Miranda

Revue pluridisciplinaire du monde anglophone /
Multidisciplinary peer-reviewed journal on the English-speaking world

22 | 2021

Unheard Possibilities: Reappraising Classical Film Music Scoring and Analysis

---

Max Steiner's Musical Pictures: "If you get too decorative, you lose your appeal to the emotions"

Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/miranda/39069>

DOI: 10.4000/miranda.39069

ISSN: 2108-6559

Publisher

Université Toulouse - Jean Jaurès

Electronic reference

Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris, "Max Steiner's Musical Pictures: "If you get too decorative, you lose your appeal to the emotions"", *Miranda* [Online], 22 | 2021, Online since 29 March 2021, connection on 28 April 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/miranda/39069> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/miranda.39069>

This text was automatically generated on 28 April 2021.

Miranda is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Max Steiner's Musical Pictures: "If you get too decorative, you lose your appeal to the emotions"

Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris

Introduction

- ¹ Max Steiner once stated in an interview that, "[i]f you get too decorative, you lose your appeal to the emotions."¹ The sentence seems to sum up the musician's main approach: Steiner used the hundreds of scores he composed and directed to generate both effect and affect while recreating a sort of topography of the musical mood. Balancing the dynamic relation between music and image, he also seems to have been one of the few—and certainly one of the first—Hollywood composers to use certain sections of the score as mnemonic devices. In *Beyond the Soundtrack*, Robynn Stilwell suggests that music can conjure up, but also actually create, new memories in a kind of "geography of the soundscape" (Gorbman 187). Why was Steiner's sound geography so groundbreaking? How does his affective strategy function? And what is it exactly that his music does in some of his major film scores, from *King Kong* (Cooper and Shoedsack, 1933) and *Casablanca* (Curtiz, 1942) to the scandalous *Beyond the Forest* (Vidor, 1949) starring Bette Davis? Although Max Steiner composed over 300 soundtracks with RKO Pictures and Warner Bros., this article will focus more specifically on these three scores. The movies he wrote them for quickly acquired a cult status and span some of his most productive years. Cooper and Schoedsack's pre-Code monster adventure romance movie, Curtiz's wartime romantic drama and Vidor's film noir all belong to different genres which do not necessarily rely heavily on "emotion." They nevertheless prove to be remarkable for their intriguing treatment of an emotional dimension, expertly expressed by scores highlighting and connecting the various plots and conflicts at work in the filmic narratives.

- 2 In her 1980 seminal essay "Narrative Film Music," Claudia Gorbman underlines that "[w]hatever music is applied to a film segment will do *something*, will have an effect—just as whatever two words a poet puts together will produce a meaning different from that of each word separately" (189). This elliptic description of the impact of music on the spectator seems to perfectly encapsulate Steiner's very own sonic logic. Beyond mere auditory emphasis, music influences the visual poetics of the film and, most importantly, impacts the spectator's entire aesthetic experience in an often unforgettable way. How, then, can we explore and qualify Steiner's enigmatic "something"? One of the very first hypotheses which come to mind is Steiner's uncanny ability to render the almost palpable, vibrant and tactile quality of what Gorbman calls the "*mutual implication*" of music-image and music-filmic narrative relationships (Gorbman 1987, 15).

Matchmaking: Creating a Sonic Space, Reworking the Visual Experience

- 3 During the silent film era, music was first used to distract the viewer from the noise of projectors, and later to add to the attraction of the film and enhance its meaning. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the soundtrack was still "a mixture of classical and popular tunes" (Wegele 3). It took Steiner's special scoring technique to adapt this use of illustrative music. By relying mostly on music in the nondiegetic background and occasionally on music in the diegetic foreground (the indigenous drums in *King Kong*, for instance), he gave special depth to space and sounds. Juggling with a series of studio constraints in the 1930s, he nonetheless managed to thrive within the system successfully. As Martin Marks demonstrates in "The Sound of Music":

