THE INFLUENCE OF MOTION PICTURE TECHNIQUES ON THE
STATUS AND CHARACTER OF MUSIC DESIGNED TO
ACCOMPANY DRAMATIC FORMS

DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, composers have been limited by restrictions which curbed and molded their works. The old masters, in spite of their deep love for music, also wrote professionally; because of this they had to please their patrons. Rarely have composers been able to practice art for art's sake exclusively. Of course, the whole set-up was different from the modern situation because they had an altogether different set of restrictions. Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach were influenced by various factors. For example, one might have been commissioned to write music for a water festival. He was told the time by which he was to finish it, was given the atmosphere and description of the setting, and was limited by the range and flexibility of the instruments of the period. These were all relatively long works which entailed full development and followed the established form of the music of the day.

Our modern motion picture composers are limited by the necessity of fitting musical impulses to action. The timing is a matter of split-second synchronization. The writers have no classical form to follow as each script requires highly individualistic treatment, highly restricted
time elements, and highly technical instrumentation. Therefore, every composition is a challenge. The challenge includes not only the time element but a demand for a greater amount of originality in musical line and mood setting.

Whereas Beethoven, for instance, had approximately forty-five minutes to set a pastorale atmosphere for his sixth symphony, the motion picture composer has fifteen seconds to establish definitely "the same mood." For the modern composer, this means a much greater study of the orchestral tone possibilities as well as form. The modern composer, as a consequence, is constantly looking for new musical effects. Previously unexplored ranges of the woodwinds, the strings, or the new electronic instruments, such as the Theremin, the Hammond, the Solovox, the Nova Chord, and other developments of musical instruments conceived and built by radio engineers, are being explored by the modern composer.

Whereas the old masters composed with an eye on their lords' money purses, the modern composer has one eye on the studio clock and one eye on the producer's stop watch.
CHAPTER I

RELATION OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

The atmospheres and effects that are produced by music have become more varied and amazing as man's knowledge of mechanics and his insight into the depths of this art have progressed. Baltzell concurs in his History of Music when he says:

... So long as man accepted the various phenomena of musical sounds as isolated facts, there could be no art. But when he began to use them to minister to his pleasure and to study them and their effects, he began to form an art of music.\(^1\)

Scientific discoveries and inventions have given man a wider range of expression by means of musical instruments. The music produced by the musical instruments might be considered the imitations of the music of nature. The music of nature seems to influence the emotions of man. The loud majestic music of the thunder might well create a fear of impending disaster. The imitative roll of the tympani is often used to suggest just such a fear. The theory that man and nature go hand in hand leads naturally and directly to the conclusion that drama, an imitation of life and man, and music, an imitation of nature, should be closely related.

\(^1\)W. J. Baltzell, History of Music, p. 17.
Wagner presented a clear picture of this relationship when he recorded:

The drama, at the moment of its realistic, scenic presentation, awakens in the spectator real participation in the action presented to him; and this is so faithfully imitated from real life (or at least from the possibilities of it), that the sympathetic human feeling passes through such participation into a state of ecstasy which forgets that momentous question "Why?" and willingly yields itself up to the guidance of those new laws through which music makes itself so strangely intelligible, and at the same time—in the deepest sense—gives the only correct answer to that very "Why?".

Music may be an outlet for emotions, but what are these emotions? The reaction to a stimulus is often associated with some past experience of the listener or spectator who accepts the suggestion and relates it to his own life and experience.

Even the Greek philosophers believed that music aroused the emotions. Plato believed that modes and tunes would influence the emotions of men and that to control a state properly the music must be controlled. Baltzell states:

It was known, however, that the drama, owing to the enormous proportions of the amphitheatre in which it was performed, was musically declaimed, and that the voices of the actors and chorus were sustained by lyres and flutes. It was also known that in the music of the Greeks the Word was the governing principle; that there was no independent instrumental music—nor was there elsewhere for many centuries afterward.

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In the drama the spectator discards his own life and reacts sympathetically to the events in this pretended life, his reactions being suggested by the gestures, expressions, and words of the actors as well as by the music. Music influences and suggests emotions, or reactions, by means of rhythms, modes, harmonies, dynamics, instrumentation, and melodies.

