

Eisler's Notes on Hollywood and the Film Music Project, 1935–42

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In 1947, Hanns Eisler in collaboration with Theodor Adorno published a small but important book entitled *Composing for the Films*. The book represents a significant contribution to film studies, cultural criticism, and the discipline of twentieth-century musical practice. It also provides one of the few extended historical texts from the 1940s that deconstructs Hollywood musical practice while probing the wider theoretical implications of motion picture music. The gestation of *Composing for the Films*, however, remains controversial.¹ Although I shall treat this and the book's politically tangled publication history elsewhere, this article seeks to address one aspect of the book's intellectual foundation—that is, Eisler's theoretical and aesthetic notions about film music in relation to Hollywood's film industry. Eisler's direct exposure and reaction to Hollywood musical practices began in 1935 during his first trip to the United States, and continued in 1938 when he returned as an émigré and embarked on the Film Music Project (1940–42, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation).

Since 1927, Eisler had been deeply interested in film music. As a committed Marxist, he saw film as a powerful political device to educate the proletariat and serve the revolutionary cause. In contrast to the modernist bourgeois ideals of his teacher Arnold Schoenberg, Eisler believed that music should be democratized and provide social meaning to a mass public.² Film music offered an outlet for the practical realization of these ideals, and Eisler quickly established himself as a critic and composer in the field from the earliest development of sound film onward, and brought a specialized knowledge and commitment to its practice. He involved himself intensively as a film composer, exploiting a wide range of musical approaches and applying many of the theoretical and aesthetic concepts that he, as a politically motivated musician, cultivated within an array of genres from documentary to commercial productions. Consequently, by the time he arrived in the United States in 1938, he was already considered a European expert and had accumulated a great deal of experience as a critic on the subject.

"Hollywood Seen from the Left"

In May 1935, Eisler was invited by the English parliamentarian Lord Marley to present a series of lectures in the United States in support of the World

Committee for the Relief of the Victims of German Fascism.³ Organized in 1933 under the direction of Willi Münzenberg as a response to the burning of “objectionable” books in Germany and the suppression of intellectual activities by the Nazis, the Committee launched a propaganda campaign to appeal to a new constituency of socialist sympathizers worldwide. Münzenberg’s control over this organization derived from his position as head of the Soviet Union’s cultural propaganda apparatus abroad. His network of Communist Front organizations, including charities, publishing houses, newspapers, theaters, film studios, and cinema houses, attracted the participation of many illustrious intellectuals and artists like Eisler. For example, in 1934, Eisler and the playwright Bertolt Brecht published their *Lieder, Gedichte, Chöre* with Editions du Carrefour, which had been a subsidiary of the Münzenberg Press since 1933. Eisler also wrote the score for *Kuhle Wampe*, a production of Münzenberg’s Prometheus Films (McMeekin 2003:262–63; Betz 1982:121; Schoots 2000:79, 88). Münzenberg used popular media such as those described above to create bridges between the Soviet “proletarian” government and less doctrinaire Western socialists (McMeekin 2003:1). And by 1935, when the Soviet Union officially shifted its policy from a United to a more inclusive Popular Front agenda that would have wider appeal to socialist intellectuals and artists, anti-fascism became the common political concern, a shared rallying call.⁴ Consequently, the activities of the World Committee and in particular Eisler’s tour mustered international support for Communism by exposing the terrors of Fascism.

As Eisler crisscrossed the United States visiting over fifty cities, he lectured on the conditions of Germany under Fascism and spoke on “The Crisis in Culture,” a common concern among European scholars and intellectuals during the 1920s and 1930s.⁵ Musical performances of his *Kampflieder* often accompanied these talks, and helped to establish him within American art circles as an important political musician.⁶ During the tour, he met various American composers, some of whom would later help him once he immigrated to the United States.⁷ Most important, the trip included a visit to Los Angeles, where he mingled with colleagues associated with the film industry and had the opportunity to explore several film studios.

Even in 1935, Eisler had a great deal to say about Hollywood’s film enterprise, whether concerning the working conditions for composers, or the industry’s production values. He documented these impressions in two articles; “A Musical Journey through America” and “Hollywood Seen from the Left,” which show him to be a perceptive observer of the movie capital (1978f; 1978g).⁸ Eisler recounts his visit to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, one of the bigger Hollywood studios, which he presents as a humorous tale

marked by acerbic quips about how the industry functions. Eisler, impressed with the studio's technical mastery, remarks "we have nothing in Europe to compare." Nevertheless, he contends that Hollywood's musical standards are "abominably low." As a consequence, composers must confront a life of "hell" and the "prospect of becoming hopelessly dim-witted." These observations emerge from Eisler's lively description of the studio's highly rationalized, factory-like system of specialization. Studio music departments, he says, appoint various specialists (usually five or six composers) who must produce music within the narrow context of a single prescribed genre: one does "military music" (Eisler mockingly dubs this specialist a former German Army musician), another "Vienna waltzes and operetta music" (a composer from the old school), and another "preludes and the accompaniments" (a serious music composer), as well as one for jazz and dance, and yet another who produces only song lyrics.⁹

The work of the composers, whom Eisler sarcastically calls the "music office workers," is not only reduced to automated impersonal tasks that stultify the mind and any creative impulse, but the musical product, as an outgrowth of the system, becomes highly conventionalized through extreme specialization that in turn negatively affects musical function. Consequently, music becomes an appendage to the film itself rather than being integrated into the whole, with the result that studio composers have no idea about the contents of the complete motion picture and how their individual efforts contribute to the impact of the film. And though the musical standards created in this factory-like environment suffer, nevertheless, the industry is not "foolish," because it understands that such rationalization expedites the movie-making process with the potential of greater profits through reduced costs. Eisler concludes the argument by saying:

Although films could be an excellent means of entertainment and education in modern society, in the hands of private industry they are solely for profit and a means of lulling the masses. (Eisler 1978f:91)

It is no coincidence that Eisler follows the discussion of Hollywood with observations about his experiences in Detroit, the center of the world automobile industry. In a parallel tale, he describes the inhuman working conditions of the Ford factory workers, who at the end of the day "fall into an exhausted sleep" from the monotony imposed by assembly-line tasks (Eisler 1978f:92). By making these analogies and exploiting rhetoric like "music office workers," Eisler reduces the work of a composer to a dehumanizing experience that swallows white-collar workers just as the automotive industry devours those wearing blue collars, all victims of advanced capitalism.

In his second article, entitled "Hollywood Seen from the Left," Eisler revisits many of the same issues but this time directly invokes the analogy of the music specialist as "factory" worker who toils in an office and must punch in his hours. A so-called "studio manager" (Eisler's term for the head of the music department), who in the opinion of Eisler is "an absolutely unmusical man," makes all the final decisions and bases his assessment on the "hit" potential of a given work. Eisler's formula for a "hit" is explained this way: "musical numbers that you can sing before you have even heard them," an idea that his colleague Adorno would address subsequently in his now famous article "On Popular Music," and again they would revisit together in their collaborative book *Composing for the Films*.¹⁰ Eisler summarizes his initial impressions of the American film enterprise in this way: "The music department of a big Hollywood film company is a very peculiar place."¹¹

As one whose film expertise had primarily been connected to European socialist film productions, Eisler subscribed to a different set of aesthetic and practical values that corresponded with his Marxist principles. In his view, the idea that Hollywood produced entertainment for the sake of entertainment was a bourgeois notion that paralleled contemporary art music's equally bourgeois concern for art for art's sake, against which he had leveled similar criticisms (Eisler 1978g:46). Eisler disparages the lack of purpose and function exhibited in both types of music. According to him, the conventions of entertainment music, in particular, stifle one's intellect. Used as a pacifier or narcotic, it is designed to divert audiences from the crisis in society and occupies the non-productive activities of leisure. The score contributes significantly to Hollywood film as escapist entertainment. Eisler warns his listeners: film music should provide social commentary, not intoxicating effects that serve the interests of production and in turn form the "socio-economic basis for the peculiar form of musical practice in capitalism" (Eisler 1978b:39; also 1978i:116).

Eisler's conclusions provide some of the earliest and most astute criticisms of the industry, which had only a few years earlier recognized the potential of integrating non-diegetic music into films such as Max Steiner's score for *King Kong* (1933).¹² His view proved to be especially perceptive since many Hollywood composers would reach some of the same conclusions only a few years later (Levant 1940; Raksin 1989). These observations, made during his first visit to Hollywood in 1935, would once again come to the surface when he sought professional opportunities there as a film composer over the next decade. In 1938, as war was becoming imminent, Eisler returned to the United States, this time as an émigré exploring various avenues of musical employment. Film music and Hollywood would figure prominently in his plans.

