

Film Music—What's in a Name?

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Picture music—a new art form—is coming into its own.
George Antheil, *Modern Music* (1937)

Prolegomena to the Study of Film Music: Terminology

Twenty years ago musicologist Martin Marks identified the principal disciplinary challenge to the scholarly study of film music when he wrote: "Because film communicates (at least potentially) through a conjunction of visual and auditory signals, research into film music requires an understanding of not one but two non-verbal systems of communication, as well as the problematical jargons with which we attempt to describe each of them in speech. In this age of specialized studies, few scholars have been able to master more than half of the subject."¹ Now twenty years later, in a time when the value of cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies has been recognized and, to some extent

encouraged within the academic community, the study of film music has become a burgeoning multidisciplinary if not *trans-disciplinary* endeavor.

Today writers utilize not only the concepts and technical vocabularies of music and film making, but variously terms and concepts from musicology, film theory, media and communication studies, cultural studies, comparative literature, literary criticism, critical theory, philosophy, semiotics, psychology, cognitive science, sociology, feminist theory, gender studies, and marketing research—and that is probably not an exhaustive list of all the disciplines and areas represented. With the resulting profusion of technical language there is the potential for a veritable Babel. Like different languages, two disciplines may, for instance, have different terms for the same thing, and writers may

not realize that. No doubt this is to a greater or lesser extent true of most interdisciplinary fields, especially in their early stages.²

The reader, if not the writer, is thus faced with the prospect of learning something of those concepts and vocabularies in order to understand the diverse perspectives on film music today, as there is no *lingua franca*. Though there are now explicit references to "film music studies," the study of music in films remains less a coherent field than a rapidly growing community of writers in various disciplines, with almost as many interests as there are writers. The disciplinary plurality and diversity of interests poses a challenge to finding common ground, let alone a common domain of discourse.

Exemplifying this state of affairs is the fact that the term *film music* itself has come to have two definitions that are *incommensurable*.³ If writers cannot agree on the meaning of film music as a term we obviously face a fundamental problem in defining the field to which the term applies. Therefore one of the goals of *The Journal of Film Music* will be to foster a serviceable parlance for the study of film music.

¹Martin Marks, "Film Music: The Material, Literature and Present State of Research," *Journal of the University Film and Video Association* 34 (1982): 4.

²Cf. Claire McNerney, "An Interdisciplinary Perspective of Classificatory Structures," www.scils.rutgers.edu/~clairemc/classify.html.

³For a discussion of the philosophical notion of

incommensurability, see Dudley Shapere, s.v. "Incommensurability," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998). Originating in the philosophy of science, incommensurability has also been seen as relevant to problems in aesthetics. See Oscar Kenshur, "The Rhetoric of Incommensurability," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (1984): 375-81.

Film Music and its Synonyms

As a first step towards this goal then, let us examine *film music* as a term, taking a lesson from linguistic philosophy as to the value of defining terms so as to avoid the pitfall philosophers call *verbal disputes* (also known as *semantic* or *definitional disputes*), in this instance, confusion and arguments arising out using different meanings of the same word. As the philosopher Garth Kemerling notes, "Needless controversy is sometimes produced and perpetuated by an unacknowledged ambiguity in the application of key terms."⁴ A verbal dispute can be prevented or eliminated by agreeing on the definition of a term. One way of reaching agreement is to start with a *lexical definition* that simply reports how a term is already used and accepted, rather than how it could or should be used. (Such definitions are thus also often called *customary* or *reportive definitions*.)⁵

Though lexicological research has apparently not been done on the combination of the words *film* and *music* resulting in the attributive noun *film music*, it is nonetheless possible to discern from the literature something of its origins

and use in the English language, as well as its relationship to several synonyms and associated terms. Not surprisingly the history of film music as a term reflects virtually the whole history of film itself. Consulting Steven Wescott's *Comprehensive Bibliography of Music for Film and Television* (published in 1985) it is interesting to find that while *film music* was already in the English language by 1940 it does not appear in the titles of American publications much before that.⁶

It seems likely that *film music* is an English cognate modeled on the German *Film-Musik* or *Filmmusik*.⁷ Though the German term was in use before 1920, the corresponding term in American usage from the same period was *moving picture* or *motion picture music*, or, more commonly just *picture music*, with *movie music*, *cinema music* and *screen music* being later synonyms.⁸ *Film music* as such may have entered the English language by way of Britain, initially in hyphenated form as *film-music*.⁹ The title of Kurt London's influential monograph *Film Music: A Summary of the Characteristic features of its History, Aesthetics, Technique; and Possible Developments* may have been partly responsible for the unhyphenated *film music* coming into English usage. Published in

Britain in 1936, it was the standard text on the subject in English for many years. London, a German expatriate, wrote the book in German while living in France, but it was translated for publication.¹⁰ Prior to that articles he had published in German used the unhyphenated form *Filmmusik*.¹¹

In 1941 the first magazine devoted to film music commenced publication in America under the title *Film Music Notes*.¹² No doubt providing as it did a unique and enduring forum in which to publish serious writing on the subject, it served at the same time to reinforce the use of the term film music by scholarly writers rather than its synonyms.

Film Music as a Musical Style or Technique

The music or musical practice that was known during the silent era (roughly 1895-1928) as film music was the live music performed to accompany theatrical silent films. Though there was much interest in having original music specially composed for silent films, due to time constraints relatively little music was actually written for individual films.¹³ Instead, silent films were mainly

⁴Garth Kemerling, "Definition and Meaning," *Philosophy Pages*. <www.philosophypages.com>

⁵Peter A. Angeles, *Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 57-8.

⁶Steven D. Wescott, *A Comprehensive Bibliography of Music for Film and Television*. (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1985).

⁷Other terms were also used in German, e.g., *Kinomusik*, the English cognate of which is *cinema music*.

⁸Cf. Oscar Levant, "Movie Music," *Town and Country*, December 1939, 90-1, 130-3. Levant, who composed music in Hollywood during the 1930s, uses the terms "picture music" and "movie music," but not film music. In a short essay film composer Franz Waxman used in the space of three paragraphs three of these terms

synonymously: motion picture music, screen music, and movie music, but not film music.

"Action on the Frontiers of American Composition," *Music Publishers Journal* 2, no. 1 (1944): 7, 47.

⁹British composer Walter Leigh used "film-music" as a term in an article he wrote, "The Musician and the Film," *Cinema Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (1934): 70-4. Though the title of an article by his British colleague Arthur Benjamin is "Film Music," *The Musical Times* 78 (1937): 595-7, Benjamin uses "film-music" in the text. Hollywood film composer Herbert Stothart contributed a chapter entitled "Film Music" to an anthology published in England. However Stothart does not use the term *film music* in the text, but instead, *picture music*. Stephen Watts,

ed., *Behind the Screen* (London, Barker, 1938), 138-4.

¹⁰Kurt London, *Film Music: A Summary of the Characteristic features of its History, Aesthetics, Technique; and Possible Developments*, trans. Eric S. Bensingler (London: Faber & Faber, 1936). Biographical information about London is given on the dust jacket.

¹¹For example, see Kurt London, "Gedanken zum Problem der Filmmusik," *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 51 (1924): 60-2. For references to other German articles by London, see Wescott, *ibid.*, 43, 183, 259, and 315.

¹²By 1958 when the magazine ceased publication after 17 years it was called *Film and TV Music*.

¹³For an early plea for original music in silent films, see Mne. Pilar-Morin, "Silent Drama

accompanied by existing music borrowed from other musical genres along with a large repertory of music specially composed for use in silent films, so-called “Kinothek” music.¹⁴ With the advent of sound films the use of existing music, whether from other genres or Kinothek, rapidly declined, and original music became the order of the day.¹⁵ At the same time “score” soon replaced the term “accompaniment.”

