Understanding the Leitmotif

The musical leitmotif, having reached a point of particular forcefulness in the music of Richard Wagner, has remained a popular compositional device up to the present day. In this book, Matthew Bribitzer-Stull explores the background and development of the leitmotif, from Wagner to the Hollywood adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series. Analyzing both concert music and film music, Bribitzer-Stull explains what the leitmotif is and establishes it as the union of two aspects: the thematic and the associative. He goes on to show that Wagner’s *Ring* cycle provides a leitmotivic paradigm, a model from which we can learn to better understand the leitmotif across style periods. Arguing for a renewed interest in the artistic merit of the leitmotif, Bribitzer-Stull reveals how uniting meaning, memory, and emotion in music can lead to a richer listening experience and a better understanding of dramatic music’s enduring appeal.

Understanding the Leitmotif

From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music

MATTHEW BRIBITZER-STULL
For Warren Darcy and Robert Gauldin, whose teaching and scholarship inspired me to study music theory and to study Wagner.
Contents

List of music examples [page viii]
List of tables [xvii]
Preface [xix]
Acknowledgments [xxiii]

1 Introduction: the leitmotif problem [1]

PART I MUSICAL THEMES [31]
2 Motive, phrase, melody, and theme [33]
3 Thematic development, thematic identity: musical themes and the prototype model [56]

PART II MUSICAL ASSOCIATION [77]
4 The phenomenon of musical association [79]
5 Piece specifics, cultural generics, and associative layering [109]
6 From Nibelheim to Hollywood: the associativity of harmonic progression [131]

PART III LEITMOTIFS IN CONTEXT [157]
7 The paradigm of Wagner’s Ring [159]
8 Leitmotif in Western art music outside The Ring [213]
9 The modern-day leitmotif: associative themes in contemporary film music [255]

Works cited [301]
Index [322]
Music examples

Example 1.1 Comparison of “Giants” and “Fafner as Dragon” in Wagner’s *Ring* [2]
   a. “Giants,” Rg/68/1/1ff.

Example 1.2 Thematic mutation of “Ring” theme in Jackson/Shore *The Lord of the Rings* [4]
   a. “Ring” during Galadriel’s opening narration
   b. “Ring” as Frodo enters the Cracks of Doom

Example 1.3 Leitmotivic Conceptual Integration Network (CIN) Model [12]
   a. General model
   b. Leitmotivic CIN for “Indy’s Feelings for Marion” from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*
   c. “Indy’s Feelings for Marion” theme

Example 1.4 Forms of the *idée fixe* in Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* [16]
   a. Original statement, I, mm. 72–111
   b. Witches’ Sabbath statement, V, mm. 40–65

Example 1.5 Stereotypical leitmotif guide excerpt [26]

Example 2.1 Text phrase and musical phrase in concert; Wagner’s *Die Walküre*, Act II, Scene 4 290/2/1–3/4 [41]

Example 2.2 From note-against-note framework to elaborated music by addition of motives. Reprinted by permission of Waveland Press, Inc. from Robert Gauldin’s *A Practical Approach to 18th-Century Counterpoint* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., © 2013). All rights reserved. [47]

Example 2.3 Motivic linkage in fugue #2 in C minor, *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I* BWV 847, mm. 1–3 and 7–12 [48]

Example 2.4 Some examples of motives [49]
   a. Schubert, “Erlkönig,” mm. 1–2
   b. Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, I, mm. 1–2
   c. Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, I, mm. 1–3
d. Beethoven, Bagatelle in G Minor, Op. 119, No. 1, mm. 1–3

e. Joseph Haydn, String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 76, No. 2, I, mm. 1–2

f. Wagner, “Nibelungs” motive from Das Rheingold, 114/1/1

Example 3.1 Scheherazade’s and Shahriar’s themes from Rimsky-Korsakov’s Scheherazade [57]
a. Initial presentation in the first movement
   1. Shahriar’s theme, mm. 1–4
   2. Scheherazade’s theme, m. 14ff.
b. Principal theme from first movement (based on Shahriar’s theme), mm. 20–23
c. Secondary theme from first movement (based on Scheherazade’s theme), m. 94ff.
d. Fanfare theme from second movement (devolves from Scheherazade’s triplet figure), mm. 132–35

Example 3.2 Thematic relationships [59]
a. Two themes that are not structurally related
b. Two themes that are structurally related

