



# The Invisible Art of Film Music: A Comprehensive History

By Laurence E. MacDonald

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Beginning with the era of synchronized sound in the 1920s, music has been an integral part of motion pictures. Whether used to heighten the tension of a scene or evoke a subtle emotional response, scores have played a significant—if often unrealized—role in the viewer’s enjoyment.

In *The Invisible Art of Film Music*, Laurence MacDonald provides a comprehensive introduction for the general student, film historian, and aspiring cinematographer. Arranged chronologically from the silent era to the present day, this volume provides insight into the evolution of music in cinema and analyzes the vital contributions of scores to hundreds of films.

MacDonald reviews key developments in film music and discusses many of the most important and influential scores of the last nine decades, including those from *Modern Times*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Citizen Kane*, *Laura*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Ben-Hur*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Godfather*, *Jaws*, *Ragtime*, *The Mission*, *Titanic*, *Gladiator*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and *Slumdog Millionaire*. MacDonald also provides biographical sketches of such great composers as Max Steiner, Alfred Newman, Franz Waxman, Bernard Herrmann, Elmer Bernstein, Henry Mancini, Maurice Jarre, John Barry, John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith, Dave Grusin, Ennio Morricone, Randy Newman, Hans Zimmer, and Danny Elfman.

Updated and expanded to include scores produced well into the twenty-first century, this new edition of *The Invisible Art of Film Music* will appeal not only to scholars of cinema and musicologists but also any fan of film scores.

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### Editorial Review

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Music plays an important part in the movies by underscoring emotions, heightening drama, and offering context to just about any and every scene. But most moviegoers rarely give film scores much thought—it is background, after all. This impressive text provides a comprehensive, chronological introduction to the art of film scoring, showcasing key developments of some of the most important films from 1920 to 2009, with an epilogue that takes a peek at 2010–12. Biographical sketches of 52 composers are featured as sidebars throughout the text. An extensive bibliography, general index, and title index complete the volume. Recommended for most large public libraries and for academic libraries supporting film-studies and music-composition programs. --Rebecca Vnuk

### Review

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The second edition of this film history (1st ed., 1998) covers music scored for such films as *Brokeback Mountain*, *Unbreakable*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Nine*, and others released between 2000 and 2011. Biographical information about composers appears in sidebars, allowing the text to focus more on the history and details of the composers' film music. MacDonald offers an engaging study that presents important information about the history of film music. The book gives considerable attention to the three "godfather" Hollywood composers--Max Steiner, Dimitri Tiomkin, and Alfred Newman--but covers film composers, their scores, and their stylistic features for every decade. Composers such as Aaron Copland, whose output was mostly outside film scoring, are also included. Despite its title, however, much of the book is devoted to Hollywood film music. With its stronger analytic approach, *Music and Cinema*, edited by James Buhler, Caryl Flinn, and David Neumeyer, is geared more toward music majors. This volume will be useful for general readers interested in film music history and for undergraduates with no previous musical background. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower-division undergraduates and general readers. (*CHOICE*)

MacDonald updates his work *The Invisible Art of Film Music: A Comprehensive History*, in this second edition. This version includes the additions of 1998 to 2012, expanded articles and commentary, and photographs of composers. The work begins with a brief introduction of the early years of film history, followed by a chronological history of film music. Among the films and events of each year are 52 corresponding composer biographies, which MacDonald calls "biographical sketches," of film music's most influential and prominent composers, from Max Steiner to Michael Giacchino. The title concludes with an epilog that highlights the first few years of the current decade. A volume of this size, more than 600 pages, requires significant indexing. Although the general index is quite short, the title index and name index are substantial and invaluable. MacDonald does a great job organizing the book in a way that makes it valuable as a reference tool or as a cover-to-cover read. VERDICT A great resource for the general student or historian of music or film interested in the greatest and most influential movies and events of film music

history. (*Library Journal*)

When the 1st edition of this history of Hollywood film music appeared in 1998, one reviewer called it 'the best (history) available in the market.' In this 2d edition, the author, a retired college professor, has expanded coverage to 2012. As in the 1st edition, a chronological arrangement is used to cover composers and their scores written as background music for films (Hollywood musicals like *Singin' in the Rain* are excluded). After a chapter on music that was used to accompany the silent films, each of the chapters that follows cover a decade of film history. These chapters begin with an overview of the decade, followed by year-by-year coverage. For each year, the author highlights a few outstanding scores and their composers, followed by a section, 'Short Cuts,' that mentions briefly a few other important film scores. For example, in the section '1939,' Max Steiner's score for *Gone with the Wind* and Aaron Copeland's *Of Mice and Men*, get extensive coverage and brief mention is made of other film scores of the year by such composers as Erich Korngold and Dimitri Tiomkin. Each entry discusses both the music and the film (e.g., brief plot outlines). Coverage is nontechnical and anecdotal, often bordering on entertainment gossip. Scattered throughout the text are page-long profiles (each with a photograph) of 102 important composers beginning with Max Steiner and ending with Michael Giacchino, who composed the score for the 2009 animated feature *Ratatouille*. Each chapter also contains a list of sources used in the text. The book ends with an extensive six-page bibliography of books and articles on the subject of film music, followed by three indexes: the first on general topics, the second of film titles, and the third of names (because of the book's chronological arrangement the use of this index is essential to trace a composer's output). The book is both informative and entertaining. . . .[T]he present volume is also an excellent source of information on this subject. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

About the Author

**Laurence E. MacDonald** is professor emeritus at Mott Community College.

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