

READING MUSICAL FOUNDATION

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"Don Juan" Breaks Its Silence Thanks To Funding by Reading Musical Foundation

June 26, 2006 - In 1927, sound pictures premiered in Pennsylvania at Reading's own Arcadia Theatre at 730 Penn Street. It was February 21st and *Vitaphone*, a sound film process produced by Warner Brothers and used on features and short subjects, was debuting at the theater in the film, "*Don Juan*" starring John Barrymore. Although there was no talking, a *Vitaphone*-equipped theater used specially designed projectors, amplifiers, and speakers to provide music and sound effects. Using a mechanical interlock with an attached phonograph turntable, the projectionist would synchronize the film and phonograph to play at designated times. Swords clashed and toasting glasses clinked. Arranged by Major Edward Bowers and David Mendoza, a musical score for "*Don Juan*" was played by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Henry Hadley with five additional instrumental and vocal selections used throughout the film.

The silent film, "*Don Juan*," will return to the city on Thursday, October 12th at the GoggleWorks Theatre, located at the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, 102 Washington Street in downtown Reading as part of Berks Movie Madness Film Festival. The film will be shown at 7:00 p.m., admission \$5 per person. Alan Shirk, organizer of the festival and board member of the presenting organization, Berks Arts Council, felt that the film would benefit from the introduction of live music. After approaching local composer, David Himes, Shirk brought the project to the Reading Musical Foundation for funding consideration.

"The Reading Musical Foundation is very supportive of the creation of new music. Most recently, it funded an original composition, *Music in the Wings* to honor local music educator and Ringgold Band's music director, Jim Seidel," Tammy Mitgang, President of RMF confirmed. "Using the talents of David Himes, the film will not only have an original score but live musicians will perform it during the film's airing. Many times, we take for granted the power of music and its relationship to motion pictures. If a picture paints a thousand words, can you imagine how the addition of music heightens the viewing experience? From stirring scores that introduce and permeate a film to critical background instrumentals that set the tone and emotion of a given scene, music enhances film as well as our lives each and every day."

The musicians performing the score will be local and include several student musicians. Music education is at the foundation of RMF's mission and the "*Don Juan*" sound project provides a special learning experience. While the performance of an original score alone is especially exciting for a musician, having the opportunity to work under the auspices of the composer himself is rare. Mitgang further commented, "We are fortunate to have a gifted composer working right here in our community who understands the educational importance of teaming seasoned musicians with younger students."

The 1st Annual Berks Movie Madness film festival will span eight days and include screenings, workshops and exhibits. Downtown venues include: GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, Women's Club of Reading, Hispanic Center of Reading and Berks, Inc., Trinity Lutheran Church, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading Area Community College and Canal Street Pub and Restaurant.

For more information regarding the Don Juan musical score project sponsored by Reading Musical Foundation, please contact Tammy Mitgang at 610-376-3395. For information regarding the 1st Annual Berks Movie Madness Film Festival (October 4 – October 12), contact Alan Shirk at 610-736-9223 or visit the website – www.berksarts.org.