Example 3.3 More and less prototypic leitmotifs in The Ring [69]
a. “Renunciation of Love,” Rg/43/1/1–2/1
b. “Curse,” Rg/175/2/4–3/2
c. “Hunding,” Wk/16/2/3–4
d. “Scheming,” Sg/1/1/4–6
e. “Resentment,” Rg/174/4/3

Example 3.4 Pre-statements of “Giants” [73]
a. Rg/58/4/1
b. Rg/64/3/5

Example 4.1 The F major opening theme from Dvořák’s Zlatý Kolovrat, mm. 9–22 [80]

Example 4.2 “Rhinedaughters’ Joy in the Gold,” a rhamatic indexical
   sinsign, Rg/33/2/1–2 [91]

Example 4.3 Götterdämmerung, Act I, Scene 3
   (Gd/89/5/1–90/4/1) [96]

Example 4.4 Melodic return in Beethoven’s An die ferne Geliebte, Op. 98: “Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,”
   mm. 40–48 (cf. “Auf dem Hügel sitz ich, spähend,” mm. 1–9) [99]
Example 5.1 Two topics
b. French overture style. Mozart, Symphony in Eb Major, K. 543, 1788, introduction

Example 5.2 Recollection of material from Marguerite’s “Le roi de Thulé” used symbolically in Berlioz’s *La damnation de Faust*, Scene 13, mm. 5–10 [119]

Example 5.3 The brook texture from Schubert’s *Die Schöne Müllerin* [122]
a. “Wohin?” mm. 1–6
b. “Der Müller und der Bach,” mm. 78–82

Example 5.4 Pre-existing tunes recontextualized to create associative layering [126]
a. “Dixieland” in the score to *Gone with the Wind*
b. “There’s No Place Like Home” in the score to *The Wizard of Oz*

Example 6.1 Wagner’s “Tarnhelm” progression [135]
a. Analytic sketch
b. Neo-Riemannian transformational parallelisms
c. Scale-degree functions
d. Set-theory observations

Example 6.2 Sketch of Schubert’s “Der Wegweiser” from *Wintertreise*, mm. 1–39 [138]

Example 6.3 Sketch of Rezia’s Act III aria, “Traure, mein Herz, um verschwindenes Glück” from Weber’s *Oberon*, mm. 37–51 [139]

Example 6.4 Sketch of Brahms’s “Wie Melodien,” Op. 105/1, mm. 1–28 [145]

Example 6.5 Opening of Richard Strauss’s “Frühling” from *Vier letzte Lieder* [146]

Example 6.6 Richard Strauss’s *Salome*, mm. 23–26 [147]

Example 6.7 Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*, Finale, *Allegro Agitato*, mm. 67–81 [148]

Example 6.8 Dvořák’s *Polędnice*, mm. 265–68, 274–75 [149]

Example 6.9 Transcription of “Imperial March” from the *Star Wars* films [149]

Example 6.10 Transcription of the “Menace of the Agents” theme from *E.T.* [150]
Example 6.11 Transcription of the “Gollum” theme from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy [150]

Example 6.12 Opening of “Neptune” from Holst’s *The Planets* [151]

Example 7.1 The “Dresden Amen” [162]
   b. Tannhäuser, Tn/278/1/1
   c. Parsifal, Ps/4/4/2

Example 7.2 “Longing for Death” variants [163]
   a. Hd/4/2/1
   b. Hd/101/4/1
   c. Hd/107/3/1
   d. Hd/176/3/3

Example 7.3 Some themes in *Lohengrin* [166]
   a. “Ortrud” theme 1, Lg/115/1/3
   b. “Ortrud” theme 2, Lg/115/2/4
   c. “Forbidden Question,” Lg/62/4/3

Example 7.4 W.A. Mozart, Horn Concerto, K. 447, I, mm. 79–85 [171]

Example 7.5 Schubert, “Die Liebe Farbe,” mm. 10–13 [172]

Example 7.6 “Gold” subjected to Change of Mode [173]
   a. Rg/32/3/2
   b. Rg/50/1/4

Example 7.7 “Freia’s Golden Apples” subjected to Change of Mode [174]
   a. Rg/74/2/1
   b. Rg/103/4/2

Example 7.8 “Sword” subjected to Change of Mode [175]
   a. Rg/213/1/3
   b. Wk/180/1/3

