

## Duke Lecture

### On Hidden Narratives

[title slide, then Mantel slide] In her novel *Wolf Hall*, Hillary Mantel writes, “Beneath every history, another history.” Beneath can mean under, below, buried, submerged, hidden. But it also suggests things that are deep, profound, rooted, *from* below. Today I want to talk about the narratives beneath our histories and historiographies, how we can exhume these narratives, how we can raise them up from being beneath, how we can make sure they aren’t being put under other narratives, how when things are beneath they often have deep things to tell us. I also want to talk about how we, as scholars, can be made to be *beneath*, made to be hidden, and how we might address that, so that we are not buried or drowned, but strongly rooted and profound. And finally, today, I want to listen: to all of you, to your hidden and buried narratives, because without listening to uncovered narratives, they remain shrouded, veiled from our senses, unable to be truly and fully recovered, unable to be acted upon.

1.

I’ll start off by talking about my own current research uncovering the role of women in silent film music. In women in music as a sub-discipline, most research has focused on the rarity of the successful female performer or composer or has attributed her success to a male mentor. Examples of this include Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, and Alma Mahler. While there has been a significant amount of research recently conducted on histories of neglected women in art music, like my own book on Louise Talma, little work has been done on the careers of women in vernacular musics prior to 1960.

In soliciting essays on this very topic for an edited collection, my colleague Dr. Paula Bishop and I were struck by how difficult it was to communicate the scope of this research. Many potential essay authors were eager to write about women who had come from modest beginnings and made it big, often in the context of being a partner to a male performer. Few, initially, understood that we were really looking for narratives in which women had contributed substantially to a genre or form or practice but had remained basically uncredited by scholars and fans. Because of the disregard these women have suffered, they can be difficult to identify, much less research deeply. But in part thanks to the ever-expanding online archives of primary source materials, it is possible to discover previously unknown musical histories beneath the histories taught in all those glossy, expensive music history textbooks... you know—the ones written by white men about other, mostly white, mostly European, men....

Why is the history of women in silent film music important? Well, there's this to begin with: [slide of male composers on Google] all men, all white.... I believe that the historical record, once recovered from being *beneath*, will demonstrate that women were the primary arbiters of musical taste and the creators of musical associations in films, and that their influence on the music of sound films has been vastly under-acknowledged. They developed both of the two modes of perceiving music as part of a cinematic experience. They helped create and expanded what Anahid Kassabian calls “assimilating identifications”—identifications assist perceivers of a film in locating themselves within the film’s diegesis: eighteenth-century Europe, nineteenth-century Australia, twentieth-century America and what she terms “affiliating identifications,” in which re-existing music in a film score, then, encourages perceivers to bring their own subtexts to the film and encourages them to interpret the film

in more personal ways than a composed score might. So while in the past we may have given credit to Hugo Riesenfeld or Samuel Rothapfel for being the geniuses behind effective film music, now we can also give due recognition to the women who composed, arranged, selected, and performed music for the early cinema. It is possible to trace the work of John Williams and Hans Zimmer and their colleagues to the scoring practices of women like the women I'll talk about here today.

The popular visual trope of a silent film accompanist [slide of woman in front of screen] is that of a woman seated at a piano or organ, her back to the audience, playing for a film. (This image is used a lot because it's easy to photoshop your own image [slide of panda] into the screen.) Sometimes the woman at the piano is parodied, [slide of cartoon] such as in this misogynist, heteronormative cartoon from the silent era. Sometimes she's glamorized, like Rosa Rio, shown here in her 20s [slide of Rio]. But aside from a few individuals—like Rio—[blank slide] these women's histories are, for now, mostly hidden. I wish I could say that I find that baffling, given that, especially after the US's entry into World War I, women comprised the majority of cinema accompanists. But I don't find it unusual at all, and I think we all know why. Women's lives, careers, compositions, inventions, accomplishments went monumentally unacknowledged by the press, the silent film music industry, and the community, all of which were focused on the men in the business. We could say that the lack of contemporary coverage of women in silent film music can be attributed to now-outdated sexism.

