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NEWS [June 1981]:

Society:

In order to designate the present issue "Summer," we have had to abandon our "Winter" and "Spring" issues. While this practice will in no way diminish anyone's subscription--a "year" of *Pro Musica Sana* stretches from PMS 31 to PMS 34 no matter how many months intervene--it is nevertheless regrettable. Prompt submission of carefully written and typed articles is the best remedy for this unfortunate situation, but we welcome other forms of editorial assistance or suggestions. We apologize for the postal delays that some members experienced with PMS 32, which in North America was mailed at the beginning of March. Any subscriber who did not receive his copy is welcome to a replacement.

Performances:

Miklós Rózsa has now completed his second String Quartet, which could be premiered as early as next season in Chicago. The Viola Concerto premiere with Pinchas Zukerman as soloist and Andre Previn conducting will take place in 1981-1982 in Pittsburgh. Rózsa's film and concert program with the Detroit Symphony takes place at Meadow Brook on 16 August. A special mailing will go to our Midwestern members in July.

Films:

United Artists will release EYE OF THE NEEDLE at the end of July. The soundtrack album will be on Varese Sarabande Records (STV 81133). Twentieth Century-Fox has announced that *Charmed Lives*, Michael Korda's "family memoir," will be developed into a film by Nicholas Meyer. It should not be difficult to imagine an appropriate composer for this project. We wish it speedy progress.

Recordings:

Tony Thomas has enlarged his catalog with two additional Rózsa discs. THE KILLERS/DARK WATERS/TIME OUT OF MIND (TT MR-4) is another historical document drawn from acetate transfers of the old sound tracks (in the first two cases) and from a Hollywood Bowl concert (in the third). The last item, the *New England Symphonette*, is therefore the best-sounding of the lot. The piece is an entertaining expansion of the old-fashioned Piano Concerto Rózsa wrote for LYDIA some years previously. The more primitive sound of the other selections is still quite listenable. There is a full side of powerful music from THE KILLERS, and also some offbeat, little-known, American-sounding theses from the forgotten DARK WATERS.

A more ambitious record is the new *King of Kings: The Story of Christ in Music* (Medallion 311), comprising the eleven choruses Rózsa drew from BEN-HUR and KING OF KINGS, plus the additional "Kings of Bethlehem," based on a Hungarian poem and never previously recorded. Featuring a strong performance by the Brigham Young University choir under Ralph Woodward, the record is the surprise of the summer.

Anyone who missed the original French pressing of PROVIDENCE (EMI Pathe 2C 066-14406) can now obtain an American release on DRG Records (SL 9502). David Raksin's "The Subject is Film Music" will return to KUSC-FM (Los Angeles) on Wednesday evenings beginning in July.

Publications:

Though we still need a thorough revision of James Limbacher's flawed but essential Film Music, the author has now taken one step in that direction with an update volume, Keeping Score: Film Music 1972-1979. It is available for \$22.50 from The Scarecrow Press, 52 Liberty Street, Metuchen, NJ 08840.

CinemaScore, having once suspended publication, has now been reanimated by a new publisher: Randall Larson, 3378 Valley Forge Way, San Jose, CA 95117. Kevin Fahey is attempting to establish a Bernard Herrmann society and has already produced a preliminary one-page bulletin. Contact him at 5080 Brighton Ave., San Diego, CA 92107.

(continued on page 23)

CINEMA/SOUND

AN INTRODUCTION by Rick Altman:

Editor's Foreword:

The charter of *Pro Musica Sana* is clear: Film music and any other music that has been neglected on account of the cinematic background of its composer. Since the article that follows not only does not concern film music but is not even about music at all, a bit of explanation is in order.

Film music, like sound effects and dialogue, is only one component of the sound track, itself but a part of the cinematic whole. What brought the members of this Society together ten years ago, and what continues to bind all lovers of film music together, is the peculiar prejudice that exists against this particular facet of film art. Scholars and critics of music and cinema have always looked down on it. Less today than a decade ago, but the prejudice still exists. (Just a few weeks ago the eminently rational Stanley Kauffmann condemned *THE LAST METRO* because it tried to move us with music.)

The roots of this prejudice have not often been examined. In musical circles the reasons for its persistence are perhaps more obvious. There is the old anti-technological bias: Music is a "lively" art, therefore a recorded medium must be second-rate. There is simple envy: Hollywood composers make too much money to be "pure." And there are the multitudinous biases of modernism: Music that is functional and communicative must be inferior to that which is esoteric and experimental; music in the "service" of another art must be lesser than pure, abstract music. And so on.

But none of these reasons explains why film critics so often mimic their musical colleagues. Surely there is more to the matter than simple envy and a desire to emulate a senior art. Why should a cultured man of the arts like Kauffmann, who has long accepted the art of film, come down so hard on one

particular component of the cinema? The answer, I suspect, is that film critics have been conditioned by an orthodoxy laid down more than half a century ago and rarely questioned since. Students today are still being indoctrinated with this same orthodoxy on the most forward-looking campuses. Virtually every film textbook embraces it and every theoretician endorses it. The dogma seems to underlie all serious film study.

What is this doctrine? It boils down to five words: Film Is A Visual Art. Accept this and it follows that any effect achieved visually--above all by means of montage--is to be valued as uniquely cinematic and therefore "pure." Story and dialogue are merely literary or, worse, theatrical. One scarcely needs to inquire about the status in this formal hierarchy of such a vulgar, theatrical, operatic technique as dramatic film scoring. No wonder that any music aspiring to more than a merely mechanical function in the overall montage--any music that really tries to move us--incurs the automatic wrath of film purists. Not because it is bad (as indeed most film music is and always has been bad), but because it dares to make itself heard at all.

Now the Visual Art orthodoxy is nonsense. Most readers of this journal-- and everyone who has ever felt the unique power of cinemusical drama--know it to be nonsense. But it is one thing to feel a truth, another to state it persuasively, explain the misconception, and persuade the establishment. That is something that has needed doing for more than 50 years, ever since film, *sound film*, came into being. And that is what Rick Altman's article attempts here.

