Music For The Movies
by Ian Lace

Introduction
This article, that charts the history of film music, from the early European scores through to those for so many Hollywood epics, was first published in 1998 on the now defunct (but still available) site *Film Music on the Web*: part of MusicWeb International. It is now being republished on the main MusicWeb International site in order to bring it to the attention of a wider and possibly younger readership.

Newly composed classical music in the 1920s and 1930s tended towards atonalism. The *avant-garde* dissonances of Schoenberg and Webern, were considered to be *de rigueur*; tonal, melodic music was out - thought to be passé, not worth a candle. For the ordinary man in the street or the old-fashioned music-lover brought up and steeped in the late-Romantic music tradition of Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Richard Strauss, this was anathema. When the age of the talkies dawned for the cinema in the late 1920s and 1930s, and the advent of the original film score (music especially composed for a specific film - typically Max Steiner's music for the 1933 film *King Kong*) directly dramatic and emotion-laden music, that of the late-Romantic music tradition was rightly deemed more suitable rather than the incomprehensible (to the vast majority) cerebral music of the worshippers of atonalism. This type of film music held sway until the advent of pop, jazz and some dissonance-inflected scores heard during the 1950s and 1960s. Full blown late-Romantic music returned with the mass appeal of John Williams's scores for such epics as *Jaws* and *Star Wars*.

Interestingly, as the 1990s progressed, composers of classical music rediscovered tonality and melody. *Memorable* melody in film music might be said to have declined correspondingly. There have been notable exceptions – the music of Hans Zimmer for instance and the approachable music of Alexandre Desplat.

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I. *Where Does The Music Come From?*
In my youth, if ever I watched a film round twice it was usually for the music. My earliest musical memories were of the heroic, full-blooded, romantic scores for films such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Duel in the Sun* and *The Guns of Navarone*. How many of us, I wonder, have come to appreciate music through the cinema?

As mainstream classical composition moved further away from popular taste, it was left largely to composers of film music to maintain the traditions of the late romantics, held in esteem by so many music-lovers,

Of the function of film music, the celebrated film composer, Bernard Herrmann once said:

> "Music on screen can seek out and intensify the inner thoughts of the character. It can invest a scene with terror, grandeur, gaiety or misery. It often lifts mere dialogue into the realms of poetry. It is the communicating link between screen and audience, reaching out and enveloping all into one single experience."

This article focuses on the development of film music in Europe and America from the beginnings of the cinema to the end of that period which has come to be known as the "Golden Age of Hollywood" in the 1950s. It will be concerned with music specially composed for the screen as opposed to existing works used to support screenplays. The Hollywood musicals *per se* are outside the scope of

this present article. (NB - the initials AA denote Academy Award winning scores; AAN Academy Award nominations)

In the 1970s thanks to RCA and Charles Gerhardt many of these Hollywood classic scores were re-recorded in faithful reproductions of the original soundtrack recordings but in modern stereo sound. All fourteen albums in the series, containing many of the scores referred to in this article, were re-issued in CD format and several by High Definition Tape Transfers and most recently Dutton-Vocalion (Waxman, Herrmann, Tiomkin). All are recommended to admirers of film music.

In the infancy of the cinema, during the days of the silent screen, accompanying music was provided by theatre pianists or small bands often improvising to on-screen action or drawing on, as appropriate, music from libraries, of works compiled from ballads of the day and the popular classical repertoire. Sometimes epic productions like *Birth of A Nation*, would have larger groups of musicians touring with them complete with special material (mostly quotations). By and large, music specially written for films was the exception rather than the rule. It was not until after the arrival of the talkies, in 1929, that the concept of the original score gradually became the norm.

One of the earliest recorded screen scores was that composed in 1908 by Saint-Saëns for a film called *La Mort du Duc de Guise* (sometimes referred to as *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*). Later the cinema attracted a number of eminent French composers including Milhaud, Honegger, Auric and Ibert. Milhaud's *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, for instance, was originally envisaged as music to accompany a Charlie Chaplin film.

Honegger had amazingly advanced ideas on the function of film music. He regarded the ideal score as a distinct component in a unified medium and looked forward to films of recent times, from directors like Peter Greenaway, that would not just be supplied with music but be inspired by it.