The Genesis of the Film Music Project

Eisler's initial tour had left a formidable impression within American socialist artistic circles, and allowed Eisler to make contacts with Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell, and Mark Blitzstein, among others. In the fall of 1935, through the invitation of Charles Seeger, he returned to the United States again to teach for a short period at the New School for Social Research (October 1935–January 1936).¹³ As the momentum towards social democracy became a central political concern in the United States during the Depression, the New School emerged as a hotbed for left-wing cultural activities and intellectual pursuits. In keeping with the New School's progressive trends in the social sciences, music—alongside the other allied arts—became a focal point for the study of culture in the modern urban landscape. It was at the New School, during Eisler's initial 1935 American lecture tour, for example, that he attended the communist Composers' Collective at the invitation of Cowell, and gave two seminars the following autumn that focused on "The Crisis of Modern Music" and "Musical Composition," covering, among other topics, political mass songs.¹⁴

In 1938, when Eisler sought to return to the United States, Alvin Johnson, the New School's director, took an active role in facilitating his immigration. In response to Hitler's policy to eliminate Jews from civil service positions, Johnson, working closely with the Rockefeller Foundation, brought many imperiled scholars to the United States, placing them in academic positions.¹⁵ Through Johnson's efforts, the Foundation instituted two-year grants to provide émigrés with temporary assistance and help them through the difficult initial years of adjustment and integration in the United States. At the end of the granting period, however, the Foundation expected that recipients would find permanent positions elsewhere (Fosdick 1941:13–15).

While Johnson offered Eisler opportunities for teaching at the New School, Eisler continued to explore other possibilities. During this unstable period, he was engaged to write several film scores for colleagues within his socialist circle.¹⁶ His first project in New York was a documentary entitled *400 Million* (1939), which chronicled the Chinese struggle for liberation and national independence, directed and produced by his old European friend and collaborator Joris Ivens.¹⁷ Though the film afforded no financial benefit for Eisler, it appealed to his political sensibilities and provided some exposure to American audiences. Ivens had great respect for Eisler, having worked closely with him in Europe on various film projects connected to their mutual socialist goals.¹⁸ Eisler also composed the score for two short films produced and directed by fellow socialist American Joseph Losey, whom Eisler had first met in the Soviet Union in 1935 (Caute 1994:45). *Pete Roleum and his Cousins* (1939) was made on behalf of the oil industry

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with generous funding from a consortium of New York oil companies. For Losey, who had aligned himself closely with a community of Marxists, the capitalist propaganda puppet film appeared to be an unlikely project, but he made a great deal of money, from which Eisler must have benefited.¹⁹ Eisler's second film collaboration with Losey suited their mutual political interests more closely. *A Child Went Forth* (1940) was a New Deal project produced for the National Association of Nursery Educators with the help of the left-wing production company Frontier Films.²⁰

Alongside these film projects, Eisler also received a contract from Oxford University Press to write a book about modern music based upon the lectures he presented at the New School.²¹ Although he hoped that the book would sustain him financially, it was clear he would not be able to realize any financial benefit until its completion. In the meantime, he needed to find other means of subsistence. Losey, who had been associated with the Rockefeller Foundation, initially approached John Marshall (an assistant director of the Humanities division at the Foundation) and Johnson regarding the possibility that Eisler might undertake a research project while simultaneously working on his book (Ciment 1985:56). Johnson then contacted Marshall with a proposal to help Eisler obtain a subvention for his research.²² But over the next few weeks, letters between Johnson and Marshall show that the focus of the project changed abruptly from modern music more generally to motion picture music. Johnson suggested to Marshall that if the Foundation supported Eisler with a two-year grant as aid for a deposed scholar, the funds would sustain the composer until he could establish himself. After the two-year period, Johnson was prepared to offer him a full time position at the New School in their theater and arts programs.²³ The Rockefeller Foundation already supported a number of projects associated with music and technology, including several documentaries by Losey, Harold Burris-Meyer's project concerning sound technology at the Stevens Institute, as well as Paul Lazarsfeld and the Princeton Radio Project. Consequently, a project on film music that addressed issues of technological innovation and musical practice appealed to Marshall, who was extremely impressed by Eisler's credentials.²⁴

The correspondence between Marshall and Johnson also reveals Marshall's concern regarding the possible political overtones of supporting an outspoken socialist émigré such as Eisler. Marshall sought confirmation of Eisler's intellectual credentials for the undertaking and raised questions over his political associations. In a letter of November 16, 1939, Johnson reported to Marshall that he had "quizzed Eisler with a view to finding out whether he had any connection with the communists, or more particularly with the Stalin-Trotsky row."²⁵ Already by then, Marshall showed that he was

aware that the United States government feared communist sympathizers and their potentially subversive activities. Johnson did not reveal Eisler's response, but rather shifted the discussion to Eisler's colleague Losey. He seems to have been protecting Eisler's interests by concealing from Marshall his political orientation as a Marxist. As it was, Eisler underwent ongoing problems in solidifying his visa status starting immediately from his arrival in the United States in January 1938, with the result that he was forced to move continually in and out of the country. Even after Eisler received the grant, Marshall continued to inquire about his political status.²⁶ The Federal Bureau of Investigation files show that he was under constant surveillance by the government starting in February 1942.²⁷

Johnson appeared to satisfy Marshall well enough that Eisler met with Marshall to formulate a more specific research project and then prepared a proposal on the topic of film music for submission to the Rockefeller Foundation.²⁸ Marshall contacted various people to investigate the merits and validity of the proposal, as well as Eisler's abilities to carry it out. Among them sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld (director of another Rockefeller funded study, the Princeton Radio Project), who provided a positive assessment of Eisler as a composer. On Eisler's intellectual potential, he included an interesting comparison with the culture critic Theodor Adorno, who at the time worked as head of research for the radio music programming division under Lazarsfeld's Radio Project.²⁹ Lazarsfeld writes, "Eisler is also far above the average as a pianist and as a theoretician. No one seems to doubt that whatever problem on the social aspects of music he would tackle, his work would be worthy of support." Lazarsfeld goes on to say, "I have always been interested in his work, but I don't know him well personally." Nevertheless, Lazarsfeld continues, "My general feeling would be that he [Eisler] hasn't quite the deep intellectual sincerity and great freshness of approach which Dr. Adorno has, but that his interests lie in the same direction and that from a practical point of view he might be easier to handle."³⁰ Like Adorno, Eisler was "a facile dialectician," and both were gifted critical interpreters of music and mass culture.³¹ The letter confirms the common intellectual ground between the two men and that his peers never doubted Eisler's abilities to confront the social and intellectual implications of music.

Lazarsfeld's letter also implied that Marshall was keen to find out whether the musical experiments associated with the Princeton Radio Project could be of value in developing Eisler's research.³² There is evidence that Eisler eventually consulted with Lazarsfeld and Adorno about the Radio Project, at least on issues of empirical data collecting, as I discuss below. However, contact between Eisler and Adorno at this time seems to have occurred primarily through social circles within the community of émigrés in New

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York. As Adorno confided to his friend Walter Benjamin in May 1938, "I have seen Eisler quite a lot, and on one occasion we had a lengthy conversation. He is extremely friendly and approachable, presumably on account of the Institute or the radio project."³³ Such comments reveal the competitive tensions among émigrés who needed to establish themselves in a new world. Nevertheless, some of the ideas that Adorno formulated in the Radio Project would eventually appear in parts of *Composing for the Films*.³⁴

On February 1, 1940, Eisler received a large grant of \$20,160 from the Rockefeller Foundation for the Film Music Project, administered by the New School over a two-year period (later extended for an extra nine months). Marshall saw Eisler as the ideal candidate. With the prospect of a published book on the subject of film music, he expected Eisler's work to have an impact on specialists in the film industry as well as the scholarly community.³⁵ The study was timely because the implications of technology in film and radio were only just beginning to receive scholarly attention in conjunction with public reception, and government agencies were expressing great interest in the field especially as the war began to escalate.³⁶ Eisler initially began the study in New York, primarily with the help of independent film producers and documentarians with whom he had already worked. Later, however, Eisler moved his project to Hollywood to be closer to the commercial motion picture industry.

Eisler hoped the Project would provide him an opening into the competitive milieu of the Hollywood film industry, where he could fulfill his goal to work as a film composer in the movie capital (Eisler 1983a:250–54; Schebera 1998b:73–89). Many of his professional colleagues from Europe had already fled to the United States and some had successfully established themselves in the film industry. Moreover, by the late 1930s, numerous of his American left-wing colleagues such as Clifford Odets and Harold Clurman could no longer continue working in political theater on Broadway or depend on government funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and they too left for Hollywood.³⁷ Like all of them, Eisler recognized the potential of working there. In Hollywood, then, Eisler would renew many old relationships and acquaintances.

The Film Music Project: A Framework for Style, Theory, and Practice

What has brought about this research project is the question raised in recent years by musicians everywhere—is it really necessary to continue the current Hollywood practice of rehashing "original" scores with crumbs picked from the table of Tchaikowsky, Debussy, Ravel, Richard Strauss and

Stravinsky? Is a new musical material possible? May it not even be more useful and effective? (Eisler 1940–41:251)

Although Eisler addresses various issues in the Film Music Project, this pithy statement, published in *Modern Music* (1941), encapsulates his fundamental criticism of Hollywood: film music should embrace a contemporary musical language. According to Eisler, motion picture music lagged far behind other aspects of film production such as the techniques of montage, editing, lighting, and camera work. Hollywood's complacency towards musical innovation and experimentation was to blame, in part, because the industry preserved the initial practices introduced by the Hollywood establishment during the early stages of non-diegetic scoring for sound film. It refused to close "the gap between the highly evolved technique of the motion picture and the generally far less advanced techniques of motion-picture music" (Eisler 1941:138).

