Ole Virginny

by J. S. Samecnik Sam Fox (1916) One Step

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by **J. S. Samecnik** (whose biography may or may not be as follows)

John Stepan Zamecnik (pronounced <u>zam</u>-ish-nick) was a first generation American born in Ohio of Bohemian (now Czech Republic) parents who arrived in New York in 1870. His father was an accomplished musician, and saw this propensity in his son, so made sure he was musically trained early on in his youth. At 18 he was sent to the Prague Conservatory of Music to study all facets of music. This included a composition class with famed composer Anton Dvořák.

After graduation, in 1901 John had returned to the us and worked for three years as first violinist with the Pittsburgh Symphony, which at that time was under the direction of operetta and song composer Victor Herbert. Back in Cleveland, John married Mary Barbara Hodous in 1904, and they had two sons. In 1908 he became the musical director for the new Cleveland Hippodrome. This gave him a chance to have some of his compositions for stage and orchestra performed, and once they started showing movies, he quickly adapted to this by writing appropriate music that could be interchanged between films with similar scenarios. This would soon become his primary genre, and one that would influence cinema for quite some time.

In 1908 Zamecnik's first published piece with Sam Fox, *College Yell March*, began a long relationship with the Cleveland publisher that made him a force in the publishing industry. Indeed, the composer became as known for his popular works as his semi-classical ones. The publisher also saw promise in the film score snippets John had written, and soon started to publish them as well. Fox also published Zamecnik songs written for some stage musicals and other theatrical productions.

While at Fox, Zamecnik worked primarily as an arranger. He also composed both popular songs and waltzes in addition to orchestrated film cues under a variety of pseudonyms (up to 21 have been identified), perhaps in an effort to fatten up the perceived stable of Fox composers and not flood the market with his own. Zamecnik a musical resource that was obviously well-versed in classical writing and performance, yet did not put down popular styles, even embracing them to a degree. Even though he had been working for Fox for nearly a decade, Zamecnik was considered just a staff member. His considerable contributions paid off handsomely in 1919, however. As reported in the August 9, 1919 edition of The Music Trade Review: "Sam Fox Publishing Co., Cleveland, O., has just signed J. S. Zamecnik, the well-known composer and arranger, to a contract covering a period of years. It is understood that the contract calls for guarantee by the publishers of a large sum each year running into five figures"

By the early 1920s many larger budget feature films were accompanied by custom scores commissioned for that purpose, usually for the road-show productions that used live orchestras or mid-sized ensembles. Zamecnik was engaged for cues or musical sections for several of these films. For this reason and with Sam Fox's blessing he took the family to Los Angeles in 1924, same year he joined ASCAP, where the film industry was now centered. His full scores were obviously for silent films for the next three years

Now contracted by Paramount Pictures through an agreement with Sam Fox to provide and publish all of their film scores, J.S. wrote the music for the first film ever to win an Oscar for best picture, *Wings*, released in late 1927. Although *The Jazz Singer* had debuted two months before, and a few sound films were already in theaters, *Wings* still gained much notice as an essentially silent film with an added soundtrack. In this sense, Zamecnik became one of the first in his field to compose a full underscore for a film that would be used in perpetuity, rather than at the whim of a theater music director. Fox also published the score for performance in theaters not equipped with sound, something much to the composer's preferences, and some 4,000 copies were distributed.

Zamecnik retired from composing for the most part in 1933 after scoring *The Power and the Glory*, working only occasionally as a consultant or arranger and continuing his radio appearances. His official obituary printed in the major papers after his death at 81 in 1953 noted that he had composed the scores for *Wings* and *Abie's Irish Rose*, but little else. John Zamecnik was entombed at the Inglewood Mausoleum near Los Angeles International Airport.