As a consequence there was a narrowing in the meaning of film music/picture music and it came to connote scores *composed* for films—*film scores* or *movie scores*—as mainly composed by specialists called *film composers* (or *movie composers*), such as the six men commemorated in 1999 by the U.S. Postal Service with its Hollywood Composers stamp series: Max Steiner, Dimitri Tiomkin, Bernard Herrmann, Franz Waxman, Alfred Newman, and Erich Wolfgang Korngold.¹⁶ The resulting circumscribed definition of film music was what philosophers call an *essential definition* (or *essence* or *real definition*). In an *essential* definition, “among the

characteristics possessed by a thing, one is unique and hierarchically superior in that it states (a) the most important characteristic of the thing, and/or (b) that characteristic upon which the others depend for their existence.”¹⁷ The *essence* of film music came to be thought of as a compositional technique, or style in the broadest sense, rather than the use to which it was put in films, its *function*. Strange as it may seem, already in the silent days something in the nature of a musical style began to emerge out of the practice of so-called musical “illustration,” in spite of the fact that most of the music used to accompany silent films was existing music. As London observed:

The compiler had to weld together his material on the basis of the film, and bring order into chaos. In this sense, he could to a certain degree be rated equally with an original composer. Even pieces which were characteristic in themselves could have their nature transformed in the melting-pot of

compilation. There arose a new style, which absorbed all the earlier individuality of the single pieces in favour of a new collective character. This went so far that even the rhythm, tempo, key, form, instrumentation, and actually the melody of a piece of music had to be remodelled.¹⁸

An abundance of anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that this sense of a film music style or “collective character” that London observed in the 1930s endured for most of the twentieth century and continues to the present day. One humorous aside will serve to illustrate this. Hollywood film composer Hugo Friedhofer in confessing his great liking for the first two movements of Hindemith’s *Mathis der Maler* symphony (1934) commented that the last movement sounded “a little too much like movie battle music.”¹⁹ Despite all its stylistic variability throughout the decades—whether the often cited “late Romantic” style or passing trends in musical fashion—there was and remains a film

Music,” *The Moving Picture World* 6 (April 30, 1910): 676; for a later one made at the dawn of sound films, see “Movie Music,” *National Board of Review Magazine* 3 (May 6, 1928): 3.

¹⁴“Kinothek” is a contraction of “Kinobibliothek,” translated as “cinema library.” For a discussion of *Kinothek* music, see London, *Film Music*, 50–61.

¹⁵Cf. *ibid.*, 136: “Such sound-film compositions are invariably original music: when the mechanical interlude between silent and sound-films had once come to an end, the use of existing music was finally abandoned, and although at first this mainly meant the song hit and its variations, composers did at last begin to exercise an increased influence.” This generalization is not quite accurate, as a good deal of existing music continued to be used in scoring films for the first several years after the coming of sound. For example, of the dozen horror films produced under Carl Laemmle by Universal Pictures between 1930–36, two used only existing music and six made use of existing music in addition to original music composed for them. William H.

Rosar, “Music for the Monsters: Universal Pictures’ Horror Film Scores of the Thirties,” *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 40 (1983): 391–421.

¹⁶As Levant observed in 1940, “There are now few pictures of any kind that do not utilize music to some degree, and in a considerable majority of them the score is credited to a musician of specialized, if not general reputation. Offhand, in the last year, I have seen films from Hollywood with scores attributed to Richard Hageman, Louis Gruenberg, Ernst Toch, Kurt Weill, W. Franke Harling, George Antheil, Erich Korngold and Werner Janssen, all composers of general reputation; as well as by such specialists as Steiner, Newman, Stothart, Franz Waxman, Edward Ward, Hugo Friedhofer and Edward Powell, to mention only the more familiar names.” Oscar Levant, *A Smattering of Ignorance* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing, 1942), 108.

¹⁷Angeles, *ibid.*, 57.

¹⁸London, *Film Music*, 53–4.

¹⁹Hugo Friedhofer, interview by the author, tape

recording, Hollywood, CA, July 8, 1975. Ironically *Mathis der Maler* was an influence on Friedhofer and some of his colleagues. Oscar Levant recalled, “There was a communal approach to . . . keeping abreast of developments elsewhere in the musical world. The boys obtained every important new score as soon as it was available, with the result that Hindemith’s ‘Mathis der Maler’ was known in Hollywood before it was played in Carnegie Hall. They frequently had meetings at each other’s houses, where they would play records, break down instrumentation of certain passages, discuss the technique of the writing and make notes on the effects that were introduced in the scores. The effect of this was not invisible in their own scores.” Levant, *ibid.*, 122. Hindemith completed *Mathis* February 27, 1934 and it premiered March 12, 1934 under the baton of Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting the Berlin Philharmonic. Hindemith himself then recorded it for Telefunken April 9, 1934, with the Berlin Philharmonic. Some time between the release of the recording and the American premiere of the work with the New York Phil-

music *sound*, elusive though it may be to define.²⁰ In the 1980s musicologist Fred Steiner, himself a film and TV composer, observed the “tendency of film music to sound like itself.” In Steiner’s view changes in film music style are somehow superficial, resulting in “new wine in old bottles.”²¹

Like the proverbial blind men seeking to describe an elephant by touch, different writers have sought to express this peculiarity or *particularity* of film music in various ways. Most frequently film music has been seen as a musical technique or technique of composition, more than a style as London suggested.²² Some have claimed it is a unique art form. Film critic Gerald Pratley declared that “Film music should be recognized by the musical world as a new form of composition, equal in rank to the older-established schools . . .”²³ Within little over a decade after the coming of sound, English composer laureate Vaughan Williams was saying that “film music is capable of becoming, and to a certain extent already is, a fine art, but it is applied art, and a specialized art at that.”²⁴ Others have stressed originality as a factor, though not in a stylistic sense, but in terms of “special”

composition, i.e., music specially composed for a given film. Thus Clifford McCarty stipulated the meaning of *film score* for his book *Film Composers in America: A Filmography 1911-1970* (2000): “The film score . . . is the original or adapted background score, composed expressly for a particular film.”²⁵

From a musical standpoint, the common denominator is that film music is *inspired* by films, much as incidental music for the theater could be said to be *inspired* by the plays for which it is written, or tone poems by poetry, or opera by libretti, or songs by lyrics. Film composers themselves have frequently described their work as a sort of musical “reaction” or “response” to the films they score. So it is perhaps the intimate relationship between film scores and the films for which they are composed that is somehow responsible for film music embodying a distinct *quality* as a musical idiom, what can perhaps only be characterized as a *cinematic* quality.

Music Terms and Film Terms

From the outset “film music” was a *musical* term rather than a

film term. It was in the music world, or its domain of discourse, that the term film music was intended to designate and distinguish it from music composed for other genres, such as chamber music, incidental music for the theater, ballet music, opera, operetta, and church music. Presumably the term was primarily used to distinguish film music relative to the concert hall and theater, as it is from that milieu from which film music practitioners originally came—orchestra conductors, organists, pianists, composers, and arrangers alike.

With the advent of sound films virtually all the movie studios established music departments that employed staffs of composers 365 days a year. Just as these departments were not called *film* music departments, the terms used in the film world by the film industry were not film music but *background music*, or later, *underscoring*, both terms reflecting how music was initially regarded as being subordinate to dialog and sound effects.²⁶ The resulting work was called a *musical score* in the film world, corresponding to the terms *film score* and *movie score* in the music world.

In film industry terminology

harmonic October 4, 1934, under Otto Klemperer, the Hindemith recording was purchased by Edward B. Powell, a member of the coterie Levant referred to as “the boys.” In fact, Levant himself was a member of the group, which as well as Friedhofer also included Herbert Spencer, Conrad Salinger, and David Raksin—all men who at the time were working mainly as orchestrators and/or uncredited staff composers. “All were keenly avid for learning as much as we could about whatever contemporary music was available on records and mini-scores, and please to remember that this was about 15 or 16 years before the advent of the LP.” Hugo Friedhofer, letter to author, August 25, 1975. Powell had a standing order with a record dealer in Los Angeles who specialized in imported

records to supply him with “everything interesting,” and didn’t know about *Mathis* until he got it from the dealer. Edward B. Powell, conversation with author, Woodland Hills, CA, January 29, 1977. It was some ten years after the premier of *Mathis* that Friedhofer overtly imitated Hindemith: “The first sort of partially Hindemithian score that I did was *The Lodger* [Fox, 1944]. The main title tune in that is almost straight Hindemith.” Friedhofer, interview, *ibid.*

²⁰For a discussion of film music as a *Stilbegriff* (style concept), see Helga de la Motte-Haber and Hans Emons, *Filmmusik: Eine systematische Beschreibung* (Munich: Karl Hanser Verlag, 1980), 107-13.

