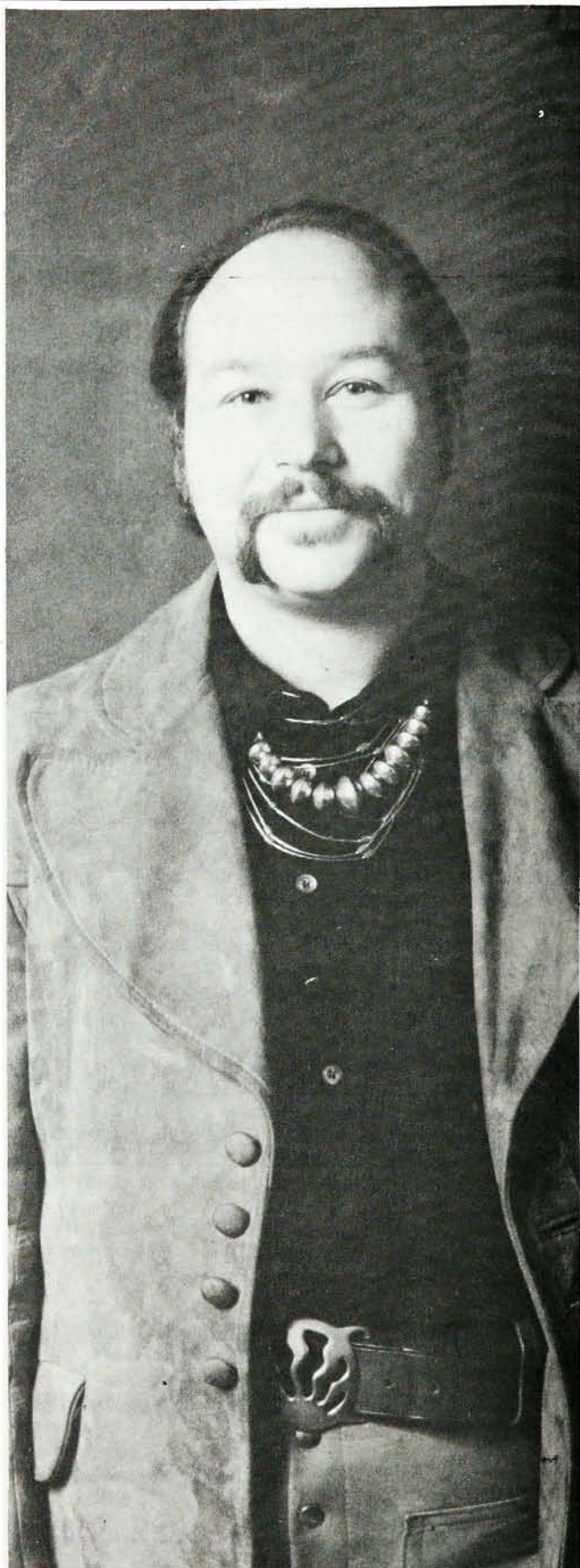


paul hoffert

thriving on variety

by robert paton

Having traveled many musical roads, Paul Hoffert is composing music for film. After his major contribution to the success of *Outrageous*, he's now working with Jules Dassin on *Circle of Two*. He comments on the composer-director relationship.



Paul Hoffert is a jazz composer. At the age of sixteen he had completed **Jazz Roots Of Paul Hoffert**, his first album.

A few years later, while his days were spent studying physics at the University of Toronto, Hoffert devoted his evenings to applying his musical skills at various local clubs, establishing his role in the jazz world as a talented composer and performer.

In the mid-sixties, in New York, Paul Hoffert met Skip Prokop and together they founded the rock orchestra Lighthouse. Success, awards, and world tours followed in their wake. But, plagued with personnel changes, Lighthouse disbanded in the mid-seventies.

Since that time, Hoffert has been busy composing for the stage, television and film. With his wife Brenda, he composed the soundtrack for the movie **Outrageous**, and many other films. Currently, he is at work on the production **Circle of Two** which just finished principal photography in Toronto.

Interviewed at his home, Paul Hoffert spoke of his attitudes toward the Arts, his involvement with film, and his commitment to music.

