

# The Pleasure of His Company

Take an all-star cast (including Fred Astaire, Debbie Reynolds, Lili Palmer, Tab Hunter, Gary Merrill and Charlie Ruggles), a hit Broadway show (*The Pleasure of His Company* by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner), a world-class director (George Seaton), and what could possibly go wrong? The answer is, in a word – nothing. Paramount and Perlberg-Seaton snapped up the film rights to *The Pleasure of His Company*, which starred and was directed by Cyril Ritchard and which had a run of 474 performances. Co-author Samuel Taylor adapted the play for the screen and did a beautiful job of opening it up for film. Taylor was an expert in this sort of romantic comedy, having written the play *Sabrina Fair* (which Paramount and Billy Wilder brought to the screen as *Sabrina*), and Seaton was one of those directors who excelled in whatever film genre he was working in – and he worked in a lot of different genres, with such great movies as *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Apartment for Peggy*, *The Country Girl*, *Teacher's Pet*, *The Counterfeit Traitor*, *36 Hours*, and *Airport*.

The plot is a bubbly confection about a ne'er-do-well rich man named "Pogo" Poole (Astaire), who returns from his many travels to attend the wedding of his daughter Jessica (Reynolds), a debutante who hasn't seen her father since he and her mother (Palmer) divorced. Mom has remarried a straight-laced banker (Merrill), and Jessica is marrying a cattle rancher (Hunter) from the

Napa Valley. As in all bubbly confections, there are complications, misunderstandings, charm, laughs and the eventual happy ending. *The Pleasure of His Company* has all these in spades with an emphasis on the "pleasure."

As you'd expect from such a cast, the performers sparkle as much as the writing and direction. Astaire has a lot of fun in his role – at the time of this film he'd retired from dancing in film (his last film prior to *The Pleasure of His Company* had been a dramatic turn in Stanley Kramer's *On the Beach*), but he manages to do a few steps in a party scene. Astaire has charm to spare and so does Debbie Reynolds. Everyone else just seems to be having a great time, even with the occasional plot complications. Astaire was nominated for a Golden Globe® as Best Actor – Musical or Comedy.

Hired to compose the score was the great Alfred Newman, who'd recently ended his long tenure at Twentieth Century-Fox. Newman had scored several of Seaton's early films, including *Chicken Every Sunday*, *The Big Lift*, *For Heaven's Sake* and *Anything Can Happen*, and just as Seaton had migrated from Fox to Paramount, so, too, did Newman. There he scored both *The Pleasure of His Company* and Seaton's next Paramount film, *The Counterfeit Traitor*. Some years later, he scored Seaton's *Airport*, which would be the director's second-to-last film and Newman's last before he passed

away.

It's hard to imagine a more luscious, melodic, beguiling and captivating romantic comedy score than what Newman delivered for *The Pleasure of His Company*. The score gets off to a stunning start with a great Newman theme, "Lullaby in Blue" – a theme that is the cornerstone of the score and will reappear at frequent intervals. The main secondary theme occurs soon thereafter, Newman's *Pleasure of His Company* theme. There's a wonderful theme for Astaire, a kind of "traveling music" that is infectious and fun. And there are other lovely themes along the way to the happy ending. The score is like a sparkling glass of champagne – sophisticated, lush, witty, tender and pure Newman.

This is the first CD release for *The Pleasure of His Company* and we present the complete score, the source music, and some demo cues, mostly in stereo from the original session masters housed in the Paramount vaults. A world premiere score release by Alfred Newman is always cause for celebration – so, pop open the champagne and be prepared to be charmed by one of the greatest film composers who ever lived.

— Bruce Kimmel