

Musical Treasure Chest #46

I love old movies, particularly romances from the 1930s and 40s. There is a certain fantastical quality to them that makes me yearn to jump into the screen and be part of it. I have a soft spot for old musicals, no matter how flimsy or farfetched the plot, they transport you out of your day-to-day life. I was thinking about old movies this past weekend as we filmed our next video short. I don't want to reveal too much, but we had a chance to work in the Kenmore Ballroom in downtown Albany, which is a wonderful landmark site, and played host to the great bands of the 20s, 30s and 40s. Newly renovated, but retaining the flavor of its heritage, the ballroom is beautiful and evocative. We had a blast filming, stepping a bit out of our comfort zone. The video will be ready in April, and I will tell you more about it over the next weeks. I have attached a picture, so you get a taste of what we were up to!



But thinking back to these movies, one of my favorites is the **Nelson Eddy/Jeannette MacDonald movie *Maytime***. Released in 1937 by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the film is loosely based on Sigmund Romberg's 1917 operetta *Maytime*, though very little of Romberg's original music remains in the movie. I think I am particularly fond of this movie because the love story is so sweet and the music is just marvelous. Not only does it feature lilting 1930s songs such as "Will You Remember," but the movie includes a veritable panoply of great opera excerpts by Donizetti, Rossini, Wagner, Meyerbeer, Delibes, Gounod and more. Both Jeannette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy were superb singers. Eddy, in fact, enjoyed a great opera career singing throughout Europe and America performing on the stages at major opera houses. He also gave frequent vocal recitals, including at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall in the 1920s (presented by the Troy Chromatic Concerts). Eddy's career and life story are a fascinating and worthwhile read. MacDonald came to opera formally a bit later in life, working with Lotte Lehman in the 1940s and appearing in performances at opera houses in Canada and America. But she has a natural crystalline soprano with much musicality, even from her earliest movies.

Nelson and Jeannette made eight movies together in a span of about a dozen years. There is much speculation about their personal relationship, with some proof of an intense and long-lasting love affair that continued until Jeannette's passing in 1965 (she had a congenital heart condition). Without doubt there is a palpable chemistry between them. I think *Maytime* is my favorite, though certainly *Naughty Marietta* and *Girl of the Golden West* are not far behind. But the story of *Maytime* is so poignant and the cinematography so gorgeous, I can never watch it without a box of tissues in my lap for the final scene.

David Janower was a huge fan of their movies too. One of the last times I saw David before he passed, we listened together to a CD of Eddy/MacDonald musical soundtracks. David's enjoyment of the music was spread over his face, I will always hold that memory dear. I share with you today some excerpts from ***Maytime*** and ***Naught Marietta***. You can also rent the movies on Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kt72phbQG1w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bFcsARGupg&t=33s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xpKeabZIEs>