Cinema Canada: Mr. Hoffert, you have composed music for the stage, television and film. Each has its own specific structure to work within. Have you experienced any artistic restrictions in dealing with film?

Paul Hoffert: For me, having the form of your music dictated very strictly by the visual content is not a restriction. It's a very comfortable aid in shaping the music. Within those confines is an incredible amount of freedom.

Perhaps it's my mathematical background, but those so-called restrictions give me a structure to start with, and from that I can take my music many different ways.

That's probably why I enjoy writing for film: I want to write for film.

Have you ever committed yourself to writing a score, then once you had started, found yourself unmotivated by it?

Well, that's a difficult question to answer. Technically speaking, if the producer is happy with your work, and as a result asks you to do more, then you've been successful at your craft. But to be honest, there are some films that I've been artistically unhappy with; the music and the film. I find it difficult to separate the two.

The pictures that work well are generally easy to write music for: ones that have difficulties usually produce problems for the music, and the problems are not always solvable.

Take a scene that doesn't work: if the music is added to aid it, chances are you will see the deficiencies of the scene. It's possible for this method to work, but it's a philosophy that shouldn't be taken. Generally speaking, it's easier to strengthen something that is already strong.

Robert Paton is a musician, composer and free-lance writer living in Toronto.

Music can be very helpful in a scene that is neutral. It's actually the best type of scene to work with, a myriad of emotional qualities can be written into it.

Often, a scene that is extremely strong is much better without any music at all. Many of the disagreements that I have with producers will centre around their need for more music than what I feel is warranted.

Have you had any major problems with producers?

No, not really. Although, many of the pictures I've worked on in Canada tend to fall apart in the subject of theme, and I feel that this is a fault of the producers.

Canada is still an inexperienced country in terms of world movie production; we have a lot to learn.

Producers must be a very important artistic cog in the wheel. Generally they are thought of as the financial organizers, and the director is usually credited for being the more creative one. I feel they should play equally large parts in the area of artistic co-ordination.

*Right now you are working on **Circle of Two**. What are your feelings concerning that picture?*

It's an absolute pleasure. I've worked with the producers before. Bill Marshall and Henk Van der Kolk: we have an excellent working relationship. But working with the director, Jules Dassin, has proven to be a wonderful experience; his conception and appreciation of the role of music in a film is very similar to mine.

