One would be hard-pressed to name two film composers more prominent than Erich Wolfgang Korngold and John Williams. Korngold, as many film music histories have told us, was an Austrian opera composer who fled Vienna after the Nazis came to power, arriving in Hollywood in 1938. Alongside composers like Max Steiner, he established the leitmotivic, late-Romantic score as the dominant scoring paradigm of the Classical Hollywood era. Korngold’s chosen idiom swiftly faced competition from jazz and popular music, and, in the mid-1970s, John Williams would be credited with reviving something like it in his film scores for Jaws (1975) and the original Star Wars trilogy (1977, 1980, 1983). And yet, despite the importance of Korngold and Williams in the history of film music and the frequency with which their scores are cited and analyzed, thorough historical-contextual research, and, in the case of Williams, compilations of primary sources and biographical information have been comparatively scant. The publication of two recent books, Korngold and His World (2019), edited by Daniel Goldmark and Kevin C. Karnes, and Emilio Audissino’s John Williams’s Film Music: Jaws, Star Wars, Raiders of the Lost Ark, and the Return of the Classical Hollywood Music Style (2014), have rectified these omissions, launching an exciting new phase for both Korngold and Williams scholarship, in particular, while also raising broader musicological questions.

Goldmark and Karnes’s volume, an entry in Princeton University Press’s Bard Music Festival series, is an invaluable reappraisal of Korngold’s career combined with a collection of crucial primary sources. In contrast to scholarship on Williams, biographies of Korngold abound. There are also ample analyses of...
Korgold's work, including the composer's operas—especially *Die tote Stadt* (1920)—and discussions of his well-known scores for the trio of swashbucklers starring Errol Flynn: *Captain Blood* (1935), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), and *The Sea Hawk* (1940). Additionally, Bryan Gilliam and Richard Taruskin have examined Korgold's transition from opera to film, Michael Haas has discussed the hardships he and his music faced under the Third Reich, and Ben Winters has written extensively about Korgold's film and art music.

What *Korgold and His World* adds to this literature is, first, its collection of primary sources, some of which have been translated into English for the first time and others drawn from sources that are difficult to locate; and, second, a contextualization of his work within current lines of inquiry within the humanities. Readers invested in Jewish studies, migration studies, disability studies, and sound studies will find this volume especially engaging, and, given that the authors are primarily musicologists, many of whom focus on German-speaking composers, this collection opens the door for future publications situating Korgold within other fields, such as film studies and American studies.

*Korgold and His World* is divided into a section of essays and a section of documents. The essay section proceeds in roughly chronological order, beginning with David Brodbeck's examination of how Julius Korgold's career as a music critic affected the reception of his child prodigy son's early pieces. Julius Korgold was eager to shield Erich from any fallout that his sour relationships with certain prominent Viennese critics and musicians might provoke and from allegations that Erich owed his success to nepotism. Korgold's works were already attracting reviews laced with anti-Semitism, the impact of which several other authors explore. Charles Youmans's contribution pushes back against a historical narrative that sees Korgold's opera *Der Wunder der Heliane* (1927) as an old-fashioned foil to Ernst Krenek's overly modernist *Jonny spielt auf* (1927), arguing that critics interpreted both works as modernist attempts to find a future for the genre. Sherry Lee and Sadie Menicanin's essay ("Acoustic Space, Modern Interiority, and Korgold's Cities") examines the soundscape of Bruges as Korgold depicted it in *Die tote Stadt*. The authors push back against portrayals of Korgold as a stale Romantic, presenting his "nostalgic turn to acoustic spaces of interiority and pastness" as "a response to modernism no less than modern in itself" (page 84). Lily E. Hirsch's work sensitively explores the significance and relevance of Korgold's Jewish identity.