Example 7.9 “Gold” subjected to Harmonic Corruption, Rg/50/2/1 [176]

Example 7.10 Harmonic-dramatic continuum [177]

Example 7.11 “Volsungs’ Bond of Sympathy” subjected to Harmonic Corruption [178]
   a. Wk/15/1/3
   b. Sg/37/4/1

Example 7.12 Harmonic Corruption of one theme by another [180]
   a. “Valhalla” corrupted by “Tarnhelm” progression, Gd/101/3/1
b. “Valhalla” corrupted by “Magic Potion” progression, Gd/104/1/3

Example 7.13 Thematic Truncation of “Spear,” Sg/279/3/1 [181]

Example 7.14 Thematic Truncation of “Curse,” Gd/337/5/3 [182]

Example 7.15 Fragmentation of “Tarnhelm” and “Ring” [184]
   a. Rg/168/3/3
   b. Rg/173/4/3

Example 7.16 Fragmentation of “Valkyries,” Gd/90/1/1 [185]

Example 7.17 Thematic Evolution of “Feminine Allure” to “Scheming” [190]
   a. “Feminine Allure,” Rg/96/4/1
   b. “Scheming” Sg/1/1/1

Example 7.18 Thematic Evolution (inversion) of “Nature” to “Twilight of the Gods” [193]
   a. “Rhine,” Rg/2/3/4
   b. “Twilight of the Gods,” Rg/194/2/1

Example 7.19 Thematic Complex, “Wotan’s Rebellion against his Destiny,” Wk/109/1/1 [201]

Example 7.20 Thematic Complex, “Wotan’s Blessing upon the Nibelung’s Son,” Wk/129/4/1 [204]

Example 7.21 Thematic Irony, “Parting Kiss” [206]
   a. Wk/296/4/1
   b. Sg/159/1/1

Example 7.22 Thematic Irony, “Renunciation of Love” [210]
   a. Rg/43/1/1
   b. Gd/112/1/1

Example 8.1 Tristan und Isolde, Act I, mm. 1–11 [215]

Example 8.2 Tristan und Isolde, Act III, mm. 1–4 [216]

Example 8.3 Vorspiel to Act I of Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, mm. 1–14 [217]

Example 8.4 “Amfortas’s Wounds” from Parsifal [219]
   a. Ps/17/2/3–5
   b. Harmonic Redemption, Ps/267/4/3–268/1/4

Example 8.5 “The Fairies” from Weber’s Oberon [224]
   a. Act I, No. 1, mm. 8–9
   b. Change of Texture, Act I, No. 4, mm. 88–89
   c. “Oberon’s Grief,” Act I, No. 2, mm. 2–3

Example 8.6 Change of Mode in “Ghost” from Weber’s Euryanthe [225]
   a. Typical presentation: Overture mm. 129–43
   b. Final presentation: Act III, No. 25, mm. 216–23
Example 8.7  Thematic developments in Richard Strauss’s
Guntram  [227]
a. “Guntram’s Compassion,” Gt/13/4/4–5
b. “Ardor,” Gt/68/3/4–69/1/2ff
c. “Guntram’s Shame,” Gt/89/4/5–90/1
d. “Guntram’s Compassion,” subject to Harmonic
Corruption and Fragmentation, Gt/93/5/2–3

Example 8.8  Thematic developments in Richard Strauss’s Der
Rosenkavalier  [228]
a. “Octavian’s Bravado,” Rk/1/1/1–2
b. “Octavian’s Bravado,” Harmonic Corruption, Rk/22/3/
   3–4/1
c. “Octavian’s Bravado,” Change of Mode, Rk/347/3/1–3
d. “Octavian’s Bravado,” Fragmentation and Associative
   Transposition, Rk/254/2/1

Example 8.9  Thematic development in Richard Strauss’s
Salome  [230]
a. “Jochanaan’s Holiness,” Sl/34/1/4–2/2
b. “Jochanaan’s Holiness,” subjected to Harmonic
   Corruption and Fragmentation, Sl/175/5/1–2 et al.

