



The Sheik & The Son of The Sheik

Music Notes by Eric Beheim

THE SHEIK

In compiling a musical score for Image Entertainment's video release of Rudolph Valentino's THE SHEIK, our goal was to come up with music which audiences would typically have heard back during the film's initial theatrical release in 1921-22. To the best of our knowledge, there was no original score prepared for THE SHEIK, nor could we locate a cue sheet giving suggestions for possible music to use. The film itself provided us with one definite lead: on two different occasions, Valentino's character sings (via title cards) the "Kashmiri Song" from *Four Indian Love Lyrics* (Woodfore-Finden/1902). In all likelihood, this was probably reprised as the love theme for the sheik and Diana, and we used it accordingly. The rest of the music was selected from material that would have been in print on or before 1922 and which evoked a decidedly Oriental mood.

Following the opening credits, the first scene shows a holy man standing on a balcony, calling the faithful to prayer. We underscored this using the oboe cadenza from the *Sampson et Dalila* "Bacchanale" by Saint-Saens. This immediately segues into "On the Steppes of Central Asia" by Borodin. (Many will recognize this theme as "The Sands of Time" from the musical *Kismet*, which was based on the music of Borodin.) The sheik's caravan starts off for the city of Biskra accompanied by "In the Sudan," a 1902 composition by Sebek which often turned up on cue sheets for films set in the Middle East. The establishing shots of Biskra itself were scored using "Danse de la Bacchante" from the ballet *Sylvia* by Leo Delibes. The initial meeting of the sheik and Diana outside the Casino is accompanied by the opening bars of "Kashmiri Song," played as an English Horn solo. The action moves inside, where a native girl is performing a sensuous dance. This was underscored using a 1922 selection entitled "Zulaikha," which may well have been inspired by the theatrical release of THE SHEIK. The film's first big set-piece is an Arab marriage lottery/bacchanal, to which Diana clandestinely gains entrance dressed as a dancing girl. The action suggests exotic music which is both boisterous and slightly barbaric. Our choice was "Dance of the Warriors" from the suite *Three African Dances* (Ring/1913). Later, when the sheik climbs a trellis and enters Diana's room via the balcony, we used "Dance of the Slave Maidens" from Borodin's *Polovetsian Dances*. (Thanks to its use in *Kismet*, this theme is popularly known as "Stranger in Paradise.")

The action soon shifts into the desert, where Diana is kidnapped by the sheik and taken to his oasis camp. Her entrance into his luxuriously appointed tent is underscored by the appropriately titled "In the Sheik's Tent," a 1921 composition undoubtedly inspired by THE SHEIK's highly successful theatrical release. Diana's entering the tent marks the beginning of a sexual cat-and-mouse game which reaches a climax during a terrific sandstorm. As the sheik reveals to Diana that her only alternative is to give herself to him, we used another one of the *Three African Dances*, which reprises a theme heard during the bacchanal in the Casino. Later, as he enters her room with the intention of raping her, he finds her in fervent prayer and is overcome with remorse. This emotional scene ends with



the sheik sending in a serving woman to comfort her. The entire sequence was scored using "Less than the Dust" from the *Four Indian Love Lyrics*. The real villain of THE SHEIK makes his appearance in the person of that colorful old character actor Walter Long. Playing "Omair the bandit," he and his caravan of cutthroats enter the scene to Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C-Sharp Minor" (heard here in a 1920 arrangement in G Minor!). A later scene of Omair plotting to capture Diana is underscored using "Weird Oriental Theme," a 1918 composition by Sol P. Levy which was very popular with silent film musicians. As Diana and her armed escort ride into the desert at sunset, we used "In Sight of the Oasis" (Baron/1917), a superior piece of silent film incidental music which could easily stand on its own as a concert number. Captured by Omair and his riders, Diana, in a swoon, is carried off on horseback to the bandit's fortress-like stronghold to an excerpt from the *Sampson et Dalila* "Bacchanal." As she recovers consciousness and becomes aware of her perilous situation, the music heard is Delibes' "La Grotte D'Orion" from the ballet *Sylvia*. Predictably, the sheik and his men stage a daring night attack on Omair's stronghold to rescue her. In keeping with the furious action, we used "Heavy Dramatic Agitato No.1" (Luz/1917), which was adapted from the 11 Guarny Overture by Gomez. Injured in the battle and near death, the sheik is brought back to his camp, where his loyal followers appeal to Allah to spare him. This dramatic sequence was scored using "Till I Awake," another of the Four Indian Love Lyrics. Ultimately, the sheik regains consciousness and is reunited with the now-willing Diana. For this tender closing scene, we reprise "Kashmiri Song," which carries through the end titles.

