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# MUSIC IN FILM

## SETTLING THE SCORE

 1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION

BY JOSEPH TURRIN

# Music in Film

Settling the Score

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# Music in Film

## Settling the Score

First Edition

By Joseph Turrin

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## Bio of Joseph Turrin

Joseph Turrin's music has been commissioned and performed by some of the world's leading orchestras, chamber ensembles, and soloists. His work encompasses many varied forms, including film, theater, opera, orchestral, chamber, jazz, electronic, and dance. Several of his films and recording projects have been nominated for Emmy and Grammy Awards, and many of his works have been recorded on RCA, EMI, Teldec, Naxos, Summit, Klavier, Cala, Albany Records and Crystal Records.

His compositions have been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Live from Lincoln Center, New York Philharmonic Principal Brass, Canadian Brass, Notre Dame University, United States Military Academy at West Point, Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, Musica Viva NY, International Trumpet Guild, and others. The many noted conductor's, musicians and ensembles that have performed his work include Kurt Masur, Erich Leinsdorf, Bramwell Tovey, Hugh Wolf, Wynton Marsalis, Yo Yo Ma, Anne-Sophia Mutter, Frederica von Stade, Sumi Jo, Thomas Hampson, Ramon Vargas, Evelyn Glennie, Mostly Mozart Festival, Royal Philharmonic, BBC Concert Orchestra, US Marine Band (The President's Own), US Air Force Band, Eastman Wind Ensemble, Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, English Chamber Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Little Orchestra Society, New Orleans Symphony, New Mexico Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Brass, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Brass, New York City Master Chorale, and others.

His movie credits, both as composer and orchestrator include films for Paramount Pictures, Cannon Films, New Line Cinema, DEG Entertainment Group, Kino Lorber Films, and PBS/Channel 13 in New York. Some of these films include *A New Life*, directed by Alan Alda, *Little Darlings*, *Nightmare on Elm Street 3*, *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, *Weeds*, *Verna-USO Girl*, *Sadie Thompson* (Raoul Walsh-1929), *Intolerance* (D.W. Griffith-1916), *Diary of a Lost Girl* (Georg Pabst-1929), *Kingdom of Shadows: The Rise of the Horror Film*, and *Broken Blossoms* (D.W. Griffith-1919). He also did the orchestrations for the Opening Fanfare for the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona Spain.

His works are published by, Boosey & Hawkes, C.F. Peters, Theodore Presser, Schott Music, C. Alan Publications, Hal Leonard, Alfred Music, Editions BIM (Switzerland), Winwood Music (England), Paraclete Press, and Studio Music (England). His awards include the National Endowment for the Arts, United Nations Award, New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Roger Ebert "Thumbs Up" Award, American Music Center, ASCAP Awards, National Band Association, Arnold Gabriel Award for Composition (US Air Force Band), Manhattan School of Music Composition Award, and the Eastman School of Music Sol Human Award. In 2007, his opera *The Scarecrow* was selected as a finalist by the American Academy of Arts and Letters Richard Rodgers Award and the National

Opera Association. In 2006, he was awarded an honorary degree from the Eastman School of Music and the University of Rochester. For fifteen years he taught composition and film scoring at the Hartt School and is currently on the faculty at Rutgers University, Montclair State University, and Kean University.

## Acknowledgments

In writing this text, I wanted to present a broad spectrum of film music, the composers of film music, and some of the important foundations, both historical and current, that have contributed to this marvelous art form. Although this textbook is intended for use in general education courses at the university level, I also believe it has value to anyone interested in the subject, from simple curiosity to a more in-depth comprehension of the craft. The one significant feature in this text that sets it apart from others is the inclusion of numerous video and audio examples that are linked throughout. For a greater appreciation of the material, I would suggest making an effort to explore these clips as they pertain to the various sections in the book.

I'd like to thank the folks at Cognella for their time, effort, and faith in making this book a possibility. Most importantly, I want to thank Dorian, my wife, who without her support, proofing, numerous suggestions, and encouragement, this text would never have been written.

