

# POPULAR SONGS AND INSTRUMENTALS IN 1930S AUSTRALIAN FEATURE FILMS

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## Abstract

Seven feature films produced in Australia in the 1930s are analysed to examine professional practices in the use of music. The focus is on the way songs and instrumentals are used diegetically in the films selected for the study, rather than the use of music for underscore. Judgments are made about how diegetic music is employed to enhance the entertainment value of the films, to exploit the versatile talents of the actors, and to reflect the cultural values of the characters. The way that music interacts with film narrative structure is also considered.

## Keywords

1930s Australian films, diegetic songs, instrumentals, underscore

This study examines the songs and instrumentals of a selection of feature films made in the 1930s in Australia at the beginning of the sound film era. The songs are all performed diegetically (i.e. as part of the narrative action) on-screen (or occasionally off-screen) and the instrumentals are a mixture of diegetic music performed on-screen or off-screen or used as underscore for titles or action sequences without dialogue. The term 'instrumentals' is used here to indicate pieces of music that are usually in the European classical music standard repertoire and thus recognisable to many listeners, for example Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in C sharp minor* for solo piano (1892) and Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No 1* for orchestra (1901), two works that appear in the films being studied. The term "underscore" refers to instrumental music specially composed or adapted which is intended to enhance the mood of the narrative but is not a realistic part of it.

The songs and instrumentals of the following films are discussed in detail in this article: *The Squatter's Daughter* (Ken G. Hall, 1933), *The Hayseeds* (Beaumont Smith, 1933), *Uncivilised* (Charles Chauvel, 1935), *Lovers and Luggers* (Ken G. Hall, 1937), *The Broken Melody* (Ken G. Hall, 1938), *Come Up Smiling* (William Freshman, 1939) and *Gone to the Dogs* (Ken G. Hall, 1939).

The methods used in this study include the application of audio-visual theories of how music works in film (Atkins, 1983; Gorbman, 1987; Buhler,

2001) to the analysis of the selected film texts. Theories about how diegetic music works in film are not covered in the literature as well as theories about how non-diegetic dramatic underscoring works. However, some of the same considerations apply to diegetic as they do to non-diegetic music. Gorbman's "codes of film music" can be applied to both kinds (Gorbman, 1987: 13). Her concept of "pure musical codes" is relevant to diegetic performances where the audience focuses on an "aesthetic mode of contemplating" music, for example, the melodic, structural, textural or timbral aspect of the musical item itself, or the skills of musical performance or of stagecraft of the person or persons performing. The aesthetic appreciation of musical works and of their performers can apply to the audience reception of all of the films under discussion and is arguably one source of the entertainment value of each film. More potent and relevant to the selection of films, however, is Gorbman's notion of "cultural musical codes". All musical styles, and indeed specific musical works, have powerful cultural associations, and these will vary according to the cultural literacy and experience of the listener and with the use of particular musical styles or specific work in various performance and audio-visual media. For example Strauss's *The Blue Danube* waltz may conjure up specific images of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Viennese courtly ballroom. The contemporary listener may also associate it with some of the many films in which it has been used (e.g. *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Strictly Ballroom*) or with some of its notable performers (e.g. André Rieu). All these intertextual experiences will modify the cultural interpretation. With the selection of films under discussion an attempt has been made to analyse the cultural coding of each piece of diegetic and non-diegetic music, and to reveal any narrative interplay tied to the cultural codes of the various musical cues.

In discussing the "value" of diegetic music in feature films, Buhler (2001: 43) identifies "a heavy interpretive bias towards the symphonic non-diegetic score", concluding that "symphonic sound is opposed to the dance band, 'classical' music to popular (jazz, or later rock), and, therefore high art and aesthetic values are set against low art and commercial value". Although symphonic underscore plays a back-seat to diegetic songs and instrumentals in the films under discussion in this article, it will be argued that the same binary oppositions occurs within the diegetic music cues themselves, that popular and classical music diegetic cues are used as oppositional class signifiers.

In the discourse about the function of diegetic music in film, Gorbman (1987: 22–26) outlines a number of issues that have limited pertinence to the films under discussion here. Because of the primitive audio-visual technology available in 1930s Australia, music could not be effectively used under dialogue (Buys, 2004: 28), so Gorbman's notions of "irony" (p. 23) and "indifference" (p. 24) between dialogue and music were techniques yet to be explored. Likewise the power to create a sense of "depth and space" (p. 25) through subtle changes in the amplitude and audio spectral content of musical cues, was extremely difficult to achieve.

Diegetic music in film is alternatively referred to as "source music" (Atkins, 1983). Atkins' study explores the use of source music in American cinema, outlining three main categories for its use (p. 21):

1. *One or more of the chief protagonists is a musician, a composer, performer, or combination of the two.*
2. *One of the protagonists is a would-be performer, usually a failure as one.*
3. *The source music is part of the milieu in which the characters appear, either briefly or throughout the film.*

The films under discussion fit into these categories. Atkins (1983: 50) also outlines “three specific types of source music”. These are:

*...popular songs as performed in the nostalgia film; serious concert music composed for specific motion pictures; and ethnic source music, both ancient and non-Western.*

These types of source music are also all represented in the films selected for this study.