²¹Fred Steiner, Personal communication, n.d.

²²Consider the title of the book by Roger Manvell

and John Huntley, *The Technique of Film Music* (New York: Hastings House, 1957).

²³Pratley as quoted in Manvell & Huntley, *ibid.*, 281.

²⁴Ralph Vaughan Williams, quoted in Manvell & Huntley, *ibid.*, 197.

²⁵Clifford McCarty, *Film Composers in America: A Filmography 1911-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

²⁶For a discussion of the inadequacy of the term “background music,” see Manvell & Huntley, *ibid.*, 72. They suggest instead the term “functional music.” Similarly Kracauer analyzed film music from the standpoint of “physiological functions” and “aesthetic functions.” Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 133-56.

there is often a difference between technical *terms* and technical *credits*. Whereas a technical credit is typically given in film publicity and in screen credits, the technical terms are mainly just the “shop talk” used in the movie business. Such is the case with the industry terms “score” and “scoring” used both as nouns and verbs. The terms *score* and *scoring* are not synonymous with musical score which is a technical *credit*. Unlike the narrowed meaning of “film music” in the music world that more-or-less coincided with the coming of sound films, “score” and “scoring” never narrowed in the film world so as to become coextensive in meaning with film music defined as original composition in the music world. That is because even after the end of the silent era music from both other genres and existing music composed for films has to some extent always been used (or reused) to *score* films. Heinz Roemheld’s skillful score for Universal’s *The Black Cat* (1934) is an early example that illustrates this practice well because it combines both the use of “classical” music Roemheld adapted to fit the film (reminiscent of silent film accompaniment) with music he wrote based on classical themes and completely original music he had composed previously. Significantly in this

case Roemheld did not receive screen credit for musical score but as “Musical Director,” unlike other Universal films at the time, where screen credit for musical score was given.²⁷ In the heyday of the movie studio system the term “music director” in screen credits sometimes signaled that the score was composed by more than one composer, or in other instances that the score did not consist of original music written for the film. As McCarty noted with the case of musicals, “A [film] composer usually receives credit for ‘musical direction,’ a term described by Adolph Deutsch as including ‘all such musical functions as adapting, arranging, conducting, composing background music, and general responsibility for the entire musical content of the picture with the exception of composing the songs.’ However, the term ‘musical direction’ does not mean the same at all studios. Its appearance on the screen as the sole music credit does not imply that the musical director also composed the score, though this often is the case, just as credit for the score does not necessarily mean that the composer conducted his own music, though this is not uncommon.”²⁸

It is also the case that from the beginning of sound films, a significant number of scores have been

edited from already recorded film music by movie studio personnel (typically music editors), usually due to budgetary constraints.²⁹ To complicate matters, sometimes in talking about film music, industry people have added the word “film” to “score” in this usage, just to make it clear they are speaking of music in films. Today this practice is most prevalent in film trailers that more often than not are scored with existing music.

So odd as it may seem then from a compositional standpoint, where a “score” is something composed by a composer, scores for films were—and are—not necessarily composed, but edited or compiled, even by non-musicians. What still remains one of the most popular and striking examples of scoring a film with existing music is Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) which was scored with music from phonograph records of “classical” music. In a very real sense, Kubrick the cinema *auteur* par excellence, scored the film himself, as it was he who selected, spotted, and edited the music.

Two decades ago the term “song score” was coined for scores that use recordings of popular songs as scoring. The term “song score,” though, is not a technical credit, and so does not appear in screen credits. Rather, each song is credited individually in the end credits of films by its title, writers, recording artists, recording label, and music publishers. Typically the person responsible for compiling the “song score” receives a screen credit as “Music Supervisor,” a technical credit that formerly had an entirely different meaning. (Music Supervisors were usually a music department head at a movie studio or television production company. For example, for many

²⁷For example in the case of Universal’s *White Hell of Pitz Palu* (1930) Roemheld’s screen credit read “Original Musical Score Composed by Heinz Roemheld.”

²⁸Clifford McCarty, *Film Composers in America: A Checklist of Their Work* (Los Angeles: Clifford McCarty, 1953), xvii-xviii.

²⁹See Rosar, *ibid.*, 398. Cf. Lawrence Morton, “From time to time it has seemed possible that film music might lift itself even beyond respectability to the status of an honorable category of the art of music. [L]et us observe that the functions of film music are well understood, even by the film cutters who piece scores to-

gether out of scraps of sound-track. It takes a real composer, however, to fulfill those functions with good music.” Lawrence Morton, “Confession,” *Frontier* (May 1955), p. 21. Morton, a noted music critic in Los Angeles, was the brother of Hollywood composer-orchestrator Arthur Morton. Lawrence Morton himself occasionally worked as an orchestrator in Hollywood, mainly for Walter Schuman. To this day some still regard him as the best critic film music ever had, though he ultimately became disenchanted with film music as this excerpt from one of his late writings on the subject reveals.

years Lionel Newman was music supervisor of 20th Century-Fox Television). “Score” and “scoring” as technical terms therefore actually subsume film music as a musical genre (i.e., original background music or underscoring or musical scores) but are not limited to that.

The apparent paradox that score and scoring are more comprehensive terms than film music, illogical as that may seem, is because film music is not a film industry term whereas score and scoring are. This paradox can however be quickly disposed of when the terms are viewed in *part-whole relationships*: In musical terminology, film music as a musical genre—a sort of *repertoire*—is the *whole* of which a film score is a *part*, whereas in film terminology, the *whole* of which a score or scoring is a *part* is the individual film in which it is heard.

Musical Scores vs. “Source” Music

In distinction to *musical score* the term *source music* was coined by the film industry to designate music where the “source” of the music was seen or implied in the film, whether a vocalist, instrumentalist, ensemble, or radio.

“Source music” has not been used as a technical credit.³⁰ In the music world, songs written for films were not designated as film music but were called *film songs*, *movie songs*, *cinema songs*, etc. In the film world they were called *theme songs*—or just *songs*—a musical form apart from the specialized genre (or technique) of composition known as film music in the music world, or, background music and underscoring in the film world. This distinction was quite evident soon after the arrival of sound because the movie studios gave separate screen credits for songs and musical scores in the same film.

From a historical perspective it is obvious why after the advent of sound the term film music was reserved for instrumental music composed for films, inasmuch as theatrical silent films were almost invariably accompanied by instrumental music, not vocal music. Even in the silent days the movie companies themselves came to regard the instrumental music that accompanied films as being more than just a facet of film exhibition, but rather as an indispensable part of cinema itself, as evidenced by the lists of “musical suggestions” or “cue sheets” they issued to movie theaters when a film was released which specified pieces to

use in accompanying the film.³¹ The term “accompaniment” was thus something of a misnomer, because the music was not merely a concomitant to the picture, but part of the integral whole that was the silent cinema. To therefore speak of a *film medium* in the silent era does not do justice to the fact that the silent cinema was in reality a *multimedia* form, whether it be film with live music or accompanied by phonograph recordings. This multimedia union of cinematography and musical practice became literally (and physically) bonded together with the advent of optical “sound-on-film” recording, and in the process became the *medium of sound film* we have known ever since. Even with that technological development, the silent tradition persisted through the transition to sound because some of the first “sound” films were little more than silent films with recorded music, having no recorded dialog, but instead, full-length recorded accompaniments (scores), as for example, Warner Bros.’ *Don Juan* (1926).³² The so-called “part-talkies” such as Warner’s *The Jazz Singer* (1927) also preserved and perpetuated the silent tradition to the extent that the “silent” portions of them (where there was no recorded “dialog”) were accompanied by

³⁰By 1932 movie studio music departments had instituted a classification scheme for cue sheets which indicated the manner in which each cue (piece of music) in a film was used. Each cue was given a number, following which was the title of the piece, its composer(s) and lyricist(s), the name of the publisher or owner of the music rights, and then abbreviations, either “inst” for instrumental music, or “vocal” for music featuring a vocal, “bkgr” for background and “vis” for visual, meaning that it was source music.

