

FILM REVIEWS

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of melody. It therefore affords an excellent opportunity for an historical film, made appealing by beautiful music. There is no need, no excuse even, to invent anything about Schubert to make his story interesting.

Yet though I have searched through three large musical compendiums and one full-length work on the composer, I can find absolutely no justification for most of the events recorded in *New Wine*. It is true that Schubert met with little publishing success—he didn't particularly want it—but he did meet the public through compositions played by the leading performers of the day, and through his operas. It is possible that he had one love affair—with the Count Esterhazy's daughter—but if so, the object of his affection bore no resemblance in name, history, or figure to the girl portrayed by Ilona Massey, nor is there any question of her leaving her Hungarian home to seek Schubert's company in Vienna. Nor is there mention of a flight across the border to escape conscription. Nor that the *Unfinished Symphony* was unfinished because the composer took to school-teaching, or because he was affected by the death of Beethoven.

From the point of view of historical accuracy, then, *New Wine* hardly fills the old bottle. So, too, with its music. Ilona Massey is not a great singer, and the orchestra murders the hackneyed though beautiful 'cello motif of the *Unfinished Symphony* by playing the reverse of *pp*, the composer's direction.

The director, indeed, had so little faith in Schubert's music and in the public taste that he introduced a subsidiary story to pass it over as lightly as possible. I have faith, however, in the public taste, for I once heard an ordinary audience enthusiastically applaud Stokowski's rendering of the *Unfinished Symphony* as a film short. There was no need to introduce a concert hall of

A.D. 1941 (or thereabouts) at various intervals when some work was to be performed. And having introduced it, there was no need to turn the cameras on an eternally triangular, though quite touching, drama taking place in the rear gallery of the hall. I have a feeling that it would have been in better taste to have woven the masterpieces into the story by having them performed by the composer's own orchestra of acquaintances in the salon of a friend—as he did quite often.

Still there are good points to save the picture from complete disapproval. The

picture of Beethoven is very well done indeed (Albert Basserman again!) The comedy scenes are good, except that Binnie Barnes is nothing more than silly. Alan Curtis makes a life-like Schubert, though he does not sing and is not quite as traditionally plump as was Tauber in *Blossom Time*.

But I would not advise those with a passion for historical accuracy to see this picture.

FIRST parting in 19 years: William Powell made perhaps the biggest sacrifice of his screen career when he

parted with his moustache for the female impersonation scene in *Love Crazy*.

A MOVIE MAN hired a new Negro maid. On her first day at work her employer asked what her name was. Said she "Pislam Siv."

"There can't be any such name as that!"

"It's right out of the Bible," she vowed.

Confronted with a Bible and asked to show where Pislam Siv figured in it, she turned to a page, pointed to the words: Psalm XIV.

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Anti-Nazi Films

HOLLYWOOD is experiencing some difficulty with the U.S.A. authorities over its steadily-growing output of anti-Nazi films. The chief complaint seems to be that they are not in accord with America's avowed "hands-off Europe" policy, and that therefore they are a danger to her neutrality. Such films as "Underground," which is an American version of the recently-released "Freedom Radio," and includes a reconstruction of the flight of Hess to Britain, "Man Hunt," which is the story of a man who set out to kill Hitler, and "A Yank in the R.A.F.," which speaks for itself, are among the films condemned as propaganda. If such is the case, Dr. Goebbels might be well advised to study Hollywood's technique, as these films seem to have struck in happy medium in combining the elements of popular entertainment with just enough propaganda to be effective.