Thanks to the enterprising Marco Polo record company, we can now hear fine early French film scores such as those of Honegger for Abel Gance's 1927 silent production of *Napoleon* and *Les Misérables* (1934); and Jacques Ibert's music for G.W. Pabst's *Don Quixote*, created from the Cervantes novel as a vehicle for Feodor Chaliapin, and Orson Welles's 1948 production of *Macbeth*.

The German composer Edmund Meisel provided a telling score that underlined the tragedy of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (Russia, 1925) and, later, Prokofiev and Shostakovich would also embrace the new medium enthusiastically.

Prokofiev's scores for *Lieutenant Kijé*, *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1942 and 46) have all passed into the standard classical repertory. *Nevsky* includes some extraordinarily imaginative orchestration to convey the brutality of the Teutonic knights and the chill savagery of *The Battle on the Ice*.

Shostakovich's witty score for *The Gadfly* (1955) is hugely enjoyable and accessible. One of its themes was used as incidental music for a popular TV series - *Reilly, Ace of Spies* (1983). Interestingly, much of the music for Shostakovich's delightful First Piano Concerto, composed in 1933, started life as thematic material for a cartoon film. His later score for the Russian version of *Hamlet* is supremely powerful and evocative. Listening to Bernard Herrmann's Decca recording, you can imagine the ghost's heavy tread, the rattling of chains and the swirling of leaves. It is altogether a much more impressive score than Walton's for Olivier's *Hamlet* (AAN).

Walton was much more successful in his scoring for the other Olivier Shakespearean triumphs: *Henry V* (AAN) and *Richard III*. His strong, strident Battle of Agincourt music brilliantly evoking the noise and clamour of the knights' charge, must be one of the most frequently quoted pieces of film music ever written. The work of Sir William Walton for the screen is fully committed. All his numerous scores for

a wide diversity of films: *As You Like It*, *Escape Me Never*, *Major Barbara* and *First of the Few* - are expertly crafted and colourfully orchestrated. Chandos's four volumes of Walton film scores are heartily recommended.

Sir Arthur Bliss produced another classic score for Alexander Korda's film of the H.G. Wells story, *Things to Come*. The wonderful March and the closing music, hymning the spirit of adventure and man's unquenchable thirst for knowledge, are deeply moving in the grand Elgarian tradition. A suite from the score is popular and has been recorded several times, notably by Sir Charles Groves, for Warner EMI, coupled with Bliss's *Colour Symphony*. A further Marco Polo/Naxos recording includes Bliss's music for the films: *Christopher Columbus* (1949), *Seven Waves Away* (1956) and *Men of Two Worlds* (1945) which included *Baraza*, a concert piece for piano and orchestra with men's voices.

A number of other British composers were also attracted to the medium with varying degrees of enthusiasm including Arnold (*The Bridge on the River Kwai*), Bax (*Oliver Twist*), Ireland (*The Overlanders*), Walter Leigh (*Song of Ceylon*) Eric Coates (*The Dambusters*), William Alwyn (*The Fallen Idol*), Britten (*Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*) and Vaughan Williams (*Scott of the Antarctic*).

Vaughan Williams' brilliantly orchestrated score, using a whole battery of percussion instruments, a wind machine, solo soprano and choir to suggest the desolation of the vast sub-polar expanses for *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948) became the basis for his seventh symphony, *Sinfonia Antartica*. Previously he had written some intensely moving music for a Laurence Olivier film shot in Canada in 1940 - *49th Parallel*.

RVW was enthusiastic about working in the medium and even had aspirations about scoring a western! Unlike most of his American peers, Vaughan Williams did not like to write to on-screen action preferring to capture the spirit rather than the letter by using the script as inspiration.

However, it was the emergent first generation of American film composers working in Hollywood from the early 1930s, when the dream factory was churning out literally thousands of productions of varying quality, that made the biggest impact on the development of music for the cinema.

One of the first composers to produce an original score was George Gershwin who wrote music which was eventually to be incorporated into his *Second Rhapsody*, for a forgettable 1931 film entitled *Delicious*.

Yet, oddly enough, the American musical establishment made hardly any impact on Hollywood. Exceptions included the Aaron Copland scores for *The Red Pony* (1949) which contained some telling vignettes suggesting the wild imagination of the young boy hero, and music for *Our Town* (AAN 1940) that seemed to epitomise the essence of small town America. Virgil Thomson is remembered for his evocative swamp music for *Louisiana Story* and for the broad sweeping score of *The Plow that broke the Plains*.

