

***Film Music and the Holocaust* - Matt Lawson**

ABSTRACT:

Holocaust representation in film is a controversial on-going debate. Despite the hundreds of 'Holocaust films' of many origins and genres, academic literature is generally limited to 'pure' film studies, whereas little academic effort is expended on the music.

As film musicology continues to mature as a musicological sub-discipline, it is imperative that revolutionary avenues of research are explored and disseminated. Holocaust film music is one such area which calls out for academic attention, as interest in the Holocaust continues to grow in academic and non-academic circles.

This introductory paper highlights the key academic areas of interest, and will discuss compositional, ethical and political choices which may be considered when composing for films based around such sensitive narratives.

To put these choices into context, three contrasting scenes from *Schindler's List* (1997), *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955) and *Escape from Sobibor* (1987) will be presented. In *Schindler's List*, the 'big name' composer approach, along with issues of possible oversentimentality will be challenged. In *Nuit et Brouillard*, Hans Eisler's anti-literal and anti-sentimental techniques will be discussed in terms of their appropriateness for Holocaust film. Finally, in *Escape from Sobibor*, the use of pre-existing music to form a blurred diegetic/non-diegetic underscore will be explored. All three case studies will be approached from a musical representational viewpoint, with the potential effects upon audience reception also noted. The paper concludes by discussing emerging issues and possibilities for further research on Holocaust film music, as new avenues of Holocaust research open up.