Example 8.10  “Cradle Song” in Berg’s Wozzeck, typical presentation, Act
I, mm. 371–72 (Scene 3)  [231]

Example 8.11  Thematic Transformation of “Earrings” into “Marie’s
Guilt” in Berg’s Wozzeck  [232]
a. “Earrings” Act II, mm. 7–10 (Scene 1)
b. “Marie’s Guilt” Act II, mm. 105–06 (Scene 1)
c. “Marie’s Guilt” retrograde, Act II, mm. 126–28

Example 8.12  Transformation of “Golaud’s Anxiety” into “Melisande’s
Wedding Ring” in Debussy’s Pelléas et Mélisande  [236]
a. “Golaud’s Anxiety,” Act I, Scene 1, mm. 5–6
b. “Melisande’s Wedding Ring,” Act II, Scene 1,
   mm. 76–77

Example 8.13  “My Mind Beats On” from Britten’s Death in Venice  [237]
a. Original statement, mm. 1–2
b. Thematic Inversion, mm. 10–11

Example 8.14  “Cockerel” from Rimsky-Korsakov’s The Golden
Cockerel  [240]
a. Original statement, Act I, rehearsal 88
b. Thematic Inversion, Act II, six bars before
   rehearsal 111
Example 8.15  “Rusalka” theme from Dvořák’s *Rusalka*  [241]
a. Original statement, Act I, mm. 4–11
b. Harmonic Corruption and Truncation, Act II, rehearsal 7

Example 8.16  Thematic transformation between two themes in Elgar’s *The Apostles*  [244]
b. “Lament of Mary Magdalene” Part I. III. By the Sea of Galilee, second bar of rehearsal 79

Example 8.17  “Lilac Fairy” theme from Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty*  [246]
a. Original statement, Act I, No. 4, mm. 232–38
b. Harmonic Corruption and Change of Texture, Act II, No. 19, mm. 19–22

Example 8.18  “Swan” theme from Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*  [247]
a. Original statement, Act II, No. 9, mm. 1–5
b. Harmonic Redemption and apotheosis, Act IV, No. 36, *Meno mosso*

Example 8.19  Inversion of “Sunset” into “Sunrise” in Schoenberg’s *Gurrelieder*  [249]
a. “Sunset,” Part I, orchestral prelude, mm. 9–10
b. “Sunrise,” Part III, two bars before rehearsal 102

Example 8.20  “Love” theme in Schoenberg’s *Gurrelieder*  [250]
a. Original statement, Part I, two bars before rehearsal 50
b. Harmonic Corruption and Fragmentation, Part I, one bar after rehearsal 95

Example 8.21  “Peer Gynt” theme from Grieg’s *Peer Gynt*  [251]
a. Original statement, Act I, No. 1, mm. 1–4
b. Harmonic Corruption, Act II, No. 4, mm. 1–4

Example 8.22  Thematic transformation in Grieg’s *Peer Gynt* of “Woman in Green” into “Morning”  [252]
a. “Woman in Green,” Act II, No. 6, mm. 23–27
b. “Morning,” Act IV, No. 13, mm 1–4

Example 8.23  “Mother and Daughter Together” from Dvořák’s *Vodník*  [253]
a. Original statement, mm. 128–31
b. Harmonic Corruption and Change of Texture, mm. 549–54
Example 9.1 The central theme in Maurice Jarre’s monothematic score to *Lawrence of Arabia* [272]


a. Preliminary model
b. Enrichment of preliminary model

Example 9.3 First phrase of the “Harry Potter” theme from John Williams’s score to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* [281]

Example 9.4 The “Voldemort” theme prototype in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* [282]

Example 9.5 Prototypic major-mode version of the “Heroism” main-title theme from John Williams’s scores to the *Star Wars* films [285]

Example 9.6 Prototypic major-mode title theme from James Horner’s *Star Trek* films [285]

Example 9.7 “Harry’s Longing for Familial Love” from John Williams’s score to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* [286]

a. Prototypic statement when Harry speaks of his feelings to Remus Lupin during the covered bridge scene
b. Change of Mode/Contextual Reinterpretation: major-mode harmonization with melody beginning on 2 rather than 1

Example 9.8 Harmonic Corruption of the “Heroism” theme in *Star Wars* [287]

Example 9.9 Prototypic statement of “Will of the Hindu Gods” from John Williams’s score to *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* [287]

Example 9.10 “Grail” theme prototype from John Williams’s score to *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* [287]

Example 9.11 Thematic Complex in *The Fellowship of the Ring* [288]

a. “Forces of Darkness” motive
b. “Urgency” motive
c. “Running” motive
d. “Battle” rhythm

