### **JUNE 2015**

## HELLO WORLD













Is there a link between music and science? People who tend to have an aptitude for science also tend to have an aptitude for music. Whether researching cures for infectious disease or the proper music credits on a 1914 film, some of the skills are the same. You use all your resources, and you compile all the information. And, in both science and film history, sometimes you have to make educated guesses as to what really happened. In his day job, Dr. Jon Mirsalis is the Managing Director of the Biosciences Division at SRI International and holds Ph.D. degrees in toxicology and genetics. But at night, the Phantom of the Opera comes out, as a piano accompanist for silent films. An accomplished pianist, Jon has performed at a number of major film festivals and has also recorded scores for many video and short subjects. Jon's Internet Movie Database page is impressive! You don't suppose his genetics research has discovered the piano gene — do you?

A fun part of his hobby is meeting the film actors and actresses: Fayard Nicholas, half of the famous Nicholas Brothers dancers; Ben Burtt, 12-time Oscar nominee and four-time Oscar winner for sound effects for *Star Wars, Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *E.T.*, and voice of R2D2 and Wall-E; Fay Wray, star of the original *King Kong* in 1933; Loretta Young, classic Hollywood star (who had a daughter by Clark Gable); Ruby Keeler, star of the original *42nd Street*; and Billie Dove, silent film star and mistress of Howard Hughes. An extension of his hobby is rare film research and restoration, particularly when it comes to the films of Lon Chaney, Sr. (can you spot his picture on this page?).

If you have ever attended a presentation by Jon, you know that he is a captivating speaker. He makes the subject of infectious disease fascinating. I had the pleasure of listening to his SRI Fellows Award presentation, and I enjoyed learning about his career. Jon has a broad background in drug development and has personally been involved in the development of over 50 therapeutic drugs that have entered clinical trials. He has also published extensively in the areas of genetic toxicology, mechanisms of carcinogenesis and development of therapeutics for cancer and infectious disease. I think there is more than an educated guess going on! Perhaps it is the music that is creating the ability to just get it right.

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