³¹See Gillian Anderson, *Music for Silent Films: A Guide* (Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1988).

³²The score for *Don Juan* was by William Axt and David Mendoza. The term *synchronization* is another term in need of lexicological study, because before it was used to refer specifically to the matching of sound with picture (especially dialog), it referred to the pairing of music with picture in the silent days. For example, see Stephen W. Bush, “Possibilities of Musical Synchronization,” *The Moving Picture World*, September 2, 1911, 608. After sound came, studio music departments continued to use the term *synchronization* to refer to the process of fitting music to picture but mainly with regard to recording music to picture. For example, Uni-

versal’s General Music Director (music department head) David Broekman conducted Roemheld’s score for *The White Hell of Pitz Palu* but rather than receiving screen credit for conducting, he is credited with “Synchronization.” For other nuances of this term, cf. Roemheld: “[T]he scene is the Kentucky Derby. The furious tempo of the orchestra’s gallop considerably enhances the apparent speed of the horses and the suspense on the last lap. If ... this music is *synchronized* [italics added] on the film, its source, quite naturally, seems to be the ... race-track. It is questionable if this type of *synchronization* [italics added] is truly satisfactory, yet if done

continuous recorded music.³³ With dialog, the notion of musical accompaniment took on another significance, because in accompanying the spoken word in sound films, instrumental music *qua* background music was considered analogous to instrumental accompaniment in vocal music. Hollywood film composer Herbert Stothart was one who professed that idea, “I play for a picture, as a good accompanist plays for a voice.”³⁴ John Williams expressed a similar view to Stothart’s in saying, “I think a composer should think of the dialogue as part of the score; he could write it as accompaniment for a violin concerto rather than compose a score to exist on its own.”³⁵

From the inception of sound films, source music in general and songs specifically were regarded more as the *contents* of some films (especially musicals), than as being virtually a component of cinema itself, as musical accompaniment had become during the silent era. In a critique of early musicals and the use of songs in them, Heinz Roemheld alluded to this distinction when he wrote in 1930, “Music is inseparably affiliated with motion pictures, but differently; its purpose one of the mysterious secrets of showmanship—important, but subtle.”³⁶

The terms *background music* and *underscoring* have since largely fallen into disuse with *musical score* remaining in use in the film industry, corresponding to the terms *movie score* or *film score* long used in the music world. Often the three terms are just abbreviated as “score,” which leads to some ambiguity, because the term “score” in the music world has the connotation of original music, whereas in film industry parlance it doesn’t, as discussed above.

Rather unfortunately, film composers themselves and other film industry people have taken certain liberties with this terminology to describe the varied and sometimes subtle ways in which scores and source music may be interrelated in films. For example in his textbook *Scoring for Films*, veteran film and TV composer Earle Hagen considers source music to be one of “three basic types of scoring.” But in seeking to explain how source music can be used effectively, and how it can be related to and integrated with the other types of scoring, Hagen gets into something of a verbal muddle. He writes, “[Source music] succeeds in many instances where scoring fails,” and where he talks of using “transition[s] from source to scoring and vice versa” clearly he is talking about source music

and scoring being different rather than being two “types” of scoring as he had intended to show.³⁷ He further introduces the paradoxical-sounding term *source scoring* as an additional term to those of scoring and source music. “Source scoring,” Hagen explains, “is one of the most valuable techniques in the picture business. This kind of music is like source in its content, but tailored to meet scoring requirements. The trick is to make it... a combination of source and scoring.” Though Hagen says that this is a type of scoring, he once again distinguishes source music from scoring in defining source scoring as a technique. He gives as an example of source scoring the use of popular songs in films, for instance songs sung in main titles that are then used instrumentally throughout the rest of the film. But usually such songs in main titles have no source, even an implied one, so by definition they do not constitute source music. If source scoring is a “combination” of source music and scoring, then it is not just a “type of scoring” as Hagen claims, and the term amounts to an oxymoron, if an unintentional one. Obviously source music cannot both be a “type of scoring” and at the same time be something different from scoring.

Ordinary Language philosophy has often enough demonstrated how merely misusing or altering the meaning of commonly understood words can create needless puzzles and even nonsense. It would seem that the main cause of the verbal muddle in Hagen’s textbook is his inconsistent use of the word “scoring,” first, in a general way, to mean more or less the selection or composition and placement of any and all music in a film, and second, to specifically

discreetly—that is, scarcely and softly—it can be effective and practical.” Heinz Roemheld, “Music and Motion Pictures,” *The Film Spectator* 10 (November 22, 1930), 87.

³³What original music there was in *The Jazz Singer* was composed by Louis Silvers. In 1930–31, prior to the advent of dubbing, so-called “non-dialog” versions were prepared by the Hollywood movie studios for the foreign market. Instead of recorded dialog, these versions had dialog inter-titles (as in silent films) in the appropriate language, and were accompanied with full-length recorded scores. See Rosar, *ibid.*, 393.

³⁴W. E. Oliver, “Stothart Provides Score,” *Los Angeles Herald and Express*, July 19, 1942. Stothart, who had come to Hollywood from the world of operetta and musical comedy, first worked at MGM as a song writer before embarking on a career as a film composer.

³⁵John Williams in Irwin Bazelon, *Knowing the Score: Notes on Film Music* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1975), 200.

³⁶Heinz Roemheld, “Musicals,” *Hollywood Filmograph* (November 8, 1930), 21.

³⁷Earle Hagen, *Scoring for Films* (N.p.: E.D.J. Music, 1971), 192.

mean underscoring as a technique and style of composing, i.e., underscoring. By using the same term to mean two different things, in this case, one more specific than the other, Hagen actually hampers understanding of the techniques he endeavors to describe. He further complicates matters by equating source music with popular music: "Source music is usually popular in style. In the earlier days of the motion picture business, elaborate devices were used to qualify source music. A scene would start on a close up of a record spinning and pull back and pan to two people sitting on a sofa playing a love scene. This was the directors [*sic*] way of saying that he wanted this scene played in a popular style. What he was really doing was qualifying the source of the music."³⁸

By implication, rightly or wrongly, it follows that scoring (underscoring) is (or was) generally not in the style of popular music, at least in Hagen's view. Hagen also speaks of music being "source-like," by which he seems to mean two things: (1) that the music is in the style of popular music, and (2) that ordinarily one would hear music of that style only as source music. The term "source-like" conflates musical style with how music is used in films, even though Hagen may have accurately described actual practice. These considerations therefore only pertain to Hagen's conceptual analysis and use of

terms (or coining of them, if he coined the term "source scoring"), and says nothing about the aesthetic significance of what he calls source scoring nor whether in practice it is effective dramatically as he claims. This has all the makings of a verbal dispute due to Hagen's inconsistent and neologistic use of terms that leads to self-contradiction, as we have seen. The examples from Hagen's book could readily provide the basis for an aesthetic argument over what scoring "really is" as opposed to what source music "really is"—the very things that Hagen was at pains to differentiate, were he not hindered by his idiosyncratic use of terminology.

For example, in explaining how film composers sometimes also compose source music one might conclude from Hagen that film composing is not limited to underscoring. While this is certainly true in a literal sense, when functioning in this capacity the film composer is really serving as a musical director on the film, because just as often the composer merely selects or adapts existing music to function as source music rather than composing it. Even more commonly source music is selected and sometimes even adapted by someone else before the composer is hired to score the film. Historically, in the studio system music department librarians and/or arrangers were typically entrusted with this function, especially librarians in the

case of researching and finding historically authentic "period" music or ethnic music to use as source music.³⁹

Like Hagen, Irene Kahn Atkins writes in her groundbreaking monograph *Source Music in Motion Pictures* (1983) that "Source music is a *type* [*italics added*] of motion picture music that has been heard in countless films," and that "The categories of background scoring and source music are logical ones into which all film music can be divided."⁴⁰ While the distinction between background scoring and source music was long established in film industry terminology by the time Atkins wrote her book, her formulation leads to the same sort of perplexing situation seen in Hagen's "types of scoring," because there is no precedent, let alone an established one, in the use of either the term film music or motion picture music, respectively, for source music to be regarded as film scoring.⁴¹

For that matter source music had never been previously considered a "type" of film music at all, because film music as a term in the music world was not thought to consist of different "types" as Atkins posits (background and source). Atkins, who was the daughter of songwriter Gus Kahn, had been a film and music editor for motion pictures and TV prior to her work as a film historian. Given that experience and the extensive annotated bibliography of the literature she provides in her book, it is puzzling as to why she chose to depart from accepted usage and use "motion picture music" or "film music" as a generic label for music in films rather than as terms for a special form (or technique) of musical composition as it had by then long been understood. One can only

³⁸Hagen, *ibid.*, 190.