The aesthetic and spiritual value of a piece of music depends on its rhythm. This rhythm in turn depends on muscular and organic coordinations. Rhythm, then, is the common foundation alike of technique and expression. When the arts of drama and music are fused with mutual purposes, a new dimension and a new art form result.

It is the reaction of the eye and the ear that is stimulated by the combination of music and drama. The hand may be quicker than the eye, but the eye is quicker than the ear. The ear is a more passive organ than the eye and less swift to grasp and rationalize. Wagner points out that:

As the speech-power of gesture states to the eye only that which it finds utterable, so the orchestra communicates to the ear the feature which in its way precisely corresponds with that statement of gesture.

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6 Hanns Eisler, Composing for the Film, p. 20.

During the Renaissance, music and drama were combined through the oratorio and opera. In the sixteenth century, William Shakespeare included verses within his plays which were to be sung. In 1825 Felix Mendelssohn wrote the overture to Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Mendelssohn also composed music for the dramas "Athalie," "Antigone," and "Œdipus."

One of the most universal means of sharing experiences is music.

Music has often been compared with language itself, and the comparison is quite legitimate. While it combines easily with actual language, it also speaks a language of its own which is universal. There is no better way of studying national characteristics than through the folk-music of individual countries. There is no mistaking the character of a Hungarian Rhapsody, or an Irish jig, or a Russian Trepak, or a Polish Mazurka, or a Viennese Waltz.8 Perhaps the most representative factor of any country is its music. Edward Grieg centered his music around the folk songs and legends of his native land of Norway.9 The "Peer Gynt" suite was composed to accompany Ibsen's Norwegian drama.

Through the media of radio, records, television, and motion pictures, more and more people have been drawn into the charmed circle and united by the universal language of music. Since the beginning of sound, music has played an

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9Baltzell, op. cit., p. 511.
important role in the progress of man, but the cinema is a new medium of expression. Its development lies in the future and cannot be compared with the already vast development of music.

However, being akin to music, the motion picture must incorporate its principles and form a double art, utilizing the unlimited advantages of its predecessors. The universe is in continual motion. An art that mirrors this motion must be, by its very nature, the most important. 10

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF HISTORY OF MOTION PICTURE MUSIC

It was recognized even in the very earliest days of the cinema that music was its vital complement. It is a historic fact that at the first public film show given in England, January, 1896, the music was provided by an old harmonium with four notes missing.\(^1\) At that time the most important purpose of the music was to drown the noise of the projector and the rattling, sack-rustling audiences.\(^2\)

When the projector was later housed in a sound proof compartment, the bleak silence was a death blow to any sign of action the picture might have. Music was needed to give the picture life and to give it a third dimension.

In the pioneer days of the silent films, a lone pianist rendered energetic excerpts from music such as Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King" as the inevitable villain bounded across the screen. For a time the appropriateness depended entirely on the repertoire and personality of the pianist, but later scores were supplied with each picture. The

\(^1\)Muir Mathieson, "The Movie Scene," Film Music Notes, VIII, No. 4 (March-April, 1949), 3.

\(^2\)Ibid.
preparation of these scores was indeed a far cry from our
detailed processing of the elaborate scores of today.

The new pictures were shipped from Hollywood to New
York where they were viewed, in complete silence, by an
accomplished musician hired by the studio for this purpose.
Finally, some two or three hours later, he emerged with a
list of musical titles. Sometimes the theatres in the large
cities employed a hundred-man orchestra; some of the smaller
houses, just organists or piano players. But large or
small, the list was printed and sent immediately to all
theatres that were to show the picture.

The score, or cue sheet as it was sometimes called, was
a detailed break-down of all the music to be played during
the showing of the picture. It would begin:

Open with "Dramatic Suspense" by Andino. At "No,
darling, don't shoot," "Mysterioso Dramatico No.
22" by Borche. Keep on playing until the villain
shoots. Watch for shot. Shot has to be fired by
man in orchestra. After shot, tacet until girl
dies. As soon as villain turns and flees, begin
"Hurry No 33" by Minot. Watch for police whistle
to be blown by man in orchestra. We supply
whistles at seventeen cents C.O.D."

