

# Playing Silent Films

Lesson 1

## Felix in Hollywood

FROG MUSIC PRESS



# *Lesson 1*

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## *Theatre Style vs. Accompanying Films*

There is a difference between playing a solo theatre organ concert and accompanying films.

A solo theatre organ concert, with the many “signature” techniques used by the great theatre organists, draws attention to the organ and artist, allowing them to shine.

Accompanying Silent Films is more like playing a church service; supporting the service, rather than the organ being the “star”.

**Two things you should find immediately encouraging:**

1. Many silent film organists were also church organists. They would play theatres during the week and church on Sundays.
2. The flashy techniques of today’s theatre organ stars could get you fired in the silent film theatres - so you do not need to be able to play like them.

When accompanying films, the music enhances the movie experience and should not draw attention away from the action on screen. Playing ‘Popular’ tunes during the screening often distract from the film. Watch a really well-done modern movie with a great film score: it’s about the film, not the music. Very few people leave the theatre singing the tunes they heard! There are rare occasions when you will need to play recognizable music, but these are rare.

Think back to the silent film days when preparing to accompany films. Church organists were (usually) working for the pastor. Similarly, in the movie house, the organist worked for the manager. Unlike playing on the concert stage, where you called the shots and were the center of attention, film organists had a responsibility to the film, and the manager, if you intended to get paid.

Here is a chance for you and me, the average organist, to relive that nostalgic era, when the organ was often the only instrument people heard. They were the the entertainment long before background music, car radios, record players, CD players and personal media players existed.

Have fun playing, and share with your friends and neighbors! You might even find yourself playing silent films out in public, possibly at a library or local small theatre. It’s a possible dream!

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## *Where to find things and how to use them.*

This series is a complete turn-key resource. Each film has been provided with a full music score, registrations, and tips and techniques to adapt the music to the film.

### *The Music*

There are four musical selections used for *Felix Goes to Hollywood*.

Comedy - Burlesque	Edward P. Favor
Allegro No. 1	Adolf Minot
The Squirrel Parade	Warner Crosby
June Bug Parade	Arthur H. Haskins

### *Registrations*

There are 5 different registrations available for each movie:

Theatre Organ - standard TO registrations  
Roland Atelier Organs  
Roland C-330, C-380  
Rodgers 500 Series  
Rodgers Infinity Organs

These Roland and Rodgers registrations\* are very simple to load to your pistons after you download them from our website.

1. Save the registration MIDI file to your organ USB drive.
2. Select the registration file and press PLAY.
3. After you hear a short musical phrase play, press PAUSE.
4. Hold SET and press the first piston you are saving the music on.

When completed with Step 4:

5. Press PLAY. After another short musical phrase, press PAUSE.
6. Hold SET and press the next piston in order.

Repeat the process to set the remaining pistons for FELIX.

*\*All these organs include theatre organ stops and combinations in the USER stop library. These pistons set them for you automatically from downloaded files.*

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## *The Music*

Many of the composers who wrote for silent movies are unfamiliar and wrote music no one has ever heard. (That can be a blessing - nobody knows if you make a mistake!) During the era of the silent films, most tiny movie houses would have a pianist, while medium and large houses had an organist (or two). And in big cities, movie houses might have full orchestras. Movie houses with orchestras also employed organists, with the music director scheduling the organist to play often when the orchestra would take breaks and at late night showings.

*Did the films arrive with a fully-composed score?* This was very rare. Most films relied on the local musician pulling music from their library as suggested by ‘cue sheets’ that arrived with the movies.

Many publishers sold collections of ‘movie mood music’ used to accompany films. Using these collections along with sheet music, it was up to the organist or pianist to compile their own scores, while a conductor would arrange the music for the size of orchestra that would play.

They did not have to use new music for every film. These collections included music titled “Hurry!”, “Misterioso”, “Furioso”, “Allegro”, “Romance”, and more; designed to be used for various scenes. Since these musical selections were not heard in the general public, musicians could get away with using the same selections in other films.

Some of this music still exists in library collections and on the internet. We work to use music of the period for our scores.

