

We would not underline a dramatic film with a Beethoven symphony because, no matter how good the film, the audience might end up listening to Beethoven. In short, good film music is a purely functional aspect of . . . drama.²⁷

Here is a strangely conflicting statement, with a defensive fear of Beethoven coinciding with the too-modest view that film music should be purely functional, and not call attention to itself. Much film music writing still betrays this conflict, with inferiority complexes exacerbated by lack of ambition. The result is that very practical, how-to concerns can flare up into disproportionately strong feeling.

Irwin Bazelon objects to the use of the standard repertoire for mere “emotional saccharine.” He expects the musician to object too.

To a music-loving purist the use of concert music in films of this type is *offensive* because the original mood and tone, organic to the composition’s formal structure, are altered when combined with oversweetened narrative.²⁸

Ernest Lindgren echoes John Huntley, summarizing this still standard view about the possible duplicities of film music, and then using some remarkably emphatic language.

The use of well-known music is . . . distracting, and has the additional disadvantage that it often has certain associations for the spectator which may conflict entirely with the associations the producer wishes to establish in his film. . . . The use of classical music for sound films is entirely to be deplored.²⁹

Lindgren’s strong sentiments are almost universal among the film composing community, which adds a new issue to the mix. Composers repeatedly emphasize how precomposition is an emblem of various dire philistinisms.

Producers will rest content [to tolerate mediocre film music] so long as movie critics, like the movie-going public itself, continue to exhibit their altogether remarkable insensitivity to all film music except popular songs, folk tunes, ballads or familiar concert and opera classics; and so long as music critics continue to ignore film music completely.³⁰

It can be said that this statement equates philistinism with the mistreatment of artists, in this case film music artists. Precom-