The Coming of Sound Film in Sweden 1928-1932
New and Old Technologies

Christopher Natzén
For Harald

It’s easy to get buried in the past
when you try to make a good thing last

Neil - 1974
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Introduction

The orchestra pit at the Palladium [cinema theatre] was dark and gloomy, but instead the ramp had been given a more powerful lighting, against which the row of beautiful [flowers] did well. The audience seemed almost devotional before the phenomenon which one had sought out to witness. Darkness spread over the auditorium, and the invisible music began to play.¹

When a new invention seems to change the very foundation of existing conditions overnight, the immediate reactions that follow are often described in black and white, with all kinds of arguments put forward for the invention’s benefits or drawbacks. When it is time to tell the invention’s history, it is equally often told as a black and white success story about an eminent breakthrough a long time ago by some ingenious inventor, while the trials and errors, which are always part of any invention, are mentioned more often as curiosities on the way to the final product. The invention is seldom, if ever, contextualised in a larger discourse, so that the grey shadows of the same story are nuanced.

As far as the film medium is concerned, this is illustrated by the never ending emphasis on new technologies suddenly emerging which bring with them either a heightened representation of the reality outside film, or new sensations to the experience of the cinematic event.

The introduction of sound film in Sweden during the last years of the 1920s does not constitute any exception to this rule. At the time several independent, yet intertwined, companies and other organisations tried to get a grip on a situation that might lead to a complete change in the film industry. Particularly through the winter and spring of 1929 the rumours around sound film from America were much discussed and debated in Sweden. Often events were described in journals and newspapers with little profound reflection on whether these rumours had anything to do with actual events. So far, very few had actually heard this new wondrous technology which would either augment the spectacle of film viewing, or destroy once and for all the film medium as an art form.

My translation - unless otherwise stated, all translations of Swedish sources are mine.
When finally *Love and the Devil* (Alexander Korda, 1929) and *White Shadows in the South Seas* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1928) premiered on Thursday 2 May 1929 in Stockholm at the Palladium and Piccadilly theatres, respectively, it was something many had waited for.² Now was the time to settle the dispute if this was something to have or not - if it was something that would become part of Swedish film culture. These two films, with their synchronous sound effects and music, received a mixed reception among critics at the time. One of them stated: “The sound film became an interesting acquaintance. Too interesting to dismiss in a few lines. We will return”.³ Yet, others saw these screenings as nothing more than a curiosity which no one would ever like to see replace the art form of silent film. According to these critics, following this new path meant that the film medium would move back to the beginning of the 1910s overnight. As one reviewer put it: the “sound film premiere was a horrible disappointment, even for those who had been cautious enough to expect little from this new invention”.⁴ In sum – the proponents for sound film saw the screenings as the ultimate evidence that the days of silent film were numbered, while others, among them musicians, saw it as only another gimmick soon to fade away.⁵

These are some of the issues I will delve into in this thesis, which covers the years 1928-1932 during the conversion to sound film in Sweden, a period in Swedish film history that forever changed exhibition practices, and which meant unemployment for a whole group of practitioners before associated with the cinematic event. I refer here to Rick Altman and his notion of “cinema as event” where film is viewed as a self-contained structure around which everything revolves. I return specifically to this notion on page 24.

**Aims and object of study**

The aim of this thesis is twofold. First it addresses questions relating to reception and what happens in general with the perception of sound when more sounds become mechanically reproduced. Second, it focuses on the coming of sound film in Sweden during the years 1928–1932 and on the reactions towards mechanically recorded sounds.

The first aim then, is on issues related to how mediated sounds are received by the audience as an authentic expression of a lived reality. The film medium during the conversion to sound is a good case study through which to deal with such issues, as the medium transformed from a form when

² That is to say, these were the first films that continuously had music running on the soundtrack. They still, however, lacked dialogue. Different experimental screenings had occurred all through the late winter and spring of 1929 since the premiere of *Wings* (William Wellman, 1927), 10 January 1929, China.
sounds and music were performed live, into a medium with a recorded and mechanically reproduced soundtrack. As we will see, during the years 1928-1932 questions related to what should be seen as authentic sounds were widely discussed, until the recorded and mechanical soundtrack once more “disappeared” after initially making the technology behind the medium visible. This technological process enhanced the seemingly ever truer expression of a lived reality which has continued ever since, until the present day digital era.

To approach these questions the thesis focuses on the conversion to sound film in Sweden during the years 1928–1932. Concerning these four years 1928-1932 a more thorough change for production, distribution, and exhibition has not occurred before or after. This is illustrated by the numerous studies on the subject in other countries, which will be presented in more detail below. Despite this, the conversion to sound in Sweden, according to me, has not been given an academically focused survey, which is an omission in written Swedish film history that my research attempts to cover. The purpose of this part of the study is, therefore, to give new information regarding the period in question by looking at the changing attitudes towards recorded sound and music within the Swedish film industry. This in turn necessitates rewriting international film history concerning music use in early sound film. Compared to Hollywood, who by 1933 consistently started to use non-diegetic music within sound film, the Swedish film industry regularly started to use this kind of music already by 1931. In fact, part of my aim is a critical re-reading of existing academic literature covering this area.

The second aim of this study - the arrival of sound film in Sweden - constitutes a good case study of how a fairly young, but organisationally stable industry met something that seemed to change overnight its very pre-requisites, plunging everyone from producers to musicians into an uncertain future. For the purpose of this study three specific groups have, therefore, been singled out whose various fates in that changing environment will be addressed – firstly film production/sound companies, secondly cinema owners, and thirdly musicians. They all contributed to the process their specificities, conceptions and ideas, which sometimes were aligned with each other and the fast changing environment, and sometimes were not.

These three groups experienced the conversion to sound film differently. At one end of the spectrum the production companies in Sweden needed to handle the situation quickly, or else take the risk of running into financial problems. For instance, while at first it might have looked as if they had a choice of having sound film or not, in reality this was never an option. Whatever their preconceived notions of sound film, the production companies approached the situation in a down-to-earth manner that resulted in a smooth conversion. At the other end of the spectrum the musicians faced a similar situation, but from a more bottom up perspective, which forced them to rely heavily on second-hand information. For them it was not a question of deciding on sound film or not, but rather how to act to save their jobs in
the first place. What stands out in their case is the lack of action in encountering the fast arriving sound film, and it will come as no surprise that the Swedish Musicians’ Union was the least prepared organisation to meet these rapid changes. Finally, set in the middle between the production companies and the musicians, we find the cinema owners who needed to respond to the decisions made by production and sound companies, but also to cope with their employed musicians. The cinema owners ended taking up a rather straightforward and casual approach on how to act, since their organisation was flexible enough to adjust to the changing environment.\footnote{A note needs to be stressed at once - the central position of AB Svensk Filmindustri. The company dominated the market and was truly vertically integrated (with production, distribution and cinemas with employed musicians). However, they did not control any sound patents and were therefore subject to problems with interchangeability between sound systems. The company’s central position forced more or less the rest of the Swedish film industry to follow their decisions.}

All three groups, however, shared the uncertainty towards a phenomenon which could develop in different ways. No one knew if sound film would disappear after a couple of years, or be running alongside silent film, or take over the scene altogether. Sometimes this uncertainty resulted in contradictory reactions, and what might from today’s vantage point look like an industry out of control. But in reality the constant changes of actions and standpoints were more an expression of positioning and preparing for every eventuality. By focusing on these three groups my aim, therefore, is to show that this was an industry that was not out of control. Rather it was organisationally very much up for the task.

I attempt to show this through a survey of the sound conversion from the season 1928-1929 to the season 1931-1932 from the point of view of production (chapter 2), reception (chapter 3) and practice (chapter 4), in order to demonstrate how the three groups of companies, cinema owners and musicians faced the “crisis” of sound film. In doing so I also highlight the discussions during the period on the nature of authentic sounds and how these sounds succeeded to merge with the diegesis of the film.

**Limits of study and periodisation**

As mentioned, I have limited this study to the period 1928–1932. The reasons for deciding on this time frame are several. First, as far as the period in and for itself is concerned, these years not only witnessed the arrival of sound film at the cinemas, thereby changing the pre-requisites for a whole industry. These years also represent the climax of a phase in Sweden that was characterised by a belief in the future that had grown stronger during the 1920s, culminating in the spring of 1932, at which time the aftermath of the stock market crash of 1929 had also sunk in as a mental reality.\footnote{The full impact of the depression was felt in Sweden during 1931. Erik Lundberg, *Ekonomiska kriser förr och nu* (Stockholm: SNS Förlag, 1994 [1983]): 90.} In this con-
text, I particularly focus on how ideological, political, economical, and technical forces collaborated in creating a pattern that finally led from openness and willingness to experiment, to a kind of psychological gathering and a stronger emphasis on tradition. I set this in relation to the Americanisation that was debated throughout the period and which came to have implications for especially the musicians’ reactions towards sound film.

A second reason for the above mentioned time frame is that the sound conversion in Sweden, and Europe as a whole, differs from the sound phase in the US. It is both shorter and occurs during another time span. In Hollywood the starting point for this period is generally regarded as the release of The Jazz Singer (Alan Crosland, 1927) in October 1927, while the period in Sweden started during the second half of the season 1928-1929 culminating with the “first” Swedish sound film Säg det i toner (Say it with Music, Edwin Adolphson and Julius Jaenzon, 1929) during the Christmas of 1929, in turn launching a new phase for Swedish film production concerning content, aesthetics, and economics. In the US the sound conversion can be said to have ended by the close of the 1930-1931 season, when Hollywood had definitely stopped producing silent films, and a consensus had been reached that regarded sound as something permanent (whether you agreed to it or not). From a Swedish perspective, in the spring of 1931 it was still seen as a possibility that silent films would persist throughout the season 1931–1932.

A third reason for this time frame is that it was in the year 1932 that the Swedish film industry leader Svensk Filmindustri (SF) started to use the Swedish sound system from AGA-Baltic. Through this sound system Sweden succeeded to develop an apparatus of their own, hence liberating production companies and cinema owners from high rental and service fees on foreign sound equipment, as well as solving many obstacles concerning the interchangeability between competing sound systems that had been so prominent during the ongoing patent disputes the previous years.

I have also limited my research to the Swedish capital of Stockholm, as it was at the time the centre of the Swedish film industry. It was there that the production companies made their decisions which affected the rest of the

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9 See, for example, Thomas J. Saunders, Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany (Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 1994): 222, for a similar time frame for Germany.
10 Although Don Juan (Alan Crosland, 1926) preceded The Jazz Singer by over a year.
country, and it was there that the first sound films appeared and were discussed. Moreover, the editorial staffs of the different periodicals, as well as the Union organisations’ head offices, were based in the Swedish capital. In short – everything started in Stockholm, and then rapidly spread out to the rest of Sweden.

Previous research in Sweden: a critical survey

The history of the road to a Swedish production of sound film has been the topic of surprisingly few studies. For instance, a concise history of the conversion to sound film during the years 1928-1932 in Sweden does not exist.14 Often the sound film is also treated as a backdrop for a completely different subject matter. As a consequence the issue has not been given enough attention, which has resulted in many conclusions and assumptions not supported by thorough research.15 Instead, the arguments have been supported by second-hand sources, which have led to half-truths being elevated to accepted facts.

The more accurate sources are easily accounted for but should, obviously, nevertheless constitute the starting point for this thesis. When reviewing these, one finds that there is ironically more written about the sound film that


was produced before the 1920s than about the actual conversion to the sound film period. The earliest sources that focus on the conversion naturally emphasise the technology as such. In a section of John Hertzberg’s article in translation “Photography and Reproduction Technology” in The Book of Inventions IX, there is a description over a few pages of the different technical systems, which focuses on the most important sound systems since Edison’s Kinetophone and forward. In a Swedish context this text is unique as being a rare example that describes in detail all the available sound systems at the time (something that was also acknowledged). In this regard the text illustrates the different systems that production companies and cinema owners needed to get an understanding of. Otherwise, for the work at hand, the article is of limited interest other than as an illustration of how the technology was viewed and explained. Together with numerous other explanatory but less detailed articles and texts published during the conversion to sound about the technology behind synchronous sound, these texts helped to heighten the reawakened medium sensitivity that I discuss further in chapter 1.

Another noteworthy text about technology is Arne Holtzberg’s “Sound Film Technique in Sweden” in Swedish Cinema and Film People in Word and Image, which in a sense dovetailed with Hertzberg’s article, although written several years later. This text is just as technically concise but differs from Hertzberg’s in that it is solely focused on AGA-Baltic’s development, that is the company that together with the large production company Svensk Filmindustri succeeded in freeing the Swedish film industry from the dependence of foreign sound companies (which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2). Another text that focuses on a sole company is the anniversary book on Nordisk Tonefilm, From an Ice Bear’s Memoirs... from 1954. Despite its biases, it is one of the better Swedish works on the company’s history. The film critic Bengt Idestam-Almquist’s contribution in this book, “Nordisk Tonefilm and its forefathers”, starts off in 1896 and sets the company inside a larger framework by addressing general industrial decisions. This text gives a good account of the development of the AGA-Baltic sound patent and the following conflict with the Nordisk company.

Another source of interest in this regard is Ragnar Allberg and Bengt Idestam-Almquist’s book from 1932, Film of Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, as it

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16 Hertzberg (1929): 664-878. For the sake of clarity I have in the main body of the text translated the Swedish titles into English throughout the thesis. For a similar British text see for example Kenneth C. E. Mees, Some Photographic Aspects of Sound Recording (London: The Royal Society of Arts, 1934) or for a text with an American focus see James R. Cameron, Motion Pictures with Sound (Manhattan Beach, N.Y.: Cameron Publishing Co., 1929).


18 Holtzberg (1940): XLII-XLVII.


is one of the first historical overviews in Swedish about cinema.\textsuperscript{21} Despite being published just after the conversion to sound, the new sound film was put in some kind of context. Hence, in the last three chapters, Warner’s development with regard to sound is explained in a rudimentary fashion, as well as reactions towards the sound film, and the changing prerequisites for film workers and actors. Nothing, however, is mentioned about the Swedish situation. The conclusion of this work is that Hollywood has finally lost its prominence over Europe – thanks to sound film! As a source, this book is as dubious as it is subjective. The point here is that at its publication it was given much attention in the press as the first Swedish film book, and as such became a reference work of how retrospectively one came to view the conversion to sound.\textsuperscript{22}

Concerning academic texts about the conversion to sound phase the first source that should be given some attention is Elisabeth Liljedahl’s thesis \textit{Silent Film in Sweden – Critique and Debate: How the Contemporary Period Valued the New Artform} from 1975.\textsuperscript{23} As far as contemporary criticism is concerned the main focus of this thesis is periodicals and their critics from the 1920s. But since several critics were active during both the silent period and the sound era, Liljedahl also gives insight into their reception of sound film, although not following this up with any general discussion. Despite a thorough analysis of four critics and their views on sound film, any deeper insight into their reasoning is strikingly left out, leaving the reader with a shallow and general picture.\textsuperscript{24} Because of this one-dimensionality the quotes are often left standing on their own, without being contextualised in any larger historical framework. As Leif Furhammar has shown, from time to time Liljedahl takes the opinions in the reviews a little too literally, thus missing the fact that quite a few articles were part of a polemic in an ongoing debate between critics. Here, as Furhammar notes, it was often not so important if one contradicted oneself, as it was to keep the debate going.\textsuperscript{25} Nevertheless, Liljedahl’s thesis constitutes one of few texts that address the debate during the late 1920s and early 1930s, while the last part of the book returns exclusively to the sound film.\textsuperscript{26}

More problematic is Jan Reinholds’ book \textit{Filmindustry 1900-1975} from 1987. It is a first publication within a framework of a doctoral thesis at the Economic History Department at Gothenburg University.\textsuperscript{27} The better part of the material was assembled during the 1970s but was not worked upon until

\textsuperscript{21} Ragnar Allberg and Bengt Idestam-Almquist, \textit{Film igår, idag, i morgon} (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1932).
\textsuperscript{22} “Bokspalten”, Biografbladet, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1932): 35.
\textsuperscript{23} Liljedahl (1975).
\textsuperscript{24} The critics that are discussed are: Bengt Idestam-Almquist alias Robin Hood (Stockholms-Tidningen, Biografbladet), Herbert Grevenius (Stockholms Dagblad), Thorsten Eklann alias Pir Ramek (Upsala) and Sven Stolpe (Filmjournalen).
\textsuperscript{26} Liljedahl (1975): 288-294.
\textsuperscript{27} Reinholds (1987/1).
the 1980s. This is evident regarding the book’s part on sound film that I have surveyed, which reveal great errors concerning the Movietone and Vitaphone principles. Astonishingly Reinhold had difficulties in separating the two systems, despite the fact that they were based on two completely different techniques – Movietone being a sound-on-film system and Vitaphone being a sound-on-disc system, where the former technology would come to replace the latter after sound films’ initial years.28 Reinholds’ other contribution from 1987, Cinema in Sweden 1900-1975, treats the Swedish cinemas with a focus on its audience.29 Here, as well, a major error is made concerning the drop in revenues due to a decline in audience base during the last years of the 1920s. Reinholds’ conclusion becomes too negative as he does not look on the audience development in a longer perspective. As I will show, the sound film in Sweden instead upheld the figures at a time when the great depression of 1929 was felt through the rest of society.

That so few titles exist about the conversion to sound in Sweden, and that some of them evidently contain factual errors, has created problems for later research. Per-Olov Qvist’s book Images of the Swedish Welfare State from 1995, about the Swedish cinema during the 1930s, is a good example of how half truths have been elevated to facts. A point in case is Qvist’s strong reliance on Reinholds to describe what went on during the sound conversion.30 On the other hand, as soon as Qvist challenges such half truths with his own material, he succeeds in shedding new light on the matters at hand, first and foremost concerning the circumstances within the industry in a time of great change.

