

COMES STRAVINSKY TO THE FILM THEATER

Music of the Ultra-Modernists Employed to Accompany Remarkable Motion Picture at the Capitol Theater—Distortion as Principle in Adapting Motives to Nightmare Mood of Screen Play—Latter an Original Treatment of Psychopathic Theme—Impressionism in Two Arts Synchronized—A Genuine Musical Departure Effected

At that point the young man left off his eerie recitation. . . . Together with his solitary auditor he entered the marmoreal house that rose from the wet and twining shrubbery. . . .

WITH the opening of that mad-house door the creators of the "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" let in the light of imagination upon the movies. With a gesture, bold and admirable, they raised the blazing flag of futurism where the prosaic has from the first held title. At last the camera promises to inherit its rich and rightful portion.

"The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" is to the regulation film play as a canvas by Cézanne to a Meissonier. One shows you a viewpoint and personal vision, the other holds up the microscope of the many. One is art, the other artifice.

The makers of "Caligari" have taken as a springboard the premise that the principles of modernism applied in the plastic arts are perfectly applicable in motion pictures. In the strange domain where *Dr. Caligari* plies his grisly trade, the windows and doors and rooftops are joined at crazy and disturbing angles. The "lighting" proceeds from strange planets; the shadows are extra-somber and intense. Of the terrestrial as we understand it there is virtually nothing. Extraordinary as all this is, it is seen to have its logic, its inevitability, as the film spins on. For all that one sees on the sheet is the puppets which dance in a diseased brain. The play, in short, is a psychopathic study.



"Cesare" (the Somnambulist) Bears Off the Heroine in the Night—A Striking Scene from "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari"

Properly, the American premiere of "Caligari" employed music calculated to heighten its exotic character, to underline its fantastic aspects. At the Capitol Theater, where the film was introduced, the admirable symphony orchestra played a special score arranged from the writings of the modernists Debussy, Strauss, Stravinsky and others. Of the compiling and adapting of the music let S. L. Rothafel—in charge of the artistic destinies of the big theater—speak.

"In handling the musical problem presented by 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari' Mr. Rapee (the conductor) and I felt that the orthodox thing would not do. A film conceived along revolutionary lines called for a score faithfully synchronized in mood and development. We took psychology into reckoning—the psychology of the audience no less than of the play. In the phantasmagorical

scheme of 'Dr. Caligari' people move and live in a world out of joint. The cracked country is dotted with grotesque houses, skinny twisted trees, enormously steep and rutted pathways. . . . The key principle of this sprawling architecture and wild terrain is, distortion. With that steadily in mind we built up the score. We went to Schönberg, Debussy, Stravinsky, Prokofieff, Richard Strauss for thematic material. We assembled our themes, assigned characteristic ideas to the principals of the play, and then proceeded to *distort* the music. The music had, as it were, to be made eligible for citizenship in a nightmare country.

"The score is built up on the leit-motif system; quite in the Wagnerian manner. For *Caligari's* motif we went to Strauss's 'Till Eulenspiegel.' His idea recurs, or is suggested, whenever *Caligari* or his influence is at work on the screen. To identify *Cesare*, the Somnambulist, Mr. Rapee and I borrowed a bit from Debussy's 'Afternoon of a Faun.' These main ideas appear singly or together, whole or in part, as the psychology of the tale demands. The scoring is not that of the original, but has been done here and is contrived to emphasize the *macabre*. Muted brass was resorted to for most of the sinister sounds.

"I think I may confidently, and justly, say that the whole represents the most daring musical achievement in the history of the American motion-picture theater. We tried very hard with this picture, because we think so much of it. 'Caligari' is, to my mind, an imaginative masterpiece and a triumph as directing. Musically no less than pictorially it opens up a virgin country."

As briefly back as five years Stravinsky or Schönberg in the movie-house belonged to the inconceivable. To-day it calmly happens, and the audience calmly swallows the pill. It would have been far simpler, in preparing accompaniment for this film, to dish up the old safe and sickening potpourri. The more admirable, then, is the departure made



A Piece of the Prison—A Remarkably Somber Effect Achieved with Pyramidal Planes

by Messrs. Rothafel and Rapee. The thing took more than courage; it meant double labor and it meant considerable expense. Four rehearsals were called. But the tune was worth the toll. The acrid air of Stravinsky has been borne into the film theater. It may clear the sweet murk before the last reel is run. B. R.



"Cesare"—Released by His Master, "Caligari"—Seeks Out His Victim

Expect Admissions Tax to Be Either Reduced or Abolished

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 13.—While it is understood that the excise tax on musical instruments is to be eliminated from the revenue law, there remains considerable uncertainty as to the disposition of the admissions tax. The writer has been unable to secure a direct expression on the subject of the retention of the admissions tax in the law, but it appears to be the general view that the tax on tickets will be either reduced—or—repealed. Several

members of the House Ways and Means Committee with whom I have talked point out the fact that the admissions tax brings in a comparatively large revenue, and that for this reason there may develop some opposition to its being dropped from the law. It is expected that representatives of concert, opera and amusement interests will present a strong protest to the House Ways and Means Committee at the hearings on the revision bill against the threatened increase in the tax, and favoring abolishing the tax entirely if this be found possible. A. T. M.

Urges Harding to Have Congress Sessions Opened With Music

WASHINGTON, April 13.—President Harding has been appealed to recommend to Congress that the sessions of Senate and House be opened with music as a fitting and inspiring start for the day's activities. He is also asked to suggest that this be done in the case of the various State legislatures. Secretary Philips, of the Columbia Grafonola Dealers' Association of Washington, has written the President pointing out the advantages of incor-

porating music in the daily round of activities. Nothing, he thinks, could be so conducive to the doing of a good day's work, whether it be in commerce, the professions or in making laws for the people.

President Harding has responded to Mr. Philips's communication, commending his views and expressing the hope that music is to have a larger place in our national life. A. T. M.

The Brooklyn Academy of Music is claiming \$43,000 from the city for taking its courtyard rights.