Eisler had initially formulated many of his basic ideas for the study during the late 1920s when the film industry was first considering sound film as a viable technology. Eisler's involvement in music and film extended to the technical innovations being developed during these early stages. In 1927, Tri-Ergon, a German enterprise that was developing a sound-on-film technology, commissioned Eisler to write music for a short abstract film entitled *Opus III*, to be shown at the Baden-Baden Music Festival of that year (Heller 1998:541–59). By using this new invention to synchronize music together with film, Eisler undertook to illustrate the film's visual rhythms. He also sought to measure the impact of the combined effect of music and image upon the audience. The demonstration consisted of two presentations of the film, the first with Eisler's score synchronized directly on the film strip, while the second was a silent film, this time accompanied by Eisler conducting the score with a live orchestra with the result that it produced only a loosely synchronized version. "Thus every listener was able to judge the success of our experiment. Despite pioneering difficulties, success was sensational."³⁸

These experiences provided the foundation for the kinds of aesthetic questions Eisler began to posit in relation to music and its implications for film, while this early work simultaneously addressed the technical issues related to sound production and effect. Eisler recognized that filmmakers and composers should not sever technological issues in sound production from the creative musical task. These experiments also allowed Eisler to consider the effect these procedures generated on potential audiences. He would revisit all these issues in drafting the initial proposal for his Film Music Project.

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Table 1: Documentary sources for the Film Music Project

| Date | Comments | Title of Document |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Nov. 1939 | General Overview of Project | Research Program on the Relation between Music and Films ^a |
| 5 Dec. 1939 | Rockefeller Foundation | Music and Films: Proposed Research Project by Hanns Eisler, prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation ^b |
| 3 Jan. 1940 | Summary by Rockefeller Foundation | Study of Music in Film Production ^c |
| 31 Jan. 1941 | Report of Expenses for 1940 | Rockefeller Music Project Report of Expenses ^d |
| May 1941 | Published in <i>Modern Music</i> 18 | Film Music—Work in Progress ^e |
| 8 Jan. 1942 | Report Concerning the Project | Relationship between Music and the Movies ^f |
| 15 Jan. 1942 | Summation of Project (Inter-Office) | Experimental Demonstration of Music in Film Production at The New School for Social Research ^g |
| 31 Oct. 1942 | Final Report | Final Report on the Film Music Project on a Grant by the Rockefeller Foundation ^h |
| Undated | Expenditures 1940–43 | Statement of Expenses Hanns Eisler—Rockefeller Music Fund ⁱ |

a. Typescript in RA with file date November 22, 1939. The document accompanied a letter from Alvin Johnson to John Marshall, dated November 1, 1939, RA. Published in Eisler 1983a:137–40.

b. Typescript in RA, undated (handwritten on p. 3: “grant to begin Feb 1, ’39 [sic]”); accompanied letter from Johnson to Marshall, December 5, 1939. Published in Eisler 1983a:142–45.

c. “Messrs. Alvin Johnson, Eisler, and Robin—Study of Music in Film Production,” Inter-office memo, Interviews, January 3, 1940, RA.

d. Typescript in RA.

e. Also published in Eisler 1983a:146–51.

f. Typescript attached to letter from Johnson to Marshall, January 8, 1942. Published in Eisler 1983a:152–53.

g. Typescript in RA.

h. Typescript in RA. Published in Eisler 1983a:154–58.

i. Typescript in RA.

Table 1 lists the source documents for the Project and includes proposals and progress reports either written by Eisler or summarized as a written memo by the office of the Rockefeller Foundation, as well as the essay published in *Modern Music* mentioned above. Eisler's initial draft proposal was ambitious and included the following: an examination of the problems in exploiting film scoring techniques, the relation between music and image, the creation of a laboratory to experiment with methods of sound synthesis, and a methodological outline for the investigation. In the latter, Eisler summarized the various compositional applications he would use in each of the practical examples with which he illustrated his findings.

Perhaps the boldest proposition Eisler makes is that some modernist music, by which he means, as we learn from other sources, Schoenberg's twelve-tone method, is appropriate for film (Eisler 1940–41:251; 1983d:155). Eisler's desire to use these new techniques outside the context of the concert hall is an oblique criticism of bourgeois values (Eisler 1940–41:251). Music, Eisler has proposed, must have a purpose, and the abstract qualities inherent in such music find purpose in film. Eisler's goal is to replace what he characterizes as a routine approach to musical style and function with new strategies culled from his research. Reacting to the large symphonic sound that dominates Hollywood practice, Eisler proposes to experiment with smaller ensembles and new instruments such as electric violin or the theremin in order to expand existing sounds. It is not surprising that Eisler also intends to devote particular attention to the use of vocal music in film since it has been a central forum for his political expression. In fact, Eisler had just completed a course at the New School dedicated to this genre. He extends his interest in vocal music to propose the development of filmed opera as a new American form.

Eisler notes that the standard practice in Hollywood productions was to use music to illustrate screen events by mimicking action and the emotional mood. Eisler proposes to introduce counterpoint, an oppositional Marxist concept related to dialectics. He used it in his previous theater and film productions as a means to reveal contradiction in the dramatic material while obliging audiences to consider those contradictions critically. In essence, music, standing in contrast to the visual meaning, could explain and comment on the narrative.³⁹

Eisler also discusses procedures for sound synthesis. By 1939, scientists had developed a technology that, from a set of symbols photographed onto the film, permitted sound on film to be reproduced with precision and clarity. Eisler's previous work with Tri-Ergon had brought him in touch with some of these technical and scientific applications, and he now proposes that a laboratory be set up to investigate these possibilities. In essence, Eisler's

goal was to refine the technology so that composers could impose those symbols directly on the film and thereby avoid the step of recording with live musicians. Eisler anticipates the procedures adopted by post-World War II composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen who worked directly with electro-magnetic tape. Yet it is ironic that Eisler, the political musician who was coined by the American press as “the Karl Marx of music,” would argue in favor of this technique on economic grounds as “an essential preliminary to the rationalization of production methods in the film and music fields,” since adoption of such devices would eliminate musicians in the music making process.⁴⁰ On the surface, Eisler’s position seems to contradict his earlier critique of a rationalized and administered system dictated by the culture industry. Yet already in 1935, Eisler had addressed both the advantages and disadvantages of this technology for musicians and projected the potential loss of jobs for the “conductor, the virtuoso and the instrumentalist” (Eisler 1978h:111).

In the final segment of the draft proposal, Eisler speaks to the necessity of creating a theoretical approach that would address the essential problems discussed above. Moreover, these questions become a framework for the practical examination of the results that he also proposes to undertake in the form of musical demonstrations. The theoretical research would eventually culminate in the publication of *Composing for the Films* in collaboration with Adorno while Eisler’s demonstrations would form the core of his Film Music Project. These demonstrations were intended to illustrate the various possibilities of scoring film and to test his innovative ideas.

Finally, in order to facilitate the study of scoring practices, both European and American, Eisler wanted to establish a sound-film library. To create a scholarly library for critical research about film was a novel idea for its day. Only during the mid-1930s did scholars in the United States begin to consider preserving film and treat it as an art form rather than simply a commercial product. For example, Iris Barry, curator of film at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, opened a film collection in 1935, among the first of its kind.⁴¹ Eisler would eventually contact Barry in connection with the Film Music Project, and she agreed to cooperate with him in housing the demonstration films he intended to produce.⁴²

Already in this initial draft proposal, Eisler reveals some of the most important various substantive ideas culled from his past experiences as a composer and writer of film music—namely, the use of modernist musical practices and a detailed consideration of musical function and sound production in film. The proposal consequently contains the kernels of what would be his most important contributions to the theoretical consideration of film music: the Film Music Project and *Composing for the Films*.

On December 5, 1939, Eisler submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation his final proposal entitled “Music and Films,” which received approval to start on February 1, 1940.⁴³ Eisler modified his previous draft by organizing the study around four semi-annual reports, each ideally preceded by a practical demonstration if the final budget permitted. At each of the public demonstration-lectures, he planned to present six or seven pre-existing two- to three-minute clips taken from documentaries, newsreels, and commercial feature films for which he would compose new scoring to illustrate alternative possibilities.⁴⁴ Eisler also intended to measure audience reaction through questionnaires. In essence, he seems to have designed the project not only as a critical response to the film industry but in part as praxis, a venue for his own compositional and artistic work. Eisler retained most of the ideas cast in his original draft proposal, but he did make one significant omission in the final proposal: the establishment of a laboratory for sound synthesis to investigate some of the technical problems associated with applying sound directly to the film strip, which may have proved too costly.