For one thing, a feature usually required more than an hour of music, but time was almost always short—sometimes as little as three weeks—since the major studios turned out from thirty to fifty films a year. For another, the music was to be composed in short segments ('cues'), following detailed timing charts ('cue sheets'), and these were normally decided upon and prepared by someone other than the composer. Moreover, composers were usually assigned to films by the studio's music director, who might ask for two or more to work on one film [...]. Finally, recording engineers (or music editors) presided over the final sound-track 'mix', whereby cues could be altered in volume, replaced, shortened, or eliminated altogether. (Marks in Nowell-Smith 251)

- 4 Steiner's position is, consequently, a paradoxical one, as he worked within the system and yet was able to impose his own stylistic devices while increasingly shying away from the arrangements of classical music. The score for *King Kong* (1933) is the perfect example of his search for a definite scoring technique. Considered to be the first masterpiece of the sound era, it is an integral part of the movie which successfully circumvents musical clichés by fostering a harmonious osmosis with the image track. Filled with massive orchestral effects and consistently foregrounding the great ape's emotional dimension as well as conveying his unspoken thoughts, it helped further the spectator's suspension of disbelief. For the first time, music's key dramatic function fully contributed to the viewer's immersion into Skull Island's supernatural world, already heralding the type of intense phenomenon of immersion Linda Hutcheon describes in her book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006):

A double definition of adaptation as a product (as extensive, particular *transcoding*) and as a process (as creative reinterpretation and palimpsestic intertextuality) is one way to address the various dimensions of the broader phenomenon of adaptation. An emphasis on process allows us to expand the traditional focus on adaptation studies on medium-specificity and individual comparative case studies in order to consider as well relations among the major modes of engagement: that is, it permits us to think about how adaptations allow people to tell, show or interact with stories. We can be told or shown a story, each in a range of different media. However, the perspective, and thus the grammar, changes with the third mode of engagement; as audience members, we interact *with* stories in, for instance, the new media, from virtual reality to machinima. All three modes are arguably 'immersive,' though to different degrees and in different ways; for example, the telling mode (a novel) immerses us through imagination in a fictional world; the showing mode (plays and films) immerses us through the perception of the aural and the visual world [...]; the participatory mode (video games) immerses us physically and kinesthetically. (22-23)

- 5 The *King Kong* aboriginal sacrifice sequence with dance, drums and gong, for instance, inscribes this type of powerful sensory experience on screen [42:05-49:38]. In the first confrontation between Beauty and the Beast, possibly one of the most well-known scenes in film history, the ponderous and brooding notes of this section of the score become associated with the powerful animal. It visually intensifies its surprise at discovering the terrified blond heroine, redoubling the effect of close-up of his hairy face. At this precise moment, however, the score stops being perceived as momentary affect to start "articulating filmic narrativity, ideology and other agendas" (Reyland 56). Possibly for the first time through sound, someone's mental space is represented and virtually frozen on screen for a few shots. The scene foreshadows the Beast's mute love for Ann (Fay Wray). The dramatic intensity is all the greater as a somber use of silence (the absence of diegetic or nondiegetic music) first alternates with the native chief's portentous words of offering, before the second ringing of the gong and thumping music start dominating the soundtrack. It immediately engineers an effect of auditory hypnosis which anticipates the visual hypnosis generated by the world-famous close-ups of the ape's startled face as it sees Ann and eventually carries her away (Fig. 1-3).

Figure 1.

Figure 2

Figure 3

King Kong (Cooper and Schoedsack, 1933): the Beast approaches Ann while by the natives celebrate