But it was Max Steiner, an immigrant Viennese Jew coming to America in 1914, who was the first truly professional Hollywood film composer. (The fact that most of the studio bosses were Jews may have eased his way). Steiner arrived in Hollywood, in 1929, from a background of Broadway musical comedy. At that time there was very little underscoring - chiefly just for opening and closing sequences. As Steiner later recalled:

> "... recorded music was thought to be necessary only for musical productions like *Rio Rita* ... Producers and directors did not know how to handle music, sound men and musicians were inexperienced and the microphone was in its infancy. Music for dramatic pictures was only used when it was required by the script. A constant fear was that they would be asked - 'Where does the music come from?'"

But by 1931 producers and directors were beginning to add a little music here and there to support love scenes or silent sequences. Steiner was first employed as an orchestrator, then as a composer, at RKO before going on to Warner Bros. He scored over 300 films spread over more than thirty years.

In 1933, came his seminal score for *King Kong* and with it the real beginnings of Hollywood film music. Steiner's score, which uses the Wagnerian principal of leitmotifs with themes for leading characters and concepts, sweeps you along with the action, building climax on climax to accompany the bizarre plot about a giant gorilla and a horde of prehistoric monsters on a remote uncharted island. Steiner screws up the tension from the very start, you can sense the apprehension as the ship approaches the island through the fog and the persistent, thumping percussive effects emphasise the sheer size and power of Kong as he approaches. In contrast, Steiner deftly entwines the themes for the monster and Fay Wray at the end as Kong falls from atop of the Empire State Building to emphasise the dramatic theme of Beauty 'besting' the Beast.

Steiner's music was a sort of compendium of late nineteenth century mid European romantic influences, like Wagner and Liszt, and all the Strausses plus the music of Broadway. It was this style of music which would become the Hollywood standard until well into the 1950s.
Steiner preferred to wait until a picture was completed before commencing scoring. He would have sequences broken down into exact footage, minutes and seconds. As he composed he continually referred to a stopwatch. He felt strongly that his music should exactly synchronise with on-screen action and he was uncannily successful in capturing moods and events.

He worked well under pressure - a trait appreciated by David O. Selznick who contracted him for *Gone With The Wind* (AAN). At the time Steiner was also committed to three other films and was working 20 hours a day propped up by daily thyroid extract injections and vitamin B12 shots. The resultant score is justly famed for its "Tara" theme but it has to be said little else approaches this peak.

Steiner was as much at home with the adventure film as with the "woman's weepie", redolent of sighing strings. His huge output includes scores for such memorable films as *Now Voyager* (AA), *The Informer* (AA), *Since You Went Away* (AA), *The Big Sleep*, *Casablanca* (AAN), *The Fountainhead*, *The Letter* (AAN), *Dodge City*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Johnny Belinda* (AAN) and *Spencer's Mountain*.

Bette Davis was amongst a select number of stars who were keenly aware of the flattering effect a good score could have on their performances and would often confer with composers such as Steiner and Korngold.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was one of the few Hollywood greats who came from a conservatoire background (others were Rózsa and Bernard Herrmann). Korngold had enjoyed considerable acclaim for his opera *Die Tote Stadt* and his stature brought considerable prestige to Warner Bros.

Like Steiner, Korngold was Viennese but he arrived in Hollywood in 1934 escaping the fascist regime to adapt Mendelssohn for Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He stayed on to write some of the most celebrated original scores for the cinema including those for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (AA), *The Sea Hawk* (AAN), *Anthony Adverse* (AA), *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (AAN), *Between Two Worlds*, *Deception* (for which he wrote a Cello Concerto) and *Kings Row*.

He was often accused of writing more corn than gold, but his rich extrovert style was ideal for the colourful larger than life world of the Errol Flynn swashbucklers. In *Robin Hood*, for instance, Korngold writes a virile, stirring march pointing up the pomp and pageantry surrounding the Archery Tournament and tender romantic melodies for love scenes between Robin and Lady Marion.

Perhaps Korngold's most inspired, most popular score is that for *Kings Row*. The thrilling theme which is introduced with the main titles has be one of the most memorable in all film music. Invention of a remarkably high order is sustained throughout, perfectly delineating the small town's extraordinary characters and the often macabre events of this strong psychological drama.

