

The Early Film Music of Dmitry Shostakovich (Oxford Music / Media)

By Joan Titus

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In the late 1920s, Dmitry Shostakovich emerged as one of the first Soviet film composers. With his first score for the silent film New Babylon (1928-29) and the many sound scores that followed, he was situated to observe and participate in the changing politics of the film industry and negotiate the role of the film composer. In The Early Film Music of Dmitry Shostakovich, author Joan Titus examines the relationship between musical narration, audience, filmmaker, and composer in six of Shostakovich's early film scores, from 1928 through 1936. Titus engages with the construct of Soviet intelligibility, the filmmaking and scoring processes, and the cultural politics of scoring Soviet film music, asking how listeners hear and see Shostakovich. The discussions of the scores are enriched by the composer's own writing on film music, along with archival materials and recently discovered musical manuscripts that illuminate the collaborative processes of the film teams, studios, and composer. The Early Film Music of Dmitry Shostakovich commingles film/media studies, musicology, and Russian studies , and is sure to be of interest to a wide audience including those in music studies, film/media scholars, and Slavicists.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Joan Titus's exciting book on Dmitry Shostakovich richly demonstrates the importance of a synthetic approach to music studies - in this case, a study of how a young, classically trained composer learned to write for popular new media and developed as an artist in the process. Titus illustrates how the composer coped with the challenges, both technical and political, in producing sounds, scores, and songs for each movie and how he eventually pioneered successful models of film music that were intelligible for the masses."--Beth Holmgren, Duke University

"With an impressive set of scholarly tools that span many methods and disciplines and an essential companion website that contains clips from difficult-to-find early Soviet films, Titus's study of Shostakovich's early film scores adroitly introduces a new world of important details and ideas to our understanding of both Shostakovich's music as well as Soviet cinema and culture."--Neil Lerner, Davidson College

"A welcome addition to the ever-growing field of film music studies. Joan Titus has brought the complex contexts for early Soviet film and film music to vivid life. Hers is that rare kind of interdisciplinary study that benefits both from her extensive knowledge of period documents and willingness to engage with questions of interest to scholars today. Her book also provides tantalizing new insights and speculations on the cross-influences of soundtracks and symphonies in Shostakovich's compositional career."--David Haas, University of Georgia

About the Author

Joan Titus is an associate professor of musicology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. With a background in musicology, film studies, and Slavic, her research interests span cultural politics, music for Russian/Soviet film, gender and music, and indigenous music.

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