- 6 Shot size shifts from close-up to extreme close-up, emphasizing the captivated Beast's human-like eyes. The track-in inscribes on screen the birth of the ape's emotional scape, while creating early on a special bond with the viewer. The materialization on screen of such instant chemistry conditions the spectator's own mode of engagement. The artificiality of the special effects used to build the various "Giant Terror Gorilla" models, as he was known in 1932, with ten-inch fangs and twelve-inch articulated eyeballs notably, is somehow cancelled out by the use of music. Beyond expressing moods and diverse connotations and being an "aid in interpreting narrative events and indicating moral/class/ethnic values of characters" (Gorbman 1987, 84) and as it actively interacts with all kinds of diegetic sounds, music distinctly shapes the spectator's type of immersion.
- 7 Steiner's scoring imposes a sort of "reverse coding" of the expression of emotion on screen. Whereas the human being screams in inarticulate terror, it underscores the Beast's thoughtful process as he starts looking at Ann with fledgling tenderness. This particular musical moment virtually highlights the beginning of his falling in love with the young woman; it therefore fosters narrative interpretation and becomes a narrative in its own right. Drawing on Patrick McCreless, Nicholas Reyland suggests in "The Beginnings of a Beautiful Friendship? Music Narratology and Screen Music Studies": "The extraordinary array of tools, unimaginable just 30 years ago, for gaining a musical understanding [suggests ways of tying interpretations of musically mediated audio-viewing] more closely and imaginatively, to human experience" (56).
- 8 Steiner composed an original score instead of relying on 19th century classical music or solely on music whose source had to be shown within the film itself as was still the custom at the time.² By mixing it with other elements of the soundtrack (the sound of

the gong signaling the Beast's arrival for instance or Fay Wray's celebrated screams recorded in one single session and dubbed in when needed), Steiner ushers us into the heart of the plot of the doomed protective love Kong feels for Ann. His use of diegetic and nondiegetic music and sounds, combined with a heavily tragic cadence, somehow beguiles us into a willing suspension of disbelief, as we enter Kong's fantastic universe. It maneuvers us into relating to the ape's viewpoint, since we consequently ascribe easily recognizable human reactions to him. In "And the Beast Goes On," Robert Fiedel notes that Steiner had annotated his original sketch with the words "Go nuts here!" (72), so as to stress the wild atmosphere of Skull Island and have the audience adhere to "the film's fantastic premise" (71).

- 9 This type of underscoring³ accompanies the close shots of the ape's face and is in itself a demonstration of melodic manipulation. Furthermore, it helps establish the legitimacy of film music, which was slowly becoming an inseparable element from the sound film, among other supposedly more "noble" musical forms. Fiedel further comments that:

The music's elaborate scope, primitive Stravinskian rhythms, and prevalent use of such "modern"-sounding dissonances as minor and diminished sixths and whole-tone clusters,⁴ while remaining firmly rooted in the romantic, Wagnerian leitmotiv tradition, decisively established the viability of the *original* film score. (71)

- 10 In many ways, this corresponds to one of the seminal "musical moment[s] in film" Amy Herzog analyzes in *Dream of Difference, Songs of the Same* (1); it operates on time and movement fostering new configurations of time and space and thus partially answers Gorbman's question, "What is it that music does?"

Bette Davis's Eyes: a Suggestive Harmonic Texture

- 11 Steiner's intimate match between segments of the score and screen action seems to have started with Irving Pichel and Ernest Schoedsack's 1932 film *The Most Dangerous Game*, also about an extraordinary island; it then cohered into a convincing creative process with *King Kong*. His "organic" approach hinges on an acute sense of cinematic detail. Whether it be the ape's sad face or Bette Davis's eyes⁵ in *Beyond the Forest* (Fig. 2), Steiner knew how to pick these catching cinematic details and articulate them with "very simple themes, skillfully connected and repeated in deft transformations, [which] could work both intellectually and subliminally on an audience, and make the melodramatic convincing" (Marks in Nowell-Smith 255).

Figure 4

Beyond the Forest (Vidor, 1949): Soft background music and Bette Davis's Eyes, portals to the melodramatic core of the movie.