His "Introduction to Cinema/Sound" is actually the preface to an issue (no. 60) of *Yale French Studies* entirely devoted to this important topic. The issue, for which Professor Altman was guest editor, was published early this year, and we are rushing to bring it to the attention of our readers as soon as possible. *Yale French Studies*, though an estimable and wide-ranging academic journal, is perhaps off the beaten track for movie critics and film scholars. But the "Cinema/Sound" issue deserves the widest distribution, to which goal we hope now to contribute in some small way.

Though only the introduction is reproduced here, we recommend the entire issue to our readers. It contains fifteen articles on various theoretical, historical, and critical points of interest. French cinema is emphasized, but not exclusively. Four of the articles are explicitly concerned with music:

David Bordwell, "The Musical Analogy."
Claudia Gorbman, "Narrative Film Music."
Annette Insdorf, "Maurice Jaubert and Francois Truffaut: Musical

Continuities from L'ATALANTE to L'HISTOIRE D'ADELE H." Philip
Rosen, "Adorno and Film Music: Theoretical Notes on *Composing
for the Films*."

In addition Claudia Gorbman's "Bibliography on Sound in Film" contains a section on film music that supplements earlier bibliographies by Manvell and Huntley (1957; rev. 1975), Sharpies (1978), and Marks (1979).

Yale French Studies, no. 60, may be obtained for \$5 plus postage (40c U.S./75c foreign) from Room 315, William Harkness Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06420. The following essay is reprinted by permission of the publisher.

* * * * *

More than half a century after the coming of sound, film criticism and theory still remain resolutely image-bound. Early filmmakers' skepticism about the value of sound has been indirectly perpetuated by generations of critics for whom the cinema is an essentially visual art, sound serving as little more than a superfluous accompaniment. In recent years the reasons underlying this hegemony of the visual have continued to multiply. With each new visually oriented analysis, with each new image-inspired theory, film study's exclusive image orientation gains ground. The role of this issue of *Yale French Studies* is thus remedial; by concentrating attention on a neglected area it will perhaps suggest new directions and possibilities for a more integrated approach to the entire film experience.

The source of the image's current dominance is closely linked to the vocabulary developed by three-quarters of a century of film critics. With few exceptions film terminology is camera-oriented. The distance of the camera from its object, its vertical attitude, horizontal movement, lens, and focus all depend quite specifically on the camera's characteristics and provide the field of cinema studies with a basic language. Another set of terms concentrates on the non-camera aspect of the film's visual component: film stock, punctuation, aspect ratio, lighting, special effects, and so forth. While these terms and many others constitute part of any introductory film course, the corresponding audio terms remain virtually unknown. The type and placement of microphones, methods of recording sound, mixing practices, loudspeaker varieties, and many other fundamental considerations are the province of a few specialists.

This general situation has been strongly reinforced by the concerns evinced by influential film critics over the last half century. To choose only a well known pair of examples, we find that Eisenstein and Bazin, considered from the standpoint of the sound track, appear strikingly similar in their interests. Though Eisenstein stresses montage and Bazin prefers long takes and deep-focus photography, both constantly emphasize the visual component of film-making. Like its vocabulary, film criticism's problematics have remained consistently visual in nature. Outside of a spate of reaction to the coming of sound, the concerns of the sound track have remained excluded from the nodal points of film

criticism. In recent years this situation has grown even more one-sided, due to the strongly visual emphasis of recent French film theory. The strain which analyzes the film apparatus (beginning with the work of Jean-Louis Baudry and Jean-Louis Comolli) usually defines film apparatus as camera and projector, with the mechanics of sound reproduction left on the margin. The justification for this approach is said to lie in the Western world's privileging of vision over all other senses; the cinema, it is claimed, is no more than a child of Renaissance perspective. According to this approach the spectator is placed, within the film as well as within the world at large, primarily by visual markers; even within the limits of this method of handling spectator placement, however, it is surprising that more emphasis has not been placed on the sound track's role in splitting and complicating the spectator, in contesting as well as reinforcing the lessons of the image tract. Recent theory has been pushed even further in a visual direction by the adoption of Jacques Lacan's visual metaphors (first by Baudry and Christian Metz, then by virtually the entire Paris school). Developing a fascinating and logical tie between the "mirror stage" as described by Lacan and the film-viewing experience itself, these critics find themselves limited to visual language alone. Now, the mirror metaphor could easily be applied to sound as well as to vision (the Narcissus myth includes Echo as well, as I have pointed out in a recent review¹), but, given the image-consciousness already present in previous criticism and theory alike, the mirror analogy has been restricted to visual experiences. As a result, the ancillary role previously played by the sound track has been diminished still more. It is difficult to imagine how the auditory dimension of cinema might at this late date be reinstated. Perhaps the most important single requirement for a revival of interest in the sound track is an increased sensitivity to problems of sound technology. Paradoxically, book after book chronicles the technological, economic, and artistic innovations which led to the coming of sound, yet subsequent developments have been neglected by all but a minuscule group of technicians. Everyone knows that

Charles F. Altman, "Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Discourse," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 2, No. 3 (August, 1977), 257-72.

Edison intended sound and image reproduction as a synchronized pair, and that various influences delayed for decades the acceptance of his original concept. Stress has repeatedly been placed on Lee de Forest's early invention of the audion tube and his later collaboration with Theodore Case and Earl Sponable. Economic historians have pointed out the importance of patent disputes with the German Tri-Ergon group and, in a general way, the dilatory effects of the capitalist system's profit-consciousness. In fact, nearly every history of the cinema devotes an entire chapter to the period stretching from Warner's experiment with sound-on-disc in *Don Juan* (August, 1926) through Fox's highly successful use of sound-on-film in its *Movietone News* series to the supposed landmark of Warner's *Jazz Singer* (October, 1927). As a general rule, these chapters go on to mention the 1928 *Lights of New York* ("the first completely dialogued full-length film") and the 1929 fascination with the musical, but in keeping with standard film history's preoccupation with "firsts" the chapter ends with no more than brief reference to the early experiments with sound conducted by King Vidor, Rouben Mamoulian, Ernst Lubitsch, and Walt Disney.

