

is plain wrongheaded. Film music uses have ample precedent, and if needed, justification in a great number of contexts.

MULTIVALENT MONTAGE

It is between pure parallelism and strict “counterpoint,” between empathy and opposition that we find the great majority of picture-music equations, where we find multiplicity and multivalence. This notion jeopardizes a standard film music truism: “it is a peculiarity of film music that if it isn’t just right, it can be very wrong.”²⁶ “Wrong” could still be convincingly argued, but one could well add that the “right” is often wrong too. As I have argued, standard geometries are not sufficiently inclusive.

George Antheil wrote in 1938 about a better awareness and use of both alternatives.

This does not mean that music must only play *with* a picture; it can also play against it; in fact I believe that very often indeed it should play against it. But this “against” should be a definite and intended contrast, heightening the drama and the effect of the picture instead of merely drawing attention to the queer non-matching music.²⁷

Siegfried Kracauer felt similarly, that counterpoint must maintain contact with the narrative, that chaotic relations are pointless.²⁸ But Kracauer also reminisces about a certain drunken pianist in silent days whose accompaniments would wander from the apparent business at hand.

The lack of relation between the musical themes and the action they were supposed to sustain seemed very delightful indeed to me, for it made me see the story in a new and unexpected light or, more important, challenged me to lose myself in an uncharted wilderness opened up by allusive shots.²⁹

Kracauer here expresses some very contemporary-sounding sentiments, which implicitly suggest how timid our thinking has been. Walter Murch states the case more directly.

In continuing to say that we “see” a film or a television program, we persist in ignoring how the soundtrack has modified perception.