The next two essays, which explore Korgold's film score output, may be of the most interest to musicologists focusing on film music. Ben Winters, as he has in previous publications, brushes away some of the myths that have cropped up around Korgold's film music. In "New Opportunities in Film: Korgold and Warner Bros.," Winters notes that, although the "melodiousness and brassy exuberance" of scores like *Captain Blood* have come to define the Korgoldian sound in musicological discourse, this is but one aspect of the composer's range, which encompassed an eclectic variety of ensemble types, harmonic idioms, moods, and timbres tailored to serve each film's narrative (page 116). Neil Lerner, in "The Caverns of the Human Mind Are Full of Strange Shadows: Disability Representation, Henry Bellamann, and Korgold's Musical Subtexts in the Score for *Kings Row,*" uses archival materials to reconstruct the 1942 film's production process and to analyze the score's representation of disability. Although the score is most famous for its theme to John Williams's main theme for *Star Wars,*

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Lerner draws more attention to the modernist music Korngold composed to depict the “film’s preoccupations with disability, with minds and bodies defined as abnormal and in need of either cure or erasure” (page 148).

Amy Lynn Wlodarski’s essay “American and Austrian Ruins in Korngold’s Symphony in F-sharp” advances the timeline to Korngold’s poorly received double return to the world of concert music and to his home city of Vienna after World War II, centering on his Symphony in F-sharp (1947–52).7 The symphony’s supposedly outmoded musical language has taken the blame for its negative reception, but Wlodarski offers a different explanation, analyzing it as a representation of “a particularly traumatic mode of modernism—the ruin” (page 169). Ghostly and disturbing remnants of the musical past recur throughout the work, including references to Korngold’s film scores—some heavily influenced by Wagner—to fellow Viennese composer Arnold Schoenberg’s Verklärte Nacht (1899), to George M. Cohan’s “Over There” (1917), and to Aaron Copland’s Appalachian Spring (1944). This blend of Germanic and U.S.-American styles carried with them painful memories of Nazi Germany, the Holocaust, and the Allied occupation of Austria, a combination that proved unpalatable for Viennese audiences.

The second section is a collection of important primary sources, each of which is prefaced with useful contextualizing remarks by Brodbeck, Bryan Gilliam, Goldmark, and Karnes. These fascinating documents include Korngold’s fond memories of his teacher, Alexander von Zemlinksy, his thoughts on musical modernism, two documents relating to his views on film music in 1937 and 1940, and his final 1955 public statement on musical matters. Most striking to this reader were Luzi Korngold’s account of her family’s flight from the Nazis and a series of letters from Julius Korngold, both of which capture the Korngolds’ dawning recognition that they needed to leave Vienna as well as the warmth of their interpersonal relationships.

In his concluding essay, Leon Botstein surveys Korngold’s reception history, warning that the effort to rehabilitate the composer’s reputation has led to an unwillingness to entertain some critiques of the composer’s politics. Korngold’s enduring devotion to Wagnerian Romanticism seemed tasteless in the postwar era, where such aesthetic leanings could no longer retain any sense of political neutrality. Botstein posits that Korngold “may never have actually grown up,” that “his distorted childhood and failure to break free from his father or a sentimental image of Vienna may have limited his sense of the human condition” (page 307). It may be a surprising coda to a collection that otherwise offers a more sympathetic view of Korngold and aligns him with modernism, but Botstein’s warning is a productive addition, in part because his point applies beyond Korngold. Film music studies, perhaps out of an awareness of its own relative newness and the previously low stature of its object of study, has arguably focused more on examining the achievements of film composers than on exploring their perceived shortcomings, whether personal, political, or aesthetic.