Joseph Turrin

## Accolades

“Joseph Turrin’s book is an excellent course for those interested in the history and basic techniques of modern film music scoring. Not at all a simple historical recitation of film music, the book is informative and indicative of the author’s own broad based interests and of his experience as a composer of film music, with a wide and extremely varied choice of musical examples.

Full of history, but not obsessively detailed, the book casts a wide net over many diverse films and the composers that worked on them. Musical examples covering a vast and comprehensive list of subjects, both historical and contemporary, along with many

visual examples, are plentiful. Although meant for course study, this very-well written and well researched book is a fascinating and highly recommended narrative for the general reader interested in the who, what and how of film music.”

– Bruce Broughton

“Joe Turrin knows music in film—as an avid student of the subject, and as an exemplary practitioner. I know, when he did the score for one of my films, he added emotion and context that the movie would never have had without him.”

—Alan Alda

“I have always liked composers who are reflecting upon the musical sound of their country. Joseph Turrin does it in a very convincing way. I have taken great delight from getting to know his scores, which I have conducted in New York, in Europe, and in Asia.”

—Kurt Masur

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## UNIT 1

# Music in Film



## Prelude

The study of film music is an expansive subject that would be almost impossible to cover in any one course or text. With this in mind, the material chosen represents and highlights some of the more significant examples in this area. Not only for the inspiration these film scores may have had on composers in the medium, but also to highlight the importance of music in film, both in general and specific ways.

Although good film music can stand on its own both in concert and out of context, its true brilliance is measured by how it interacts with the many facets that are a part of the film experience. Beside its enhancement of the image, bringing the viewer a deeper appreciation and understanding of what they are seeing, music can deliver a subtext to what may not be visually apparent at the time. It can also provide a sense of what may be coming, as in the scores of many horror films that foreshadow specific scary events, and in some situations, it can anchor us to the storyline by introducing and developing thematic material associated with characters and plot. Most importantly, it should emotionally and dramatically convey the style and content of the film. At its best, there should be an interdependent relationship in which film and music each complement the other.

One interesting aspect of film music that separates it from all the other music in our lives is that it is made apparent to us through a series of music cues that start and stop throughout the playing of the movie. We experience film music in bits and pieces, unlike our usual experience of listening to music, which usually comes to us in a more continuous flow, allowing our listening experience to feel complete. In film music, this kind of continuity is not possible, although film composers can achieve something comparable.

For the composer to create continuity in film music, they must try to find a way to somehow bridge and connect these separated sections of music. To achieve this, the composer's toolbox mostly relies on the use of returning themes, repetition and variations on already presented music. This use of repetition also serves as a way to connect the narrative both visually and dramatically. Regarding all this, the most important factor that makes all this possible; film music depends on the brain's capacity to retain and remember music, which it can do very efficiently.

The study of the human brain is a complex science, although there have been some fundamental realizations that have come to light concerning how it processes music. A survey of MRI imaging of the brain, while listening to music has presented us with some interesting facts. Although the auditory cortex, located in the temporal lobe, is responsible for processing sounds, the listening of music also affects the regions related to emotions and memory. Other studies have found that listening to

music stimulates the release of dopamine, which arouses a sense of pleasure and euphoria. Researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine have discovered that listening to music can not only enhance our memory but to also increase our ability to pay attention.

The Stanford team showed that music engages the areas of the brain involved with paying attention, making predictions and updating an event in memory. By studying subjects while listening to a classical symphony comprised of several sections or movements, peak brain activity occurred during a short period of silence between musical movements—when seemingly nothing was happening.<sup>1</sup>

There is no question that the presence of music affects our senses in the most profound ways. Physicians and music therapists for a long time have proven that music can also benefit patients suffering from pain, anxiety, depression, stuttering disorders, and dementia. The country singer and guitarist Glenn Campbell had Alzheimer's for several years, and although he could hardly remember the names of his family members, he continued to perform without much difficulty remembering the melody lines and chords of songs, although for the lyrics he often used a teleprompter. It's discovered that Alzheimer disease, at first, affects the language and memory centers of the brain although the motor centers remain intact for more extended periods of time. His doctors also suggested that the activity of performing might have prevented a more rapid decline. Another interesting fact is that individuals afflicted with various stuttering disabilities hardly ever have problems when singing. This may also be related to memory; when we sing, we usually know the song and words by heart, both are in our memory bank. On the other hand, speaking involves searching for words (word retrieval), and that isn't necessarily connected to memory.

