

A Man Called Peter

A Man Called Peter is the story of preacher Peter Marshall, who was the Chaplain of the United States senate as well as being pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC. Based on the biography by his widow, Catherine Marshall, Twentieth Century Fox acquired the rights and hired Henry Koster to direct. Koster was an expert with this kind of film, and he'd already directed many Fox classics and box-office and critical hits like *The Robe*, *My Cousin Rachel*, *Desiree*, and others. In 1955 alone he directed not only *A Man Called Peter* but also *Good Morning, Miss Dove* and *The Virgin Queen*. His association with Fox would continue throughout the 1950s and through the mid-1960s.

The screenplay was by Eleanore Griffin, who'd won an Academy Award for *Boys Town*, written the original story for *The Harvey Girls*, and who also provided the screenplay for Koster's film of *Good Morning, Miss Dove*. The director of photography was Harold Lipstein, not a well-known name these days, but he photographed some wonderful movies, including *Wichita*, *The Adventures of Haji Baba*, *Pal Joey*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Chapman Report*, *Any Wednesday*, *Palm Springs Weekend*, and many others. He also worked in television, most especially on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.

Even though Hedda Hopper announced in 1953 that Richard Burton would be starring in the film, ultimately the role of Peter Marshall fell to the fine British actor Richard Todd (*Stage Fright*, *The Dam Busters*, and *The Hasty Heart*, for which he received an Academy Award nomination as Best Actor). Jean Peters (*Captain from Castile*, *Viva Zapata*, *Pickup on South Street*, *Broken Lance*) was cast as Catherine Wood Marshall – it would be Peters' final film role, although she'd return to acting in the 1970s for various TV projects. Also in the cast were Jill Esmond, Les Tremayne, and young Billy Chapin.

And to write score, the head of the Fox music department, Alfred Newman, who'd worked with Koster on the religious epic, *The Robe*.

A Man Called Peter was a box-office hit. Audiences took to the inspiring story of a Scottish kid who has dreams of a life on the sea, but who instead gets a calling from God to be a minister. Leaving Scotland, he comes to America to find his mission and his life. *A Man Called Peter* would receive one Academy Award nomination, for its Cinemascope color cinematography.

Alfred Newman's score is a beauty. No other composer did this kind of film as well as Newman and he did many films with religious themes. It is emotional and passionate and filled with memorable music. You can always tell a Newman score within the first twenty seconds of hearing it – the extraordinary writing for strings, the harmonies and colors – he was simply unique and one of the greatest of all film composers, and his long and amazing career at Fox is really unparalleled. Add to that the brilliant work of his co-conspirators, orchestrator Edward B. Powell and vocal supervisor, the great Ken Darby, and you have film music magic.

The soundtrack for *A Man Called Peter* was previously released on CD by Film Score Monthly. The presentation there included all the source music within the score itself, as it appeared in the film. For this release, Mike Matessino decided to present Newman's score by itself, and hearing it that way is extremely powerful and a great listening experience. All of the source music is included here, after the Newman program. The sound has been considerably cleaned up – a bit of wow and flutter still remains, but it's minor now and the Newman score sounds fantastic in that classic Fox stereo.

Bruce Kimmel

The organ heard in this film, now known as the Barr/Fox Wurlitzer Theater Organ, was installed on the Fox Scoring Stage in 1928. It can be heard in dozens of classic film scores – *The Sound of Music*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *Home Alone*, and *The Witches of Eastwick* to name a few. Many of the greatest names in film music used it,

including Alfred Newman, Dimitri Tiomkin, Bernard Herrmann, Jerry Goldsmith, and John Williams.

It was removed from Fox in 1998, and after sitting in boxes in Reno for about 15 years, I purchased it and had it fully restored, making sure that all of its original 1,366 pipes were used. Since June 2018, when I completed my new LA recording facility Bandrika Studios (which was literally built around the organ), the Barr/Fox Wurlitzer has re-entered the world of film music. Within its first six months of completion, it was used throughout my score for Amblin/Universal's 2018 film *The House With a Clock In Its Walls*, in my score for the upcoming Amazon Studios series *Carnival Row*, and in Danny Elfman's score for the 2018 Universal reboot of *The Grinch*.

These tracks from *A Man Called Peter* showcase this instrument replicating the sound of a church organ, which it does beautifully and convincingly. Throughout its history at Fox, it was often called upon to record hymns and church music, although this represents only a small part of its musical potential. In its second life, looking forward to stretching the organ to its full capabilities, some of which can be heard in my score to *The House With a Clock In Its Walls*. I'm so happy to see this forgotten piece of film music history back in the spotlight, and can't wait to see everything else this beloved instrument's second life has in store.

Nathan Barr, 2018