Russian language and literature and of Soviet musical life. If only she had trusted her critical acumen, her familiarity with the score, and fundamentally her hearing of the work more fully, her book’s many beneficial observations and insights would have found a firmer setting. More to the point, if only so many others less-skilled had not foisted their tendentious, ill-informed, overly literal readings of Shostakovich on us for the past twenty years, disciplined scholars like Fairclough would not be moved to downplay what they have worked hard to glean from a work. Despite its hesitations, Fairclough’s book is a hopeful sign, a useful model for historically informed writing about Shostakovich and his music. I eagerly await further similarly grounded post-bellum Shostakovich scholarship.

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FILM MUSIC


In this collection of essays, editors Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell, both well-known for their own work in music and film, seek to illuminate the use of and responses to the inclusion of pre-existing compositions in a variety of film genres and historical periods. For the most part, the scholarship represented in this book is indicative of the newness of the field itself: some essays are paragons of clarity and reasoned analysis; others are trying to find an ideological home amid a wealth of information and a sea of possible approaches; and a few could have benefited from more space for explanation or more time for incubation before publication.

The true value of the collection lies in three outstanding articles by Kristi A. Brown, Jeongwon Joe, and Phil Powrie. Joe, in “Reconsidering Amadeus: Mozart as Film Music,” offers a powerfully reasoned and well-articulated response to the myriad of musicologists (and others) who took offence at the much-edited and re-coded Mozart works used for the score of Amadeus. In her article, Joe reiterates the fact that the film is not, in fact, a true biopic of the composer, but rather what playwright Peter Shaffer emphasized, a “fantasia on events in Mozart’s life.” What makes the soundtrack for the film work so well, Joe argues, is that it offers a non-specialist public a greater understanding of both the actions and events taking place on the screen, creating what she terms the “third meeting” (borrowing from Roland Barthes). Her response to fact-based criticisms of the film from a primarily pro-high-culture is that such criteria have no reasonable place in evaluating film soundtracks, especially those for films expressly not presented as factual; in doing so, critics ignore the essential use of the music, that which contributes to the whole.

Kristi A. Brown’s work “The Troll Among Us” revisits the old chestnut that is “From the Hall of the Mountain King,” from Grieg’s Peer Gynt suite and establishes for a vast majority of audiences a new view of the work and its underlying meaning when used in recent film. Written with an easy, casual style appropriate for scholars in a wide array of disciplines, “The Troll Among Us” positions the rumbling dance as both a clue as to the heinous identity of the bad guy (demonstrated in M and Needful Things) and as a accompaniment to petty villainy (Rat Race). Drawing on traditional Scandinavian uses of the troll in folk literature and the appropriation of the troll as an ambiguous creature “between the human and the monstrous,” Brown traces the lineage of the troll in contemporary society from its folk beginnings to its indirect association with Jews and then the SS. The troll is shown in M to be both the murderer and the crowd howling for his “extinguishment.” In Needful Things, the character initially portrayed as the troll—the demonic Leland Gaunt—cleverly masterminds a
scheme by which nearly the entire populace of the town is taken over by its trollish nature. While Brown is correct in her assessment of the score as “heavy-handed,” it is effective nonetheless quite simply because of the instant recognition of the “Mountain King” tune and the sinister darkness it has come to represent throughout popular culture. Subtlety is not needed or even wanted at this juncture: this is a horror movie made from a Stephen King novel, pure and simple, and the use of known motives both visual and musical affords the film exactly what it needs to reach its target audience.

In her conclusions, Brown points to other recent pop-culture appropriations of themes and motives from Peer Gynt, both textually and musically. This seems a rich field for further exploration and publication, and Brown’s flair and analytical skills position her perfectly as a scholar who can communicate across areas of focus, promising rich results.

Co-editor Phil Powrie takes on the ubiquitousness of the accordion as a motif culturel in “The Fabulous Destiny of the Accordion in French Cinema.” The title pays homage to the 2001 magical realist film Le fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulin, known in the United States as Amélie. The treatment of nostalgic sounds or sound-elements is not often singled out for scholarly treatment, perhaps because the use generally falls on the side of the banal—Titanic’s pennywhistle, for example—rather than having an impact that draws on associations and meanings beyond the film in question. The accordion achieves this status, and as Powrie points out, it has been used successfully to sympathetically depict working-class Frenchmen and women, the Popular Front, community, and romance. Powrie examines the use of the accordion in Amélie in the context of the composer’s larger oeuvre and comments on the critical response to the soundtrack. Few filmgoers realized that the seemingly written-to-fit score for the movie was in fact pieced together from earlier works by Yann Tiersen, a Breton composer whose primarily instrumental music has been well-received at home and abroad. Although many critics of the film found it “fascist” and/or overly cleansed for a story purporting to take place in modern France, Powrie argues instead that the film and its music “[work] against this culture of the clean-cut” by positioning Amélie’s utopian attempts against their dystopian opposites.

