

**Mervyn Cooke, ed. *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*.
Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
ix + 382 pp. \$38.95
ISBN 978-0-195-33119-6 (paper)**

**Julie Hubbert, ed. *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and
Contexts in Film Music History*. Berkeley, Los Angeles
and London: University of California Press, 2011.
xiv + 507 pp. \$42.95
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For years, film music was an unexamined, underappreciated, and overlooked field of study. Fortunately, the past decade has witnessed a steady build of interest in film music scholarship thanks, in part, to annual conferences of Music and the Moving Image (MAMI), regular meetings of the International Musicological Society's Music and Media Study Group (MAM), and scholarly journals such as *Sound and the Moving Image*, *Music and the Moving Image*, and the *Journal of Film Music*. Film music is a "neglected art" no more.¹ Many music departments in colleges and universities across North America can boast at least one undergraduate film music course—a change of tides that has led to the publication of invaluable academic texts such as Roger Hickman's *Reel Music: Exploring 100 Years of Film Music* (2005); *Hearing the Movies* (2015) by James Buhler, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer; and Mervyn Cooke's *A History of Film Music*.²

1. Roy Pendergast, *Film Music: A Neglected Art: A Critical Study of Music in Films*, 2nd edition (New York and London: Norton, 1992).

2. Roger Hickman, *Reel Music: Exploring 100 Years of Film Music* (New York: Norton, 2006); James Buhler, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer, *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). These three texts are

Those who have taught music history survey courses will appreciate the value of complementing general history textbooks with primary source documents such as the thought-provoking readings from Weiss and Taruskin's *Music in the Western World* and Strunk's *Source Readings in Music History*.³ Primary documents breath fresh life into history and help students "hear" the voices of the past. Now we have comparable sourcebooks for film music: Julie Hubbert's *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History*, Mervyn Cooke's *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*, and *The Routledge Film Music Sourcebook* edited by James Wierzbicki, Nathan Platte, and Colin Roust.⁴ The Hubbert and Cooke titles examined in this review serve as crucial resources for film music students studying American Hollywood music.

To create a book of source readings dedicated to American film music history is a daunting endeavor. The sheer diversity of topics in the field is mind-boggling. After all, there are multiple perspectives to consider (those of composers, musicians, sound technicians, philosophers, journalists, conductors, and exhibitors), musical styles (Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, classical, jazz, modernism, electronic music, pop), venues, exhibition practices, scoring, compositional style, copyright law, financing, and the different elements that make up the soundtrack itself (music, silence, sound effects and dialogue).

With 507 pages and fifty-three source documents focused on American narrative film music history from 1896 to the present, the readings in Hubbert's *Celluloid Symphonies* "reveal how composers as well as directors, producers, and industry executives have affected the sound, structure, and placement of music in films," and "describe the major practical, technical, commercial, and aesthetic concerns and innovations that have shaped the use of music in film history" (x). The book is divided chronologically into five periods, with readings on "the practical, political, and aesthetic forces that affected the film industry" (xi): (1) Silent Film (1895–1925), titled "Playing the Pictures: Music and the Silent Film," (2) The Early Sound Film (1926–1934), titled "All Singing, Dancing, and Talking: Music in the Early Sound Film," (3) Hollywood's Golden Age (1935–1959), titled "Carpet, Wallpaper, and Earmuffs: The Hollywood Score," (4) "The Recession Soundtrack: From Albums to Auteurs, Songs to

reviewed by Blake Howe, "Textbooks for Film Music History: An Overview," this *Journal* 6, no. 1 (2016): 63–71.

3. Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, eds., *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Schirmer, 2008); W. Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler, eds., *Source Readings in Music History*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1998).

4. It is important to note that Hubbert's and Cooke's source readings focus exclusively on film music in narrative film of the United States while the Routledge Sourcebook also covers international film music. James Wierzbicki, Nathan Platte, Colin Roust, eds., *The Routledge Film Music Sourcebook* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012).