But that sexism is still pervasive. In my survey of the scholarly literature on silent film music, I have found very few references to individual women, despite the copious amounts of

primary source material now easily accessible online through entirely open-access portals. In the *Routledge Film Music Sourcebook*, edited by three men, not a single woman from the silent era is included. In Rick Altman's *Silent Film Sound*, once described to me—by a white male Reviewer #2, naturally—as “the bible of silent film music,” Altman makes only one reference to a female cinema performer, and even then it's in a quote where the woman is referred to only as a man's “step-mother.” (Altman, 226) In a footnote, Altman tries to claim that there were no women in cinema orchestras because they weren't allowed into the musicians' union, but I cannot tell you how [4 slides of women orchestras] many documents I have seen to the contrary. Even in Julie Brown and Annette Davison's edited collection *The Sounds of the Silents in Britain*, essays mention just two women performers, and one of those is described in the context of being another performer's wife. And so women—performers, composers, innovators—in silent film music have been kept hidden, beneath the attention of most scholars. “So what?” a colleague—who will remain unidentified—asked me: “the women were just playing music written or chosen for them to play by men. The women didn't publish new music for the cinema the way men did; they were just human music boxes, automatons.” What utter rubbish. Rosa Rio was no automaton; neither were Florence Price, who accompanied silent films before she became recognized as a symphonic composer; or blues great Sippie Wallace, who played in the cinema when she was a teenager.

What I'm finding on this topic has the capacity to rewrite a significant portion of our film music history, which is film history, which is... cultural history. I'll provide one case study here, that of accompanist Hazel Burnett, whose music, notes, and other papers are held by the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin in the Josephine Burnett Collection. First, a little background on music for silent film.

By 1908, the cinema industry had largely decided that accompanying a motion picture with music was not only acceptable, but essential. And although debates about what kinds of music were appropriate for film lasted well into the sound era, pretty much everybody agreed that accompanimental music served a narrative function and assisted in establishing geographical, chronological, and other loci both acoustically and within the diegesis of a film. As a result, trade magazines and studios began publishing suggestions for music to be used with particular films. The *Edison Kinetogram*, the house organ for the inventor's studio, began offering columns on "playing the picture" starting in 1909. These suggestions from Edison were not terribly sophisticated: the recommendations for a nine-scene film titled *How the Landlord Collected His Rent* were [slide of this list] "1. March, brisk; 2. Irish jig; 3. Begin with Andante, finish with Allegro; 4. Popular Air; 5. Ditto; 6. Andante with Lively at finish; 7. March (same as No. 1); 8. Plaintive; 9. Andante (Use March of No. 1)."<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the *Kinetogram's* column spurred other film companies and magazines to publish their own suggestions as well. *Film Index* and *Moving Picture World* began publishing columns in 1910.<sup>2</sup> There was a significant increase in the number of films for which musical suggestions (sometimes called "musical plots") were made in trade magazines during the late 1910s and early 20s. Such suggestions led to the development of the studio-published cue sheet. Cue sheets—which offered more specific pairings of an individual piece of music with each scene—became more detailed over time. In 1913, accompanist, composer, and entrepreneur Alice Smyth Burton Jay invented a cue sheet that included not just the title of each piece to

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My thanks to Jonathan Mummolo and Rachel Barker-Asto for their assistance in locating and providing archival materials for this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895-1924* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 68.

<sup>2</sup> Julie Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011), 7.

accompany each scene, but also a duration (in minutes and seconds), and a musical incipit. (I have not found extant cue sheets by Jay, but here is one by James C. Bradford, who made hundreds of cue sheets for Paramount. [slide of *Ace of Action* cue sheet]) The cue sheets of the 1920s represent the height of the form. Composers, music editors, and score compilers contributed to both trade magazines' musical suggestions and created standalone publications that were distributed by studios with their films as part of an attempt by studios to control or at least influence the musical accompaniment of their pictures.