As historical context for this study, reference is also made below to Kalinak (1992), Buys (2004), Phillips (2003), Donnelly (2001), Naphthali (1998), Pike and Cooper (1998), Tulloch (1982) and Wierzbicki (2009).

To conduct this research, the author was able to access and analyse Australian feature film texts from the 1930s during a period of research at the Australian Film and Sound Archive in January–February, 2008.

Although the selected films for the study are predominantly directed by the most successful film-maker of this decade, Ken G. Hall, they provide a good coverage of the different approaches for the use of music in film in the 1930s period of Australian feature film making. Three of these films, *Lovers and Luggers*, *The Broken Melody* and *Come Up Smiling* have main characters who are professional musicians, thus giving rise to the diegetic introduction of songs and instrumentals that are central to their plots. *The Hayseeds*, *Gone to the Dogs* and *Uncivilised* are films that incorporate significant sequences of music to showcase the musical talents of their leading actors. *The Squatter's Daughter*, *The Hayseeds* and *Uncivilised* use diegetic music sequences as signifiers of race and class difference.

All of the films being discussed here have at least some underscore as well as diegetic songs and instrumentals. Although underscore may be referred to briefly in parts of the article, it is not its focus. Ironically, however, it was an investigation of underscore in early Australian sound-era films that led to the particular selection chosen here for discussion of diegetic music. Broadly speaking the films initially selected had credits relating to the composition of music (usually songs) or to “musical direction”. Here the term “musical direction” refers to the practice of selecting already composed music from a hire library of scores for use as underscore in a film. The musical director's role was to ‘illustrate’ the film. This included deciding where music was needed (“spotting”), selecting appropriate repertoire, doing any necessary arranging or adaptation of the chosen scores and conducting the music cues in recording sessions (Buys, 2004: 5–6). This approach to the placement of music in film can be seen to be a carry-over from the silent film era, when music was invariably chosen from existing musical repertoire either found in

specially created anthologies of keyboard music, such as Lang and West (1920), Rapée (1925), and Beynon (1921), or alternatively available in commercial music hire libraries.

Nineteen of the twenty five Australian feature films produced in the years 1930 to 1934 have no music credits. In this period music credits are only given to Barney Cuthbert for *Fellers* (Arthur Higgin and Austin Fay, 1930), to Jack O'Hagen and Ormond Bulmers for *Showgirl's Luck* (Norman Dawn, 1931), to Alaric Howard and George Wallace for *His Royal Highness* (F.W. Thring, 1931), to Frank Chapple and Tom King for *The Squatter's Daughter*, to Lionel Hart for *In the Wake of the Bounty* (Charles Chauvel, 1933), to Alf Laurance and Frank Chapple for *The Hayseeds*, to The Early Victorians for *The Secret of the Skies* (A.R. Harwood, 1934) and to Hamilton Webber for *Strike Me Lucky* (Ken G. Hall, 1934). With the exception of Lionel Hart (who was given a "musical director" credit) these are all song-writing credits. Comparing the approach to music in silent films to that of early sound films, Kalinak (1992: 40) states that the 'continuous playing and selective reproduction of diegetic sound' in silent film screening practice was replaced by "intermittent music and faithful reproduction of diegetic sound" in the sound era. The scarcity of music in Australian feature films of the early 1930s reinforces this observation. As indicated above, in the early days of sound it was technically difficult to use underscored music simultaneously with dialogue or sound effects (Buys, 2004: 28). Thus much of the music used was performed onscreen or used under scenes that had no dialogue or sound effects.

By the mid-1930s sound technology for the inclusion of underscored music had improved (Buys, 2004: 8–9). From 1935 to 1939, twenty-one of the twenty-four Australian feature films produced had music credits either for musical direction, composition or song-writing. The most dominant musical figure in this period for film making is Hamilton Webber who provided "musical direction" for all but two of the eleven films made by the most prolific director, Sydney-based Ken G. Hall. Webber was also credited as a composer (of the music for the songs) for Hall's *Strike me Lucky*, and there is evidence in the form of hand-written cues held by the National Library of Australia that he wrote or arranged substantial underscore for *Lover and Luggers*.

While the role of the musical director was a carry-over into sound film production from silent film exhibition, live musical and variety entertainment was also translated into the making of feature films in the early days of the Australian sound film. Hall's Melbourne-based rival, Frank W. Thring, developed a story around the war-time entertainment troupe in *Diggers* (1931) and created a "fantasy-operetta" (Shirley and Adams, 1983: 115) to capitalise on the versatile talents of vaudeville performer, George Wallace, in *His Royal Highness* (1932). Later, Ken G. Hall ventured, less successfully, into the vaudeville-based feature film with *Strike Me Lucky*, which featured comedian Roy 'Mo' Rene (Shirley and Adams, 1983: 146).