Quist’s work gives valuable insights into the Zeitgeist, as does Mats Björkin in his thesis Americanism, Bolshevism and Miniskirts (1998) (see next page) and Ann-Kristin Wallengren in her thesis An Evening at Röda Kvarn (1998).31 For the thesis at hand their insights have been invaluable as many decisions made by industry people may not always be explained by rational thinking. For example, in Wallengren, concerned with silent film music in Sweden during the 1920s, there is an interesting part about the musicians’ position in relation to sound film.32 Through the correspondence between Svensk Filmindustri’s executive Olof Andersson and the proprietors

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29 Reinholds (1987/2).
of the cinema theatres Skandia and Röda Kvarn (both owned by Svensk Filminindustri), Wallengren is able to give a more nuanced picture concerning the musicians’ situation. The feeling that emerges from the correspondence challenges in several aspects the image that was presented in contemporary media of an industry indifferent to what happened to the musicians. Rather, both the proprietors and the company were worried about the fates of their musicians, and thereby tried to find alternative jobs for them. I have made good use of Wallengren, as it is the most concise and thorough survey of the kind of music that was played in Swedish cinemas during the 1920s.

Another text that has been of importance for this thesis is an article by Torsten Jungstedt, “The Breakthrough of the Sound Film/Swedish Film 1930-1939” in The Film Year Book 1976 from 1977. By using the development in Europe and the US as a backdrop, and by returning to the archives, Jungstedt sheds new light on Swedish circumstances concerning the conversion to sound film and also during the 1930s. Although short, the article nevertheless summarises the most important aspects, from the technical changes to the economic crises that Swedish film found itself in just before the conversion to sound.33 Leif Furhammar’s essay “Decadence: Swedish Film 1925-1930” from 1980 pursue this further and is one of few texts that treats the period just before the arrival of sound film.34 Without going into too much detail his essay gives a good overview of the premises before the arrival of the sound film. This has been useful as it gives a backdrop and a context for the debates during the period 1928-1932 that this thesis addresses.

Similar in this regard is Mats Björkin’s thesis. It does not specifically address issues concerning the conversion to sound film, but is important in showing how the Swedish film industry consolidated during the 1920s.35 This consolidation phase can be said to have reached a point of stabilisation simultaneously to the entry of sound film, and was a development that had, more or less, just finished as the sound film arrived. Björkin’s thesis clarifies the attitudes towards the US, which gives a greater understanding of the critique towards what was at the time often referred to as “mechanical music” (noise). This critique against the mechanical (noise) is pursued in Karl-Olof Edström’s book On demand from 1982, which is a historical exposé over the Musicians’ Union from 1907 and onward.36 This is a rare book that looks at the conversion to sound film from the musicians’ perspective. Although covering a lot of topics, the sound conversion is given due treatment, and the book has been valuable as a source for establishing dates of issues central to this thesis (see chapter 4).

For sound film prior to the conversion to sound years, Jan Olsson’s *From Film Sound to Sound Film* from 1986 has been invaluable.³⁷ It is aimed only at early sound film in Sweden, and focuses on film that was present up to approximately 1920–1921 - that is, until the inventor Sven A:son Berglund’s infamous failure to acquire continued funding for research into the technology of sound. Berglund was one of the earliest sound inventors and started his research by 1906. At times it seemed that he had solved the synchronicity problem, but after a screening on 17 February 1921, when everything seemed to take off, he nevertheless lost funding. This screening had such an impact that it resurfaced as an example both for and against sound film eight years later. I will return to this in chapter 2.

**Sound and the teleological view of historical progress**

In much early writing on sound, the approach has been influenced by early American research in the 1930s. The perspective of this research has been that perfect synchronisation was the all important and impending objective, leading to conclusions that synchronised sound was in the long run inevitable. This research also saw the conversion to sound as a total break in film history.³⁸ Such an approach is understandable as the conversion to sound creates such a clear breaking point, a “before” and “after” that separates the film of today from the film of yesterday – that is, such a date in film history around which other questions about economic, technical and practical issues can revolve. For the conversion to sound film, *The Jazz Singer* thereby serves as a perfect phenomenon in that it “provides a date, a studio, a genre, and a star to epitomize a whole history”,³⁹ to use Donald Crafton’s words. Or as William H. Hays, the head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), wrote in 1929:

*The Jazz Singer* marked the beginning of a great rush to sound. The industry which had been waiting for assurance of the practability of sound was at length convinced. The turning point had been reached. Today we reckon the evening of October 6, 1927, as the beginning of a new phase in motion pictures. From that evening on sound became the imperative element in production.⁴⁰

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It is claimed that the “methods of story-telling in silent films and talkies are not analogous”, 41 but as Michel Chion emphasises, within the discontinuous history of the film medium there is also a continuous history that follows a continuum. That is, for sound film there is continuous movement from the invention of cinema itself to integrating the elements of image and sound.42 This integration continued after the sound conversion into the twenty-first century, with references made to the medium’s heightened realism and elevated experience, albeit that the sounds heard are, as Chion puts it, “more dispersed and dissociated with respect to what we see” than ever before.43

Swedish circumstances show on this continuous movement and on a smooth conversion with continuities across silent film and sound film. This continuous history echoes André Bazin who does not see any breaking point during the conversion to sound film. For him the break comes considerably later with different montage and camera techniques such as deep focus.44 For while contemporary writings in Sweden may have emphasised a disruptive break, the films themselves tell a completely different story, just as Charles O’Brian has shown in the case of France.45

The discontinuous history came for long to be the narrative told primarily due to the fact that literature tended to chronicle technological, economical, and artistic innovations up to the conversion, but failed to investigate subsequent developments.46 Seen from this perspective the sound film could not have replaced the silent film until the conversional period, since all necessary technology had not been developed before then. In this regard the view of historical progress followed the cycle of “invention – innovation – diffusion”,47 commonly referred to as “the theory of technological innovation”.48

That is, in the case of sound film, scholars have taken for granted that it was from the beginning synchronisation per se that one tried to achieve, and that all experiments only had this as an overarching goal. This in turn led to a view on the conversion to sound that assumed a clear demarcation between silent film and sound film which is an abstraction and construction created both by scholars and the industry itself after the advent of synchronous sound. In reality film continued to be a tool for story telling, such that its different parts as, for example, musical practices developed during the silent period, continued to prevail, after Al Jolson had made his famous exclamation – “You ain’t heard nothin’ yet”. Or to put it differently, – despite the seemingly big change of the industry it was still “business as usual”.

Edward Buscombe notes that the theory of technological innovation only explains “why it is that innovation takes the course it does”, never “why there should be innovations in the first place”. Related to this argument is Rick Altman’s crisis model of historiography – one that stipulates that every representational system sometimes enters an identity crisis, with a continuous presence of apparently contradictory practices, as can be seen in the reaction towards sound film in Sweden. Several diverging technological systems compete under what Altman calls a jurisdictional conflict. However, the aims for every seemingly diverging system are the same, and after a certain time span a negotiated settlement is reached. The process is not clear as it follows along a continuum, making it easy to fall into the trap of afterwards settling for specific dates as to when something happened, while in reality it is only the seemingly discontinuous end result that we are dating. Charles O’Brien, too, writes about a “historiography of crisis”, but sees this more as something typical of the writings during the 1930s, contrasting it to the writings of Bazin, and later to academic research during the 1970s onward. O’Brien arrives at a similar conclusion as Altman, as he emphasises that “sound conversion appears to be not the cataclysmic overturning of the cinema’s status quo but rather a consolidation of the major and minor studios that would define the next thirty years of Hollywood’s studio system”. A similar pattern can be seen in the Swedish film industry as the production, distribution and exhibition company Svensk Filmindustri consolidated its central position, although it prior to the conversion to sound had had thoughts of giving up film production altogether.

53 The company had followed the general decline of Swedish film production in the 1920s resulting in that only six feature films were produced in Sweden during 1929. This should be
Donald Crafton for his part points to the importance of also having a perspective on the audience and their desires, in other words how these desires might lead back into the production. Robert Spadoni argues for a similar approach, and emphasises that the central question is not how an audience received these films during the late 1920s and early 1930s but how their reactions might have led back into the production. Both Crafton and Spadoni echo Rick Altman’s theory of cinema as a cultural event, that is how film is viewed as a self-contained structure around which everything revolves that is concerned with that specific filmic text. Two aspects are of importance: that of the work of production and that about the process of reception. The key to understanding the model is that just as production goes through the text toward reception, the reception goes back and influences production. No one side is privileged; instead there is a continuous interchange without a beginning or an end, as well as a constant shifting of positions. To use Barbara Klinger’s words, the audience in this case “does not exist in one stable location in relation to the flux of historical meanings around a film”, but is rather in a constant change of positions in relation to the film medium. Altman’s model is of particular use in approaching the three disparate, albeit intertwined, groups of production/sound companies, cinemas, and musicians that this thesis addresses. They all participate in the constant interchange of experiences and in their particular ways contribute to the production during the conversion to sound.

Previous research on the conversion to sound film

The thoughts of a discontinuous sound history also came to influence most literature between 1930 and 1960, which was characterised by a perspective of a “before” and “after” sound film, with a clear focus on the technology behind it. The texts focused on aesthetic issues that came up with the camera becoming static, whereupon the general feeling was that everything changed for the worse. Paul Rotha wrote in 1931 that it is “a matter of common observation to appreciate that since talking films have occupied the attention of the studios, the pictorial value of the screen has greatly deteriorated”. What compared to the average of 20-30 films that were produced per year prior and after the conversion to sound. Lars Åhlander (ed.), Svensk filmografi 3: 1930-1939 (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1979): 37-39; Lars Åhlander (ed.), Svensk filmografi 2: 1920-1929 (Stockholm: Svenska filminstitutet, 1982): 52-53.


implications this might have had for the medium at large, as well as decisions thereby made by production companies, was left to the side. For example concerning the musicians’ situation, there was a general agreement that they went into mass unemployment, ignoring the fact that many actually found work in the emerging record industry, albeit that the unemployment figures remained high.59

Other issues that got their share of interest during the 1930s were the changing prerequisites for film distribution and export changes. The focus here was on how Hollywood avoided losing its prominence on foreign markets, as well as on the dispute over patent issues between enterprises. What received the greatest interest was the new technique of sound. Numerous articles and books were written during the 1930s where the new technique was described from all possible points of view. A good example of this is Edward Kellogg’s articles.60

It took until the 1960s before other kinds of texts started to emerge. These were characterised by a sense of rediscovery, and were focused foremost on the changed form and style that films revealed during the conversion to sound, as well as approaching “what happened to whom”-questions. Among authors of this time the before mentioned David Conant and Gertrude Jobes can be put forward.61 This period brought with it a renewed interest for this area of research, although it became the following decade’s task to return to empirical sources as the 1970s was dominated by a strong shift towards corporate history. Douglas Gomery published several articles on the conversion to sound film, arguing that the conversion was mainly economically driven. He also argued for the theory of technological innovation as a way to explain the change. More specifically, in his view it was mainly economical aspects that drew some companies to pursue the synchronous and mechanical sound, while the technical innovation as such became a driving force in its own right for continued development.62 In his pursuit of decision makers, he ad-


dressed, among other issues, the patent disputes and thus also the different pre-requisites for American and European companies. Most importantly his articles gave later research a good foundation to start from, as he straightened out several questions concerning what had happened during the very short time span of the conversion to sound (although musicians, cinema owners and audiences at large were left out of the discussion). Although Gomery himself argued that by applying this focus he was able to completely modify how the conversion to sound was viewed, he nevertheless, to quote Paul Seale, “frequently limits his revision to the substance of traditional histories, tracing out again, if slightly more circuitously, their linear trajectories”.63

Despite the merits of Gomery’s work, which gave a renewed and broadened perspective to research by emphasising economic aspects on the conversion to sound, the theory of technological innovation only explains the direction that the innovation takes when it is already in place. In fact, Gomery fails to clarify how it is that any innovation at all can take place in an otherwise stable and profit-making industry. What is the need behind such a change? In cinema research so far, this has most frequently been attributed to a search for realism.64

For a nuanced picture, David Bordwell in The Classical Hollywood Cinema (1985) expanded Gomery’s approach by regarding the conversion as narrative and reception driven. In his chapter “The Introduction of Sound”, an audience perspective was applied, as well as addressing issues concerning music, which up to then had only received minor interest. Gomery’s explorations were augmented as Bordwell addressed how producers and companies reacted towards audience preferences, raising the issue of how this might lead back into a production context.65 In conjunction with this Kristin Thompson published a book that approached American film export between the years 1907 and 1934. What makes this work interesting in the context of

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this thesis is that Thompson approached the patent disputes during the early 1930s from a European perspective.66

Besides Bordwell, what unites most texts until the 1980s is that they almost exclusively utilise a historical focus. Film sound theory and its relation to film theory at large, within a historical context is never really addressed, and it was not until the 1990s, which in a sense summarised the previous years, that film sound and film theory met. The focus then was on theoretical aspects concerning perception where one re-acknowledged earlier writings on the subject. Key authors in this latest re-alignment are Rick Altman and James Lastra.

**Film sound theory**

In general, film theory has at least until 1980, concentrated more on the image track than on the sound track, leading to a film terminology that almost exclusively, as Rick Altman has shown, was camera oriented.67 As a consequence of the seemingly clear breaking point between silent film and sound film, reflections on the sound track have been primarily focused on the years around 1930, walking hand in hand with research on sound technology that mainly focused on the innovations leading up to the sound film.68 Such themes, mainly the intangibility of dialogue, which then was brought to light, became the paradigms of sound research for a long time to come. This also came to colour film music research, as it has generally been included under the umbrella of sound.69

Simultaneously with the historical focus on sound film, there has been a constant development of film sound theory. One of the earliest examples where film sound was theorised was a statement on film sound written by Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and G. V. Alexandrov published 5 August 1928.70 The text was an expression of the opportunities that the new technique raised, as well as an utterance about problems inherent in that same technology. Since the text was grounded in the theory of montage, sound was seen as strengthening and broadening the affect that the montage was assumed to have on the audience. Sound was seen as a montage element in its own right, and should be “treated as a new montage element”.71 According to the statement sound was unavoidable since the ever more compli-

68 Ibid., 11.
71 Ibid. 259.
cated plots during the silent period finally needed the help of the dialogue to clarify matters.

Sound was still not seen as a fundamental component of film as the emphasis remained on the visual components, and as Altman has argued, it was viewed as an addition since cinema was “cinema before the sound track was added”.72 This resulted in the image looming large, and in the dependence of the soundtrack. This was a model of thinking about sound and especially music that was to become the paradigm up to the present day, which was based on the view that the image controlled the development of all parts of the medium.73

Eisenstein’s theorisation on sound and later music finds its historical roots in the nineteenth-century and that century’s acoustical research. For example, just as Richard Wagner strove in his music towards a totality in which every part aimed at one expressive end, so Eisenstein sought an audiovisual totality. Eisenstein’s conception of a dialectical film form entailed that cinematic materials and structures gained independence, and thus turned away from Wagner’s notion of totality.74 Yet, it seems, as Kristin Thompson has argued, that Eisenstein did not consider sound “as a thing apart, requiring a whole new approach, as so many other filmmakers did; instead he was able to see it as a filmic device similar to the image devices of the silent period”. In other words, the sound worked together with the image to control audience response.75

Due to the independent nature of film sound Eisenstein was interpreted in the Statement as arguing for a contrapuntal use of sound and music, while in reality he was only talking about “sensed inner moments” in relation to vertical montage. This is illustrated with an orchestra; every instrument group develops horizontally, while the vertical structure joins every group. Transferred to film, both dialogue, sound and music need to fuse with the images, although they do not need to express the same thing – just like the instruments in an orchestra.76

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Another aspect of film sound that can be traced back to the nineteenth-century is the definition of perception that connected more closely the eye than the ear to consciousness. Sound, and especially music, was seen as a transmitter of emotional responses, while sight was seen as the rational check on such processes.77 One also emphasised, which was taken up later by Hans Erdmann and Giuseppe Becce, music’s stronger connection to subjectivity (or “die Gefühlslinie”, that is, music’s possibility to describe the inner aspects of a narrative),78 thereby associating sight with objectivity. Or, as Vsevolod Pudovkin argued, while the image is an objective representation of certain events, music is a subjective utterance of this objectivity.79

It has been suggested that the ear is the ideal sense that can establish a correspondence between the inner subjectivity and the spiritual interiority of the perceived object, as the latter’s interior is mediated by its emitted sounds.80 This thought, in effect, became the foundation of film sound theory, as well as for film music theory, whereupon one assumed that, in the words of Kathryn Kalinak, “meaning [was] contained in the visual image and that sound [could] only reinforce or alter what [was] already there” as accompaniment. Sound and music functions were to be either in parallel or in counterpoint to the image, which together with the image as the structural base, resulted in sound/music research never really approaching issues concerning perception.81

With this followed that the terminology and methodology for the analysis of the soundtrack was taken from the research on the image.82 It clearly shows, as Kalinak argues, that in the writings of, for example, Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs, Siegfried Kracauer and René Clair, “a film’s meaning, ultimately, is contained in ‘what the pictures impart’”.83 That is, what the earliest sound critics shared, according to Rick Altman, were two fallacies – the historical fallacy (starting with the silent film and regarding sound as an addition) and the ontological fallacy (arguing that film is a visual medium, 

78 Giuseppe Becce and Hans Erdmann, Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Music. 1, Musik und Film (Berlin: Berlin-Lichterfelde, 1927).
82 Ibid., 25.
thereby stipulating the image as the carrier of meaning). Altman (1992/3): 35-39. Film sound and film music research came to use these as functions for an analytical model based on the image, creating two more fallacies, the reproductive fallacy (that sounds are reproduced truthfully to the original) and the nominalist fallacy (which focuses on the heterogeneity of sound but fails to acknowledge that sounds also share a common ground that is articulated when perceivers discuss sound events). Altman (1980/1): 6.