Example 9.12 “Leia” theme prototype from John Williams’s score to *Star Wars* [290]
Example 9.13  First phrase of “Adventure” theme prototype from John Williams’s score to Raiders of the Lost Ark  [290]

Example 9.14  Thematic evolution in John Williams’s score to Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban  [291]
   a. “Mischief”
   b. “Weasleys”
   c. “The Marauders’ Map”

Example 9.15  Thematic evolution in John Williams’s score to Superman  [292]
   a. Main theme (“Superman”)  
   b. “Parting”

Example 9.16  “Doomed Love” Thematic Prototype from John Williams’s score to Star Wars Episode 3: Revenge of the Sith  [294]

Example 9.17  Themes from Howard Shore’s scores to Peter Jackson’s The Lord of the Rings trilogy that feature ♯4  [297]
   a. “Sorrow of the Elves”
   b. “Dwarves of Yore”
   c. “Lothlórien”
   d. “Andúril, Flame of the West”

Example 9.18  The “Shire” theme from Howard Shore’s score to The Fellowship of the Ring  [298]

Example 9.19  “Into the West” from Howard Shore’s score to The Return of the King  [298]
Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.1</td>
<td>Comparative lengths of “Giants” theme</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>The prototype model and the leitmotif</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Ideal arrangement of the Peircian trichotomy of signs</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6.1</td>
<td>“Tarnhelm” progression formal functions</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Understanding,” the first word of this book’s title, implies that we have not yet fully grasped the concept of the leitmotif. Certainly, past decades bear testament to a history of leitmotivic deconstruction – that is, subverting the musico-philosophical significance of the leitmotif to expose its fundamental assumptions and inconsistencies – and we must admit that the days of its facile usage in music scholarship are long past.1 While it would be an exaggeration to assert its destruction, it is fair to say that the leitmotif concept has suffered considerable damage and abuse over the past century. Not only have critics disparaged its effectiveness and value as a compositional device, but also leitmotivic analysis has been attacked as a puerile, descriptive mania akin to collecting. Moreover, the very meaning of the word “leitmotif” itself has splintered; a cursory glance at the scholarly literature on the topic reveals an object imperfectly apprehended, as though viewed from different angles through a refracting lens.

Certainly, an entire book could be devoted to the history of leitmotivic analysis, criticism, and reception. I am less interested, though, in sifting through the detritus left in the wake of the previous century’s leitmotivic de-(con)struction than I am in resuscitating the idea of leitmotif as a valuable component of musical understanding. To that end I attempt to establish the twofold importance of the leitmotif: first as a theme – a component of musical structure – and second as an associative entity – a component of musical meaning. In so doing, I engage largely, but not exclusively, with dramatic Western art music of the later nineteenth century and Hollywood film music post-1970. Among Western, functionally tonal musics, these repertories comprise what is arguably some of the most emotionally evocative music still widely enjoyed by modern man. In the pages that follow, I hope to show that both the accessibility and the subtlety of this music rest in no small part on the leitmotif.

Perhaps it is best to admit now that I find Wagner’s thematic technique of singular importance to the history of Western dramatic music, hence the

1 See Krims 1998 for a serviceable overview of the intersection between music analysis and deconstruction.
inspiration for this book. It is all too easy to perpetuate Wagner’s self-aggrandizing teleologies and his followers’ essentialist viewpoints regarding the nature of his compositional practice and of German art – something I have tried to avoid. That said, Wagner scholarship is, in my opinion, plagued with a critical *sine qua non* that one finds rarely – if at all – in the analytic work on other composers’ music. There are many who argue, implicitly or explicitly, that any positive appraisal of Wagner’s artistry must be counter-balanced by criticism of his deeply problematic philosophies, self-appraisals, and legacy; failure to do so is irresponsible, a thoughtless acceptance of Wagnerian hagiography. Because the darker side of Wagner and Bayreuth is well documented in the scholarly literature (including within an anthology I co-edited with Gottfried Wagner, great-grandson of the composer), it is my hope that readers will understand that I find it unnecessary to weave it into my narrative on leitmotif here. Rather, I wish to argue, unapologetically, that Wagner’s thematic technique not only admirably served his dramatic aims in *The Ring*, but also provided a paradigm adopted by countless later composers across a wide variety of genres. Illustrating said claim comprises the content of the final three chapters of this book.

