

Sabrina/We're No Angels

Frederick Hollander may not be a familiar name to many film music fans, but he was a superb composer who wrote some terrific scores over the years. He was also a wonderful songwriter, dating back to his work in German cabaret and films – his most iconic and well-known song being the gorgeous “Falling in Love Again” from Josef von Sternberg’s *The Blue Angel*.

Hollander, born in 1896, came from a very artistic family. His father composed operettas, one of his uncles ran the Stern Conservatory in Berlin, and another uncle was a well-known novelist and theater critic who worked with Max Reinhardt. While getting his musical training, Hollander spent his evenings playing piano for silent films in Berlin. Soon after completing his studies, he began composing music for Max Reinhardt productions. His big break came with the aforementioned *The Blue Angel* starring Marlene Dietrich, for which he wrote both score and songs. He continued to write scores for German films until 1934, when he immigrated to the United States and joined the ranks of other foreign composers working in Hollywood.

The songs he wrote for such films as *Anything Goes*, *Desire*, *Rhythm on the Range*, *Artists and Models*, *One Hundred Men and a Girl* (among many others) were sung by such notables as Marlene Dietrich, Bing Crosby, Deanna Durbin and Dorothy Lamour. But he also wrote the dramatic scores for many films, including such classics as *Angel*, *Bluebeard’s Eighth Wife*, *Midnight*, *The Great McGinty*, *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, *The Talk of the Town*, *Never a Dull Moment*, *Born Yesterday* – as well as the songs and score to the beloved film *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T*. In 1948 he wrote the score and songs for Billy Wilder’s *A Foreign Affair* – and Wilder would turn to Hollander again for the music adaptations for his film version of Samuel Taylor’s play *Sabrina Fair*.

Sabrina Fair opened on Broadway at the National Theater on November 11, 1953. Starring Margaret Sullivan and Joseph Cotton, the play had a very

healthy and successful run of 318 performances. Paramount snapped up the film rights, and director Billy Wilder co-wrote the screenplay with Taylor. Because Wilder, as was his wont, ended up changing much of the plot, Taylor left the project and was replaced by up-and-coming young writer Ernest Lehman.

The resulting film, retitled *Sabrina*, came out in 1954 and was an absolute delight with a brilliant cast. Humphrey Bogart and William Holden played the brothers Larrabee, Linus and David, and the wonderful British character actor John Williams played their chauffeur, Thomas Fairchild, whose daughter is the title character, Sabrina. But it was the magical, winsome and altogether lovable Audrey Hepburn who made the film into pure cinematic magic. She’d become an overnight star the year before with *Roman Holiday*, and *Sabrina* was the perfect follow-up, cementing her place as one of the fastest-rising stars in Hollywood.

Sabrina is a lovely soufflé of a film – funny, romantic and endearing – with great performances from all three leads. From all accounts, Bogart was unhappy during filming – he hadn’t been Wilder’s first choice (Cary Grant was) and he didn’t feel he was all that right for the film. But in the end, he gave a terrific performance loved by both critics and audiences. The picture was nominated for six Academy Awards (including Best Actress for Miss Hepburn, Best Director for Wilder, and Best Story and Screenplay for Wilder, Taylor and Lehman). It took home only one – for Edith Head’s costumes. *Sabrina* was a commercial and critical success. It was Wilder’s last film for Paramount, ending an amazing collaboration of studio and director that produced such classics as *Double Indemnity*, *The Lost Weekend*, *Sunset Blvd.*, *Ace in the Hole*, *Stalag 17* and others.

Wilder wanted to use popular tunes throughout *Sabrina*, and Hollander was the perfect choice to do those adaptations, as well as provide a few original themes. The resulting score was a memorable and charming pastiche – in

fact, it’s impossible to think of *Sabrina* without hearing Hollander’s incredible arrangements of such standards as “My Ideal,” “I Don’t Want to Walk Without You,” “Lover,” “Dream Girl,” “Isn’t It Romantic?” and more. No one did this kind of score better than Hollander, and *Sabrina* is a delight from start to finish.

Two years later, Paramount released a wonderful Christmas comedy called *We’re No Angels*. The French play on which it was based, *La Cuisine des Anges* by Albert Husson, had been adapted by Samuel and Bella Spewack as *My Three Angels* and brought to Broadway – where it ran for 344 performances. For the film version, the title was changed to *We’re No Angels*. Michael Curtiz was hired to direct, reuniting him with his *Casablanca* star, Humphrey Bogart. The other two titular angels were Peter Ustinov and Aldo Ray; other cast members included beautiful Joan Bennett, Basil Rathbone and Leo G. Carroll. The film had a handsome production, with especially luscious photography by Loyal Griggs in VistaVision and Technicolor. The cast all seem to be having a grand time and the movie has great moments of hilarious fun and an abundance of charm. Once again, Hollander provides an incredibly appealing score, which has both original and memorable themes along with interpolations such as “Silent Night.”

Frederick Hollander had a really long and fruitful tenure at Paramount, and to fill out this CD, we present surviving cues from several of his film scores for the studio, including *The Bride Wore Boots*, *The Affairs of Susan*, *The Great McGinty*, *Remember the Night* and *Disputed Passage*. Frederick Hollander passed away in 1976, but it is a pleasure to bring an entire disc of his music to CD. Though he is perhaps unsung these days, we hope that this potpourri of delightful music will show what an amazing talent he was.

— Bruce Kimmel