Soon the men who compiled these lists realized that they
were passing up opportunities of tremendous promise by recom-
mending works of other composers. They began to commission
men to write original accompaniments for motion pictures. In

1925 Max Winkler, one of the men who compiled these lists, commissioned Erno Rapee to write for him an *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures*. The book listed not only some twenty thousand titles of music but some "general ideas about how to illustrate a picture with music." The development of sound recording revolutionized the motion picture industry. The importance of music and of modern methods of reproducing sound is parallel to that of the printing press to literature, philosophy, and the whole sum of the world's knowledge. There is this vital difference: books preserve in cold type the great thoughts of the ages, priceless even though disembodied, but electrical reproduction actually re-creates the living organism of music, giving it voice, movement, and compelling vitality.

Sound recording began in France in 1857 with a barrel-shaped cylinder known as a phonautograph. Edison invented his phonograph in 1877, using a cylinder covered with tin-foil.

The actual talking picture made its appearance in France in 1892. "It was a lantern-slide accompanied by a voice on

4Ibid., p. 217.
5Ibid., p. 218.
on a phonograph, describing the pictures on a slide." Six-

teen years lapsed before the development of the cinephone.

First a record was made of all the talk and noises
in the picture. Then, actors were drilled over
and over to act in time to the voices, even to
moving their lips so it looked as if they were
really saying the things on the records.

The procedure of making a sound recording and then fitting
the picture is still employed in the making of animated
cartoons and in special musical numbers. This is done in
such a skillful manner that the audience is unaware of the
fact that the performer they see is not always in reality
the one they hear. In "A Song To Remember," Cornel Wilde
moved his fingers over the keyboard in rhythm with recordings
of Jose Iturbi. Certainly the combination of two individuals
to represent Chopin is not illogical. The acting ability and
the musical ability required to portray the character of Chopin
with any degree of authenticity would be difficult to find in
one individual. The movie audience was consciously aware of
this method of substitution in "The Jolson Story" because
they knew the voice to be that of the famed Al Jolson and the
face to be that of youthful Larry Parks and not because of
defective photography or recording, or lack of synchronization.

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7 Jeanne Bendick, Making the Movies, p. 75.
8 Ibid., pp. 76-77.
Sound was printed directly on the motion picture film by Eugene Lauste in 1910. Then came the Fleming tube which amplified electric current. Later De Forest added the means of controlling even the smallest amount of current through the tube. "Electron tubes like this are the heart of the radio set, and they are the heart of movie sound recording too." Elias Reis developed a sound record on film in 1913, using a control current from a microphone and passing it through one of these electron tubes. The system worked out by Reis is almost the same as the one used now.

The introduction of frequency modulation has increased the ranges of musical instruments as far as sound transmission is concerned. It makes truer reproductions and transmits accurately more of the higher and lower frequencies of musical instruments than was possible with amplitude modulation.

In its infancy the recording process with its imperfections tended to lower the musical standards, but at least it supplied "...an exact musical accompaniment for the film at all performances in outlying small theatres as well as in the motion picture palaces."

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9 Bendick, _op. cit._, p. 78.
10 _Ibid._, pp. 78-79.
The practice of dismounting gems of classic works from their original settings and beading them together on a string of assorted melodies and sentiments continued for some time even after the introduction of sound to the films. These dreadful mixtures of musical accompaniments were evidence of a lack, either of imagination or ability, on the part of producers. They were not able to visualize their pictorial creations with original music. "The same thing happened in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the famous pasticcio music for operas was made, pasting the 'favourite' airs of the period together without rhyme or reason."

Eventually it was realized that there was a need for the picture and the music to be molded together, each complementing the other, yet the process was slow. This was an entirely new field, one that had yet to be proven; a combination of arts, the result of which was the new art form. New art forms take time and gradual development, and this was to be a highly commercialized art form.

12Carlos Chavez, *Towards a New Music*, p. 169.
CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF MOTION PICTURE MUSIC

Hollywood began the development of this new art form at a disadvantage. The composer was of little importance to the other technicians that contributed to the making up of a motion picture. He was underpaid, given little cooperation, limited for time, forced to follow an almost mechanical procedure in his process of composing, and had little, if any, knowledge of cinematographic works and the instruments involved in their production.