- 12 Quite a few of Steiner's scores were actually written for melodramas—such as *Jezebel* (Wyler, 1938), *Now, Voyager* (Rapper, 1942)—or had melodramatic characteristics. Along with composer Erich Korngold working at Warner Bros., his main obsession seemed to find “imaginative ways to adapt Romantic idioms to the dictates of film scoring” (Marks in Chapter 21, “Music and the Silent Film,” Nowell-Smith 253). Resolutely seizing upon significant cinematic details when underscoring, the composer causes an entire universe to open up and goes much further than mere “Mickey-Mousing,” which Martin Marks defines as music following the film's action too literally (Marks in Nowell-Smith 1996, 255).
- 13 The soft background music accompanying Rosa's tale in the opening sequence of *Beyond the Forest* conveys, at first, an apparently banal story in the small town of Loyaltown, until the moment when the camera focuses on the train signal's disquieting rhythmic movement, which is amplified by Steiner's scoring (Fig. 3) [0:56-5:01]. The tension unfolds between the dramatic music of the written prologue announcing a violent tale of passion and the relatively tame segment of the score accompanying the narrator's calm voice-over introducing the small-town setting; it culminates with the strident musical segment redoubling the insistent, powerful and rhythmic signal of the Chicago train. At this stage, the soundtrack already promises to intensify any form of emotional expression by associating Rosa's character with a kind of unstoppable, inexorable movement forward. Its ample rhyming scheme and at times overly lyrical content seem mostly geared toward enhancing a romantic scenario, but prove instead highly destabilizing as it eventually tones down and changes character at the end of the prologue. The pendulum's swing of the mechanical signal triggers an unstoppable tragic cadence which materializes the beginning of the flashback in the best film noir

tradition and inscribes the implacable mechanic of passion on screen. The increasingly strident score "foregrounds the work music performs in relation to the image, destabilizing the image and opening it to outside associations" (Herzog 6). Rosa consequently becomes irremediably connected to a fateful dynamic of passion, which will only come to an end at her death.

Figure 5

Beyond the Forest (Vidor, 1949): The Molines' story in voice-over, the small town of Loyaltown, the train station signal and the quickening pace of the music.

- 14 Music, here, works to reconfigure the tale's boundaries as the spectator can guess these few shots are proleptic of Rosa's destiny: its jerky rhythmic structure already delineates an emotionally-charged arena Rosa will remain entangled in and where her story will tragically come full circle. Its very excessiveness prefigures her death, creating a prospective and predictive auditory space. In the final sequence, close-ups and a high-angle shot of Rosa show her lying dead and broken by the train tracks, an utterly vulnerable shadow fleshed out by the music [1:28:40]. Steiner is hardly being "decorative" here, and his music forcefully increases the filmic rhetoric. In this sense, his dramatic scoring is truly essential, as its stridency doesn't merely provide added variety and expressiveness to the overall melodic line; it fully serves film noir's dark atmosphere and the heroine's somber ending. And if its high degree of synchronization to the tragic events doesn't really alter the genre conventions, since the *femme fatale* rather typically meets a horrific end, it properly gives it body; instead, it renders palpable a final tragedy whose emotional resonance culminates in an operatic elegy.
- 15 The operatic dimension of Steiner's scores seems to be consistently highlighted by quite a few critics. In a seminal article on "The Music of *Casablanca*," Timothy Scheurer also foregrounds the powerful spectrum of the composer's music:

His scores, in fact, are almost reminiscent of operetta scores. He delineates character with carefully developed themes that "sing" and could almost stand as arias or at least as popular songs employing the classic AABA form. Harlan Lebo notes that 'Steiner reveled in soaring themes, virtually nonstop music behind the dialogue [...]' (92)

- 16 The fact that Max Steiner directed the National Symphonic Orchestra for the film's spectacular and mostly operatic score⁶ is therefore fully in harmony with the film's entire system. In this specific instance, the dark and powerful melodies and rhythms fully inscribe themselves on screen, so that each perceptual register and tonality (whether visual or auditory) can be consciously focused on since they closely interact instead of contradicting each other or there being a discrepancy effect between one structure and the other. As Gorbman underlines,

For example, the music that plays while a film's credits unroll—jazz, pseudo-classical, Wagnerian, folk—activates these cultural codes, and can reveal beforehand a great deal about the style and subject of the narrative to come. Third, music in a film refers to the film—that is, it bears specific formal relationships to coexistent elements in the film. The various ways in which it does so shall be called cinematic musical codes, and these latter will form our primary center of interest. (185)

- 17 Music is therefore an integral part of the film's coding process—one which is at once highly imaginative, potently operative and masterfully manipulative.