Although such recommendations were, as cue sheet compiler Bradford had printed at the top of his cue sheets for Paramount, mere aids for music directors [slide of this text], “their purpose [being] rather to illustrate the style and character of the music that fits each scene and so enable to leader to select a similar piece from his library,” the studios—which often owned the publishing companies that produced the music—heavily promoted the recommended pieces.<sup>3</sup> It will not surprise you to learn that these same studios owned the publishing companies that produced this repertoire. Advice columns for accompanists—written by the same composers and arrangers who wrote the music—also advocated for the acquisition of cue sheet-referenced pieces on cinema musicians, claiming them as essential for the sophisticated cinema music library. Regarding these practices, Rick Altman claims “during the twenties, music directors and orchestra leaders depended heavily on cue sheets”

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<sup>3</sup> Bradford's cue sheets for Paramount stated: “The purpose of this musical setting is to aid the leader in selecting appropriate music for the picture. It is not intended that he should purchase the pieces suggested nor should it be inferred that without them a good musical setting is not possible. Their purpose is rather to illustrate the style and character of the music that fits each scene and so enable to leader to select a similar piece from his library.”

and that “selections chosen by cue sheet compilers were guaranteed continued sales and playing time.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet...there is very little published documentation about exactly how and when these musical cues were used.<sup>5</sup> Published reviews, in which critics occasionally made comparisons between cue sheets and the actual music played, shed some light on performance practices of the silent cinema. But most reviews of photoplaying were written about only the largest theaters, like the Rialto in New York, where the performers were, again, the authors of the cue sheets. Even there, though, there was clearly room for deviation from the cue sheet, as I’ll show in a minute. In analyzing the use of cue sheets and performer-compiled scores, I argue that while Hollywood compilers—the majority of whom were male—may have encouraged accompanists to make certain choices regarding photoplay music, accompaniments for studio films were actually highly individualized and determined by a player’s own preferences and available music library. These accompanists were mostly women.

“So what?” This evidence suggests that the sounds of the cinema, the music that evolved into modern soundtracks, was chosen, developed, created, and circulated mainly by women, not by the men who created the cue sheets. Composers for early sound films like Max Steiner would have heard women’s accompaniments far more frequently than scores that adhered exactly—or even closely—to men’s suggestions for music when they experienced cinema music as young people. As I said before, I could go so far as to propose that scores

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<sup>4</sup> Altman, 353-54.

<sup>5</sup> One exception is Marco Targa, “The Use of Cue Sheets in Italian Silent Cinema: Contexts, Repertoires, Praxis,” in *The Sounds of Silent Films*, ed. Claus Tieber and Anna Windisch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 49-65.

by composers like James Horner and Howard Shore exhibit the legacies of aesthetics determined in large part by female cinema performers and composers.

Numerous contemporary accounts describe how full scores issued by studios for films were often jettisoned for simpler and/or easier to play compilations, cue sheet versions, abridgements, or arrangements. Likewise, cue sheets were also modified, used merely as the basis for ideas, or ignored altogether.<sup>6</sup> In his work creating compiled scores to play with silent films, Rodney Sauer, the director of the Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra, has noted, “Many surviving cue sheets show multiple changes from the printed score penciled in by a theater music director.”<sup>7</sup> This is common to collections of cue sheets from all over North America. Such is the case with the cue sheets from the Burnett Collection and other collections I’ve recently worked with. The modular format of the cue sheet allowed for easy substitution of a performer’s preferred pieces in the place of those suggested by the cue sheet compiler. In every case, the performer, serving as the final editor of the cue sheet, appears to have made changes to incorporate repertoire they already owned and knew.

Hazel Burnett [slide: HB at Aztec] performed for both cinema and live theater as an organist and pianist. After an early career in Ohio, she moved to Texas, where she played at the Majestic Theater in Austin and the Queen Theater and the Aztec Theatre in San Antonio. The Burnett Collection contains a wide variety of materials, including printed cue sheets and full scores; photoplay albums; sheet music; and hundreds of pieces clipped out of *The Etude* and *Melody* magazines. Much of Burnett’s music is marked with performance indicia that

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<sup>6</sup> Kendra Preston Leonard, “Using Resources for Silent Film Music,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 63, no. 4 (October-December 2016), 274.