Though this is hardly the place for a full-fledged history of sound technology during the last half-century, it will nevertheless prove useful to provide an outline of major developments and concerns.² The early history of sound film is marked by the limitations of the carbon and condenser microphones then in use. Non-directional, fragile, sensitive to wind and other ambient noises, needing an amplification stage very close to the microphone, these mikes required very special recording conditions. Providing these conditions heavily influenced image recording as well as sound. Simply put, the problem lay in the difficulties of producing a high quality and complex sound track (including dialogue, music, effects) with an unselective microphone at a time when the technology of sound mixing practically forbade post-mixing of multiple

²This summary is heavily dependent on many of the items listed in Claudia Gorbman's excellent bibliography, especially Edward W. Kellogg, "History of Sound Motion Pictures," repr. from *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* in Raymond Fielding, ed., *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967).

tracks without audible loss of quality. In fact, until approximately 1933 it was extremely rare for music and dialogue to appear simultaneously on the sound track unless they were recorded simultaneously. The latter solution of course presents other difficulties. The amount of reverberation generally required for dialogue varies greatly from that which is appropriate for music (dialogue needs the fast and relatively limited reverberation of familiar upholstered interior spaces, while we expect orchestral music to have the slow reverb provided by a large auditorium); similarly, dialogue and music require different amplification and thus are difficult to record with the same microphone). The industry's solution to this problem, already generally operational by late 1929, was to record the music separately—in an atmosphere conducive to proper music recording—then to play the *recorded* music back while the scene was being acted and its dialogue recorded. This so-called "playback" system had the immediate effect of separating the sound track from the image—a primary factor in the constitution of film ideology. By facilitating the matching of a performer with a sound which he had not necessarily created, the playback permitted immediate capitalization on the sound film's fundamental lie: the implication that the sound is produced by the image when in fact it remains independent from it.

While the playback system serves as an early model of the prestidigitation which characterizes the later multiple-channel mixing of effects, dialogue, and music (first perfected in the late thirties), it was not able to solve the problem of outdoor synchronized dialogue recording. The early mikes continued to pick up unwanted noises in all but the most carefully selected outdoor sites (the new directional ribbon or velocity mikes were even more sensitive to wind pressure than the familiar carbon and condenser mikes). Simply to move indoors, however, deprived the filmmaker of location photography. Here again, the relatively primitive state of sound technology determined the development of major aspects of image technology. In order to benefit from the controlled atmosphere provided by the new heavily insulated sound studios, without giving up outdoor scenes entirely, research in the area of back projection was accelerated, with acceptable results achieved as early as 1932. That the technique of

back projection is modeled on that of the playback seems incontrovertible. In both cases the material pre-recorded under special conditions (music needing special miking in a proper room, location photography involving movement and distances inconsistent with current sound practices) is inserted in the final recording by virtue of a hidden reproduction device (the playback speaker, the back projector). It is thus on the model of sound track practices that Hollywood's habit of *constructing* reality (as opposed to *observing* it) is based.

Throughout the thirties, nearly every important technological innovation can be traced back to the desire to produce a persuasive illusion of real people speaking real words. Not only sound stages but camera blimps, microphone booms, incandescent lights (replacing the noisier arc lamps), and the development of highly directional microphones derive from a felt need to reduce all traces of the sound-work from the sound track. This effacement of work, commonly recognized as a standard trait of bourgeois ideology, provides the technological counterpart to the inaudible sound editing practices developed during this period (blooping, cutting to sound, carrying sound over the cut, raising dialogue volume levels while reducing the level of sounds which don't directly serve the plot). These technological and technical contributions to inaudible sound editing of course parallel the well known standards of invisible image editing developed during the same period. The technical aspects of this visual practice have received regular comment—match-cutting, cutting on movement, 180° rule, 30° rule, and so forth—but the technological aspects deserve to be more widely recognized: finer grain film to reduce graininess, faster film to reduce degree of artificial lighting, color film to simulate natural vision, coated lenses to reduce distortion and glare, more mobile cameras to reproduce variety of human motion. Indeed, many of these innovations, usually mentioned only from the image-improvement standpoint, have corresponding effects on sound reproduction. To mention only a few, the experiments in film carried out by Eastman, Dupont, and others immediately before the war resulted not only in the faster panchromatic films which permitted the cinematographers of the period to increase

depth of focus, but also in marked improvements in the quality of sound-on-film recording. Fine-grain film stock, like Eastman's No. 1302 and Dupont's No. 222, contributed markedly, as did the new coated lenses, to the increase in quality of sound recording during and after the war. (It is too seldom remembered that sound technology during the thirties and forties is also image technology: all sounds, whether coded as variable density or variable area, were expressed in optical terms, and thus had to be recorded photographically on the film, and ultimately read by means of a lamp in the projector. Thus nearly every advance in image technology—film, lens, printer, lamp—resulted in a corresponding leap in sound quality.)

In terms of sound quality, the average film of the mid-forties, whether in Hollywood, France, or England, represented a significant improvement on the original efforts of the late twenties. In more general terms, however, the films of the forties remained the direct descendants of those earlier films. Every step of the process had been improved—from microphones to printers, from amplifiers to loudspeakers—yet the fundamental optical recording and printing technology remained basically the same. Not until after the war, thanks in part to German wartime technology, did the sound recording industry in general and the film sound track in particular take a quantum leap forward with the perfection of magnetic recording techniques. As with all important technological developments, however, the magnetic recording revolution met with immediate economic resistance. There was no question that magnetic recording was easier, used lighter, more mobile equipment, cost less, and produced markedly better results; theaters, however, were not equipped to play films which substituted a magnetic stripe for the traditional optical sound track. Just as Hollywood delayed the coming of sound for years, it has for economic reasons delayed the coming of better sound for decades. Over a quarter of a century after the general availability of magnetic recording technology, very few theaters (usually only the high priced, first run, big city variety) are equipped with magnetic sound equipment. Ironically, for years the average amateur filmmaker working with super-8 sound equipment has possessed better and more advanced sound reproduction facilities than his neighborhood cinema.