Ken G. Hall (1901–1994) was a pioneer of 1930s Australian feature film making, working for Cinesound Productions Limited. Hall was responsible for the formation of Cinesound when he persuaded his employer, Stuart Doyle (head of Union Theatres), to adopt an optical sound recording system developed by Tasmanian audio technician, Arthur Smith, thereby

circumventing the punishing royalty payments demanded by American companies for the new film sound technologies (Buys, 2004: 8–9). Hall made seventeen feature films for Cinesound, as well as many hundreds of Cinesound Review newsreels and other documentary productions. He won Australia's first Academy Award in 1942 for his documentary, *Kokoda Front Line!* (Ken G. Hall, 1942), and was also an innovator in the fledgling Australian television industry (Buckley, 1994). As a feature film-maker, Hall's focus was on entertainment rather than art (Buckley, 1994). According to Buys (2004: 9), Hall aspired to the Hollywood studio system, where the "financial success of one film was relied on to finance subsequent films". It was this formula that made Hall the most successful and prolific film-maker in the first decade of Australian feature sound film. Many of Hall's films had spectacular climactic scenes, for example the bush fire in *The Squatter's Daughter*, the felling of an entire forest by dynamiting in *Tall Timbers* (1937), the elaborately staged operetta in *The Broken Melody* and the bursting dam in *Dad Rudd M.P.* (1940). Entertainment in the form of comedy, song and dance was also a priority in Hall's approach to making feature films appealing to the masses.

Despite parallels between the sound-era film industries in Australia and the United States and other countries, the Australian industry's approach to the provision of music lagged behind the trend elsewhere for the composition of new orchestral music to underscore films. In order to avoid paying high mechanical reproduction rights for existing songs to be included in sound films, Hollywood producers developed a set of new business models including buying up music publishing companies, creating their own publishing companies, and commissioning new works as 'works for hire' (Wierzbicki, 2009: 114–116). Several dozen Hollywood film studios hired large orchestras and contracted teams of musical specialists such as arrangers, composers and conductors (Wierzbicki, 2009: 113–114). Whereas the background music performed for silent films had been largely adapted by "musical directors" from existing libraries of music, a new practice developed for the creation of original non-diegetic scores. Phillips (2003: 8–9) describes this original music phenomenon:

*The early 1930s saw the rise of the 'symphonic style' music score. Noted composers such as Shostakovitch, Schoenberg, Holst, Prokofiev, Steiner, Waxman, Korngold, Britten, Rozsa, Copland, Tiomkin, Jaubert, to name a few, set the stage for what we now know as the cinematic Hollywood-style movie score and "The Golden Age of Cinema". Music was influenced by the late nineteenth-century Romantic period composers, such as Puccini, Verdi, Mahler, [Richard] Strauss, Wagner and Brahms.*

Here Phillips lists prominent concert composers from the US, Russia, France and England, including European immigrant composers to the US who became specialists in Hollywood film music scoring. In the 1930s Australian context, the lack of infrastructure for orchestral music composition and for synchronisation of music to film as well as the unavailability of experienced composers, meant that this original music orchestral underscore practice for feature film making was effectively delayed by a decade compared to the situation in the US, Russia, England and France. Thus although orchestral underscored cues exist in some Australia feature films in the 1930s, it is largely orchestrated repertoire music from library sources, and the musical

focus of these films is predominantly on diegetic songs and well-known instrumental pieces.

The use of diegetic songs and instrumentals in the films selected for this study is analysed below.

### The Squatter's Daughter

Ken G. Hall's *The Squatter's Daughter* is a film about the rivalry between two sheep stations, Enderby and Waratah, with villains on Waratah trying to destroy Enderby by devious criminal means. According to the film's credits, Frank Chapple and Tom King provided "musical numbers", mostly (diegetic) music performed onscreen as part of the narrative. Although music fulfils an important narrative function of articulating class and cultural difference, its placement is intermittent with large time gaps between cues.

At the beginning of the film there is a scrolled patriotic message from the Australian Prime Minister (Joseph Lyons) underscored by a military band fanfare and march. When the credits roll there is a segue to Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No 1*. This famous orchestral work (featured annually in the Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall) in its well-known vocal form (the song setting with lyrics by Arthur C. Benson titled 'Land of Hope and Glory') refers to England and specifically to the occasion of the coronation of King Edward VII. The music proceeds ironically to accompany shots of ten thousand sheep in the Australian outback (Hall, 1980: 60). Despite this audio/visual dissonance, it is a good example of the use of a memorable tune and orchestral "grandeur" to support the spectacular images of the vast mob of sheep (Gorbman, 1987: 68). It is fair to say that Australia had no homegrown musical works that could provide the same kind of stirring "projection of Australiana" that Hall was aiming for (Hall, 1980: 58). When instrumentals, such as *Pomp and Circumstance March No 1* have words associated with them and we hear them without the lyrics, we can still associate the lyrics with them, thus adding another level of meaning to the cinematic experience. There are other examples of this phenomenon in the films selected for discussion in this article.