<sup>7</sup> Rodney Sauer, “Photoplay Music: A Reusable Repertory for Silent Film Scoring, 1914-1929,” *American Music Research Center Journal* 8–9 (January 1, 1998): 56.



confirm that she used it in accompanying silent film. Burnett also drew heavily on the repertoire from the stage in scoring movies.

The published cue sheets in Burnett's collection are mostly unmarked and appear to have been used only as guides for her to compile her own scores, which she did using music from albums and magazines. Numerous pieces of sheet music in her collection are labeled with cue numbers and descriptive notes: Frederick Vanderpool's "The Want of You" was used for the cue "maw asleep" in one unidentified movie, and Edvard Grieg's popular "Ase's Death" accompanied another unknown film's cue 27: "Mary prostrated." "No. 5 Molto Agitato" from composer Joseph Carl Breil's *Original Collection of Dramatic Music for Motion Picture Plays* is marked as "14 phone rings," while "No. 6 Andante Misterioso" was used for "2 man enters." Burnett wrote the titles of accompaniment-appropriate pieces on the covers of the photoplay albums that contained the pieces, often including the page number for quick access. She also interleaved pieces of sheet music and pieces cut from *Melody* and *The Etude* between pages of her photoplay albums to create original modular scores.

One particularly useful example for understanding Burnett's practices is her compiled score for the 1920 Paramount movie *Humoresque*. [slide: movie poster] The film is a classic melodrama about a young Jewish violinist. Hugo Riesenfeld, the conductor of several large New York moving picture palace orchestras and a prolific composer for film, created an original score for *Humoresque* for the film's premiere, and it was this score that was performed by a cinema orchestra and organist at its premiere and on the road tour that followed. While Burnett almost certainly had access to Riesenfeld's cue sheet, she compiled a

rather different score from her own personal library while retaining two pieces from Riesenfeld's cues.

In August 1920, *The American Organist* magazine, hoping to publish but not yet having secured the official cue sheet from Riesenfeld, proposed its own set of musical suggestions for *Humoresque*. "In suggested classic organ scorings for photoplays," the anonymous author wrote, referring to the common practice of trade magazines' issuance of suggestions for pieces for accompaniment, "we shall depart from the hodge-podge method of using two or three dozen pieces, confining ourselves instead to the selection of only a few outstandingly appropriate organ numbers, and using them as motives upon which the background of the music is to be woven."<sup>8</sup> (They write this as if it is a departure from the norm, but it wasn't—everyone was recommending the use of recurring leitmotifs and themes.) These pieces chosen were [slide of this text]:

[Charles Marie] Widor's *Andante Cantabile Aff[ectuos]* (Sym. 4): illustrating the home life, its nobility of character, its pathos, its sincerity; and also these characteristics as portrayed in the hero;

[William] Wolstenholme's "The Answer": illustrating the love of her[o] and heroine;

Wolstenholme's "The Question": illustrating the excitement and the uncertainty of the crucial situations;

[Antonin] Dvorak's "Humoresque": the piece the hero is apparently supposed to use for his greatest performances;

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<sup>8</sup> "Score in Detail: *Humoresque*," *The American Organist*, August 1920: 295

Max Bruch's *Kol Nidre*: optional in concert before his own people; and for the Mother's devotions in the Synagogue;

(Traditional: "Eli Eli": as above).<sup>9</sup>

On the very next page, however [slide of score suggestions], the editors of the magazine's Photoplay Department offered a slightly different set of suggested pieces, gleaned from attending a showing of the picture where Riesenfeld's compiled score had been used. Here they reified the recommendation of Dvorak's "Humoresque," "Eli Eli," and Bruch's *Kol Nidre*, but instead of the Widor and Wolstenholme pieces advised the use of Francis Dorel's "Love Bells," Felix Mendelssohn's "*Athalia* Selection," and Cecile Chaminade's "Serenade."<sup>10</sup>

In the next month's issue there appeared responses and additions to the suggestions from August: cinema organist Rollo F. Maitland pointed out that "Eli Eli" was not, in fact, a traditional Jewish melody, but was heavily based on "Through the Ages" by Josiah Zuro and had been composed for a "Hebrew" stage play by J. K. Sandler, after which it was adapted for several dramatic productions on both stage and screen.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, by this time, the *American Organist* had obtained Riesenfeld's own official cue sheet for the film, which it published in full but without incipits in the issue.