Instead of focusing on the integration of dialogue, sound and music, research from the start came to focus on the issue of fidelity, addressing the fundamental illusion that “the sound is produced by the image when in fact it remains independent from it”. Theoretical discussions on sound therefore almost exclusively came to concentrate on the relationship between the sound recording and its original source. In this view a reproduced sound was supposed to articulate the acoustic environment and landscape in which we live. Balázs argued that it is “the business of the sound film to reveal for us our acoustic environment, the acoustic landscape in which we live, the speech of things and the intimate whisperings of nature”. Balázs (1952): 197. The image came to represent the space-time that is in front of the camera, while the sounds reproduced the material that is included in the film, that is, the recording produced an exact replica of the sonic material, and therefore could not be manipulated. Since the early studies of gramophonic recording and reproduction in the 1910s and 1920s had been aimed primarily towards music, most early theoreticians on sound film took as their starting point an ideal auditor sitting in a concert hall. The recording should thereby take in all space sounds, making for a sound that from the very beginning was not faithful to the recording event.

The fact remains that a sound’s fidelity to a source is not a property of film sound but an effect of synchronisation. A sound can therefore be repeated infinitely throughout a film to different images, without any connection to the space where the original was at first located. This means that a reproduced sound or a recorded piece of music in reality sounds different from its authentic source, in that every part in the process before a sound emerges from the speakers and is perceived by the audience follows a set of established and standardised practices to present the sound accurately according to our expectations, from the staging of the sound over the re-

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85 Ibid., 39-41.
87 Balázs (1952): 197.
90 Ibid., 147.
cording, editing, mixing, re-recording and playback. Or as Chion puts it: “The sounds are skimmed of certain aspects and enriched with others,” which he calls materialising sound indices. The rendering of these sounds consists of accommodations and adjustments to conserve a certain kind of realism in their new representational context. This emphasises sound’s double property, that is, film sound does not only make us believe that the recording objectively indicates the source but also impressions linked to it. Yet, audiences do perceive that these sounds, how inaccurate they might be, are emanating from the object/character/action on screen. Audiences also sense depth, a feeling of distance depending on what the audiences see on screen, whereby the “creation of depth was now the consequence of both visual and aural conventions.”

Sound’s independence and the audience’s simultaneous perception of image track and soundtrack were largely left out of scholarly discussion until the 1980s. Thus, for example, the difference between early Soviet filmmaker’s non-fidelity use of sound, which created off-screen diegetic sounds contrary to Hollywood’s use of on-screen diegetic sounds, were not acknowledged.

The acknowledgement of such aspects can be said to have been initiated by the publication of a special issue of Yale French Studies entitled Cinéma/Sound, which aimed at a new start for sound research. But as the editor Rick Altman later stated, most articles were still aimed “at describing the properties of sound, the relationship between image and sound, or the functioning of sound in a particular textual situation”. But as James Lastra also has argued one did emphasise a recording’s diegetic function for narrational clarity.

Later research has come to regard the recording as a sample, or reading of it, if you will, of the original. In this view the recording of the sound only resembles the original by name, since more or less any kind of sound can stand in for the same original. In the 1980s there was also a general agreement that in “sound recording, as in image recording, the apparatus performs a significant perceptual work for us – isolating, intensifying, analyzing sonic and visual material”. Or to quote James Lastra, “technological representation is never a case of simply seeing or hearing, but of looking and listening.

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93 Ibid., 69-71, 96, 111.
We look and listen for things, for specific purposes, while machines’ ‘more perfect’ eyes and ears absorb indiscriminately.¹⁰⁰

Film music theory

Previous research on the soundtrack has primarily been concentrated on sound, but contrary to what is normally assumed, film music has also been the subject of many discussions. There is a huge body of popular work on music in film, everything from reviews of scores to interviews and biographies of great composers. However, the body of academic writing on film music is slim. From the 1930s to the 1960s and 1970s all seem to take for granted that the meaning in the image is fixed and that music is only illustration or some kind of comment, without participating in the creation of the image.¹⁰¹ Ann-Kristin Wallengren argues that this has led one to limit the theoretical tools for film music analysis (and, as I stress, also for film sound in general) of looking only at specific functions. One central aspect has been on how film music works in relation to the image either by relating to characters and objects, or by relating generally to atmosphere and space.¹⁰²

To name the most central and important books, we need to go to the 1980s and 1990s, and to Claudia Gorbman’s Unheard Melodies (1987), Kathryn Kalinak’s Settling the Score (1992), Caryl Flinn’s Strains of Utopia (1992), Royal S. Brown’s Overtones and Undertones (1994), Michel Chion’s La musique au cinéma (1995), and to Martin Miller Marks’ Music and the Silent Film (1997).¹⁰³ The focus of these works is on music material, performance practices, and the music’s relation to a film’s narrative and its operations. Most of these works rarely include any real analysis of music’s relation to the audience, and it took until the new millennium before any such examples came along, for instance Anahid Kassabian’s Hearing Film (2001).¹⁰⁴

Earlier works with this focus are easily accounted for. Parts in Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler’s Composing for the Film from 1947, and Kurt London’s early contribution Film Music from 1936 are two examples.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Ibid., 196, 232.
Although London tells the story from the beginning, and thereby addresses music’s continuous presence within the medium, it is above all a catalogue that lists different types of music and their functions, much in the manner of the Kinothek-catalogues of the 1920s. Other illustrative examples of not much happening in this regard until the 1980s are Irwin Bazelon’s *Knowing the Score* (1975) and Charles Merrell Berg’s *An Investigation* (1976). The approach of both Bazelon and Berg are strikingly similar to London’s, as they go through film music’s various functions, Bazelon taking a general historical view, while Berg concentrates on the silent period. In effect, the only difference from London’s work is another forty years, which gives Bazelon more examples to draw from. The work which best exemplifies the catalogue character of many publications at this time is James L. Limbacher’s *Film Music from Violins to Video*, which over nearly 900 pages lists different functions along with short recapitulations of their meaning.

If one generally talks about a “before” and “after” *The Jazz Singer* during the conversion to sound, the same can be said about Gorbman’s *Unheard Melodies*. It is a true landmark in film music studies. For the first time film music was set into a broader film theoretical context, approaching questions about film music never before asked. What Gorbman, and later Flinn, does is to look on film music’s relationships to consciousness. She critiques the notions of parallelism and contrapuntal emphasised by, for example, Rudolf Arnheim, and argues instead for a mutual implication where the image is not seen as dominant, but rather the constant interaction between image and music is focused. It is important to note, as Wallengren argues, that the interaction occurs both ways: just as the music influences the image, the latter also influences the former. In this Gorbman identifies seven principles of film music that have since comprised the corner stones of narrative film music theory. The emphasis has been on 1) music’s invisibility, 2) its inaudibility, 3) music as a signifier of emotion, 4) cueing narrative, 5) its continuity, 6) its unity, and 7) that all of the above may be violated. These principles give a very good description of how film music generally functions.

However, Gorbman is still stuck inside the same text-oriented analysis that the writers of Rick Altman’s special film sound periodical issue of 1980. For instance, Gorbman has received criticism from Anahid Kassabian and Jeff Smith that she only considers how music relates to the narrative world of the film, leaving the audience outside, on the assumption that every audi-

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tor interprets every musical cue the same way.\textsuperscript{111} Gorbman is assumed to interpret a neutral audience that has no preferences or expectations as they enter the theatre, and hence the scores under analysis are detached from any subjective and historical listening conditions, as they belong exclusively to the particular films under study.\textsuperscript{112} To use Jeff Smith’s words, the audience becomes “a repository of subject effects which he can neither understand nor consciously perceive”.\textsuperscript{113} Strictly speaking, then, not much had changed since 1949, when Aaron Copland listed similar principles for film music: 1) creating a convincing atmosphere, 2) underlying psychological refinements, 3) a kind of neutral background filler, 4) building continuity, and 5) building-up a scene.\textsuperscript{114} In defence of Gorbman one should not forget the environment and context in which the book was written. Published in a decade when psychoanalytic and psycho-semiotic film studies had become fashionable, it is difficult to see Gorbman taking a different approach.

Kassabian, in turn, argues for a theoretical approach that considers film music’s engagement between audiences and film scores. The link between the two are “conditioned by filmgoers’ relationships to a wide range of music both within and outside” of the theatre.\textsuperscript{115} In this she sees two different approaches in contemporary film music: the composed score and the compiled score. In so doing she also argues for an assimilating identification in connection with the former, and an affiliating identification with the latter. Here the assimilating identification tries to maintain control over the process of identification, thus narrowing down possible ways to the inside. The affiliating identification, on the other hand, tries to open up possible identification to the outside. In sum the “assimilating identifications try to narrow the psychic field” while “affiliating identifications [try] to open it wide”.\textsuperscript{116} Kassabian concentrates on three aspects in relation to perception, focusing on how the narrative world of the film is perceived, and how an audience perceives the music’s method within a scene, as well as what the music evokes and communicates to the audience.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{111} Kassabian (2001); Jeff Smith, “Unheard Melodies? A Critique of Psychoanalytic Theories of Film Music”, Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies, David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (eds.) (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).
\textsuperscript{112} Kassabian (2001): 41.
\textsuperscript{113} Smith (1996): 239. Smith also argues that film music needs to be heard by the audience “in order to serve any narrational function” at all, see page 235. Jerrold Levinson is another author who disagrees with Gorbman on this issue, see Jerrold Levinson, “Film Music and Narrative Agency” in Bordwell and Carroll (1996): 250.
\textsuperscript{115} Kassabian (2001): 2.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 2-3, 138-139 (see page 2-3 for the quote).
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 41-42.
The concept of intermediality

The concept of intermediality comprises both of conditions and changes between the film medium and other media and cultural expressions, as well as of various aspects within the film medium itself, for example between music, images and sounds, but also between different aspects of exhibition practices and other technological parts of the production apparatus. Hans Lund has divided the history of interart/intermedia studies into four schematic categories that to a certain degree have run alongside each other. The first two, Comparative Aesthetics and Comparative Art Studies, I will not dwell upon, since the other two, Interart Studies and Intermediality Studies, are of more interest for the discussion at hand, as sounds and music play a significant part. Since the millennium, the terms “medium” and “intermediality” (although the latter term was already coined by Dick Higgins in 1966) have started to be used more than art and interart. During the 1980s the term intermediality was brought into the discussion in Germany to explain intertextual relations between different media. Then music’s relation to other media played an important role, in later years especially in the writings of Jürgen E. Müller and Claus Clüver.

For Müller a media text or a media product stands for musical, visual and verbal expressions that communicate regardless of aesthetic intent. In this sense intermediality stands for relations between different media texts or media products. Claus Clüver takes a similar approach and argues that the intermedia text is founded on two or more sign systems where its verbal aspects are inseparable from the visual, musical and performative aspects. Its opposites are multimedia texts that consist of separable and individually connected texts in different media and mixed media texts, whose signs would not be connected or independent outside their context. In other words, intermediality “concerns such transmedial phenomena as narrativity, parody, and the implied reader/listener/viewer as well as the intermedial aspects of the intertextualities inherent in individual texts – and the inevitably intermedial character of each medium”. Müller in turn sees intermediality as a process that manifests itself on at least three levels:

a) the level of the embedding of media (= “texts”) into specific multi- and intermedia patterns of communicative action, b) the level of the (technical) intermedia devices and processes of the apparatuses and c)

of the integration and transformation of media structures of one or of several media into the context of another medium.122

Müller’s definition, and one that many scholars today tend to agree upon reads: “A media-product becomes an inter-media-product if a multimedia coexistence of different media-quotations and elements is transformed into a conceptual intermedia coexistence, the aesthetic refractions and faults (Verwerfungen) of which open new dimensions of experience to the recipient”.123

Since the millennium the concept of intermediality has come to include even more of the other forms of interart/intermedia as it is seen to encompass everything from strictly technological perspectives, mainly concerned with a medium as a physical and historically defined “channel”, to aesthetic perspectives, mainly concerned with the medium as a cultural practice.124

Intermediality is useful in approaching the continuous history of the medium, as exemplified by research on early sound film in the 1990s, especially as viewed by Rick Altman.125 As noted, in this context the film as a medium is regarded as a continuous cultural event, without a beginning or an ending. What scholars of early sound film did was to return to early interdisciplinary film writings,126 which led to a renegotiation of older assumptions. For instance, since earlier research on silent cinema, and even some contemporary commentators during the early 1920s,127 viewed sound/music as something that only accompanied the film (and was therefore only seen as coming from the same source that had produced it), cinemas as well as the employed musicians had been perceived as a subordinate part of a film’s production.128

The term “music/sound accompaniment” presupposes that the image always takes prominence, and obscures the fact that many other kinds of accompaniment existed before the accompaniment was standardised during the 1920s. For example, in the case of lectures and illustrated songs it was more often the images that accompanied sounds and music, while the sound re-

123 Ibid., 298.
124 Still, some of the old demarcation lines exist between studies concentrated on traditional work-oriented arts and those studying historical and/or technological aspects that seem to want to dispense with certain aspects altogether. For example, Friedrich Kittler can be regarded as wanting to diminish the very idea of authorship, the essential factor in the sum of things supposedly not being authors but the medium or media as ‘cause’ and origin, see Maaret Koskinen, “Introduction”, Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Arts, Maaret Koskinen (ed.) (London/New York: Wallflower, 2008): 4.
128 Rick Altman, “Film Sound – All of It”, Iris, No. 27 (Spring 1999): 31.
cording formed the structural base of the performance. It can be argued that this is also true of sound film and its soundtrack. For example, the sound of spoken words creates an illusion that the words are emanating from the image, while in reality these words are only articulated on the soundtrack. The image then gets the function of hiding the source that created these sounds.

By the intermedial approach, then, one can, instead of looking at the early sound experiments as attempts at making perfect the filmic synchronic expression, view them as attempts at combining a fairly new technology (film) with a more used and well tested one (gramophone). This enables the possibility of seeing the first experiments with sound not as failures but as successful tests of linking different media, and of integrating image and sound. This can also be viewed as linking one technology of high esteem (gramophone) with a technology representing a downgraded art form (film). Transferred to the conversion to sound in Sweden and the three groups of production/sound companies, cinemas and musicians, intermediality opens up the field by taking into consideration how various individuals and groups were affected by the events that unfolded. The concept also lets one approach the fundamental reforms in production and exhibition practices that became the result after the transformation of film from a “silent” to a sound medium. It opens up an understanding of how relatively primitive states of sound technology instigated developments of image technology.

A note on terminology: the notions of external/internal logic of perception and formative music

With an intermedial approach, technology, reception, and practice during the conversion to sound film can be viewed from several diverging angles. Intermediality addresses how image, sound, and music in this context directly or indirectly influence each other. For this thesis especially Werner Wolf’s *The Musicalization of Fiction* (1999) is of main interest. Wolf introduces the concepts of overt (open/direct) and covert (covered/indirect) intermediality in order to broaden Steven Paul Scher’s terminology of how one should regard the relationship between music and literature. According to Wolf, 129

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overt can be seen as a direct form of intermediality if both media at a given point can be separated and keep their distinct features and be cited independently. In other words, both media should keep their respective character, even if they are taken out of context. The characterising mark is that one can directly see which media are involved, and that the medium, for example sound film, is seen as a hybrid of several media.\textsuperscript{136}

Linked to Wolf’s notions of overt and covert intermediality is Michel Chion’s notion of audiovision and his distinctions of external logic (a perception borne out of interventions external to the represented content) and internal logic (a perception borne out of the narrative situation itself) in order to describe certain experiences in film viewing. Using these notions it is possible to see how these relations between image, sound and music changed during the conversion to sound when dialogue was added,\textsuperscript{137} in order to reach an understanding of normative conditions that are not evident from the sources. It is important to note that I see the external logic of perception as including all aspects of a cinematic event that externally influence the narrative construction, and not only editing that interrupts the continuity of the image, or sudden changes of tempo, as Chion does.

Covert is then defined as a participation of at least two conventional media but where only one of them seems to be direct. The other medium is indirectly present in the first. If this can be expressed as one medium dominating the other, then it is less important to what degree the subordinated medium influences the dominant since it can appear simultaneously.\textsuperscript{138} At a superficial reading of Wolf’s criteria for covert intermediality, silent film could be counted in this category as it is the music that is set to follow the images. However, it is not as simple as this. Wolf has included sound film in the concept of overt intermediality, and silent film could therefore seem to belong to the other category in that the image could be seen as the dominant medium over the music (one could see the reverse case on special occasions, for example, with the use of mood music during shooting).\textsuperscript{139} I would argue that Wolf’s conclusion concerning sound film as a clear and typical form of overt intermediality is equivocal and is not completely thought through. In fact, the relationship between image and music raises questions; whether sound film and silent film must be regarded differently and simply cannot be slotted into specific categories. That is to say, sound and silent film work on a continuum where each shows distinct marks with regard to overt and covert intermediality.