Miklós Rózsa also created strong musical evocations of disturbed personalities, particularly in his pioneering use of the theremin, to express, for example, Gregory Peck's amnesia and paranoia in Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (AA) and the craving and despair of the alcoholic played by Ray Milland in *The Lost Weekend* (AAN).

Rózsa had come to Hollywood to work on *The Thief of Baghdad* (AAN), after working, in England, on several films for Alexander Korda including *The Jungle Book* (AAN) and *The Four Feathers*. His distinctly recognisable style, strongly influenced by his native Hungarian folksong, informed a wide variety of distinguished productions from the hard, gritty scores for the film noir genre (*Double Indemnity* (AAN) and *The Killers* (AAN)) through historical romances such as *Ivanhoe* (AAN) and *El Cid* (AAN) for which he took immense pains to research the musical styles of the periods in which they were set, to the spectacular religious epics such as *Quo Vadis* (AAN), *Ben Hur* (AA) and *King of Kings*.

Franz Waxman, a German Jew, escaped to Hollywood after being attacked by Nazi thugs. One of his first Hollywood scores, for *The Bride of Frankenstein* broke new ground using the symphony orchestra in an impressionistic manner to create the eerie, chilling noises of Frankenstein's laboratory. His highly popular *Prince Valiant* score was an enjoyable pastiche of influences of Richard Strauss and Korngold.

Waxman had a real gift for melody and he was much influenced by Shostakovich. His scores are of a consistently high quality. They include: *Rebecca* (AAN), *Sunset Boulevard* (AA), *A Place in the Sun* (AA), *Objective Burma* (AAN), *The Nun's Story* (AAN), *Sayonara* and *The Spirit of St Louis*. There is, for example, a sublime moment in the last-named film when the fragile little plane approaches Ireland. A gigue starts slowly, gently, gathering in momentum and excitement, then it is joined in counterpoint by the inspired Spirit theme asserting itself triumphantly to celebrate Lindbergh's crossing of the Atlantic.

The Western is a genre that has always attracted fine sweeping scores. Dimitri Tiomkin excelled here creating highly emotional music to intensify the drama and propel the action along for *Duel in the Sun*, *Gunfight at the OK Corral*, *Red River* and *High Noon* (AA).

Tiomkin was just as adept at writing quieter, reflective music such as the gentle romantic score for *Friendly Persuasion* (AAN - for the song 'Thee I Love'), for the mystical setting of Shangri-La in *Lost Horizon* (AAN) and his imaginative use of Debussy's impressionistic music for the fragile, poetic *Portrait of Jenny*.

Also memorable are the Tiomkin scores for *The Guns of Navarone* (AAN), *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (AAN), *The Land of the Pharaohs* and for his work for Hitchcock including *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Strangers on a Train*. In the latter film, the sharp, relentless rhythms screw up the tension almost unbearably as Guy (Farley Granger) rushes to finish his tennis match to restrain the deranged Bruno (Robert Walker) from planting incriminating evidence.

Bernard Herrmann was another composer much used by Hitchcock. (These scores will be discussed in Part II). Earlier he had forged a working relationship with Orson Welles and provided music which became an integral part of the fabric of *Citizen Kane* (AAN).Witness: (a) the treatment for the *Breakfast Montage*, the music cleverly and wittily charts the deterioration of Kane's first marriage; and (b) the obsessive rhythmic hammering that threatens to pulverise his second wife - who has ambitions as a soprano - when, on stage, she fails to rise to the demands of Herrmann's specially

composed operatic aria. (Kane had commissioned a grand opera well outside the range of his wife's lyric soprano voice.)

Herrmann was a master of orchestration. His work shored up many inferior productions. His Debussy-like music, employing nine harps, realistically portrayed the movement of the sea in *Beneath the Twelve Mile Reef* and his use of obscure instruments such as the serpent and native log drums helped to emphasise the dangers of the safari in *White Witch Doctor*.