According to the Rockefeller documents, Eisler was keen to employ a testing device used in connection with the Princeton Radio Research Project that could help to establish specific psychological readings from audiences and gauge their musical perception. In fact, Eisler had previously relied upon data from audience reaction in his earlier work with Tri-Ergon.⁴⁵ The device was a simple box with two buttons—one for favorable, the other for unfavorable responses—and would be connected to a moving tape synchronized with movements of a musical score.⁴⁶ The positive and negative reactions could then generate a quantifiable response in relation to the musical effects. This was just the kind of empirical data gathering over which Adorno and Lazarsfeld disagreed, and Adorno’s rejection of the method, because of its uncritical approach, led to his departure from the Princeton Radio Project.⁴⁷

Although Marshall expressed some skepticism about the validity of psychological testing, he approved a budget of \$500 per year dedicated to measuring audience reaction, which appears in the proposed budgets for 1940–41 and 1941–42.⁴⁸ On December 22, 1941, Eisler disbursed \$275 to fund the investigation of audience reaction to Dr. Joachim Schumacher, who is listed as a consultant in Eisler’s final report.⁴⁹ It is unclear precisely what Schumacher did or how Eisler incorporated any of his results into his Project since Eisler’s principal connection with him concerned a book on Beethoven sketches on which both men were hoping to collaborate.⁵⁰ Instead, an ironic and negative statement about the usefulness of empirical methods when applied to audience reception appears in *Composing for the Films*: this attitude points to Adorno’s own rejection of this type of empirical data.⁵¹

Eisler Confronts Hollywood

Eisler was not alone in challenging the style, aesthetics, and function of the Hollywood film music industry. Aaron Copland and George Antheil, among others, had published their own critical views.⁵² Those who argued against Hollywood practice, however, were primarily “outsiders” with roots in the art music community. Indeed, Eisler shared similar prejudices with his American counterparts but as a European Marxist his perspective distanced him even more. And though Eisler had visited some of the studios, he had not yet worked in Hollywood as a composer, a position that may have weakened his critical authority. As an outsider, he was not intimately familiar with the practical expectations of the system—working under its commercial pressures, writing for short deadlines, and appeasing film directors and music supervisors—a context that Copland explicitly describes only after his own direct experiences in Hollywood.⁵³ Consequently, Eisler’s discussion seems naïve at times in its goal to influence the closed community of Hollywood with its institutional rigidity and administrative authority, an issue that he and Adorno would later fully address in *Composing for the Films*.

Eisler’s naïveté reveals itself already during the early stages of his investigation. In order to proceed with the analysis and re-composition of the various Hollywood feature film clips proposed for the demonstrations, he needed to obtain permission and seek special materials from the studios involved. What he required was not simply the film in its final form but rather the visual materials and their separate accompanying soundtracks in order to re-apply new underscoring for the films themselves. Initially, Eisler was able to obtain one Donald Duck film from the Disney studios, but not in the form he needed. To solicit other examples, Marshall advised Eisler to go to Hollywood and meet with Leo Rosten of the Motion Picture Research Project in order to obtain the materials he needed.⁵⁴ By 1941, however, Eisler was successful in obtaining sequences from *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Long Voyage Home*, two films directed by John Ford (Eisler 1940–41:253–54). Nevertheless, in the final report, Hollywood feature films are not well represented. The “Report on the Film Music Project” in the appendix to *Composing for the Films* cites only *The Grapes of Wrath*.⁵⁵ Yet, this picture is atypical and unprecedented for Hollywood standards because it employed camera techniques and a style that was characteristic of documentary film (Wolfe 1995:382). For the most part, Eisler had to rely on clips from documentary films, particularly by filmmakers with whom he had already worked closely.⁵⁶ Eisler also used newsreels, which presented a similar problem because they are considered a specialized category of documentary film.⁵⁷ Because the study responded primarily to Hollywood practice, these choices appear to be somewhat problematic and artificial.⁵⁸

Such choices placed limitations on the scope and force of Eisler's arguments particularly since many American composers including Copland, Virgil Thomson, and others had already provided innovative scores for documentary films that exploited modernist musical styles.⁵⁹ Still, by the early 1940s these composers had very limited influence and found it difficult to convince Hollywood that a contemporary idiom and a more progressive style could function under the pressure of industry values and standards.⁶⁰ Consequently, the documentary or documentary-like film clips Eisler used as examples were not particularly pertinent to the conditions and specialized needs of Hollywood film scores. Although Eisler acknowledged his dependency upon non-Hollywood productions, he nevertheless denied its limitations for the study (Eisler 1947:139).

In spring 1941, Eisler published an article in *Modern Music* outlining his progress on the Film Music Project (Eisler 1940–41). This document appears to be the only substantive statement he made in the course of the Project.⁶¹ Unlike his initial proposals of 1939 to Johnson and Marshall, this document refocuses his intentions from an overview of film music practice to a direct response to Hollywood (Eisler 1940–1941:251). Eisler demonstrates the viability of new musical materials by exploiting its most severe expression, the “complicated” (as Eisler puts it) twelve-tone techniques of Schoenberg. By 1941, most American composers and musicians did not fully understand Schoenberg's method nor appreciate the musical possibilities associated with row composition.⁶² Moreover, such difficult music did not coincide with the values espoused by Hollywood's commercial enterprise, which appealed to audiences through recognizable musical styles—music that the industry felt was tried and true.⁶³ Eisler, however, had already demonstrated the effectiveness of twelve-tone music by using it exclusively in scores he created for the American documentary films *400 Million* and *The Living Soil*, which were well received by audiences who were unaware of the presence of the style. As Eisler revealed, “Apparently advanced musical material, which average concert-goers may find indigestible and non-relevant, when applied to films loses something of this forbidding quality” (Eisler 1940–41:251).

Eisler also addresses two recent Hollywood films in this report: *Long Voyage Home* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, originally scored by Richard Hageman and Alfred Newman, respectively. In re-scoring both films, Eisler's goal is to avoid the sentimentality, commonly exploited in Hollywood, that encourages audience identification and emotive responses. Instead, Eisler prescribes counterpoint in a sailor's death scene from *Long Voyage Home* to create music that evokes the hysteria, fear, and struggle of death rather than its characterization as a somber emotional event. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Eisler emphasizes the heroic aspects of the epic struggle of the Joad family

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to reach California, although he gives no musical details about his scoring strategy here. What we can understand from these two examples is that for Eisler the underscoring should avoid appealing to the immediate emotive qualities inherent in the narrative or dramatic situation, and instead should seek to express alternative values linked to the larger narrative or symbolic goals of a film.⁶⁴

On January 29, 1942, the Rockefeller Foundation approved a nine-month extension of the project (through November 1, 1942) in order for Eisler to complete compositional and recording elements that were lagging behind.⁶⁵ Eisler had experienced problems in obtaining studio films and soundtracks, and these difficulties, combined with setbacks in recording, prevented him from finishing the necessary work within the original two-year period set by the Foundation. Despite these delays, Eisler was able to mount a demonstration in April 1942 in Los Angeles and anticipated another for January 1943 for a wider group at the Academy of Motion Pictures.⁶⁶ Brecht attended a showing of the film *Regen* with, as he recounts in his journal, “taut music” (Brecht 1993:223). Eisler also listed significant expenses under the rubric “2 Demonstrations” in his final accounting to the Rockefeller Foundation, which suggests that two such demonstrations took place.⁶⁷

The Foundation recognized some of the potential limitations in Eisler’s project. John Marshall remarked, “With the practice of film production as rigidly controlled as it is, it may be too much to hope that Eisler’s findings will be utilized in Hollywood. On the other hand, we may be surprised in this point, for Eisler has considerable prestige and if his work should succeed in impressing someone in authority in Hollywood, it might gain unanticipated effect there.”⁶⁸ Eisler engaged a number of consultants for the Film Music Project, including Adorno, Brecht, Charlie Chaplin, Clurman, Fritz Lang, Odets, Seeger and Schoenberg.⁶⁹ All close friends of Eisler, some of them had achieved considerable success in Hollywood. It seemed likely that they would help to generate interest in Eisler’s work among the wider professional film community, and in fact, by December 1942, Eisler was already engaged to write the music for Lang’s film *Hangmen Also Die*.⁷⁰

Two versions of the final report on the Film Music Project exist. The first is a typescript, eventually published as part of Eisler’s complete works, and the second, written at a later date, forms the Appendix of *Composing for the Films*.⁷¹ The early version is schematic in nature, outlining the three constituent stages of the project. The first, entitled “Practical Section,” simply lists the music Eisler composed for various film sequences and the collaborators on the recordings, while “Methods employed in each selection” describes the musical treatments more fully under the headings “Musical methods” and “Dramaturgical methods.” In the final “Theoretical section,”

Eisler gives a list of topics of investigation without going into the substance of each, which he defers to a detailed treatment in a book to be published by Oxford University Press. And in fact, this final report constitutes an outline for the book itself and includes topics such as the use of advanced musical material (twelve-tone technique), adaptation of small chamber ensembles, dramatic treatment in relation to musical illustration, the implications of “neutralization” and the study of “sound stripe,” as well as the relationship between music and picture.