For a great example of Zamecnik's work, one only needs to turn to his score for the 1927 film *Wings*, which was recently re-orchestrated and reunited with the picture in 2011 through the valiant efforts of San Francisco pianist and silent film historian Frederick Hodges. He understood the relationship between the music and the screen action, giving an emotional thrust to the road show version of the film that would have been greatly diminished without the careful thought he put into it.

Content from Wikipedia.





















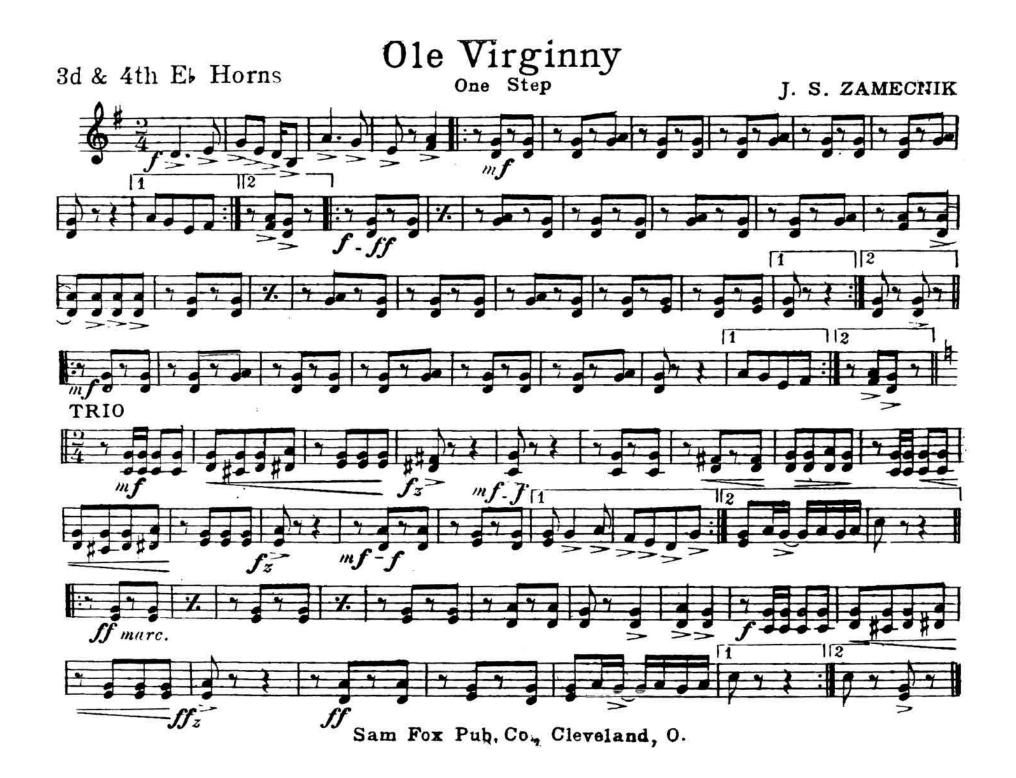




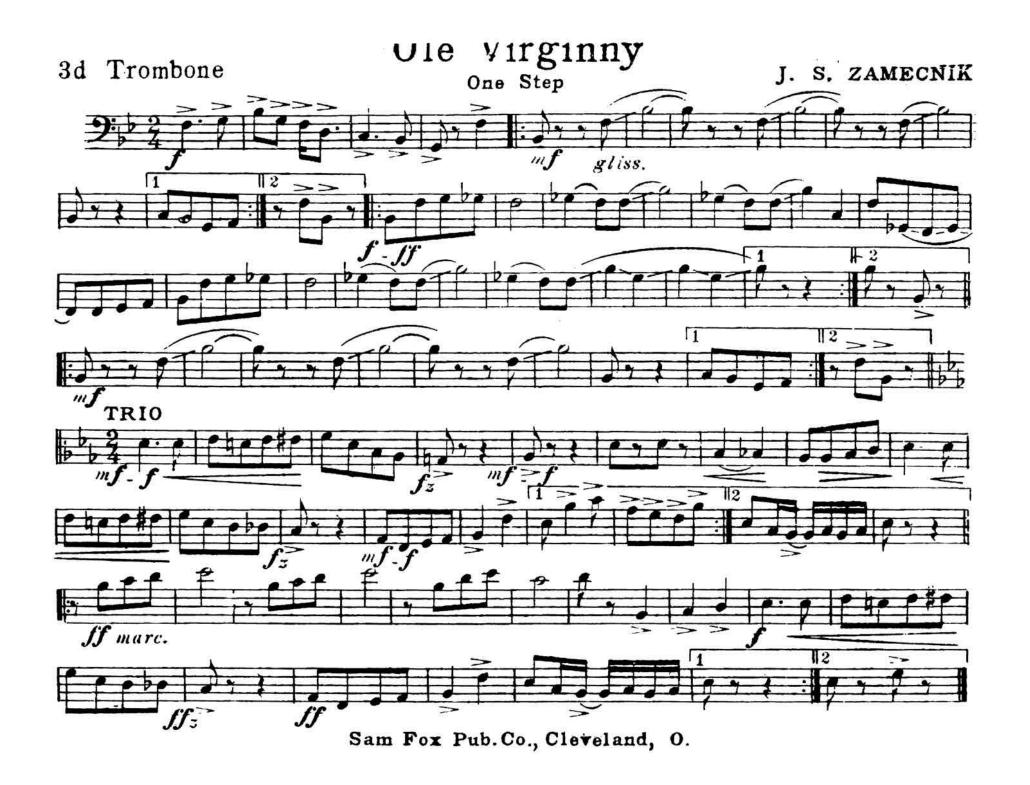


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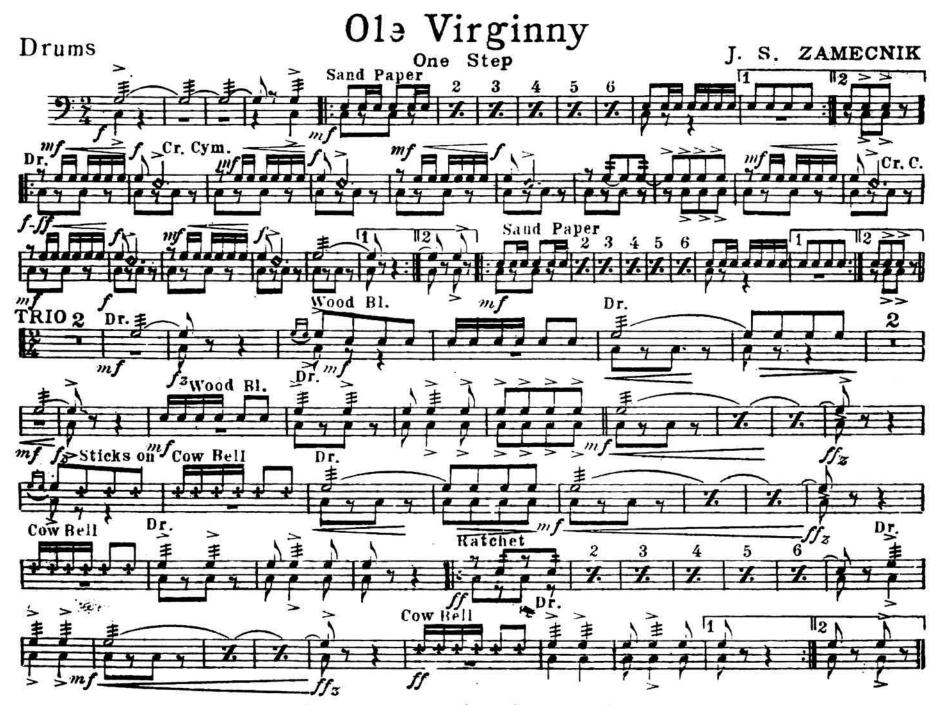


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