If the majority of the leading composers were drawn towards Warner Bros., Twentieth Century Fox could boast of their own Alfred Newman who attracted more Academy Award nominations than anyone. His *Conquest March* for *Captain from Castile* (AAN) must be one of the most stirring composed for the screen. Other highlights over a long career include *Wuthering Heights* (AAN), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (AAN), *Anastasia* (AAN) and *Airport* (AAN). Stories with a religious background were one of his specialities - *The Robe*, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (AAN) and *The Song of Bernadette* (AA). The latter is memorable for its sensitive, understated scene suggestive of bird-song and rustling leaves when Jennifer Jones sees the Lady of her vision.

The intense pressure these composers worked under necessitated support from staff in the studios' music departments. At Warner Bros, Hugo Friedhofer was kept busy often far into the night orchestrating for Steiner and Korngold. A distinct musical style evolved at that studio - a Warner Bros sound typified by an often pronounced ostinato bass for dramatic emphasis.

Friedhofer was later to go on to win an Oscar for his accomplished score for *The Best Years of Our Lives* (AA). There is a memorable sequence where the music actually assumes the acting. The Dana Andrews character is sitting in the cockpit of a bomber consigned to the scrapheap. As he sits there the nightmare of combat clouds his features. Friedhofer's dissonances tell you just as effectively as any action could, the horrors Andrews has witnessed.

This score had the distinction of a lengthy critique with musical examples in America's foremost music journal Music Quarterly. Film music was becoming respectable.

Space does not permit discussion of the work of other worthy figures working in Hollywood such as Victor Young (*For Whom the Bell Tolls* (AAN)), Roy Webb (*Cat People*), Friedrich Hollaender, Daniele Amfitheatrof, Adolph Deutsch and David Raksin who produced excellent music for *Laura* and *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

In 1953 came *A Streetcar Named Desire* (AAN) and with it Alex North's jazz-orientated score. Film music was changing.

Part II of this article charts those changes from then until the present day.

II. *Those Surging Romantic Scores Are Out!*

The 1950s was a decade of intense upheaval in Hollywood. Cinema attendances were declining from the peak years of the 1940s and the public was turning increasingly to television for entertainment. People were becoming more sophisticated and demanding. They were no longer content to accept "cardboard" sets representational of a Welsh mining valley or an African jungle; they wanted the real thing. Consequently film crews travelled to the four corners of the earth and producers invested in technical innovation such as 3D, CinemaScope and stereophonic sound to tempt back dwindling audiences.

Music for the cinema began to change too. Throughout the 1940s the standard screen score had been a hybrid of late romantic classical, operetta and Broadway musical forms. Franz Waxman's

Academy Award winning score for *A Place in the Sun* (1951) was one of the first to erode this convention. It uses jazz inflections, in an otherwise straightforward formal orchestral score, to characterise the fatal allure Elizabeth Taylor has for Montgomery Clift.

But it was Alex North's Oscar-nominated music for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (again in 1951), that really broke new ground. This was a totally jazz score appropriate to its New Orleans setting. From the "real live" jazz that you know is being played in the "Four Deuces", the score deftly turns to commentating jazz (chiefly with the addition of emotive strings) emphasising the squalor of the area of New Orleans where the film is set, and contrasting the brutish ignorance and pathetic madness of the Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh characters.

Later, in 1955, Elmer Bernstein would use a predominantly jazz score in *The Man with the Golden Arm* (AAN) to suggest the craving and despair of the drug-addicted jazz musician played by Frank Sinatra.

Bernstein, himself, was to cause another major change to the established order. The typical Hollywood score, until then, usually used a large orchestra of sixty or more players. Bernstein believed that this was not always dramatically appropriate and often chose a more telling, imaginative use of a chamber orchestra or even a small group of instruments such as in *Sudden Fear* and/or a more economical use of music as a whole (*To Kill A Mockingbird* - AAN) so that its impact was maximised when it was utilised.

Elmer Bernstein is probably best known for scores such as *The Magnificent Seven* (AAN) and *Walk on the Wild Side* (AAN - with Mack David for the title song). His score for the contemporary 'film noir' *The Grifters*, for instance, contains some remarkable electronic music to give the score a hard, steely yet sardonically humorous edge to comment on the sleazy trio of confidence tricksters who are the main characters.

Alex North, too, was busy right up until his death in 1991 composing for such films as *Death of A Salesman* (AAN), *The Rainmaker* (AAN), *Spartacus* (AAN), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (AAN) and *Under the Volcano* (AAN)

The two celebrated James Dean movies *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause* brought more change - very appropriately for both films were about teenage rebellion. Leonard Rosenman's highly complex and often dissonant music ran counter to the romantic modes still prevalent then.

