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THE FILM MUSIC ISSUE

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John Mauceri

The founding director of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra explains how, as atonality bombarded the concert hall, traditional symphonists turned to film

Cinema was never silent. Music was always a part of the performance tradition and, indeed, the success of the medium, whether that was music played on an upright piano, a theatre organ or by a symphony orchestra. With the synchronisation of image and recorded music, the specificity of the music and the drama could be as finely achieved as Wagner's music dramas, when he coordinated the action and scenic design with the exact beats and gestures of his scores. In cinema the collaboration between the visual and the acoustic is achieved in the reverse order: vision first, music after. The effect for the audience, though, is exactly the same.

In the years before the Second World War, orchestral music was developing quite nicely, with a mixture of new ideas of an ever-extended tonality, the acceptance of violence as a worthy aesthetic element in the language and the continued influence of popular dance forms as well as exotic instrumental colours from non-Western sources. And movie music was simply another delivery system of these trends.

However, a generation of young composers who were born into the horrors of the war in Europe began their compositional life in the late 1950s and early 1960s and what they had to say was quite specific and, I believe, firmly rooted in their childhood experience. American universities and serious music critics supported what might be called the "Second World War School", to the exclusion of a vast and complex tradition of musical depiction and storytelling that had always been at the heart of Western music. The word "contemporary" no longer meant music composed at a certain time, but music of a certain style, even though that style had first been developed in the second decade of the 20th century. And while many were quite convinced that those experiments in atonal and 12-tone music were just that, experiments, this nationality-free language spoke profoundly to this group of young and brilliant intellectual men. It was as if their earliest experiences seemed to find an appropriate voice in their new maturity, a maturity that needed to embrace that experience and confront the excesses of a romantic spirit that had been abused and an optimism that was now devastatingly unacceptable. Truth was no longer Beauty. Just look around.

Movies, however, did not care. Movies – their directors, producers, studios and, most of all, their audiences – simply continued to do what theatre music had always done in Western lyric theatre tradition. It continued to use the musical metaphors and similes that had developed since the era of the madrigals, while embracing, when appropriate, all the newest ideas of what was now called "contemporary music". Because of this, a vast legacy of orchestral music was composed, performed, recorded and promulgated to hundreds of millions throughout the world – not in concert halls, but in movie palaces. Movies continued



'A vast legacy of orchestral music was promulgated in movie palaces'

the magic lantern theatrical experience that Wagner imported for his Bayreuth Festspielhaus. And it is not surprising that composers of film music used Wagner's aesthetic and compositional ideas (leitmotif, scenic descriptive devices, epic scale) and continue to do so today. If Mahler was convinced that the Germanic symphonic tradition would end with his symphonies, he was only partially right. What he could not predict was that this very tradition would continue not in symphonies but would be delivered in another medium.

And so, while it was quite normal for a composer to write for the movies and the concert hall in the 1930s and 1940s – composers like Aaron Copland, Miklós Rózsa and William Walton – this became all but impossible in the late 1950s and onward with the official language of classical music being defined as existing only within a certain style. The European wunderkinder, who had become American citizens – Max Steiner, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Miklós Rózsa, Dimitri Tiomkin and

Franz Waxman – inspired the next generation of cinema symphonists: Elmer Bernstein, Jerry Goldsmith, Alex North and Bernard Herrmann; and that influence continues today with John Williams, Danny Elfman and Howard Shore. That Hans Zimmer works and lives in America brings the story full circle. By now it is up to classical music to look back and look around – which, of course, is exactly what it is doing these days – and that is a good thing. It is no longer unacceptable for a John Corigliano, a Philip Glass or a Tan Dun to write for the movies.

The Second World War School composers are, biologically speaking, passing out of this world. Their musical cosmos has left a memorial to a time that cannot ever be forgotten. Their music insists on our attention. Ironically, their musical style has also permeated cinema music, which has always been willing to accept new influences, so that the same vast audience that can accept a Korngoldian uplift also accepts the seemingly chaotic opacity of Ligeti in one score by John Williams. No one questions the skill and genius of Goldsmith's *Planet of the Apes* – an atonal tone poem that evokes a future of prehistoric brutality – that emanated from the same composer who gave us *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. That the output of one film director, Alfred Hitchcock, could require and inspire vastly different musical styles – jazz, high Romantic, atonal, pop, Russian constructivist – is just one more example of the accepting nature of film and film music.

That the greatest film composers themselves were dismissed and/or ridiculed by the composers and critics of contemporary music is, by now, very much beside the point and should probably not be seen as an assessment of musical quality. It was, and is, perhaps best described as a passionate difference of opinion. ©

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THE

Ten great studio recreations of soundtracks

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The Movie Music Collector

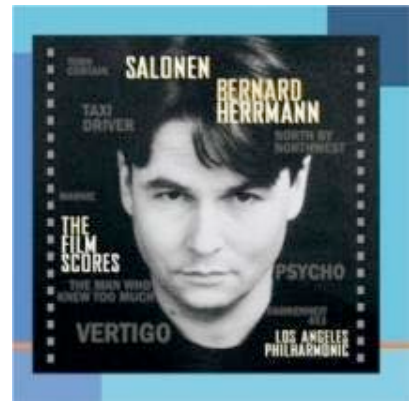
The April 2011 edition of Gramophone contains a 25-page exploration of film music. Here, **Adrian Edwards** lists his ten favourite studio recreations of classic movie soundtracks.