The second music segment of the film is a slow romantic ballad 'The Moon and I Love You' sung by the squatter's daughter, Joan Enderby, accompanying herself at a grand piano in the family homestead. She is alone and dressed elegantly for dinner which she is about to have with a mysterious guest, Wayne, who she has taken in after she discovers him injured from a riding accident while she was out riding herself. This musical scene is one of several in the film that reinforce the class of the main characters. The grand piano and competent pianism in Australian historical films are typical signifiers of wealth and (usually female) artistic accomplishment. For example, the Aboriginal orphan in *Jedda* (Charles Chauvel, 1955) who has been shielded from her own race by a grazier and his wife and raised as if she were a European girl, plays a grand piano in a key scene of the story. Other examples of this kind of scene are found in *The Hayseeds* (Beaumont Smith, 1933), *The Broken Melody* (Ken G. Hall, 1938), and *The Man From Snowy River* (George Miller, 1982). The

significance of the piano for Australian pioneering families is well expressed by Covell (1967: 21):

*Middle-class values have rarely expressed themselves with more touching gallantry than in the sacrifices and discomforts endured by countless families in order to bring this cumbersome symbol of higher values to their chosen home in small unstable ships and on grinding bullock drays.*

As if to provide class contrast through music, the next two cues are a fragment of hillbilly yodelling performed by a female servant, Poppy, and some bagpipe tunes played discordantly for comic effect by one of the farm hands, Scotty.

The centrepiece of music in the film is a diegetic sequence for a lavish party at the Waratah homestead. It involves a jazz dance orchestra, the “first-rate Jim Coates Orchestra” (Naphthali, 1999: 333), which provides on-screen background music for the dancing and squattocracy banter. The fact that the host can afford to import a dance orchestra from the city for a homestead party, is another indicator of wealth and privilege. The dance music and dancing are interrupted for a featured performance by an indigenous gumleaf band. The Waratah Station patriarch, Old Ironbark (Barky), tells his visiting English friend, Cartwright, that the players are “his Abo boundary riders”. Painted up and looking decidedly uncomfortable amongst the elegantly attired guests, they play a unison version of a military march, the tune splitting into thirds for the final phrase. Barky sees the group as an exotic and amusing entertainment for his guests (There is an enthusiastic burst of applause at the end of the performance), but his boundary riders look very unamused by their assignment. Naphthali (1998: 331–332) reports that Ken G Hall, like his Barky character, had similar attitudes to the musicians: he didn’t pay them anything, and was critical of their attitude and behaviour on the set, and he used them not because he liked the music, but because they were a popular novelty act in Sydney at the time.

The Jim Coates jazz orchestra plays a number of sophisticated contrasting dance pieces for the party scene, the last of which is a jazz waltz version of the song ‘The Moon and I Love You’. Beginning with a tenor singing the lyrics, it becomes an instrumental as background for a conversation where one of the guests looking out the window suggests the moon must be rising. In fact, as Barky surmises, it is a bush fire approaching. The bush fire will eventually feature in the climax of the story.

Another song is introduced immediately after the lavish party scene. Zena, the Afghani girlfriend of Jimmy, Joan’s partly disabled brother, sings a love song to Jimmy accompanying herself on a guitar. Her guitar performance is poorly mimed, as her basic strumming bears no relation to the more complex jazzy textures of the guitar part, performed on the set off-screen by a professional guitarist. It would have been much more effective to keep the guitar part simpler to match the miming, and also to decide on appropriate musical skills that might reasonably be expected of this particular character.

It is not until after the dramatic bushfire fighting/survival scene that for the first time in the film some music is introduced which underscores the action

and also the dialogue between Joan and Jimmy. A very slow sad tune with an accompaniment of repeated string chords is used to support the mood of the aftermath of the bushfire and the tragedy of the death of Jimmy's heroic dog, Bidgee. This segues to a medley of happy familiar tune fragments, including Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song' (Op. 62 No. 6) and 'Wedding March' (from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), used to bring the narrative to an harmonious close as Wayne (now revealed as the heir of Waratah) and Joan are united. This segment is a good example of the typical scoring practice in this era of stringing together well-known tunes with particular cultural associations rather than commissioning original music.

## The Hayseeds

Frank Chapple is also credited for the "musical numbers" of *The Hayseeds*, this time collaborating with Alf Lawrance (incorrectly spelt "Lawrence" in the titles). Although this film is subtitled 'An Australian Musical Comedy' it is much more focused on comedy than on music, although, from its outset, a musical scenario is emphasised. Under a shot of a dirt road in a tall forest, we can hear a band approaching accompanied by martial drumming. A choir with quasi-operatic voices is added as we see a band of hikers coming up the road. They are singing a hiking song 'Back Down the Old Bush Trail' as they walk, but the instrumentalists are nowhere to be seen. Having arrived at a clearing, one of the hikers, Henry, sings a song titled 'Let's Call it a Day'. A cut to the Hayseed family homestead shows their attention drawn to the sound of the singing. Another cut introduces the film's female lead, Mary Townleigh, one of the hikers. There is a further cut to the Jim Coates jazz band which is providing on-screen live music accompaniment for Henry to sing the song 'We Will Hike Back Home Again' in a light operatic style. A group of female hikers does a choreographed soft-shoe shuffle to a more up-tempo section of the music.