\textsuperscript{137} Chion (1994): 44, 46.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{139} With mood music I mean music that helped actors during the silent period to get into the mood during recording, for example for strong emotional scenes. Roy M. Prendergast, \textit{Film Music: A Neglected Art – A Critical Study of Music in Films} (London/New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992 [1977]): 17.
If one of the distinctive marks for overt intermediality is that each medium involved, seen as separate, still maintains its characteristics and can be seen as a work of its own, covert intermediality should show the reverse. (This is also what Wolf observes when he writes about literature and music). But he also maintains that in one of the main categories of covert intermediality the subordinated medium can be seen as a dramatisation of the first. Here, the non-dominant medium has a relation to the dominant in that it, to a great degree, adjusts to the latter, and is seen as its kin and represents it by imitation. That is, for dialogue, sound and music the question is how they are synchronous in relation to the image and, as Michel Chion puts it, almost seem to “glue together entirely unlikely sounds and images”. The reverse case to this type of covert intermediality then is a thematisation form where the subordinated medium is indirectly present, and is used as a reference without any greater degree of influence of the dominant one. The thematisation and imitated forms find their equivalence in the overt intermediality forms of integration and adaptation. These forms can also be exemplified by how music and libretto function in the music drama of Richard Wagner.

The thematisation and imitated forms can be found in both silent film and sound film. The difference between the two forms can be regarded as a gradual movement from one to the other in such a way that it is hard to see where the demarcation line is. Concerning music on one side of the continuum we would find the thematisation form where music goes through a whole film to create an overall feeling, for instance in Max Steiner’s musical score to King Kong (Merian C. Cooper/Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933). In this film the music creates an atmosphere through the drums and could be seen, using Wolf’s terminology, more as an imitating form rather than general thematisation emotional music. Imitating is here given the meaning of modelling something in another material, that is to say, the music tries to recreate and heighten the feelings that are present in the image through allusion. Freely improvised silent music could also be included here, since the movement towards imitation happens when the music is derived from film music catalogues rather than through composed music (the conductor composes his own modulations, that is to say concentrates the musical syntax to serve the narrative flow of the film), to specifically written music that is closest to the imitated form. Music cannot become completely imitative until the musicians are fully visible in the image.

Using Wolf’s distinctions on the relations between diegetic and non-diegetic music is useful, since music is the only element in the filmic dis-

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141 Ibid., 44-45.
143 Wolf (1999): 44.
144 Ibid., 54.
course that can freely move between the diegetic and the non-diegetic music worlds. That is, it is music’s relation to the narrative that is explained with the diegetic/non-diegetic dichotomy rather than music’s relation to the image. Although these terms have become common knowledge this fundamental differentiation is often overlooked. Music that with today’s understanding of the terms would be regarded as non-diegetic was during the first years of sound film motivated by the “presence” of a silent film orchestra, and was therefore literally perceived as standing outside the entire film. It was not a part of the diegesis, although the music participated in the creation of the diegetic illusion. Wolf’s notions of thematisation, imitation, integration and adaptation illustrates that this is music to be seen as silent film music within the context of a sound film, and as such lies outside what both the terms diegetic and non-diegetic try to explain.

Within the context of sound film, such music has implications for the construction of the diegesis, as it fluctuates during the process of making meaning through everyone of Wolf’s notions, that is, the music can at different instances be regarded as thematisation music, imitating music, integrated music or adapted music. One general feature of this music was that it almost always was preceded by a text sign, or drowned out all other sounds exactly in the manner of a sound film with only synchronised music. But as I will show, to regard music as such, and in isolation, is to simplify matters, as it participated with sound effects and dialogue in the creation of the diegesis.

Regarding this type of music in the overall context of specific sound films, with both dialogue and effects, will challenge our understanding that non-diegetic music within sound film did not arrive in full force, until the boat in *King Kong* emerges from the fog in its approach towards Skull Island. It has always been argued that film music in general (with the exception of diegetically motivated music) largely disappeared during the conversion to sound, and did not re-enter the medium in the US until 1932-1933, with *King Kong* as the showcase in 1933, except for some short and notable instances in *Cimarron* (Wesley Ruggles, 1930), *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931), and *Symphony of Six Million* (Gregory La Cava, 1932). Suffice it to mention *King Kong’s* central position for non-diegetic music in a number of film historical studies. For example Royal S. Brown describes Hollywood’s use of music as follows:

> It took further technological advances, post-recording in particular, and a major change in mindset for the modern film score to come into being. And when it did, via scores such as Steiner’s *Symphony of Six*

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146 Ibid., 22.
Million and, more importantly, *King Kong*, it almost immediately manifested the one quality which, more than any other - artistic, aesthetic, or otherwise - makes the film score what it by and large still is today, and that is structural, or even, if you will, syntactical discontinuity.\(^{148}\)

I will argue that, compared to Hollywood, from a Swedish perspective non-diegetic film music in sound film, with its character of syntactical discontinuity, was consistently present from an earlier point. This leads to the insight that a *continuous* use of non-diegetic music within sound film occurred as early as in 1931 in Sweden. Moreover, and more importantly, I will show that after its first appearance it was used continuously in film in Sweden until it paradoxically disappeared in 1933, when Hollywood, as Brown’s quote demonstrates, started to use similar principles.

Here Swedish cinema reveals strong similarities with French cinema of the time.\(^{149}\) That is, while Hollywood focused on the intelligibility of the dialogue in relation to the narrative, French cinema, and as I will show, Swedish cinema to a certain degree, worked after a different model in which the sound was supposed to reproduce a performance staged for recording. Here, the reliance on direct sound was prominent, and the reproduction was understood as a recording of actors’ and singers’ performances (which is one explanation of the strong emphasis on song performances in Swedish films of the 1930s), although this tradition is not enough to explain the early use of non-diegetic music in sound film in Swedish cinema. The explanation should also be found in the fact that working after a performance idiom also meant that music needed to be recorded simultaneously. This is indeed what happened in Sweden, and it literally brought the orchestra outdoors.\(^{150}\) The reason was that in the late 1920s and early 1930s it was technically very difficult to re-record, forcing the simultaneous recording of dialogue, sound effects and music,\(^{151}\) (which usually is given as the main argument as to why Hollywood refrained from using music). In that sense *King Kong* came at the right time and place when all necessary technology was in place.

My main argument, then, is that this kind of “silent film music” came to play a crucial role for the construction of, if not the non-diegetic space as such, but nevertheless for the existence of non-diegetic music in sound film. No appropriate term for this type of music exists within sound film. “Off-screen music” comes closest but this type of music is nevertheless diegetically motivated. Also Gorbman’s use of the term “background music” could be appropriate, but her notion of it refers both to silent film music and to

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non-diegetic music, and would thus confuse matters.\textsuperscript{152} This problem with the term background music is illustrated, for example, in her conclusion about \textit{The Jazz Singer}'s soundtrack:

Within this perspective it seems hardly accurate to call the bulk of \textit{The Jazz Singer}'s score nondiegetic, since the film constructs no consistent diegetic sound space to which to oppose nondiegetic music. Scenes that do have synch sound clearly take place on a sound stage as performances.\textsuperscript{153}

Yet, this is for Gorbman equal to background music, a term she later also uses to illustrate the non-diegetic music after conversion to sound.

To describe this kind of music, I therefore propose “formative music” as an umbrella term that addresses music functions in line with Werner Wolf’s terminology - thematisation, imitation, integration and adaptation. That is, formative music helps to construct the other parts of the soundtrack in their relation to the diegesis, as it is to be seen as standing outside both diegetic and non-diegetic music. It is characterised in a similar manner as Kevin J. Donnelly’s notion of foreground music in relation to contemporary film projection, that is, it is characterised by the “increased separation of music and other sounds in multi-speaker cinema sound systems and home-cinema setups”.\textsuperscript{154} It is motivated through the presence of a live orchestra playing off screen, which contemporary audiences were well acquainted with. In the overall structure of a film, formative music is, therefore, to be regarded as an important structural component that is a forerunner to non-diegetic music within sound film.

\textbf{Swedish music life during the 1920s}

From the outset of the last century the music and sound landscape in Sweden became increasingly mechanised with gramophones, phonographs and self-playing instruments.\textsuperscript{155} Added to this development was radio with its music programmes that became publicly available during the 1920s, increasing the presence of mediated music and sounds. People with a so-called radio licence in Sweden increased tenfold during the second half of the 1920s reaching a figure of approximately 400 000.\textsuperscript{156}

Recorded music carriers did not only facilitate for common people to hear music but also moved the place of listening from public places to the com-

\textsuperscript{152} Gorbman (1987): 42.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{154} Donnelly (2005): 2, 13, 36.
fort of the home. Compared to experiencing music in a concert hall this also changed the way listening was done as it now became possible to do other things simultaneously while listening.157 But mechanised music was not only contained within the walls of the home, as portable gramophones and radio made it possible for cafés and other establishments to provide popular music to its visitors.158

One characteristic feature of the Swedish musical life during the 1920s was the absence of the 12 tone music of Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern (it would take until after the Second World War for this music to be a part of the Swedish music landscape).159 Instead the emphasis was on the romantic composers as well as on popular melodies performed on song and on the new word associated with a modern life in the city - namely “schlagers” (popular songs).160 Concerning the latter it constituted of waltzes, one-step and especially foxtrot as it became associated with the rhetoric figure of “all that jazz”.161 The term jazz came to receive a wide meaning in Swedish cultural life of the 1920s and stood in for a whole set of features connected to an urban life. Jazz was linked to the development of the radio which resulted in that gramophone recordings increasingly contained schlagers and jazz melodies in favour of classic instrumental music.162 In this way, heard in public places and bought on record, jazz also became popularised as it was easily accessible. According to some contemporary writers this also meant a lowering of Swedish musical values.163

Although access to recorded popular music increased there is a slightly different story concerning classic music. In the 1920s a person who wanted to listen to this kind of music had only a few alternatives to pick between. One would think that the growing gramophone industry could have been an alternative but the selections available were few. For example in 1936 only ten of Joseph Haydn’s 104 symphonies had been recorded and of Johann Sebastian Bach’s over 200 church cantatas only one had been put on disc. The average length of each side on a shellac disk also posed obstacles as it was four and a half minutes long, making it painstaking to enjoy a full symphony.164 Instead, the short length of the records further encouraged the production of the 2-3 minutes long schlager melodies. If the duration of the disks only allowed for short musical selections, the technology developed in other places. For example, increasingly tonecolours from more instruments and voices were done justice and multiple microphones allowed for a more

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158 Ibid., 33.
159 Ibid., 18.
161 Ibid., 198-199.
163 Yngve Flyckt, Svenskt musikliv (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1939): 11-13, 93-94.
precise rendition compared to a live performance, altering in the long run the overall experience of music.

If everyday life was more and more steeped in a sonorous landscape of “all that jazz”, the organisations that controlled the concert life focused on classic music of the nineteenth-century. This emphasis on the romantic composers put Richard Wagner in an elevated position. In fact, the presence of “Wagner” allows for a clarification not only of certain aspect of film music accompaniment prevalent during the 1920s, but also how this very moulding of different media were thought of in Sweden during the 1920s and the 1930s, which in turn was linked to the discussion at the time of “Americanisation” in both its negative and positive aspects. In Sweden the Musicians’ Union used Wagner furthermore to validate an accompaniment of the romantic art music of the nineteenth-century, in favour of the new and emerging American jazz that had started to became popular, and that would (many thought) now flood the country with the sound film from Hollywood.

**Naming of sound film in Sweden**

As with all new technologies, there is, to begin with, uncertainty about what to call a new medium. The definition of a new medium is constantly reconfiguring itself, which is a reason for the many names for sound film in Sweden and elsewhere. During the late 1920s several different names existed, that today have completely different meanings. The common aim of the different names given to sound film was trying to explain to the audience what kind of accompaniment they might expect when entering a cinema. The three most prominent terms found in Swedish sources during the first years under investigation are “tone film”, “sound film, and “talking film”. The first, tone film, is to be seen as a silent film with mostly synchronised music, with few if any sound effects. Under no circumstances was there any dialogue. This term was the one most frequently used in Sweden during the late 1920s. The second, sound film, was a silent film with synchronised sound effects and little synchronised music, but still there was no dialogue. This term was inconsistently used and its meaning shifted from writer and publication until it became the general term during the 1930s. The last, talking film, was what we now regard as sound film.

In this thesis I will for the sake of simplicity use only the word sound film, except for direct citations. That is, throughout I regard sound film as

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167 Dagmar Waldner, “Kinetografisk utvecklingshistoria”, *Biografbladet*, Vol. 8, No. 22 (15 November 1927): 609. The article contains a list of over 100 names for the medium of film during its different stages of development.
the contemporary talking film. The reason for this is that this mix of expressions settled quickly during 1930 and onward. After a vote in 1928 in the daily Svenska Dagbladet it also became the name generally accepted. The periodical Biografbladet had already settled for this term in 1925.

A note on empirical sources

The empirical written material for this thesis consists of minutes, personal letters and other documents such as pamphlets, publicity material and catalogues mainly from the National Archive, the National Library of Sweden, the Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union Archive, and the Swedish Musicians’ Union Archive.

In the section dealing with the production and sound companies, specific films, contemporary periodicals and daily newspapers have also been consulted. Concerning the periodicals, I have concentrated primarily on Svensk Filmtidning (the journal of the Swedish Film Exchange Association), Biografägaren, Biografbladet (both journals for the cinema owners), and Musikern (the journal of the Swedish Musicians’ Union). These periodicals had several contributors, although I have focused on Bengt Idestam-Almquist in Biografbladet and Gustaf Gille in Musikern. The latter was the editor-in-chief of the periodical and can be seen as the spokesperson for the Musicians’ Union. Idestam-Almquist was in turn one of the most persistent writers during the conversion to sound, and was also a longtime contributor to Stockholms-Tidningen as well as the dialogue writer to one of the earliest Swedish sound films, För hennes skull (For Her Sake, Paul Merzbach, 1930). Stockholms-Tidningen, together with Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet, constitute the core papers I have focused on - all four major Stockholm daily newspapers with large sections devoted to cinema.

Although being an indispensable source of information on what was going on, writings of this kind need, as Donald Crafton has argued, to be approached carefully as they consist of filtered information depending on whom the publication was representing. This can be seen in the periodicals studied, as they clearly position themselves accordingly for or against sound film. The standard for accuracy and source citation was not the same for journalists back in the 1920s, as it is, for example, with academic writing

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169 "‘Ljudfilm’ blev segrare!", Biografbladet, Vol. 9, No. 15 (1 October 1928): 499. During the voting period the name question was almost daily commented on. See for example, “Ge oss ett bra ord! - en ny pristävland”, Svenska Dagbladet, 19 August 1928, 8; "‘Ljudfilm’ blev segrare!", Svenska Dagbladet, 13 September, 1928, 8. The word “ljudfilm” was motivated this way on 13 September - “It has advantages: it is Swedish, it is easy to pronounce and, ‘last but not least’, it covers well what the new art form has to offer, something that the second best word ‘tonfilm’ does not.”


171 All translations of reviews and other articles from periodicals and newspapers are my own.
today, so that facts and opinions often were mingled.\textsuperscript{172} The relationship between the reviewer and his/her presumed reader is complicated. Donald Crafton emphasises the following:

\begin{quote}
It would be a mistake to assume that a journalist’s or a trade reviewer's audience is the same audience the films addressed. The constituent audience of the writer is more likely to be subscribers to the periodical than the attenders of cinema. There may be a certain overlap, of course, but common sense suggests that reviewers’ and films’ audience are not identical.\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

Or to use Mats Björkin’s words:

\begin{quote}
The [...] present day scholar ends up between a [film] industry that does everything to understand its audience, at the same time as it strives to control it, and [film] criticism, which from its own viewpoint strives to understand as well as control both the industry and the audience, but which at the same time claims to be independent of that same industry, and more competent than the audience.\textsuperscript{174}
\end{quote}

This certainly was the fact during the conversion to sound as critical writing at the time often was more about keeping the debate alive rather than to take a sober stance toward the topic at hand.

Concerning the film reviews in the daily newspapers, the sole focus in this thesis is the Stockholm press and its readers. Despite being a narrow point of view, it is nevertheless worth using the critic and his/her readers as a point of departure, as the placement and size of their texts within a daily paper give a hint about how newsworthy a given event was. Given this, the reviews say almost nothing about how the audience appreciated film sound (and recorded music). What is learned from these sources is mainly what according to the writer sticks out from the normal and out of the ordinary and therefore worth commenting on. Barbara Klinger notes, for example, that a review may give a partial view of a film’s discursive surroundings, but simultaneously “it can result in an insufficient depiction of film’s relationship to its social context, with consequences for how we hypothesize cinema’s historical and ideological meaning”.\textsuperscript{175}

During the late 1920s \textit{Svensk Filmtidning} was the mouthpiece of the Swedish Film Exchange Association that represented Fox, Liberty, Le Mat and Universal.\textsuperscript{176} A second group of distributors was largely controlled by Svensk Filmindustri, which also included UFA and some American film

\textsuperscript{172} Crafton (1997): 516-517, 531.
\textsuperscript{173} Donald Crafton, “The Jazz Singer's Reception in the Media and at the Box Office”, \textit{Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies}, David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (eds.) (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996): 461.
\textsuperscript{174} Björkin (1998): 166.
\textsuperscript{175} Klinger, (1997): 110.
\textsuperscript{176} Furhammar (1980): 12.
distributors, while a third group consisted of independent distributors, among them Biörnstad Filmbyrå which from April 1927 to May 1929 owned the rights to distribute Warner/First National film’s during the initial years of the coming of sound.177

With regard to the cinema owners’ situation and the reception of sound film, the empirical material mainly consists of minutes from the Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union, reviews, editorials and other material from contemporary periodicals and daily newspapers, such as film advertisements. The focus on the latter creates the backdrop for the narrative in this thesis about the first sound film screenings in Sweden during 1929. Among the cinema owners two competing organisations existed. The larger, the Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union, published the periodical Biografägaren from 1926 which I have utilised as a source. The smaller, Swedish Cinema’s Association founded in 1924, consisted of a group of cinemas that had broken out of the Union.

