Recomposing the Past: Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen Edited by James Cook, Alexander Kolassa and Adam Whittaker. Pp. 260+xii. Ashgate Screen Music Series (Routledge, Abingdon and New York, 2018) £115.

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The idea of the 'past' is complex and varied. Indeed, as William Faulkner famously asserted in his 1951 novel *Requiem for a Nun*, '[t]he past is never dead. It's not even past.' This assertation holds particular pertinence for the collection of essays under review here all of which concern the notion of how music in films or stage works that deal with the past frame that issue. Furthermore, and as the editors note at the outset, there is also a 'fictive quality' (p. 1) about revealing or unfurling the past cinematically. The very idea of an historical narrative – that something in the present might give us a clear purchase on the past – undermines any sense that the past is a stable and tangible concept. Indeed, such a presentation of the past tells us as much about ourselves or whomsoever is doing the telling as it does the subject of what is being told. History, either in the more positivistic sense of dealing with and confirming dates and facts or in the Foucauldian sense of 'telling stories', is what music can bring to the concept, especially as a type of 'felt' narrative. And this is indicated by the editors: '[t]his is not a book about the past. Instead, this volume is about the present and its relationship with the past, how the present rewrites the past, and perhaps even how the present itself is rewritten through our ongoing creative dialogues with the past.' (p. 6).

To interrogate and explore what they claim are the rich and differently-constituted notions of the past and especially how these positions have served fruitful creative needs, the essays in the book are grouped into three broad categories: the first 'Authenticity, appropriateness, and recomposing the past'; the second 'Music, space, and place: geography

as history'; and the final section 'Presentness and the past: dialogues between old and new'. This partitioning proves to be meaningful and clearly delineates some of the issues discussed as well the range of ideological motivations that contribute to the constructions of history in cinema.

The first section explores the purported 'fit' of music in film whether as a source feature or as scoring. The idea underpinning much of this section is an attempt to examine how the widespread 'inauthenticity' of music – its seemingly anachronistic tension with the visuals and notional period – might be more usefully investigated in its production of cinematic narrative. Approaching the position through the lens of anachronism, whilst tempting, raises further critical questions, albeit largely unconsidered, about the function of music in cinema more generally, and any historical obligations it should have to working within a purported historical accuracy of authenticity. This critical tension arises because much of the music under discussion is what might be termed 'scoring' or, for the sake of heuristic usefulness 'non-diegetic'. Because of this, one might (and indeed Daniela Fountain's chapter on the lute as an ideological as much as an historical signifier of the Renaissance, does) question the need for such music also to conform to notions of historical equivalency when a film about the early twentieth-century, for example, might not deploy music redolent of the musical styles of that period.

Furthermore, and as Mervyn Cooke ('Baroque à la Hitchcock') deftly outlines in his chapter on the music in *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) the role and function of the music may well be to contribute as much to generic expectations as to historical obedience or authenticity. Thus, a horror film set in the nineteenth-century but whose score deploys 'fractured 'or atonal textures, is doing so as much because these index the referential clichés of that generic type (at least in most mass-entertainment cinema). Cooke carefully examines this problem by arguing that generic construction and, in this case, pre-existent music that is

more (but far from precisely) contemporary with the time-period depicted co-exist for different reasons: one to support the mechanics of the storytelling and the other, to bring an audience familiar with the pre-existing baroque and classical music deployed, firmly 'into' that period in a way similar to the ways in which the rich and richly-period costumes and sets do. In general, the opening section chapters mostly do not confront the question of the paradox of music's historical identity and the need, if there were any, for it to cohere historically with the visual period setting in any great detail. James Cook's opening contribution, however, 'Representing Renaissance Rome: Beyond anachronism in Showtime's *The Borgias* (2011)' does engage with this problem by asserting (entirely correctly in my view) that the anachronistic use of Handel's *Zadok the Priest* during the processional scene leading to the coronation of Pope Alexander Sextus in 1492 does not undermine the authenticity even though, paradoxically the music is entirely anachronistic, but rather that it demonstrates a way of understanding how 'the evocation of the past in popular media is worthy of detailed analysis since it tells us as much about how we, in the present, conceive of it.' (pg. 17). It does not necessarily follow, however, that there was ever a concern for music's lesser role (and thus a looser concern for historical synergy between music and image) but rather that the slippery hermeneutics of musical deployment especially in mixed media such as film, highlight music's emotional rather than its positivistic (historically accurate) engagement with the production of narrative. For Woody Allen, J.S. Bach is often deployed to invoke the intellectual, for emotional detachment and philosophical rigour. It does not invoke period sensitivity (there is nothing Baroque in late twentieth-century Manhattan). In the same way, *Zadok the Priest* in *The Borgias* captures the pomp and ceremony of the occasion – an occasion in the past which Handel, though from a 'different' past, popularly conjures up. The fact that this series is ultimately a human and 'familiar' drama is carefully summed up by Cook who argues that the focus on the characters

suggests that the historical period is of lesser narrative significance than the interpretation of those characters' lives and interactions and it is that for which the music is responsible.