Motion picture music . . . suffers from a particular handicap: from the very beginning it has been regarded as an auxiliary art not of first-rank importance. In the early days it was entrusted to anyone who happened to be around and willing—often enough to musicians whose qualifications were not such as to permit them to compete in fields where solid musical standards still obtained. This created an affinity between inferior 'hack' musicians, busybodies, and motion picture music.¹

Little wonder that the finer, more gifted composers glanced at these feeble attempts at art with a disdainful eye.²

As far as its music departments are concerned, Hollywood has been a house divided. The jerky, halting progress

¹Hanns Eisler, Composing for the Film, p. 6.
of its musical achievements is partially due to the fact that not only the music but also the composers were considered strictly background. The small group of "lesser" composers who pursued the art of making a living were, as a whole, not too well versed in the technique of scoring. Any attempt on the part of a newcomer to upset the routine by setting a higher prestige with a new technique was met with the united "thumbs down" from the already settled group. They were not willing, or capable, it seems, of accepting new ideas and thereby profiting both themselves and their profession by learning.

Even if Stravinsky, Toch, or Schoenberg had been convinced of the possibilities of filmland, there seemed little possibility of ever overcoming the barriers thrown up by the short-sighted members of the production staff.

Finally, however, in 1936-37, George Antheil and two or three other "modern" composers entered Hollywood and survived its icy welcome. Soon the producers and directors were convinced that perhaps the ideas and suggestions of these newcomers might be worth a try.

There is a rather amusing story attributed to Oscar Levant concerning the reaction of the resident composers to this influx of modern harmony. When the directors started

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demanding to know why all the scores were not equally as "fresh," the routine composers rushed out to Arnold Schoenberg to take a few lessons in discords.\(^4\) Needless to say, they failed to achieve much from their few lessons. When scores failed to blossom forth with any element of originality, the staff composers resorted to the old plan of standing firmly united against any new technique.

The motion picture industry, being of commercial parentage, responds to universal demand. That fact alone might well account for many inferior productions. As one composer puts it, "Thousands and thousands of stupid films have been made, corresponding to millions and millions of stupid people."\(^5\) So we are concerned not only with the development of the industry, but of the consumer—the public.

The very fact that the musical continuity attending a picture is received through the subconscious would qualify it for educational purposes. The subtlety of background music in presenting an idea, the absolute unawareness of its presence, and its accepted influence are illustrated in the following statement made by Frederick Sternfeld:

Hindemith's secundal counterpoint, presented in Carnegie Hall as absolute music, receives a cold welcome from a musically unsophisticated audience,

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 314.

\(^5\)Carlos Chavez, *Towards a New Music*, p. 171.
but Hindemithian harmonies forming the counterpart of a duel on the screen, as in the "Bandit of Sherwood Forest," are absorbed with keen emotional enjoyment. Unconsciously, the public accepted the dissonances and rhythmic complexities of the modern idiom in expressive and illustrative sequences.6

That music influences our moods subconsciously is easily recognized. The ordinary layman may never have heard of a mass, but, when he hears the "Sanctus" in Bach's B Minor Mass, he knows it must be connected in some way with the church. "Thus, in a general way, by association, music molds our moods."7

The art of creating moods and bridging scenes with short sections of music is more easily recognized as such from its extensive use in radio. Writing for the motion pictures and writing for radio are related in that they involve the difficulties of sound recording. In radio, however, the music is not overshadowed by visual suggestions and involves only the physical reaction of the ear.

One form that has developed as a result of using music to "connect" scenes is known as a "musical bridge." Originally these "bridges" were odds and ends of phonograph records thrown in without much regard as to how they fitted the particular script. They were brief excerpts from the old masters that were not entirely satisfactory. It follows, then, that

a new musical form was created; the bridges were very short, running from five seconds to a minute and a half, complete in themselves, pleasing to the ear, and of dramatic content. They had to establish the mood of the following scene in a positive, unmistakable manner.

In short musical forms, each element must be self-sufficient or capable of rapid expansion. Motion-picture music cannot "wait." Each small musical form accompanying a motion picture is a kind of variation, even though it has not been preceded by a manifest theme. The dramatic function is the real theme.

The close relationship between the picture and the music has resulted in the music being unable to lead a life of its own. Consequently, almost none of the music written for the screen has ever succeeded in being "an independent work of art." 