Despite the early prominence of music and dance, the singing/dancing/hiking group is always narratively in the background, apart from the characters Mary and Henry. Members of the Hayseed family complain that the music is upsetting their cows, but that is the extent of their interaction with the hikers until the end of the story when the singing is heard again in the distance, and Dad announces: "We'll go and join them for a jamboree". This presents an opportunity for Henry to sing 'Let's Call It A Day' and for the female hiker group to perform a Busby Berkeley-style dance routine, filmed from above, to the jazz band music. Tulloch (1982: 13) considers this sequence is a blatant reference to the Hollywood film *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1933) and a good example of "the media imperialism thesis" where "a dependent economy within a capitalist world system absorbs the media content and consumerist values of the dominant power". In support of this thesis, Tulloch notes that by 1925 "Australia was importing over 90 per cent of her films from the United States." (p. 14). An alternative view is that the Busby Berkeley homage is an example of intertextuality in film.

While this musical entertainment strategy frames the narrative, the romantic plot is also driven by diegetic song. Mary becomes lost in the bush, injures her leg, and is drawn to the sound of the prospector John Manners crooning

a song ('Night in the Bush') accompanying himself on guitar at his bush camp site. John then helps the injured Mary back to the Hayseed homestead. Later at the Townleigh family's home on Sydney Harbour, Mary, accompanying herself on a grand piano, sings John's song 'Night in the Bush', thus signalling her growing romantic obsession with him.

The musical highlight of the film is an impassioned vocal duet 'I've Answered your Call of Love' between Mary and John at a point in the story where it seems that the relationship may be devastated by the accusation (falsely promulgated by Henry) that John has committed fraud. This was filmed on the balcony of the Townleigh mansion overlooking Sydney Harbour, with a small band of backing musicians performing the accompaniment off-camera.

The only other song used in the film is 'The Wild Colonial Boy', sung pitifully by Dad Hayseed and his son Joe as they arrive back at the Townleigh's home after an afternoon of heavy drinking. The Hayseeds had been invited to stay with the Townleighs in Sydney because of their kindness towards Mary when she had sustained her leg injury.

The source of much of the humour in this film is the contrast between the crude manners of the Hayseed family and the poshness of the Townleigh family. This is musically reflected by the contrast between the Hayseed's tastes (as typified by the drunken rendition of "The Wild Colonial Boy") and the Townleigh's (as represented by Mary's refined adaptation of 'Night in the Bush' at the grand piano). The film also exploits the singing talents of John Moore (Henry) and his entertainment company, Music in the Air, of which Cecil Kellaway (Dad) and Shirley Dale (Mary) were also members.

## Uncivilised

This same tactic is used in *Uncivilised* where Dennis Hoey, an English actor and baritone singer, was cast in the lead role of Mara. Pike and Cooper (1980: 228) give the following summary of the improbable plot of *Uncivilised*:

*A successful high-society authoress, Beatrice Lynn, travels into the wilds of northern Australia to investigate the story of a primitive Aboriginal tribe ruled by a white king, Mara. On the way she is kidnapped by an Afghan trader who takes her into the land where the strange song of the white chieftain echoes through the jungle. Mara buys Beatrice from the Afghan and tries to win her love. After many adventures, including opium smuggling and a battle with an Aboriginal killer, Beatrice grows to love Mara and decides to remain with him in his jungle domain.*

To take advantage of Dennis Hoey's vocal prowess, Mara is assigned three diegetic songs. The first is a mock African-American spiritual (sounding a bit like 'Ol' Man River'), performed on Beatrice's arrival in his village. The third is a love song for Beatrice which ends the film. Both these songs are presented diegetically with non-diegetic orchestral accompaniment. The second is a song with lyrics intended to give the impression Mara is singing in an Aboriginal language as part of a corroboree in which he is expected to

participate. The song is accompanied by diegetic drumming and non-diegetic orchestral and choral elements. The lyrics transcribe as:

*Urilee moolicar*  
*Grickeegar cigaree*  
*Dickaree jikaree*  
*Moolicar jikaree*  
*Grickeegar cigaree*  
*Lee*

Despite this bizarre verbal invention, *Uncivilised* is the first Australian feature film to incorporate a significant amount of indigenous diegetic music. The location of the filming was Palm Island off the north east coast of North Queensland—an extended internment camp for supposedly ‘troublesome’ indigenous individuals from various parts of Queensland, and the indigenous extras were drawn from this community.

Appropriately in this regard, the diegetic music appears to be mixture of Torres Strait Islander and ‘Top End’ indigenous styles. When Beatrice first arrives at Mara’s camp, in the background the tribe are performing a unison chant on a single tone accompanied by clap sticks; after the tribe believes that Mara has found a (white) wife there is a ceremonial dance sequence of regular repeated shouting (the syllable “hee”) with a two-beat clap stick pattern performed between each shout and a tumbling strain vocal melody sung over the groove; to accompany a scene with the tribal witchdoctor, beat-less group wailing is used; a didjeridu and clap stick piece is employed as background for various indoor conversations; and in a ceremonial dance scene a regular beat on a resonant low-pitched drum underpins group unison chanting. From this particular scene (approximately 48 minutes into the film) a strategy to merge indigenous music (or indigenous-sounding music) with Western instrumental and vocal elements is employed. This cue is the start of Mara’s song with quasi-language lyrics as described above.

