



# The Encyclopedia of Film Composers

By Thomas S. Hischak



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For more than a century, original music has been composed for the cinema. From the early days when live music accompanied silent films to the present in which a composer can draw upon a full orchestra or a lone synthesizer to embody a composition, music has been an integral element of most films. By the late 1930s, movie studios had established music departments, and some of the greatest names in film music emerged during Hollywood's Golden Age, including Alfred Newman, Max Steiner, Dimitri Tiomkin, and Bernard Herrmann. Over the decades, other creators of screen music offered additional memorable scores, and some composers—such as Henry Mancini, Randy Newman, and John Williams—have become household names.

*The Encyclopedia of Film Composers* features entries on more than 250 movie composers from around the world. It not only provides facts about these artists but also explains what makes each composer notable and discusses his or her music in detail. Each entry includes

- Biographical material
- Important dates
- Career highlights
- Analysis of the composer's musical style
- Complete list of movie credits

This book brings recognition to the many men and women who have written music for movies over the past one hundred years. In addition to composers from the United States and Great Britain, artists from dozens of other countries are also represented. A rich resource of movie music history, *The Encyclopedia of Film Composers* will be of interest to fans of cinema in general as well as those who want to learn more about the many talented individuals who have created memorable scores.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Hischak offers a unique combination of opinion and painstaking research. The author asserts that film composers deserve further recognition for their influence and contributions. His objective is to fill a gap, covering hundreds of lesser-known composers. Included are 252 individuals who either created a significant number of film scores or who mainly composed in other genres but also had notable film score success. Each entry includes a biography; a discussion of the subject's work that includes Hischak's perspective on, for example, which piece was most memorable; feature film credits, including Academy Award, British Academy of Film and Television Arts, and the Golden Globe Award nominations and wins; the director; and country where the movie was produced. It's critical to read the book's introduction to understand that if an artist created the score with three or more composers, for example, it was not included on the list. Closing the volume are comprehensive name and title indexes, necessary for a book with so much detail. Verdict: Hischak's offering presents a wide scope of composers, and anyone who loves film and has previous knowledge of music and/or film will be delighted by its content. (*Library Journal*)

This hefty volume focuses solely on the creators of movie music. From the early silent films to today's blockbusters, accompanying music often draws as much attention as the films themselves and sometimes outlives the pictures in both popular culture and film history. Herein are more than 250 alphabetically arranged entries on composers from all over the world, covering the entire spectrum of cinema history. Entries are generally a few pages in length and contain biographical information, chronological career highlights, and an analysis of the musical style of the composer, and they end with a comprehensive list of film scores. This list is also valuable for indicating the director(s) and country of production for each film as well as any awards won by the composer or nominations for awards. Alternative or English titles are given for foreign films, if any. Although a smattering of composers here will be recognizable to the general user - Henry Mancini, Marvin Hamlisch, and Randy Newman, perhaps - most will likely be unknown. For example, who was responsible for the memorable music in *The Wizard of Oz*, *Psycho*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *Lawrence of Arabia*? This tome provides the detailed answers: Herbert Stohart, Bernard Herrmann, Max Steiner, and Maurice Jarre, respectively. A user can quickly see what other film scores these composers are responsible for and examine the arc of their careers. Other features include some black-and-white pictures and both a name and title index for quickly locating a particular film or person. . . .*The Encyclopedia of Film Composers* is recommended as an interesting addition to the reference collection of academic and public libraries and anywhere film is being studied. (*Booklist*)

This sizeable volume is another well-executed encyclopedia compiled by Hischak, author of many notable works, such as *American Literature on Stage and Screen* and *Broadway Plays and Musicals*. Often overlooked, film composers are a crucial part of cinema even during the era of silent films. Only a handful are well known, however, with name recognition usually occurring only when a film produces a hit song (as with *Goldfinger* or *Born Free*). Hischak pays both the famous and little-known homage by including over 250 composers from the US and abroad. Entries provide poignant bibliographical details and point out important chronological and contextual information along with musical influences. An added bonus is an analysis of each composer's musical style and work outside film. Each listing focuses on an individual who is the sole composer (or one of a pair) of a film score. The author highlights strong associations between major film directors and composers, including only full-length films or documentaries released in major theaters. A complete list of a composer's film credits follows each entry, and a title-name index and bibliography complete the volume. Hischak has produced a fine reference work for all interested in film composers and their music. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Undergraduates and above; general readers;

professionals/practitioners. (*CHOICE*)

Paying homage to those often-forgotten composers whose music serves as the backdrop of film, this encyclopedia focuses on 252 composers who have contributed significantly to movie music. Some entries feature artists who composed songs, but this is predominantly a collection of composers of film scores. Major film composers are covered, but this work attempts to give attention to Hollywood and foreign film composers often left out of other treatments on the subject. Entries provide biographical information, descriptions of the composer's career and musical style, and a complete list of film score credits. Only films in which the individual is listed as the primary composer or one of two composers are listed. For the common reader, the encyclopedia provides a few surprises such as an entry on Charlie Chaplin, who scored some of his own films decades after their release. Familiar names in jazz appear as entries as well. Featured in this work is more than a century of composers who have provided original music for silent films to contemporary movies. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

Having seen many of the encyclopedias and dictionaries of film music and their composers over the past several years, I must say that this stands out for its volume and detail. The film title and name indices themselves are priceless; I highly recommend this tome as an essential addition to any music and movie print reference collection. (*Reference Reviews*)

*The Encyclopedia of Film Composers* remains a success for both its author and its readers. Hischak succeeds in his stated purpose of drawing much needed attention to the work of film composers, and the reader is left with a highly readable reference text, teeming with insight into the composition of many major and minor film scores. (*Film Matters*)

About the Author

**Thomas S. Hischak** is an internationally recognized author and teacher in the performing arts and one of the foremost authorities on American musical theatre. He is the author of more than twenty books about theatre, film, and popular music, including *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical*, *The Rodgers and Hammerstein Encyclopedia*, and several books for Scarecrow Press, including *Theatre as Human Action* (2006), *Off-Broadway Musicals since 1919* (2011), and *The Disney Song Encyclopedia* (2009). Hischak is professor of theatre at the State University of New York College at Cortland.

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