³⁹Cf. MGM music librarian George Schneider [Monachus Minor, pseud.], "Music Library in the Film Studios," *Music Publishers Journal* 4, no. 1 (1946): 35, 67-8.

⁴⁰Irene Kahn Atkins, *Source Music in Motion Pictures*. (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated

University Presses, 1983), 13-4.

⁴¹Admittedly there is something of a historical irony here when one recalls that the "source" of music in silent films was almost invariably visible, whether it be an orchestra in the pit, an organ, a piano, or even a phonograph.

surmise that perhaps—somehow—Atkins was unaware of the long accepted circumscribed usage these terms had as musical terms and assumed instead that “motion picture music” or “film music” were labels for music in films as a category.

Adopting Hagen’s paradoxical terminology, Atkins cites Max Steiner’s use of Herman Hupfield’s song “As Time Goes By” in his score for *Casablanca* (1943) as being a “famous example” of “source scoring,” but in so doing changes Hagen’s definition of it. She writes that “A subtype of background scoring that is closely allied to source music is source scoring. Source scoring is music, often a song, that is heard first as source music and subsequently as background music, usually reorchestrated in greatly expanded form.”⁴² Hagen, however, did not say that source scoring involves music first heard as source music, nor that it was a “subtype of background scoring,” but was instead a “type of scoring.” Thus the use of “As Time Goes By” in *Casablanca* does not exemplify what Hagen meant by source scoring.

Though composed for a musical show produced in 1931, “As Time Goes By” is sung in the film by Dooley Wilson, who ostensibly accompanies himself at the piano.⁴³ Because of the strong sentimental significance of this song for the two central characters in the story (Rick and Ilsa), Steiner utilized it as a theme in his score, what Atkins offers as an example of “source scoring.” Unless recognized from having heard it elsewhere one might assume wrongly that the song had been written for the film, especially since it is also in Steiner’s score. Undoubtedly many have drawn

this conclusion in the several decades since the film’s release, mistakenly thinking that it was just another movie “theme song” as were commonplace in those days. In any case, by Atkins’ definition, Wilson’s singing of “As Time Goes By” in the film constitutes film music simply because it is heard as source music.

But “As Time Goes By” is not the only piece of source music in *Casablanca* whose theme Steiner incorporates in his score. Atkins doesn’t mention the highly dramatic use of “La Marseillaise,” sung proudly and defiantly by the French patriots in Rick’s Café to drown out the German military singing “Die Wacht am Rhein.” Steiner’s score actually ends with a triumphant statement of “La Marseillaise.” Would it make sense though, following Atkins’ definition, to call the French national anthem and the old patriotic German ballad “film music” just because they are source music in the film? Surely even most lay people would not likely construe these familiar songs as being film music, though they might mistakenly assume “As Time Goes By” to be a “theme song” written for *Casablanca* if they didn’t recognize it. Conversely, probably no one would deny that Steiner’s end title is film music, even though he quotes “La Marseillaise,” as do countless other film scores of the period and later. To deny that Steiner’s use of it in his score is

film music would be rather like denying that Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* and *Marche Slav* are concert works because, Tchaikovsky like Steiner, quotes “La Marseillaise” in them. The on screen singing of “La Marseillaise” as source music in *Casablanca* is a *performance* of the song, whereas Steiner’s and Tchaikovsky’s use of it is a quotation in a new work, namely, a film score.⁴⁴

Even the “more precise” definition (or redefinition) of source music offered by Atkins to distinguish it from scoring seems inadequate to explain its myriad dramatic functions (let alone its musical nature): “[M]usic that, whether emanating from a source visible on the screen (such as a musical instrument or ensemble, a vocalist, a radio, a record player, or a television receiver) or not, assumed to be audible to the characters in the film.” But how often do the characters in films appear to be listening to the source music? As with everything in a film, source music is mainly intended for the audience’s ears.⁴⁵ It should not be necessary to redefine “source” music, since it already has a definition.

More than not, source music is just “there,” like musical scores are just “there” in films, the main difference in its presence being that the visual “source” of the music is shown or implied. Source music, like underscoring, usually serves some purpose other than

⁴² Atkins, *ibid.*, 14.

⁴³ Atkins, *ibid.* As Dooley could not play the piano his keyboard performance was dubbed by pianist Elliot Carpenter. See Rudy Behlmer, “Liner Notes,” *Casablanca*. Los Angeles: Rhino Entertainment, Compact disc. R2 72911, 1997.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of Tchaikovsky’s use of “La Marseillaise” in the *1812 Overture*, cf. V. A.

Howard, “On Musical Quotation,” *The Monist* 58 (1974): 309.

⁴⁵ Atkins, *ibid.*, 13. McCarty defines film scores as the converse of how Atkins defines source music, i.e., as “the only element of a film’s soundtrack that cannot be heard by the film’s characters but only by the audience.” McCarty, *Film Composers in America: A Filmography*, *ibid.*, 3.

being heard by the characters, often functioning more-or-less like a musical prop helping to establish a location (thus its other name “realistic music”).

The most discerning film music critics have long been cognizant of this typical role played by source music on film sound tracks. For example in his review of Hugo Friedhofer’s score for *Edge of Doom* (1950), a shadowy urban melodrama about a young man who kills a priest, William Hamilton also observed, “[T]here is a variety of natural sounds in the scenes which are done with great imagination. There are the usual street noises, a funeral at J.T. Murray’s (“Thoughtful Service”), and particularly striking: the halls and stairways of the house where Martin [the murderer] lives. Immediately the front door is open, we are greeted by a magnificent melange of screaming children, four or five radio programs, and someone practicing arpeggios.”⁴⁶

In a similar way the use of “realistic music” in Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1956) is highly effective in musically establishing the locale, as the film takes place entirely in an apartment building. In this case the use of source music represents an unusual extreme for music in films because it constitutes the only music in the film besides the main title composed by Franz Waxman (who, interest-

ingly, composed some of the source music himself). As Ross Care notes in his analysis of the music in *Rear Window*, “[W]hen sound design is combined with an innovative use of music, when music is sometimes actually used as sound, the two components can fuse into one of the most potent and evocatively atmospheric elements in either medium.”⁴⁷ Indeed, composers and film makers alike (as in the case of *Rear Window*) have not infrequently used source music to create a mood or achieve a dramatic effect as an alternative to underscoring. But it is nonetheless arguable that creating a mood or achieving a dramatic effect with music is only a *necessary* but not *sufficient* condition for music in films to constitute film scoring, because by definition, underscoring is not source music.

Film Music and Popular Music

Academia has not been exempt from contributing to potential confusion resulting from the use (or misuse) of terminology, even if it be accidental. Film historian K.J. Donnelly writes in his insightful discussion of the film *Performance* (1970) that it “presents a *model of film music* [italics added] that arose as a particular aesthetic in the

1960s,” but then explains that “It was with the advent of pop music as a *replacement for film music* [italics added] in *The Graduate* (1967) and *Easy Rider* (1969) that the *film music paradigm* [italics added] that had been weathered but had persisted since the 1930s was broken.”⁴⁸ On the face of it Donnelly’s meaning is clear enough, but if his words are taken literally, they involve a *reductio ad absurdum* because pop music cannot both at the same ‘replace film music’ and be a ‘model of film music,’ ‘breaking’ the prevailing ‘film music paradigm.’ If pop music be a ‘replacement’ for film music in Donnelly’s view, then it cannot logically also be film music, otherwise this would entail film music being used to break its own paradigm and replace itself.

Obviously this is not what Donnelly has in mind, though it does seem that in some sense he is saying that pop music or the way it was used in these films is *not* film music. That is, pop music “replaces” film music, but only in the sense of being used instead of or in lieu of underscoring. But not all films, past and present, have scores, and some films have no music at all.