Serialism (1960–1977),” and (5) “The Postmodern Soundtrack: Film Music in the Video and Digital Age (1978–present).”

One of the greatest strengths of Hubbert’s book is her “big picture” view, which highlights how historical shifts are driven by myriad influences, including changes in popular taste and aesthetics, political, economic and social factors, and so forth. In this way, the subtitle of *Celluloid Symphonies*, “Texts and Contexts,” is key to understanding Hubbert’s approach. Throughout, she provides a deep contextual perspective, casting her net far and wide, drawing documents from a variety of sources: books, interviews, trade journals, cue sheets, magazines, newspapers, and film archives. This allows her to include non-academic publications by forgotten writers among more famously cited authors, composers, and critics.

At 382 pages with thirty-one source documents, Mervyn Cooke’s *The Hollywood Film Music Reader* is divided into three sections. Like Hubbert, Cooke organizes his book chronologically: (1) “From ‘Silents’ to Sound,” (2) “Film Composers in Their Own Words,” and (3) “Critics and Commentators.” As stated in his introduction, a large part of the book focuses on film music composition and is “devoted to the personal reminiscences of some of the leading film composers who helped change the face(s) of Hollywood scoring as it branched out from its classically influenced origins to embrace modernism, nationalism, jazz, and popular music” (vii). Cooke does not aim for the same degree of detail and nuance as Hubbert, and he does not attempt to chronicle the history of Hollywood film music comprehensively. Instead, he concentrates on a few significant topics: early film music, composers, and critics. In Part 2, titled “Film Composers in their Own Words,” the seventeen collected articles provide the reader with a “one-stop-shop.” This is different from Hubbert’s book, which sprinkles articles by and about film composers across Parts 3, 4, and 5, making it difficult to compare composers’ approaches to scoring.

Note that Hubbert’s sourcebook surveys the history of film up to 2005, even addressing links between film music, videogames, and MTV, whereas Cooke’s cuts off in 1999 and omits mention of more contemporary films, marketing techniques, and popular styles. Another big difference between the two sourcebooks is their approach to introductions and critical commentaries. Above and beyond Hubbert’s well-chosen source readings is the critical commentary in the extensive introductory essays to each of her five sections, which range between twenty-three and thirty-eight pages. Her introductions are rich in detail about general film history, American history, politics, economics, and technology. The impressive breadth of her investigation encourages a historical view of film music that is at once holistic, inclusive, and comprehensive. She paints with broad brushstrokes, identifying general trends and developments in film music history. Although she clearly highlights references in her

introductions with boldface lettering, it might have been preferable to include brief contextual biographical and/or historical commentary directly preceding each document. But this is a minor quibble, given the truly impressive results Hubbert achieves. Averaging 2–5 pages, Cooke’s mini-introductions to the three sections of his book are more humble than Hubbert’s. But Cooke prefaces each individual primary document with introductory remarks that convey essential contextual and biographical information. Many instructors might find this approach preferable, as it saves having to conduct background research on each author and is particularly advantageous in a course where only certain select readings are assigned. In the remainder of this review, I will take a comparative approach, focusing on the treatment of certain topics in the Hubbert and Cooke anthologies.