Nevertheless, Hollywood was able to capitalize on the new technology in another way. Though filmmakers around the world continued to use optical sound for distribution prints, they very early began to do all their own recording in the magnetic mode (by the end of 1951, 75% of Hollywood's original production recording, music scoring, and dubbing was being done on magnetic recording equipment). Finishing what the playback had begun, magnetic recording divorced the sound track still further from the image and from the image's optical technology. Now, any number of sound sources could easily be separately recorded, mixed, and remixed independently of the image (thus simplifying the manipulation of stereophonic sound, now often coupled with the new side-screen formats).

Ironically, the very technology which permitted Hollywood and other studio systems all over the world further to separate the production of sound and image tracks encouraged independent filmmakers to tie the recording of the two tracks tightly together. As inexpensive as they are portable, magnetic recorders were soon made a part of the standard *cinema-verite* kit. Perceiving the ideological roots of Hollywood's split between image and sound (re)production, the partisans of direct sound developed a theory of the naturalness of direct, unedited recording, of this method's ideologically uncontaminated nature. Though these theories are contestable on many grounds, they had an enormous effect, particularly in France. Jean-Luc Godard and other practitioners of the New Wave were soon abandoning Hollywood's characteristic directional microphones and selective amplification in favor of the direct transcription of all ambient sounds by means of a single omni-directional centrally located mike. No doubt this approach neglects the extent to which the human ear selects sounds, but it certainly had the important effect of foregrounding the artificiality, i.e. the constructed nature, of sound practices in studio-produced classical narrative films the world over.

Of all those influenced by Godard and *le direct*, no one has had such an important technological influence as Robert Altman. Experimenting from the very first with multiple-channel mixing (e.g. *M.A.S.H.*),

Altman has at least since *Nashville* adopted the eight-track technology developed by the popular recording industry. In many ways, this was an obvious development, since film sound has regularly profited from parallel developments in related sound industries (radio, phonograph, tape, etc.), yet this borrowing was longer in coming and promises to bear still more fruit than most of the others. Over the past quarter of a century the popular recording industry has been one of the most profitable in the entire entertainment complex, and thus has benefitted from technological developments far surpassing those made available to the cinema over the same period. At present, it is not at all uncommon for twenty-four separate tracks to be used in the constitution of the final sound track for an inexpensive record or tape. The standards of mixing technology have thus grown rapidly, to the point where they far surpass those typical of the film industry. Whereas nearly all previous productions had necessitated a mechanical connection between the microphone and other sound apparatus (whence the sound boom required for all sound takes since the early thirties), Altman introduced the use of radio mikes broadcasting to the separate tracks of an eight-track system, using two or three times the basic eight when necessary. This frees the actor entirely from the tyranny of the microphone, and also, thanks to microphone technology developed for other purposes, permits Altman to restrict each channel to a single, carefully controlled input (a single character's voice). Each track can then be dealt with separately in any of the ways in which sound signals have traditionally been handled (filtered, reverb added, amplified, etc.), so that the final mix can do anything from reproducing the exact sound actually heard from a specific point to constructing a highly contradictory set of signs which utterly splits the hearing subject. By manipulating his sound, whether through microphone location, signal deformation, or editing strategies, Altman—and the many others who now follow this system—is in a position to manipulate his auditor independently from his spectator. When the two sets of positioning signals are combined in the viewing/hearing subject, the full possibilities of cinema's audio-visual collaboration may clearly be sensed.

One final development deserves mention, because it represents the most recent progress in solving an old problem. When there was only one microphone input for the sound track, the problem of ground noise already existed. Indeed, throughout the thirties and forties, one of the main concerns of sound engineers was that of ground noise reduction. Many solutions were proposed and indeed put into effect, but none capable of solving the problems endemic to the multiple tracks and frequency ranges possible in recent equipment. Recently, however, the Dolby system (not surprisingly, an innovation of the popular recording industry) has been applied to film sound with very favorable results. Basically, the Dolby system reduces distortion by artificially amplifying and then reducing low volume sounds (compensating for differences in frequency range), thus returning the sounds to their original volume but in the process reducing ground noise. Used for the final track of *Nashville*, the Dolby system was first used throughout production in *Star Wars*, and since then for a number of other expensive Hollywood features, including Michael Cimino's *Deer Hunter*. Indeed, now that the film industry has at last begun to take its cue from the area which represents the state-of-the-sound-art—popular recording—it is to be expected that new technology will continue to be made available. Whether or not local theaters will ever be equipped with the sound systems necessary to use these innovations to their fullest must remain a separate--and economically problematic--question.

Just as attention to the technology of sound has largely been concentrated on the innovations leading up to the coming of sound, so reflection on the role of the sound track is concentrated in the years immediately following the sound revolution. Though parts of this early commentary are all too familiar (how many times must we read about Rene Clair's praise of asynchronous sound in *Broadway Melody?*), its overall logic and ramifications have never been fully explored. Briefly, let me recall the major figures and statements in the history of sound aesthetics. As early as August, 1928, Sergei Eisenstein set the tone in a joint statement made with Pudovkin and

Alexandrov. Stressing sound's threat to montage, this manifesto called for an asynchronous, contrapuntal use of sound. The following year Pudovkin explained this theory in full in a chapter of his *Film Technique* entitled "Asynchronism as a Principle of Sound Film," while at the same time Rene Clair was independently arriving at similar conclusions. Shortly, a similar theory was to be propounded in Bela Balazs' *Der Geist des Films*. The polemic against the tendency of sound film to imitate the theater, already apparent in Clair and Balazs, reached its height in the work of another early critic of the sound cinema, Rudolf Arnheim, especially in his 1938 "A New Laocoon: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film"³