Meanwhile the first generation of composers: Steiner, Waxman, Rozsa, Herrmann, Newman and Tiomkin continued to work successfully into the 1960s and beyond. Some of Bernard Herrmann's best work comes from his ten year association with Alfred Hitchcock on films such as *Marnie*, *North by Northwest*, *Vertigo* and *Psycho*.

For *Psycho*, Herrmann uses just a string orchestra for a suitably monochrome effect (the film was shot in black and white). The shock of the screeching, stabbing sound of violins playing glissando upwards in short staccato bursts is well known but our nerves are already at shredding point through the way Herrmann has manipulated our senses in the lead-up scenes. For instance, from the palpable tension created as the music blends with the rain streaming down the windscreen and the frenzied rhythm of the wipers as Marion drives through the darkness to the motel, you are manipulated into a terrifying sense of foreboding.

Bernard Herrmann's own Decca recording of the *Psycho* score has been reissued on CD; so too has the Mercury recording of Herrmann's splendid score for *Vertigo*. Joel McNeely's 1997 recording of the complete score from the film won a Gramophone Award. Herrmann's exotic music employing the *Tempo di habanera* to evoke Madeleine's obsession with the memory of Carlotta and the swirling

figures for Scottie's vertigo creates a score full of tension and unresolved "resolutions" appropriate to this celebrated, bizarre, psychological thriller.

Jerry Goldsmith, another major figure of the second generation of Hollywood composers working since the 1950s, has also contributed an impressive corpus of works, successfully adapting his style to the fashions of the day. His many scores include *The Blue Max*, *Papillon*, *The Omen* (AA), *Gremlins*, *Sleeping with the Enemy*, *Patton* and *Basic Instinct*. (Jerry Goldsmith's elegant, cool yet sensuous score, reminiscent of the work of Waxman and Herrmann, incorporates synthesizers very subtly to fit the mood of the erotic thriller that is *Basic Instinct* and to suggest the icily controlled psychotic nature of the Sharon Stone character. Interestingly, the National Philharmonic Orchestra is used - the same orchestra that was employed by Charles Gerhardt to record the RCA Classic Film Scores in the 1970s.

Another innovator, Jerome Moross, was employed between 1941 and 1952 as a Hollywood orchestrator. Like Friedhofer, he seized his chance for composition and gave the western probably its most celebrated score - for *The Big Country*. Again new ground was broken for here was a western score written by an American with an American view of the Old West rather than an outsider's or European's concept like those of Steiner or Tiomkin.

The Big Country's imposing opening with its strident brass fanfares and furiously whirling strings is truly electrifying. Throughout the score the rhythms are sturdy and rugged; they seem to be truly representative of the vast plains and skies and the way people lived there.

However, the European influence on the Western genre was to be reinstated in a surprisingly different manner with the arrival of some bizarre Italian horse operas.

Ennio Morricone came into his own with the spaghetti westerns bringing a radically different kind of score to the genre. Wailing woodwinds and "squeeze boxes" were used to illustrate the enigmatic Clint Eastwood characters and the off-beat stories. In *Once Upon A Time in the West*, for instance, a harmonica, in the hands of an avenging Charles Bronson, is used as a mournful clarion call.

Nino Rota wrote memorable scores for a string of films that enjoyed international acclaim including the films of Federico Fellini (*La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita*) plus *War and Peace* and *Il Gattopardo*. The score of *Il Gattopardo*, is distinguished by noble and yearning melodies that are ideal for this sumptuous production about the decline of Sicily's ruling elite caused by Garibaldi's revolution.

Both Morricone and Rota went on to provide music for Hollywood. Rota is especially remembered for *The Godfather* - his music, appropriately reminiscent of the Godfather's Sicilian origins, speaks of family loyalty set against a background of the most hideous crimes. Morricone has also composed notable heroic/tragic scores for more recent Hollywood gangster movies such as *The Untouchables* and *Bugsy* (AAN). In complete contrast, he provided a moving score for the sentimentally, nostalgic *Cinema Paradiso*.