Early Silent and Sound Film Highlights

Hubbert provides twelve documents that highlight the importance of the “silent” unmechanized aspects of early film (Part 1) and seven documents about early sound film (Part 2), making her book *the* unrivaled go-to source for early film music history documents. Exactly how “silent” was the silent era of film? Not as silent as previously thought, argues Hubbert, who reminds us of how music and sound thrived in early film exhibition halls. Amongst the most notable articles Hubbert selects for Part 1 is Louis Reeves Harrison’s infamous “Jackass music” (a satirical take on how *not* to accompany film) with its biting attack of caricatured musicians: Lily Limpwrist, Freddy Fuzzlehead, and Percy Peashaker. Unlike Cooke, Hubbert does not reproduce H. F. Hoffman’s hilarious cartoons, which inject a welcome dose of humor into class readings and lectures. Hubbert also includes thematic cue sheets for films from the mid 1920s and a practical no-nonsense guide by Eugene A. Ahern about how to play “appropriate” music, create sound effects, and convey the mood of a scene. Particularly useful is how Hubbert makes sense of these documents for students. She identifies a shift where the piano accompanists and percussionists employed in music halls and nickelodeons in the first decade of film are replaced in the 1920s by large orchestras in “movie palaces” like the Capitol, Rivoli, and Rialto. She discusses changes in “compilation scoring,” using evidence from the source documents to show how films of the first decade featured popular music, while films from the 1920s drew more from classical excerpts by Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner. The section concludes with a newspaper article on a 1924 US court ruling, which established copyright compensation for songwriters, composers, and music publishers. Hubbert uses this document to demonstrate the benefits of examining history from as many angles as possible. The case shows how financial rather than purely aesthetic drivers fuelled the

shift from popular music to classical music in early film. Part 2, “Music in the Early Sound Film (1926–1934),” features seven documents from 1926–1935. Hubbert’s introduction describes the simultaneous existence of silent films, talkies, and “half-talkies” as theater owners slowly upgraded the technology in their venues. Here, she aptly cautions against viewing the switch from silent to sound film as an overnight revolution.

In Part 1 of his *Hollywood Film Music Reader*, Cooke includes four articles from the silent and early sound periods. He starts with Max Winkler (missing from Hubbert’s survey) who describes his process and justification for “inventing” the cue sheet. Like Hubbert, Cooke includes an indispensable excerpt from Ernö Rapée’s *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures* and from Leonid Sabaneev’s *Music for the Films* (I find Hubbert’s extract fascinating, whereas Cooke’s is rather dry and technical). Also of note is an article by T. Scott Buhrman about Hugo Riesenfeld. This time, I prefer Cooke’s article (penned by Riesenfeld himself) as it reveals much about Riesenfeld’s sophisticated methods of matching up music and image, even “editing segments of film himself or requiring the projector to be run at variable speeds so that the images might fit better with his musical selections” (16).

Film Composers

Given the centrality of Max Steiner in establishing the style and sound of Hollywood film music for the “talkies” it is no surprise that both Hubbert and Cooke reproduce his 1937 article “Scoring the Film.” Steiner outlines his scoring process, from cue sheets to mickey-mousing, creating leitmotivic character themes, and using the “special measuring machine.” The Aaron Copland article “Our New Music,” also included in both sourcebooks, articulates an alternative to Max Steiner’s methods. Copland recommends thinner orchestration and famously defines film music as a “small flame put under the screen to help warm it.”

I find that the most stimulating composer-focused documents in Hubbert’s book are the interviews. Danny Elfman speaks about his eclectic musical influences (from pop and rock, to classical and musical theater) while Howard Shore reflects on his working relationship with David Cronenberg and his approach to scoring, which he defines in terms of intuition, editing, and reduction. Particularly noteworthy are his reflections on the soundtrack of *Silence of the Lambs*, which he built together with sound designer Skip Liesay, thus blurring the “ontological distinction between sound and music” (399). One captivating group of documents in Part 4 of Hubbert’s text includes writings by and about Bernard Hermann, Ennio Morricone, and Lalo Schifrin, all of whom experimented with alternatives to orchestral scoring. Morricone reflects

on composing “music that is born within the scene” (335) by using ambient and “found” sounds, while Lalo Schifrin reveals his love for experimentation and flexible shifts between musical genres and styles, particularly when scoring auteur-directed avant-garde films. An article that could easily pass under the radar of television music aficionados, especially given the title (“Jazz Composers in Hollywood”) features an interview in which composers Benny Carter, Quincy Jones, Henry Mancini, Lalo Schifrin, and Pat Williams compare writing music for the mediums of film and television.