Although the Film Music Project in itself had limited influence on the industry at the time, the substance of the project—including examples from Eisler’s demonstrations—would form the foundation for *Composing for the Films*, and it was this book that would make a significant mark. Published several years after the completion of the study, its Appendix contains a revised version of the Final Report from the Film Music Project. In the book version, Eisler (and Adorno) include a retrospective introduction. Here, the authors describe the study as experimental because they position their musical solutions outside Hollywood’s commercial influences and instead make the case that the study is simply considering possibilities or “potentialities” rather than fixed solutions. There is some irony in these goals. It appears that the authors are presenting a dialectical response to the conflict between ideal solutions and any realistic possibility of altering Hollywood practice. This debate reveals a tension between Eisler and Adorno. Eisler had habitually transformed theory into practice, whereas Adorno always worked from a utopian perspective, never sully his ideals with the compromises required by practice. In contrast to Eisler’s professional situation during the Film Music Project (1940–42), by 1947, when the Appendix was eventually published, he had written eight Hollywood scores and his critical distance from Hollywood practice had obviously changed.⁷²

The Appendix, nevertheless, is meant to illustrate many of the conceptual ideas expressed in the main body of *Composing for the Films*. Eisler presents compositional materials and short analytical discussions derived from his work on the Film Music Project. Perhaps the most impressive contribution in the Appendix is the discussion of Eisler’s score for the film *Regen*, which he contrasts with Eisenstein’s analysis of a passage from Prokofiev’s score for Eisenstein’s own picture *Alexander Nevsky*. *Regen* was initially produced in 1929 as a silent film by his close friend the filmmaker Joris Ivens.⁷³ In 1932, however, composer Lou Lichtveld created a musical score for it (Schebera 1998a:178–79). In the music he provided for the film (entitled *Fourteen Ways of Describing Rain*, op. 70), one movement of which is printed in the Appendix, Eisler attempts to explore the various dramaturgical possibilities exploiting “the twelve-tone style” (Eisler 1947:148). The film’s abstract

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quality, which Ivens suggests is “a film of atmosphere,” portrays the changing moods that occur in the city of Amsterdam during rainfall. According to Ivens, the continuity and structure of the film are defined by the natural depiction of rain as a shower begins, progresses, and finally ends. In order to create a range of expressivity and movement, Ivens relied on a variety of contrasting visual characterizations established by the rhythmic movement of falling rain captured through contrasting shadings of light. For example, melancholy effects were expressed through large and heavy, dark pear-shaped drops presented across a window, whereas happiness was portrayed in a spring shower by bright small round droplets, as they would jump against various surfaces (Ivens 1969:35–39). The film’s plotless narrative links it more closely to a form of avant-garde documentary, though French critics called the film a *cinépoème*.

When one considers that the Film Music Project and *Composing for the Films* were primarily directed towards the Hollywood film industry, it is curious that Eisler chose *Regen* to exemplify the various musical methods and concepts that he and Adorno discuss in the book’s previous chapters. However, because the picture originally contained neither titles nor sound, music could emerge as a central voice shaping the impact of Ivens’ film. Consequently, Eisler employed a range of musico-dramatic possibilities that included close detailed synchronization—as in the parallelism associated with mickey-mouse techniques and other illustrative procedures—and the more extreme and contrasting effects of counterpoint (Eisler 1947:148).

In considering Eisler’s score to the film *Regen* and its thematic narrative, Eisler was able to exploit the repeated short visual segments as a means to demonstrate the importance of small forms and structural unity between film and music, and so the film’s structure provided an aesthetically ideal framework for the formal organization of the music. Eisler conceived the score for *Regen* as a variation, allowing the periodic and episodic form of the music to coincide with the visual structure of the film. For this reason the film was suited to the use of twelve-tone methods because unlike tonal music, in which the harmonic procedures that help to define the formal properties require spans of time to achieve tonal fulfillment, a row piece does not depend upon periodization because those tonal relationships simply do not exist. Eisler believed that smaller forms, like variation, could provide a more precise relationship between music and film on architectonic grounds since he felt that the formal strategies of thematic development used, for example, in nineteenth-century works become irrelevant to the quickly changing moods inherent in montage.

Eisler’s own commentary concerning *Regen* in the Appendix provides only a limited discussion, much of it outlining the pictorial events on screen.

However, he does discuss the score's motivic detail. Eisler maintains that he is trying to achieve freedom from larger structural musical paradigms seen in traditional autonomous works, yet he retains the surface details of motif, variation, repetition, transition, and conclusion without having to depend upon the formal properties intrinsic to the process of tonality. He thus succeeds in connecting the structure of the variation form with the structure of the film itself and its progressive events on screen.

Perhaps *Regen's* appeal to Eisler was in part due to the melancholy character of the film, which provided a discreet politically symbolic theme for Eisler. Years later, when Eisler was interviewed by Hans Bunge, he related the sorrowful character of the film's mood and his musical conception as a metaphoric theme of the twentieth century.

I do not want to say that the crucial theme of the 20th century is, shall we say, the anatomy of sorrow—or the anatomy of melancholy. But that too may present itself in a work of music. . . . Fourteen Ways in which one can be acceptably sorrowful. (Bunge 1970:16 and Betz 1982:178)

Fourteen Ways of Describing Rain is dedicated to Arnold Schoenberg. Eisler's homage to his teacher is expressed not only by the piece's twelve-tone style, but also in other ways. The motif of melancholy as depicted in the film's mood and character suggests a connection to Schoenberg's 1912 chamber piece *Pierrot Lunaire*, op. 21. Schoenberg wrote *Pierrot* as a melodrama that interpolates musical interludes with extended monologues, with the result that the music is integrally connected to its text. Eisler creates a parallel relationship by equally integrating music and image within the medium of film. But he also borrows more concretely from *Pierrot* by employing the same instrumentation (flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and piano). He makes a further tribute to his teacher by beginning and ending *Fourteen Ways of Describing Rain* with a "cadenza-like 'monogram'" outlining Schoenberg's initials (Eisler 1947:148).

Eisler considered the chamber instrumentation ideal for a film score. After 1932, he recognized that sound technology had improved to such an extent that composers no longer needed to place limitations on the types of instruments that could be used in recording. Yet, because Hollywood film scores were crafted in a manner that more often subordinated the music to screen events, and not directly heard by the "spectator," Eisler felt it superfluous to compose a score of dense texture, since he believed audiences could only absorb so much at any one given moment (Eisler 1947:104–5). This was a particularly important concept for Eisler to exemplify in his project, because he saw that Hollywood's conventionalized orchestration produced a standardized sound that in turn contributed to its neutralization. Instead,

the economy of the musical resources used in film scores such as *Regen* creates sharp and well-defined articulations that allowed for a more severe expression. Furthermore, Eisler points out that nothing superfluous has been retained (Eisler 1947:152). Like Copland in his 1939 Hollywood score for *Of Mice and Men*, Eisler emphasizes the timbres of the flute and clarinet within the more intimate chamber textures to achieve an effective contrast with the monotonous and blurred effects of Hollywood's standardized orchestrations.⁷⁴

Eisler and Adorno offer, as a counter example, a detailed rebuttal of Eisenstein's analysis of a sequence from his film *Alexander Nevsky*. In a famous detailed pictorial/musical graph, Eisenstein shows shot-by-shot, bar-by-bar the interrelationship between Prokofiev's music and the image. The two-minute sequence represented on the diagram is taken from a scene preceding the "Battle on the Ice" that conveys a mood of intensity in anticipation of the battle. Similar to a musical score, the layers on Eisenstein's graph are shown to produce various strong and weak metrical accents established both by the duration of the shot and the duration of the music (accents are produced by the movement of light, graphic pictorial figures or gestural movements, dramatic content or any filmic element that restricts the inertia of the film). As the eye moves across the pictorial shot we are meant to see a direct correspondence between the visual movement and the musical articulation, or as Eisenstein suggests, "exactly the same motion lies at the base of both the musical and the plastic structures" (Eisenstein 1942:175). Consequently, stronger, more intensive moments are established when the visual and sonic accents are produced coincidentally.

The authors begin by exploring the idea of rhythm, which they believe is largely a metaphorical concept within the filmic image. According to Adorno and Eisler, Eisenstein's diagram relies on a static image (i.e., in its photographed state, one frame) in relation to musical notation (rather than music as realized in performance or sound). The example cannot truly present the precise correspondence that Eisenstein had in mind because the media in question (music and film) are dependent upon motion in time. In one image (shot V), for example, Eisenstein presents a steeply graded slope that is accompanied by a descending quarter-note triad. Because the music functions in motion and the picture is static, the authors argue that synchronization between the music and the image is vague at best. Moreover, the triadic musical formulation is so nondescript and presented as such that the spectator has no reason to associate the score directly with the image of the heroic presentation that was intended (Eisler 1947:153–54).

