



William Susman
Music for Moving Pictures

WINNER
BEST DOCUMENTARY SHORT
TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL, NEW YORK

When Medicine Got it Wrong (2009)

A film by Katie Cadigan and Laura Murray

Joan Jeanrenaud: cello, all string parts

William Susman: piano, keyboards

1. Research - No Money :3:26
2. Hospital :2:57
3. When Medicine Main Title - Premonition. . . :2:40
4. Hinkley - Kenny Woe. :2:40
5. The First Meeting - State Office :2:41
6. Full Humanity - Hundreds of Hours - Capitol Hill. . :3:04
7. If I Could do Anything - Steve :2:22
8. Make Themselves Heard - From Childhood . :2:07
9. Friends Newsletters - Hoffmans :3:07
10. Tell Your Mother - Committed - Kenny Murder. . . :2:27
11. Wonder - Oliphant - Tony Future :2:31

Balancing Acts: A Jewish Theater in the Soviet Union (2008)

A film by Sam Ball, Kate Stilley and William Susman

Joan Jeanrenaud: cello, all string parts

Mira Stroika: accordion, vocals

William Susman: piano, keyboards

12. Balancing Acts Main Title - Pale :3:53
13. Chagall's Shtetl :2:57
14. Theatre & Fireworks - Mikhoel's Vodka :1:53
15. Lear - Stalin :2:37
16. Arrested - Luck - End Credits :2:53

Native New Yorker (2005)

A film by Steve Bilich

William Susman: piano, keyboards

17. Native New Yorker (score runs without pause) . . :13:02

Total Time: **57:15**

Music for Moving Pictures

Films during the Silent Era were called *moving pictures*. Live performance of the music helped provide a “narrative” and intensify the emotion. Setting the mood for these early films, a musician, often a pianist, performed live accompanying the projection of the film. In some of the larger movie houses an organist or orchestra played a score live-to-picture or improvised to pre-determined themes.

The three documentaries collected on this CD are connected through their usage, in varying degrees, of historical footage and vintage cameras dating back to the 1920s.

When Medicine Got it Wrong blends historical film with contemporary imagery telling the story of parents who rocked psychiatry. **Balancing Acts: A Jewish Theater in the Soviet Union** relies entirely on archival footage from the first decades of the Soviet Union. **Native New Yorker** is a contemporary silent film shot before, during and after 9/11 with a hand-cranked 1924 Ciné-Kodak camera.

Although these films cover vastly different subjects, the music they feature plays a significant and vital role, helping to create and ultimately become part of the narrative.

Produced by William Susman • Engineered by Stephen Hart
Recorded at Bay Area Sound Studios, San Rafael, CA
Sept. 2 & 3, 2008 (When Medicine) Sept. 26 & Oct. 12, 2008 (Balancing Acts)
January 2005 (Native New Yorker)

Cover Design by Daniel Sofer/hermosawave
Photo Credits: Alessandro Moruzzi (Jean Jeanrenaud),
See Ming Lee (Mira Stroika)

All compositions ©2005-2009 by William Susman (ASCAP)

When Medicine Got It Wrong

When Medicine Got it Wrong is the groundbreaking story of loving parents who rocked the halls of psychiatry, changing how we understand schizophrenia. In the 1970s, a small group of parents rebelled against then-popular psychiatric theories blaming schizophrenia on bad parenting. Their activism helped revolutionize treatment forever and their stories reveal the origins of the tragic state of mental health care today. This is a film by Katie Cadigan and Laura Murray.

Balancing Acts: A Jewish Theatre in the Soviet Union

Moscow, January 1948. In the bitter cold, a large crowd attends the State Funeral of the Yiddish actor and director Solomon Mikhoels. An official proclamation mourns the death of “a great People’s Artist of the Soviet Union.” What people are really mourning is the death of the most popular Jewish theater in the Soviet Union, and the man who kept it alive against all odds for over 20 years. No doubt many suspected the truth: he had just been assassinated by Stalin’s secret police. This film by Sam Ball, Kate Stilley and William Susman tells the story of an exhilarating and ultimately tragic experiment in modern Jewish theater.