"Perfect" Effectiveness: The *Casablanca* Film Score

- 18 The celebrated 1942 movie directed by Michael Curtiz seems to be the ultimate demonstration of Steiner's use of paradoxically undecorative and bluntly effective music in film. Generations of viewers and critics alike have celebrated the simplicity and yet extreme potency of its score. So that beyond wondering what it mediates, one should focus on the way in which it creates a sense of communality which is, after all, one of music's first social functions.
- 19 By the time Steiner started working on *Casablanca*, music was a conventional feature in narrative cinema. An advanced set of stylistic devices is at work here telling its own independent story and covering contrasting leitmotifs such as *La Marseillaise* v. *Deutschland über Alles* which finally subside under other elements of the soundtrack before "pausing in suspense in mid-phrase" (Marks in Nowell-Smith 254). The opening credits sum up the story well ahead of the image track by introducing an oriental melody, clarinets, rababs (Arab fiddles) and the French *La Marseillaise*.
- 20 At this early stage of the movie, the texture of cinematic language is extremely synthesized and somehow reduced to a bare minimum. The music narrates its own plot and heralds the flow of musical affect to come; it imposes its own process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, to borrow from Deleuze and Guattari's terminology in their philosophical project *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972-1980). In so doing, it imposes its own form of propaganda on the viewer-listener, as the mere refrain of *La Marseillaise* already brings forth notions of national and racial identity, and hence codifies a certain type of national and cultural fiction—the narrative fight of Free French and European Resistance fighters against the Nazis in a colonial context, years after the original reference to the French Revolution. Steiner's nondiegetic music is masterfully woven into the diegetic one, for instance when Sam plays the piano and

sings M. K. Jerome and Jack Scholl's 1942 song "Knock on Wood" [12:43-13:56]. It matches to perfection the atmosphere surrounding the Vichy-controlled but somewhat lawless city of Casablanca and Rick's Café. Both are being restructured into hybrid territories which have to adapt and diversely grapple with foreign cultural forms. Underlying the ongoing call-and-response pattern of Sam's song, which already works to blur the lines between time frames and participants, the conflict between the different parties at play keeps unfolding (Fig. 4.1-4.2). Coralin Davelaar demonstrates in her analysis of "Max Steiner and the Music of Casablanca" that,

The one original source song,—Knock on Wood, written by M. K. Jerome and Jack Scholl, sounds like it could have been written any year between 1919 and 1943. [...] The song is not constructed to climax at all, but rather to move along like an unrushed conversation among friends. In the onscreen performance, the African American leader Sam (Dooley Wilson) coolly poses a series of questions to which his white band mates respond in unison. The partly sung and partly spoken melody creates an antiphonal chorus of questions and answers between Sam and the band [...]:

Sam: Say, who got trouble?

We got trouble. [...]

Sam: Well now don't you frown. Just knuckle down, and knock on wood.

The song's tempo, neither brisk nor crawling, provides a suitable accompaniment to the lighthearted discussion of how to manage mounting troubles through a discourse of luck rather than the grander talk of destiny and certainty, enabling the crowd to make light of their troubles. (69)

Figure 6

Figure 7

Casablanca (Curtiz, 1942): The first Café scene: Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and Sam (Dooley Wilson) singing *Knock on Wood* (songwriter and composer Scholl and Jerome).