As the drama intensifies more and more diegetic indigenous musical elements are employed. The regular drum beats give way to more flamboyant often irregular bursts of drumming; and underscoring the battle scene between Mara’s and Moopil’s tribes we hear frenetic drumming and intensely active orchestral textures (at times drowned out by the battle cries).

Lindley Evans, who also scored Charles Chauvel’s *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940) and *The Rats of Tobruk* (1944), is credited in *Uncivilised* for “musical arrangement”, but the non-diegetic elements of the score involve considerable compositional invention. The main title uses a variety of themes and motifs that will subsequently surface throughout the film for various underscoring purposes. This is a typical musical strategy used in the overtures of operas and musical theatre works. Evans (1983: 150) reports in a memoir that he later turned several cues for *Uncivilised* (including that of the corroboree scene) into full orchestral works.

## Lovers and Luggers

In *Lovers and Luggers* the lead character, Daubenny Carshott, is a concert pianist who tires of concertising and goes looking for adventure as a pearl diver. He is prompted by the demands of the woman he loves, Stella Raff, who tells him she will only marry him if he dives for and finds a pearl for her. At the beginning of the film, set in London, he plays Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in C sharp minor* in a concert, and soon after the concert we hear him playing for Stella, in her luxury apartment, the last five bars of Liszt's *Liebesträume* (Notturmo III) with exaggerated rubato. When she remarks "Do you always make love by playing other men's music?" he bangs the keyboard of her grand piano in frustration.

He plays the whole of the famous Liszt work later for his new friends on Thursday Island, in the Torres Strait. His dazzling performance is heard mostly off-screen as his audience is sitting on the host's verandah in the balmy evening air, listening and talking with amazement of his virtuosity and with nostalgia for the cultural delights of European civilisation; but towards the end of his performance Lorna Quidley (the woman Daubenny eventually falls for after finding out Stella is two-timing), joins him in the living room. There he is seen playing on her upright piano, arguably an instrument symbolising social status on Thursday Island, but none the less lower status than the grand piano in Stella's apartment. In the ensuing conversation Daubenny reveals cryptically that he is still thinking of his love for Stella. The third *Liebesträume* was originally conceived by Liszt as a song setting of the poem 'O Lieb' by Ferdinand Freiligrath with the text of the poem included on the piano score (Liszt, 1972: 44):

*O Love! O love, so long as e'er thou canst, or dost on love believe,  
The time shall come, when thou by graves shalt stand and grieve.*

In this scene the piano piece and associated text can be interpreted as a commentary on the fact that the following day Daubenny will be undertaking his first perilous dive for the pearl to secure Stella's love and his marriage to her.

In an earlier scene as background to another verandah conversation between Captain Quidley (Lorna's father) and Daubenny, Lorna plays (off-screen) "a piece which sounds like a piano arrangements of a song by an American musical theatre songwriter such as Cole Porter, rather than a classical piano piece".

The cultural contrast between the classical and the popular is however best illustrated by a song written by Jim Donlevy, 'Desire' (Donlevy, n.d.). This is sung by Lilian Frith in China Tom's bar on Thursday Island, a venue where all the pearl industry men socialise. She is dressed exotically in bikini top and grass skirt and her performance is decidedly risqué. The song lyrics express a much more basic approach to love than Freiligrath's:

*I live for Desire, I crave what I want, I want what I crave, Desire,  
Emotions beyond control mean danger to the soul.*

The only other diegetic songs in *Lovers and Luggers* are performed *a cappella*. Daubenny sings a lyrical adaptation of 'My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean' on his arrival on Thursday Island, while unpacking his bags; and a variety of sea shanties, such as 'Drunken Sailor' and 'Blow the Man Down' are sung by a group of carousing locals.

As mentioned above, Hamilton Webber is credited as musical director for this film which has significant underscore (thirteen orchestral cues, some with choir), including a dramatic seventeen-minute cue to accompany the climactic underwater fight scene between two divers (Daubenny and a villain called Quong). However unlike *Uncivilised* there is no attempt to merge diegetic and undiegetic musical elements. As with all the films previously discussed, the diegetic music of *Lovers and Luggers* works to signify cultural and class differences, in this case between the urbane Daubenny and the Thursday Islanders he encounters.

### The Broken Melody

The same cultural signification device is employed in Ken G. Hall's next feature, *The Broken Melody*, another film with a classical musician as the lead character. For this film Hall commissioned original music by Alfred Hill, the best-known Australian concert composer from the early part of the twentieth century. Hill had had some previous experience working on the score of a film on a Maori historical subject in New Zealand, a film that was never released and is deemed to be lost (Thomson, 1980: 177–178). For *The Broken Melody*, Hill wrote the diegetic music: a theme for violin and piano, first heard in a nightclub scene, and a section of an operetta based on this theme, both of which are significant in the plot of the film. The theme is also developed in a solo violin busking scene and is elaborated on in the title music.

