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## Arts

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### The Cambridge Companion to Film Music

Edited by Mervyn Cooke and Fiona Ford

Cambridge University Press

Cambridge

2016

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Cambridge Companions to Music

**Keywords** Cinema, Music, Film

**Review DOI** [10.1108/RR-03-2017-0047](https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-03-2017-0047)

This book is at heart, a collection of essays, from numerous scholars and creative talents, which is concerned with reviewing the broad functions music plays within cinema. The editors' intentions are to provide readers with an overview of cinematic scores, from the intellectual and creative labour expended in their creation, through the theory underlying their structures along with the many ways in which they can be analysed and interpreted. From the outset, it is abundantly clear that this book's audience is primarily academic film scholars and musicologists although musicians and composers will likely also glean value from this work. The more casual reader may find this book less engaging although anyone with a love of movie soundtracks may still garner considerable edification and enjoyment from consulting it.

The work opens with content, figure and table listings, followed by some brief biographical information on the contributing authors and editors, followed by the usual acknowledgements. These are followed by a short three-page introduction to the book, which while briefly outlining its intent, squarely focusses on providing a guide to the specific highlights and topics each chapter addresses. Suitably informed by this, the reader is now well equipped to access this book's primary content.

This work's main body comprises 21 chapters, which are subdivided into four groups. The opening five chapters address aspects behind the creative labour expended in Making

Film Music. Part two, entitled Approaching Film Music, devotes five chapters to exploring and considering various aspects of film music theory. Part three, Genre and Idiom, develops this theme through six essays exploring cinematic music within discrete film genres or musical styles. Finally, part four shifts from the prior predominantly Anglo centric framing to address Music in World Cinema in five concluding chapters.

Numerous monochrome illustrations and photographs, along with musical notation extracts, periodically accompany the essays comprising this book. Such images are generally crisply reproduced on the page, with the musical notations particularly pleasingly presented. Frequency of such non-textual content's inclusion varies by individual author, with some making scant or no use at all, which may diminish the work's attraction for some casual readers. However, this reviewer found the degree of image content included to be well justified and likely to add value for the work's intended audience.

Two useful indexes are incorporated at the book's end; however, as a primarily anthological work predictably no further appendices, beyond a 28-page cited sources list are included. The first index comprises a ten-page alphabetical listing of film and television programmes whose musical content is mentioned within the work. The list is varied and enables the reader to easily dive into diverse discussions, such as, for example, the historical contextualisation of music within *Battlestar Galactica* (p. 211) or the musicology of the *Spaghetti Western* genre (p. 226). Spanning 17 pages, the second index is the more usual subject or topic index and is well formatted and functional. From reviewing this topic listing, it is clear that a considerable spectrum of theoretical topics, musical forms and film genres are demonstrably covered. However, as a relatively modest sized anthology, some scholars may be disappointed that comprehensive encyclopaedic coverage is not included in the cover price.

Nevertheless, this is undoubtedly a scholarly and worthy book suitable for acquisition into general collections by those academic and scholarly libraries which support researchers and academics working within film studies, media or music. While the discourse is scholarly, the text is for the most part accessible and would also be of use to both undergraduate and postgraduate students studying within such disciplines. The price, especially the paperback edition, is relatively inexpensive, and hence, normally, I would have no reluctance in recommending its purchase. However, there remains the question of how much value this work would offer within a reference collection, given its anthological



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rather than encyclopaedic construction. As noted above, while the indexing is excellent, many of the entries it directs the reader to are brief mentions rather than generous thematic expositions. Consequently, while its purchase price and scholarly content make a strong case for general acquisition, I can only give a muted recommendation as a reference work.

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### The Encyclopedia of World Folk Dance

Mary Ellen Snodgrass

Rowman & Littlefield

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2016

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The author of this encyclopaedia taught humanities at high-school and university level for many years and has authored several prize-winning encyclopaedias in subjects as varied as fable, feminist literature, the underground railroad and ballet. The acknowledgements bear witness to consultation with a wide variety of authorities, although many of them are actually US-based.

The encyclopaedia begins with a chronology, before 347 pages on an alphabetical series of subjects ranging from nationalities to dance form (e.g. veiled dance, clogging or branle), taking in other topics as wide-ranging as censorship and ceilidhs. A brief appendix lists national and state dances, alphabetically by dance rather than by nation. This is followed by a four-page glossary of necessary terms that might be unfamiliar to the average enquirer, such as “bel canto” – a singing style – or the act of “reverence” made to spectators at the end of certain dances. There is an eight-page bibliography divided into primary and secondary sources: books, journals and electronic sources; the vast majority of the secondary sources were published in the past 15 years. A very detailed index finishes off the book. Additionally, the book is well-supplied with both black and white and eye-catching colour illustrations.

The challenge for any individual compiler of a one-volume encyclopaedia is that even when

there is wide consultation, one then has to bring everything together into a logical arrangement, doing justice to the international coverage of the topic whilst not oversimplifying to the point of banality. Snodgrass has produced an impressive tome with wide-ranging discussion, and the reviewer is challenged to ascertain the reliability of the information therein.

The best way to test an encyclopaedia is to interrogate it on one particular area, so the present reviewer has taken the folk dance of Scotland as an example. There is no main entry for “Scotland”, nor for “strathspey”, although there are certainly many page references to each in the index, with those in bold type flagged as the most pertinent. On the other hand, there is a two-page entry Reel, but it makes only the briefest of references to Scotland’s national dance. Because the index yields so many page references, it would take careful inspection of many different pages before the reader felt informed about the nature of folk dance in Scotland. Unfortunately, they might not be very well-informed.

The appendix listing national dances cites two for Scotland – the reel (but not the strathspey) and the highland fling. The latter is arguably more of a solo competition showpiece nowadays, compared to the very sociable reels, strathspeys, marches and so on; it does not even feature in the world’s most eminent online encyclopaedia of music, *Oxford Music Online*. Furthermore, whilst the acknowledgments include the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, the bibliography itself lists nothing that would enable the novice enquirer to get a quick grasp on the subject of Scotland’s national folk dance.

Even more worryingly, the primary sources are very old – for example, the author lists Grove’s *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in the 1889 edition. There have been more recent paper editions, but *Oxford Music Online* superseded them all, a century later than the edition used! It is very surprising indeed that Snodgrass was unable to source either the paper version that appeared when the online edition first came on stream, or the current online version itself, not just for British but for quite a few other national dances too.

Meanwhile, if proof is needed of both of the American bias and the outdated primary sources for this volume, the book on the highland fling was published in New York in 1,892: Horatio N. Grant’s *The Highland Fling and How to Teach it*. A “primary source” should be there because it is an important, authoritative source, as much as an old one; a contemporary Scottish dance expert probably would not refer students to an American source this old, except as evidence of how the dance was perceived by that author in that particular era.