- 21 When the film's first sequence actually opens in voice-over taking us inside Rick's Café, we have been "forewarned" by the disruptive and yet galvanizing and unifying dimension of *La Marseillaise* musical theme; it "picks up diegetic associations, which, in turn, infuse themselves into each new thematic statement" (Gorbman 192), announcing that the entire movie will be a variation on the theme of conflict (whether love, friendship or war).
- 22 The interdependence of the score and film diegesis is mostly symbolized—it is not even inscribed on screen yet—but it immediately imposes a structural pattern that we can guess will resurface in other similar and/or slightly different musical themes and theme songs. The matter, as the word "theme" indicates, will be repeated over and over in the course of the narrative. Music then acquires a primary function of narrative implication and hence emotional manipulation. The spectator starts inferring the narrative development and bringing to the film fable his own affect in the same way as the 1929 viewer when subjected to the Kuleshov effect. Depending on which frame followed the shot of a character with an impassive face, the decoding process was invested with different feelings and oriented in a particular direction. The potency of music editing actively enhances the effectiveness of the editing. Both prove to be powerful tools that have to be conjointly tuned in to steer the viewer's emotional reactions to various sequences of images.
- 23 Steiner's arrangement of musical fragments imposes a formulaic structure. *La Marseillaise*, for instance, is used six times in the film, especially in the scene at Rick's Café when Resistance hero Victor Laszlo, the heroine's husband, starts singing it to drown out the voices of the German officers singing *Die Wacht am Rhein*, *The Watch on the*

Rhine, a German patriotic anthem expressing the historical French–German enmity, played four times. They allow the film to be interspersed with what Gorbman calls “‘metadiegetic’ images—those supposedly narrated or ‘imagined’ by a character in the film” (196), such as the Paris flashback Rick re-envisions after having listened to *As Time Goes By* (Herman Hupfeld, 1931) for the first time in years when Ilsa walks into his Café.

- 24 Ironically, Steiner didn't like the song, which was composed by Herman Hupfeld and first sung by Frances Williams in the 1931 Broadway show *Everybody's Welcome*. As R. A. Campbell underlines, Steiner deemed it “too insipid to carry the dramatic burden placed upon it.”⁷ But Michael Curtis refused to let the composer write a replacement song for it would have meant reshooting the scene with Ingrid Bergman who was already working on Sam Wood's 1943 *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. And so as it had already been recorded, he had to use it. Variations on the central theme of Ilsa and Rick's remembered love inject difference into repetition and generate a continuous flow of musical affect, which impacts the rest of the movie to the end when both Ilsa's theme and *La Marseillaise* are played again. It functions very much like the entire movie's musical structure, even though it is only first heard twenty minutes after the opening, and provides tensions between “the closed meanings of repetition” and “a surplus of meaning that opens the film to new lines of flight” (Herzog 4).
- 25 The ending enacts a synthesis of Ilsa's theme and *La Marseillaise*, and the soundtrack eventually foregrounds a very singular type of narrative. As Ilsa's plane takes off, Louis decides to save Rick from the Germans and to take his side [1:40-1:42:38]. The first bars of Ilsa's theme start playing followed with a variation on a romanticized rendition of *La Marseillaise* thus converting the scene into what Henri Cartier-Bresson was to call “the decisive moment” in his eponymous 1952 monograph on photography. Their juncture represents the perfect musical moment, which also deliberately highlights the constructed nature of history and memory as complex processes. There is no fusion *per se* of the various musical or narrative layers, but an expert recomposition that fully exhibits the right convergence of action, scoring and expression.
- 26 In “The Music of *Casablanca*,” Timothy Scheurer underlines how

[t]he lines between foreground and background music dissolve as Steiner employs the themes to heighten the conflicts on both the physical plane (the singing of “The Marseillaise” in opposition to the Germans' singing “Watch on the Rhine” at Rick's) and the psychological plane (the final scene in which the three themes seem to compete and seek closure). (93)
- 27 As an actual historical era, the French Resistance becomes intertwined with fictional references to another narrative (Rick and Ilsa's love story), which is itself embedded in the overall filmic narrative and therefore hauntingly and indelibly reshapes the latter. The very notion of closure in the end scene is similarly reworked, as it opens up onto the new “beginning” Rick mentions to Captain Renault while another version of *La Marseillaise* resonates (Fig. 4).

Figure 8

Casablanca (Curtiz, 1942): The final exchange between Rick and Louis, sentimentalists and patriots: from History to myth.