The main character, John Ainsworth, is a classical music violinist who gets sent down from university for being in a nightclub brawl, is disowned by his rich grazier father for aspiring to a music career rather than to commitment to the farm, falls on hard times and becomes an alcoholic, lives in a cave in a Sydney harbourside park (The Domain), saves a fellow musician (Ann Brady) when she tries to jump into the harbour in despair, is encouraged by Ann to revive his music career through busking, through this activity gets the opportunity to travel overseas, and eventually forges a successful career as a violinist, conductor and composer. He is reunited with Ann (now a trained opera singer) when he returns to Australia to conduct his opera, unexpectedly finding her performing the leading role in the premiere he is conducting (Ann was understudying the role, and is called in at the last moments when the contracted French prima donna pulls out).

Ken G. Hall adapted the screenplay from a novel by F. J. Thwaites by the same title. Hall (1980: 112) describes his approach to tweaking Thwaites' story:

*His hero was a musician who played the cello, which proves what I've been saying. Australian authors never thought of a screen sale. How do you get a musical climax, or any sort of climax, out of a hero*

*who plays the cello? The answer is that you don't, and almost in a twinkling of an eye Thwaites' man has lost his cello and found himself a violinist-conductor. Here again I had looked first for the big, spectacular climax and worked back.*

Hall is here cognisant of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century culture of classical music where certain kinds of musicians (conductors such as Arturo Toscanini, violinists such as Fritz Kreisler, sopranos such as Nellie Melba and tenors such as Enrico Caruso) could command heroic public attention. The spectacular climax Hall devised was a lavish theatrical realisation of the operetta that Ainsworth had written and was conducting on his tour of Australia.

Although the narrative of *The Broken Melody* is focused on classical music, there is jazz orchestra music used for certain scenes, initially the nightclub scene where John first encounters Ann singing a popular song with the Maurie Gilman Orchestra. Even though he is impressed by her performance there is a hint of cultural superiority in his comment to a friend: "That crooner, she's good". Later in the nightclub sequence, someone shouts out to John: "Give us a tune, John". He borrows a violin from one of the dance band musicians and proceeds to play his violin and piano work (the theme) accompanied by the band's pianist. Dramaturgically this scene is flawed: it is unlikely that the pianist would have known the work or would have been able to improvise such an elaborate accompaniment and, according to Naphali (1998: 326), a serious classical musician in the 1930s would not have been prepared to play his or her music in that kind of venue.

In *The Broken Melody*, Hall clearly sees the entertainment value in playing the tension between high-brow and low-brow music. John represents the high-brow aspirations of the classical music career (even though his wealthy father places no value on it). He meets his "crooning" love interest in a club offering low-brow musical entertainment. They both fall on hard times and are reduced to the lowest-brow act of busking. Separated, they independently work their way up the classical music high-brow ladder, to reunite happily in the final scene.

### Come Up Smiling

The same kind of approach is found in *Come up Smiling* (also known as *Ants in His Pants*). The lead female character, Pat, is a carnival performer with aspirations to a high-art singing career, but she damages her voice performing popular songs in their carnival act. The plot revolves around her uncle, Barney, winning a boxing contest with rival carnival performer, The Killer, in order to be able to pay for an operation on Pat's vocal organs. Much of the plot's humour is musical. Barney for example has a pathological aversion to the sound of bagpipes and goes into a rage, attacking The Killer (and his bagpipes) when he hears him playing the instrument. The Killer, on the other hand, turns from surly to putty whenever he hears Pat sing. While singing the humorous song 'Ants in Your Pants', Barney is bitten by bull ants that have been placed on the stage by a mischievous boy, but he manages to finish the song with interjected vocal cries of pain. The bagpipes,

Pat's singing, and the bull ants all later figure in the strategy for Barney to beat The Killer in the boxing bout.

As with *The Hayseeds* and *Uncivilised*, the film-makers took advantage of the versatile talents of their actors in *Come Up Smiling*. The American actor Will Mahoney playing Barney was a skilled tap dancer. Apart from his comical movements in avoiding the punches of The Killer and his contortions while singing 'Ants in Your Pants', Mahoney also features in a tap dance routine that is a send-up of the song 'My Mammy', made famous by Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927). Touring along a country road, Barney and his troupe encounter a herd of sheep. One of them steals a lamb, and this is the cue for a song about 'My lamb-y'. Although a musical parody, this is also an example of the exploitation by Australian film-makers of American popular culture as discussed earlier in relation to *The Hayseeds*. In order to train for the boxing match, Barney is recommended to a women's physical education and deportment school. To introduce the location his instructor-to-be, Kitty Katkin, sings a humorous song, "That's the Way to Handle Your Man", to her class of young women, as they carry out a group movement routine. The only non-comic song performance in the film is one given by Pat at a swish party where Rudolph Rudolpho, the singing maestro she is trying to impress, is a guest. She performs Johann Strauss II's virtuosic 'Frühlingsstimmen' ('Voices of Spring') for orchestra and solo soprano (Op. 410), but her voice fails in the last bar. The performance establishes her talent, but also reveals her vocal injury and the need for the operation.

