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Special Issue:
Music, Media, and Narrative in the Streaming Age

kbzf

KIELER BEITRÄGE ZUR FILMMUSIKFORSCHUNG

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Guest Editors' Foreword

Themed »Music, Media, and Narrative in the Streaming Age« this volume takes its cue from the eponymous joint annual conference of the Kieler Gesellschaft für Filmmusikforschung and the IMS Study Group Music and Media (June 6–7, 2024, at the University of Music and Theatre Munich). As representatives of the two collaborating societies, we – Julin Lee and Emile Wennekes – have taken on the role of Guest Editors to curate this »ensemble cast« of articles drawn from the conference. Since we also celebrated the fifteenth edition of the annual gatherings of MaM during the Munich conference, Emile has penned a featurette which looks back on the history of the Study Group.

Given that all presenters at this bilingual conference opted to deliver their talks in English, it may be no surprise that the seven full-length contributions in this issue appear in English as well. While the number of English-language articles is unusually high, it is by no means without precedent: the *kbzf* journal has always welcomed submissions in both German and English. Indeed, English-language articles have occasionally taken the stage alongside predominantly German companions: issue #12 (2016) featured 35% of its full-length articles in English, and issue #15 (2020) as many as 62.5%. This reflects the journal's continuing commitment both to nurturing German-language scholarship on screen music and to ensuring that international voices can be heard via our open-access platform.

We are delighted, then, to present the seven contributions of issue #19 that together capture the diversity of topics, genres, and methodologies addressed at the 2024 conference. In arranging this »playlist,« several thematic connections emerged. The first two articles examine what it means to »sound similar« in the streaming age. Júlia Durand reconsiders »soundalikes,« urging us to see them not merely as imitations but as key agents in shaping sonic identity and musical imaginaries. Matthew Day Blackmar, in turn, scrutinizes the practice of sampling in hip hop under YouTube's automated content detection systems, highlighting how copyright enforcement mechanisms continue to disadvantage Black creative vernaculars.

Voice takes center stage in the next two contributions, though approached through different media and to different ends. Stefan Greenfield-Casas explores the significance

of vocality in the construction of fictional personas in VTubing, while Misty Choi draws on theories of the acousmatic voice to analyze how music conveys the protagonist's inner voice in the Japanese film *DEPARTURES: THE GIFT OF LAST MEMORIES* (2009, Yōjirō Takita). The Japanese origins of both articles provide a bridge to the following cluster, which foregrounds questions of style. Taking a hermeneutical approach to analyze the role of pre-existing (Western classical) piano music in the Japanese anime *YOUR LIE IN APRIL* (Fuji TV, 2014–2015), Nash Hickam and Jeffrey Yuneck demonstrate how music structures the narrative in detail. Next, starting from canonical compositions from the Western art music repertoire, Tabea Umbreit traces the timbral DNA of the *danse macabre* tradition across music and film (music) history, paying special attention to »skeletal« percussion. Matters of instrumentation – and more broadly, timbre – are likewise addressed in Mattia Merlini's contribution, in which he surveys stylistic shifts in video game scoring, especially in light of evolving technological affordances.

Last but not least, conference presenter Anika Babel offers a bonus track: in lieu of a research paper, she contributes an in-depth reflection on Elsie Walker's latest monograph, *Life 24x a Second: Cinema, Selfhood, and Society*. While formally a book review, Babel's deep and sophisticated engagement with Walker's work invites readers to reflect not only on what and how we study and teach screen music today, but also – and perhaps more importantly – why. This issue concludes with three contributions in German. Henriette Engelke reviews two recent edited volumes: *Leidenschaft Filmmusik. Theorie – Praxis – Vermittlung* (eds. Hartling & Vollberg, 2024) and *Zwischen Kinosound und Game Audio. Film – Musik – Vermittlung* (eds. Krettenauer & Oberhaus, 2024). A group-authored report on the 2025 annual conference of the Kieler Gesellschaft für Filmmusikforschung offers both a vivid account of the event and an enticing preview of the journal's next issue. We hope that this collection, published in a journal whose name itself foregrounds film music, will encourage broader explorations of screen music across media genres, reflecting the evolving narratives in the streaming era – and also the narratives about them.

Julin Lee and Emile Wennekes

Munich and Utrecht, September 2025