Above both the distributors’ and the cinema owners’ organisations stood two neutral overlapping “societies” with the overall benefit of the whole industry as their main goal - The Swedish Film and Cinema Society and The Swedish Film Club. Although neutral on paper, the persons in the leading positions clearly were a source for conflict. The former had, for example, as their representative until 1926 Mauritz Enderstedt who more or less run the Swedish Cinemas’ Union. The latter on the other hand published Biografbladet, which also was a mouthpiece for the cinema owners.178

The Swedish Musicians’ Union and its branch in Stockholm were managed by Joseph Gelhaar who had as central position as Mauritz Enderstedt had in the Swedish Cinemas’ Union. Specific problems arise when studying the Swedish Musicians’ Union and its policies. To read the minutes from the department in Stockholm poses special challenges. On one hand, the minutes show on a unified understanding that sound film would not endanger the members’ job opportunities. But among the documentation there are also many personal letters that express a different opinion regarding sound film. Here I present three case studies: the musicians Wentzell Wanca and Eduard Hladisch, and the conductor Georg von Kraskowski, from which one can draw the conclusion that the Union was all but unified on the question of sound film. These created such problems for the Union that cracks can be seen in the official façade. I will also highlight one of the few female conductors, Greta Håkansson, who was put forward by the Union as a contrast to her troublesome male colleagues. She was regarded as an exemplary union member during the conversion to sound.

The films that this thesis approaches can be divided into those produced in Sweden and non-Swedish films which premiered in Sweden. Therefore, a

central film, for example, *Blackmail* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1929) only receives minor interest in this work as it did not premiere in Sweden until the 1970s. Also, when it comes to non-Swedish sound films I am more interested in their reception during the conversion years in Sweden, rather than on how they were produced. On the same token the silent premiere of *The Jazz Singer* in February 1929 receives significantly more attention than its sound premiere a couple of months later, as the first silent screening of the film highlights certain telling reactions and feelings towards the sound film. The non-Swedish films also form the backdrop for a more general discussion concerning dialogue, sound, music, and image relations prior to and after the sound conversion. Therefore the selection of these films has been decided by their presence in the Swedish debate, or if they premiered in Sweden during the period under investigation.

On the other hand the focus shifts slightly when dealing with Swedish sound film production. This is especially the case when analysing films produced by Svensk Filmin industri, as my aim is to highlight the importance of the formative music through the films that exist from that period of time and how quickly in 1931 formative music developed into a non-diegetic use of music.¹⁷⁹

There is a problem regarding the earliest Swedish sound films and sound film experiments during the autumn of 1929 in that the actual soundtracks are lost. These films often utilised theme songs and song performances as their driving force, which still exist as they were released on gramophone records often with the same performer and orchestra. By a rudimentary synching of these songs with the films one gets a feeling for how they might have sounded, and more importantly, how the song numbers were integrated into the narrative.

As noted above, one should be aware that contemporary writings may create problems for the reading of the impact that they had. For, generally speaking, using editorials, articles and reviews from contemporary periodicals and newspapers is problematic, as these “voices” tend to stand in for a film’s general reception, when we actually know very little about the audience composition at the time and their reactions towards a specific film. That is, one needs to be careful not to mix a film’s social context with writings about the film by people who might have other vested interests in a specific film than a strictly critical one.¹⁸⁰

Finally, a word about the various versions of the films that have been the objects of study in this thesis. Some films have been viewed on original 35mm copies at festivals and conferences but the majority have been viewed on some electronic version – be it DVD or other digital carries. Since this thesis argues throughout that our perception of sound and music since the

¹⁷⁹ All Swedish films throughout the thesis are named after the English title given in *Swedish Filmografi*.

silent days has changed and altered considerably due to developments in sound technology (optical sound, magnetic recording and digital), it becomes somewhat anachronistic not to study these films in their original format. Even if it would have been possible to view all films as intended, there still remains the obstacle of acoustics, which obviously are impossible to recreate. For as Donald Crafton emphasises, already “contemporary accounts noted significant variations in reproduction from theatre to theatre”. The question is if it is even desirable to try to reach such verisimilitude? After all, even a new 35mm print would raise similar doubts of its historical “sound” validity, since, as Crafton notes, a print goes through an “extensive electronic re-mastering that the restoration and transfer process usually entails”.182

Chapter breakdown

The thesis consists of five chapters. Both the first and last chapters discuss dialogue, sound, music and image relations. Chapter 1 “Image, Sound, Audience I: ‘Constructed’ sounds - the visibility of technology” deals with these issues prior to the conversion to sound, and the following intermediate years until sound film had reached a certain equilibrium. The focus here is mainly how the novelty of sound makes the consciousness of technology behind film resurface once more, just as it did during the birth of cinema. The novelty of sound opens up for a negotiation of the perception of sound and image, as it makes visible the film medium’s technological construction. Soon this visibility was once more absorbed by the cinematic discourse and became an integrated part of the diegetic world.

Chapter 5 “Image, Sound, Audience II: ‘Authentic’ sounds - the disappearance of technology” dovetails with Chapter 1, addressing similar phenomena at a time when they had become fully integrated and the technology once more had “disappeared” (albeit that new sound technology generally speaking always has been noted). The focus of this chapter is on sound recording as a documentation of a sound event in the 1930s, and how the development has since then, with the digital sound technology, reached the almost total dismantling of the notion of a pre-existing original sound event. In other words, the chapter addresses issues related to the processes that have transformed listening from the perception of sound as a reproduction in the late 1920s, to a listening that is perceived to be in more direct contact with the recording event.

Chapters 2-4 contain most of the empirically based research concerning the Swedish circumstances during the conversion to sound but also emphasise the process of an ever deeper immersion into a mediated acoustical real-

181 Ibid., 148.
182 Ibid., 148. This can, for instance, be heard on the new soundtrack for Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) made in 1997.
ity. Chapter 2 “Production – The Companies” deals with the production and sound companies, with special focus attributed to the production and distribution company Svensk Filmindustri and its films. Particular attention is given to how formative music in their films transforms itself into a consistent use of non-diegetic music two years before this happened in Hollywood, leading to how technology once more started to “disappear” (something that is discussed further in Chapter 5). The chapter begins with a short description of the early presence of sound film in Sweden, as well as providing a backdrop to certain financial and technological factors in Swedish society during the 1920s.

Chapter 3 “Reception – The Cinemas” addresses the topic of the reception of the first sound films in Sweden during 1929, and focuses on the ongoing debate for or against sound film. The main focus of the chapter is on an analysis of the advertising campaigns during the late winter and spring of 1929, and how sound film gradually phased out silent film in Sweden. The argument is that the audience’s re-awakened consciousness of the technology described in Chapter 1 was an active part in this process, and how their reactions led back into the advertising campaigns, making them participants in the cinematic event.

Finally, Chapter 4 “Practice – The Musicians” continues this debate strictly from a musician’s point of view. This chapter turns the focus upside down and looks at the arrival of sound film from a grass-roots perspective, by addressing the musicians as a group that strongly became affected by the coming of sound film. I also focus on the Musicians’ Union’s organisation and the events in its Stockholm branch prior to the arrival of sound, in order to illustrate how this organisation was not prepared to meet quickly changing circumstances - in a complete contrast to production companies and cinema owners, whose organisations were established enough to meet the arrival of sound film resulting, in their case, in a rather smooth conversion. While chapter 4 may divert somewhat in dwelling on issues that do not strictly deal with the conversion to sound, it serves to contextualise a technological invention that changed not only film production and reception, but also had very concrete social repercussions for those that created the sounds of music.
Chapter 1: Image, Sound, Audience I: “Constructed” sounds - the visibility of technology

Henceforth let no one make the mistake of regarding sound simply as an embellishment. Sound today is far more important than an effect. The talking picture is, in itself, a distinctive art-form.¹

Writing in 1929 William H. Hays concludes that sound film has reached such a technical standard of quality that silent film will be no more. He argues that sound film has overcome the initial problems and predicts a future without silent film.

During the same year the first sound films begin to arrive to Swedish cinemas. This is followed by an intense debate between representatives of the industry, as well as cinema owners and musicians, while also igniting a debate in the daily newspapers if this novelty is something worth having. Parts of the writings revolve around the technique of sound as such while the overall discussions focus on the audience and their preferences.

As I observed in the introduction, an attempt at recapitulating audience preferences eighty years after the unfolding events cannot result in anything but generalisations, as the evidence is drawn from trade journals, critical accounts, and box-office results. However, sound is a socially produced phenomenon, whether live or recorded, and so the audience also took part in its creation. Their reactions toward it are expressed in contemporary writings,² even if it is filtered information that sometime says more about the writer than the nature of these reactions. With this in mind, a general conclusion can still be drawn from these sources about the shifting feeling towards sound film in Sweden during the conversion to sound.

Prior to the 1928–1929 season sound was first regarded as a curiosity, and conclusions were quickly drawn about sound technology’s inferior quality, which actually not many knew too much about. During the autumn of 1928 the situation in the US was given more interest than merely curious remarks. After the Swedish premiere of Wings (William Wellman, 1927) in January

¹ Hays (1929): 44.
1929, the “first” film to be screened in Stockholm with sound effects, the frequency of informative articles about this new technology increased considerably, and more often than not these articles also demonstrated a strong opinion for or against sound film. At the end of the season, which had contained several screenings along with *Love and the Devil* and *White Shadows in the South Seas* with synchronous music, it was apparent to everyone that sound films were becoming a reality even in Sweden.

The following season the debate continued and revolved on “old” issues like film rental costs, censorship, and the central position that films from Hollywood had on the Swedish market. At first there was great uncertainty as to how the new technology of sound would affect these matters. Would the rental cost increase? How did the existing regulations justify censorship of the soundtrack? Would Hollywood lose its prominence in the market? Disparate as these issues might have been, there was one common feature that was constantly returned to: that of the inferior technical quality of the sound. It was felt as not “good enough”, and arguments were commonplace that one had “started to become tired of these mechanical pajazzo prologues and orchestral pieces, where some instruments are quite audible at the expense of others”. For example in the case of the musicians’ union, instead of focusing on how the soundtrack might affect job opportunities, and hence prepare for a situation with high unemployment rates, the focus was more on how bad a recorded violin actually sounded, as if this would suffice to save the musicians’ jobs. More importantly, sound was at the time not regarded as an integrated part of the medium and was seen more as an addition, and as something brought to the medium from the outside. It was merely considered to reveal “the same childish delight in conveying the new sound, as the first silent movies [had] in showing moving pictures just because they moved”.

During the 1930–1931 season, however, a clear shift among the writers occurs. The sources give a feeling that audiences experienced and felt that sound had become integrated to a higher degree with the films’ narrative. Sound loses its novelty and seems to disappear from view in the reviews. It is accepted, for good and for bad, as something that will be a constant part of the medium, and the view in Sweden points to similarities of what the then president of Fox West Coast Theatres, Harold B. Franklin, argued – that now, when “the sound picture is accepted, the public is not interested in the novelty of attending a performance, but rather in the entertainment value that is offered”. In Sweden this resulted in an overabundance of lighter comedies.

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3 I regard *Wings* as the first sound film to be screened in Stockholm since it was the first that had recorded sound. Other experimental screenings had occurred before in 1928. One noteworthy example was Nordisk Tonefilm’s sound film program of shorts in October 1928 in the Concert House (see further p. 72).
5 The Musicians’ Union’s journal *Musikern* is filled with accounts on these matters.
7 Franklin (1930): 260.
filled with music and song numbers, as well as with short lecture films with prominent personalities. This can be seen being played out in the short films that were produced and used as prologues with Prince Wilhelm (Carl Wilhelm Ludvig Bernadotte) which started with Medan båten glider fram (While the Boat Floats Forward, Gustaf Molander, 1930) where he recites a text and/or lectures on a certain topic.

The audience, then, was understood to have lost interest in the technology behind sound film in the same manner as they had lost interest in the technology behind, for example, radio - another major public breakthrough during the 1920s. If it sounds well, and the subject matter is intriguing enough, no one complains. However, at this time film practice in Sweden was not working alongside the Hollywood and German practice of inviting the audience into the narrative, but rather along similar traits found in France, where the focus according to Charles O’Brien was on how to “dissolve differences between film and [cinema] spaces so as to suggest a co-presence between viewers and actor”, just as in a theatre. In France this became a natural way of incorporating sound into the film medium, as actors had already often “played the same roles on stage, and film scripts were often written by playwrights and dialogue specialists adept at creating roles for the same actors”. In comparison, as this thesis shows, Swedish cinema during the conversion to sound can be seen as being located somewhere in between on one hand the US/German emphasis on the scene as a sound construction, and on the other, the French prominence on sound as a recording of a sonic event. Lucy Fischer describes these differences in an analysis of René Clair’s Le Million (René Clair, 1931):

For the technologists and directors within the traditional commercial cinema (exemplified by the Americans) the central problem was one of perfecting sound technique to realize a flawless sound illusion. For René Clair the problem was exactly opposite. His explorations were all involved with subverting the illusion of realistic sound in order to liberate the medium and restore to it its poetic powers.

In Sweden the view on sound technology and the sound track shows a double approach in trying to achieve a flawless sound illusion while simultaneously using its poetic powers. This resulted in a performance-based approach of music and song numbers, which prevailed for decades. The Swedish film industry’s approach towards sound film illustrates what John Belton

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8 Ibid., 263.
10 Ibid., 55-56.
11 Ibid., 57.
has argued on a general level, that the conversion to sound shows that each stage in any technological development, apart from being a universal transformation that responds to linear changes in technology, also reacts, in Belton’s words, towards “unpredictable shifts in stylistic concerns of a period, nation, or group of individuals”.  

The integration of sound into a film’s diegesis in Sweden was finalised during the season of 1931-1932, when silent film in its turn is viewed as a curiosity, and is almost treated as a novelty – something that one used to look at. In some cinemas there are even special nights where the orchestra was emphasised in the ads.

This is a very short summary of the changing attitudes and the general sound film development in Sweden during the period under investigation. For a small country with a small economy, in Sweden there was little to do than to go along with what went on outside its borders, although sound was incorporated along different roads than in Hollywood which, as Charles O’Brien has shown, also happened in France. It is also important to note that different uses of sound were not barriers for production personnel to move between countries, although sound as such became more nationally specific.

In the following chapter I will focus on a general discussion of how the novelty of sound opens up for negotiating the perception of sound and image, and how this soon is absorbed by the cinematic discourse and becomes an integrated part of the diegetic world. After the empirical journeys through the Swedish “soundscape” of the 1920s and early 1930s in chapters 2–4, I return to these issues in chapter 5, as these tumultuous years were fast disappearing into the obscurity of memory.

**Before the conversion to sound**

Film has in most cases been screened with some kind of sonorous accompaniment – be it in the form of a lecturer, sound effects, accompanying music, or for that matter, comments from the audience. This accompaniment was something that was highlighted, but during the 1910s there is a process to assimilate these sounds and music into the diegesis. A confidential handbook that the Swedish company Svensk Filmindustri handed out to its cinema proprietors in 1929 describes in detail how sound effects and music accompaniment should be done. It is especially emphasised that sound effects and

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13 John Belton, “Technology and Aesthetics of Film Sound”, *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985): 70.
music should “disappear” and be perceived unconsciously,17 or be “unheard” to use Claudia Gorbman’s notion about classic narrative cinema.18 This aim to make the sonorous accompaniment “vanish” resulted in evermore complicated ways of setting sound and music to film. One writer remembers that audiences were “not satisfied with [only] the image ... but also wanted sound effects”, which became more complicated as the years went by.19 These sound effects were often produced by a special sound effect person but also, as Rick Altman points out, by the musicians, and consequently linked these effects to the music world.20

Furthermore, from an early point films were filled with intradiegetic sounds,21 illustrated with the film medium’s endeavour to incorporate the obvious sound medium of the telephone.22 Dialogue was present not only as text captions but also in the way a film was cut and edited to make a shot or gesture equivalent to an expression.23 Even the term “silent film” is a construct that dates back to the conversion to sound years. Before this, the term simply does not exist; instead there is a palette of different terms to differentiate the film medium from the theatre.24

Although today regarded as silent, such films had, as noted, sonorous cues built into the narrative, often in relation to the use of the telephone and the radio. For example in, Hattmakarens bal (The Hatter’s Ball, Edvard Persson, 1928) there is, aside from the usual text signs that request a special piece of music, also a scene where a woman milks a cow while simultaneously using ear phones listening to radio which, according to the text sign, is broadcasting a hambo (Fig. 1-2).

20 Rick Altman, Silent Film Sound (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 152. This goes against Peter Schepelern’s view of the low importance of all sound accompaniment during the exhibition, see Peter Schepelern, “Musikdrama eller musik till drama? Stumfilm, musikdrama och vetenskaplig entusiasm”, Filmhäftet, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1998): 41.
It is as if we are witnessing “the ever-closer relationship between the sensuous and the technological”, as Sara Danius stressed in her study on the configuration of seeing and hearing in the modernist period.²⁵ These sonorous cues were then underlined with live music, creating a feeling of a unified medium. From the perspective of Soviet cinema, Vladimir Messman wrote in 1928 in relation to recent developments in Hollywood:

It is however quite clear that basically sound, in combination with visual image, constitutes the particular music specific to film, a field in which we are resolutely doing nothing. The elements of music, organically combined with visual images and edited together into a single conception and a single cinematic treatment are basically a sound film, sound cinema! The development of the technique of sound film, as it were, ‘industrialises’ the combination of visual and sound images recorded and edited on film and not produced by a live (i.e. non mechanical) performer or orchestral conductor.²⁶

The “silent” cinema is experienced as a sound medium in that the film medium’s illusionary effect bridges the gap between the sensuous and the technological, creating a continuous flow of exchange between live sounds and images. Also, this flow follows a continuum, constantly shifting positions between a diegetic and non-diegetic world. This emphasises the importance of the film medium’s strong diegetic production where even a live orchestra—which by definition is non-diegetic— is felt as being a part of the diegesis. In other words, Messman’s quote illustrates that the sonic production overlaps the discontinuous story of the medium. The sound film with its synchronised dialogue and recorded music only continued along this existing diegetic process, in order to create a stronger diegetic effect,²⁷ and as I argue it is in this light the notion of formative music needs to be seen. David Bordwell has for example shown in the case of the US, that sound technique was

“brought into conformity with silent filmmaking norms” and was “inserted into the already-constituted system of the classical Hollywood style”.