Henry Krips gets credit for "musical direction", as the co-composer of the title song, and as co-arranger of "Poor Little Sheep". This was Krips' first involvement in music for film. He was engaged as musical director and composer in a number of subsequent projects including the next film under discussion, *Gone to the Dogs*, as well as *Smithy* (Ken G. Hall, 1946) and *Sons of Matthew* (Charles Chauvel, 1948).

### Gone to the Dogs

*Gone to the Dogs* is a greyhound doping comedy starring the multi-talented George Wallace. Although songs take a backseat to the spoken and physical comedy, there is just one long diegetic music sequence around the middle of the film which includes a song written by Wallace ('We'll Build a Little Home') and a spectacular production number 'Gone to the Dogs' (lyrics, Harry Allen; music, Henry Krips). The latter is a vehicle for the impressive singing and dancing skills of both Wallace and musical comedy star, Lois Green. It employs an elaborate set, complex staging and choreography, a large off-screen swing band, clever male and female vocal harmonies, a large cast of dancers, a host of young female tennis players in shorts, and twelve paraded greyhounds. There is a comedic bonus at the end of the routine, as described by Hall (1980: 116):

*I wanted it to climax with a great herd of dogs of every kind, shape and colour dashing into the scene and breaking it up by causing utter confusion.*

## Conclusions

In the early years of 1930s Australian feature film production, the technology of film sound precluded the use of music except for diegetic songs and instrumentals. Underscoring was used in places where there were no sound effects or dialogue such as under the titles. Especially composed underscore was not typical in film of this period; and composers such as Hamilton Webber, who were charged with providing underscore, generally relied on adapting already-written music, often well-known musical works available from specialist music hire libraries that had been set up to provide options for live music accompanying silent films. Musicians working on sound films were typically given the title of “musical director”, even if they provided elaborate arrangements of the chosen music or even wrote original music.

Many of the diegetic music scenes in Australian 1930s features were filmed on set with all the musicians on-camera or, alternatively, with singers on-camera and backing musicians off-camera. The live entertainment traditions of vaudeville and variety were incorporated into sound films, and directors such as Ken G. Hall, Beaumont Smith, Charles Chauvel and William Freshman were keen to exploit the versatile performance talents of actors such as George Wallace, John Moore, Dennis Hoey and Will Mahoney, to the extent of adding arguably fortuitous song and/or dance segments to their films. This is especially evident in *The Hayseeds*, *Uncivilised* and *Gone to the Dogs*. Of the seven films selected for examination, three have main characters who are career musicians (*Lovers and Luggers*, *The Broken Melody* and *Come Up Smiling*). This allowed their directors to introduce diegetic music that is central to their narrative structures, rather than being peripheral to the action.

Generally the diegetic songs and instrumentals in these seven films can be seen as signifiers of class, politics, and cultural background, as represented, for example by language (Aboriginal songs in *Uncivilised*), instrumentation (gum-leaves and bagpipes in *The Squatter's Daughter*) and performance style (yodelling in *The Squatter's Daughter*). With the exception of *Uncivilised* and *Gone to the Dogs* there are contrasting selections of classical and popular music styles that work to reinforce class and cultural differences and aspirations amongst the characters.

The predominant director in the 1930s, Ken G. Hall, had international aspirations and his business strategy was driven by U.S production models. Charles Chauvel was also aiming for the international market in his “action adventure” approach to *Uncivilised* (Pike and Cooper, 1998: 173). However, the use of music in Australian films in this period is characterised by the predominance of diegetic songs and instrumentals as distinct from the strongly emerging tradition in the U.S. of films being dramatically underscored by composers such as Alfred Newman, Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold who were steeped in the late European romantic orchestral music tradition (Smith, 1998: 6). There are obvious references to American popular musical cinema in the diegetic music and dance presentations in the films considered in this study (for example the Busby Berkeley tribute in *The Hayseeds* and the elaborate production sequence in *Gone to the Dogs*), but generally the diegetic songs and instrumentals are

more simply presented and serve the dramatic or comedic requirements of the films.

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Australian filmmakers were at the forefront of cinema and film, having created what is considered the first feature-length narrative film with the release of *The Story of the Kelly Gang* and other early films by directors John Gavin, W. J. Lincoln and Alfred Rolfe. Notable Australian films of the early 1900s: *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906) – the world's first feature-length film. *Moora Neya*, or *The Message of the Spear* (1911) – one of the first films to depict Indigenous Australians. This music set was popular in the 1930s. A good job on hunting down all these old songs and making them available for download. You deserve a medal. I think there are enough vintage songs here to provide the soundtrack for a dozen *Wolfenstein* and *Fallout* movies each. XD. 6,564 Views. 15 Favorites. 3 Reviews. DOWNLOAD OPTIONS. download 569 files. A film crew goes to a tropical island for an exotic location shoot and discovers a colossal ape who takes a shine to their female blonde star. He is then captured and brought back to New York City for public exhibition. Directors: Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack | Stars: Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong, Bruce Cabot, Frank Reicher. Eva has just gotten married to an older gentleman, but discovers that he is obsessed with order in his life and doesn't have much room for passion. She becomes despondent and leaves him, See full summary ».