One of the earliest examples of film music breaking away from its insignificant position of background to stand alone was Sergei Prokofieff's symphonic suite "Lieutenant Kije," Opus 60. This music is today in the form of a concert suite made up of music extracted from the incidental music written by Prokofieff for the Russian sound film "Lieutenant Kije" in 1933. The first Russian performance of the suite

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8 Eisler, op. cit., p. 93.
10 "Lieutenant Kije," program notes, North Texas State College Library.
was in Moscow in 1934 and in America on October 15, 1937; performances were repeated in other parts of the country by the Boston Symphony Orchestra with "conspicuous success."\textsuperscript{11}

Aaron Copland has composed successfully for both concert and the films. He is one of Hollywood's leading composers of today; one of Copland's most recent successes is "The Heiress," for which he received the Academy Award in 1949. The score is of a tranquil nature employing small ensembles. Other Copland film scores of outstanding caliber are "Our Town" and "The Red Pony," which also display his talents in blending a quiet, subtle background.\textsuperscript{12}

When the film "Our Town" was received with such tremendous success, Copland was influenced to write an orchestral suite based on the music. When the suite was heard in concert, its reception was dubious because the music was not complete in itself.\textsuperscript{13} It was an integrated part of the picture, without which it did not live.

In writing the music for the English picture "The Red Shoes," Brian Easdale was given an exceptional opportunity to create something more lasting, more complete in itself than the usual film score. Instead of the restrictions and limitations of set dialogue and action, Easdale was to write

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12}Irwin A. Bazelow, "The Heiress," \textit{Film Music Notes}, IX, No. 2 (November-December, 1949), 17.

\textsuperscript{13}Heinsheimer, \textit{op. cit.}, 211.
approximately fourteen minutes of music, and, upon its completion and recording, the choreography for the ballet "The Red Shoes" was to be worked out and fitted to the music. No split-second timing had to be considered, no set gestures to be followed by music. Easdale simply wrote to "...the visual impression of designer Hein Heckroth's sketches of every scene."  

Easdale's music more than fulfills the expectations of a waiting public. "The Red Shoes" is filled with lyrical, wide-angled melodies with the impish twinkling red shoes theme dancing in and out in phrases of variation. The continuity is smooth with alternate soothing and impulsive moods. The rhythm ranges from bright Latin snatches at the beginning through the syncopated jazz section to the mournful dirge of death, when peace finally descends. The harmonies burst forth with occasional sections in which there is a fight for predominance of key. They seem to represent the dancing girl's futile attempts to escape from the whirling red shoes upon her feet. Here the story of the film enters as the girl of the story struggles with her own indecision between marriage or career.

The music on the whole is descriptive and easy listening, and it incites the imagination to a tremendous extent. While it gives the visual color and motion a real significance, it

14 Brian Easdale, "The Movie Scene," Film Music Notes, VIII, No. 4 (March-April, 1949), 5.
leads a full, recognizable life of its own.

In 1943 Alfred Newman received the Academy Award for the best music score for dramatic picture. This score for "The Song of Bernadette" is one of great dramatic intensity. It is rich in counterpoint and the thematic material is haunting and pure. The almost constant use of the strings and full orchestra is much in the style of Wagner. A strange, religious feeling of anticipation is created very cleverly by use of melody high in the strings against women's voices.

William Walton's magnificent musical setting for "Hamlet" lent majesty and power that would have been quite unobtainable with a silent motion picture. In "The Lost Weekend" Miklos Rosza produced a vague, unearthly effect by using an entirely new combination of instruments, including the theremin, the novachord, and high strings, sul ponticello.  

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS OF TECHNICAL PROCEDURE

The detailed process of composing the score for a motion picture is filled with limitations and restrictions. The Hollywood composer is given an entire motion picture in its photographically completed form, and it is his job to inject life, continuity, emphasis, and atmosphere. His music must round out the third dimension.

The composer's task is a difficult one, involving not only musical creativeness and ability but some knowledge of sound and equipment. "Synchronizing music with action in a moving picture is one of the most exacting and exasperating jobs in the world. It is turning Hollywood's composers into precision engineers."¹

Some of the musical tricks of deception employed by the Hollywood composers sound almost incredible. By underscoring a nervous toss of the head with a strong musical beat, the composer can make the gesture seem an intended action. If an actor speaks his lines too fast, the composer can determine his natural rhythm of speech, 3/4 or 4/4, and

¹"Fitting Music to Film," Science Illustrated, II (February, 1947), 49.
write the background music in a slightly slower tempo. The tempo of the music will almost seem to fit right in with that of the speech, and yet not quite. This lends an air of calmness and assurance to the actor.  