David Lean's blockbusters of the 1960s, *Lawrence of Arabia* (AA), *Dr Zhivago* (AA) and *Ryan's Daughter* helped to draw back audiences against a general trend of falling attendances. A major ingredient of their success was the memorable music of French composer Maurice Jarre. The score for *Lawrence* is particularly impressive not just for the well known main theme but because its clever form and instrumentation seems to capture the spirit of the Arab world and the overwhelming heat and desolation of the desert.

Since then Jarre has worked on innumerable films, in America and Europe, in many different styles including the notorious *Fatal Attraction* for which he produced a very spare acerbic score which suited its chilling atmosphere ideally.

Contemporaneously with the Lean/Jarre partnership was that of Francois Truffaut and Georges Delerue. They worked together on eleven films many of them classics of the French cinema including *Shoot the Pianist*, *The Last Metro* and *Jules et Jim* for which Delerue wrote a winsome bittersweet accompaniment to underscore the evolution of the relationship of the three central characters.

Delerue worked on many Hollywood films and specialised in sweeping romantic scores, in the old tradition, for what were once termed "women's pictures": *Beaches* and *Steel Magnolias*. One of his last scores, that for *Black Robe* (an altogether superior production to the much hyped *Dances With Wolves*) is well worth seeking out. Francis Lai (*Love Story* - AA) and Michel Legrand (*The Thomas Crown Affair* - AAN; and *Summer of '42* - AA) also enjoyed Hollywood acclaim.

In England, in 1957, David Lean had employed Malcolm Arnold to score *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (AA). A Chandos album of Arnold's work for the cinema showed there was much more to that score than just Colonel Bogie and it proved his great versatility and ability to create pictures in sound.

Mention should also be made of Muir Mathieson. He was responsible for the musical direction of countless films; he won an Oscar nomination for *Genevieve*.

John Barry is probably best known for his tongue in cheek, sardonic scores for the James Bond films: *From Russia With Love*, *Goldfinger* and *Thunderball*. He has had a long and remarkably successful career enjoying accolades for *The Lion in Winter* (AA), *Out of Africa* (AA) and *Chaplin* (AAN)

Barry is certainly versatile, turning his finger to all types of genres. For his popular score *Somewhere in Time* he created a Rachmaninov-type melody for this romantic bit of whimsy about a man who is drawn into a picture, he admires, of a girl, from an earlier age. In fact Rachmaninov's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* is actually quoted in the film. However, Barry's frequent use of strings in their high register, very often recorded in an over-reverberant pop music like acoustic may not be to everybody's taste.

John Addison won an Oscar for his music for *Tom Jones*. He was hired to replace Bernard Herrmann who had been released from Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* because a theme that could be commercially exploited was required. Henry Mancini was another composer who was released from a Hitchcock film, this time it was *Frenzy*. In this instance, Hitchcock thought Mancini's music was too menacing - he wanted something different so Mancini was replaced by Ron Goodwin. Goodwin who scored popular successes with his music for *633 Squadron* and *Where Eagles Dare*, also partially replaced Sir William Walton who had been contracted to write the music for *The Battle of Britain* (the 1969, United Artists British production). Goodwin's music under-scored most of that film but part of the music that Walton had composed was retained for the film's air battle sequence.

Interestingly, Henry Mancini, best known for his light music scores for such films as *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (AA) and *The Pink Panther*, began his film career as an arranger, orchestrator and patchwork composer for a string of Universal monster movies such as *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

Since the 1960s, Hollywood producers have been keen on commercial exploitation of their movies. Since then there has been a flood rather than a dearth of soundtrack recordings.

At this point it is as well to pause and argue that many scores are perfectly satisfactory doing the job for which they were originally intended but the acid test, as music, is their ability to stand independently of the screenplay. Many scores - and I include some mentioned in this article - rely on a strong, sometimes an outstanding main theme, but have little else to offer other than limited variations on that theme. It pays to beware in selecting costly soundtrack CDs; you might be entranced by two or three minutes of music and disappointed with the remaining fifty-seven.

Home video allows one the opportunity of listening more carefully to the music, on a repeated viewing, to ascertain whether a score has sustained interest. If you are unsure, it is probably best to buy a collection of scores like the three Varèse-Sarabande "Big Movie Hits" albums containing some of the more memorable scores of recent years.

John Williams' music however rarely disappoints; most of his scores show a remarkably high level of sustained invention. It was Williams who revived interest in the big romantic orchestral score in the mid 1970s after a decade when the norm was pop and rock. (Audience figures had been still shrinking and producers were more budget-conscious preferring to eschew costly larger orchestras.)

