

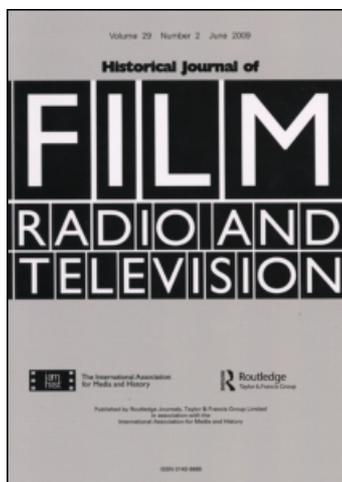
This article was downloaded by: [Giunta, Carrie]

On: 5 March 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 919680838]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713423937>

Beyond the Soundtrack: representing music in cinema

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Online publication date: 05 March 2010

To cite this Article Giunta, Carrie(2010) 'Beyond the Soundtrack: representing music in cinema', Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, 30: 1, 132 – 133

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/01439680903577425

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01439680903577425>

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Notwithstanding this shortcoming, *American Cinema of the 1940s* does illuminate the relationship between the historical context of the 1940s and the content of that decade's films. None of the essays is heavy on jargon, all of them offer readings of films that would be understood readily by undergraduates, and most share an infectious affection for classical Hollywood cinema. Thus, the volume could be beneficially included in syllabi on American cultural history and/or film studies.

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Beyond the Soundtrack: representing music in cinema

DANIEL GOLDMARK, LAWRENCE KRAMER and RICHARD LEPPERT (Eds)

Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007

viii + 324 pp., \$24.95 (paper)

This superb collection of essays on film music sprang from a conference of the same name featuring scholars from the fields of musicology and film studies. Sixteen contributions bridge the two disciplines in one remarkable volume. Whereas previous publications on film music render the soundtrack as a supporting element to the visual dimension of film, *Beyond the Soundtrack* boldly overthrows the tradition by considering music and image as equal partners in conversation, and by examining how music develops a life of its own and can change the life of a film.

The reader gleans from this cross-disciplinary meeting that film music is not and never was a supplementary element. Since the early days of motion pictures, film audiences have listened and watched. This juxtaposition is aptly depicted in the illustration on the volume's front cover. Taken from a 1913 compilation of music for film accompaniment entitled *The Witmark Moving Picture Album for Piano or Organ*, the picture sets the scene inside a cinema of the time. In the foreground, we see the spectators in the front rows, fixed at attention to an image on a screen. The screen is set upon a stage, in front of which an accompanist sits at a piano with the screen and audience on either side of him. What is striking about this scene is the location of the musical source literally between audience and image. Music was as simultaneously a part of the action on the screen and of the audience's environment in 1913 as it is today.

While the cover gives an apt portrayal of how music is presented in cinema, the essays inside consider how music ranging from Miles Davis to Beethoven is *represented* in cinema. In contrast to scholarship that views music as a secondary component of film-making whose meaning depends on visual technique, the authors argue for reciprocity and mutual influence between the two. In three parts subtitled 'Musical Meaning,' 'Musical Agency' and 'Musical Identity' readers will find chapters by some of the heaviest hitters in film studies, including Claudia Gorbman, Richard Dyer, Rick

Altman, and an assortment of musicology experts such as co-editors Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer and Richard Leppert.

Nicholas Cook writes on the BBC costume drama *Eroica* (Jones, 2003), a film about listening to music. Characters in *Eroica* are spectators of the first rehearsal in 1804 of Beethoven's third symphony as it was performed in its entirety. With this symphony, audiences at the time learned to listen to music in a whole new way. The film visualises characters in the process of listening by way of close-up shots of the actors reacting to and identifying with the music. A shift occurs during these shots from diegetic music, which emanates from a source within the narrative of the film, to 'metadiegetic' (p. 39) music played inside the character's heads. As with previous film music texts, diegetic and non-diegetic music are amply discussed throughout *Beyond the Soundtrack*, but discussions focus rather on the blurring of the boundary between the two types. Robynn J. Stilwell's essay 'The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic' celebrates this ambiguity it promotes, citing powerful examples from *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) and *The Killing Fields* (Joffe, 1984).

An especially noteworthy chapter is 'Melodic Trains: Music in Polanski's *The Pianist*' by Lawrence Kramer. The film gravitates around Frédéric Chopin's 'G-minor Ballade' as it is played by leading figure, Szpilman, the pianist. Taking the train metaphor from a Steve Reich composition, Kramer posits that traumatic historical events are on a different train from the one that carries the melody in Chopin's 'G-minor Ballade.' While the events in the film are on one train, the Chopin piece is 'the melody of the different train' (p. 72). Kramer thus raises key questions about music as a universal language and a 'civilizing force' (p. 67).

Goldmark's 2005 monograph *Tunes For 'Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon* called attention to a lack of critical work on cartoon music. In his chapter for this volume, he reveals the early history of music in animated cartoons prior to the advent of synchronised sound. Goldmark's thorough investigation reveals the antecedents of cartoon music in early accompanying guides, Tin Pan Alley sheet music, musicals, pop songs, bouncing-ball cartoons and player piano rolls. Together these elements laid the groundwork for synchronised sound to be adopted first in cartoons and later in live-action films. That the Goldmark chapter is the only one about animated films is the one disappointment of *Beyond the Soundtrack*.

Beyond the Soundtrack is the place where musicologists and film scholars meet to discuss and debate how music is represented in films. This volume could fast become a key text in a new niche as well as a stimulus for future work about film music. Readers looking for a film studies text about famous composers will be surprised to find copious examples from a broad range of Western films and genres. Those expecting a series of neologisms and catch phrases will discover a collection of concise and cogent essays that are not only groundbreaking and innovative, but also a joy to read.

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