Of course, the development of the visual actions that form the pattern for the music is rich in suggestions to an alert composer.

Much pictorial music depends upon line and volume. That is, the melodic line goes up or down, as the fortunes of the players ascend or descend. The heroine trips up stairs and the small boy slides down the bannister. What could be more suggestive than the ascending major scale and the descending chromatic scale? What are scales anyhow? Nothing but music stairs.

In the film "Rebecca," Franz Waxman depicts the collapse of a burning house by means of crashes and downward glissandi in the entire orchestra. An audience will accept this transfer of a downward visual movement to a descending aural line, even though the noises made by a collapsing structure do not descend in pitch. On the other hand a rising and falling movement is sometimes interpreted musically by a gradual increase and decrease in dynamics. Thus, in Waxman's music for the film "Suspicion," a series of alternating crescendi and decrescendi accompany waves that rise and break against the base of a cliff.

The composer for a film is, of course, associated with the music department and is considered a specialist in his line. There are staff composers regularly employed by a studio while others are free-lance composers who contract

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with the different studios. Often a studio will lend one of its staff composers to another studio for a specific job.

Once a composer is assigned to a picture, he reports to the head of the music department. There all arrangements are made for studio passes, manuscript paper, working space and so forth. "The extent to which he succeeds in influencing the musical planning, performance, and recording procedure depends on his authority, adroitness, and, most important, the support he can obtain outside the department."4

When the producer, director, film cutters, and many other detail technicians have released the work print, which is complete and approved except for technicolor and finishing touches, it is taken to a studio projection room. The only sounds on this work print are those of dialogue and some noises of special effects, such as train whistles, the splashing of water, a gun shot, and the special musical numbers that have been previously recorded.5

This pre-recorded music, if originally composed for the picture, is the only case in which the music is composed and recorded in advance of the actual shooting. This usually occurs when there is a special vocal, instrumental, or dance number. Sometimes in the course of a picture a band is

4Hanns Eisler, Composing for the Films, p. 91.
5Heinsheimer, op. cit., p. 237.
shown playing in the background, here also the music is recorded before the picture is photographed.

Before the practice of pre-recording was put into use, the picture was photographed and recorded simultaneously. This was not only expensive, the recording orchestra being paid by the hour, but acoustics were not considered in the designing of the sets, and, in addition, the camera noises were bad. On the other hand, if the cameras were placed in booths behind glass windows, bad photography resulted.\(^6\)

If these pre-recorded numbers occur in a period picture, the composer is presented with the problem of research. Sometimes he can work in folk music to help portray the character of the country.

By recording a number in advance, the record may be played back while the camera is actually shooting, and the singer or instrumentalists move "...in perfect synchronization with the playback."\(^7\) Using this method, the camera or record may be stopped or started together at any point. Thus, the camera may be moved and new angles set up with no danger of a change in tempo—or even voice quality showing fatigue. Later the laboratory technicians mount the sound track and picture together on one film.


\(^7\)Ibid.
Just viewing the work print a time or two does not instantly inspire the composer to rush out and jot down themes which have started singing through his brain. Even if this were possible, this musical genius could not weave his themes into a pattern that would coincide minutely with the drama unfolding on the screen. This is a long, detailed process that involves split-second timing.

There is, of course, the script which the composer is given to study. From this he may work out some basic ideas on the different themes. "There are two schools of thought about scoring a picture: one is strictly mood music with no thematic relation to the characters in the story; and the other, thematic and melodic writing." Eric Korngold makes excellent use of thematic material in his music for "The Constant Nymph" as illustrated in Figure 1, page 25.

The practice of using themes to portray love, death, comedy, or individual characters stems from the time of Wagner and the Leitmotif. However, Hollywood has a tendency to overdo a thing that has proven its value. "The Hollywood score is so frequently organized by the method of the Wagnerian Leitmotif that a good deal of the spontaneity and

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8Skinner, op. cit., p. 32.
9"Reviews of Summer Releases," Film Music Notes, III, No. 1 (October, 1943), 11.
THE CONSTANT NYMPH

Fig. 1.--Illustration of Thematic Material
modernity of this genre as a whole suffers."^10 Wagner, with his complicated plots and numerous characters, developed the Leitmotif almost from necessity as well as from inspiration. The motion picture is a much simpler medium which uses music not so much as a guide as an inspiration. "Cinema music is so easily understood that it has no need of Leitmotifs to serve as signposts, and its limited dimension does not permit of adequate expansion of the Leitmotif."^11

The preview of the work print is generally attended by representative members of the various departments that have contributed to the shooting of the pictures such as Sound, Publicity, Cutting, Music, Camera, Props, Make-up, Special Effects, Art, the set dressers, and front office.  