THE SON OF THE SHEIK

Having the opportunity to compile a music score for THE SON OF THE SHEIK has special meaning for me. When I was 15 years old, I saw it at a library screening in Cleveland, Ohio. It was the first full-length silent feature film I'd ever seen and even though the print was shown silent, it served to kindle a life-long interest in watching and studying silent feature films. Later, after I had begun preparing synchronized silent film scores, I often thought about doing a score for THE SON OF THE SHEIK, if for no other reason than so that some other young film buff, seeing it for the first time, could experience it with the added dimension that music provides. To the best of our knowledge, no original score was prepared for THE SON OF THE SHEIK upon its original theatrical release. A cue sheet prepared by Ernst Luz for the film's general release does survive, but is so riddled with musical incongruities that to have followed its suggestions would only have distracted from the film rather than complemented it. Therefore, it was decided to compile a score using selections such as might have been used in one of the big, first-run New York movie palaces when the film was initially released. Following the opening titles, the film fades in on the camp of a band of desert outlaws, the most unsavory of which is Ghabah the Moor, played by Montague Love. We assigned him the opening, ominous bars of Borodin's *Symphony No. 2* as his theme. Next we meet the film's comic relief character, a tiny Arab known as "the Pincher." His theme is an excerpt from the *Aida* ballet music by Verdi. The film then introduces the heroine Yasmin. In a flashback, we see her first meeting with Ahmed, son of the original sheik. This serves to introduce their love theme: Borodin's "Nocturne" (popularly known as "This Is My Beloved" from its use in *Kismet*). Scenes of Ahmed and his servants galloping over the desert sand dunes are accompanied by music from Massenet's



Herodiade Ballet Suite. As Ahmed and Yasmin meet and pledge their love, a second love theme is introduced: "Ah, Moon of My Desire" from *In a Persian Garden* by Lehmann. Later, after Ahmed is captured and trussed up inside some abandoned ruins, his rescue is underscored using music from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq D'Or* Suite. Ghabah and his motley band of entertainers stage a parade through the streets of a desert town, accompanied by Strauss's "Egyptian March." Later, when Yasmin performs her veil dance in the Café Mauré it is to music from *Caucasian Sketches* by Ippolitov-Ivanov. One of the highlights of this film is seeing Valentino and Agnes Ayres reprise their original roles as the sheik and Diana. The scene set in their desert villa opens with "The Egyptians" from Massenet's *Herodiade* Ballet Suite. Scenes showing the old sheik and Diana together are underscored using "Kashmir' Song," their love theme from *THE SHEIK*. After the villainous Ghabah has been dispatched and Ahmed and Yasmin are reunited, they ride off together into the sunset to a reprise of "Moon of My Desire."

THE SHORT SUBJECTS

The three Valentino short subjects included on this program provide us with a welcome opportunity to leave the desert sands behind and return to jazz age America of the 1920s. *RUDOLPH VALENTINO AND HIS 88 AMERICAN BEAUTIES* (1923) is a documentary of an actual beauty pageant which Valentino hosted in Madison Square Garden. We scored it using music originally written for the Ziegfeld Follies back in the 'teens and early '20s. For good measure, we also threw in a few fox trots from that era, including "Ain't We Got Fun." *THE SHEIK'S PHYSIQUE* provided the perfect opportunity for us to introduce the fox trot most often associated with Valentino, "The Sheik of Araby." (Being pseudo-Oriental, it would otherwise have been out of place had it been used in *THE SHEIK* or *THE SON OF THE SHEIK*.) Newsreel footage of Valentino's funeral in New York City was scored primarily using music from the opera *Azora*, written by Henry Hadley. The brief clip from *THE SON OF THE SHEIK* was underscored by Ernst Luz's exotic "Poppy Theme" (1917). The closing moments, including the funeral cortege to the church, utilizes "Westlawn Dirge" (1910), by Karl L. King, better known as a composer of stirring marches and circus galops.

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