

**Kathryn Kalinak, *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
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Ideal for train journeys, holidays, and as a quick catch-up for busy people who want something intellectually stimulating. *Very Short Introductions* combine authoritative analysis, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make often challenging topics highly readable. . . .

So, where's the gap in your knowledge?¹

With Kathryn Kalinak's fine contribution to the *Very Short Introductions* Series, it is comforting to witness the "gaps" being filled in the series' coverage of film and music. Kalinak's *Film Music* joins *Music* (Nicholas Cook; 2000), *World Music* (Philip Bohlman; 2002), and *Folk Music* (Mark Slobin; forthcoming, 2011) as the only musical entries in the Oxford University Press series. This reviewer is hopeful that jazz and popular music are not far behind.²

Film Music also fills what was, until recently, a considerable gap in textbooks that deal with the topic from aesthetic, historical, and practical points of view. For many years instructors relied on Fred Karlin's *Listening to Movies* as an introduction to film music history and practice.³ Roger Hickman's *Reel Music*, which offers teachers useful viewing guides, several musical examples, and broad coverage, also continues to be useful almost five years after its initial publication.⁴ Within the last year James Wierzbicki authored a rethinking of film music's history, while the team of James Buhler, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer provided a reconsideration of the way we process

1. <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/category/academic/series/general/vsi.do> Accessed 8 September 2010.

2. In the spirit of interdisciplinary studies, volumes are also available on *Documentary Film* (Patricia Aufderheide, 2008) and *Film* (Michael Wood, forthcoming 2012).

3. Fred Karlin, *Listening to Movies: The Film Lover's Guide to Film Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1994).

4. Roger Hickman, *Reel Music: Exploring 100 Years of Film Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

the intersection of sound and image.⁵ Kalinak's concise, thought-provoking treatment of film music is a welcome addition to these resources because it is not superfluous to the aforementioned texts despite its brevity.

Kalinak engages the reader from the onset by proposing that film music interacts with and shapes a film's narrative from a variety of perspectives, obscuring the flat, artificial nature of the medium's presentation while acting as a sort of conduit between the audience and the cinematic world. She follows with a compelling reading of how Stealers Wheel's "Stuck in the Middle (With You)" (1972) interacts so effectively with the *mise en scène* in an iconic scene from Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992). It is a scene with which many film music scholars and film lovers alike are quite familiar, but Kalinak's choice is appropriate for other important reasons as well. Poll a typical non-majors film music appreciation course and one discovers, sadly, that the average student has not *chosen* to view any films made before 1975 or so. Because Kalinak chooses a cue from a film more familiar to a younger audience that employs a song popular with an older generation of readers long before its inclusion in *Reservoir Dogs*, she avoids alienating the former, less cinematically experienced reader (who is a likely target audience of this textbook). Perhaps more importantly, because of the skill with which Kalinak teases out the layers of meaning between lyrics, music, and image, one notices how the same procedure could be used to analyze countless other film cues from a muiscodramatic perspective. In other words, if the *Reservoir Dogs* reference is unfamiliar, substitute your own excerpt and employ Kalinak's "blueprint" as one possible analytical avenue. It is this sort of flexibility that makes the book an attractive pedagogical resource.

Another important way in which the book enhances available resources for film music instructors is Kalinak's command of film traditions outside the United States and Europe. She prepares us for this more global account of film music by using Western and non-Western musical examples in the obligatory discussion of basic musical elements. In emphasizing melody's importance to film composers, she begins with a quote by A. R. Rahman (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 2008)—again, a contemporary example with global renown—rather than "classic" tunesmiths like Max Steiner or Erich Wolfgang Korngold.

In her chapter about the origins of the film industry (Chapter 4, A History of Film Music I: 1895-1927) Kalinak reminds the reader that music and film were meant to be integrated, even in the "silent" era, and that contemporaneous filmmakers in India, Iran, China, Japan, and Brazil all sought to incorporate music into their early cinematic endeavors as well. When Kalinak introduces the sound era of film in the subsequent chapter (Chapter 5, A

5. James Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2009) and James Buhler, David Neumeyer, and Rob Deemer, *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

History of Film Music II: 1927-1960), she notes, “Although it was dialogue that drove the new technology, it was the genre of the musical that most fully exploited it.”⁶ She uses this point to segue into how song—influenced in part by the developing Hollywood musical—was used around the world, perhaps most notably in India, where in the early 1930s the prevalence of songs in movies laid the foundation for what would become the archetypal Bollywood film (long before anyone heard of *Slumdog Millionaire* or A. R. Rahman).

The book’s brevity is the foundation for what might be its greatest strength: flexibility. For instance, this film music instructor longs for additional analyses like the aforementioned cue from *Reservoir Dogs*. Yet with that sole example as a model, one can invite a class to examine their own excerpts similarly. When summarizing an important concept suggested by film theorist and film music scholar Claudia Gorbman on the intersection of film and music, Kalinak states:

Gorbman posited that with the onset of sound cinema, the sound track reconstructed time into a “relentless linearity” with music being “the one sound element capable of freeing up that temporal representation.” This explains why music is called upon to attend film’s most fractious moments in terms of time—flashbacks, montages, and slow-motion sequences—that threaten the unity of time.⁷

While such a statement could be further clarified with some examples, Kalinak’s clear, concise encapsulation frees one to assemble cinematic excerpts with more personal resonance. Further, she understands that from a film music pedagogue’s point of view, some of the most enriching classroom discussions do not come through screening a given excerpt and telling students what they should see and hear, but when a student responds to this model by seeing and hearing something completely different. This book serves as yet another resource for institutions and instructors hoping to “fill the gaps” in their own curricula, and in response to a growing interest in learning more about film music demonstrated by contemporary music students.

6. Kathryn Kalinak, *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 52.

7. Kalinak, 24.