Conclusion

- 28 As the years went by, ensuring the perfect alliance between the storytelling process and film scoring remained Max Steiner's lifelong goal. As early as the 1930s, he created sonic spaces that selectively tuned in on the dialogue and image track of the movie, long before any other composer. In this sense, he devised a new type of filmic experience whose synesthetic texture would instantly balance emotional, aesthetic and thematic elements. Seizing upon a significant detail, the "father of film music," as he came to be known, would build upon it a whole universe to sustain unity, create mood and emotion. Kathryn Kalinak remarks that the main musical strategy he perfected to his death in 1971 involved using "expressive melody and [haunting] leitmotifs and [a] careful placement of music in relation to the dialogue" (Kalinak about the "heritage" of Steiner and Korngold, quoted in chapter 2 "The Life of Max Steiner," in Wegele 82). Decades before Henri Cartier-Bresson in photography, he knew how to detect and redefine the contours of the "decisive moment," the peculiar function and impact of which Sean O'Hagan defines as follows in an article on Cartier-Bresson:

What Cartier-Bresson understood by the decisive moment is best explained by the famous quote from his lengthy introduction to the book: "Photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression."⁸

- 29 In the field of film scoring, Steiner integrated this precious instant among a string of others. Each one helped achieve extreme expressiveness and effectiveness, and

triggered selective process of recognition within the spectator-listener. The ability to achieve this was precisely the reason why he was signed in by the RKO in 1929 Hollywood,⁹ having inherited a classic musical strategy providing the viewers with an experience of repetition and recognition, he systematically applied and refined the main theme strategy. This particular pattern and its anchoring function were to become central to the later development of Hollywood cinema as to the movie scores of other composers like Erich Korngold and Bernard Hermann.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited

- Campbell, R. A. "Background As Time Goes By." <https://astgby.blogspot.com/2009/08/background-as-time-goes-by.html>, accessed 17 April 2014.
- Cooper, Merian and Ernest Schoedsack. *King Kong*. RKO, 1933.
- Curtiz, Michael. *Casablanca*. Warner Bros., 1942.
- Davelaar, Coralin. "Max Steiner and the Music of *Casablanca*." *The Hilltop Review* 6.1 (Dec. 2012): 68-75.
- Fiedel, Robert. "And the Beast Goes On." *American Film* 2.5 (March 1977): 71-72.
- Goldmark, Daniel and Lawrence Kramer, eds. *Beyond the Soundtrack. Representing Music in Cinema*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.
- Gorbman, Claudia. "Narrative Film Music." *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 183-203.
- . *Unheard Melodies. Narrative Film Music*. London, Bloomington & Indianapolis: BFI Publishing & Indiana UP, 1987.
- Herzog, Amy. *Dream of Difference, Songs of the Same. The Musical Moment in Film*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.
- Kalinak, Kathryn. *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, ed. *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Chapter 21, Martin Marks, "Music and the Silent Film." Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996: 183-191.
- Paulus, Irena. "Du rôle de la musique dans le cinéma hollywoodien classique. Les fonctions de la musique dans le film *Casablanca* (1943) de Michael Curtiz." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 28.1 (June 1997): 63-110.
- Pichel, Irving and Ernest Schoedsack. *The Most Dangerous Game*. RKO, 1932.
- Rapper, Iving. *Now, Voyager*. Warner Bros., 1942.
- Raskin, David. "David Raskin Remembers his Colleagues." http://www.americancomposers.org/raskin_steiner.htm, accessed 17 April 2014.

Reyland, Nicholas. "The Beginnings of a Beautiful Friendship? Music Narratology and Screen Music Studies." *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* 6.1 (Spring 2012): 55-71.

Scheurer, Timothy E. "'You Know What I Want to Hear': The Music of *Casablanca*." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 32.2 (2004): 90-96.

---. *Music and Mythmaking in Film: Genre and the Role of the Composer*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2008.