For that matter there is no reason to believe that the films Donnelly cites would have even been well suited to “film music” as he defines it (namely, “a single coherent underscore,” with “melodic cohesion and harmonic movement that was and is still a trademark of orchestral film music.”)⁴⁹ Moreover it is difficult to imagine that anyone would have considered scoring these films with an orchestral score of the kind Donnelly characterizes.⁵⁰

It is therefore puzzling why Donnelly doesn’t say that the *use* of the pop music in these films

⁴⁶William Hamilton, “*Edge of Doom*,” *Film Music Notes* 10, no. 1 (1950): 6.

⁴⁷Ross Care, “*Rear Window*: The Music of Sound,” *Scarlet Street*, No. 37 (2000): 60.

⁴⁸K. J. Donnelly, “*Performance* and the Composite Film Score,” in *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, ed. K. J. Donnelly (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 152-53.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁰Hollywood film composer David Raksin, who

also taught courses in film music, expressed a similar view in 1974, only four years after *Performance* was released: “There are times these days when I suspect that my students at USC and UCLA are trying to provoke me into ‘putting down’ Rock or Pop film scores indiscriminately. And I feel absurdly virtuous when I ask them whether they can imagine pictures like *Easy Rider* or *The Last Picture Show* or *American Graffiti* with any other kind of music.

simply constitutes what is today called a song score, rather than comparing and contrasting, as he does, the music in these films with conventional underscoring, when to do so is like comparing apples and oranges. This is all the more apparent when Donnelly claims that the “musical collage” in *Performance* “replaces the *functions* [italics added] of the dominant tradition” (i.e. the “single coherent orchestral underscore”).⁵¹ But if the music in *Performance* is not only in a different style from the “dominant tradition” and also ‘functions’ differently than underscoring, what is the point of comparing it with how ‘coherent’ orchestral underscoring ‘functions’? It is like comparing the use of plainchant in the liturgy with the arias that came to be played in churches during the nineteenth century. It would seem that musical styles and their use or “function” in films are not interchangeable, and thus cannot really replace one another, except in the sense of one kind of music being used instead of another.

What gives rise to the apparent contradiction in terms here is that Donnelly uses film music to mean two different things: Film music as a musical technique, as discussed above in terms of its *essential definition*, and film music as a function

or set of functions served by music in films, that is, a *functional definition*, as philosophers would say. Put schematically, it is film music as musical *technique* opposed to film music in terms of filmic *function*—a dichotomy akin to the venerable “form vs. function” in architecture and the plastic arts. In this case, though, Donnelly is claiming that the music he discusses is both different in form *and* function.

In reality such departures from what Donnelly calls the “dominant tradition” were a regular occurrence well before the films he cites were made, for example, the introduction of contemporary jazz in Leith Stevens’ score for *The Wild One* (1953) and Elmer Bernstein’s for *The Man with The Golden Arm* (1955). These scores set a trend for using jazz in films that continued well into the 1960s and after, something for which perhaps Henry Mancini was best known.⁵² Therefore the use of popular music in general can scarcely “replace” film music because as the authors of *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music* (2001) have convincingly shown, popular music has always been an integral part of music in films, whether scores or source music.

For example, by 1932 the great popularity and individual influence of George Gershwin’s music was already evident. Not only was his *Rhapsody in Blue* used in the early Universal musical *King of Jazz* (1930), featuring Paul Whiteman and his orchestra (who had originally performed the premiere of the piece in New York in 1924), but his style was imitated by Alfred Newman, for one, in his scores for United Artists’ *Street Scene* (1931) and Universal’s *Night World* (1932). Gershwin himself composed a piece that would later

become his *Second Rhapsody* for a Manhattan montage in Fox’s *Delicious* (1931). There was also the widespread use and influence of the Big Band style in the scores to Hollywood films of the 1930s and ‘40s, and not just musicals but dramatic films as well. A striking early example is Bernhard Kaun’s jazzy main title for Warner Bros.’ stark prison drama *20,000 Years in Sing Sing* (1932). A few years later at Warners Heinz Roemheld used the Charleston in his main title for the Bette Davis film *Front Page Woman* (1935), not to mention the countless Warner Bros. main titles from the period scored with fox-trots composed and/or arranged by Roemheld and other Warner Bros. staff composers, often without receiving screen credit. These are just some instances among hundreds—if not thousands—reflecting the prevalent use of popular idioms in Hollywood scores. Indeed some of the most famous popular music in the twentieth century originated in films, more than a little of it having been written by those who also scored the films in which it was heard. Again, Henry Mancini’s work is probably the most famous example of this.

To show how thoroughly pervasive the influence of popular music was in American film music prior to the present day, long-time Hollywood composer-arranger-orchestrator Marlin Skiles, who came from a jazz background, observed that the recognizable “Hollywood style” that had emerged by the 1940s was an amalgam of European “classical” music tradition and American jazz (and thus also an early example of “crossover” music in American musical culture).⁵³ The music of George Gershwin is perhaps the main prototype for the Hollywood

The fact is that the music in those films was just what it should have been. But I do not find this to be equally true of all films in which such music is used.” David Raksin, “Whatever Became of Movie Music?” *Film Music Notebook* (Autumn 1974), 23. It is interesting to note that Raksin uses the term “film score” when today such compilations are called “song scores.”

⁵¹Donnelly, *ibid*, 153.

⁵²See Tony Thomas, *Music for the Movies* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1973), 195-203.

⁵³Marlin Skiles, Personal communication, n.d.

style. Skiles' own score for *Gallant Journey* (1946) is a good example of this synthesis, especially because Skiles felt he was influenced by the piano music of Bix Beiderbecke and Eastwood Lane, rather than by Gershwin. Sounding like a blend of jazz and Wagner, Hindemith, Honegger and Copland (!), the well-crafted score featured Harry James-style trumpet solos played by jazz trumpeter, Manny Klein, then a contract musician in Columbia Pictures' studio orchestra. The film, directed and co-written by William Wellman, was about pioneer American aviator John Montgomery in the late 1800s. So the influence of jazz on the musical style was unrelated to source music, let alone the historical period in which the film was set, just as the influence of jazz on Alex North's score for *Spartacus* (1960) hardly reflected music from the time of the Roman Empire. The existence of the "Hollywood style" was corroborated by David Raksin, a colleague of Skiles' and North's who, however, claimed to have never written in that style, strange as that may seem considering the jazzy Hollywoodish "big theme" in his score for MGM's *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1950).⁵⁴

Not so long ago it was the kiss of death for a music critic to say

that a new American concert work sounded like movie music, and it was no doubt the "Hollywood style" critics had in mind, as it was by far the most familiar. It was thus that Ernest Gold's piano concerto was dismissed by the critics when it debuted in New York in 1945. When Gold came to Hollywood shortly thereafter and played his concerto for various studio music department heads they, too, said "It sounds like movie music," but in this case, that was what they wanted, and his career as a film composer was launched.⁵⁵

It was because of such snobbery in the world of concert music that André Previn abandoned film composing to pursue a career as a conductor. As he lamented in 1974, "Some critics . . . will forgive you for being an axe murderer, but never for scoring a film. There ought to be a statute of limitations."⁵⁶

Like Hagen and Atkins, film scholars Pamela Robertson Wojcik and Arthur Knight, who edited *Soundtrack Available*, consider source music to be film scoring, though not for musical reasons, but because of its dramatic or "narrative" function in films (curiously, although the volume is mainly devoted to source music in films, nowhere is Atkins' book

cited.)⁵⁷ They fault film music criticism and histories of film music for "largely ignoring" popular music in films, and cite Mark Evans' *Soundtrack: The Music of the Movies* and Roy Prendergast's *Film Music: A Neglected Art* as being "typical" in this regard. Evans can hardly be accused of "ignoring" popular music in his book, since he devotes a chapter to it, outlining and discussing most of the points of contention that continue to be debated today. Entitled "The Rise of Popular Music" the chapter begins, "Until the recent rise of pop music, few motion picture scores received much attention from the general public."⁵⁸ Prendergast also discusses the use of jazz in film scores and some of the same issues raised by Evans as well.⁵⁹

