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An interesting development in recent years has been the emergence of film music as a legitimate area for academic research. Many scholars believe that this development acknowledges the significant role played by film music in enhancing the overall narrative and images it accompanies.¹ The editors of and contributors to Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema seek to advance this notion by recognizing that musical scores play a vital role in setting the mood and contrasting or intensifying what occurs on screen.² Beyond the Soundtrack, edited by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer,


and Richard Leppert, brings together sixteen essays originally delivered at a conference hosted by the University of Minnesota in April 2004. All contributors are celebrated writers and scholars in their respective fields of film music studies and musicology. The contributors effortlessly argue throughout the publication that music and image are linked in a way that produces an important symbiotic relationship, as each responds to the other’s characteristics.

Divided into three sections, “Musical Meaning,” “Musical Agency,” and “Musical Identity,” this book offers a wealth of insights into film as a musical medium and focuses on how movies use music as a part of creating and enhancing fictional worlds. Between them, the contributors refer to 172 films, ranging from silent movies to Hollywood blockbusters and cartoons, though most stay within the realm of more well-known Western commercial films. The broad scope and range of material covered in this collection—a result of the contributors’ varied backgrounds in literature, film studies, historical musicology, and cultural studies—successfully allows the reader to consider film as reflective of music, rather than music simply being added as a supplement to cinematic image and narrative.

Both essays that begin this extensive book are captivating, well put together, and do not overwhelm the reader. Peter Franklin begins this volume with his essay exploring nineteenth-century European symphonic music and its fate in the modernist era. He does this through the examination of the opening title and credits sequence of Gone with the Wind. He compellingly argues that Max Steiner’s romantic symphonic film score does not just provide atmosphere but also narrates the story before any image from the film proper is seen. Franklin highlights the accessibility of symphonic scores by discussing an interaction he had on a train where he watched a child recreate Star Wars by using his musical imagination. Throughout Franklin is careful not to exaggerate claims or overgeneralize his opinions to all symphonic music used in films.

The next essay written by Nicholas Cook, who has also published a text on analyzing musical multimedia, continues this dialogue about symphonic score music. Cook’s essay discusses the music-led, made-for-television BBC broadcast of Simon Cellan Jones’s Eroica. Cook trenchantly argues that the film expands the concept of the music video as a narrative tool. Essentially structured by the performance of Beethoven’s work, the movie seeks to enhance the depiction of socialized listening. Through the examination of responses drawn from an interactive website dedicated to the film, Cook comes to the convincing and credible conclusion that this type of motion

\[^{3}\text{Goldmark et al, Beyond, 8.}\]
\[^{4}\text{Goldmark et al, Beyond, 21.}\]
picture makes the genre of classical music accessible to an audience who may be less familiar with it.

The next three essays are similar in content, insofar as they all discuss two films: *The Pianist* and *The Piano*. Susan McClary’s essay, like that of Franklin’s, explores similarities between nineteenth-century symphonic music and contemporary characters in historical fiction. McClary discusses three recent films—*The Hours*, *Angels and Insects*, and *The Piano*—each set in the nineteenth or early twentieth-century that use minimalism in their scores as a counterpoint to the drama on screen. Her argument is persuasive because she effectively uses the three films to discuss how the minimalist music allows the audience to become more emotionally involved in the narratives. She soundly proves that minimalism is used to great effect, allowing us to rethink narratives of nineteenth-century sound’s dominance in cinema.

Next is coeditor Lawrence Kramer’s well-written essay that focuses on Roman Polanski’s *The Pianist*. As summarized in her insightful, thorough, and positive review of *Beyond the Soundtrack*, musicologist Erica Argyropoulos describes the movie as based on the memoir of Polish Holocaust survivor and professional musician, Władysław Szpilman. Kramer focuses on the use of preexisting music written by Chopin in the film. He expresses the importance of the music’s abridged treatment, which thus changes its character to one of ambivalence; something that would not be the case if each piece were heard in full.

Next, Michael Chion concludes Part 1 of the book with his exploration of film scores from *The Pianist* and *The Piano*. He effectively asserts that cinema allows composers the opportunity to showcase Romantic music in new ways. Furthermore, he argues this gives the audience the chance to rediscover pieces of music if they listen to familiar works as if they were new. All three of these essays were engaging, well-researched, and provided a tremendous perspective to the different uses of symphonic music in cinema.