John Williams' association with Steven Spielberg produced some of his finest work for a string of successes including *Jaws* (AA), *Star Wars* (AA), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (AAN), *Superman* (AAN), *E.T.* (AA) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (AAN). His large-scale, richly romantic scores were shown off to the best possible effect in the new digital stereo and sounded stunning in a well equipped theatre.

His music shows strong influences of Korngold, Wagner, Richard Strauss and Elgar. The triumphal march at the end of *Star Wars*, for instance, could have been penned by Elgar. Perhaps the best of his sci-fi genre is *Close Encounters ...* especially the long climactic scene of the meeting with the benevolent aliens which prompts music that is inspired and deeply moving.

Williams is truly versatile being equally at home with small domestic dramas and comedies. His score for *The Accidental Tourist* (AAN) underlining the isolation and quirky vulnerability of the William Hurt character is particularly appealing so too is the subtle and delicate music for Stanley and Iris exquisitely scored for flute, piano and strings. His score (1997) for *Seven Years in Tibet* was a favourite on Classic FM.

Although one may regret the passing of the opulent romantic scores of the heyday of Hollywood, there is vigour and invention apparent in the best of today's scores. I would go so far as to claim that some of the best and most imaginative music since the 1930s has been composed for the screen - and the tradition continues.

Music of all styles and from all eras: "classical" orchestral, instrumental and chamber, are used - often in juxtaposition with jazz or popular idioms or synthesizers - according to the requirements of the screenplay. British composer, George Fenton's impressive and imaginative main title music for *White Palace*, for instance, commences with music that is very close to a Mozart piano concerto. This is played over scenes showing a very conventional, strait-laced James Spader in his immaculate flat, dressing, formally, for a bachelor party. As he does so, the string accompaniment recedes, yielding for a while, to saxophone and jazz instrumentation as the theme becomes syncopated so that you anticipate Spader's imminent encounter with the more earthy Susan Sarandon character. Another successful British composer is Patrick Doyle who often scores films for Kenneth Branagh such as *Much Ado About Nothing*.

There are many interesting talents amongst the recent generation of film composers including: Jean-Claude Petit (*Cyrano de Bergerac*), Hans Zimmer (*Driving Miss Daisy*), Michael Kamen (*The Last Boy Scout*), Alan Silvestri (*The Abyss*), Danny Elfman (*Batman*), Thomas Newman (*The Player*), Mark Isham (*A River Runs Through It*) and Richard Robbins (*Howards End*). James Horner has provided rousing, exciting scores for such adventure films and thrillers as *The Rocketeer* and *Titanic*. James Newton Howard is writing attractive romantic scores for films like *Prince of Tides* and *Dying Young*, reminiscent of Steiner but less saccharine and including pop and "easy listening" styles. (The films in brackets are my choice from their output).

Turning to art-house cinema for a moment, Michael Nyman's controversially distinctive, highly personal style has been used by Peter Greenaway in his films: *The Draughtsman's Contract*, *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife & her Lover* and *Prospero's Books*. Contrary to normal practice, Greenaway prefers to use Nyman's music as an inspiration to weave his images around. Therefore one should probably regard Nyman's music for films more as concert music.

Philip Glass has produced a number of film scores, including a most interesting and often serenely "angelic" score in complete contrast to the diabolical action and sleazy settings of *Candyman*. So far he has not been persuaded to commit this score to disc.

Women are beginning to work in a wider variety of behind the camera roles than the traditional editing and continuity jobs. They are directing and contributing music. Rachel Portman's score for E.M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* captures very well the London and Italian settings and the ironic nature of this comic-tragedy of manners.

The cinema of recent decades is enjoying something of a second renaissance and attendances have largely been rising. Forgetting those films with the inevitable emphasis on sex and violence, many of today's screenplays are more varied and imaginative and the best of them tackle themes that would not have even been considered a decade or so ago. The cream of today's original film music upholds the traditions and excellence established by the first pioneers working in the genre.

Note

Christopher Palmer's authoritative book *The Composer in Hollywood*, also available in paperback at £12.50 (Marion Boyars Publishers) from which quotations have been made in this article, is required reading for enthusiasts.