But as it was neither Evans' nor Prendergast's purpose to write about popular music and source music per se, to criticize their books for not adequately covering those topics is irrelevant. Evans and Prendergast were simply writing about what has long been accepted as the meaning of film music: film scores. Apparently, too, the editors of *Soundtrack Available* failed to realize that the sheer volume of writing published on popular music in films since the

⁵⁴David Raksin, Personal communication, n.d. It should not be assumed that the "Hollywood style" was unvarying. On the contrary, Skiles' observation implies an eclectic synthesis of disparate stylistic elements. Lawrence Morton, who was one of the orchestrators on Raksin's score for *The Bad and the Beautiful* referred to this in terms of the "spirit of eclecticism [sic]" in Hollywood film music. Lawrence Morton, "The Music of 'Objective: Burma'," *Hollywood Quarterly* 1 (1946): 394. Within its opening few bars, Raksin's main title to *The Bad in the Beautiful* undergoes at least three *stylistic modulations* (a neologism for which I am indebted to musicologist Anatoly Leikin): After a bravura flourish of contrary motion through the orchestra, which Raksin himself said was inspired by a passage in

Walton's first symphony, a Coplandesque exclamation (with chimes) follows, leading into the jazzy "big theme." "Big theme" was a term used in Hollywood for the main themes that dominated most Hollywood scores from the 1930s through the 1960s. See Marlin Skiles, *Music Scoring for TV & Motion Pictures* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Tab Books, 1976), 241, 247-48, and 250.

⁵⁵Thomas, *ibid.*, 24-25. Cf. Ernest Gold, "A Conversation with Ernest Gold," *Cinemascore*, no. 10 (fall 1982), 13.

⁵⁶Previn quoted by Daniel Cariaga, "Andre Previn to Direct LA Philharmonic," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 April 1984, part 1, p. 16. Cf. Edward Greenfield, "The Metamorphosis of André Previn," *High*

Fidelity Magazine 24 (November 1974), 27: "For heaven's sake . . . there ought to be a statute of limitations. I haven't done a Hollywood film since 1962, and I only see movies on aircraft." In fact Previn's last Hollywood film was in 1968, United Artists' *The Fortune Cookie*.

⁵⁷Pamela Robertson Wojcik and Arthur Knight, eds., *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

⁵⁸Mark Evans, *Soundtrack: The Music of the Movies* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1979), 190.

⁵⁹See Prendergast's discussion of *The Man with the Golden Arm* and Mancini. Roy M. Prendergast, *Film Music: A Neglected Art* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 108-19, 146-47.

advent of sound (especially musicals) far exceeds that written about film scores, especially in the film literature (even a cursory glance through the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* bears this out). But then what is one to make of *Soundtrack Available* as a scholarly work when the editors list among the "songs" used in the film *Wayne's World* (1992) Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* and Lalo Schiffrin's instrumental title theme for *Mission Impossible*?⁶⁰

Film Music and Music in Films

Were it the case that the authors above intentionally twisted the meaning of words to argue their positions and deliberately confuse readers, they would be guilty of equivocation. But as should be obvious, sophistry is not at issue here. Rather, it may well be that at present there is not a sufficiently rich technical vocabulary for film music studies *per se*, in spite of the profuse technical language already found in the literature. Once again this serves to highlight the importance of accurately using terminology—even if it be inadequate—and the needless semantic problems that can arise from the imprecise use of existing terms or from redefining terms in

new ways that can so readily result in self-contradiction. This is epitomized by the fact that as already intimated, certain writers, such as Atkins, have in the past twenty years or so come to use film music as a convenient *label* rather than as the established musical term for a technique or genre of musical composition. While "film music" had sometimes previously been used loosely to denote music in films, this was the exception not the rule.⁶¹ Ostensibly this usage is just for the sake of having one catchall term for music in films. Notwithstanding the potential semantic confusion engendered by this different use of the term (or broadening of its meaning, as some apparently see it), the proper study of film music for a number of writers today is the various ways music *functions* in films, whether musical scores or source music, such that this all-purpose definition is primarily a *functional* definition, as noted already with regards K.J. Donnelly's two uses of the term.

This functional approach tends to view music in films rather the way it was regarded in Germany in the 1920s, as *Gebrauchsmusik* ("utility music," i.e. music "that is socially useful and relevant, including music for films and radio, mechanical instruments, for amateurs and to stimulate political

debate."⁶²) *Gebrauchsmusik* was antithetical to the prevailing aesthetic in art music of *autonomous music*, or 'music for music's sake,' and promoted the exploitation of music's use and utility in everyday life. Traditional notions of *musical form* were challenged by the exponents of *Gebrauchsmusik*. Heinz Roemheld, who had studied in Germany only to become one of Hollywood's most prolific film composers, did not value underscoring *qua* music because traditional notions of musical form were invariably compromised or abandoned altogether in composing to film action, and development in the symphonic sense was almost impossible for the same reason. For Roemheld film music had no aesthetic value away from films, except in the case of a good melody that could stand on its own, such as his own jazzy hit song "Ruby" from *Ruby Gentry* (1952). "It's got to help the picture!" was Roemheld's dictum, and that purely musical concerns had to be subordinate to that precept. "It's what you might call *Gebrauchsmusik*—it's functional music. You can't go anywhere with it, because something happens on the screen and you have to, for example, underscore a pratfall or a kiss or something, just after you get started singing a melody—it doesn't work [as music]."⁶³ (It is

⁶⁰ Arthur Knight and Pamela Robertson Wojcik, "Overture," in *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, *ibid.*, 1. Schiffrin's name isn't even given though he is probably best known for *Mission Impossible*.

⁶¹ For example Hollywood composer Nat Shilkret wrote in 1946, "Effective use of film music is not limited to pictures of a dramatic nature. It is in 'musicals' that film music has had its greatest use and development. In these pictures music is an integral part of the story. And for obvious reasons the principal performers are singers, instrumentalists, or dancers." If the word "film" is omitted from what Shilkret wrote there is no

loss of meaning because its inclusion is redundant, i.e. he is only talking about music in films, not music in general. Nat Shilkret, "Some Predictions for the Future of Film Music," *Music Publishers Journal* 4, no. 1 (1946): 47.

⁶² "Gebrauchsmusik," in *Norton/Grove Concise Encyclopedia of Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 285.

⁶³ Heinz Roemheld, interview by the author, tape recording, Laguna Hills, CA, January 21, 1976. Cf. Vaughan Williams, "When the film composer comes down to brass tacks he finds himself confronted with a rigid time sheet.

The producer says, 'I want forty seconds of music here.' This means forty, not thirty-nine or forty-one. The picture rolls on relentlessly, like fate. If the music is too short it will stop dead just before the culminating kiss; if it is too long it will still be registering intense emotion while the screen is already showing the comic man putting on his mother-in-law's breeches." Ralph Vaughan Williams, "Film Music," *Royal College of Music Magazine* 40, no. 1 (1944). See Manvell & Huntley who also discuss film music in terms of "functional music." Manvell & Huntley, *ibid.*, 71-177.

perhaps no coincidence that in contrast to his film music, Roemheld's own art music was virtually neo-classical in its strict adherence to musical form.)⁶⁴ In his critique of *Gebrauchsmusik* as an aesthetic viewpoint, Stephen Hinton notes, "The same piece of music can be viewed both in terms of its use-value and in terms of its autonomous features."⁶⁵ This applies to the study of film music as well: It can be studied in relationship to the film in which it is heard (it's function or "use") or as music. In this regard, Sir Arthur Bliss once remarked, "My argument is that in the last resort film music should be judged solely as music—that is to say, by the ear alone, and the question of its value depends on whether it can stand up to this test."⁶⁶

In any case, the more general functional definition of film music and the viewpoint it represents, might succinctly be called 'film from the perspective of music,' much in the same way that films are examined from the standpoint of screenwriting, or acting, or direction, or cinematography—that is, from the standpoint of the specific contribution of an art or craft to a film. As we have seen there are those who hold that this approach is what should constitute film music studies as a scholarly pursuit, rather than it being the study of film scores and

their relationship to films, as the use of film music as a musical term would suggest.