Several other articles are also useful. Robynn Stilwell, in her “Vinyl Communion: The Record as Ritual Object in Girls’ Rites-of-Passage Films,” presents an overview of the LP as a sacred and sometimes sacrificed possession in several films. Readers will need considerable prior knowledge of the movies discussed in the article, but with that knowledge, Stilwell’s treatment is compelling. Touching on a number of recent films, Stilwell examines the role of the record as a memento and “building [block] of self” for female collectors for whom the relationship with recorded music is more intimate than the traditional male collector who compiles a collection for the sake of collecting rather than the meaning of the recordings collected.

In both Ghost World and Little Voice, Stilwell argues that the record is a device through which young women express themselves in an oblique and anonymous way. Both Enid of Ghost World and LV of Little Voice binge on individual records and songs, assimilating them completely, and find that the music offers protection and inspiration to them; it is not only a voice, but serves as a surrogate sanctuary for the girls until they are ready to speak for themselves. Heavenly Creatures provides Stilwell material for a further example of this reading, in which the two girls at the center of the film build upon a relationship at first mediated by recordings of Mario Lanza and later transformed with the destruction of those recordings. Finally, Stilwell addresses the role of the record in The Virgin Suicides, positing that Lux Lisbon’s records, like those of LV, gave Lux an outlet for communication when she cannot openly express her thoughts or desires in the rigid home environment created by the Lisbon parents. Stilwell’s final analysis—that girls’ rites focus on gaining a voice or using tools around them to foster self-discovery—is a strong one, but ultimately needs more detail and depth in the discussions of individual films to truly convince. As it stands, however, the article serves as a fine introduction to the topic.

Raymond Knapp and Ronald Rodman address the use of pre-existing popular song as leitmotif in film. All three offer in-
interesting examples and theories on the use of non-classical music, but in the end do not go quite far enough in interpreting the meaning behind the songs and artists chosen to represent characters, conflicts, and the overall aesthetic of the films they discuss. Knapp delves deeply into the origins of the Frankenstein film and camp horror as a genre in “Music, Electricity and the Sweet Mystery of Life’ in Young Frankenstein,” but never quite connects the various elements of Mary Shelley, the Golem, James Whale, the role of sexuality, and the presentation of both diegetic and nondiegetic music throughout the film. Further complicating issues, the film is presented less as the silly sex-farce spoof intended by the director and more as a deeper, coded homage to Whale’s Bride of Frankenstein. Rodman, in “The Popular Song as Leitmotif in 1990s Film,” provides a very good historical overview of the use of popular song in movies and the use of the leitmotif in film, but his analysis of the songs used in Pulp Fiction and Trainspotting, the two films discussed, lacks some necessary considerations. Arguing that characters in Pulp Fiction are signified by entire genres of song, Rodman offers examples that are too easily complicated by further understanding of the music used (the “foreground[ing] [heterosexual] ‘female’ characteristics” with songs by lesbian singer Dusty Springfield, whose sexuality and persona is not discussed, is one example); even Rodman acknowledges the conflict in his discussion of character Victor Vega, whose presence is accompanied by both “surfer music” and a later-1960s music.

The remaining several essays in the volume offer what could be read as introductions to the films and music they cover, but are generally a bit obvious in argument and information or else are lacking in clear direction, as in the case of Gorbman’s “Ears Wide Open: Kubrick’s Music,” Lars Franke on “The Godfather Part III: Film, Opera, and the Generation of Meaning,” “The Pleasures of Ambiguity: Using Classical Music in Film,” by Mike Cormack, and Vanessa Knights’ “Queer Pleasures: The Bolero, Camp, and Almodóvar.” A few articles—Timothy Warner’s “Narrating Sound: The Pop Video in the Age of the Sampler,” and Ann Davies’ “High and Low Culture: Bizet’s Carmen and the Cinema”—provide terrific historical material but not enough substantial writing on the topic supposedly at hand. While these do not detract from the better essays in the book, they will serve less as resources for continued dialogue within the discipline and more as narrative summary pieces.

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JAZZ STUDIES


We ask a lot from jazz. To some commentators, jazz is definitive of twentieth-century Americanness, with Ralph Ellison characterizing American life as “jazz-based.” To others, jazz is the epitome of the musical avant-garde, indeed central to “the great modernist tradition in the arts” (Alfred Appel, Jazz Modernism: From Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002], 7). During the Cold War, jazz was the United States’ “secret sonic weapon,” as touring musicians helped proselytize Third World countries to counter perceptions of American racism (Penny von Eschen, Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004]). And in the music’s early decades, jazz was at once, to many young white Americans, a marker of earthy, streetwise hipness, and, to some cosmopolitan urbanites in other parts of the Americas, emblematic of sophisticated North American savoir faire.

Paul Austerlitz seeks to thicken this well-seasoned stew further with Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity, which takes jazz’s multivalence as a foundational