Native New Yorker

This silent documentary with an original score was filmed through the eye of a 1924 hand-crank spring-wound Ciné-Kodak camera. The film features Terry ‘Coyote’ Murphy representing the Native American influence on the isle of Manhattan.

Coyote, a Shaman Trail Scout, takes a journey which transcends time, weaving from Inwood Park (where the island was traded for beads and booze), down a long native path (now called ‘the great white way’, more commonly known as ‘Broadway’), to the lower reaches of Manhattan into ‘ground zero’ (which is now a sacred burial ground for not just the American Indian and the slaves of yesteryear, but for the newest natives of this island empire as well).

Native New Yorker - shot before, during and after 9/11 - took several years of filming, with a running time of 13 minutes this is a film by Steve Bilich.

Composer's Comments

When I compose music for a film, I try to make an organic connection to what I see and hear on screen and how I approach the score. I listen for music that may already be in the film or, perhaps performed by one of the characters.

In *When Medicine Got it Wrong*, one of the leads plays guitar. For my main title theme, I have combined a variation on the harmony from a song he plays with an original melody. I chose a basic instrumentation of strings and piano. Knowing that cellist Joan Jeanrenaud would perform the score helped me conceptualize and orchestrate string parts that bring out her strengths and unique sound qualities.

In *Balancing Acts*, there is archival footage of a musical theatre number whose harmonic and melodic sound drive one of the themes I composed for Marc Chagall. The choice of the instrumentation: clarinet, piano, strings, cimbalom, accordion and voice derive from the Eastern European tradition. Mira Stroiika's haunting vocals and Joan Jeanrenaud's lyric and ethereal cello recall the story and Chagall's vibrant color palette in sound.

Because *Native New Yorker* is a "silent film", I could only create a link between my score and visuals. Unlike my other scores, there was no actual "indigenous" music on screen that could inform my themes. Instead, I chose an instrumentation inspired by the abundance of so many New York City street musicians in the film. Violin and guitar buskers appear as well as drummers. The piano is an homage to the musicians who played in the first movie houses. Native American chanting, as well as Middle Eastern vocalizing, reflect characters, actions and events both on and off screen. The breathy sounds of the native flutes are emblematic of the life force present and shared by all cultures.

William Susman

William Susman belongs to the generation of American composers that came of age in the late twentieth century, received traditional academic training while remaining thoroughly engaged with popular music (in his case, jazz), and who went on to establish careers for themselves outside the academic establishment.

Susman's music is notable for his integration of a variety of influences, including the Western classical tradition, Afro-Cuban music, free jazz, and a variety of non-Western folk traditions. Rhythm plays a strong role in his music through musical devices such as the Afro-Cuban Montuño, Medieval Hocket and Isorhythm.

Susman has written orchestral and chamber music for concert performance, as well as jazz and film scores. The Chicago native was trained in both classical and jazz piano. His orchestral and chamber music has been widely performed, and his music has been played by soloists such as Joan Jeanrenaud, formerly of the Kronos Quartet, and Joseph Gramley of the Silk Road Ensemble. He has been especially active in the area of film scoring, focusing particularly on documentary films.

— Stephen Eddins / *All Music Guide*



Joan Jeanrenaud, cello

Grammy-nominated recording artist Joan Jeanrenaud is best known for the more than 2,000 concerts she performed throughout the world during her impressive tenure with the Kronos Quartet. Jeanrenaud left Kronos in 1999 to pursue different artistic directions including solo and collaborative projects. As a solo artist she has premiered more than twenty compositions written for her. Since 1999, she has composed many works for cello including *Be With*, which won the Isadora Duncan Dance Award for best composition in 2001-02. In 2009, her solo CD *Strange Toys* was nominated for a Grammy.



Mira Stroika, accordion and vocals

Mira Stroika is a vocalist, accordionist, pianist and songwriter whose musical style melds cabaret and her Klezmer roots with a glam rock sensibility. A classically trained musician and former student of William Susman, Stroika is a staple in the New York music scene where she regularly performs original songs and cabaret repertoire with her brass band. Stroika is a graduate of Yale University where she studied music, theater, political science and video art.