I consider the highlight of *The Hollywood Film Music Reader* to be Part 2, which is wholly dedicated to film composers. Here, Cooke offers a treasure trove of insider perspectives about the art of film music composition. A transcript of a radio interview with Franz Waxman discusses leitmotivic principles, repetition and variation and how to musically get “inside a film character” (143). Another article by documentary film music composer Gail Kubik emphasizes the social and moral role of music in conveying political messages in propaganda and documentary war films. On the topic of musical style and genre, Cooke includes an interview with Jerry Goldsmith about using electronic music; an interview with John Williams about his nineteenth-century Wagnerian style and the revival of the orchestral score in *Star Wars* (also featured in Hubbert’s book); an interview with Thomas Newman about his “no looking back” approach to composition through the novel use of timbre, instrumentation, and electronic music; and an article by Miklós Rózsa about scoring *Quo Vadis*, where he calls for stylistic accuracy, musical realism, and historical authenticity. Other articles by Henry Mancini and Adolph Deutsch protest those decisions made during film production that fail to take composers’ ideas into account. Mancini, whose article reveals every step of his scoring process, candidly expresses disappointment in directors who have cut, subdued, or used his music in unintended ways. Finally, in a truly stimulating read by Bernard Herrmann, he muses about aural “closeups,” promotes the idea of elevating the status of sound effects in film (212), calls *2001: A Space Odyssey* “the height of vulgarity in our time” (213), complains about the assembly line model for film scoring, and even joins the “auteur” debate stating, “no director can make a film by himself” (212).

Directors and Critics

In Part 4 of her text, Hubbert includes a subsection of articles dedicated to film directors’ compilation soundtracks. Documents about William Friedkin, Stanley Kubrick, and George Lucas describe how, by cutting out the role of the film composer and using pre-composed music, these directors exercised ultimate control over the aural dimensions of their films. Hubbert ends Part 4 with an article by David Raksin that calls into question the purity of the aesthetic

aims of “compilation scoring,” which he denigrates as an overused technique employed to appeal to youth, increase sales at the box office, and sell records, with little thought about the meaning of the film.

Cooke provides little space for articles by or about film directors, opting instead to round out his book with a final chapter of nine articles that fall under the rubric of “Critics and Commentators.” In a way, this is a continuation of Part 2, as many of the personal testimonies are actually penned by composers who Cooke argues “successfully distanced themselves from their own creative work in order to publish their markedly contrasting viewpoints” (257). Note that this section is filled with mostly negative appraisals of film music. For example, George Antheil discusses the stylistic gulf between his modernist concert hall music and the conservatism of his film music. With some embarrassment, he refers to the “corniness” of the latter. There is also an article by Stravinsky in which he calls film music “wallpaper” that merely “explains” and “describes” action in a film, suggesting that its primary function is to “to feed the composer” (277). In articles by Sidney Lumet, Frederick W. Sternfeld, and in an excerpt from *Composing for the Films* by Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, we find a range of complaints against antiquated techniques and film clichés: leitmotifs, illustrative music, melody, unobtrusiveness, mickey-mousing, dissolves, and stingers.

But not all of Cooke’s Part 2 is negative. At least a few critics make useful suggestions about the importance of expanding public taste to include more modernist styles in film. One of the more expansive articles by Lawrence Morton analyzes exemplary music excerpts by Hollywood composers. This reaction piece defends against attacks by Hans Keller (who colorfully refers to the “stench” of Hollywood music) and Antony Hopkins—inflammatory anti-Hollywood articles that could have provided fodder for a fascinating classroom debate had they also been included in the reader.