In addition to the pieces listed above, [slide of Riesenfeld's cues] Riesenfeld's selections also included several pieces from the collection *Hebrew Songs and Dances*<sup>12</sup> and works by Ole Bull, Paul Lacôme, and Riesenfeld himself.<sup>13</sup> Despite the publication of his cue sheet for the

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<sup>9</sup> "Score in Detail: *Humoresque*," *American Organist*, August 1920: 295. Modern punctuation added for clarity.

<sup>10</sup> "Score in Detail: *Humoresque*," *American Organist*, August 1920: 296.

<sup>11</sup> Rollo F. Maitland, "The Humoresque Score," *American Organist*, September 1920: 331.

<sup>12</sup> J. Fleischmann, *25 Hebrew Songs and Dances* (New York: Fischer, 1912).

<sup>13</sup> "Riesenfeld's 'Humoresque' Score," *American Organist*, September 1920: 332.

film—said to be the first of his cue sheets ever made available to “any but his own conductors and organists,”<sup>14</sup>—Riesensfeld made several changes to the cues even while the film played in New York, depending on the theater in which it was shown. Such variation directed by the compiler himself suggests that he knew that his cues would ultimately serve as general guidelines rather than a fixed work to which cinema musicians would rigidly adhere. *The Musical Courier* traced the use of Riesensfeld’s cues for *Humoresque*, focusing on the overture as an example of how the cue recommendations might be altered.

When the picture was shown at the Criterion, Mr. Riesensfeld selected Dvorak’s “Humoresque” as the overture for the reason that that famous composition was ideal for the intimate orchestra at the little playhouse. Yet, when the photodrama was moved to the Rivoli Theater, Goldmark’s “Sakuntala” overture was played by the Rivoli musicians because it lent itself better for the larger group. And, when “Humoresque” moved to the Rialto, the mallet music from Goldmark’s “Queen of Sheba” was chosen as the overture, a composition which had the Oriental atmosphere,<sup>15</sup> yet different from that played at the Rivoli.<sup>16</sup>

At other screenings of *Humoresque* at the Rivoli, Riesensfeld used an unidentified overture by Weber to introduce the film.<sup>17</sup> With overtures proving mutable, Riesensfeld established musical continuity through the use of the “Jewish-sounding” “Eli, Eli,” sung by Emanuel List and Jean Booth at the premiere, and the various pieces from *25 Hebrew Songs and Dances*. The reviewer for *The American Organist* praised Riesensfeld’s for its mix of “authentic” and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jews, Jewish topics, and Jewish customs were often referred to as “Oriental” during this period. For more, see *Orientalism and the Jews*, ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Penslar (Boston: Brandeis University Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> “Films Must be Artistically Introduced.” *The Music Magazine-Musical Courier* 81, September 16, 1920: 36, 39.

<sup>17</sup> “Reel Life at the Riesensfeld Houses,” *Columbia Daily Spectator* 19 July 1920: 3. Accessed July 13, 2016, <http://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/columbia?a=d&d=cs19200719-01.2.22>.

“effective” music, writing, “the Jewish music was well registered and never became tiresome.”<sup>18</sup>

In her score for *Humoresque*, Hazel Burnett also used Dvorak’s “Humoresque” and Bruch’s *Kol Nidre*. Assigning credit for her use of these pieces exclusively to Riesenfeld’s cue sheet is impossible, however: the titular work could hardly be avoided, and Bruch’s arrangement of the traditional *Kol Nidre* was a well-known musical synonym for Jews. Nonetheless, her score has these commonalities with Riesenfeld’s, even as she replaced the remainder of Riesenfeld’s suggestions [slide: Riesenfeld vs Burnett, cues 1-5]. Burnett wrote out her cues and notes for accompanying the film on the inside front cover of her 1917 *Standard Student’s Classic Album*, from which some of the cues were drawn, demonstrating that she created her score from music she already owned and knew.<sup>19</sup> She combined the music for some continuous or closely related cues, reducing the number of different works in her score and providing scene-to-scene continuity in addition to that delivered by the two main themes.