Following this primary showing, the composer is given a definite appointment for a private viewing of the picture. This usually takes place in a small projection room equipped with movie screen, projector, chairs, a desk, stop watches and sometimes a piano. There is a buzzer system which enables the composer to signal for the projection machine to be stopped, rewound, and run again at any particular moment.

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^10 Frederick Sternfeld, "Music and the Feature Film," Musical Quarterly, XXXIII (October, 1947), 520.

^11 Eisler, op. cit., p. 5.

^12 Skinner, op. cit., p. 41.
Movies are sectioned off into reels, the spools on which the film is wound. A reel contains approximately one thousand feet of film. At the end of the two thousand-foot reel, the theatre operator begins the following reel on a different projection machine. This switch in equipment presents the composer with a problem. If the music continues from one reel into the next, the mechanical break must not be distinguishable. This problem is sometimes overcome by ending the first reel with a chord and beginning the next reel with the same chord.

The composer, with the suggestions of the Producer, Director, and Head of the Music Department, must decide:

...where the music has to be added, where background music should be heard, how each sequence should be underscored, what kind of music should express each character, where music will be needed to emphasize a mood or to help the picture by the proper "play doctoring."

When it is decided that a scene needs musical underscoring, the scene is analyzed for musical phrases with the "cue" timed to thirds of a second. "The reason for the thirds of a second is that film runs through a projection machine at the rate of one foot per two-thirds of a second."

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During this small period of time, two-thirds of a second, sixteen individual pictures flash over the screen. One quick gesture or noise can occur to bring the entire scene to a definite, split-second climax.17

When the sequence has been analyzed and broken down into split-second cues it is typed up and labeled a "cue sheet." An illustration of a "cue sheet" used by Frank Skinner in "The Irishman" is shown in Figure 2, page 29.18 It takes days to analyze the entire motion picture and write out the cues and exact timing. After this exasperating task, the composer is expected to transform this amazing time pattern into an inspired, mechanically exact musical score within a few weeks.

The composer times his music as he writes and marks the exact number of seconds it takes to arrive at the principle measures. Figure 3, page 30, illustrates how these split-second cues are marked on a motion picture score.19

The composer does not generally orchestrate and copy the entire score. This is again taken over by specialists; however, the composer does indicate the instrumentation on sketches.

17Heinsheimer, op. cit., pp. 238-239.
18Skinner, op. cit., p. 54.
19Skinner, op. cit., p. 60.
"THE IRISHMAN"

Establishing shot: O'Toole walking through countryside.

.00 Start to fade in on a medium long shot of O'Toole walking, camera right, silhouetted against the sky.

.02 Fade full in.

.04 1/3 O'Toole stops walking and turns toward camera, smiling.

.08 1/3 O'Toole starts to jump down from wall toward camera.

.09 He lands, starts to walk toward camera.

.10 2/3 He walks gaily.

.14 1/3 He tosses his shillelagh in the air.

.15 1/3 He catches it.

.18 He stops under apple tree, he looks up.

.20 2/3 He raises his shillelagh up and swings it.

.22 1/3 Cut to close up as he throws his shillelagh in tree.

.23 1/3 An apple drops into scene. He catches it.

.24 1/3His shillelagh drops into scene. He catches it.

.24 2/3 He raises the apple to his mouth.

.25 2/3 He takes a bite and starts to walk right, camera dollies with him.

.28 1/3 Start to fade in on first superimposed foreword: "TO THIS WANDERER THE GREEN LAND OF IRELAND MEANT PEACE AND QUIET."

.32 O'Toole tosses shillelagh into the air.

.33 He catches it.

.36 Fade out on first foreword.

.38 1/3 Start to fade in on second foreword: "BUT TO OTHERS, IRELAND WAS A BACKGROUND FOR PLOTS, INTRIGUE AND VIOLENCE."

etc.