The case of Williams, however, represents an intriguing exception. Although, like Korngold’s, many of Williams’s scores have reached quasi-canonical status within film music studies, music scholars have historically expressed more skepticism and even hostility toward his work, sometimes tacitly by excluding his scores or downplaying their importance. It may be that this difference in their reception stems from the disparity between Korngold’s and Williams’s respective levels of institutional support at the time musicologists began turning to film music in significant numbers in the late 1980s. Musicological interest in film, of course, precedes this point by several decades, as does the extensive primary source literature on technical aspects of composing for film, but the publication of several significant books starting in the late 1980s arguably set the tone for film music studies in its current form.8 Film music studies, then, developed into a specific field of interest not long after Charles Gerhardt’s 1970s recordings rekindled interest in Korngold’s film scores.9 The type of advocacy to which Botstein refers was arguably necessary to undo the damage Korngold’s reputation suffered due to anti-Semitic attacks during his time and musicology’s once-pervasive bias against film music.

Williams, in contrast, was already a famous and successful film composer by the time film music studies solidified, and therefore the power dynamics involved in criticizing him were different. In one

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7 For more on Korngold’s attempted returns, see Haas, Forbidden Music, 294–304.


9 The first of these is The Sea Hawk: The Classic Films of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, with the National Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Charles Gerhardt, RCA Red Seal LSC 3330, 1972, 33⅓ rpm.

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Music thus serves several functions for the audience member: it creates a cohesive emotional experience (macro-emotive function), it inspires more granular emotional responses within individual scenes (micro-emotive function), it trains the viewer’s gaze on certain aspects of the scene (perceptive function), and it conveys important information about, for example, the setting and characters’ emotions (cognitive function). At first blush, launching a book about Williams’s career with a methodology chapter might seem strange, but given that this framework returns throughout the study, elucidating it right at the start makes for efficient reading.

In the introduction, Williams comes back into focus, and Audissino unveils his thesis: “Williams revived some then disused features of the classical [Hollywood] style and consequently launched a neoclassical film music trend” (page 5). Audissino expresses a desire to rescue Williams from scholarly neglect, a neglect which he suggests might stem from “suspicion about the composer’s enormous success and from some ideological prejudices” (page 4). Indeed, at the time of writing, analyses of his scores were surprisingly thin on the ground, and those that existed mostly focused on his leitmotivic, late-Romantic scores for franchises like Star Wars, Superman, Indiana Jones, and Harry Potter.13 By “ideological prejudices,” Audissino refers to a prominent theme within the discourse: several scholars had explored the composer’s constructions of gender and race, identifying politically reactionary elements within his leitmotivic scores, an issue to which he returns in Chapter 8.14


14 Examples of this critique include Anahid Kassabian, Hearing Film: Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music (New York: Routledge, 2001), 91-116; Lerner, “Nostalgia, Masculinist Discourse, and Authoritarianism”; and Halfyard and Hancock, “Scoring Fantasy Girls.”
Following the introduction, the book falls into two parts. The first short section contextualizes Williams’s neoclassicism by sketching a history of film music (Chapter 1) and pinpointing the key features of the Classical Hollywood sound (Chapter 2). These qualities, which Williams would go on to restore, include musical language (late-Romantic), techniques (leitmotifs and Mickey-Mousing), musical means (the sound of the symphony orchestra), and, in a return to the methodology introduced in his preface, function (in particular, the spatial perceptive function).

The second section focuses on Williams’s contributions. In Chapter 3, Audissino establishes the more immediate context for Williams’s revival by discussing the popular-music-influenced work of composers like Ennio Morricone, John Barry, and Henry Mancini in the 1960s, whose scores mostly abandoned the spatial perceptive function. The stage thus set, Chapter 4 explores Williams’s score for Star Wars, which breathed new life into the classical model. Film music specialists will likely be familiar with much of this history, but Audissino’s careful weaving in of primary sources and his discussion of the largely ignored scores for the prequel trilogy make for an engaging and informative read. Chapter 5 turns back the clock to the beginning of Williams’s career, and Audissino identifies an emerging neoclassical style in the composer’s earlier work while also emphasizing his eclecticism, a much-neglected trait of Williams’s scores. Given that Williams’s pre-Jaws scores have yet to attract substantial musicological attention, this chapter is a particularly invaluable contribution.15 Audissino devotes the next chapter to Williams’s Jaws score, which he identifies as the composer’s first fully neoclassical work. In Chapter 7, Audissino pauses the historical narrative to describe the ways in which Williams’s neoclassical style draws on the four elements of the Classical Hollywood sound he outlined in Chapter 2. He suggests that Williams’s idiom, in contrast to the older style, references stylistic features from the twentieth century, including jazz, atonality, pandiatonicism, and influences from film composers like Bernard Herrmann and Aaron Copland.16

