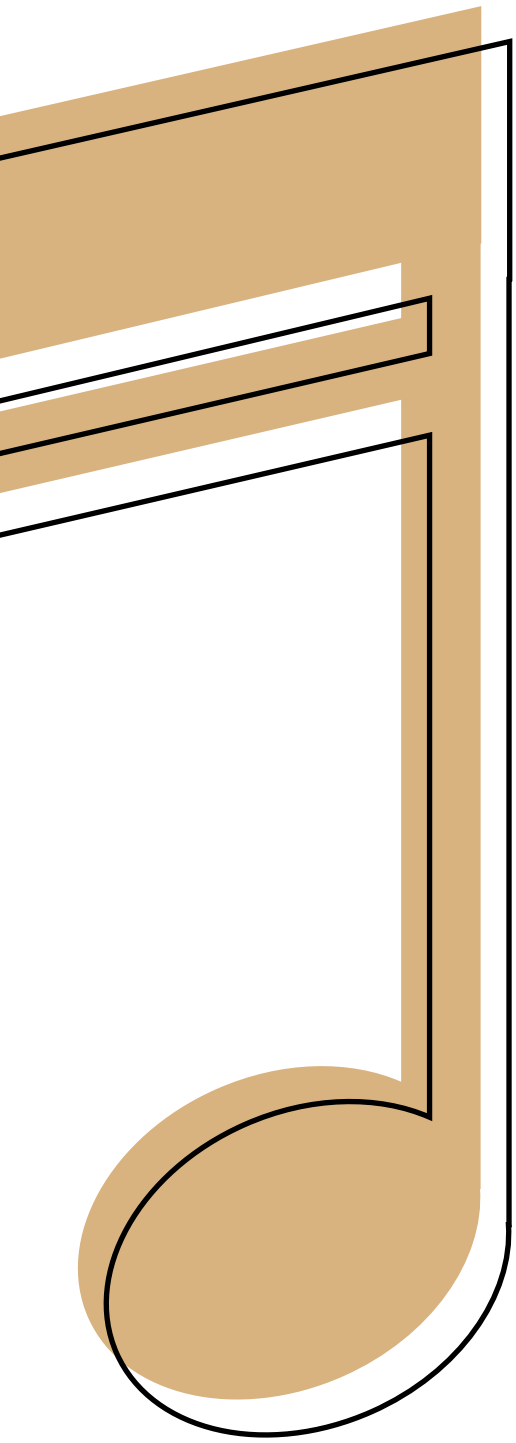
Julia Galas



FILM SOUNDSCAPES: HOW MUSIC BUILDS THE WORLD OF CINEMA

Sight is very often the first sense we associate with the cinema. To truly see a film, however, we must also hear it – discovering its full complexity would not be possible without the sound revolution and film music, which has become an integral part of the stories told on the big screen. Music invites viewers to journey through the characters' emotions, diverse locations, and plot twists, weaving individual scenes into a coherent whole. Thanks to it, we cease to be mere spectators: we become a part of the world depicted on screen and active participants in the unfolding story.

Bogumiła Mika, PhD, DLitt, Assoc. Prof.
Institute of Arts Studies
Faculty of Humanities
University of Silesia in Katowice
bogumila.mika@us.edu.pl

MUSIC IN THE SCORE OF CULTURE

'The shift towards audio in culture, as well as growing knowledge of how to tell stories through sound, is placing ever-greater demands on film music today. It is no longer merely a backdrop to a sequence of scenes: music creates an additional space, encouraging us to watch (and listen to!) a film more than once and allow the soundscape to help us discover further dimensions of the narrative', says musicologist Bogumiła Mika, PhD, DLitt. Assoc. Prof., who researches the significance of musical styles and the role of instruments in various types of film music.

Music shapes the way we understand a given scene – having been brought up in a particular culture, we are 'programmed' with certain ways of interpreting sounds, which enables us to accurately interpret what we see and hear on screen. Music remains inseparably linked to the era in which it was created, thus introducing a context specific to that era into the film and building deeper narrative layers. The researcher also notes that a conscious composer draws on the knowledge that classical and art music – shaped over generations – brings to film music. The same applies to instruments – each one emerged at a specific moment in history, and its presence was motivated by a particular purpose and method of use. For this reason, the very choice of instrument suggests to viewers whether it will be, for example, a love scene (violin) or a victory parade (trumpet). Ludwig Göransson makes excellent use of this potential in the film *Oppenheimer* – violin leads the soundtrack and, thanks to the various ways of using the bow, takes on both a lyrical and an unsettling tone.