Concerning music its presence before the conversion to sound was more a part of a film’s exhibition than an integrated part of the film itself. Often the small ensemble or pianist only rudimentary underlined certain aspects of the narrative. In the words of Louis Levy:

The first step towards any improvement in the type of music played as an accompaniment to films actually came from the filling in of these internal gaps by a relief pianist. Usually he (or more often she) adopted the same attitude as the orchestra, and was generally more concerned with showing-off prowess as a performer rather than with playing music suitable to the mood of the film.

The diegetic function of music was greatly augmented during the second half of the 1910s and throughout the 1920s, when musical themes to accompany film were gathered and catalogued according to subject matter and emotions. Regarding the period before the conversion to sound, it is not an unbroken period of similar musical accompaniments. Instead it is characterised by its diversity of musical practices where the actual meaning of a certain kind of accompaniment changed over time. For example, prior to approximately 1910 the term “appropriate music” in the US meant independent musical performances, while after 1910 the same term referred to the musical accompaniment to the actual films. This can also be seen in the changing meaning of the term “cue music”, which first stood for music as sound effects, before changing into an understanding of the term as proper music. As this term changed meaning it also became appropriate to argue, as Altman does, that it was not until it changed meaning that one also can start talking about a “stand-alone audiovisual continuum”, which carried on over the conversion to sound, and continues today.

As previously noted, this development had implications for audience participation. As musical accompaniment became a self-evident part of the film medium, the audience, who up to then had been quite lively, became more silent and finally wholly absorbed by the “synchronous” and diegetic sounds. As Rick Altman has shown, when the films were screened by travelling showmen the charm of novelty constituted the main attraction. The audience came into the “theatre” straight from the street, only separated by a thin

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32 Numerous catalogues exist, for example Becce/Erdmann (1927); Erno Rapee, Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures: As Essential as the Picture (New York: Belwin, 1925). For a Swedish example see A. E. Wappler, Katalog över Universal-Film-Musik samt Orkester-Bibliotek International (Stockholm: Musikhandel international, 1927).
drapery making all street noise present. These presentations encouraged a high degree of participation from the audience, and their comments were an important part of the screenings.34

With the introduction of permanent cinemas, other demands were raised, both concerning the content of the films and how they were presented. Other acts were introduced alongside the film which increasingly had accompaniment to varying degrees. These acts and the skill of the accompanying musicians became in themselves an advantage in the competition with other cinemas. The audience was still an active part, as lecturers and even musicians turned directly towards them.35

When musical accompaniment became a self-evident part of the medium and developed towards what I see as a Wagnerian mode with motifs and themes given “labels” as to what they signified, producers tried to control certain accompaniment ahead of others. However, a Wagnerian mode implicates a silencing of the audience since it demands a higher attention to be able to follow what happens in the music, necessary to fully understand the images. When finally dialogue was added through synchronous sound, all sounds emanating from the audience were silenced.36

The true change at the end of the silent era was not the coming of sound as such although contemporary sources saw it as a revolution,37 but rather the silencing of all sounds except the ones emanating from the loudspeakers. Moreover, this changed the reception of the films as the audience, who had been able to comment on the film during the screening, were now forced to move this exchange of thoughts to another place, often outside the actual theatre,38 or face the irritation from fellow visitors (Fig. 3).39

34 For a more thorough analysis of this development see Altman (1999): 31-48. Here I only give a brief account of the main points on this issue in Altman’s article. See also Altman (2004): 278-285.
36 Ibid., 42.
37 John Scotland, *The Talkies* (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, 1930) is one author who underlines the revolutionary aspect of the conversion to sound.
In this manner, music played an important role in the conversion of integrating the audience into the diegesis – in fact equal to other aspects of the medium like camera angles, lighting and editing. The “labelled” musical suggestions, designed to integrate the audience, could be very detailed. This is evident from the musical suggestions proposed by the conductor Walter Karlander for *The Divine Woman* (Victor Sjöström, 1928) in the Piccadilly cinema in Stockholm:\(^{41}\)

A Divine Woman, waltz – Halvar Olsson
   Play straight through as prelude, after which the film is signalled
   and the waltz is played to the text *First Act.*
Rose de Mai, Bluette – Levadé
   Play entire piece.
Fritz et Suzel – Levadé
   Play to just after the text, *Now then, wipe the tears...*
Chanson de Patres – Levadé
   The number is interrupted when Madame Latour pushes her
daughter away.
Bange Nacht (Kinothek III A. Nr. 4) – Becce
   Play once for the scene when Madame Latour reappears
   with her friends.

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\(^{41}\) This film is lost except for a 9-minute sequence rediscovered in 1993.
Chanson de Patres – Levadé
   Play only the final 16 acts allegretto until Lebrand is again seen seemingly to comfort Marianne.
Bange Nacht (Kinothek III A. Nr. 4) – Becce
   Play once until the image fades away.
Madelon – Robert
   Here only the chorus is played (32 bars) 2½ times or until Lars Hansson runs after Greta Garbo.
Berceuse Mignome – Billi
   Play 1½ times or until the image with the lonely pianist fades in.
A Divine Woman, waltz – Halvar Olsson
   Play throughout the restaurant scene and until the image fades away. Nota bene! Piano solo.42

The sequence begins with the title melody “A Divine Woman” being played in its entirety before the film starts. Then follow shorter and longer parts of musical pieces assembled by the conductor to give the unfolding scene a sense of musical coherence. In no instance is the music interrupted with silence, as it continuously flows from scene change to scene change. Finally, the sequence ends with the title melody in a different rendition. By working this way, the conductor sets up the film musically in relation to the images. From here on the music continues to work after these ideas set up at the beginning, and develops further as the film unfolds – just as music works for sound film. The use of such suggestions had by the second half of the 1920s become standard, and at least in the US was a practice already in the early 1910s.43 Seen from this vantage point it can be argued that the principal development during the period, until the conversion to sound, was not the finalisation of sound film, but the constant progress of all sounds towards a more diegetic sound seemingly coming from the screen. The conversion to sound only emphasised this tendency.

Despite the important function of music and sounds for the absorbance of the audience into a film’s diegetic world, an obstacle for research has been that such music, during the period prior to the conversion to sound, is seldom mentioned in reviews and other sources, except if it was considered particularly noteworthy:

At Skandia [cinema theatre], one should not sit next to the orchestra, where the conductor gives too loud commands to the other members of the music [orchestra]. One should take one’s chances in the morn-

ings instead. As it is now, the conductor is almost as disturbing as the organ. And that would not be to say too little!\textsuperscript{44}

Using Rick Altman’s words, it has always been “much harder to establish normative conditions than to locate exceptions to those conditions. Standard practice is not news; only unusual events are newsworthy”.\textsuperscript{45} This is one reason why it seems that sound film per se first was the “only” thing on people’s minds during the conversion to sound, and why it so suddenly disappeared from the sources when it had transformed into a normative condition.

One way proposed by Rick Altman of approaching this normative condition is to look on the process of audiovisual combinations.\textsuperscript{46} By using Michel Chion’s notion of audiovision and his distinctions of external logic and internal logic of perception it explains how this process of reconciliation worked to create a feeling of a unified whole,\textsuperscript{47} a process that I argue is still at work. This procedure is hard to distinguish under normative conditions, but reveals itself in instances when the medium “shifts” and develops into “another” medium, while retaining strong similarities with the previous one, as was the case during the conversion to sound.

Implied in Chion’s notions of external and internal logic is the synchronic effect that is created when the visual meets the auditive.\textsuperscript{48} James Lastra writes in turn about the “representational effect”\textsuperscript{49} rather than the synchronic effect, although the implied meaning is the same. That is, any kind of sound or music will always generate something to the meaning of the image, hence creating an effect, out of which the audience automatically inscribes meaning.\textsuperscript{50} Since music here, prior to the conversion to sound, was forced to “stand in” for many other sounds, it carried the auditive interpretation, and even stood in for dialogue.\textsuperscript{51} The sound imitations gave some kind of reality effect, without drawing attention to themselves as such.\textsuperscript{52} At play in this context is Roland Barthes’ notion of “ancrage” and Gorbman’s interpretation of it.\textsuperscript{53} She connects it to the “mutual implication” between image and music where, according to Adorno and Eisler, the music hits specific points to achieve this synchronic effect which, in turn, is a part of the diegetic process.\textsuperscript{54} It is a traditional method of musical accompaniment borrowed from opera, which was present during the silent period, although it became possi-

\textsuperscript{44} “Nöjen och missnöjen”, \textit{Våra Nöjen}, Vol. 14, No. 37 (14 September 1928): 14.
\textsuperscript{45} Altman (1996): 677.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 695.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid. 59.
\textsuperscript{49} Lastra (2000): 94,
\textsuperscript{50} Gorbman (1987): 32.
\textsuperscript{51} “Film och musik”, \textit{Filmbladet}, Vol. 6, No. 40 (20 November 1920): 765-766.
\textsuperscript{53} Gorbman (1987): 32.
\textsuperscript{54} Adorno and Eisler (1994 [1947]): 73.
able to do in a more subtle way with mechanised sound. In other words, to use Walter Murch’s conclusion, we “do not see and hear a film, we hear/see it”.

How this synchronic/representational effect was played out during the 1920s can be seen in the version of *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (F. W. Murnau, 1927) with its original Movietone soundtrack. The track consists almost exclusively of music with some short instances of sound effects. The latter is of minor interest here. What is interesting is how the music is used to evoke sound effects and is constantly commenting on central aspects of the visuals, as for example at the beginning where the “whistling” is clearly distinguished in the music. Another clear example is the husband’s (Georg O’Brien) “screams” when he is looking for his wife (Janet Gaynor), after the storm. Every single scream is emphasised with an oboe, an instrument that on this occasion, after it has been established diegetically, is allowed to be heard “off-screen”, creating a feeling of an endless and desperate search.

To begin with the technology of early sound film and the different appearances of the cinemas made it hard to achieve the effect to satisfaction for every screening, affecting the external logic of perception and complaints like Gilbert Seldes about the need to “give us [again] the effect of complete and continuous movement”, can be seen in the sources during the first years of sound film. Sound as such was therefore to begin with regarded as added to the image, as it stood out. This was especially the case when dialogue was added, as it would give the illusion that the speech was emanating from the characters on screen. There is a deep-rooted feeling, which has prevailed, that the person speaking also should be seen in the image. But since the line between sync and out of sync is very fine, dialogue sequences always run the risk of betraying the technology behind the illusion. In other words, the coming of dialogue emphasised the mechanical gimmick of sound, and guaranteed once again the “heightened awareness of the artificial nature of cinema”.

Equally important, in masking the artificial nature of the medium was the variety of the music illustrated by the conductor Walter Karlander’s music suggestions mentioned above. A repeated use of little variation would draw attention to the music, and therefore break the illusion of a unified whole, affecting the internal logic of perception and thereby creating a completely different synchronic/representational effect. This could have amusing impli-

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57 The film was released as a silent film as well as in a Movietone version.
cations, as is testified in the following anecdote from Walter Hammenhög’s autobiography (in translation) *There Was Once a Musician* from 1942:

It was a film based on Anton Dvořák’s ‘Humoresque’ [about] a small chap who obtained a violin by force from his stingy father and after that became a great violinist. The film was good, but it was prescribed that we were only allowed to play ‘Humoresque’ during the whole screening. It became damned tiresome, four hours per evening, and on Sunday eight with the matinee. ... But one night, the last Wednesday screening in the fifth week, there was a boozer in the theatre who suddenly screamed to me: - Don’t you know any other piece, you bugger? Then the audience woke! Then the audience was listening. ... at last there was someone who had listened to the actual piece of music. 

Suddenly someone had listened, had heard the “unheard”, and listened actively after that which was supposed not to exist. Finally someone had been conscious about what the ensemble was doing, emphasising the medium’s artificial nature.

The external logic of perception: intermedial aspects of image/sound/music

The external logic of perception acknowledges that film is a multi-medial work where each participating medium shows its presence, directly or indirectly, with references or traces present in the other medium. Claudia Gorbman argues that the image track and the sound accompaniment mutually influence each other, creating a synchronic/representational effect that lets the audience participate in the construction of the diegesis, or more specifically, what diegetic effect the simultaneous perception of images, sounds and music has on the audience.

Concerning music, Adorno and Eisler argue that image and music only influence each other indirectly. They work as intermediaries in the construction of meaning and their elements never actually coincide. Rather, there is a constant “debate” between the mediums where music is understood to imitate and subordinate itself to the overall theme of a specific film sequence. Film music should not strive towards the same uniqueness as conservatory music for live performance, as it would come in conflict with the visuals, or, to use Rick Altman’s words, that the musicians “must let the particularity of their music disappear into the process of imitation”. However, as illustrated with Werner Wolf’s understanding of the notion of imitation, this is not to say that the music does not affect the images. On the contrary, as can

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64 Adorno and Eisler (1994 [1947]): 47, 88.
be seen from Walter Karlander’s music suggestions and Waldemar Hammelnög’s anecdote, music participates strongly in the process of making meaning. Even Adorno and Eisler acknowledge this, and stress that the relation between image and music needs to be viewed as being flexible and mobile.66 But, due to the prevailing view that the image is dominant in the process of making meaning, music has often been understood to function as a translation of what is already present in the image. Claus Clüver emphasises that a similar view exists in relation to the Bildgedichte studies, where there is a tendency to view the relationship between the “translated” and the “translational” mediums through the former’s point of view.67

The “questioning and answering” character of the film medium between its images and music (and sounds in general I might add) is a study of relations, to paraphrase Ann-Kristin Wallengren’s conclusion about film music.68 It is not about what the image might signify or about what music and sounds signify that is of interest, but what images, music, and sounds might signify together, as they meet inside the four walls of a cinema, and in relation to the audience. This challenges some assumptions for the development of the film medium and for events during the conversion to sound. For example, as the cinema of attractions gave way to a cinema of narration, with reforms in production and exhibition practices, film accompaniment simultaneously moved towards a Wagnerian mode. This transformation of the medium implies that a Wagnerian mode of accompaniment “demanded a cinema of narration rather than a cinema of attractions”.69 Music was an essential ingredient for experiencing cinema and could be seen, along with other sounds, as one of the major determinants in silent cinema”.70 The attempts of a standardisation of musical accompaniment by the industry coincided “with the development of continuity editing”,71 which, in turn, was stipulated by more dramatically coherent narratives that also changed exhibition practices. Music came to participate in this realignment of the cinema,72 and filled an equally important role to clarify matters as a lecturer or some other explanation of what was going on was demanded by the evermore complex narratives after 1907.73 Music participated, as Tim Andersson explains, within “a larger context involving the development of other narrative

It might be that the theories of Wagner, and more importantly musical accompaniment in general, played a more crucial role not only for the early transformation of the medium but also for the conversion to sound.

Cinemas like China and Göta Lejon, both built in 1928 in Stockholm, with their balconies, or in a cinema-like Skandia, built in 1923, with its private boxes were all constructed after a late nineteenth-century concert norm that followed with the music in use. For prominent cinemas the idea then became that the music was supposed to be played with large orchestras and hence sound “large”. When recorded sound was introduced, with its emphasis on dialogue, these cinemas first became an obstacle since they were built to maximise reverberation.75

There is a great difference between the live sounds during the silent period that the audience had grown accustomed to and the recorded sounds that followed with the conversion to sound. Mechanically reproduced dialogue, sounds, and music never “convey exactly the same information that a given auditor would experience” if the sound was heard live.76 The sound engineer has the power to create a sound event that is far from the actual original event, although traces of the first event are present in the recording where the interpretation of sound is a form of recognition and association on the audience’s part.77 In a way a recording, be it of dialogue, sound effects or music, is a representation of the sound event rather than a reproduction of the original sound source. An illusion is created for the benefit of the diegetic effect that the event is reproduced truthfully, while in reality it is a new version that only shares similarities with the original event.78 Rudolf Arnheim emphasises, in relation to silent film and its implied sounds, that “in order to get a full impression it is not necessary for it to be complete in the naturalistic sense”.79 The same is, of course, also true for recorded sound. The fundamental illusion of sound recording is to make the audience believe that they are experiencing a reproduction of the sound event rather than a representation of it.80

What has influenced the recording of a sound event is that the goal has generally been to reproduce dialogue, sound, and music in a way that make them possible to mass produce,81 as illustrated by the importance of the theme songs and their relation to the gramophone industry for audience participation in the cinematic event. This was especially big business in the US

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76 Ibid., 24.
79 Rudolf Arnheim, Film (London: Faber and Faber, 1933 [1932]): 38.
and goes back to the nickelodeons and the use of illustrated songs. In Sweden this started to develop in the late 1920s, and an example was Oscar Bergström’s performance of a song during the premiere of Der Anwalt des Herzens (Wilhelm Thiele, 1927). However, it would take until the 1930s, and the coming of sound film, before theme songs in Sweden fully exploded onto the market (saleswise), even if orchestras had more persistently been used to play the theme song of the feature during the season 1929-1930 when sound film gradually phased out silent film.