The wider hermeneutic manifestation of history in film is interrogated, in broad terms, in the second and third sections of the book. The second section in particular invites an examination of the ideological charge that music brings with it (in general but especially) in historical films. One wonders here whether these contributions which are all good, solid and well-researched pieces, each addressing a germane and under-discussed area are, to a certain extent, recapitulating the central function of film music more generally: namely the paradoxical attempt to suture spectators into the otherwise implausible narrative unfolding before them and thus countering what Lawrence Kramer characterised as the alienating flatness of the two-dimensional screen. Perhaps this should override concerns of historical authenticity or congruity if one accepts the mechanics of musical deployment are really for the production of narrative. There is also the question of whether historical films may themselves, in certain cases, constitute a genre or at least participate in one.

The second section of *Recomposing the Past* engages with some of these issues by considering a wider ambit of what early music's (or 'neo-early music's) use in film might connote. Therefore, as Simon Nugent sets out in his chapter 'Celtic music and Hollywood cinema', how the use of Celtic music largely activated a sense of a medieval past or a place to be read as medieval or folkloreish or as a nostalgic construction of 'a return to a pre-modern age' (pg. 120). Such a position both extrapolates how the historical might justifiably be understood as having some referential dimension but how it might also stand referentially for something didactic and almost mechanical as William Gibbon's exemplary contribution, 'Little harmonic labyrinths', on the use of Baroque (or Baroque-style music – Gibbon's consciously avoids using 'neobaroque' even though that would have worked) in 1980s Nintendo games (Nintendo Entertainment Systems).

The final fascinating section claims to differentiate itself from the preceding sections by considering how the recruitment of historical material might stimulate creativity in the present. However, the distinction is not really necessary since the varied nature of the contributions can be loosely framed as inspired by the past. Alexander Kolassa's piece opens the section and focuses on late twentieth-century British operas that draw on the musical past (especially Peter Maxwell Davies' *Taverner* and Alexander Goehr's *Ariana*). The fascination that this period of British contemporary music had with earlier music (usually seventeenth century or earlier) is interesting and Kolassa does an excellent job of articulating the creative structures that lie behind this music, especially that which was post-1945. This examination departs from the largely screen focus of much of the rest of the volume and even, in some ways, from the stage later on but this is no bad thing, though fruitful areas of discussion remain absent, no doubt for reasons of space, such as a potential consideration of Oliver Knussen's direct use and reimagining of the past in *Music for a Puppet Court* (1983).

Medievalism and, more broadly perhaps, the creative imagining of the past reappears in the final section but, in fact, that issue has touched many other contributions throughout the volume. Fittingly, the issue also concludes the work with a final, multi-authored, chapter that considers neo-medievalism, fantasy and *Game of Thrones*. However, because this series –famously – plays with both ideas of the past and generic conventions, might it not also be reasonable to see this concatenation of the medieval past, as nebulous as it is here constituted, as yet another example, musically but also cinematically, of the deployment of music as much for narrative-fantasy as for the historical? The authors, of course acknowledge this and even meaningfully suggest that a new critical framework might be required to deal with the past as fantasy because, in the end, returning loosely to Foucault, is it not always a case of presenting the past but 'reproduc[ing] the past to make it present.' (pg. 246).

This is a strong collection of essays that is certainly to be recommended. Ultimately, however, any review, and particularly one that surveys a collection of essays, cannot attempt to capture the full sense of the critical arguments that are activated and engaged with. Many noteworthy case studies and arguments, not to mention whole chapters have, for reasons of space, had to be omitted. This work is rewarding for all who have an interest in film music, for fans and critics alike. It offers an introduction to an under-represented and understudied areas of the discipline as well as recapitulating more familiar territory and repertoires. There remains, however, the question of 'representation' that the title declares. One wonder perhaps whether the examinations of music contained in this book really constitute a presentation as much as (or perhaps more than) representation because they are so much bound up with questions of authenticity or generic engagement on the one hand and with the popular conjuring of place or space on the other.