Another inconsistency in the diagram relates to Prokofiev's use of repeated musical gestures. Here, Eisler and Adorno note that the musical

underscoring repeats while the image track changes perspective as it progresses from a medium shot (panoramic) to a close-up. The authors contend that the music does not develop similarly alongside the image track. Yet Eisenstein purports to have worked in close collaboration with Prokofiev in order to establish calculated synchronous vertical correspondences within the audiovisual elements:

There are sequences in which the shots were cut to a previously recorded music-track. There are sequences for which the entire piece of music was written to a final cutting of the picture. There are sequences that contain both approaches. (Eisenstein 1942:158)

In fact, Eisler and Adorno raise the point that film music rather than image tends to be by nature more dynamic.⁷⁵ Image only indirectly creates the appearance of motion and relies far more on the musical score to give it motivation (Eisler 1947:78). Yet, in the *Alexander Nevsky* example, Prokofiev's underscoring functions impassively as a timekeeper, while the image transforms and develops (Eisler 1947:155).

Eisler and Adorno close their discussion by showing that Eisenstein's model is too specific, dogmatic, and inconstant, and even go so far as to suggest that his analysis moves within "a sphere of high-sounding aesthetic arguments." They express further disappointment with the banality of Prokofiev's underscoring, describing it as "harmless" and composed "without much effort"—a piece that exemplifies conventional tactics in a style that is "ineffective" (Eisler 1947:157).

Eisler's writings and The Film Music Project constitute one of the most astute examinations of Hollywood musical practice for its time. Unlike most American contemporary writings of the period that provide little analytical engagement, Eisler in contrast, presents a highly critical account that offers new possibilities for the medium by integrating practice within a social, political, and aesthetic framework. While Eisler was framing this critique, simultaneously, he also hoped to exploit the Film Music Project and the exposure he gained from it to obtain work in Hollywood as a film composer. In April 1942, he moved to Hollywood, completing the Project by the following November. During that period, however, the pressure to finish the Project, to find work as a film composer (in which by the fall he succeeded), and to begin his promised book-length study for Oxford University Press led him to seek a collaborator in order to see the Project through to its intended book publication.⁷⁶ Although the evidence suggests that he might have initially asked his friend Bertolt Brecht, who had arrived in Hollywood only six months before Eisler, in the end, he approached Adorno. With the weight of the Film Music Project to provide the founda-

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tion for their collaborative work and a contract with Oxford University Press in hand, Adorno was extremely pleased to oblige.⁷⁷ Eisler could now provocatively expand his initial ideas as outlined in the Film Music Project, moving beyond the practical footing he enunciated in his reports to place the study on a wider critical plane.

Notes

1. See most recently Bick 2001:104–8, 135–42; Adorno 2002:365–71; Gall 2006:155–82.
2. Eisler's experiences in film reflect his values that music must take on a social purpose. His direct experience is described in "Blast-Furnace Music: Work on a Sound Film in the Soviet Union" (Eisler 1978c); on music's social purpose including film, see "The Crisis in Music" (Eisler 1978i).
3. Letter from Alvin Johnson (director of the New School for Social Research) to John Marshall (Rockefeller Foundation), July 8, 1940, Music Filming 1939–1941, Series 200, Box 259, Folder 3095, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York (hereafter RA). The letter includes a biographical sketch of Eisler and makes reference to this tour, stating, "Lord Marley, M.P., invited Eisler to make concert-lectures in the United States, for the aid of the Saar children refugees, at that time settled in France. This was unpaid, charity job." On Lord Marley and the World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, see Taylor 2007 and Koch 1995: 65–66.
4. The official adoption of the Popular Front took place in Moscow during the Seventh Comintern Congress, August 1935. At that time the Soviet Union would embrace an anti-fascist coalition with socialist and left-wing organizations as well as bourgeois democrats. See Claudin 1975:171–207. On the implications of this change in the United States, see Schrecker 1998:14–25. On the shift from a United to Popular front in relation to Eisler's cultural activities, see Willet 1995:84. Münzenberg was able to recruit many renowned intellectuals and artists in his anti-fascist cause; see McMeekin 2003:280. Eisler also proclaims the agenda of his trip in one of the lectures he gave during the tour, declaring "We cannot conduct such struggles alone, but must form an alliance with those sections of the people who suffer under this order of society and who are combating it. That is an alliance of the progressive intellectuals, scholars, doctors, engineers, artists and the working class. The composer must understand once and for all that this alliance alone will provide the guarantee of bringing order into the chaos in music." See Eisler 1978h:113.
5. Many European intellectuals adopted the term "The Crisis in Culture," referring to the social failings of capitalism. See Rose 1978:1–7. Eisler's lecture "The Crisis in Music" was originally issued by the Downtown Music School in New York for publication in *Music Vanguard* (April 1935), and was edited by Charles Seeger. On January 1, 1936, the left-wing paper *The Nation* reported on a symposium presented at Town Hall on "The Crisis in Music." Aaron Copland, Hanns Eisler, and Henry Cowell shared the podium to speak on the subject. See Washington, Library of Congress, Copland Collection, Box 219/Folder 56, "Music: A Bright Evening, with Musicians," *The Nation* (January 1, 1936), 27.
6. According to Betz (1982:143–47), Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, and Cowell helped to sponsor Eisler's 1935 tour. Eisler's lecture was considered a kind of manifesto for a number of American proletarian composers, particularly Marc Blitzstein. On Eisler's reception and influence on American proletarian composers as well as a musical description of his lecture

concerts in New York, see Oja 1989:452–53. Eisler's speeches for the tour are published as "Address to a Solidarity Concert," translated into English by Elie Siegmeister, in Eisler 1978a:69–73, and Mayer 1985:266–71. Eisler expresses his impressions of America in "A Letter to Ernst Hermann Meyer dated Mar. 14, 1935;" "A Musical Journey through America;" and "Hollywood Seen from the Left," in Eisler 1978a:74–75, 82–94, and 101–5, respectively. German editions of "Address to a Solidarity Concert;" "A Musical Journey through America;" and "Hollywood Seen from the Left," are newly published in Eisler 2007:238–40, 255–66, and 270–74, respectively.

7. Henry Cowell's wife Sidney remembers Eisler's 1935 visit to New York. Her recollections of this visit are recorded in an undated document she prepared for the New York Public Library; New York, New York Public Library, Henry Cowell Collection, Box 73, folder "Political and Communist Stuff."

8. Eisler prepared "A Musical Journey through America," for a radio broadcast in Strasbourg on June 7, 1935 during the First International Workers' Music Olympiad. According to Grabs, Eisler's broadcast transmission was abruptly cut when he discussed the brutal working conditions of the workers at the Ford Motor Company (Eisler 1978f:94).

9. Eisler 1978f:91. Years later, David Raksin echoed Eisler's observations regarding the assembly-line technique used in Hollywood, though without the humorous socialist perspective (Raksin 1989:167–81).

10. The potential success strategies of a hit song to which Eisler refers are taken up in Adorno's article "On Popular Music," under "Recognition and Acceptance," "Plugging" and "Structural Standardization." In the article, Adorno suggests that "hits" retain similarities from one song to the next as predigested material so that the audience expends little effort in listening, recognition and acceptance; see Adorno and Simpson 1941:17–48. Leppert evaluates the article in Adorno 2002:336–48.

11. Eisler 1978g:103. Oscar Levant reports the comments of Nat Finston, the music director of MGM studios during the 1930s, in the same vein. Finston described his department as "a well-oiled machine. Every man a cog in the wheel." Levant, who was seeking work as a composer, responded, "my greatest desire in life at this moment is to be a cog in the wheel." See Levant 1940:111; also Kashner and Schoenberger 1994:134–35.

12. Palmer 1990:27–28 and Levant 1941:101.

13. Cowell met Eisler in Europe in 1930 and respected the composer greatly. During Eisler's 1935 tour, he brought him to the Composers' Collective where he met Charles Seeger. Both Cowell and Seeger had a close association with the New School of Social Research, and Seeger insisted that Eisler teach there during the following winter. See Cowell Collection, Correspondence Charles Seeger to Henry Cowell, "Western Union May 1935 Telegram," Box 163 no. 11, NYPL: "I want Eisler to give a course at the new school Saturday afternoons next winter, Would not conflict with our courses because would be financed by a group of backers through scholarship students, Please wire miss mayer Wednesday as follows: I concur with Seeger on Proposed Eisler course, charles seeger."

14. New School for Social Research, Bulletin 1935–36:58–59. Eisler had attained international notoriety for his mass songs or militant *kampflieder* in the fight for socialism.

15. In April 1933 only a few months after the Nazis took power, the so-called Law for the Reconstitution of the Civil Service was sanctioned, requiring the dismissal of all Jewish employees working in governmental positions. This affected not only those working in government offices but an entire range of employees in education and the arts. Though it took several years before this law and others like it took full effect, within certain quarters

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there was immediate action. See Kater 1997:75–87. Key musical figures such as Arnold Schoenberg, professor at the Akademie der Künste, Bruno Walter, Jascha Horenstein and Otto Klemperer, among others, were asked to leave their positions and cancel concerts or risk audience disruption and personal attack. Schoenberg and Walter immediately left the country. Eisler, who was already out of the country, was not to return. The government was particularly suspicious of Eisler because he was Jewish, a modernist, and a political Bolshevik (Hinton 1993:102).

