The Golden Age of Sound Film

Generic Conventions

Film Genres

- Films can be organized into types
- These types will have stock characteristics
- Included in these conventions are the amounts, styles, and types of music
- Caution
  - Genres are vague
  - Many films are hybrids - combinations of two or more genres

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Overview

- Horror
  - *King Kong*
  - *Bride of Frankenstein*
- Action: *Adventures of Robin Hood*
- Romance: *Wuthering Heights*
- Western: *Stagecoach*
- Animation: Disney cartoons
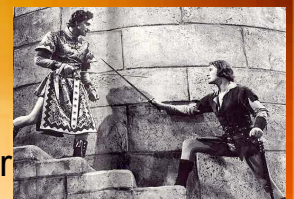

King Kong, 1933

- » Movie was in financial trouble
- » Asked Max Steiner to "save" picture
- » Composed lengthy score - "Steiner concert with pictures"
- » Characteristics - AFI Best Scores #13
  - » Full Symphony Orchestra
  - » Depicts wide range of emotions
  - » Two main leitmotifs: Beauty and Beast
  - » Also note Mickey Mousing - mimicking physical actions

Beauty and Beast Themes

- » King Kong theme: 3 descending notes
  - » Thematic transformation
    - » Terrorizing at the beginning
    - » Sympathetic at the end
  - » Character is transformed through music
- » Beauty (Ann) theme: a waltz
  - » Heard initially as love theme
  - » After capture, theme reflects her terror
- » Sacrifice scene - Viewer Guide 9.1

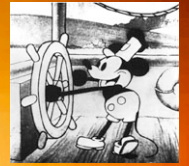## *Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938

- Action--swashbuckler
- Based on legend
- Music by Erich Korngold
  - One of Hollywood's greatest
  - Rich in orchestral colors--matching technicolor
  - AFI #11 greatest score
- Climax: Viewer Guide 9.2

Wuthering Heights 1939

❖ Based on novel by Emily Brontë

❖ Framed story in flashback

❖ Composer: Alfred Newman

   ❖ Strings are prominent

   ❖ Cathy theme dominates

❖ Opening frame: stranger seeks shelter

Animation Shorts

- Disney technical innovations
  - First sound cartoons
  - Negotiated 5 year exclusive rights to color
- *Steamboat Willie* (1928) is first sound cartoon: music is continuous
  - Walt could not afford an actor; he made the voices
  - Intended to premiere with The Jazz Singer (1927), but came a year later

Animation Shorts

- *Silly Symphonies* is a series with no recurring characters
- Some are miniature operas
- Carl Stalling is principal composer
- *The Three Little Pigs* is best known