Burnett also employed leitmotifs in her score in more consistent ways than Riesenfeld. While Riesenfeld uses different pieces from *25 Hebrew Songs and Dances*—not far from the *American Organist’s* disdained “hodge-podge method of using two or three dozen pieces”—each time the camera returns to the protagonist’s home, enters the temple, or otherwise shows the exterior signifiers of Jewishness, Burnett [slide of Burnett’s cues] uses only the *Kol Nidre*; the frequency of its use is eclipsed only by “Humoresque” itself, which she also uses far more often than Riesenfeld does. Her reiterated uses of “Humoresque” and the *Kol Nidre* provide solid, recognizable themes for the picture, the “motives upon which the background of the

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<sup>18</sup> “Photoplay Reviews: Rialto—New York,” *American Organist*, September 1920: 332.

<sup>19</sup> *Standard Student’s Classic Album* (Philadelphia, Theodore Presser: 1917).

music is to be woven.” At the same time, the other pieces listed in her cue sheet repeatedly share rhythmic and melodic gestures and key areas, contributing to a holistic and coherent score that adheres to the contemporary aesthetic of using leitmotifs as narrative devices in film scoring.

Although some of these cues may be unknown today, research into Burnett’s albums and other collections reveal them to be popular and well-known works frequently heard in the cinema. These selections denote Burnett’s familiarity with audience expectations and the extramusical associations such pieces had developed from being used to accompany stage and screen works. Jules Massenet’s “Melodie,” for example, is the composer’s “Melodie-Élégie” Op. 10, No. 5 (from the composer’s *Pièces de genre*, also used in his incidental music to *Les Érinnyes*) and was commonly used in cinema accompaniments to indicate sadness. F. Paolo Tosti’s “Good Bye,” likewise, was a favorite of audiences around the turn of the century and included in Albert Ernst Wier’s *The Ideal Home Library*, Vol. 9, published by Scribner in 1913. Other pieces, such as those by Mendelssohn and Beethoven, were commonly found in photoplay albums; works by J. S. Zamecnik and Charles Huerter were composed specifically for film accompaniment.

Many of the pieces Burnett used in her compiled score for *Humoresque* and other scores were drawn from *The Etude* magazine, which published numerous short generic or character pieces in each issue. Such works, available at a lower cost than individually published pieces of sheet music, made up an expansive library of music appropriate for playing with moving pictures. In compiling a score, Burnett often attached these pieces, cut out of the magazine, to other pieces, handwritten cue sheets, or notes indicating their place in a film score. [slide:

Calamity Jane] Here, “Merry Hunting Party” by Emil Söchting is marked as being for “Calamity Jane” for the 1915 movie *In the Days of '75 and '76*. Among the hundreds of pieces Burnett clipped out of *The Etude* to use in accompanying were works not only by male composers, but also by women, who frequently published in the magazine. Burnett scored films with pieces written by black English composer Amanda Aldridge (sometimes writing under the pseudonym of “Montague Ring,” but everyone knew it was her); Carrie Jacobs Bond; Esther Gronow; Mae Davis; and many others. [slide: blank]

Other materials in the Burnett Collection suggest that while Burnett may have taken inspiration from or adopted a few musical suggestions from cue sheets, her accompanimental practices did not make much use of the music advised by them. So what? This means that audiences in Ohio and Texas who experienced her cinematic accompaniments would have heard her original musical accompaniments of Hollywood films and not those proposed by studio cue compilers. And materials from several other collections—too many and too much to discuss here—provide the exact same narrative as the Burnett Collection. So what, again? So not only was it women—as accompanists—who were selecting pieces (or improvising—essentially composing) for silent film scores, they were choosing and using musical works by women for use in their scores.