16. On his early American filmscores, see Schebera 1998:74–78 and Betz 1982:170–72; Betz also includes Eisler's filmography, 1982:305–9.

17. *400 Million* premiered on March 7, 1939; see Schoots 2000:150; and Ivens 1969:180.

18. These films included *Komsomol* (1932) and *New Earth* (1933).

19. The film premiered at the World's Fair Exhibition in New York on May 22, 1939. Losey developed some important technical innovations for the applications of sound on film; see Caute 1994:67.

20. *A Child Went Forth* was an eighteen-minute educational propaganda film on the principles associated with progressive education filmed at the Nell Goldsmith nursery camp and featured children aged two to seven years. Eisler discusses scenes from it in Eisler 1947:141–44. See also Caute 1994:65–66; and Losey 1968:189–90. On *The Living Land*, see Helbing 1998: 523–33. Eisler discusses the *Living Land* briefly in 1947:144; see also Ciment 1985:55–59.

21. Though undated and unidentified, a proposal to Oxford Press is published in Eisler's Complete Works. It outlines a project concerning the contemporary composer within the context of more general social trends. Eisler 1985c:469–70.

22. Letter from Johnson to Marshall, October 13, 1939, in which Johnson says, "Will you let me come to see you to plead the case for a subvention to Hanns Eisler for the research going into a book on modern music," RA.

23. Letter from Johnson to Marshall, November 1, 1939, RA.

24. From John Marshall, Inter-office correspondence, November 2, 1939, Subject "Alvin Johnson's letter of November 1st about Hanns Eisler," RA.

25. Letter from Johnson to Marshall, November 16, 1939, RA.

26. Letter from Johnson to Marshall, July 8, 1940, RA. Johnson provides a description of Eisler's interrogation by the State Department's immigration authorities, stating, "The fact that he [Eisler] is here is proof that nothing was found that could stand against him." See also Helbing 1998:531.

27. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information website, Hanns Eisler, <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/eisler.htm>. See also Schebera 1978:70–76.

28. Letter from Johnson to Marshall, November 1, 1939, RA. Documents accompanying the letter include "Hanns Eisler's Work as Composer for the Films," pp. 1–3; and "Research Program on the Relation Between Music and Films," pp. 4–9. Also letters from Marshall to Johnson, November 13 and 20, 1939, RA. Harry Robin, who had worked closely on sound during the production of *Pete Roleum and his Cousins*, helped Eisler on the applications. Robin had also received a Rockefeller grant in support of his post-graduate work. He would eventually assist Eisler on the Film Music Project; see letter from Harry Robin to Johannes Gall, New School of Social Research, Archive Files, Folder: Hanns Eisler; and Betz 1982:172.

29. On Adorno's working relationship with Lazarsfeld and his contributions to the Radio Project, see Leppert's commentary in Adorno 2002:213–33. Adorno left the project in ap-

proximately 1940 (Leppert shows discrepancies in the sources regarding the date of his departure), after the Rockefeller Foundation terminated the funding for the music research portion of Lazarsfeld's project. The Foundation was unhappy with Adorno's unwillingness to work within the empirical methods set out by Lazarsfeld.

30. Letter from Lazarsfeld to Marshall, January 2, 1940, RA. Lazarsfeld's comment, "that he would be easier to handle than Adorno," is in reference to Lazarsfeld's differences with Adorno working on the Princeton Radio Project. On the dispute, see Adorno 2002:214–18; and Jenemann 2007:48–50.

31. See Heilbut 1983:187. Heilbut also states that Eisler's abilities to interpret social situations was more sophisticated than Adorno's, "Since he [Eisler] could be as suave a dialectician as Adorno and much more pithy, his writings offer something special, the inside view of a professional who is able to explore the social implications of phenomena that other refugee musicians were satisfied simply to behold," Heilbut 1983:153. Ernst Bloch commented in May 1973, "I got to know him as a man who could formulate ideas with the greatest liveliness, wit and precision, utterly exceptional in this precision," quoted in Betz 1982:261 n. 55. David Blake states, "It is well known that Eisler was a master of the art of self-contradiction, using non-sequitur, change of tack and playing devil's advocate in a brilliantly ironic way in an attempt to look at a problem from every angle, to expose it fully to the gaze of his interlocutor. For an ordinary person to take part in this, let alone keep up with the pace and fully appreciate the wide range of references, which his enormous reading threw out, was wonderfully stimulating, and exhausting" (1995:462).

32. Among those with whom Eisler was in touch during the project was Burris-Meyer, who was involved in acoustical issues related to sound and theater. In questions related to non-musical effects, Eisler would consult him. See inter-office memo from Marshall, January 3, 1940, RA.

33. Letter from Theodor W. Adorno to Walter Benjamin, May 4, 1938, in Adorno 1999:59.

34. Adorno hoped to publish the work he accomplished on the Princeton Radio Project, which had been funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, in a prospective book entitled *Current of Music*. According to Robert Hullot-Kentor, who published a reconstruction of *Current of Music*, Adorno's book proposal was rejected by Paul Vaudrin, the publisher (and Eisler's publisher) at Oxford Press because of its scholarly language; see Adorno 2006:55.

35. Letter from Johnson to Marshall, December 5, 1939, RA; letter from Adorno to Vaudrin (Oxford Press), June 13, 1946, in Los Angeles, Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, Special Collections, University of Southern California, Hanns Eisler Collection, Correspondence A–Z, Adorno (hereafter FML), which states, "The whole book has originated from Mr. Eisler's Project and his contract was based on the idea that he should give an account of the Project—something which, incidentally, is doubtless expected by a large number of experts, and people interested in Mr. Eisler's practical work in the movies, and as a composer in general."

36. In 1935, for example, the Rockefeller Foundation began to invest in studies related to radio and motion pictures. See http://www.rockfound.org/about_us/history/1930_1939.shtml.

37 On the departure of Eisler's German colleagues to Hollywood see Heilbut 1983. In 1935, the United States government initiated a program (Works Progress Administration, WPA) to aid Americans who were out of work during the Depression. By June 1939, the WPA received cuts to its program when it was transferred to the Federal Works Agency and by 1943 it was officially terminated. Many of these programs funded arts and theater initiatives (DeHart 1967).

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38. Preliminary Proposal, "Hanns Eisler's Work as Composer for the Films," RA (Eisler 1983b); also Eisler 1978.
39. Eisler presents the idea of counterpoint in his proposal but describes the concept more fully in Eisler 1978j.
40. Eisler, "Research Program on the Relationship between Music and Films," 1983a:140.
41. On the establishment of film as an art form and the development of American collections, see Decherney 2005: 97–160. Decherney devotes considerable discussion to Iris Barry's role in this development and her efforts at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.
42. Letter from Iris Barry to Marshall, January 4, 1940, RA.
43. Letter from Norma S. Thompson to Johnson, January 23, 1940, RA. The letter reports that at the meeting of the Executive Committee, the project was approved.
44. Inter-office memo, January 3, 1940, RA. From the "Rockefeller Music Project Report of Expenses" and the "Statement of Expenses," it would seem that recordings were undertaken in July 1940, editing took place in November of the same year, and the screenings took place at the Preview Theatre in January 1941. At present, Eisler's original audio recordings are lost though Johannes Gall has discovered some apparently mis-attributed manuscripts housed in the Eisler Collection at the Berlin Academie der Kunst, which he believes were composed for the Film Music Project demonstrations; see Gall:2002:60–77 and 81–103. Gall re-recorded and synchronized the musical examples to the existing film clips discussed in the Film Music Project (and in Eisler 1947:135–65), piecing together various musical excerpts from the manuscript scores housed at the archives in Berlin. They are available online (<http://www.hanns-eisler.com/DVD/index.php?Seite=DVDEdition&Sprache=en>) and on the DVD that accompanies his edition of *Composing for the Films*.
45. See note 38 above.
46. Inter-office, January 3, 1940, RA.
47. Ironically, the Eisler sources, dated January 3, 1940, coincide with the dates of Adorno's departure and the Foundation's decision not to continue funding the music division of the Princeton Radio Project. See note 30 above regarding Adorno's scholarly methods, the dispute between Lazarsfeld and Adorno, and Adorno's departure from the Radio project.
48. Inter-office memo, January 3, 1940, RA. The budget for 1940–41 appears in a letter from Marshall to Johnson, January 10, 1940, RA, and allots \$500 per year for each of 1940 and 1941. That for 1941–42 appears in a separate document, dated February 1, 1941; it allocates a single amount of \$500 and notes that an unexpended amount of \$500 has been carried over from the previous year.
49. "Account of Rockefeller Music Project October 27th, 1942," FML; see also "Statement of Expenses Hanns Eisler-Rockefeller Music Fund," undated (last dated entry is July 17, 1943); and "Final Report on the Film-Music Project on a Grant by the Rockefeller Foundation," October 31, 1942, RA (Eisler 1983e).
50. Evidence for this collaboration appears in a book proposal entitled "Beethoven's Sketch Books: An analysis of His Creative Process," in Eisler 1985b.
51. See Eisler 1947:86n12. The authors suggest that audiences would find it difficult to respond to a questionnaire designed to measure their reaction to film music because they were not accustomed to listening directly to the soundtrack. Questionnaires and interviews, however, could help determine whether there is actual merit in the industry's prejudice against modern music.