Steiner, Max. *Notes to You*. Unpublished autobiography. Max Steiner Collection. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library. Harold B. Lee Library. Brigham Young University. Provo, Utah. The National Symphonic Orchestra score of *Beyond the Forest*, dir. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlzb61XrMoQ&index=5&list=PLqADZ58MCROsQ-0PEHgR2ZPUfsB0sV9xB>. Accessed 3 Sept. 2014.

Thomas, Tony. *Max Steiner: Vienna, London, New York, and Finally Hollywood*, Max Steiner Collection. Brigham Young University 1996, <http://files.lib.byu.edu/ead/XML/MSS1547.xml>.

Vidor, King. *Beyond the Forest*. Warner Bros., 1949.

Wegele, Peter. *Max Steiner. Composing Casablanca, and the Golden Age of Film Music*. Chapter 2 "The Life of Max Steiner." Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014: 49-92.

Wyler, William. *Jezebel*. Warner Bros., 1938.

NOTES

1. Thomas, Tony. *Max Steiner: Vienna, London, New York, and Finally Hollywood*, Max Steiner Collection, Brigham Young University 1996, <http://files.lib.byu.edu/ead/XML/MSS1547.xml>, accessed 27 Aug. 2014.

2. In his unpublished biography *Notes to You*, Max Steiner criticized the fact that "the studio decided that they didn't want any music in dramatic pictures. This was motivated not only by the economic factor, but they had decided that you could not have any background music unless you showed the source. In other words, you had to actually photograph an orchestra, a photograph, a piano, a singer, or whatever or people would wonder where the music was coming from and why." (Quoted by Wegele, 61. Max Steiner Collection, Brigham Young University)

3. In his book *Max Steiner. Composing Casablanca, and the golden age of film music*, Peter Wegele defines *underscoring* as "the technique of writing music that underlies dramatic action or a dialogue" (Wegele, 33).

4. In music, a whole tone scale is a scale in which each note is separated from its neighbors by the interval of a whole step. There are only two complementary whole tone scales, both six-note or hexatonic scales, the whole tone scale on C and the whole tone scale on B.

5. Also the title of a 1981 popular version of the song "Bette Davis Eyes" by Kim Carnes describing a "ferocious", independent woman.

6. He was actually nominated for an Academy Award for Best Score. Refer to:

[[http://www.youtube.com/watch?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlzb61XrMoQ&index=5&list=PLqADZ58MCROsQ-0PEHgR2ZPUfsB0sV9xB)

[v=Vlzb61XrMoQ&index=5&list=PLqADZ58MCROsQ-0PEHgR2ZPUfsB0sV9xB](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlzb61XrMoQ&index=5&list=PLqADZ58MCROsQ-0PEHgR2ZPUfsB0sV9xB)]

7. R. A. Campbell. <https://astgby.blogspot.com/2009/08/background-as-time-goes-by.html>.

8. Sean O'Hagan. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/dec/23/henri-cartier-bresson-the-decisive-moment-reissued-photography>

9. <http://www.hollywoodsgoldenage.com/moguls/max-steiner.html>

ABSTRACTS

By devising a "geography of the soundscape" (Stilwell), Max Steiner used the scores he composed and directed to generate maximum effect and affect. Balancing the dynamic relation between music and image, he was one of the first Hollywood composers to use sections of the score as mnemonic devices.

En imaginant une "géographie de l'environnement sonore" (Stilwell), Max Steiner s'est servi des musiques de film qu'il a composées et dirigées pour créer un effet et un affect maximaux. En développant une relation dynamique équilibrée entre musique et image, il a été l'un des premiers compositeurs hollywoodiens à utiliser des morceaux de la musique du film comme procédés mnémoniques.

INDEX

Keywords: Max Steiner, music, soundscape, score, mnemonic devices, King Kong, Casablanca, Beyond the Forest

Mots-clés: Max Steiner, musique de film, environnement sonore, procédés mnémoniques, King Kong, Casablanca, La Garce

AUTHORS

ANNE-MARIE PAQUET-DEYRIS

Professeure

Université Paris Nanterre

apaquet.deyris@parisnanterre.fr