My approach embraces what some will consider artificial separations – musical materials from musical meanings, and soundtrack from filmic whole. While I agree that such epistemological divorces necessarily impoverish and misrepresent the items under consideration, the criticism leveled against them really indicts analysis itself, an act that, by definition, separates complex objects into their constituent parts. An analyst at heart, I must confess that I find the benefits of analysis outweigh its faults, and that I have no interest in pursuing a lengthy scholarly defense of it here. Such arguments are worth having, but readers familiar with the English-language musicological literature will know that these arguments have been made at length (and will doubtless continue) in more fitting places than the preface to a book about leitmotifs.

And that brings me to my final point – a point any writer of prefaces knows all too well – a pre-emptive disclaimer of what this book does not do. Because leitmotif is a complex topic, doing *it* justice means that I can’t do full justice to the many topics it intersects – in my attempt to serve

---

2 For those to whom this literature is unfamiliar, I suggest beginning with the writings of Paul Lawrence Rose and Gottfried Wagner. See Rose 1992 and 1990; Wagner 1999; and these men’s essays in Bribitzer-Stull 2007.

3 See Chion 2009: xi for just such a critique.
many audiences, I run the real risk of satisfying none. Wagnerians will long for more detailed insights into Wagner’s prose, Wagnerian reception history, and modern-day opera productions; card-carrying music theorists will likely feel an imagined rush of wind as we race through topics in the history of Western music that beg for deeper study; students of musical meaning will doubtless find the material in Chapters Four and Five synoptic (though I hope some of my thoughts on associativity are both new and deserving of further consideration); and film-music scholars will search in vain for probing new insights into the history of film music, or the analysis thereof.

That said, certain readers will likely experience opposite problems. Wagnerians may find their eyes glazing over when perusing the details of the Peircian trichotomies; musicologists might lament that the clutter of film music, semiotics, and thematic theory burdens what could have been a good book on the history of the Wagnerian leitmotif; readers without technical training in music may find too much analysis (“What do I do with these Schenker graphs?!’’); and students of film might tire of the copious “classical” music citations. In my defense against dilettantism on the one hand and inscrutable specialization on the other, I can only plead that I have attempted to write a book that I would want to read – one that, in its discursiveness, affirms my command of certain bailiwicks, while challenging me to grow in others.

This goal will, I hope, explain why this book steers clear of a standard chapter arrangement. I eschew the formula of “literature review,” followed by “theory,” closing with “analysis,” in favor of chapters peppered with all of these things united to explain a certain aspect of the leitmotif. Since I take Wagner’s Ring as paradigmatic of leitmotivic practice, his thoughts feature prominently in the pages that follow (though I juxtapose them with those of numerous other musical thinkers). That said, Wagnerian citations are not confined to one section in a compilation or summary along the lines of what so many previous scholars have already accomplished, but are rather aired in service of the topic at hand.4 Thus, it is my hope that readers of this book will trace a variety of Leitfaden (to borrow a Wagnerian metaphor) to help them make sense of a wide-ranging study much the way listeners continue to use the leitmotif to make sense of multi-media art forms like opera and film.

4 For one lightly glossed collection of Wagner quotations on themes and expression, see Kirby 2004: 11–16.
A note on film-music excerpts

Many chapters of this book engage film music. Since the film soundtrack is often “team composed” under the direction of the lead composer, and is also subject to editors’ and directors’ input, it does not usually reflect one composer’s musical conception or intention the way we assume most recent art music does.\textsuperscript{5} (It is important to remember that film, including the soundtrack, in the period from 1970 to the present is largely the director’s medium.) Thus, the analysis and transcription in this study relies on the full score as heard in the DVD release of the motion picture (director’s cut, if available), rather than music or information presented in scores or soundtrack releases. Soundtrack releases often include suites, music cut from the theatric release of the film, and music played over the credits – that is, music catering to the needs of the composer or to a listener experiencing the music divorced from image, rather than the needs of someone engaged with the filmic experience as a whole.

Pedal points, atmospheric timbral effects, dialogue, and non-musical (though sometimes pitched) sound effects are all part of the film soundtrack, often occurring simultaneously with the music. This, coupled with large orchestral forces, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a definitive transcription of any given musical passage. Since access to many film scores is difficult, if not impossible, the transcriptions in the pages that follow present only what is most salient dramatically. First and foremost this will comprise melodic content.\textsuperscript{6} It may also include a prose description of the texture and orchestral colors and, when appropriate, the harmonic support presented as one or more of the following: a bass or other contrapuntal line, an accompanying chord progression, figured-bass notation, or Roman numerals. These last are included only if they seem to accurately represent the tonal implications of the harmonies.