Jules is the first director that I've worked with that



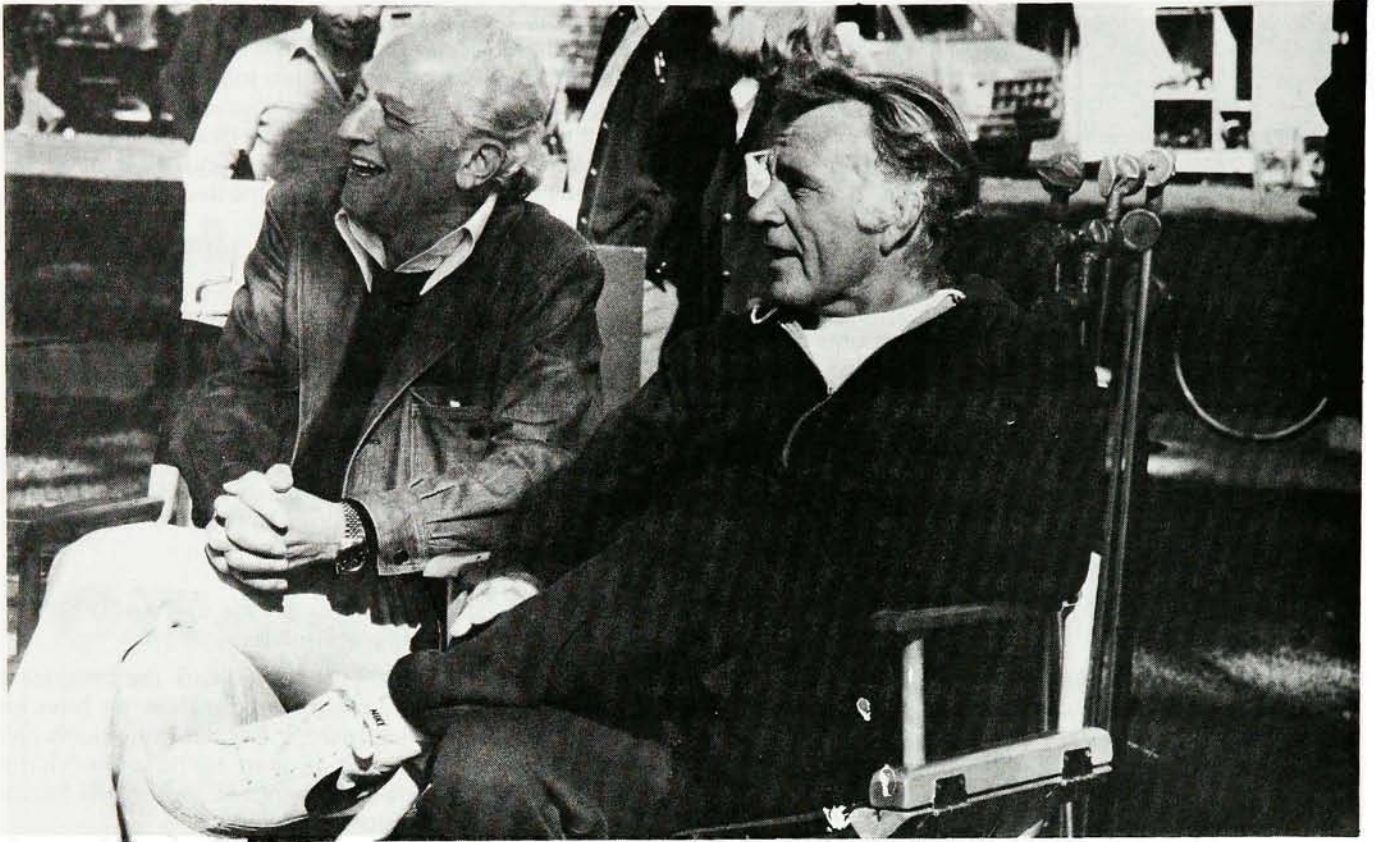
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Director Jules Dassin with Richard Burton, momentary spectators on the set of *Circle of Two*

spends time and meticulous care in the planning of every bit of music in the film. We go over everything.

If we're preparing to shoot a scene, and in the background there must be a string quartet, bagpipes, banjo, etc., then at least a week beforehand I'll audition the people necessary. I'll make my suggestions as to what the music should be, then Jules will give me a decision, and after that, a cassette tape of the music will be made. With the tape, Jules will then block out his scene to the rhythmic feeling of the music.

It is the first time I've worked on a picture that when something in the background is to be playing, the producers and directors haven't decided to slot it in later.

So this is not a normal practice?

No. Usually the scene is shot, and then the appropriate source music is found.

Mind you, I've been trying to get producers to agree to this method of detailed work, but that is very difficult to achieve. I must say though, it is certainly a pleasure that we're doing it for *Circle of Two*.

*You wrote the soundtrack to **Outrageous**, and that was a success. Do you look for a film that has the potential to become a commercial success before undertaking it?*

Not really. To be honest, my wife Brenda and I read the script to *Outrageous* and thought that it was terrific, but we didn't think the commercial potential would be that large. We thought the audience appeal would probably be

very limited. I must admit, I was rather pleased when I found out that **Outrageous** became a success.

The reason we did it was we thought it was a film to be made, it was a good film. I wouldn't have felt bad if it hadn't been a success, it was a good experience. And as a result, it was a good movie.

Have you ever wished to transcend your Canadian reputation for the recognition that is often synonymous with working in the States?

No. If I had any desire to be working in the States — then I'd be there.

I had an opportunity about two years ago: a major studio from Hollywood called and offered me a couple of features and a television series, but to accept that would have meant for my family and me to move down there. I like the Disneyland quality of life, but I don't think I would like to live in Hollywood. I wouldn't feel one-hundred percent comfortable.

Mind you, if I couldn't get work in Canada, then I would probably leave. Fortunately, I can get work here, so while that continues, I'll remain.

Although I'm originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., I no longer identify with the Americans or their country. I've been a Canadian for a long time, my formative years were spent here. Generally speaking, I don't enjoy the States nearly as much as Canada. I think we live in a great place.

What is your attitude toward Canadian artists who leave

to work in the States?

