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David Cooper. *Bernard Herrmann's* Vertigo*: A Film Score Handbook*

Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. [xviii, 157 p. ISBN: 031331490X. $66.95]
Music examples, illustrations, index.

David Cooper. *Bernard Herrmann's* The Ghost and Mrs. Muir: *A Film Score Guide*

Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005. [xix, 165 p. ISBN: 0810856794. $24.95]
Music examples, illustrations, index.

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Speaking at Eastman College in 1973, Bernard Herrmann described film music as "a completely unstudied territory, and that in the old days there used to be atlases of the world with unexplored regions marked in white and labeled 'unknown.' Well, that's still what cinema music is like."[1] Herrmann might have been surprised that three decades later, this terra incognita has become the subject of a scholarly gold rush, as manifested in the proliferation of books, articles, and dissertations on film music. Prominent among recent contributions to the field are studies of two seminal Herrmann scores by David Cooper, Professor of Music and Technology at the University of Leeds (UK). Both volumes are part of a series of film score guides edited by Kate Daubney and published by Greenwood and Scarecrow Presses. Each guide is dedicated to the detailed analysis of an individual film score. The first two books in the series, Daubney's study of *Now Voyager*[2] by Max Steiner and Cooper's study of *Vertigo*, were published by Greenwood Press; the other five volumes, which cover scores by Louis and Bebe Barron, Ennio Morricone, Gabriel Yared, Danny Elfman, and Herrmann, are available from Scarecrow Press.

In her foreword to Cooper's newest addition to the series, *Bernard Herrmann's* The Ghost and Mrs. Muir: *A Film Score Guide*, Daubney remarks that one of the aims of the Film Score Guides is to scrutinize scores that "represent a significant stage in the compositional development of an individual film composer." Joseph Mankiewicz's spectral romance *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947) marked the end of Herrmann's early period in Hollywood, which had begun auspiciously with *Citizen Kane* in 1941. In the intervening six years, Herrmann had scored a handful of films, won his only Oscar (for *All that Money Can Buy*) and, as Cooper points out, "asserted himself as a maverick in the system – a composer who managed to maintain at the least the illusion of a remarkable degree of autonomy." It was the last score Herrmann completed before his nervous breakdown in 1948; he would not compose for film again until Nicholas Ray's *On Dangerous Ground* in 1950.

Until Cooper's study, the score for *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* had languished in relative obscurity. In contrast, Cooper's previous book, *Bernard Herrmann's* Vertigo: *A Film Score Handbook*, focuses on a celebrated score of Herrmann's middle period. *Vertigo* was written in 1958 when Herrmann was in the prime of his career, and it marked the composer's fourth collaboration with Alfred Hitchcock. The *Vertigo* score has been the subject of analyses by Graham Bruce and Royal Brown, among others. The scope and depth of Cooper's book

1 Herrmann quoted in Steven Smith, *A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 358.

2 Kate Daubney, *Max Steiner's* Now Voyager: *A Film Score Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000). For a review in these pages, see Charles Leinberger, "Kate Daubney, Max Steiner's *Now Voyager*: A Film Score Guide." *The Journal of Film Music*, 1, no. 1 (Summer 2002), 113-15.

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goes well beyond any previous discussions of this score, however, and makes it the definitive study to date of one of Herrmann's most important works.

In keeping with the basic format of the Film Score Guides, both books are divided into two main parts. The first part, which comprises three chapters, covers Herrmann's biography and major works up to the film in question, general characteristics of his music, and the literary sources and production history of each film. The second part of each book consists of an overview of the score followed by a detailed cue-by-cue analysis, complete with music examples and reproductions of pages from the holograph score.[3]

While the initial chapter of *Bernard Herrmann's* Vertigo presents a concise survey of Herrmann's career up to 1958, Cooper takes time in its sequel to examine the concert works of the 1930s in some detail and to trace the influence of Herrmann's CBS radio scores on his film scoring technique (in particular, the use of very short musical transitions between scenes).

In the second chapter of the *Vertigo* study, Cooper cites specific examples from the score to illustrate characteristic features of Herrmann's melodic writing, harmony, orchestration, and rhythm. His analysis of the "dissonance" between the metrical and hypermetrical structure of the opening of the "Prelude" is particularly striking, and illustrates the subtle complexities that lurk beneath the apparently simple and regular surface of Herrmann's music.

In the corresponding chapter in *Bernard Herrmann's* The Ghost and Mrs. Muir, Cooper shifts his focus to Herrmann's film scoring technique and presents a theoretical framework for analysis that classifies some of the ways in which music can become invested with referential meaning.[4] Among the categories outlined are "cultural referents" (such as ethnic instruments or national anthems), intertextuality, and several types of "isomorphisms" (in which structural correspondences exist between music and visual images, natural sounds, physical gestures, etc.). Cooper illustrates this set of critical and analytical categories with specific examples from the film. This chapter is a model of concise theoretical writing that nicely complements the discussion of Herrmann's style in *Vertigo*.