Is it legal to play this music for movies? Yes, the music we use is all in the public domain in the USA, but the term of copyright restrictions may be different in your country. For more background on copyright we suggest visiting the [www.imslp.org](http://www.imslp.org) copyright page for more information about copyrights in your country.

# Playing Silent Films

## The Cue Sheet.

When performing, print out the cue sheet and place it within easy view.

During the film, you will refer to it as needed to keep track of your progress through the score.

Order of the film. Helps you keep your place during the film.

“Stops” is the Piston suggestion for that selection.\*

“Warn Cue” indicates what to watch for to prepare the transition.

“Cue” is the action or frame on screen to begin the next selection.

“Time” is useful when practicing. Knowing the exact time of the cue makes it easy for you to rewind and practice the transition.

FROG MUSIC PRESS CUE SHEET				
for				
FELIX IN HOLLYWOOD				
PAT SULLIVAN COMIC - 1923				
No.	Stops	Warn Cue	Cue	Time
1. Comedy Burlesque.....	18/5.....	Title.....		00 00
2. Allegro No. 1 .....	18/1.....	Store owner cries.....	Felix taps store owner. ....	01 25
3. The Squirrel Parade.....	18/3.....	“California” .....	Felix yawns .....	04 14
4. June Bug Parade.....	18/4 .....	Chaplin running.....	“That ruins my...” .....	06 27
5. Comedy Burlesque.....	18/5.....	Felix with Contract.....	The End.....	07 50

\*Registration files and sheets are available for download from our website: [www.frogmusic.com](http://www.frogmusic.com)

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*Playing Silent Films*

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FROG MUSIC PRESS CUE SHEET  
*for*  
FELIX IN HOLLYWOOD

PAT SULLIVAN COMIC - 1923

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<i>No.</i>	<i>Stops</i>	<i>Warn Cue</i>	<i>Cue</i>	<i>Time</i>
1. Comedy Burlesque.....	18/5.....		Title.....	00 00
2. Allegro No. 1 .....	18/1.....	Store owner cries.....	Felix taps store owner. ....	01 25
3. The Squirrel Parade.....	18/3.....	"California" .....	Felix yawns .....	04 14
4. June Bug Parade.....	18/4 .....	Chaplin running.....	"That ruins my... ..	06 27
5. Comedy Burlesque.....	18/5.....	Felix with Contract.....	The End.....	07 50

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## *Lesson 1 - Playing the Film*

### *What do I do first?*

Learn the music and the movie.

You can sit down and study them both on their own, getting an idea of how the movie flows and learning the notes.

For the first film, FELIX IN HOLLYWOOD, you simply play the music through in order, starting and stopping the music as cued on the cue sheet. Don't worry about making transitions, just settle in and play.

When you are familiar with the story and the music, sit down, start the movie and play along.

Eventually, you'll find it useful to rewind to the transition points where you go from one piece to another, figuring out what sections you might need to repeat to fill out the scene with music and what sections you might need to drop out to end when you should.

This becomes natural before long.



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# *Playing Silent Films*

## *Transitions*

Transitions from one piece to the next in this lesson is simple. End the piece, pause for a moment and begin the next one.

Once you feel comfortable moving from one piece to the next without much preparation, begin watching the movie closely for the *WARN CUE*.

Originally, only the CUE was listed - the moment where the music changes. We add a WARN CUE to help the player prepare for the transition. The *WARN CUE* will help jog your memory and get you ready to make the CUE change.

After just a few times through the movie scenes, it should begin to feel natural - like watching for the ushers to line up before bringing the collection forward.

## *Playing the Film*

Are you ready to play the film?

You should have:

1. Learned the music and feel comfortable with it.
2. Hooked up the DVD player.
3. Copied the Cue Sheet.
4. Watched the film following along with the Cue Sheet.
5. Loaded the Registrations.

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## *Practicing the Transitions*

Learn to pause the film and back up on your device.

When practicing you'll find yourself playing through a scene to the CUE, begin playing the new music and then stop and back up the movie as far as you need to start once again and do this all once more.