Working in the wake of such important formulators of prescriptive cinema theory, other more modest individuals like Raymond Spottiswoode forged a matching descriptive theory. Dividing sounds into realistic/non-realistic and parallel/contrastive categories, Spottiswoode also elaborated on previous usage by separating the notion of counterpoint from that of asynchronism, thus clearing the path for the terminology generally employed today, that of Siegfried Kracauer. Borrowing freely from Spottiswoode, as well as Pudovkin, Clair, Arnheim, and Karel Reisz's standard editing manual,⁴ Kracauer provides three pairs of terms, each predicated on the primacy of the image but designed to describe sound: synchronism/asynchronism, actual/commentative, and parallelism/counterpoint. That the basic vocabulary for film sound should derive from a line of critics profoundly suspicious of sound and that this terminology should take the image as its point of departure are matters of concern which have been too infrequently addressed in the history of criticism on the sound track.⁵

³Eisenstein, *Film Form* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949), p. 258; Pudovkin, *Film Technique* (New York: Grove, 1960), pp. 155-65; Clair, *Reflexion faite* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), *passim*, and *Cinema d'hier, cinema d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), pp. 195-218; Balazs, *Theory of the Film* (New York: Dover, 1970), pp. 194ff.; Arnheim, *Film As Art* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1957), pp. 199-230.

⁴Spottiswoode, *A Grammar of the Film* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1950), pp. 176ff.; Kracauer, *Theory of Film* (New York: Oxford, 1960), pp. Ulff.; Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing* (New York: Hastings House, 1968; second enlarged edition with a new section by Gavin Millar).

⁵See Claudia Gorbman, "Clair's Sound Hierarchy and the Creation of Auditory Space," *Purdue Film Studies Annual*, 1 (1976), 113-23, for a refreshing exception to this rule.

In order to understand the source of early suspicion of sound, as well as the subsequent disenfranchisement of sound in the realm of theoretical speculation, we must consider the role which sound—and especially language—had played during the heyday of the silent film. The earliest days of the cinema were marked by a practical and all-consuming desire for simple survival, but as soon as the new art found the leisure to contemplate its own position it felt compelled to differentiate itself from its renowned parent, the theater. Munster-berg constantly opposes the virtues of the cinema to those of the stage, while Vachel Lindsay devotes a chapter of his *Art of the Moving Picture* to "Thirty Differences Between the Photoplays and the Stage."⁶ Later we find Eisenstein and many others attempting to put away the threat to the cinema's individuality represented by theater.⁷ Theories of montage in particular valorize the very areas in which cinema easily outshines the stage. Increasingly, self-conscious filmmakers attempted to reduce the effect of intertitles, shunning direct transcription of dialogue in favor of commentary whose graphic design often carried as important a message as its semantic content. To such a world, devoted to minimalization of the language which recalls film's competitor and parent, the theater, the coming of sound could hardly have represented a welcome innovation.

For the coming of sound represents the return of the silent cinema's repressed. It is thus hardly surprising that sound should be seen by silent filmmakers more as a threat than as an opportunity. Repeatedly warning against the temptation to return to the theatrical model, represented by the dominance of synchronized sound and especially of dialogue, early critics of sound devised two strategies which lie at the root of nearly all subsequent reflection on the sound track. Eager to relegate language and theatricality once more to the shadows whence they came, these early critics initiated two fallacies whose power and durability are effectively grounded in their repressive

⁶Munsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover, 1970; orig. 1916); Lindsay, *Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Liveright, 1970; orig. 1915).

⁷Eisenstein, *Film Form*, pp. 15ff.; Clair *Reflexion faite*, pp. 116 and *passim*. *Cinema d'hier, cinema d'aujourd'hui*, pp. 33, 60, 78, and *passim*; Lev Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film Writings by Lev Kuleshov*, trans. Ron Levaco (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), pp. 56ff.

function. The first of these I shall term the *historical fallacy*. A proper theory of sound cinema, one might expect, would begin with the observation that sound films are composed of two simultaneous and parallel phenomena, image and sound. Such, however, has rarely been the case. From the very first, critics who had lived through the coming of sound took the historical process (whereby an art which once lacked sound had the capabilities of sound reproduction added to it) as an adequate model for theoretical reflection. Instead of treating sound and image as simultaneous and coexistent, the historical fallacy orders them chronologically, thus implicitly hierarchizing them. Historically, sound was added to the image; *ergo* in the analysis of sound cinema we may treat sound as an afterthought, a supplement which the image is free to take or leave as it chooses.

By adhering to the historical fallacy, early critics succeeded admirably in marginalizing sound. With the rapid universalization of sound technology, however, the force of the historical argument necessarily subsided; once the silent era faded into the background the primacy of the silent image no longer appeared self-evident. Another argument was called for, a strategy tied not to film's history but to the medium's very essence. Thus was born the *ontological fallacy*. The version of the ontological fallacy regularly applied to cinema claims that film is a visual medium and that the images must be/are the primary carriers of the film's meaning and structure. Already present in capsule form during the early years of sound, this argument reaches its height in Arnheim's "New Laocoon" and Kracauer's *Theory of Film* ("films with sound live up to the spirit of the medium only if the visuals take the lead in them" p. 103). Today the primacy of the image continues to be taken as a given, even by practitioners of advanced methodologies. Witness, for example, Gianfranco Bettetini: "The essence of the cinema is basically visual, and every sonic intervention ought to limit itself to a justified and necessary act of expressive integration."⁸ Now, what is at issue here is not whether the image is essential to a definition of cinema, but whether or not notions of a form's essence

⁸Bettetini, *The Language and Technique of the Film* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), p. 111.

provide a proper and sufficient basis for legislation of that form's activity and for description of its structure. Instead of developing a logical method of describing the actual characteristics of a composite form, the on-to-logical fallacy represents a clever strategy for dissembling sound film's composite nature—in short for repressing yet again the scandal of theatrical language. No matter that the practice of fifty years of film making has clearly established the dominant position of dialogue, along with the initial position of the screenwriter, no matter that the most characteristic practice of classical film narrative should be the normally redundant technique of pointing the camera at the speaker, no matter that critics commonly quote a film word-for-word but rarely illustrate their comments with frame enlargements (usually preferring the better quality but largely irrelevant production still).