Our brain, and how we perceive music, has always fascinated researchers and prompted many studies in the area. As we listen to music, our brain searches for consistent patterns of sounds and rhythms. These patterns are in the form of repetition, returning musical material, tonality, key centers, musical shapes, etc. These elements are organized by the brain and presented to us as a coherent whole that we perceive as organized music. Because our brain understands repetition as related to remembering, our minds are continually predicting what will happen next based on a pattern, like the beat of a song. This is how we end up tapping our toes or dancing.<sup>2</sup> In music theory, composers and theorists study the craft of organizing music into logical shapes comprised of melodic and harmonic material, always striving for continuity, balance, and completeness. This overall organization of musical ideas is often referred to as *form and structure* and considered to be an essential component in the study of music composition.

In many ways, you could say that the human brain appreciates composers' reliance on organizing music into logical patterns, as it helps give us a road map for overall

comprehension. With that said, the comprehension of musical form works on deeper levels as well. There's the note-to-note, or pitch relationship, the musical duration of each of these notes, the architecture and shape of a grouping of notes, and how these individual pitches and groups work in combination forming harmony and counterpoint. These inner components are the building blocks of larger musical patterns and shapes.

Since film music comes to us in a series of segments made available through the dimension of time, with each portion separated by sections of no music, its essential for the listener to somehow make a connection. As stated before, the one most significant component in film music may be the recurrence of musical material, which not only connects and reinforces the visual but also can be remembered due to the brain's ability to recognize musical patterns and repetition readily.

In the 1939 film *Wuthering Heights*, the central theme, referred to as “Kathy’s Theme,” plays at least twenty or more times throughout the film. The question might arise; do we ever tire of hearing something over and over again? Interestingly, we accept these recurrences as a matter of fact, since associated with the storyline, characterization, relationships, and visuals. In many ways, film music stands on its own for this very reason. The recurrence and repetition of thematic material need no explanation because the continuity is expressed through its connection to the various elements in the story. Hopefully, as we explore the subject of film music, you’ll not only see how perfectly music and film work together but how and why this relationship can penetrate into our deepest emotional center.

## Why Have Music and What Can Music Do in Film?

Music is the art most removed from reality and the most capable of penetrating the subconscious. Music makes a direct appeal to the emotions—its presence in film does not require any explanation.<sup>3</sup> Music in film plays a supporting role. Sometimes it's in the background, and at other times it moves to the front for a moment, but it's generally there to anchor the film and steer the viewer toward the desired response.

Cinema is a kind of discourse among its various parts; each at its best when doing something that none of the other parts can do as well. Filmmaking is collaborative art, where all the various elements must coexist in perfect unison, each complementing the other. Music defines the meaning of the film by stimulating and guiding emotional responses to the visuals.<sup>4</sup>

The next section describes possible uses of music in film, with examples of each. Understand that sometimes these items can overlap or work together in various combinations.

# Functions of Music in Film

## Opening Credits

Music in the opening credits, if any, can set the mood and feel of the film; time, place and atmosphere are sometimes conveyed in the first music we hear.

### ***The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011)—Music by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross**

The score and soundtrack for this film by David Fincher is a collection of various sound effects and rhythms in combination with electronics and driving synthesized sonorities. The opening credits were edited to match the pulse of the music, and throughout this opening, the music conveys a dehumanized element, which conjures up the mood of the film. The story is based on a novel by Stieg Larsson and deals with violence, mostly against women, moral corruption, and Fascism in Swedish society (See Video 1.1).