These artifacts of silent cinema accompanying history provide us with valuable, previously unexcavated information. Cinema accompanists may have used cue sheets as tools for timing and possibly inspiration rather actually playing from them, but many accompanists clearly constructed their own cue sheets and modular scores based on the contents of their own music libraries. So not only did these accompanists not “depend heavily” on studio-

produced cue sheets, they also probably did not have as much of an economic influence on the sales of sheet music that Altman suggests. In fact, based on the evidence of these and other edited cue sheets, accompanist-compiled scores, and the fact that cinema musicians continued to improvise (either using original leitmotifs and themes, such as Rosa Rio did, or more freely) until the adoption of integrated sound, I propose that the accompanists themselves, as opposed to the cue sheet compilers, were the primary arbiters of taste and trends in silent film music. As a result, the accompaniments for Hollywood silents were certainly far more diverse than those compiled by studio musicians, and reflected accompanists' personal tastes and those of their audiences much more closely than did generic studio-issued cue sheets. These accompanimental practices hint at a wealth of yet hidden narratives and undiscovered musical treatments that undoubtedly influenced how silent films were received and interpreted.

This kind of scholarship—bringing what is “beneath” to the fore—addresses systemic bias. It makes musicology better. But just writing about those who experienced discrimination in the past isn't enough.

2.

Now we come to the part of this talk that I know so many of you have been patiently waiting to hear, where I say, “fuck the establishment. Fuck musicology's sexist, normative, elitist institutions and organizations and everything they stand for.” Am I right?

Yeah. I do frequently feel like we should just burn it all down. Start over. Start new scholarly societies, ask academic departments to make new evaluations of how their faculty members



do or don't support their students, how they work towards or engage with social justice, how they approach basic humanity. I could call out a long list of things that are problematic in our culture and in our chosen discipline—people, places, blog posts, textbooks—but I don't think I need to do that here. You know what's happening: institutional racism, sexism, discrimination, hate. Complacency [slide of Harris quote] on the part of many who could instigate real change is a real problem; this is a quote from an email past AMS President Ellen Harris sent me in September when I—as the AMS liaison to the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, an adjunct-advocacy group—submitted recommendations for the AMS in addressing inequality issues in the organization. (Okay, so I'm calling out one institution...and a person...by name.)

Maybe trying to reform musicology seems trivial in light of our current political situation, but I think that activism can live anywhere. The problems we face as a nation can spur us on to make it clear why the humanities matter.

I don't have a master plan or some great wisdom. We need to share ideas that we can use and improve and think about and incorporate into our teaching and our scholarship and our lives as people who want to [slide: MMB] Make Musicology Better. If we can make musicology better, can't we also "Make Academia Better," and, maybe, make the world better? I think we can. We can begin by making sure that our narratives and those of our colleagues and friends are never hidden. [blank slide]

We need a radical rethinking that affirms [slide: affirm] that who we are is a valid & important part of our scholarship.

As humanists, we work in interpretation. Only rarely can we say that our conclusions are drawn strictly from numbers or data. We seek meaning. As interpreters—and interpreters of interpretation—it is nigh impossible for us to exclude our own experiences, identities, beliefs, and preferences from our work. Our selves are integral to our work. It would be dishonest for me to claim, for example, that my chronic conditions don't have any influence on my work; or that my experience as a woman has no effect on how I conduct research and write about women in music. Will Cheng's 2016 book *Good Vibrations*—available free through open access—is a masterful entry into the humanistic literature of how our selves and our scholarship are indivisible. Does this mean we are biased? Absolutely. As Linda Martín Alcoff has written, “A plethora of sources have argued [...] that the neutrality of the theorizer can no longer, can never again, be sustained, even for a moment.”<sup>20</sup> She continues, “Who is speaking turns out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said: in fact what is said turns out to change according to who is speaking and who is listening.” What does that mean for musicologists? We are individuals drawing on an enormous variety of diverse experiences and understandings of the world—a variety that enriches the many ways we examine, excavate, and discover meaning in music. Thus meaning is plural, mutable, fluid; we all know how, as Alcoff puts it, “a single text can engender diverse meanings given diverse contexts.” We experience this in every performance we attend or give, every analysis we read of a work or a life or an event or a period of time. We need to accept that the diversity—of people, of cultures, of meanings—is inextricable from who we are—as individuals, as part of our disciplinary culture, as part of the humanities.

