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**Unheard Possibilities: Reappraising Classical Film  
Music Scoring and Analysis**

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## Foreword

Frank Mehring

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# Foreword

Frank Mehring

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- 1 This special edition takes its origin from a 2014 conference in which SERCIA (Société pour l'Enseignement et la Recherche du Cinéma Anglophone) brought to the forefront a specific dimension of the film-going experience often neglected or underdeveloped in film studies and analyses: the sonic dimension. Under the title "Music and Movies: National and Transnational Perspectives" the three-day conference was co-hosted by the Department of American Studies at Radboud University in Nijmegen. The city of Nijmegen is not only the oldest town in the Netherlands but film experts and buffs also recognize a number of iconic historical locations from Richard Attenborough's epic war film *A Bridge Too Far* (1977) – a fitting reference since Nijmegen celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allied liberation at the time of our conference.
- 2 The initial impetus for the conference organizers Frank Mehring and Melvyn Stokes, then President of SERCIA, was the conviction that the global appeal of films in the digital age is most often driven by impressive visuals. However, we do not simply *watch* a film. The motion picture experience is to a large degree shaped by its sonic architecture, including music and sound effects. The film soundtrack represents a paradigmatic medium to reveal how films are able to cross national, cultural, and ethnic boundaries. Musicians, composers and sound designers function as influential cultural mediators who play a key role in shaping regional, subnational and national identities. Thus, the conference theme "Movies and Music" raised broader issues in transnational film studies. Despite the centrality of our theme to film, media, and entertainment culture, the influences of music, sound effects, and language on the visual dimension often remain on the fringes of academic investigations. Indeed, we do not yet have an established analytical language in order to understand the complex interplay of hearing and seeing a film.
- 3 Our conference in Nijmegen brought together 57 international scholars from diverse disciplines offering a discursive platform for the collaboration between film studies, cultural studies, American studies, musicology, ethnomusicology, performance culture, sound design, and media studies. In no less than 18 workshops, we set out to decode the nexus between movies and music from historical, theoretical, and analytical

perspectives. Our keynote speakers Caryl Flinn (University of Michigan in Ann Arbor) and Kathryn Kalinak (Rhode Island College) offered cutting-edge perspectives on Broadway and Hollywood Musicals, and on Dimitri Tiomkin's musical approach to scoring the "West." Given the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the conference site in the Netherlands, a musical concert about "The Soundtrack of Liberation 1944-45" with solo singers, choir, and pianist Jens Barneck provided a performative frame to the theme of "Music and Movies".

- 4 I would like to express my deep appreciation for the SERCIA conference co-organizers, participants and particularly Céline Murillo and David Roche who took on the challenge of creating this remarkable issue on "Unheard Possibilities: Reappraising Classical Film Music Scoring and Analysis." With this volume, the editors and contributors have spearheaded a call for renewed scholarly attention on film music and for further research on the media symbiosis of music and movies.

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