Finally, unless otherwise indicated, theme names are my own and rely on my judgment of the theme’s associative role in the drama, rather than the name of the scene or cue used to identify tracks on CD soundtrack releases.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5} For an entertaining look behind the scenes at the frenetic process of team composition, see Raskin 1989.

\textsuperscript{6} Danny Elfman believes it is melody that lodges in the memory after watching a film (see Halfyard 2004: 60).

\textsuperscript{7} The practice of naming themes is a problematic one, though I believe the benefits outweigh the pitfalls. For some thoughts on the practice, see the discussion on pp. 18, 27, and 63–64 in this volume, as well as Bribitzer-Stull 2007; Thorau 2003: 138–44; and Monelle 2000: 41–42.
Acknowledgments

It is a persistent irony that the first sections of a book – the dedication, the acknowledgments, and the preface – are finished last. To frame a project, of course, requires clarity only hindsight can grant. Looking back over the journey that brought me to this point, it is with both a palpable sense of nostalgia and a deep feeling of gratitude that I celebrate the assistance I had along the way.

I would be remiss to thank anyone before my parents, who, in an age of decreased interest in arts-and-humanities education supported me financially and emotionally in my pursuit of music. Recognition is also due my teachers; they include: Earl Benson, my high-school band director, who introduced me to Wagner through a wind-band transcription of “Elsa’s Procession to the Cathedral” from Lohengrin, and whose demand for excellence (captured so concisely with the banner stretching across our classroom that read “Results, not Alibis”) instilled in me a lasting desire to reach toward excellence whatever the circumstances; Charles McDonald, my first horn teacher, who inspired me with his deep love of music, and encouraged me to start thinking about how music means things; Sylvan Suskin, who introduced me to Wagner’s Die Walküre in his Music History 101 class at Oberlin; and Warren Darcy, another Oberlin professor, whose Ring course inspired me in ways that words cannot express, and who honored me in May 2014 with an invitation to present my work as part of his retirement celebration. I am indebted as well to my mentors at Eastman: Matthew Brown for numerous thought-provoking discussions on music and on making a living in the academy; and Robert Gauldin, for sharing his seemingly boundless knowledge of the repertory with me, a level of knowledge I aspire – in all likelihood fruitlessly – to attain. My position at the University of Minnesota has not only allowed me the time and resources necessary to complete this project, but has also enabled me to make contact with many fine minds across the spectrum of musical thought. Anyone who enjoys conversations with passionate and intelligent people can imagine how much these contribute to one’s own intellectual development and productivity, and what a rare blessing it is to lead a life as professor. The University and its College of Liberal Arts also supported this
book in a more direct fashion, seeing fit to grant me a Single-Semester Leave, two Summer Research Fellowships, and a McKnight Fellowship to conduct research.

Of course, writing this acknowledgment would have been moot without a publisher. From my first inquiry to the completion of the manuscript, Vicki Cooper exhibited unflagging enthusiasm for the nature of my project. I hope the good men and women at Cambridge University Press recognize their great fortune in having her as a colleague. In my case, Vicki’s editorship was a two-for-one deal: Vicki’s husband, leading Wagner scholar John Deathridge, generously agreed to give the final manuscript a once-over before it went to press.

Various portions of this book passed through the hands of many other thinkers along the way. I find that I respect their judgment and advice all the more now that I can see how much they improved the end product. These include: family (Jason Bribitzer-Stull and Emily Stull), friends (David Philip Norris), students (Tim Brock), colleagues (Michael Cherlin, Sumanth Gopinath, Richard Leppert, Scott Lipscomb, and David Neu-meyer), and, naturally, the anonymous readers for Cambridge who provided copious and helpful comments on my prospectus. The errors and shortcomings that remain are mine alone.

Finally, I wish to admit my debt of gratitude to those closest to my heart. To my sister, Emily: thank you for traveling to New York City with me in 2000 to join me for my first live Ring-cycle performance; a moment from our experience there finds its way into Chapter 4. And to my husband, Jason: I may never be able to fully repay your love, understanding, tolerance, and support. May the next twenty years put the last twenty to shame.