We need to amplify others' voices. [slide: affirm and amplify]

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<sup>20</sup> “The Problem of Speaking For Others | Alcoff.com,” accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.alcoff.com/content/speaothers.html>.

You may have heard of how the women in President Obama’s staff developed a strategy they called “amplification” in order to make sure that they were being heard. Typically, as Alcoff writes,

when a woman speaks the presumption is against her; when a man speaks he is usually taken seriously. [Similarly, when] writers from oppressed races and nationalities have insisted that all writing is political the claim has been dismissed as foolish or grounded in *ressentiment* or it is simply ignored; when prestigious European philosophers say that all writing is political it is taken up as a new and original “truth.”

The *Washington Post* [slide: amplification 1] described the amplification process: “When a woman made a key point, other women would repeat it, giving credit to its author.”<sup>21</sup> I think we should do this for our fellow musicologists, especially those whose narratives are more vulnerable to being hidden by the many more-conservative and more exclusionary voices in our discipline. So let’s not limit this to just women [slide: amplification 2]; we need to include scholars of color, scholars who are queer, disabled, trans, or part of other populations whose narratives and work have been traditionally hidden or silenced. By engaging in this, in what Foucault would call a “ritual of speaking,” we empower others without usurping their autonomy.

We need to be and cultivate allies. [slide: affirm, amplify, ally] We need to let allies know that they can be allies without fear of being deemed being patronizing or speaking for others.

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<sup>21</sup> “White House Women Want to Be in the Room Where It Happens,” *Washington Post*, accessed January 15, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2016/09/13/white-house-women-are-now-in-the-room-where-it-happens/>.

I struggle with this one a lot. A lot. I worry about crossing the line between being an ally and being disempowering. Gilles Deleuze and feminist theorists have strongly denounced what Deleuze calls “the indignity of speaking for others.”<sup>22</sup> While it’s true that an ally’s social location can serve to support or undermine those they are trying to assist, for allies or would-be allies to retreat from offering support smacks of essentialism: that—for example—only a scholar of color can be sympathetic to and offer support in regard to the experiences and struggles of other scholars of color. This essentialism abnegates the power allies can have. At the same time, simply taking a political position of “listening” can essentialize the oppressed and signify that those doing the listening retain the power to control the narrative. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak instead proposes “speaking with and speaking to.”<sup>23</sup> One can speak to the issues affecting them. One can speak to discriminatory policies and practices. One can speak truth to power. If you want to be an ally, *speak with* those who need you and discover ways you can *speak to* the establishment without *speaking for*. If you need an ally, *speak with* potential supporters and help them find a way to *speak to* the system rather than *speaking for* you. As an ally, be accountable, and understand the social location from which you are speaking.

Finally, we need to be advocates. [advocate slide]

Whatever the institutions of musicology might claim, we should always be advocates.

Advocacy and action are the reasons we meet up to talk about our work—we’re there to advocate for ourselves, for the hidden narratives we’re uncovering, for each other. Some of

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<sup>22</sup> “The Problem of Speaking For Others | Alcoff.com.”

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

you have seen this animation of women helping each other rise. [slide: women helping women] Advocacy puts this into practice for us.

Margaret Atwood writes that, “A word after a word after a word is power.” Our words are power. Let’s use that power to make the hidden unhidden, to make the histories beneath histories deep and profound, to support our colleagues, to [slide: MMB] make musicology better.

And now I want to listen. What are your concerns? How can allies help? How can we help our allies? What actions should we be taking? Thank you. [slide: contact info]