 **Video 1.1** *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* Opening Title Sequence (2011)

### ***To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)—Music by Elmer Bernstein**

Another excellent example of opening credit music is from the film *To Kill A Mockingbird*, with a score by Elmer Bernstein. If you've read the novel or have seen this movie you would know that it deals with several controversial subjects, two of which are racism and intolerance. On another level, it's a story told through the eyes of children. With this in mind, Elmer Bernstein composed a score based on a rather simple childlike theme and introduced it in the very first seconds of the opening credits. His chosen musical instrument is the solo piano, later followed by the full string section. So why the piano? If you think about this, the piano is usually considered to be the instrument of choice when children become interested in taking music lessons, or at least it was in the 1960s. Another interesting facet of this tune it that the opening notes could be played on the piano with one finger. How much more simplicity could you ask? This opening sequence tells us a lot about the film along with the accompanying visuals. This is an excellent example of Elmer Bernstein's ability to distill the essence of this particular movie through music (Listen to Spotify Audio 1.1).

If interested, it's suggested that you find the film on DVD or its availability on any of the available streaming services.

 **Spotify Audio 1.1** *To Kill a Mockingbird* "Main Theme" (1962)

## Underscoring Emotion

Music adds depth and insight to what we see and feel by heightening the emotional level.

### Scene from *Braveheart* (1995)—Music by James Horner

This is what film music does at its best. This music brings to us what dialogue can only hope to match. This is purely what music for the cinema is all about. If asked what it is that attracts composers to write music for film, ninety-nine out of one hundred film composers would agree that finding the underlying meaning in a scene, the narrative subtext and what is not apparent visually, is what interests them most. In this scene, we are witnessing the execution of Wallace, and Horner scores this with music that's rich and noble, signifying Wallace's never-ending fight for freedom, regardless of his death (See Video 1.2).

 **Video 1.2**  
Freedom!—  
*Braveheart*  
Movie Clip  
(1995)

## The Montage

Montage in film editing refers to a section of film comprising many brief shots edited together to show a series of events in a condensed manner. The juxtaposition of these multiple images emphasizes their relationship, both similarities, and differences. Montage is a useful device for showing travel or the passage of time. Frequently, a montage is unified through the use of music.<sup>5</sup> The Russian director Eisenstein was one of the first to utilize and develop this technique in film. Music can tie these edits together, giving the viewer a clearer understanding of the montage and what it suggests. Although the eye sees a succession of scenes and visual transitions, the music creates an essential unifying element, which by its flow throughout the montage gives the viewer a sense of visual continuity. As one can imagine, this technique can be a bit confusing to an audience if not constructed properly. A great example is the workout scene in the movie *Rocky* with music by Bill Conti (Listen to Spotify Audio 1.2).

 **Spotify  
Audio 1.2**  
"Gonna Fly  
Now"—Theme  
From *Rocky III*  
(1982)

### *The Godfather* (1972)—Music by Nino Rota

This clip is from the baptism scene in *The Godfather*. Throughout this montage, mixed with scenes of brutal murder and the baptism of an innocent child, we hear only the church organ. The ritualistic juxtaposition between life and death, powerfully made with the help of music (See Video 1.3).

 **Video 1.3**  
The Baptism  
Murders—*The  
Godfather* Movie  
Clip (1972)

## Transition & Scene Change

Music can sometimes smooth out the various transitions that take place in film (e.g., fade in, fade out, dissolves, scene changes). Cutting from one scene to another is what film editing is all about. Not always, but often, these cuts can feel abrupt, and music can help smooth out the visual changes.

 **Video 1.4**  
*Braveheart*  
 Movie Clip—  
 The Love of a  
 Princess (1995)

 **Spotify**  
**Audio 1.3** “For  
 the Love of a  
 Princess” —  
*Braveheart*  
 (1995)

 **Spotify**  
**Audio 1.4**  
 “Manuscript  
 Reading and  
 Snow Picture” —  
 from *Citizen*  
*Kane* (1941)

### ***Braveheart* (1995)—Music by James Horner**

In this clip from the film *Braveheart*, the music enters on the kiss as they embrace. The music here is warm and romantic and soon swells as the scene transitions to the lovers, outside, bidding goodbye (See Video 1.4 and listen to Spotify Audio 1.3).