Fig. 2.--"Cue sheet" for "The Irishman" by Frank Skinner.
Fig. 3.--Illustration of score marked for split-second cues, orchestration indications and dialogue guides.
The task is not ended with the completion of the music score. The composer's knowledge and the worth of the musical planning he has poured into the composition is put to the test in the tricky recording system employed. His coordination is exercised to the fullest extent. As the composer prepares to conduct the studio orchestra his mind whirls:

...Keep your eye on the clock on the wall--keep your eye on the music--keep your eye on the timing clock--keep your eye on the screen for cue lines--keep one ear on the dialogue in the earphone--keep the other ear on the orchestra for any mistakes--keep your mind on your business--and don't go crazy!

The music has been written to be performed with certain measures being played in a given number of seconds. This means the tempo must be perfect. Of course, there are some variable measures between important cues that may be speeded up or slowed down in order that the cues may be reached at the proper moment. The composer is given a visual preparatory signal to aid in getting the proper timing. The composer has marked the important cues on his score with a double line.

The music cutter then makes a diagonal line across the film with a tape or scratches, ending at the exact spot where the music cue commences. This line may run either to the left or to the right. The moment when the line reaches the edge of the film, \( \downarrow \), is the exact time for the conductor to hit the cue.

\[ ^{20} \text{Skinner, op. cit., pp. 224-225.} \]
\[ ^{21} \text{Ibid., p. 221.} \]
Oddly enough, the dynamics are not entirely controlled by the composer. They are constantly at the mercy of the sound engineer. When the music, dialogue, and other sound effects are mixed and recorded on to the film track, the music is raised and lowered to its position of background or prominence by the steady hand of the sound engineer on the controls. It takes real clockwork, teamwork, and hard work to produce a motion picture.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Motion picture scores are no longer made up of excerpts from the music of Mendelssohn, Dvorak, Wagner, and the other great musicians of the past. There are occasional films that use the works of these past masters as background music, but most motion picture music is composed for the express purpose of being used in a film. The music score is "tailor-made" for each picture.

A great deal of this music for the films tends to sound like Tchaikovsky or Wagner, but the music is written to live only as long as the picture. It is not intended to exist apart from the picture; its purpose is to provide unconscious color, unspoken explanations, subtle emphasis, and to supply meaning to motion and continuity to the whole. "Its aesthetic effect is that of a stimulus of motion, not a reduplication of motion." ¹

During each period in the history of music, it has been vitally necessary that the composer know his medium thoroughly to enable him to express himself to the fullest extent

¹Hanns Eisler, Composing for the Film, p. 78.
The knowledge of the style and form of the past and present has been a guide to the possibilities of the future. Being thoroughly familiar with the limitations and versatility of musical instruments and their possible combinations is invaluable to the foresighted composer.

All of this knowledge is as necessary to the composer of cinematic works of art as it was to any of the proven masters of the Romantic, Classical, or Baroque periods. These requirements are even more important to the present day composer, for we are in a period of rapid changes and improvements not only in style, form, and taste but in scientific discoveries and inventions as well. The same elements of balance and contrast in instrumentation and composition that formed the works of the concert hall are present in the cinematic scores of today.²

Times change. Composers are influenced by the tempo of their environment. A few generations ago, before the advent of the automobile, the motion picture, and other mechanical devices that have "stepped up" present-day life, composers were freer only because their patrons were less hurried. Except for opera, the composers and the dramatists were producing works separately, and the patrons were

absorbing them separately. Drama and music were separate and distinct. Now, following a period of evolution which involved much trial and error, the original composers are joining up with the dramatists, fusing their talents. Together they are adapting their works to the demands of the times. By necessity, they are bending their efforts toward pleasing the millions of people who view the motion picture.

Writing music for the motion pictures is in the beginning stages of development. A few new forms are beginning to emerge such as "mood music" and "musical bridges." Gradually, the art of combining music and drama is being pushed into motion, and, when a real balance is achieved, this motion will burst forth into full swing. This new art form requires a new technique of original composition and the formation of this technique has just begun. The mechanical procedure involved in the making of a motion picture patterns the process of writing the musical score to accompany the drama. Mastering the new art form will not be an easy conquest, but the opportunity offered by the combination of both sound and vision is one of tremendous promise for the composer of imagination and ability.
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