After reading Part 1 of this volume one cannot help but notice a common theme amongst some of the contributors in this book. Many of these authors explore symphonic scores and the Wagnerian tradition used in film music. Contributors Peter Franklin, Susan McClary, Michael Chion, Rick Altman, and Nicholas Cook all discuss symphonic music and its importance to film. Carol Flinn’s article “The Most Romantic Art of All: Music in the Classical Hollywood Cinema” would be an excellent pairing to these essays since her article delves deeper into the world of classical Hollywood cinema scores than most of the essays in this book do. Flinn specifically explores how

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romanticism has left its mark on motion pictures, especially Hollywood studio films during the “golden age” of movie making. Importantly, she delves into the economic growth that led to the popularity of this type of film scoring. Flinn’s conclusion is similar to that of many of the contributors of Beyond the Soundtrack. Though the belief during early Hollywood film making was that music should perform a dramatically supportive role, when one listens to music in movies of this time it is difficult to believe that classical film music was actually designed to be passive.

Part 2 begins with coeditor Richard Leppert’s detailed study of Werner Herzog’s Fitzcarraldo. He observes that the absurdities in the film, which revolve around a man trying to bring opera to the native people of Peru, are no less realistic than the inherent irrationalities of the operas that the protagonist admires. Leppert uses this realization to help explain the role of opera in the film. Mitchell Morris addresses a similar idea while exploring the mythology that takes place in Reggio’s film Koyaanisqatsi. The aim of the film is to show the extent to which technology is embedded in our everyday lives. Morris argues that the minimalist movie score, composed by Phillip Glass, is not only unusually prominent but also emphasizes the non-identical repetition in the film’s images and overall structure. Both of these essays discuss music in an insightful, thought-provoking, and intriguing way.

Elsewhere, film music theorist Annette Davison describes the next contributor, Phil Brophy, as an active composer and sound designer. His background is a noticeable asset to his essay and I feel that Brophy uses his knowledge effectively to help support his essay. He explores the idea that music and sound are primary to rather than supportive of an image. He chooses to look at two films that stray from the collection’s focus on Western films: Kanevski’s An Independent Life and Kobayashi’s Kwaidan. Though his argument is largely rhetorical in nature, which causes it to lose some of its strength, Brophy successfully emphasizes that sound can play a greater role in movies if one is given the opportunity to experiment with less mainstream music. Contrastingly, Claudia Gorbman turns her attention to the “heard melodies” from auteur directors who she labels as mélomanes. She expands her theory by arguing that certain directors treat music as a key thematic element and marker of their style. Gorbman discusses the approaches of Wim Wenders, Quentin Tarantino, and Stanely Kubrick in brief while emphasizing the work of Jean-Luc Godard and Tsai Ming-Liang in more detail. Gorbman’s well-written essay reads like a rebuttal to her earlier study of classcal

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cinema, published in *Unheard Melodies*, one of the first texts on film music studies to be published. Gorbman seems to contradict much of what she first wrote in her classical cinema text, though it is unclear if this was her intention or not. Interestingly, *Beyond the Soundtrack* begins with a rather short introduction where the editors claim that only recently have scholars begun to question the study of music in films. This claim falls rather short, however, when one reviews other literature that has been published by many of the contributors in this collection, including Claudia Gorbman.

Further addressing the concept of musical agency, Berthold Hoeckner evaluates the idea that music can “transport” movie audiences, along with the characters. His essay, exploring the specific film music of a scene in *Casablanca*, is one of the only pieces in the entire volume to avoid the strict binary categorization of diegetic or nondiegetic. He instead focuses on how “the changing relation between musical transport and transportation articulates the shifting relationship between music and image, from a reality where memory is merely imagined, to an imaginary where memory is actually realized.” It is both sharply written and full of excellent examples to support his claims. The final essay in Part 2, written by Robynn J. Stilwell, explores further the gap between diegetic and nondiegetic music in films. Stilwell’s essay is comprehensible, accessible, and uses a variety of movies to persuade the reader of the importance of distinguishing between diegetic and nondiegetic. She argues that the border between diegetic and nondiegetic is crossed so often that rather then invalidating this separation, the border calls attention to moments where music trespasses these boundaries, thus reinforcing the difference.