In neither book does Cooper elaborate on the striking difference in musical syntax between Herrmann's early and later work, beginning in 1950 with *On Dangerous Ground*. He does briefly allude to this contrast when he writes: "I note in my study of *Vertigo* that 'the rhythmic profile of Herrmann's music tends to be clean cut, sharp edged and relatively inflexible – that is, he prefers to use simple repeating units that are, in general, regular rather than irregular to support the underlying melodic characteristics.' This is certainly less so in his score to *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, where rhythmic flexibility is maintained throughout." But this rhythmic flexibility, which in *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* goes hand in hand with a more traditional brand of melodious lyricism, is a general characteristic of Herrmann's film scores of the 1940s (as is evident in *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Jane Eyre*), while the consistent use of "simple repeating units" as displayed in Vertigo is one of the most salient features of the mature Herrmann style. As William H. Rosar has indicated, the use of a structural formula based on repeating two-bar units emerged in the 1950s, marking a decisive shift in Herrmann's compositional development.[5] Instead of situating each score in the larger context of Herrmann's stylistic evolution, Cooper treats their specific musical characteristics in isolation, thereby missing an opportunity to shed light on the development of one of the most distinctive compositional voices to emerge from Hollywood.

Comprehensive tables in the fourth chapter of each book summarize several basic features: cue (with reel numbers), title, motifs (identified by labels such as "Carlotta"), duration, metre, tempo, tonality (where appropriate), and orchestration. These tables lay out the motivic distribution and demonstrate Herrmann's judicious use of orchestration (both scores exploit a kaleidoscopic array of chamber formations within the orchestra and reserve tuttis for the main narrative junctures). They also make clear that each score is anchored in definite key centers. Drawing on Ernö Lendvai's concept of a "tonic axis" in the music of Bartók, Cooper defines the tonality of *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* in terms of a "double-tonic complex:" the consistently linked keys of Eb minor and F# major. In *Vertigo*, the most prominent key centers are D and C, with strong cadential resolutions to C major marking the conclusion of main junctures of the

3 In most of the examples, Cooper chooses to reproduce only the melodic line rather than provide a complete reduction of the excerpt, which is disappointing considering that Herrmann's transparent textures lend themselves readily to two-stave reductions.

4 This section of the book expands on concepts presented on p. 59-66 of the *Vertigo* study.

5 For a discussion of Herrmann's "microvariation" technique, see William H. Rosar, "Bernard Herrmann: The Beethoven of Film Music?," *The Journal of Film Music*, 1, no. 2/3 (Fall/Winter 2003), 136-40.

narrative (the first kiss, the "Scène d'amour," and the "Finale").

There are a few puzzling slips in the analysis of *Vertigo*. Cooper presents two contradictory interpretations of the phrase structure of "Madeline:" on p. 19, he divides the cue into four-bar phrases, while on p. 88, he implies a two-bar phrase structure for the opening of the cue. Aside from this discrepancy, the harmonic analysis on p. 88 is wrong: the Eb in the third full bar is harmonized by an F7 chord, not F#6 (there is no F# chord anywhere in the cue). Also, "The Necklace" concludes on a half-diminished seventh chord on E, not D (p. 143).

Aside from such minor mistakes, which are exceptions, the cue-by-cue analysis in the final section of each book is consistently illuminating. Especially perceptive is Cooper's tracing of subtle motivic relationships. For example, he points out the link between the first three notes of the motifs associated with Captain Gregg and Lucy in *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, a correspondence he intriguingly interprets as "a musical intimation that Gregg is in fact an aspect of Lucy's psyche." Another motivic connection rife with psychological significance is established between the flute line of "Carlotta's Portrait" and the opening of "Madeline." Cooper's analysis encompasses stylistic references in Herrmann's music, to Wagner in *Vertigo* (in particular, the pointed use of the Tristan chord) and to Debussy and Britten in *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. For *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, exact timings are provided for the position of each cue within the film – a helpful aid for following the analysis with a DVD, and one that should be included in the next edition of the *Vertigo* study.

Books devoted to a detailed account of the production history, critical reception, and analysis of a single film have long been a feature of film studies and have provided windows into the work of particular filmmakers.[6] The adoption of a similar format by the Film Score Guides provides a welcome complement to the broad historical and theoretical surveys that have predominated in writing on film music. These concise but substantial books supply an invaluable compendium of facts and analytical insight. Thanks to the work of scholars like David Cooper, the "white patches" on Herrmann's atlas of film music continue to dwindle steadily.

6 See for example Dan Auiler, Vertigo: *The Making of a Hitchcock Classic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), Stephen Rebello, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of Psycho* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) or Tony Lee Moral, *Hitchcock and the Making of* Marnie (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005).

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