



Disney

The Movies • The Music • The Composers
BY JANET DAY

We all know famous songs from Disney movies. We've been studying them all year long in *Music Express*, right? Remember "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from *Mary Poppins*? How about "The Bare Necessities" from *The Jungle Book*? These are huge hit songs from Disney movies that are recorded over and over by well-known artists and sung in concerts and programs by children and adults around the world. The music you hear in these movies is all a part of the Disney recipe for success.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOUND IN MOVIES

When moving pictures were first invented in the late 1800s, there was no sound at all attached to the films. As viewers watched the action on screen, various intertitles (action or dialog cards) were inserted in the film to tell the viewer what was going on. Those early film projectors were very loud! Live musicians, such as pianists, organists, or other instrumentalists, were often brought into the theater to not only drown out the sound of the projector, but also add to the theater experience. The musicians played pieces by famous composers that created a mood for each scene. For example, a car chase scene would have fast, energetic music, or a love scene would have slow, sentimental music to create a romantic effect.



WHAT IS A SOUNDTRACK?

In the late 1920s, sound was added to movies, which meant people could now hear what the actors were saying! But the music didn't go away; directors still wanted to heighten the movie experience with a musical accompaniment. At first, directors chose music that already existed — classical music, ragtime, jazz— whatever was appropriate for the scene. That soon gave way to creating complete original music to support the plot of the movie and each character on screen. This original movie music, or **soundtrack**, opened up a whole new door for composers.

FILM COMPOSITION IS BORN

Walt Disney and his brother Roy were in the movie business at this exciting time. They knew the world was changing and people were going to LOVE going to the movies! Disney movies told familiar stories with animated characters and the Disney brothers needed composers to create the soundtracks.



Walt Disney

Carl Stalling composed the scores for Disney's early cartoons including *Plane Crazy* and *The Gallopin' Gaucho*. Another legendary composer was **Frank Churchill**, who joined the Disney Studios in 1930 to create the music for films including *Three Little Pigs*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Dumbo*, and *Bambi*.

THE SHERMAN BROTHERS

The Disney music machine ran smoothly after that, with successful movies like *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* and *Lady and the Tramp*. But it was the **Sherman Brothers**, Richard and Robert, who became quite possibly the most famous of Disney composers. Do you remember learning about Richard Sherman in your December 2014 issue of *Music Express*? This song writing team created the music for *Mary Poppins*, *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, *The Jungle Book*, *The Aristocats*, and many more.



Richard and Robert Sherman

ALAN MENKEN

Now let's look at the Disney movies with which you may be familiar. What do the following Disney films have in common? *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Hercules*, *Tangled*, *Enchanted*. The common thread here is composer **Alan Menken**, the most successful Disney composer. Think of him and thank him when you sing "Under the Sea" in this issue!



Alan Menken

After the successful film scores written by Alan Menken, we can add many other Disney movies scored by other famous composers. How about *The Lion King* with music by **Elton John** and **Tim Rice**? **Randy Newman** wrote the music for *Toy Story*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *Cars*, and *The Princess and the Frog* to name a few. **Michael Giacchino** scored the music for *Ratatouille*, *The Incredibles*, and *Up*. And let's not forget *Frozen*, with its soundtrack of original songs composed by **Kristen Anderson-Lopez** and **Robert Lopez**.



Michael Giacchino



Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez



Randy Newman

WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW?

Watch the video on Disney film music and answer these questions:

1. Who is Jonathan Heely?
2. Where is the Walt Disney Studios building located?
3. Who is Walt Disney's brother?
4. Who is "holding up" the building and what are their names?
5. Who prepares the music for the Disney recording sessions?
6. How many times do the musicians see the music before it is recorded in the studio?
7. What are two things a music producer does?
8. Name two Disney movie composers mentioned by the team.
9. What two projects are they working on at the time this video was filmed?

The next time you watch a Disney movie, imagine what it would be like without the music. Then take a moment to thank these gifted composers who add the musical magic that makes a Disney film fantastic!

Let's take a walk through the Disney headquarters with Jonathan Heely, Director of Music Publishing. Perhaps we'll get a glimpse at some of the legendary film scores and the process that gets the music from the page to the screen. With your parent's or teacher's permission, go online and view the Disney Music video walk-through.