SOUND STORYTELLING

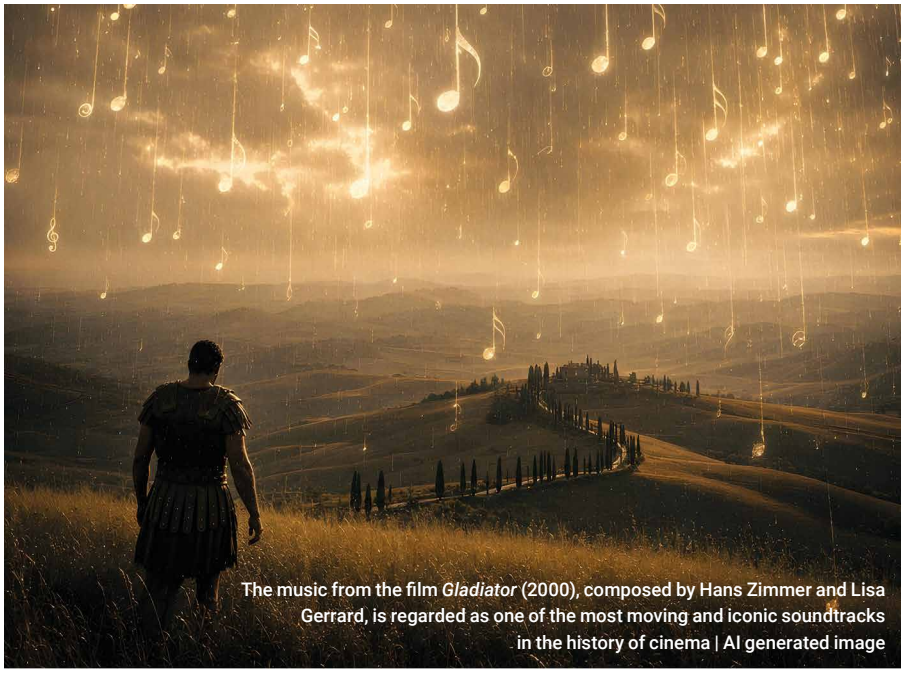
Well-chosen music lends a film greater depth, while its sound narrative complements the existing screenplay. Changes in musical motifs, as well as the number and manner of instrument use, successfully signal the successive stages of the story: a single note may, for example, be assigned to just one character, while an orchestra indicates a gathering of many characters on screen. This allows us to analyse successive scenes in terms of both the narrative and changes in the music. In the aforementioned *Oppenheimer*, when the protagonist decides to become involved in the development of the atomic bomb, we hear a piano melody, which is associated with the character of his wife. Although she does not appear in that scene, the music suggests that she will bear the greatest consequences of her husband's choice (loneliness, the hardships of parenthood).

'The heroine's sad reality becomes clear, even though there is no explicit justification for it in what we see on screen. It is a narrative that emerges through sound: many storylines that we would describe in successive book chapters can, in a film, be conveyed solely through well-composed music', explains the researcher.

STRATEGIES OF MASTERS

Prof. Mika emphasises that the work of a composer who creates film music in a thoughtful manner is based on three pillars: the history of music (the development of musical styles and instruments across the ages, melodies and timbres characteristic of various classical compositions), its connections with culture (the presence and significance of sounds in different cultures) and knowledge of films (the use of specific types of sounds in cinema). This type of attentiveness and musical and narrative sensibility characterise two masters of film music: John Williams and Hans Zimmer. It is worth noting the differences in the composers' working methods: Williams draws on his knowledge of classical music, which enables him to assign distinctive leitmotifs to individual characters and worlds. As a result, not only is each character uniquely described through sound, but the relationships between them are also reflected in the music we hear. Hans Zimmer, on the other hand, links many scenes with a single, evolving theme, weaving various scenes into a coherent and expanding soundscape. To achieve the desired effect, the composer uses electronic music as well as instruments specific to particular cultures, which he plays in a traditional manner or by giving them new sounds.

His body of work is full of surprises and unexpected sounds that swiftly become part of the cultural canon; a case in point is his score for *The Lion King* and the sonic portrait of Africa it created, which has stayed with us ever since. This phenomenon demonstrates how skilfully Zimmer uses his compositional craft and range of instruments to build emotions and a world that extends far beyond the confines of the screen', concludes the researcher.



The music from the film *Gladiator* (2000), composed by Hans Zimmer and Lisa Gerrard, is regarded as one of the most moving and iconic soundtracks in the history of cinema | AI generated image