

Sounding the Somme – Somme Unseen

Fact File: The Function of Music in Film

The function of film music is to:

- Reinforce what you are seeing.
- Establish a dramatic point of view.
- Emphasize emotions.
- Help to show the characters developing.
- Build Tension.
- Help realize films meaning.
- Underline drama and emotion.
- Provide a rhythmic pulse to drive the action forward/ Slow down a scene/ speed up.
- Highlight an important moment of the film and draw audience in, especially if withheld up to this point.
- Suggest a locale or era.
- Set the Period or place, give ethnic flavour. Can indicate a passage of time or a flashback.
- Fool the audience - red herrings (nothing happens – good for comedy or horror – build up to opening the door then no one's there. Then it can be an even bigger shock when they turn around and e.g. see the villain!
- Catch the action – emotional emphasis in drama (dialogue changes from light to serious) camera emphasis (close-up) editorial emphasis (cut). Always think which is most important emotionally for the audience.
- Help the audience get inside a characters head and tell them what they are thinking or feeling.
- Change of colour (new instrument) can change emotions e.g. adding strings to a chord can soften the moment.
- Show time and place e.g. oboe (pastoral) bagpipes (Scotland) muted brass (sinister) pentatonic (Chinese).
- Accompany dialogue fragments of music e.g. take foreground to comment on dialogue and then drop back when next line is spoken.
- Build a sense of continuity and tie together visuals (e.g. montage scene = music helps bind images together with a unifying musical idea).
- Help build the drama (music evokes a gut reaction unobtainable any other way).
- Make the movie come alive.

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Film Music terms

Title Music	Music across the opening titles. Often used to introduce films theme or set up what the film's about
Underscore	Background music to support the film
Diegetic music/ Source Music	music comes from the actual thing on screen e.g. record player / car radio
Non diegetic	Music (from films story/ narrative)
Leitmotif	Theme or motif for a character or mood in film
Links or Bridges	music links 2 scenes together often of different character (e.g, across a cut)
Click track	Metronome / simple beat, heard through headphones or punches (holes punched on film) so the conductor can keep the music in sync with the film

Structuring Film Music

- Don't always think about each cue as a separate piece of music but building blocks.
- Put into words qualities needed for thematic material + plan how these work/relate to each other in film.
- Music can evolve with the characters.
- Form or pacing of film can determine form or pacing of score.
- Themes can be separate but interlinked; same theme made sad/happy/funny thru harmony/melody/rhythm.
- Unity and variety – (identifiable motif, repetition of melodic, harmonic, rhythmic or particular instrument to identify with a character or emotion).
- Power of association; audience will remember the way they felt when they heard it before + this helps them identify with that character.
- Phrasing a sequence; look at where the start/end or peak of the film or scene is.