

only upon the largeness of Wagner (the unique, increasingly irrelevant artistic sensibility) or upon other bourgeois obscenities. Given this trajectory, and the weight of social realities surrounding it, the romantic notion of a complete, self-contained artwork simply broke.

By one definition romanticism leans away from the topical and toward the ineffable. It can be said, though, and in this period it was certainly felt, that this ineffability was disingenuous and even dangerous. According to Elie Siegmeister,

if these [Romantic] doctrines are unhesitatingly accepted by those concerned with music, as for the most part they actually are, musicians will not question the social bases of the conditions under which they work, nor the social function of their work. . . . Composers will go on creating in the same way . . . contemplating the 'inner soul' and never questioning the society under which such activity is doomed to frustration in advance.<sup>19</sup>

This account suggests that late romanticism was out of touch even with its own time, which is why modernism fled from it. Functioning these decades later, romantic film music was twice removed. Escapist mandates and their consoling consequences not only distracted audiences from their frustrations. Siegmeister's statement pertains particularly to Hollywood music makers themselves. There is a paradox in the fact that film composers used and defended the idiom of individuality in an industrial context that completely effaced the individual. It is at least partly true that the celebration of romantic ideologies masked for the composers the indentured realities of their own creativity.<sup>20</sup>

Music criticism, then as now, did not often underscore these ideological matters. Yet they were an important subtext in the music community's criticism of film music and its various appropriations. A close reading suggests that for many critics, the inadequacies of classical film music were emblematic of broader musical/cultural ills. In other words, condemnations reflected deeper biases. If criticism addressed, and continues to address, inherent film music failings, it also has a foundation of extramusical discontent with the conditions of art and its reproduction in the twentieth century. We will now look closely at an important and influential music institutional critique of film music and at some of the currents crossing beneath its surface.