### ***Citizen Kane* (1941)—Music by Bernard Herrmann**

Another example, offered as a suggestion, is the scoring of a scene transition by Bernard Herrmann from *Citizen Kane*. There’s a clever use of music tying two scenes together in the early part of the film. As a news reporter sits in the Thatcher Library reading documents, the eye of the camera follows the writing across a white page. We are focused on the camera panning across the written words as we hear the flute softly playing several staccato notes, which slowly evolve into a flutter of notes, creating a swirling effect. With the addition of other instruments, the swirling becomes more pronounced foreshadowing the visual dissolve into the snow scene. As the music bursts forth in full force, we see Kane as a young boy. Herrmann was a master at transitions, and this film is loaded with them (Listen to Spotify Audio 1.4).

## Source Music

If interested, it’s suggested that you find the film on DVD or its availability on any of the streaming services.

The most logical explanation for the use of film music is referred to as *source music*. The use of film music is divided into two categories: *diegetic* and *non-diegetic*. Diegetic music is understood to emanate from a particular source in a scene. (source music). These sources may include a playing radio, performing musicians or singers, music played in a club or restaurant scene, and so on. It’s unimportant whether or not we see the source as long as we understand the music to be coming from something or somewhere in the scene. This qualifies it as diegetic music and implies that the characters in the scene can hear this music.

Conversely, non-diegetic music is understood not to emanate from the scene itself, so the characters do not hear it. Other names for this type of music include underscore, accompaniment music, commentary music, interpolated music, and perhaps most commonly, background music. Most film music that we are familiar with is non-diegetic music.<sup>6</sup>

 **Video 1.5** Stuck  
 in the Middle  
 With You—  
*Reservoir Dogs*  
 Movie Clip  
 (1992)

### ***Reservoir Dogs* (1992)**

This is a scene from *Reservoir Dogs*. The source music emanates from the playing radio creating a somewhat detached aloofness in a very brutal scene (See Video 1.5).

## Music Playing Against the Action and Contrast

There is also music that plays against the action for extreme contrast. This is a potentially powerful approach to scoring a scene, providing insight into what may not be readily apparent.

### ***Platoon* (1986)—Music in this scene by Samuel Barber**

Sometimes finding an alternative to what we see or hear can focus our interpretation in a completely different way. Contrast is a powerful approach to expression and can in many cases bring more attention to the subject. We can only appreciate air conditioning on a sweltering day or the warmth of fire when it's cold. So, in some ways, we need the opposite, contrasting element to appreciate or understand a situation more thoroughly. Film music is filled with this approach in scoring.

*Platoon* is a brutally powerful film about war. In this final scene, we witness the killing of an American soldier as he runs, hoping for rescue. The scene goes into slow motion, as his run to safety is in vain. The director decides to score the scene with one of the great classics of contemporary American music “Adagio for Strings” by Samuel Barber. This is an emotionally melancholy piece of music, not at all violent and brutal, and in complete contrast to what we are seeing. This music speaks to us with a tragic tone, subduing the sounds of battle with its beauty and tenderness (See Video 1.6 and listen to Spotify Audio 1.5).



#### **Video 1.6**

*Platoon*  
Clip—The Death  
of Sgt. Elias  
(1986)



#### **Spotify Audio 1.5**

“Adagio for  
Strings, Op. 11”

## Create Atmosphere

Among the many insights music can present to the viewer, the obvious ones would be the film's time period (e.g., 1600, 1900, 2016), or the geographical locations in the movie (e.g., USA, India, Russia, Ireland). It may also tip us off as to the type of film (horror, science fiction, romantic, comedy, action, or adventure).

