correspondence school or agent!

"Wives Must Be Trained Wisely," Says Reno Preacher

Famed Sky-Pilot of Separation Center Finds Few Women Want Divorce

BREWSTER ADAMS believes that few of the women who go to Reno for a divorce really want one. Most of the trouble lies in the fact that their husbands lacked the wisdom and ability to train them properly. In his numerous contacts with marital difficulties, he has learned that more love and understanding, less criticism, will keep most marriages from going on the rocks. Follow his informative articles every week in Five Star Weekly.

By BREWSTER ADAMS

For 25 Years Reno's Baptist Preacher

STRANGELY, a great many women come to Reno to get a divorce, but very few really want one.

Many a good wife has been lost—needlessly lost—and that just for want of encouragement—training, I would call it.

Brewster Adams

"You're crazy," someone will surely say. "Don't they go to Reno for the 'cure?'"

Of course, I have heard that word for a quarter of a century, almost every day in my ministry here where so many trails divide.

But, honestly, I have yet to meet a case that seems to be completely "cured." There are too many recurrent symptoms, heart flurries which cannot be suppressed. Affection is an infection difficult to escape and rarely to be cured.

It is pathetically evident, if not beautifully so, that the visitor who has become dowdy with drudgery in her home, begins to be particular with her appearance when she arrives in Reno. The pathos of it is that she didn't start "being beautiful" before, or that someone did not give her encouragement to do so.

A chap from New York talked to me of how careless and slovenly his wife had become after they were married. He came out to contest the case, not for the sake of objecting, but really to validate the decree in New York.

After the "contest," which is the name they give the thing which does not exist, he came to say goodbye, and surprised me with the frank statement:

"If I had known what a good-looking woman she could be, I would never have let her escape. When she came into the courtroom, all I could think of was when as a bride she walked down the aisle of the church. She looked even more beautiful today. I've been a fool, I guess."

Then I got the chance for which I had waited. You see, she had been to see me, and I knew that she cared for him more than she would ever care for any man. She would have gone back to him, if things were different. You must understand that divorce is usually more a separation from a situation than from a person.

That is why a forced reconciliation does little good. Things have to be different to make a difference.

The New Yorker was honest, and realized the situation.

"You're right, doctor," he declared. "I never encouraged her as I should. She's a sweet woman—better than any woman I've ever known. I might have made a good wife out of her and I didn't. I am only sorry that it is too late now."

Fortunately it was not.

SO I have often thought, and wondered, as they have come to my door — good women, fair women, faithful women, with no other affection in the world than for those with whom they have broken—why should somebody have failed to make a good wife out of them?

And so, I am sure that a man has to be tamed and a woman has to be trained—put it as crudely as that, if you please. Happiness has to be captivated and cultivated. Marriage is a taming for the man and a training for the woman. And it all must be done with such fineness, that neither may be aware of the handling.

The trouble seems to be that we think marriage is just a gamble—a matter of chance, with always the possibility that our number may be a blank.

A bridegroom asked the minister what the fee should be.

"Whatever you think the bride is worth."

"Just a minute, Reverend. I'll go you on that. I don't know what she's worth, and I won't for awhile. If you will wait until I find out, I'll pay you. Or, will you take $2 now?"

"If you have the $2 handy, maybe I'd better take it."

Encouragement is the only thing that works in training—dog or wife. Argument and criticism may not be grounds for divorce, but they surely are the great causes. You wouldn't take it. Neither would she. Nor do any of us. Even the dog will lay down and quit under a harsh word, but a "Hi along, old fellow," will send him back into the sage and cactus, tongue rolling from heat and thirst, but tail wagging for happiness.

You've got to train them, but not tell them.

Down on the Walker Lake sink in Nevada is the U. S. Navy's munitions depot.

An efficient and orthodox engineer was in charge of construction. He employed a number of Indians. One, Jim, was a good worker, but his wife Susie, still carried the tommy-hawk. She drank, and when she drank she talked, and when she talked she swung an ugly knife.

"Jim," ordered the engineer, "You send your squaw back to the reservation, or tell her to keep sober."

Jim, like his tribe, did nothing about it. The engineer called him in again after Susie had gone on the warpath.

"Jim, you tell your wife to be good, or she will have to go back to the reservation."

"Ugh," grunted Jim. "You tell 'em."

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