In short, the historical and ontological fallacies are the prescriptive arguments of silent filmmakers intent on preserving the purity of their "poetic" medium. That such strategies should have been devised is understandable; that they should have provided the model for a descriptive theory is entirely unacceptable. By perpetuating an image-oriented stance, film criticism has failed to provide either the theory or the terminology necessary for proper treatment of sound cinema as it exists (and not as early theoreticians predicted it would develop—we must not forget that the same Arnheim who willingly invoked the authority of Lessing claimed that the future of sound film lay in animated cartoons!).

In order to deal intelligently with the sound track we need a new beginning. We need to start, for once, not with the self-serving pronouncements of silent film directors and fans, but with the phenomenon of sound film itself, analyzing its practices and its possibilities rather than prescribing its supposed duties and drawbacks. This issue of *Yale French Studies* represents, I hope, a step in that direction. These sort essays should provide a new starting point for reflection on the sound track, a new set of givens and problems, a new and different voice bound to be echoed in future discussions on problems of sound in the cinema.

EYE OF THE NEEDLE, THE LONDON SESSIONS by
Alan Hamer:

It was last September that Miklós Rózsa first mentioned a new film assignment, having just viewed the movie and met director Richard Marquand (THE LEGACY), whom he had found to be a most discerning man. Four months later at EMI/Anvil Studios at Abbey Road the Royal Philharmonic were assembling under the watchful eye of leader Barry Griffiths to play EYE OF THE NEEDLE, the outcome of two months' work by Rózsa, as well as additional preparation by orchestrator Christopher Palmer and copyist Tony Bremner.

The English director had mainly left musical matters to his composer and only conferred during the progress of the six sessions on small points, which appeared to be resolved swiftly. NEEDLE has Donald Sutherland in the leading role as Nazi double agent Faber, who encounters Lucy (Kate Nelligan) and her crippled husband (Christopher Cazenove). A main theme closely associated with Faber's nasty knife-disposals is introduced brilliantly in the Prelude, the first piece (of 43) to be meticulously rehearsed, promptly at ten o'clock. It has faint echoes of that other memorable World War II drama, FIVE GRAVES TO CAIRO, but with more aptly stabbing chords set against a nervous, percussive rhythm. The primary love theme is additionally revealed here as a glowing contrast.

Within an hour, two recording takes were over and done with, to be swiftly followed by a most exciting sequence entitled "The Fight." [Hereafter, I shall have to reveal some plot details; let the reader who wishes to maintain his innocence beware!.] A picture rehearsal unveiled our "hero" grappling with Lucy's husband over a gun; a prolonged, riveting entanglement by a cliff edge; then Faber hurling the unfortunate to his death on the rocks below. It was soon apparent that the precise moment of the fall was not synchronizing with the intended "spiralling" music Rózsa had written, and so the composer straightaway deleted two bars from his score and briefed the orchestra to make the alteration. The resulting sequence is a thrilling scene which would be hard to improve upon. Both the Finale and Epilogue were also completed quite expertly at the first morning session (19th January), and the RPO seemed as responsive as ever in this, their first Rózsa sound track recording in several decades.

Two excerpts later, in the afternoon, "Love Scene" and "Revulsion," further established the main love theme for Lucy and Faber. Subdued in sentiment and with moody undertones, the romantic value seems to be minimized, leaving a subtly disturbing "lust theme." Especially so in the latter track as strings sear agonizingly when Lucy unwillingly bed-partners the hungry Faber. Interestingly, the same piece was amended after the first day had finished and was recorded for a third time on the following morning. Much harsher brass "stabs" were now added—even reminiscent of some BEN-HUR death scenes—but again, some more immediate changes were necessary in order to fit the harrowing visuals.

The movie climaxes when Lucy hunts Faber with a shotgun, mortally wounding him as he strives to escape in a rowing boat. This longish sequence was recorded in two parts, the first ending as the spy tries to climb into the boat. The second overlaps slightly and, after a gently despairing solo violin passage, reflectively ushers in a melancholy variation of his love theme, which broadens as he wearily clammers out of the water, attempts a blurred focus on Lucy, then finally collapses full-length in the bottom of the boat. Also on the second day of the sessions an intriguingly titled excerpt, "Faber Grabs Skin," turned out to be (at three-and-a-half minutes) the longest musical cue in the score.

It accompanied an aerodrome break-in as Faber seeks out a fighter plane and peels off its outer nose-covering. A ponderous, hesitant mood prevails, interrupted, as military police are sighted on-field, by muted horn fanfares over a casually introduced march motif.

The last cue to be recorded on the second afternoon was "The Bedroom," and it was the first time we could hear the subsidiary love theme Rózsa had written for Lucy and her husband. More beautiful than Faber's theme d'amour, this exquisite melody paints a sad backdrop for an obviously unhappy marriage and thus, typically with this composer, is also more simple in design, more folk-like in character, more nostalgic in mood. Gently reflective viola and violin solos add a haunting despondency, almost conjuring up Hungarian nocturnal longings. The theme is varied on several other occasions and at one point dolefully recalls the "panoramic pastorale" in the closing scenes of PROVIDENCE.

In contrast, there is a plainly ebullient build-up for the finale, judging by the vigorous action screened to fit the numerous "takes," and by some of the track titles: "Escape" (rehearsed and recorded in three parts), "The Gun," "The Axe," "The Firebomb," "The Hostage" (Lucy's child), and "The Lamp." Rózsa's restless score keeps up with all this turmoil, and both conductor and orchestra swept along, seemingly inexhaustible and emotionally committed right up to the last musical segment recorded on the third day, unique in that it is intended for promotional purposes and not to form part of the sound track. It turned out an almost paradisiacal piece lasting three-and-a-quarter minutes; basically the Lucy-Faber theme in a grandiose arrangement which shows much originality of thought. Set off with a delicate harp lead-in, the rhapsody launches into a lushly romantic world, far removed from Faber's stiletto; sharing only his brazenly audacious characteristics.

However, it ends as it began with harps threading a delicate filigreed accompaniment. The red recording light flicked off; the orchestra relaxed; the conductor called out a final, "all right?" to a hidden control booth; the sessions for EYE OF THE NEEDLE were gently sewn up.



