

## SCREENING MUSIC: AN AURAL LOOK AT FILM

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Listening to music is an emotive activity. Cinema has long capitalized on the power of music to make us feel. In this seminar we seek to explore the relationship between music and the moving image. How does music alter and enhance a film? How does film change the way we perceive music? What are the differences between the orchestral "original score," written *for* the film, and soundtracks compiled of songs that come with their own context?

This seminar hopes to explore these questions in an effort to come up with a working definition for the function of music in this context. The primary texts will be the films themselves, supplemented by critical texts. How might Aristotle's "Poetics" enlighten us about James Cameron's *Titanic*? In what ways does Cameron capitalize on the Aristotelian notion of catharsis? How does a soundtrack by post-rock group Mogwai change a documentary about French soccer player Zinedine Zidane? This seminar will attract students interested in film studies, music, and psychology, but given the universal nature of music and film enjoyment, students of all backgrounds will be interested in our seminar.

### Possible Films/Clips

Sergei Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*: A collaboration between director and composer Sergei Prokofiev, this film will serve as a good introduction to the relation between music and the moving image.

Fritz Lang's *M*: Lacking any non-diegetic sound, this film associates the arrhythmic whistling of "In the Hall of the Mountain King" from Grieg's *Peer Gynt* with murder.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*: This film inaugurated a whole tradition of horror film music. What makes music scary?

James Cameron's *Titanic*: This director is a master manipulator of emotions by music.

Philippe Parreno and Douglas Gordon's *Zidane: A 20<sup>th</sup> Century Portrait*: A soundtrack by instrumental post-rock group transforms a French soccer player into an epic hero.

Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*: New Wave music of the 1980s provides an anachronistic look at the historical figure.

Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation*: This film explores the interplay between diegetic and non-diegetic sound.

Recut Trailers: Strategic cutting and soundtracking changes the genre of such blockbuster films as *The Shining* to romantic comedy and *Mary Poppins* to horror.

### Possible Texts (includes psychological studies and theoretical analysis)

“Poetics” by Aristotle

“Statement on Sound” by Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigorio Alexandrov  
from *The Eisenstein Reader* edited by Richard Taylor

“A Theory of Film Music”

from *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* by Kathryn Kalinak

*Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* by Claudia Gorbman

“Music as a Source of Emotion in Film” by Annabel J. Cohen

from *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* edited by Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda

“The Cognitive Processing of Film and Musical Soundtracks” by Marilyn G. Boltz

“Stretching Sound to Help the Mind See” by Walter Murch

from *The New York Times*

“The Soundtrack Movie, Nostalgia and Consumption” by Estella Tincknell

from *Film’s Musical Moments* edited by Ian Conrich and Estella Tincknell

“*Psycho*: The Music of Terror” from *Hitchcock’s Music* by Jack Sullivan

“Film Music: Perspectives from Cognitive Psychology” by Annabel J. Cohen

“How Music Influences the Interpretation of Film and Video: Approaches from Experimental Psychology” by Annabel J. Cohen

*Music and Drama* by Richard Wagner trans. William Ashton Ellis

*Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music* by Anahid Kassabian