

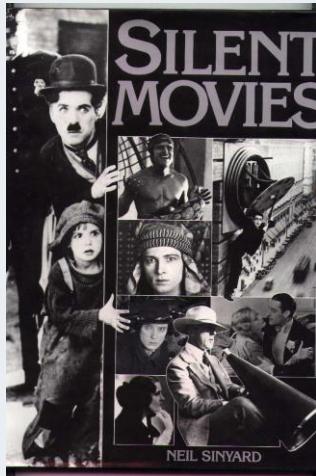


# EARLY FILM MUSIC

5 MINUTES READING #2

*“Beautiful film music can be made relevant to any period.”*

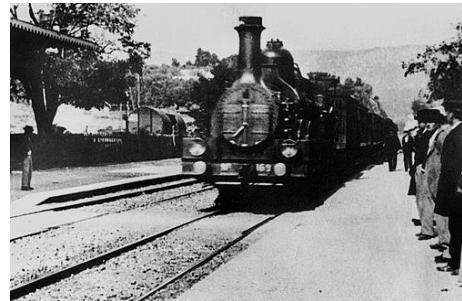
- A. R. Rahman



Questions to think about:

1. When and where did cinema “officially begin”?
2. Why did cinema organs become popular in the 1920’s?
3. What three types of “existing music” were first used for providing musical accompaniments to films?
4. Can you think of any pieces of “mood music” that have been used frequently either in films or the media in general?

The cinema officially began in Paris in 1895 with the first public screening of Louis Lumière’s film The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station (you can watch this short video by searching for this on YouTube®). Even in those early days the cinema was never really “silent”, even in the days before the invention of sound recording. Live musical accompaniments were always a part of film presentation from the very beginning. Lumière himself, for example, advertised that a saxophone quartet would accompany a film presentation at his theatre in Paris in 1897, so it wasn’t just a “cottage piano” that would provide the music.



As time went on, cinema orchestras large and small provided considerable enjoyment for musicians, so much so that this was one of the reasons for the rise of the cinema organ in the 1920’s by means of which “orchestral” sounds could be produced by just one performer!

The typical method of providing a musical accompaniment was to compile a score from existing concert, operatic and ballet music. The reasons for this weren’t simply those of cost. True, it was much easier to use existing music, but the main advantage of such an approach was that repertoire works already carried with them a host of extra-musical connotations, particularly in the repertoire of “programmatic” works from the nineteenth century.



Various libraries of “mood music” were compiled and included dramatic music by composers such as Grieg and Wagner e.g. the horse ride of the Ku Klux Klan taking place to the accompaniment of Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyries”. This approach is still used today with libraries of “mood music” recordings which are often used in advertising and television.