### ***Friday the 13th* (1981)—Music by Harry Manfredini**

There is no doubt that the next two clips can create an unsettling and foreboding atmosphere. In this scene from *Friday the 13th*, there is a build-up of suspense and tension as we follow Alice with the apprehension that there is somebody or something in the house. She picks up a weapon as she approaches the open window. There is a sustained note in the orchestra, concluding as a cat jumps out at her, although all is not well as she opens the fridge and finds a severed head. The music enters again in sharp, accented staccatos as she is attacked and murdered. This is very effective scoring, although formulaic and used in many horror films. Horror scores can effectively create these various moments of suspense and tension utilizing an arsenal of musical devices, such as dissonance, sustained notes in extreme

 **Video 1.7** *Friday the 13th Part 2* Movie Clip—Look Out, Alice! (1981)

 **Spotify Audio 1.6** “Halloween Theme—Main Title”—from *Halloween* (1978)

 **Video 1.8** *2001: A Space Odyssey* Official Trailer #1—(1968)

 **Spotify Audio 1.7** “Also Sprach Zarathustra: Einleitung, oder Sonnenaufgang”—from *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)

registers, quick successions of musically jarring accents and slowly increasing tempos and rhythms. These musical techniques are often supported by an array of nonmusical sound effects (See Video 1.7).

### ***Halloween* (1978)—Music by John Carpenter**

Another example of creating atmosphere and used in the opening credits, is the music from the film *Halloween*, with a music score by the movie director John Carpenter. The repetition of short musical fragments creates a background on which the composer can overlay longer, contrasting sonorities in the synthesized strings. This one theme and its variations reoccur throughout the film (Listen to Spotify Audio 1.6).

### ***2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)—Music from “Also Sprach Zarathustra” by Richard Strauss**

The director Stanley Kubrick decided to go with music from several classical masterpieces in this film. This opening is probably the most well-known opening in all of cinema. There’s a breath of expansiveness in the first few notes of this music as the orchestra score fills the screen with sound. The music at first is soft but then instantly grows in dimension, as the orchestration builds, gravitating between the two primary harmonic foundations of major and minor, as a metaphor for the universal laws of life and death (See Video 1.8 and listen to Spotify Audio 1.7).

## Parallel the Action

Music can also parallel, or underscore the action, and coincide with what we see on screen. The composing of music for scenes depicting action, dramatic, romantic, and adventure all fit this category of scoring. The question that arises, why duplicate in music what we already are seeing? A good question, which is solved by film composers in many different ways. Regardless, composing music that exactly follows what we see on screen is a viable scoring technique.

### ***E.T.* (1982)—Music by John Williams**

This example is one of the great chase scenes in film. John Williams scores this with meticulous detail. The synchronization is perfect, and every visual detail is in some way covered by a musical change or emphasis. Williams brilliantly keeps in mind the ultimate culmination of all this music, which builds dramatically, taking our breath away as the boys and ET reach the final roadblock and dramatically take flight. The music soars, and we are lifted out of our seats. Keep in mind that none of this synchronization is by accident and was carefully planned out by Williams and Spielberg, using click tracks, stopwatch, and streamers. It’s rumored that Spielberg

actually may have cut some of the action to fit the music. Whatever the case, structure, synchronization, drama, and climax all come together in this section of film. We will get into the various techniques of synchronization later on in the unit titled “The Movie Business” (See Video 1.9).

 **Video 1.9** Ride in the Sky—*E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* Movie Clip (1982)

## Tension and Pace

Music can relax or heighten tension and control the pacing of a scene. The use of rhythmic devices can also alter our perceived awareness of time by either slowing down or speeding up tempos. “Music makes time audible.”<sup>7</sup> It can also create a sense of apprehension, as in horror movies before something terrible happens (see “Create Atmosphere” above).

### ***Vertigo* (1958)—Music by Bernard Herrmann**

This exciting clip shows the tension that music can create in a scene by shifting tempos, rhythms, orchestrations, and by sometimes avoiding tonal resolutions. Interestingly, if you turned the sound off in this clip, it would most definitely pale in comparison without the music. There’s also an interesting connection with the rhythm of the edit in synchronization with the rhythm of the music—they almost work in unison. We often find this kind of rhythmic relationship in TV commercials, although it’s also prevalent in film as well (See Video 1.10).

 **Video 1.10** *Vertigo* Movie Clip—Officer Down (1958)

### ***The Firm* (1993)—Music by Dave Grusin**

The chase scene from *The Firm* is a classic that demonstrates tension and pace. The entire score is written and performed on solo piano, utilizing not only the keyboard but also effects created by playing on the strings inside the instrument. Grusin also places objects (e.g., paper clips, screws, erasers, etc.) on the strings, so when the keys are struck the objects vibrate, creating a metallic or percussive sound. Grusin’s creative exploration of the piano, along with his use of jazz rhythms and style, generate a musical excitement, which follows the action perfectly (See Video 1.11).