Everyone owes their career and their artistic integrity the opportunities to maximize their artistic ability. The reason I choose to stay is because I can find work, and as a result, live quite comfortably.

Then again, if I couldn't find work, I certainly wouldn't allow my career to be stifled creatively. I'd go where I could be creative.

I think we should support people who feel they need to move because of their career development.

As Canadians, we shouldn't feel so self-conscious. We operate in a global environment and we should be proud of what we are. There is absolutely no reason why we should not accept the added experience and expertise of people from other parts of the world. The chances are, they have been doing it a lot longer.

Do you think Canadians tend to be nationalistic in their approach to the arts?

Well, Canadians, as we all know, have a strange duality: on one hand we have a strong nationalistic urge to protect and conserve whatever we think we are; on the other hand, we have an incredible inferiority complex. We don't know what it is we are and maybe we don't have anything to protect. I think both of these approaches, in the extreme sense, are totally unwarranted.

It's a silly procedure for producers to disguise Canada in

their films. If a script requires a New York or London location, then that is what should be in the film. If it needn't be, then there is no reason why Toronto, or anywhere else in Canada for that matter, should be any less attractive to movie-goers than Chicago, Los Angeles, etc.

We shouldn't be so self-conscious, we must become more comfortable with ourselves.

What will you be working on in the near future?

The next project will be a children's album that Brenda and I have done. Actually, it's completed and it will be released in Canada around Christmas, then throughout the world shortly after. Over the next few years we'll probably do quite a number of projects for children.

As for film, I think my next one will be a Canadian production entitled **Midnight Matinee** (formerly **Patman**). Its lead will be James Coburn and Kate Nelligan.

In closing, what do you feel has been your best achievement to date?

What I'm most proud of is my violin concerto.

I wrote it partially as a challenge, partially to expand myself in that area, and partially as a commission. About three-and-a-half years ago I was very fortunate to work with, and have as a performer, Steven Staryk. We recorded a 'direct to disc', and I must admit, I haven't tired of it yet. It will be released throughout the world very soon, and I hope a lot of people get to listen to it. □

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF FINE ARTS

FILM PRODUCTION EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 1980

The Concordia University Faculty of Fine Arts is now inviting applications for a full-time position in Film Production within its growing programme in Film Production and Film Studies.

FILM PRODUCTION POSITION: The successful candidate will be required to teach three courses which primarily utilize Super 8 equipment. Other possible areas of teaching experience or professional expertise include 16mm lip sync film production, 16mm non-lip sync film production of an "independent" or "experimental" orientation, scriptwriting, editing, or 16mm cinematography. Administrative duties in connection with film production and broader University functions are also involved. The most important and immediate of these duties will be a term as Head of Film Production, (co-ordinator of film production activities within the larger Cinema programme).

Preference will be given to those with significant professional experience in the film industry or in film education, or an extensive record of independent filmmaking.

Rank and salary will depend on the applicant's qualifications and experience.

A working knowledge of French is considered an asset.

The deadline for applications is January 1, 1980, or when the position has been filled.

All letters of application must be accompanied by a complete curriculum vitae and the names of three persons who would be prepared to serve as references.

Please address all inquiries and/or applications to:

Asst. Professor R.J. Parker, /Director, Division of Visual Arts, /Faculty of Fine Arts, /Concordia University, /1395 Dorchester W., /Room 238, /Montreal, P.Q.

CINEMA TECHNICIAN EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 1980 OR WHEN POSITION FILLED

The Faculty's Division of Visual Arts invites applications for the position of Cinema Technician to serve its expanding Cinema programme.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- A knowledge of 16mm & Super 8 film production equipment and demonstrable experience in both its use and maintenance.
- The desire and ability to work with students at various levels, and to provide assistance to both students and faculty when required.
- Bilingualism is considered an asset (French/English).

DUTIES:

- To carry out minor repairs, and to ensure that all equipment is properly used and maintained in good working order.
- To instruct students, as necessary, in the proper handling, care and use of minor equipment.
- Inventory control; booking, dispensing, and return of equipment, administration of supplies; and related paperwork.

The salary will depend upon the applicant's qualifications and experience.

The closing date for applications is December 7, 1979, or when the position is filled.