[Photo: Derek Elley]

COMPOSER OF THE EIGHTIES?

by A. C. Robbins:

What's happened to Jerry Goldsmith? Back in 1976 (PMS 17), Mark Koldys dubbed him "composer of the seventies," a judgment that would seem to be borne out by the high praise Goldsmith received from almost everyone in the PMS 30 survey of the decade. But I'm beginning to wonder if he will ever be a composer for the eighties.

Perhaps the roots of the problem can be traced all the way back to 1976. Having triumphed with *THE WIND AND THE LION* (1975) and *LOGAN'S RUN*, Goldsmith then received the dubious honor of an Oscar for (naturally) a lesser score, *THE OMEN*. He was even treated, if that is the word, to a ridiculous live performance of his *OMEN* "song" on the Academy telecast. It would have been enough to unsettle a lesser mind.

The past few years have shown an amazing decline, though admittedly for reasons not entirely under Goldsmith's own control. 1979 began promisingly with *THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY*, a soporific "caper" movie whose score was highly praised by Derek Elley. (Why? I'd like to see a fuller defense of this effort before I'm convinced.) Then came *ALIEN*, heaping insult on injury all at once. Not only was Goldsmith's music cut and yanked about mercilessly, but it was also deemed necessary to add a bit of Howard Hanson for final uplift, and worse, to insert bits of Goldsmith's own *FREUD* for dramatic effect. Not since *THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD* had this sort of butchery and distortion been inflicted on a major composer.

But Goldsmith's troubles for 1979 were not yet over. He next found himself associated with the almost supernaturally silly *STAR TREK*—a movie about a superintelligent being that cannot spell its own name—whose producers, apparently in a state of panic, pressed him for the only thing they could understand: a *STAR WARS* rip-off. To his credit Goldsmith threatened to walk off the picture. To his misfortune he stayed. Unable to avoid the *STAR WARS* mandate entirely—it's all through the Prelude, right down to the rum-te-tum ending—he at least toned it down. But elsewhere he seemed transfixed by the stupefying lack of imagination of the entire project. True, there was a marvelous opening scene, full of jungle rhythms and somewhat reminiscent of Goldsmith's earlier *PLANET OF THE APES* (perhaps inspired by the fact that the spaceships [like the film!] appear to be piloted by monkeys). Too, there were evocative, Herrmannesque "undersea" swellings and ostinati for one exploration scene. But too often the writing, especially for strings, evinced an almost television-like slickness, full of swooping glissandi and the like, that signaled the composer's lack of interest—or perhaps his lack of time, for the producers were, as usual, foolishly negligent in the budgeting of time for composition, and Fred Steiner was called in to help with the ending.

Everything seemed to fall apart in the film's final scene, which was supposed to show the transfiguring power of love. Since the scene had been thoroughly flubbed by the writers and designers, everything depended on the music. Strike three. Goldsmith has shown himself capable of gentleness, subtlety, delicacy, and eroticism. He has written "love themes" of beauty, elegance, and lasting popularity (*THE SAND PEBBLES* has become a Muzak classic). But never to my knowledge has he written the kind of passionately romantic theme that Rózsa, Newman, Waxman, and Herrmann used to toss off almost too casually for decades. It's not a fatal lack in a composer, but the lack is finally fatal to *STAR TREK*, whose "love theme," first heard as an incongruously jazzy overture, is woefully inadequate here. Goldsmith and Steiner must have recognized its weakness, for the final scene, the purported climax of the picture, is strangely deemphasized on the soundtrack album.

All told, a sad tale. Jerry Goldsmith, who had been writing fascinating sci-fi scores before anyone heard of John Williams, had been reduced to lackluster imitations. Perhaps, considering his spectacular labors over the 1970s, he needed a respite from film work. 1980 seemed to bring such relief, for no Goldsmith picture appeared that year, something that had not happened since 1961. (Actually the composer was busy doing several films whose release was held up, so the respite was more for the listener than for the ever-industrious Goldsmith.) The fruits of this "silent" year are now on display. Have they ripened fully?

I'm not yet sure. Nothing could induce me to another OMEN sequel, so I have not seen THE FINAL CONFLICT (about which there have been some good reports). INCHON and THE SALAMANDER have yet to appear. OUTLAND, much bally-hoed, is actually a picture of modest aspirations. Its music is eerie, dramatic, functional, and well-crafted in Goldsmith's familiar "muscular Stravinsky" manner. But a day after hearing it, I couldn't remember a thing about the music. That leaves the most ambitious of the lot, the eight-hour telefilm MASADA, to strive for real tragedy and epic grandeur.

Here, once again, Goldsmith has been partly undone by his producers. Though the film was years in production, no one saw fit to allow for the few quiet months that a composer needs to write a long score. As a result, Morton Stevens had to score the final episodes (half the drama) using Goldsmith's themes, and one can only imagine under what restrictions the existing Goldsmith music must have been composed. Another foolish decision may also have harmed the music: the inclusion of a distracting prologue and epilogue that attempt to draw parallels with the modern Israelis (as if the inherent power of the situation were not enough to hold our attention!). I assume it was this material--and/or an accompanying prod from the producers--that misled Goldsmith into writing a bouncy main theme that is full of Israeli folksiness (compare Bernstein's CAST A GIANT SHADOW and Goldsmith's own QB VII), but hopelessly inadequate for this complex drama of spirit and stubbornness, duty and devotion. This theme accompanied every episode and its motto, every inane commercial break. Under such circumstances it was hard to achieve any sort of tragic mood at all. Still, the film sometimes succeeded, and so did the music. I particularly remember a solemn dirge as Jewish slaves are driven toward forced labor at Masada, and some inventive scoring (surprisingly almost Tiomkinesque) for the Roman legion's approach to the citadel.

