

JAZZ HANDS

Wilmette Theatre's resident pianist brings life to silent films

For David Drazin, "silence is golden" is no cliché—it's a way of life. Drazin, 52, has been improvising piano jazz riffs to silent films since he was in high school, and since January, he has played regularly at the Wilmette Theatre (1122 Central Ave.).

"It cheers the world up a little," he says. "It helps open minds to try something even less conventional." *Better* sat down with Drazin to learn more about his passion for silent film accompaniment, a type of entertainment you don't see (or hear) every day.

Baby Grand: While most five-year-olds were still honing their motor skills, Drazin was already at the piano, tickling the ebonies and ivories.

"I'm a jazz musician—that was the kind of music I spent my whole life in training to do," he says.



In July, Drazin will accompany the 1924 version of *Peter Pan*

Moving Pictures: The son of a couple of film buffs, Drazin was exposed to silent films at an early age. He remembers seeing Buster Keaton's movies for the first time on a big screen at a museum in Cleveland.

"They didn't have any accompanists—it was just the films," he recalls. "The place was so packed and the laughs were so big that I was too stunned to laugh."

Reel Nerve: Drazin still gets nervous before his shows, but once he gets going, he quickly loses himself in the music and images.

"That's one of the great things about playing for the pictures. You can have prolonged chase scenes and disasters—trees falling and dams breaking, war. You don't have to hold back."

To see a video of Drazin playing piano, check out better-mag.com/film

—Brenna Ehrlich