

superimposition of “incidentals,” of the aural agents of clear signification which is after all the narrative film’s generally received first responsibility, that music receives its greatest indignity.³³

Again, this discussion is contradictory. Music is sullied by the burden of signification in its silent period usage, and then when it is relieved from that burden, its new subservience is even more vigorously bemoaned. At heart are convictions about music’s rightful preeminence and lingering doubts about the possibility of film being art. Perhaps this accounts for some of the dismissal in the following quotation.

For composers the first and most important result of the invention of the sound-film was the tendency to use special music for each film. This began to provide a steady and rapidly increasing income for all composers capable of equipping themselves with the necessary technique. Three months in each year spent in writing film music leaves them nine months to write such symphonies, concertos, and chamber music such as their artistic urge may dictate; music discarded from serious compositions can often be furbished up for use in films, its very flaws possibly rendering it more suitable for the less austere medium. It is seldom that the same music can make a success on the concert platform and in the kinema [*sic*]. If it is good concert music it is essentially bad film music, and the converse is usually true. Nevertheless a good composer will write better music for even the crudest of dramatic scenes than a bad one, if only he possesses the necessary dramatic instinct.³⁴

Here is the dubious reputation referred to by Tony Thomas. This account provides for three months’ film whoring which, as soul destroying as it may be, at least leaves leisure for the kind of composing that really counts, that which coincides with “artistic urge.” The rest can be fobbed off on the films. It is interesting to note the depth of feeling in Irving’s writing, a depth which in some ways replaces a detailed defense of his position. What are the “flaws” serious compositions are prone to, and why would they be more suitable for film? Why is it, what makes it a “less austere medium”? Why must good concert music be bad film music? Why the apparent supposition that film drama is likely to be “crude,” and film composing as well?

There are reasonable answers to these questions, answers which don’t presuppose the inferiority, even the criminality of