Moments like these leave me hopeful for a Goldsmith renaissance. All artists have their dry periods; the best keep renewing themselves. Goldsmith is one of the best. His recent problems, together with the mostly deserved acclaim that has lately gone to John Williams, should not obscure his true stature. I predict that in the 1980s Goldsmith will play a "Herrmann" to Williams's "Rózsa." Like Rózsa, Williams has the greater dramatic power and melodic gift. His music can storm the heights, and it excerpts well on records. But Goldsmith, together with no small amount of musical inspiration, shares with Herrmann the rare ability to make word, sound, and image all coalesce with his music in a perfect whole. This is a major talent in the 1980s--or any other period of film music history.

CURRENT RECORDS:

Miklós Rózsa: IVANHOE, MADAME BOVARY, PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE
(Japanese Polydor MI 1394)

A welcome reissue of a classic album, despite clumsy editing. Especially good to have the original M-G-M cover restored here, unlike the gaudy Silver Screen (U.K. Polydor) release some years ago—even though the sleeve notes there were by Christopher Palmer. Unfortunately the old M-G-M sequence has also been restored in PLYMOUTH ADVENTURE, placing "Dorothy's Decision" straight after the Prelude, the Finale in the middle, and "The Mayflower" at the end! In addition, the MADAME BOVARY waltz has an unforgivable break half way through, which rather upsets the rhythm of the dance. A.H.

Pino Donaggio: DRESSED TO KILL
(Varese Sarabande STV 81148)

The latest in V-S's Donaggio series demonstrates this underrated composer's ability to compose a stylish, well-paced accompaniment to a suspenseful movie. The Main Title and "Shower Sequence" introduce the broad, yet somehow intimate-sounding theme of sensual connotations to compelling effect—in contrast to much of the starkly dramatic remainder of the work. The theme is used cleverly throughout, without ever appearing repetitious. Also noteworthy are "The Museum," an almost balletic sequence of over six minutes; a forceful triplet motif for the killer; an exciting chase; and a contrasting romantic interlude for the Nancy Allen character. The album is sonically first-class and contains nearly all the music heard in the film, including one track ("The Erotic Story") not to be found in the U.K. print.

Philip Windsor

CURRENT SCORES:

["First hearings" by our readers. Intended to stimulate, not preclude, further critical discussion.]

Jerry Goldsmith: THE FINAL CONFLICT

Although the film is slow-moving and lacks the dramatic punch of the original, the music of Goldsmith and the fine cinematography come close to making it the best of the OMEN series. The chorus is used to a lesser extent here than in the earlier films. A new main theme is utilized in a mostly instrumental guise and is one of Goldsmith's finer melodic constructions. The downward-moving intervals and minor key prelude this film well. At the finale, hushed divided strings spread a mystic, peaceful feeling as beams from the morning sun filter through Romanesque arches. This is followed by a reprise of the main title as the credits roll. In between, there is a wide variety of music, including the familiar crescendos preceding the scenes of bloody terror, and some very fine scoring of the scene in which the alignment of three stars foretells the Second Coming of Christ. All in all, a very fine effort. William Finn

Philippe Sarde: TESS

Haunting and highly characteristic, this is the most memorable and melodically attractive score of Sarde's relatively brief career, and the finest film music to appear in the last year or so. The use of English folk tunes is brilliant, but even more of a revelation are the gorgeous original themes for Tess and her loves. Considered by many one of the "best of the 1970s" (in Europe), the score is effectively performed by Carlo Savina and the London Symphony. A.H.

Georges Delerue: THE LAST METRO

Between the many period songs are some lovely, gossamer fragments of a Delerue score. Unfortunately in the current French fashion (compare MON ONCLE D'AMERIQUE and PROVIDENCE) the music is rarely allowed to breathe for more than a few seconds at a time. At least the nice closing waltz is uninterrupted. A.C.R.

Trevor Jones: EXCALIBUR

Little original music here, though Jones's synthesized sounds are not ineffective. For the most part Boorman has drenched his film in Wagner and Orff, a musical odd couple if there ever was one. The long-lined Wagner themes tend to be chopped off in mid-phrase, then repeated jad nauseam. Though the picture is medieval, as film music it belongs to the Stone Age. J.F.

Carmine Coppola: NAPOLEON

The live performance in New York was a tremendous event, even though Coppola may be most charitably described as a non-composer. His acknowledged and unacknowledged raids on the classical repertoire offered vivid evidence of how even a mediocre arrangement can bring the "silent" screen to life. Still, one does long to hear the Honegger score—or even the Carl Davis one for the English screenings. A.C.R.

NEWS [June 1981]:
(continued from page 3)

John Williams

John Williams's 1974 Violin Concerto had its long-delayed premiere in St. Louis in January, repeated a week later in Carnegie Hall by the same forces: Mark Peskanov, violin, with Leonard Slatkin conducting the St. Louis Symphony. A unique aspect of the affair was that the violinist was also a "film composer," the young Russian emigre, together with his brother Alexander, having last year written, arranged, and performed the score for HE KNOWS WHEN YOU'RE ALONE. Less fortunate aspects of the event were the way the *New York Times* reviewer a week later got around to snubbing the composer's film career and the way the thousands of "fans" who make Williams's Boston Pops concerts and record albums so popular managed not to find Carnegie Hall that night. (The concert was well attended, but by no means a sellout.) The music, relatively austere in comparison with Williams's recent film scores, deserves further hearings and comment.

Incidentally, Jeff Hall advises us that Williams used the Boston Pops orchestra last year to record the additional minutes of music for the CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND rerelease.

Hugo Friedhofer; Ron Grainer:

The man who orchestrated for Korngold and who later composed many notable scores of his own died in Hollywood on 17 May. He was 80 years old and had been suffering from complications following a recent fall. Best known for his Oscar-winning and recently recorded THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES, Friedhofer was especially respected by the younger generation of American composers. David Raksin organized a memorial tribute, at which Gene Lees, Leonard Rosen-man, and Elmer Bernstein also spoke. Raksin conducted a chamber group in some Brahms at the start and some Bach at the close.

Another loss was the British composer Ron Grainer, who died recently in London. Known in England for many television themes, including the popular DR. WHO, Grainer also composed for such features as A KIND OF LOVING, THE FINEST HOURS, NIGHT MUST FALL, STATION SIX-SAHARA, and THE OMEGA MAN.

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