Cartoons, Television, LPs, Radio, and Music Videos

Both Cooke and Hubbert discuss other media in the context of film music. Unlike Hubbert, Cooke chooses to include some thought-provoking articles about cartoon music. An article by Ingolf Dahl describes cartoon music as “the only completely creative combination of the aural and the plastic arts in movement” and encourages readers to reconsider the significant role of cartoon music in early experimental film sound (95). Another article by Scott Bradley, who worked on *Tom and Jerry*, advocates freedom in composition by using progressive approaches such as the modernist language of Schoenberg heard in *The Milky Waif*.

Hubbert ventures more deeply into explorations of other media with articles about the money generated by movie soundtrack LPs, radio, and MTV videos. In the process, she exposes much about commercialism in Hollywood film. June Bundy discusses the pressure on composers to write hit singles for radio, while Eddie Kalish reflects on how Mancini revolutionized soundtrack LPs, enhancing their quality by re-recording music. In her introduction to Part 5, titled “The Postmodern Soundtrack: Film Music in the Video and Digital Age,” Hubbert writes about how American film recovered from its recession, thanks to a new “revolution” in American film distribution and exhibition involving a lucrative system of “saturation release” and “saturation advertising” and the invention of the multiplex theater, home video, and cable television. In this section, Susan Peterson divulges the optimal “saturation formula” schedule for the release of film soundtracks, while Marianne Meyer discusses the marketing power of the MTV music video, which facilitated “new synergy between film production and cable television” (389). A document including a fascinating interview with film directors Cameron Crowe and Quentin Tarantino discusses the importance of finances on the scoring of a film and pressures on directors to “videoize” soundtracks with MTV-marketable music “moments” (or “modules”).

Conclusion

Hubbert’s *Celluloid Symphonies* and Cooke’s *Hollywood Film Music Reader* gather together invaluable documents that are accessibly written, informative, and entertaining. The two sourcebooks use the Hollywood film canon as a reference point, thus reinforcing the film music narrative recounted in most undergraduate classrooms, making them suitable to use in combination with general film music textbooks. Furthermore, both sourcebooks feature articles that link trends in film music to those encountered in the concert hall, thus encouraging music students to consider the links between film music and twentieth-century symphonic music.

Hubbert’s sourcebook is so thorough that it might even serve as a stand-alone text. Most remarkable is how she masterfully connects the dots between source readings so that consecutive documents interconnect, thus offering a cohesive historical narrative for each period. Still, the detail and contextual approach may not be appropriate for all courses. With its linear historical trajectory, *Celluloid Symphonies* lends itself best to a chronologically conceived course. Alternatively, one might imagine cherry picking articles or assigning individual sections for certain courses. Parts 1 and 2, for example, would be ideal for courses about early film. For courses that examine particular directors,

Hubbert's book provides some stimulating documents about "sonic auteurs" who have employed "compilation scoring."

Much can be said in favor of a chronological perspective of music history, but survey courses are turning increasingly to new issue-based pedagogical models.⁵ Though Cooke's sectional introductions are somewhat limited, he does provide excellent background information for each individual article, resulting in a structure that is less overwhelming than Hubbert's. With the right guidance and appropriate questions, this format avoids spoon-feeding and encourages students to make their own connections between articles and promotes critical thinking. Given the technical and stylistic issues in Cooke's source readings, his text might be better geared for music majors.

Silent until now, the film-music "voices" of the past are finally collected, heard, and interpreted. Both Hubbert's *Celluloid Symphonies* and Cooke's *Hollywood Film Music Reader* are welcome contributions to Hollywood film music literature and will be invaluable resources to instructors. With more than eighty documents between them, these masterfully devised sourcebooks provide a wealth of material for students, educators, and scholars. These are readings that will provide new depth and dimension to classroom discussion. At last, film music is no longer the "neglected art."

5. See Colin Roust, Douglass Seaton, J. Peter Burkholder, Melanie Lowe, and Don Gibson, "Roundtable: The End of the Undergraduate Music History Sequence?," this *Journal* 5, no. 2 (2015): 49–76.