

These are binary oppositions, and they were important in establishing and giving definition to some of the first film music discussions. Initially these oppositions invited staunch advocacies, as well as corresponding antipathies, all of which bore fruit in both the theory and practice of film music composition.

The positions, or at least the received representations of these positions, are familiar. Closer scrutiny will follow, but the standard versions bear repeating in this introduction. The practitioners and theorist-historians who together codified the conventions of classical film music accepted certain institutional imperatives. As a rule golden age Hollywood produced fairly simple narratives that provided, through numerous straightforward cinematic means, a clear and unobjectionable experience for the audience. Continuity editing and what has been called Aristotelian structure—clear protagonism and antagonism, unambiguous objectives—were some of the devices that became standard in studio output, which was designed both for entertainment and profit and not to overly tax the viewer. In exchange for these considerations it was hoped the viewer would feel comforted and cared for, and that his patronage would continue.

To safeguard this relationship, the film music community did its part, adopting and expanding the notion of parallelism, which is to say that it provided movie music that charmed and soothed. To work as efficiently as the rest of the cinematic apparatus, film scores were to be congruent with and subordinate to the narrative; what you heard was dovetailed to what you saw, though the correlation was to be quietly communicated and subconsciously processed. Further, lest this correlation of music to image, and more importantly of narrative to reality were to seem strained and inadequate, it was determined that audiences were not to know of the taming processes to which they were being subjected. And for the most part they seemed not to recognize them: the subjugation was successful, audiences were subdued, and Hollywood, industrially, economically, and ideologically, prevailed.

This is a defensible characterization—a usable quote—taken out of a more complicated context. There is more to this story than Hollywood hegemony. Opposing production alternatives arose to the film industry's guiding and smothering devices, and