52. On Copland's publications and critical views about Hollywood, see Bick 2002. *Modern Music* commissioned George Antheil to write a regular column dedicated specifically to Hollywood film music entitled "On the Hollywood Front" from November 1936 until June 1939. He provided an insider's view of the industry from the perspective of an art composer and included anecdotal information and pragmatic advice about Hollywood's professional musical community.
53. Copland's most important and thorough treatment concerning Hollywood film music appears in a fifty-eight page written transcript of a lecture delivered in January 1940 at the Museum of Modern Art, immediately following his experiences writing the score for his first Hollywood picture *Of Mice and Men*. In the document, he states "My ideas after having been there [Hollywood] were so changed, were so freshened, I got so different a glimpse what the whole thing was about . . ." See Class 13, Department of Fine Arts-Columbia University, Museum of Modern Art, January 10, 1940, New York City, Copland Collection Library of Congress, Box 211, Folder 28 (hereafter MOMA lecture), 4–5.
54. Inter-office correspondence from Marshall, April 29, 1940, RA; and letter from Leo C. Rosten to Marshall, July 30, 1940, RA.
55. Eisler 1947:140. Eisler also mentions *Forgotten Village* as a feature, but it was made in New York as a documentary.
56. The other pictures Eisler cites in the "Film Music—Work in Progress" (Eisler 1940–41:251–52 and Eisler 1983a:147) are: *400 Million*, *The Living Soil*, and *White Floods*. In the Appendix to Eisler [and Adorno] 1947:140–41, 144–45, he cites *The Children's Camp* (from Losey's film *A Child Went Forth*), *Forgotten Village*, and *Nature Scenes* (from the film *The Living Soil*).
57. See Doherty 1997:398.
58. On the examples Eisler chose for the Project, see Schebera 1998:79–85.
59. Copland wrote the score for *The City* (1939), directed by Ralph Steiner and W. Van Dyke, and Virgil Thomson's innovative film scores include *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937), both directed by Pare Lorentz. Louis Greenberg wrote the music for Pare Lorentz's *The Fight for Life* (1940).
60. On the innovative documentary scores written by American composers, see Cowell 1940–41:176–78. Copland's score for *Of Mice and Men* (1939) was an exception. Although it was praised for its contemporary American idiom, his style did not become disseminated in Hollywood until the mid-1940s, beginning with the post-war film *The Best Years of Our Lives*, score by Hugo Friedhofer. See Lerner 2001:477–515.
61. In 1947, years after the completion of the Project, Eisler published his only other public statement about it in "Report on the Film Music Project," the Appendix to Eisler 1947:135–65.
62. According to Aaron Copland, for example, most American composers could not separate the method as a compositional approach from Schoenberg's high modernist style (Cone 1971:141). Only by the mid 1940s did American composers become much more interested in perusing the compositional strategies associated with Schoenberg. See Bernard 1999:316–17, 351–52; and Feisst 2008.
63. Few studios could tolerate the possibilities of risk in terms of new developments or experimentation. Hollywood composer David Raksin points out, "The stakes were so great, in almost all respects (money, prestige, 'the product,' etc.) . . . the apprenticeship aspect was manifest in a limited encouragement to experiment (a studio with deadlines to meet can't tolerate too many ineptly calculated risks)." Quotation from a letter by David Raksin to Harold Spivacke, Music Division, Library of Congress, printed in Prendergast 1992:41–42.

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64. Aaron Copland had also recommended that film music be composed in relation to the larger conceptual themes and ideas of the film's narrative (Bick 2002:53).
65. Inter-office memo, January 29, 1942, RA.
66. See Eisler, "Final Report," 156. For a published version of the demonstration talk that Eisler presumably gave at the University of California in Los Angeles and later in Hollywood, see "Contemporary Music and the Film [II]," in Eisler 1985a:479–87. In his critical commentary (1985a:478,486), Mayer suggests that this document was initially revised from a "first copy" dated October 22, 1943, on the basis of which he proposes that Eisler probably presented the lecture-demonstration between early 1944 and the summer of that year. However, Mayer's dates are only surmised and not substantiated. I would suggest, rather, that Eisler mistakenly wrote 1943 instead of 1942 on the document dated October 22 since he clearly states in the "Final Report" that one lecture demonstration was "already presented" and another was planned for January 1943. By 1944, Eisler had already abandoned the Film Music Project, was well involved in completing *Composing for the Films*, and working on the film score for *None But the Lonely Heart*.
67. See "Account of Rockefeller Music Project October 27th 1942," under "Demonstrations, etc." \$4,278.16, and under "Musicians," \$1,362.50, for a total of \$5,640.66 or over 25 percent of the total budget; see also "Statement of Expenses Hanns Eisler-Rockefeller Music Fund," undated, where the expenses for two demonstrations are itemized, RA. Eisler also confirms in a letter to Marshall, November 6, 1942, RA, "It may safely be said that the results of the project have met the keenest interest of the experts here. In December and January I am expected to present the whole material again to a some what larger group of people." Eisler also projects this second demonstration for January 1943 at the Hollywood Academy of Motion Pictures; see "Final Report," 156.
68. Inter-office correspondence from Marshall, January 15, 1942, RA: "Experimental Demonstration," 2.
69. See Eisler 1983e. Of these, only Brecht (\$250) and Schoenberg (\$300) received payment. Schebera asserts that Adorno received \$300 (1998:82), but the itemized list of expenses from 1944 lists no such payment. See also letter from Eisler to Marshall, November 6, 1942, RA.
70. Letter from Leon Kaplan (partner in the law firm Kaplan and Livingston) to Eisler, December 14, 1942, FML. This letter outlines emendations to the contract with Arnold Productions for Eisler's score for the picture "The Unconquered," the working title for *Hangmen also Die*.
71. The first exists as a draft typescript with handwritten revisions, FML, and two copies of the final typescript, FML and RA, printed as "Final Report." Eisler later published another version as the Appendix to *Composing for the Films* (Eisler [and Adorno] 1947:135–58). This version differs somewhat from the first version cited above.
72. Betz provides a complete list of Eisler's Hollywood film scores (1982:307–8).
73. Berndt Heller establishes that Eisler's score is based upon Ivens's original 1929 film version and compares it to Eisler's musical adaptation for chamber music. His analysis offers a detailed reconstruction of Eisler's musical synchronization to the screen image (Heller 1998).
74. Eisler [and Adorno] 1947:106–7. On Copland's use of woodwind techniques in his score for *Of Mice and Men*, see Bick 2005:451. Copland spoke at length about the implications of standardized symphonic styles in relation to such Hollywood composers as Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Max Steiner and Alfred Newman; see MOMA lecture, 30–34.

75. Between film and music, David Bordwell also agrees stating, “we cannot easily dismiss the premises that we do attribute movement to music, and that this movement can synchronize with our visual perception” (Bordwell 1993:188 and Kivy 1984:53–57).

76. Eisler informed his publisher at Oxford University Press, Paul Vaudrin, that Adorno would be collaborating on the book publication; see letter from Eisler to Vaudrin, November 27, 1942, FML: “I wish to inform you of the following development. Since many weeks I have been collaborating with Mr. Adorno. I feel that this collaboration goes so far that it is imperative that Dr. Adorno should be mentioned as full fledged coauthor on the title page. (By Hanns Eisler and T. W. Adorno) Also the royalties will be shared. The status of Dr. Adorno’s (*sic*) coauthorship is not only a matter of honesty but also of expediency because I feel that without his intense collaboration the completion of the book may be considerably delayed or even endangered. Please acknowledge the change of the title and 50% share of the royalties.”

77. Letter from Adorno to his parents, December 21, 1942, Theodor W. Adorno (Gödde and Henri, 2006:119). “We have something pleasing to report: Hanns Eisler, with whom I am on very good terms (and Gretel with his *very* charming wife), and who, as you probably know, is director of the Rockefeller Film Music Project, and now has to write a book about it, has asked me to write it together with him. The official confirmation from the publisher (Oxford University Press) came yesterday, stating that we both have the status of authors and will split the royalties 50:50. As I had made preparations long in advance, I will be able to manage it comfortably in my spare time. I think it will be a very substantial external success. Eisler is being *extremely* loyal. Fond regards once again!” Adorno’s emphasis. His reference to having made preparations long ago is probably related to the unpublished work he accomplished on Lazarsfeld’s Princeton Radio Project.

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