Arnold Film Music, Suites – Premier Recordings

London Symphony Orchestra / Richard Hickox

Chandos CHAN 9100 [Buy from Amazon](#)

Malcolm Arnold was a prolific composer for the cinema and many of his titles are regarded with great affection. The River Kwai March, the haunting Whistle Down the Wind, the supersonic aerial trails in The Sound Barrier and This Old Man heard from Inn Of The Sixth Happiness, are played with great bravado by the LSO under Hickox's buoyant direction.



An invaluable Herrmann collection from Salonen and Sony

Bernard Herrmann. The Film Scores

Los Angeles Philharmonic / Esa-Pekka Salonen

Sony SK 62700 [Buy from Amazon](#)

This is an invaluable Herrmann collection played by an orchestra with pedigree. Five Hitchcock titles include Vertigo, Psycho, Marnie, North By Northwest and Torn Curtain, rejected by Hitchcock, alongside the Suite for Strings, Harp and Percussion from Fruffaut's Fahrenheit 451 and that smouldering night-piece from Scorsese's Taxi Driver.

Film Music of Richard Addinsell

Martin Roscoe pf, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Rumon Gamba

Chandos CHAN 10046 [Buy from Amazon](#)

This collection brings together Addinsell's piece de resistance the Warsaw Concerto in a performance as fine as any, his Christmas music for Scrooge, played by Alastair Sim, the Suite from Goodbye Mr Chips featuring Chetham's Choir and the effervescent Blithe Spirit. There's an integrity to all this music that this CD proclaims loud and clear.

Film Music of Sir Arthur Bliss

BBC Philharmonic / Rumon Gamba

Chandos CHAN 9896 [Buy now from Amazon](#)

From a jaunty march, Welcome The Queen, composed for a Pathe newsreel, to the groundbreaking Things To Come, (who doesn't experience a shiver up the spine when that March begins?), this is a superbly played and recorded CD as a tribute to a pioneer of film music. From television comes The Royal Palaces Suite, a BBC commission, and Bliss the balletomane shines through in his exotic score for Caesar and Cleopatra.

Film Music of Sir Richard Rodney Bennett

BBC Philharmonic / Rumon Gamba

Chandos CHAN 9867 [Buy now from Amazon](#)

This CD salutes the gifts of a versatile composer with a fastidious ear for musical story telling that has enhanced many a film. The beautiful viola contribution in Lady Caroline Lamb and the exquisite music in Enchanted April, lend these films a resonance long after the house lights have gone up. On a grand scale, there's that inspired anthem to luxury rail travel, Murder On The Orient Express.

Hollywood Dreams (Various)

Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra / John Mauceri

Philips 432 109-2

Recorded anew on the sound stage of Ben-Hur and Gigi, this lavishly produced CD is the last word in authenticity. Each selection is a winner and includes The Main Title to Gone With The Wind with the distant chorus singing Dixie, the concert suite from The Wizard of Oz, Bernstein's moving On The Waterfront, a Fanfare for a Bowl Concert by Schoenberg and Newman's fanfare for Twentieth Century-Fox as well as Waxman's Suite, A Place In The Sun.

Hollywood In Love (various)

Hollywood Bowl Orchestra / John Mauceri

Philips 454 647-2

John Mauceri coaxes wonderful playing from his orchestra on this album, produced with love and affection. A number of artists make 'guest appearances' including Gil Shaham, the fine violin soloist in Ennio Morricone's sentimental Cinema Paradiso. The string players of the HBO share their conductor's innate sense of rubato, melting the heart in a tune like Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing. Romantic movie memories indeed!

Ladykillers – Music From Those Glorious Ealing Comedies (various)

Royal Ballet Sinfonia / Kenneth Alwyn

Silva Screen FILMCD 117 [Buy now from Amazon](#)

Thanks to the skills of arranger Philip Lane, a quintessential part of English popular culture lives on in these lively performances of titles such as Passport To Pimlico (Auric), The Lady Killers (Cary) and The Cruel Sea (Rawsthorne). This is a happy reminder of an era when the music of leading English composers was in the cinema. Spurred on, no doubt, by release deadlines, these scores bristle with invention.

Previn conducts Korngold

London Symphony Orchestra / André Previn

DG 471 347-2 [Buy from Amazon](#)

Patrick Russ has reconstructed and assembled four Korngold titles (Captain Blood, Elizabeth and Essex, The Prince and the Pauper, The Sea Hawk), that starred the swashbuckling Errol Flynn. The scoring is full-on, but André Previn, a master at bringing light and shade to the many-layered textures of late romantic music, ensures these fine performances by the LSO are finely tuned.

Walton Scenes from Henry V. Richard III and Henry V – Suites. Spitfire Prelude and Fugue

Sir Laurence Olivier speaker; Philharmonia Orchestra / Sir William Walton

EMI 5 65007 2 [Buy from Amazon](#)

The Suites come in the arrangements by Muir Mathieson, the scenes from Henry V from 78rpm studio recordings made in 1946 that honour the spirit of Olivier's film without being an exact replica of the film soundtrack. Olivier is as compelling now as ever one remembered, and Walton conducts with fire in his belly.

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