 **Video 1.11** *The Firm* Movie Clip—The Chase (1993)

## Bringing Out the Unspoken or Unseen

Bringing out what may not be evident to the viewer is an essential function of film music. This approach to scoring is perhaps the most exciting and insightful, being that it can create a subtext to what is not apparent in the visuals or dialogue. As an example, music may suggest a character’s underlying thoughts and motivations long before the story unfolds.

 **Video 1.12** The Best Parts—*Cinema Paradiso* Movie Clip (1988)

### ***Cinema Paradiso* (1988)—Music by Ennio Morricone**

This is the final scene from *Cinema Paradiso*, and although you need to see the entire film to understand the subtext entirely, the point is easily seen in this clip. We can quickly read this character’s inner thoughts, emotions and feelings, all entirely conveyed through the music. As the music swells and grows and the rhythmic pulse increases, Salvatore becomes more animated in his facial expressions; he smiles, and slowly he’s overcome with joy and delight (See Video 1.12).

The film *Cinema Paradiso* contains an earlier scene in which the main character, Salvatore, as a younger boy, waits outside under Elena’s window, with whom he is madly in love. He has vowed to her that he would wait for months outside her house if need be until she acknowledges her love for him by coming to the window on New Year’s Eve. She never does, and he walks away. He returns sadly to the projection room at the theater, forlorn and rejected. Surprisingly, Elena appears suddenly, they embrace and kiss. Morricone’s scoring surges as the two lovers take their first kiss. There is no dialogue in any of this because none is needed. The scene speaks to us entirely through music (See Video 1.13).

 **Video 1.13** *Cinema Paradiso* Movie Clip—Waiting Outside Her Window (1988)

## Neutral Use of Music

In the early days of film (i.e., 1927–1933) there were situations where music was used as neutral filler, primarily to create a mood and nothing more. With the introduction of sound and dialogue in 1927, adding music was approached with caution, not only because its use was not yet entirely understood, but also because of the fear that it may somehow distract the viewer from spoken dialogue. This kind of attitude concerning music may have been related to the silent movie days, before 1927, when pianists provided live background music in the theater. In those early years, music was not only used to fill the space but also to cover the noise of the projector. With the addition of dialogue, it may have given the early filmmakers the idea that too many conflicting sound sources could lead to confusion and that music if used, required special consideration.

 **Video 1.14** *The Artist* Movie Clip—Lights, Camera, Attraction (2011)

### ***The Artist* (2011)—Music by Ludovic Bource**

Although a modern 2011 silent film, *The Artist* is an excellent example of continuous music used just to fill the scene (See Video 1.14).

## Cohesive Use of Themes

A music score can create unity and coherence in film by the recurrence of musical themes. We can mentally revisit a past association or reference to a particular

character or situation through music. Interestingly, this can effectively work even without visuals. In the movie *Jaws*, we don't need to see the shark to know it's near because of the John Williams two-note motif. With this, Williams creates continuity, not only musically, but also dramatically.

The use of the motif, or leitmotif as it was initially named, came to be understood as short musical themes or ideas that represent and depict various characters and situations in musical drama or symphonic works. The term *leitmotif* is derived from the late Germanic romantic period, developed to the highest degree in the opera and tone poem. *Opera and tone poems* are stories told through music in which short leitmotifs occur throughout the entire composition representing characters, events, and ideologies. This clip from the film *Jaws* is a perfect example of the leitmotif and its use (Listen to Spotify Audio 1.8).

 **Spotify Audio 1.8**  
“Main Title”—  
from *Jaws*  
(1975)

## When the Music Ends

There is also a way to draw attention to a particular event on screen by abruptly stopping the music. Where music enters and where it terminates in a scene is extremely important. Its entrance and cessation can alter the scene just because somethings been added or eliminated, in this case, the music. Composers and directors are also aware that the scene may play better with no music at all.