Incommensurability of Meanings

Ordinarily a lexical definition (as noted above, reporting how terms are already used and accepted) is adopted for the purpose of avoiding pointless verbal disputes. This presents a special problem when a term has two meanings in use as is now the case with film music. Already in 1980 musicologist Helga de la Motte-Haber was evidently aware of the semantic problem and proposed that in German *Film-Musik* be used to denote music in films from the standpoint of function (i.e. music in films), and that *Filmmusik* be reserved for film music as a musical genre (*Gattung*).⁶⁷ This could readily be rendered in English as "film-music" vs. "film music"—or even *filmmusic* or *filmusic*—all of which have been used in English already.

However it is probably too late to institute this usage in English now, because film music as a synonym for music in films has become established in some circles, and once a term has come to be used in a more general way it is difficult to restrict its meaning. This is ironic considering the narrowing we saw in the history of film music as a term with the coming of sound and concomitant movement towards original scores. In that case, however, the semantic narrowing directly mirrored a change in film music practice itself, whereas to circumscribe usage of the term now would be only for intellectual or linguistic reasons. Another solution would be to abandon the long accepted

meaning of film music as being obsolete in favor of the newer definition, so that all music in films would be considered film music. It is likely though that this could only happen over time as a result of deliberate disuse. This is not likely to happen because there will doubtless continue to be writers who will use film music to denote film scores. Regardless of this the more general use (the "functional" definition) has not superseded the specific use (the "essential" definition), and both uses of the term are currently found in the literature. In some instances they are even used by the same author, as we have seen in the case of K. J. Donnelly's discussion of *Performance*.

Be that as it may, I stated earlier that the two definitions of film music are incommensurable. Subsuming all music in films under the term "film music" is problematic because if film music is defined as a technique or genre of musical composition as the term has long been used, how can, say, Max Steiner's score for *Casablanca* be compared—especially on musical grounds—with an existing piece used in the same film as source music such as the singing of "La Marseillaise"? That is, it would seem conceptually impossible to extend or modify the definition of film music as a technique of musical composition to include the performance of a standard work in a film.

Now long valued worldwide by the film industry and moviegoers alike, some might argue that the *value* of original background music as a special art (and craft, i.e. film composing) is *relativized* (if not trivialized) when categorized along with music and uses of music from which it differs *sui generis*—namely the use of existing music

⁶⁴William H. Rosar. "Roemheld, Heinz (Heinrich Erich)." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*. ed. L. Macy. [May 6, 2002], <www.grovemusic.com>

⁶⁵Stephen Hinton. "Gebrauchsmusik." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*. ed. L. Macy. [February 22, 2002], <www.grovemusic.com>

⁶⁶Sir Arthur Bliss as quoted by Manvell & Huntley, *ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁷See de la Motte-Haber's chapter "Film-Musik und Filmmusik" in Helga de la Motte-Haber and Hans Emons, *ibid.*, 71-113.

and techniques/forms other than underscoring. At the same time original background music in films would cease to be the *sine qua non* defining film music as a musical genre, that which is unique and sets it apart from other types of music. Conversely, to stipulate the definition of film music *de novo* as meaning music in films as has now been done (apparently unmindful of the fact that the term already had a specific accepted meaning) invites confusion. If one of the defining aspects of film music understood as a musical term is original (“special”) composition (including musical quotation as in Steiner’s score for *Casablanca*), it is incongruous to include in its meaning music that is not original, though the film industry terms “score” and “scoring” encompass both; to include in this definition of film music “source” music is also incongruous, because film scores do not include source music.

This is not to fall prey to the “Black-and-white fallacy” or to create a *false dilemma*, as philosophers say—namely, that music in films is either this or that in terms of *content*. In reality musical scores and source music often share musical content (again as in the case of *Casablanca*, with “As Time Goes By” or “La Marsellaise”). There is also the fact that source music often segues into underscoring and vice versa, and is even sometimes played simultaneously for dramatic effect. But it is undeniable that since the silent days, film music as a genre has *aspired* to be original music, tailored to the specific film for which it is written, whereas source music has mainly not, except notably in the case of songs specifically written for films.

The semantic incommensura-

bility of the two definitions of film music that now co-exist no doubt now reflects to some extent the incommensurability of different aesthetic/intellectual interests, viewpoints, and values, each of which may be valid in its own right.

So agreeing on the meaning of terms for the sake of discussion does not imply agreeing on ideas, let alone ideologies. Sometimes in the course of resolving what may seem to be a verbal dispute a *genuine dispute* becomes apparent. As Garth Kemerling notes, “In cases of this sort, the resolution of every ambiguity only reveals an underlying genuine dispute. Once that’s been discovered, it can be addressed fruitfully by appropriate methods of reasoning.”⁶⁸

At the heart of the matter then there would seem to be—implicitly if not explicitly—a *genuine dispute* rather than merely a *verbal dispute* underlying the two definitions of film music, because there are those who would insist that there is—or should be—only one definition of film music, whether it be the *essential* one or the *functional* one. Probably never the twain shall meet, because there is no compelling reason—other than clarity—to abandon either usage, except where verbal confusion results from using both senses of the term in the same context, as we have seen.

Genuine disputes would seem almost inevitable in a field that is inherently interdisciplinary such as the study of film music, and historian Carlo Ginzburg has argued that such conflict is by no means a bad thing in interdisciplinary studies, but instead potentially fruitful:

[I]f you have conflicting results, you have a real inter-

disciplinary work. I think that a lot of interdisciplinary work is dull in effect because you start off with the assumption that both disciplines can be mingled peacefully which is not true. The conflict is much more interesting. Obviously disciplines are just irrelevant in some way, artificial—we have only problems, but it is true that disciplines have not only an institutional existence, but also methods, a kind of perception, and so on. If you have to dissolve those boundaries, you have to build a strategy in which you can have conflict. Otherwise you are peacefully combining two disciplines, which is either false or irrelevant. I think it [is] interesting to explore the conflict of . . . methods in order to find a real solution—rather than start with the assumption that both disciplines are going in the same direction.⁶⁹

It has not been my purpose here to argue the merits (or shortcomings) of any music or use of music in films, or any intellectual approach to analyzing the latter, but hopefully to help clarify confusion that already exists in the literature resulting from two incommensurable uses of the term *film music*. At this juncture the reader may wonder what implications this all may have for the *Journal* given that its title uses “film music” and not “music in

⁶⁸Kemerling, *ibid.*

⁶⁹Keith Luria and Romulo Gandolfo, “Carlo Ginzburg: An Interview,” *Radical History Review* 35 (1986): 99.

films”? In spite of the current music-industry-driven trend for so-called “song scores” or “compilation scores” that consist mainly of existing recorded music, by far most music in films has been composed for films. Most of this music consists of musical scores, not source music, and there is no indication that original scores will ultimately become passé, perhaps because they have so long been a part of cinema itself. As a historical point of reference, the great preponderance of music in the thousands of American films listed in McCarty’s *Film Composers in America* was composed by the hundreds of composers he credits. It seems a fair assumption that this is also true historically of international cinema as well.

From its inception, my intention has been that *The Journal of Film Music* be devoted to the art and craft of film scoring, and the varied roles played by musical scores in films. It was this music that musicologist Manfred Bukofzer referred to when writing over half a century ago that “Possibly fifty years hence, this may be regarded as the most characteristic music of the 20th century.”⁷⁰ In spite of that, as film scoring is more and more being viewed today by scholars in the larger context of music in films, it is only appropriate that the *Journal* should represent that perspective as well, though with film scoring—moreover *music*—remaining its primary focus.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to several individuals who have been instrumental in bringing *The Journal of Film Music* to fruition through its decade-long gestation: Former editor of *Current Musicology*, Karen Lindsay Painter of Harvard University Department of Music, lent much needed practical advice and guidance on how to start a scholarly journal (as well as sharing my conviction as to the scholarly value of publishing interviews with composers and musicians); David Neumeyer, of the University of Texas at Austin School of Music, from the beginning not only provided strategic suggestions and recommendations towards defining editorial function and shaping editorial policy, but for a time reviewed every submis-



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⁷⁰Manfred F. Bukofzer, “Forms and Functions of the Music Library,” *Notes: Supplement for Members*, No. 3 (1948): 4.

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