In Chapter 8, Audissino mounts an energetic defense of Williams against the allegations of critics and musicologists. Audissino deftly parries the tired denigrations of film music and lingering accusations that Williams borrows too heavily from preexisting art and film music.17 How one views the “ideological prejudice” that he first describes in the introduction, however, will likely depend on one’s scholarly investments. Audissino responds specifically to Neil Lerner’s reading of Star Wars and Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), a reading that argues Williams’s scores reinforce, respectively, the masculinist and authoritarian elements of the films.18 As a neoformalist, Audissino is understandably more invested in studying how Williams’s scores function within the narrative than he is in a project like Lerner’s, and what we might call paranoid readings of Williams’s scores are indeed perhaps overly represented within the discourse. But, at the same time, Williams’s revitalization of the late-Romantic, leitmotivic score has, at times, reanimated certain stereotyped characterizations of women and people of color, and such representations do warrant further attention.

Chapters 9 and 10 present an extended case study of Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981). In the final chapter, Audissino makes another significant contribution to Williams studies by exploring the composer’s tenure as the conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra from 1980 until 1993. Audissino credits Williams (as conductor) with popularizing and legitimizing the performance of film music in the concert hall, something that has since blossomed into the popular practice of performing scores live to film. Audissino concludes by connecting the recent dominance of sound effects to the rise of the compositional style of Hans Zimmer and his followers. Audissino includes two appendices, one on Williams’s partnership with Steven Spielberg, a relationship which, as he points out, is sometimes downplayed in film music studies, and a catalog of his works.

The luxury of reviewing a book a few years after the publication date is that the impact Audissino’s work has had on the field is readily discernible. Williams scholarship has proliferated in the years since John Williams’s Film Music was published in 2014, and, within this growing literature, citations of Audissino’s groundbreaking work abound. To name a few exceptions, see Paula Musegades, “John Williams: Television Composer,” in John Williams: Music for Films, Television and the Concert Stage, ed. Emilio Audissino, Contemporary Composers (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 27-40. 15 For one recent exception, see Jeremy Orosz, “John Williams: Paraphraser or Plagiarist?” Journal of Musicological Research 34, no. 4 (2015): 299-319. 17 For more on the latter issue, see Lerner, “Nostalgia, Masculinist Discourse and Authoritarianism,” 97.
but a few notable examples, the robust analytical literature—already recognizable before 2014—has expanded profoundly with the work of theorists like Frank Lehman and Tom Schneller, and our understanding of the relationship between Williams’s music and sound effects has benefited from the sustained attention of Chloé Huvet. Williams also features prominently in two important book-length studies concentrating on film music written by Matthew Bribitzer-Stull and Lehman. Audissino himself has continued to publish on Williams’s music, most notably by editing the excellent collection *John Williams: Music for Films, Television and the Concert Stage*, which features many of the authors cited above.

In other words, *John Williams’s Film Music* marked an arrival point for scholarship on Williams, and it seems likely that *Korngold and His World* will play a similar role for Korngold studies. Yet, at the same time, both works also open fresh avenues of research for both composers, and they also raise larger intriguing questions for the broader field of film music studies. What are the political implications, for example, of a film composer’s investment in late-Romanticism, and how should musicologists address them in their analyses? In the wake of film music studies’ solidification, how should we approach analyzing the nascent film score canon and situating the film composer within their historical context? What are the ethics involved in writing about composers situated so near to our historical moment? These larger concerns make both books essential reading for musicologists specializing in film, American studies, and twentieth- and twenty-first-century repertoires.

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