### ***Spider-Man (2002)*—Music by Danny Elfman**

When Peter tests his new powers, the music sets the excitement as Peter experiments with his new-found abilities to leap and climb. At the top of a rather tall building, he contemplates making a giant leap using his web spinning talent. As he attempts to throw his web, nothing happens, and he looks puzzlingly at his hand. Up until this point in the scene, the music has been moving along, and now, at a somewhat tense moment, the scene reaches a climactic situation, and the music comes to a sudden stop. This is an excellent example of how the score can get us into the right mode of excitement and then suddenly drop out, leaving us with nothing but what we see—a great way to draw the audience's attention to a crucial moment (See Video 1.15).

 **Video 1.15**  
*Spider-Man*  
Movie—Peter's  
New Powers  
Scene (2002)

## Music Versus No Music

### **The shower scene from *Psycho*—Music by Bernard Herrmann**

This is the famous shower scene from the 1960 film *Psycho*. Director Alfred Hitchcock initially decided not to have any music during this brutal murder, but

composer Bernard Herrmann argued that maybe he could come up with something that would change the director's mind. Hitchcock was a director who intensely believed that music and its placement be carefully considered. His philosophy was that of many directors, who felt that the use of music could change the emotional dimension of a scene and possibly rob the scene of reality, or maybe even change its intended meaning. Hitchcock felt that this could especially be true for the shower scene and that having the scene play without anything but sound effects was the best way to go. Bernard Herrmann must have made a compelling argument to the strong headed and opinionated Hitchcock because this famous shower scene does contain music.

The score is composed exclusively for string orchestra (i.e., violins, violas, cellos and string basses). Most of the score uses these instruments in a fairly standard manner both melodically and harmonically, and it's possible that Hitchcock thought Herrmann would score this scene more conventionally in style. However, the scene is composed in a very unconventional manner, especially for the 1960s. Herrmann uses the strings in a way that almost sounds electronic at first. By using screeching birdlike slides on the strings, along with some percussive hammered out chords, Herrmann creates a very chilling and violent sound. We can assume, to Hitchcock's surprise, that the kind of music Herrmann composed for the shower scene was convincing enough for the director to revise his thoughts. Bernard Herrmann's career in film music began in 1941 with a score for the film classic *Citizen Kane* and ended in 1975 with a score for Martin Scorsese's film *Taxi Driver* with Robert De Niro. By 1960 he was already a very experienced composer and to his credit, knew how to work with most directors. In the early stages of planning music for a film, the composer and director sometimes are hindered by the fact that finding a common vocabulary is difficult. As for Hitchcock and Herrmann, they later stopped working together, mostly due to personal differences (See Video 1.16 and listen to Spotify Audio 1.9).

Check out the next clip from the film *Braveheart*. In this intense battle, composer James Horner decides not to use music at all. Would you consider this to be a good choice? Would music add anything to the intensity of this scene? Sometimes music can get in the way by just adding another layer of sound to what's already there. An experienced film composer knows where not to use music (See Video 1.17).

The following story is an excellent example of how film music can be misunderstood even by professionals in the industry. It's also a philosophical argument for music versus no music:

During the production of *Lifeboat* at Twentieth Century Fox in 1944, composer David Raksin was stopped by a friend in the studio commissary and told, perhaps a little too pointedly, that Alfred Hitchcock had decided against using any music in the film. Raksin, inured to snide comments on film music, mused for a moment and

 **Video 1.16** The Shower—*Psycho* Movie Clip (1960)

 **Spotify Audio 1.9** "Prelude"—from *Psycho* (1997)

 **Video 1.17** The Battle of Stirling—*Braveheart* Movie Clip (1995)

asked why and how that unusual decision had been reached. Said the friend, “Well, Hitchcock feels that since the entire action of the film takes place in a lifeboat on the ocean, where would the music come from?” Replied Raksin, “Ask Mr. Hitchcock to explain where the cameras come from, and I’ll tell him where the music comes from.”<sup>8</sup> An interesting and controversial discourse about the placement of music in film.

## Figure Credit

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