The strongly written essays by Rick Altman and Daniel Goldmark that open Part 3 add a distinctive historical dimension to this collection of essays as they examine the rich performance practices of movies before sound film. An excellent pairing to Rick Altman’s essay on silent movie film scores would be Philip Carli’s article on “Musicology and the Presentation of Silent Film.” Altman presents a thoroughly researched and engaging essay on the historical background of thematic scoring during the silent era. He demonstrates distinctions in practices and utilization of leitmotif techniques and repeated themes in silent films as a way to keep movie production costs low. Philip Carli’s article contrasts this by examining the resurgence of silent film into the mainstream. He also examines the problems inherent in restoring these motion

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9 Goldmark et al, *Beyond*, 179

pictures and new methods of film accompaniment. Each touches on different aspects of silent film music scores which give the reader a much more in-depth look into this area of research.

Coeditor Daniel Goldmark follows Altman’s essay with his fascinating exploration of the early history of cartoon music. Using Walt Disney’s Steamboat Willie as his starting point, his essay convincingly emphasizes the importance of Fleisher’s “bouncing ball” song animations. These animations, he argues, allowed for the acceptance of synchronized sound which in turn allowed for cartoons like Steamboat Willie to become so popular. This essay can be seen as a type of “pre-history” to his detailed book Tunes for ‘Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon. In Tunes for ‘Toons Goldmark explores the concrete connection between animation, synchronized sound, and the musical score in the history of Hollywood cartoons. Goldmark produces an entertaining, appealing, and well-researched essay that is both charming and extremely persuasive in its content.

Richard Dyer’s essay, though a bit scattered, explores the film music of Nina Rota and the ways that music can function independently of narrative. He further looks into the problems that arise when trying to understand expression in film music. Contrastingly, Krin Gabbard showcases his deep knowledge of jazz in his essay which highlights that African-Americans are largely absent from films that feature music by Miles Davis. He presents an extremely compelling and gripping analysis as he looks at films where Davis’s music plays a leading role such as The Talented Mr. Ripley and Elevator to the Scaffold. This essay is one of the most thought-provoking pieces of literature in this book. It makes the reader wonder about inherent racism in movies and if this still occurs in cinema. Beyond the Soundtrack concludes its expansive collection with Gary C. Thomas’s interpretation of motion pictures that feature male characters playing music at the keyboard—the films being The Rope and Five Easy Pieces. He discusses the transitional nature of the male performances in both films. His arguments, similar to those of musicologist David Neumeyer, center on how these performances showcase music traditionally marginalized in film. This essay is one of the more


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complex in the book, taking time to fully comprehend, so I question the decision to put such a challenging literary piece at the very end of the volume.

Following the final chapter of the book, the editors provide information to further benefit the reader, including a detailed index of films and names covered in the text. Given the editors’ insistence that music is not and should not be considered subordinate to film, I find it odd that the filmography section identifies the film’s director, date of release, and country of origin, but not the name of the soundtrack’s composer. It is a small detail but one that is quite important if a book is to argue that what we hear in film is just as important as what we see. There are additionally a few other missed opportunities in this collection, such as the book’s title. As echoed by David Neumeyer in his overzealously negative review of the text, to use the word “beyond” indicates that the topic being studied is at a stage of maturity—well-documented and researched but in need of different perspectives and ideas. The study of film music, however, is a relatively new area of research.14 Though film music is an important and interesting field on which to focus, it does not seem like it is at a stage where one needs to move beyond boundaries to find new answers. Additionally, the use of the word “soundtrack” is problematic. While the editors equate this word with musical score, their usage takes for granted soundtracks’ usual inclusion of some dialogue and sound effects.15 Lastly, Beyond the Soundtrack ignores areas in music research such as music psychology and music theory, and lacks detailed musical analysis of the film scores mentioned by many of its authors. These fields could have provided valuable insights into the representation of music in cinema.

As a whole, Beyond the Soundtrack is an informative, accessible, and well-written collection of essays. The volume is unique in that it allows you to enter into the conversation about film music studies without necessarily having any previous knowledge or background into the subject. Additionally, it encourages a greater interest in film music for both the average reader and for the academic community. While some essays are more effective than others in arguing the importance of music in cinema, the book is overall very successful in its goal to not only show how motion pictures enhance music but also to provide a resource for further discourse in the field. Furthermore, if one can widen the conversation to include not just experts in film studies and cultural studies but also specialists in philosophy, music psychology, and music theory, our understanding of film music and its importance can only grow.

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