Continue this progress through to the end of the film. Your goal is to feel secure knowing when to start and stop as well as shortening by jumping forward in the score and repeating measures to fill time as needed.

An additional technique, once you feel comfortable with the film, is to practice in reverse. Start at the second to last cue, playing the final selection to the end, and so on. Learning the film in both directions - start to finish, and finish to start, can help to give you a sense of continuity when you are performing.

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## *Playing in Public*

How to get ready for this.

While learning the film, invite people who live with you to listen and watch parts of the movie - they'll be thrilled to see what you are up to and you will find this very encouraging.

Once you have a movie under your fingers, invite some friends over (or go to them if they have an organ).

The more opportunities you have to play for people watching the better you will get at playing and handling the distractions that can come to mind when playing. Having people watching over your shoulder will get you ready to play in front of an audience...especially since friends and family can be more critical than the public will be!

Also, when performing in a different place, plan ahead to have plenty of time to rehearse and go over the equipment you will be using. It's best, when possible, to do a dress rehearsal the day before to get everything right.

More about this aspect in future lessons.

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## ***Interpretation***

The first example of interpretation to *vary the tempo*.

Examples:

1. When Felix offers to show sadness, slow down a lot.
2. When Felix turns to showing happiness, speed up even a little faster than your original tempo, then settle back in the original tempo.

This may not sound like much, but is an effective way to affect the mood of the movie and will frequently find it useful.

In future lessons in this series, we will explore other ways of interpretation and include written out musical examples for you to use.

The first system of musical notation is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The right hand features a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The system concludes with a half note G4.

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. It includes a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5) in the right hand, marked with a '3' above the staff. The system ends with a half note G4.

The third system continues the piece. The right hand melody features a chromatic descent in the final measure, ending on a half note G4.

The fourth system contains a repeat sign followed by two endings. The first ending (marked '1.') leads back to the beginning of the system. The second ending (marked '2.') concludes the piece with a final chord in the right hand and a half note G4 in the left hand.

18/1

## Allegro No. 1

Adolf Minot

Allegro

The first system of music is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The treble staff features a melody of eighth notes with slurs and ties, starting with a forte (f) dynamic. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment of eighth notes.

The second system begins with a repeat sign and a box containing the letter 'A'. The treble staff continues the eighth-note melody. The bass staff features a more complex accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

The third system continues the musical development. The treble staff shows a continuation of the eighth-note pattern, while the bass staff maintains its accompaniment.

The fourth system continues the piece. The treble staff has a slight melodic variation, and the bass staff continues its accompaniment.

The fifth system concludes the piece. It features a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2.') leading to a 'Fine' marking. The treble staff has a final melodic flourish, and the bass staff provides a concluding accompaniment. The page number '19' is visible at the bottom right.

**B**

First system of musical notation for section B. It consists of a treble and bass staff in B-flat major. The treble staff has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, and a half note with a slur. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and rests.

Second system of musical notation. Similar to the first system, it features a treble and bass staff in B-flat major. The treble staff continues the melodic line, and the bass staff continues the rhythmic accompaniment.

Third system of musical notation. The treble staff continues with a melodic line, and the bass staff continues with a rhythmic accompaniment. The key signature remains B-flat major.

Fourth system of musical notation. The treble staff ends with a trill (*tr*) on a half note. The bass staff continues with a rhythmic accompaniment. The system concludes with a double bar line.

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# *Playing Silent Films*

## ***What's Next?***

The first score we compiled was 58 minutes long. That was sort of a mistake, as there was so much music to pick, learn and adapt to the movie. We learn from experience, and we are sharing what we have learned and are learning with you.

One goal of this series is to give you the tips and techniques to create and perform movies on your own.

LESSON 2 is a short film DR. JECKYL AND MR. HYDE. This will be an exercise in creating your own transitions and techniques. We will give examples of how to add things to the music, and give you exercises to add them into your own playing.

We will also explore FELIX in more depth and include an advanced score for your enjoyment.

## ***Workshops Available***

We are available for workshops and performances.  
Contact us at Frog Music for more information!