As Niels Henrik Hartvigson has argued in relation to Danish circumstances, what is demonstrated in general by these songs and the performances of the songs, is their function as a contact space between the film and its audience. The serenade scene in Konstgjorda Svensson (Artificial Svensson, Gustaf Edgren, 1929) is a good example. Fridolf Ambrosius Svensson (Fridolf Rhudin), the inventor of gimmicks, has “synched” his banjo to a gramophone and performs two numbers, and between the numbers, when he turns the record, there is a cut to a close up of the record’s label. Through this, the audience is told that the first number was called “The First Time I Saw You [Den första gång jag såg dig], with Einar Waernö on song and Einar Grönwall on guitar” and that, moreover, the number of the record to be found in the store is “Columbia 8619” (figure 4). Next, the audience is told that the following number will be “Why Do I See Tears in Your Eyes [Varför ser jag tårar i dina ögon], with Torben Cassel and his orchestra”, number “Columbia 8651” (Figs. 4-5).

The mutual influence of the image track and the sound accompaniment with the external logic of perception and the intermedial understanding of the medium raise questions during the 1920s in relation to the use of the gramophone, radio and telephone - three technologies that paved the way for

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83 “Premiär på Metropol-Palais”, Aftonbladet, 8 January 1928, 9.
85 Program Leaflet from China for Show Boat (7 October 1929).
the sound film. Douglas Shearer emphasised, for example, in 1937 that “sound-recording for the screen is a branch of telephony”.87 One part of the recording device for sound film came also to be known as the microphone – little telephone. When radio started to be popularised it was seen as a possible competitor to film,88 and later during the conversion to sound gramophone, radio and telephone were employed as a means of advertising the new sound films in Sweden and elsewhere.89 In the early 1930s when the Swedish Musicians’ Union acknowledged sound film as a problem, and confessed that they had regarded the situation too lightly, they blamed radio for paving the way.90 What made this connection so obvious was that the sound quality in sound film was not that much different from what audiences were used to from these other technologies,91 and furthermore, the technology of the gramophone was not only used in the first commercial viable sound systems’, like the Vitaphone, but was also used in the process in such a way that the sound film could be seen to integrate the phonographic recordings into its diegesis, as in the serenade scene in Konstgjorda Svensson. Another typical example of this can be seen in the café scene in Den starkaste (The Strongest, Alf Sjöberg and Axel Lindblom, 1929) where a revolving record is superimposed with shots of different characters in the café (Figs. 6-10).

To include the meaning of these recordings into the discussion at hand evokes a more complex view of the production of texts as a socio-cultural activity that is not only limited to the medium under investigation.\(^{92}\) However, to include an image of the gramophone or a record into the diegesis may not have so much to do with a fascination for the technique as such, as Hartvigson argues.\(^{93}\) It is more to be seen as a means to include music, at least during the first years of sound film - unless, of course, one deals with diegetic music or formative music, as in, for example, *Dantes mysterier* (Dante’s Mysteries, Paul Merzbach, 1931). In this film, to stress the motive of music’s presence, it is even conjured up by a magician, and is allowed to be present during the subsequent dialogue, exactly as the music during the final scene of *Cimarron* where it becomes diegetically motivated by an orchestra. In this regard, the early inclusion of radios, gramophones or records in the diegesis functions just as diegetic music and formative music in the mentioned films as a musical performance, in instigating non-diegetic music and sound impulses,\(^{94}\) which has implications for the internal logic of perception.

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\(^{94}\) Ibid., 79.
The internal logic of perception: audience participation

Besides the effect that the external aspects of sound reproduction had on the audience, the internal logic of perception also had an impact on audience choice and preferences. During the conversion to sound production companies were sensitive to audiences’ selectivity as they looked for ways to incorporate sound film into pre-existing patterns of production, with a minimum of economic loss, and to sustain a high level of attendance.95

From a film music perspective, Kathryn Kalinak emphasises that this leads to a discussion in two directions: toward culture (production) and toward consciousness (perception).96 This is, for example, shown in Walter Karlander’s musical selections of standardised pieces, and the common practice at the most prestigious cinemas during the 1920s to list the musical numbers that would be played, as illustrated by the programme to Forbidden Fruit (Cecil B. DeMille, 1921) at the Palladium cinema in Stockholm (Fig. 11).97

![Musiken till "Förbjuden frukt"](image)

Figure 11: Forbidden Fruit (1921)

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97 Program Leaflet from Palladium for Forbidden Fruit (Stockholm, 1921).
This practice highlighted the music production and prepared the audience for the music to come (just like any concert programme) and hence, in this case, also prepared the audience for how the images should be perceived.

As Claudia Gorbman argues, the medium of film is therefore deeply mediated. Theodor Adorno on his part saw film music as a social object and listening as structured around a complex set of relations between listeners and music evolving around a set of standardised set of functions. The aim was to “train the unconscious for conditioned reflexes”, of which a programme like the one for Forbidden Fruit would be an example. The argument goes that no matter how differentiated an audience might be, the music has gone through numerous cultural processes that will influence “listeners’ preferences” toward a common understanding of the music. That is to say, this is a notion whereby music both carries with it a meaning that is understood by most movie goers, and at the same time uses narratives already present in culture, to create meaning together with a filmic image. Or as John Neubauer states:

All good listening is a ‘collaboration’ with the composer and that listening inevitably mobilizes our talent to emplot, making thereby use of stories supplied by our culture and its history. ... Though instrumental music is incapable of narrating, it can enact stories: it can show even if it cannot tell, it can suggest plots, for instance in terms of themes and thematic development.

Music addresses the histories we carry with us into the theatre, and we bring an understanding of what each piece of music connotes to us. In other words, we put labels on the music we listen to, which can be seen in the musical suggestions in the film music catalogues of the 1920s referred to previously. In this regard Adorno argues that technology “always embodies a standard of society as a whole”, and creates a reflection of the “interrelation of music and society”. Applied to film music, then, Adorno, together with Hanns Eisler, treat music from the moment of its production, arguing that film music’s haphazard but qualitative development is similar to that of the film medium itself, with one difference – it has “from the very beginning ... been regarded as an auxiliary art not of first-rank importance” in relation to the images. They

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100 Ibid., 199.
argue that the progress that film music has shown has constantly been a progress of means, not of ends, justified by industry decisions and due to “consequences of standardisation within the industry itself”, as was illustrated by the importance of what I called the Wagnerian mode of film music.

This process of standardisation during the conversion to sound was not smooth in the beginning, resulting in that the internal logic of perception instead of masking the technology of perception put the technique of the film medium to the forefront. This created what from the outside might have looked like an industry out of control. Will Hays wrote in 1929, that there was at first “a wide variance of opinion as to the future of sound [and many] men in the industry believed that sound would not last”. Therefore it “took public response to convince many of them that sound was here to stay”. That is, as a cinematic event the awareness of technology and audience preferences went back into production, and was in turn absorbed by films produced during the conversion to sound, in such a way that the technology once more seemed to disappear. As Leslie Wood argues, after the initial years sound technology developed where “early sound-on-film talkies had much in common with the silent film; there was none of the camera-bolted-to-the-floor flavour of the early disc talkies”. Using Mats Björkin’s conclusion about the film medium during the 1920s, a competence was created for the integration of sound into the diegesis which merged the industry with the films by drawing parallels between the audience and contemporary life. Sound and music was felt as truthful and real if it rendered feelings associated with a particular situation. Audiences did not experience a sound as “correct” because it reproduced truthfully what might be heard in a given situation outside the cinema, but if the sound represented a truthful rendition of that situation. In this regard microphone technology, as well as auditorium acoustics, had implications for how an audience experienced what was accepted as real, leading during the conversion to sound, to the development of a certain standard of sound realism.

Before a common sound standard was “decided” upon, this development had implications for the internal logic of perception during the conversion to sound, as two competing models existed on how to integrate sounds into the diegesis. These two models also highlight two different ways of looking at the medium. The first tried, through meticulous scale-matching, to adjust

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104 Ibid., 1.
105 Hays (1929): 61.
110 Rick Altman, “The Technology of the Voice”, Iris, Vol. 3, No. 1 (first semester 1985): 13-14. See, for example, a comment to a screening of Nordisk Tonefilm’s system in October 1928 where some had remarked that it was noticeable that the sound did not come from the object that had produced it. H. R., “Skall ljudfilmen bli bryggan mellan oss och framtiden?”, Filmnyheter, Vol. 9, No. 27-28 (25 October 1928): 6.
sound scales of individual shots to a corresponding image scale, so that the “spatial perspective” would match. That is, the aim was to give a realistic duplication of the presented reality. The other approach used foregrounded sound to give a fairly accurate representation of what the image illustrated. That is, all sounds were organised according to their relevance for the narrative,\textsuperscript{111} in order to create a diegetic effect that was in line with the synchronic/representational effect. On an aesthetic level, this meant that the character that the camera was pointed at, and hence the object of the audience gazes, was also the one who spoke. One reviewer after the Concert House screening of Nordisk Tonefilm’s system in October 1928 especially expressed this need to see the person who spoke in order to understand that he/she was the source of the sound.\textsuperscript{112} That is, a sound’s source needed “to be explained to an audience” for them to know the semantic meaning of a sound and to be able to interpret it.\textsuperscript{113} The source of a sound became an illusion of selectivity for the ear when in reality the technology “does the listening for the audience”,\textsuperscript{114} deciding what sounds to focus on. In comparison with everyday experiences of sounds, this is very different, as individual people in a crowd might focus on completely different sounds.

According to Altman, from this grew the shot/reverse-shot principle to constantly be able to frame the speaker, and sound editing’s main goal was to clarify the dialogue so that it could be easily interpreted. Pointing the camera to a sound source is a way of clarifying for the audience what to focus on and tune in to, but also (as we have seen) a way to fool the audience into believing that the visual representation of a sound source would also be the object that had produced the sound.\textsuperscript{115} Within two years after the first sound screenings in 1927 Hollywood settled for the latter practice, achieving for sound something that could be called the classicism of the silent period,\textsuperscript{116} while France, and to begin with Sweden, especially worked with the former practice.

Regardless of model, the notion of a heightened cinematic realism thanks to sound was almost commonly agreed upon. This was also paired with a feeling of a stronger presence, just as radio was felt to mediate “reality as itself” without leaving your comfortable armchair and the warmth of your own home, as was argued in a publicity picture for a new radio system from Philips (Fig. 12).\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{112} Rx, “Ljudfilmsuccé i Konserthuset”, Svenska Dagbladet, 14 October 1928, 19.
\bibitem{114} Altman (1985): 16.
\bibitem{115} Altman (1980/2): 68, 71-72.
\bibitem{116} Crafton (1997): 227.
\bibitem{117} Program Leaflet from Palladium for Atlantic (Stockholm: Svensk Filmindustri, 1929): 26.
\end{thebibliography}
The advertisement emphasises that this is “something more than ordinary radio – what it offers is reality itself – so true to nature is the reproduction” of sound. However true to nature a sound might be, it simultaneously distanced the audience from the outside world, as the representational quality of the sounds inside the cinema were not the same as their equivalents outside.\textsuperscript{118} To quote Sara Danius, technology changed “not only the world but also the perception of that world”.\textsuperscript{119} This gives food for thought when considering that the first positive responses towards sound and its future was seen in relation to newsreels and actualities, where, according to some reviewers, there was an overwhelming feeling of overhearing actual persons speak.\textsuperscript{120}

In the first feature sound films the impression of reality was handicapped by the fact that the sound effects and dialogue came in short sequences in otherwise silent films with a complete musical score. The sound became an “awkward mechanical gearshift in a film’s mode of narrative presentation”,\textsuperscript{121} destroying the internal logic of perception. \textit{The Jazz Singer} illus-

\textsuperscript{118} Spadoni (2007): 8, 10.
\textsuperscript{119} Danius (2002): 189.
\textsuperscript{121} Spadoni (2007): 15. See also Belton (1999): 228.
trates this aspect fairly well; rather than a “talkie” it should be seen as a si-
lent film, with some musical numbers and short dialogue sequences. In the
dialogue scene between Sara Rabinowitz (Eugenie Besserer) and Jakie Rabi-
nowitz (Al Jolson), her parts are barely distinguishable, making one think of
the bad sound quality per se resulting in a jolt out of the diegetic world.122
During the same sequence Jakie Rabinowitz’s father (Warner Oland) enters
and screams “stop” in a state of rage over hearing his son play secular melo-
dies. At the same instance the formative music enters, and the dialogue and
sound effects disappear. Compared to the last Vitaphone feature, Little Caes-
ar, the difference is striking. In this film, dialogue and sound effects are
fully integrated with the action and camera movement, making for a smooth
integration. Little Caesar also shows the result of the road taken by Holly-
wood for technological sound research during the conversion to sound pe-
riod, that of the focus on maintaining continuity and a smooth-running flow
of sound and images. Several solutions were used, such as “shorter and more
plentiful scenes, the montage sequence, and ... an almost constantly moving
camera”.123

Similar awkward shifts as in The Jazz Singer can be seen throughout
Dantes mysterier (1931), and the list continues regarding similar examples.
For instance, the censorship board in Sweden only cut according to the im-
age, without any consideration as to what this might imply for the sound.124
If it was a sound-on-disc system you could always replace the frames al-
though it resulted in greater medium sensitivity as the screen turned black.
Bengt Idestam-Almquist wrote in the review on Fox Movietone Follies of
1929 (David Butler, 1929) that “150 meters have been cut away, with the
result that it occasionally becomes just as pitch-black as in the Swedish
Academy of Music when the head of lights has turned the wrong buttons
(which he usually does)”.125

A particular aspect of these early sound films which is seldom taken into
consideration, and that in part allowed for an easy assimilation and accep-
tance for sound, is the relation of these films to the short lecture film that
usually accompanied the feature (which I mentioned on page 53). At the
China Cinema in Stockholm, for example, the sound films during the first
half of 1929 were accompanied by sound newsreels from Paramount. Medan
båten glider fram should also be regarded in this way. This 17-minute short
film served as the prologue to the feature film Charlotte Löwensköld (Gustaf
Molander, 1930) on 26 December 1930. This prologue consists of a short
lecture about the wilderness of northern Sweden, attempting to instil in the

122 Leslie Wood has even argued that Jolson’s opening line “Say, Ma, listen to this” was told
by accident, see Leslie Wood, The Romance of the Movies (London: William Heinemann
125 Bengt Idestam-Almquist, “En glimt av Broadway i Palladium”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 30
July 1929: 9.
viewer a feeling of untamed nature. This is then carried over to the feature film, which takes place in a small village in the province of Värmland, characterised in the film by its deep forests and long winters. This prologue is also commented on in respectful articles, emphasising that sound film has found a supporter in the Swedish prince Wilhelm.\textsuperscript{126} In the US, early prologues often consisted of Vitaphone shorts that helped, as Charles Wolfe writes, “to cue different sets of expectations for the spectator”.\textsuperscript{127} The frontal-ity and vaudeville aspects of the Vitaphone shorts, as well as the being-thereness of newsreels emphasising sound as such, fostered an awareness of sound presence that carried over into the feature film. Also the sound’s source was emphasised, that is, its relation to an object made visible within the frame of the image. Hence, as audiences simultaneously became aware of technology, the same technology also became associated with objects on screen, once more facilitating the “disappearance” of the technology in the construction of the illusion and the diegetic effect, which is crucial for the internal logic of perception.

The external logic of perception and the internal logic of perception seen together during the conversion to sound reveals that the success of these early sound films had more to do with the novelty of sound than functioning technology.\textsuperscript{128} The sound film was “celebrated as a spectacular media sensation in [its] own right and thereby drew “audience’s attention to the novelty of the apparatus itself”.\textsuperscript{129} It allowed the audience to experience, and to be a part of an event that made it possible to overhear sounds from other parts of the world, or to experience “luxurious revues” as in the case of Fox Movietone Follies of 1929, a revue which one reviewer described the audience’s reactions as meeting the “screening with lively acclaim and frequent applause”.\textsuperscript{130} The advertisement for this particular film also emphasised this sound quality by focusing on the music.\textsuperscript{131} Emphasising this sound awareness also meant that audiences grew accustomed to the new soundscape facilitating for technology once more to disappear. But as the next part of this chapter will show it took a few years for this to happen.

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\textsuperscript{128} Irene Kahn Atkins, Source Music in Motion Pictures (Rutherford/Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983): 32.
\textsuperscript{129} Belton (1999): 233.
\textsuperscript{130} G–a, “Talfilmpremiär på Palladium”, Dagens Nyheter, 30 July 1929, 7.
\textsuperscript{131} Stockholms-Tidningen, 29 July 1929, 2.
\end{flushright}
During the conversion to sound: technology and medium-sensitivity

The breaking up of the internal logic of perception shows that the novelty of sound produced some unforeseen side effects during the first years. It appears as if the awareness of the image as a flat entity increased. Sound, instead of masking its technical construction, “reasserted the presence of the screen within the space of exhibition”, according to Spadoni. This was due to the fact that sound was also used in a highlighted way as a tool to surprise and shock the audience, and that it, in Crafton’s words, “was treated as a novelty, not as a transition to a permanent form”. In one of the first Swedish film books from 1932, mentioned in the introduction, it was even argued that all had been “sound for sound’s sake”.

Just as viewers during the earliest years of the medium were aware of the technical qualities of films, audiences once again became medium-sensitive, as a number of technical realities during production imprinted themselves on the finished films. Early sound technology often made for such a crude product that was far from the characteristic fluency of the silent film, and many now felt that the film medium had taken a huge step backwards. Who needed recorded and synchronised sound when “the screen [already] reproduces the sound and sends it winging out to the mental ears of the audience”? It was felt that silent film (with its music accompaniment) was full of sonorous cues, and that “all the better work, and in spots throughout the lesser films, the human voice has been speaking, the sounds of life have been caught by the screen and carried to the sensitive in audiences”.

As Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin emphasise, this shows that each new medium reforms its “predecessor by offering a more immediate and authentic experience”, but also that this reform simultaneously makes the audience “become aware of the new medium as a medium”. The sound and dialogue of the sound film made it clear for large parts of the audience that the images and sounds were mediated, a construction. Or, as Paul Rotha concludes in 1930, there was an “immediate confusion in the joint appeals of the reality of the visual image and the realism of the dialogue”, arguing that sound “has to be considered as a means of dramatic expression of the content of the theme, in conjunction with the succession of visual images on the screen ... [and]

134 Allberg/Idestam-Almquist (1932): 156.
137 Ibid., 30.
139 Ibid., 71.
although built into the construction of the film, sound does not interfere with the visual reception of the images”.  

However, this is not all about an audience first being unaware of the technical nature of the film medium only to suddenly becoming conscious of it. Rather, it is about an audience that is fully aware of the constructedness of the medium, but willingly accepts to be seduced and immersed by, as Jan Olsson argues, “story premises and modes of story telling”. This willingness to be seduced happens on the audience’s own terms, but can be broken if external or internal factors makes the technical nature of the medium explicit, as happened with the first inferior technical sound reproductions. 

But as Tino Balio has shown, the inferior technological sound quality was also integrated into “an existing set of stylistic priorities” aimed at maximising the efficiency and integration of classical norms. To begin with, this resulted in the practice of staging “the action for the sake of sound recording”, emphasising its existence. At the same time the earliest sound-on-disc systems were filled with synchronicity problems making everyone aware of the constructed nature of sound. Often bad sound quality could lead to that even perfectly synchronised voices and effects increased the audience’s medium sensitivity. The voices could sound unnatural, and the slowness of their delivery could be felt as unreal, while bad amplification could make it clear that the sounds were not coming from the screen. As Donald Crafton has described it is “as though the quality voice was not part of the actor but part of the medium itself [and the] actor’s job was to adjust his or her physiology to that mechanical paragon”. This led a contemporary writer like Paul Rotha to conclude that mechanical reproduction of sound was “an added resource to the already existing factors of filmic representation”. 

For a time formative and diegetic music helped in filling the gaps and fissures that speech and sound left behind. The diegetic effect was strengthened, and as Edgar Morin puts it, as “long as the spectator heard music … he accepted the image on the screen as a true picture of live reality”. Music reinforced the impression of reality of the image and guided the audience’s

143 Ibid.  
146 Rotha (1930): 308.  
vision. This was acknowledged at the time. Paul Rotha describes in 1930 that it was essential “for the musical score to be a part of the construction of the film, and not simply an arrangement of popular pieces suited to the theme”. With the help of the new technology music could be better tuned to the image, or more correctly synched, and hit Adorno and Eisler’s “points” more easily (see page 61).

The relationship between image and music during the conversion to sound was, to use Werner Wolf’s terminology, therefore a gradual increase of integration and adaptation in that the image and the music played different, but nevertheless mutually implicated, roles in the construction of the narrative and the creation of the impression of reality. This mutual correspondence was also present during silent film accompaniment as the “structural properties of music (its tempo, rhythm, or harmonics) or its associative powers were loosely matched to the implied narrative content”. Michel Chion’s notions of external and internal logic of perception, however, show that the terms of the audiovisual contract needed to be renegotiated during the conversion to sound. This renegotiation was not, as it may appear in hindsight, a discontinuous change, but one along a continuum that adjusted to the new circumstances. As Robert Spadoni has shown, to begin with this meant that until “the voices took up permanent residence within the actors’ bodies, sound film could strike a viewer as a dazzling reproduction of a pre-existing unity or as merely an approximation and reassembly of that unity”. To be in sync had, therefore, something external to it, “pieced onto the whole for effect rather than something intrinsic to the profilmic world”, something that had “been drawn out of it and captured on film or disc”, which resulted in voices being understood to “accompany moving lips rather than to issue from them”. This understanding also brought with it a need for the camera to be pointed towards the source of the dialogue, sound, and music to clarify the sound source and motivate it diegetically.

Formative and diegetic music played an important role to assimilate the other parts of the sound track within the diegesis. However, during the conversion to sound Hollywood soon in film after film gradually reduced music to only setting the scene in the opening credits, and later wrapping the film up at the end. Even diegetic music was often lost. In a genre like the horror film, which today is associated with a through-composed soundtrack to create a scary feeling, was devoid of music during the conversion to sound. Dracula (Tod Browning, 1931) shows this very well: except for the opening sequence there is no real music at all, except for a music box, and some chimes at the end of the film.

149 Rotha (1930): 308.
152 Ibid., 16-17.
Indeed, it was sound and dialogue that came to rule, which can also be seen in some central German films of the period, illustrating that German sound film on this subject stood closer to Hollywood than to France and Sweden. In *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931), for example, the sound is produced in a very refined way in not only using the now famous example of the whistling murderer, but also using subjective sound in a key scene when Peter Lorre is trapped in the attic. During a part of this scene he protects his ears with his hands to ward off all sounds, resulting in the soundtrack becoming completely silent. René Clair’s *Le Million* (1931) shows on a similar use of the sound track for subjective emotions although in this film it is music that fills this function. In the scene where Prosper (Jean-Louis Alibert) pretends not to know his friend Bouflette (René Lefèvre) his subconscious feelings is revealed by a song as he argues with his conscience.

*Kameradschaft* (G. W. Pabst, 1931), on the other hand, shows how thoughts around music prevailed during these intermediate sound years, when formative music had disappeared and before non-diegetic music in sound film had entered. In the restaurant scene there is music which is fitting for that environment, giving it a diegetic feeling. Yet the source is never established. Despite this, it is clear that if there should be music in such a dramatic film as *Kameradschaft*, it needs to be motivated through the environment or through a source. Except for this instance, and at the end of the film when everyone thanks each other for a work well done, while a visible orchestra starts to play, there is no music whatsoever in the film. Rather, the film shows once more the importance during the conversion period of already pre-existing sound carriers like the telephone, mentioned above, for integrating sound into the diegesis, as sound becomes the bearer of information in the sequence where the trapped miners tap the pipes and later use the phone to reach the outside world. Noël Carrol has also argued that *M* and *Kameradschaft* illustrate different styles during the conversion years, where the former film “looks to the past” with its emphasis on editing, while the latter “presages the future” with its reliance on camera movement.153

The contrast is striking when comparing these two dramatic films with a lighter film like *Der Kongress tanzt* (Erik Charell, 1931). The film allowed for greater freedom, and is filled with music and song numbers. Just as the Swedish films that are analysed in chapter 2, the lighter tone of this film also allows for a freer use of music, which is allowed to move between different levels. Although most of the music is diegetically motivated there are some instances of non-diegetic music, or gives that feeling before it becomes diegetically motivated. The ensemble scene, for example, first seems to contain formative music before it seemingly glides over into a non-diegetic use, only to be completely diegetically motivated as Christel Weininger (Lillian

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Harvey) opens the door to look where the music is coming from. There are more instances of “non-diegetic” music in this film, although it once more gives a feeling of non-diegetic music. When the emperor of Austria arrives, the music played is not motivated, giving it a non-diegetic impression. However, the scene motivates this music, just as the scene at the end sequence of *Star Wars IV: A New Hope* (George Lucas, 1977) motivates the fanfare-like music. In other words, what this illustrates is that music’s function must be understood in its relation to the narrative. The pair diegetic/non-diegetic and the notion of formative music can only be fully explained in their relation to the unfolding story, rather than to the image per se. If music is seen in this light, in its relation to the narrative, it gives one possible explanation as to why music seemed to disappear from the film medium during the first years of sound film. It can be argued that the images, together with the dialogue and sound, were seen as carrying the story, resulting in that music was eliminated.

The first talkies were, therefore, often more silent than the supposedly “silent films”. That is, a sound’s source needed to be visible, or at least the music and sounds needed to be plausible. In, for example, *Der Blaue Engel* (Joseph von Sternberg, 1930) music and sounds are cut on opening and closing doors, making for a use of sound where the audience clearly notices when there is sound and when there is none. There are not even any lap dissolves or fade-outs of sounds, as they are abruptly cut short or suddenly emerge. The soundtrack, therefore, never becomes integrated, but is perceived as an addition making itself present, thereby highlighting the technological construction of the sounds. But even in a film such as this where the sound stands out, there are instances where the music at least seems to try to cover this awkward use in order to create a sense of commentary. Early on in the film, when Immanuel Rath (Emil Jannings) opens a window to let in air, a song simultaneously emerges from the street outside. This song is then present throughout the ensuing scene, creating a rudimentary non-diegetic effect as the emotion of the song comments on Rath’s stressful situation. An even clearer non-diegetic effect is created in the formative music at the end of the film when at first bells are heard in the music, commenting on Rath having reached his final destination at his old school. As the camera pans back, the bells start and are finally resolved through church bells in the image. This is once more equal to numerous other films at the time amounting to a sort of wrapping up. This non-diegetic music should then be regarded as a special case deemed plausible at the time only because the film is ending. A similar case can be found near the end of *The Jazz Singer* when Al Jolson performs the hymn. The whole hymn is actually formative music but func-

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154 Only on one occasion is there off-screen sound. During the fight sequence there are sounds that are not shown by the camera.

tions almost as pure non-diegetic music since it starts in the apartment scene that precedes it before it becomes “diegetically” motivated.

In other words, music’s presence could help to assimilate sounds and dialogue within the diegesis, and hence once more mask the technical construction as music adheres more to the demands of the narrative than to the image per se. 156 But if dialogue and sound in the beginning created a heightened media-sensitivity, breaking the diegetic illusion, while music could cover the seams, why did music simultaneously almost disappear, and wait for its return until King Kong, being “the first underscore that […] greatly enhanced its film”? 157 Could it perhaps be that one felt that music did not fulfil any important narrative function, which the images and dialogue already fulfilled? This thesis does not try to answer why this became the result in Hollywood. Instead the study at hand show that from an international perspective non-diegetic music actually never disappeared.

The question of non-diegetic music I: rewriting film music history

Although a plot in a narrative film would for most occasions be rather clear through inter-titles, and sounds or dialogue, without the help of music, this is seldom the case as music is intertwined between image, sound and dialogue, linking the diegetic and the non-diegetic levels. Music works as an important part in the process that transmits meaning to the audience, functioning as a narrative agent. For example, music does not only reinforce suspense in a scene, it is also a part in the process that creates this suspense. 158 Nancy Wood has, for example, made the following remark:

Perhaps the most ‘artificial’ yet transparent device for the condensation of time was the continuation of non-diegetic music over scene transitions. By late 1929, scene transitions were not only strongly coded visually, but with the aid of non-diegetic music, often aurally coded as well. Two years later, non-diegetic music would make a discreet entry within the individual scene itself, concealing potential temporal ambiguities in auditory space by its self-effacing presence. 159

In this regard, music in sound film after the intermediate years of music, continued to work after similar musical principles that had been standardised during the 1920s, as well as adopting the technique of letting the music ebb and flow underneath the dialogue. 160 It also carried with it the insistence of narrative integrity through the merging of image and music based on a late

nineteenth-century romantic idiom, the difference being that where the silent film relied on continuous playing, and a selective reproduction of diegetic sounds, sound film relied on intermittent music and a faithful reproduction of diegetic sounds.¹⁶¹ To begin with, however, the first sound films continued to work along the lines of the silent film through what I have called the formative music. That is, in the early 1930s, to use Kevin J. Donnelly’s words, the “early processes of putting music to film used for silent films were adapted ... as Hollywood started to institutionalise the process of filmmaking”.¹⁶² For music it has been shown that it took until 1933 for this standard to become fully established in Hollywood, and in the film medium at large. Alan Williams has, for example, argued that the post-synchronised “silents” show that the musical units began slowly to get shorter and more flexible thus preparing for the emergence of the leitmotif construction in about 1933.¹⁶³ But as I argue in this part and in chapter 2, this process went much faster in Sweden than previously thought.

During the season of 1930-1931 Hollywood worked after a model that Donald Crafton has called the “modulated sound track” where the focus was on dialogue and sound effects at the cost of music.¹⁶⁴ David Bordwell has shown that after Hollywood mastered the technology of sound with its first focus on dialogue’s centrality, the aim of many sound improvements during the 1930s focused on a “clearer articulation of the voice in relation to music”.¹⁶⁵ This should be compared to the fact that (as I show later, page 134) the Swedish production company of Svensk Filmindustri started to work with what might be called a fully integrated sound track almost already from the outset of the Swedish conversion period. As I will argue, international film music history needs to be rewritten in this regard. For, after analysing the music of several films in Sweden during this period, my conclusion is that 1931 is in fact the correct year when designating the starting point for the return of non-diegetic music. That is, 1933 might be correct in relation to Hollywood’s use of music, but to make generalisations from this fact in relation to the film medium at large would be erroneous. At least for a Swedish context, it is more appropriate to set the starting point for the use of non-diegetic music to 1931 and, specifically, the film Röda dagen (The Red Day, Gustaf Edgren, 1931).

After the conversion to sound in Hollywood, non-diegetic music seemed to disappear from the film medium, although there is no logical reason for this. For one, in an industry that followed up on its initial successes by trying

out every possible way to contextualise sound technology, music should have been an obvious choice as it filled every requirement for an industry which was “financially sensitive to public response, [and in which] technical and stylistic innovations followed one another with amazing rapidity”.\footnote{Gorbman (1987): 48.}

Some suggestions as to why music seemed to be absent during the initial sound years can nevertheless be put forward. One reason, as has been shown earlier, was the perceived necessity for the sound source to remain visible and a part of the diegetic world. It was felt that in order to fill a dramatic function the music needed to emanate directly from the narrative situation as such. Thereby the practice of including theme songs into a silent film score was taken to its extremes. Already during the 1920s national popular melodies of the time had been included in the overall structure of the score to make sales of gramophone recordings and sheet music benefit from the total receipt. Now with recorded sound, these melodies were included in the diegesis on every plausible pretext, with the camera focusing in on radios being turned on, records being played, or small bands playing.\footnote{Rick Altman, “Cinema and Popular Song: The Lost Tradition”, \textit{Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music}, Arthur Knight and Pamela Robertson Wojcik (eds.) (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2001): 26-28; Kahn Atkins (1983): 28, 30-31.} Swedish cinema programmes, like the one from \textit{The Singing Fool} (Lloyd Bacon, 1928), also included the lyrics both in the original and in the translation (Fig. 13).\footnote{Program Leaflet from Palladium for \textit{The Singing Fool} (Stockholm, 1929): 11.}

![SONNY BOY.](image)

\textit{SONNY BOY.}

På mitt knä — kom här,
Sonny Boy,
Tre år gött du är,
Sonny Boy,
Du kan ej erfara,
Jag kan ej förklara,
Hur jag har dit här,
Sonny Boy.

När sol sig mömger,
Medan jag söker,
Du är min sol,
Sonny Boy.

Vänner må svika,
Låt dem alla svika,
Jag har je dig,
Sonny Boy.

Du kom från himlen,
du är min skatt,
Jorden blev himlen,
clit blev ljus och glätt.

Och om dysken stiger,
Jag vet att du ej sviker,
Du är mig så kär,
Sonny Boy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SONNY BOY.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climb upon my knee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though you're only three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You've no way of knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There's no way of showing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you mean to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there are gray skies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't mind the gray skies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You make them blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends may forsake me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let them all forsake me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I still have you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You're sent from heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And I know your worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You've made a heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For me right here on earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And when all is gray, dear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know you'll never stray, dear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For I love you so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonny Boy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13: Program for \textit{The Singing Fool} (1929)

The zooming in on sound carriers gradually disappears in Hollywood during the 1930s when the symphonic background scoring became the norm after
1933. Or put differently, the felt necessity to use source music as justification for music became less prevalent and soon almost disappeared, and did not return until the 1950s and the emergence of the soundtrack record.\textsuperscript{169}

This does not explain why formative music did not transform into non-diegetic music in Hollywood during the first years of the 1930s, as it did in Sweden, since that kind of music fulfilled several narrative functions following silent film music principles. On the other hand, other factors for the disappearance of music had to do with technology itself. Before approximately 1930 sound needed to be recorded simultaneously with the image, and until 1931 it was almost impossible to edit a soundtrack that had been recorded with the image. By 1930–1931 some films had small bits of discreet music in dialogue scenes, but it would take until 1932 before separate tracks for dialogue, speech and music became a reality.

Still, this does not elucidate why it would last until 1933 and \textit{King Kong} for film to include non-diegetic music.\textsuperscript{170} One explanation can be found in the views regarding colour, that is, another technology of the time which was supposed to give a heightened feeling of realism to cinema, as well as it was also regarded as an addition and innovation brought to the film medium after its birth. Steve Neale has described it as in the following manner:

> With the introduction of sound, a new aesthetic (or a new aesthetic orientation) made itself manifest at the same time as a set of real (but potentially and actually soluble) short-term technological problems. Ultimately the colour technology appropriate, so to speak, to the predominant aesthetic of sound cinema was found in ‘natural’ photographic colour systems.\textsuperscript{171}

Eirik Frisvold-Hansen has furthermore shown that colour has often been seen as an integrated part of sound film,\textsuperscript{172} where the question has never been, as Edward Buscombe has put it, about “what is real, but of what is accepted as real”.\textsuperscript{173} Here a crucial difference between, on one hand, colour/non-diegetic music, and on the other, diegetic sound/music, can be seen. Whereas the latter could be integrated into the diegesis through an establishing shot of a sound or musical source, colour and non-diegetic music were unable to fulfil these basic realist aesthetics. It was accepted for certain genres as musicals, comedies and so forth to stretch this rule, but as Buscombe shows, it is the need for colour (and non-diegetic music I would argue) to be subordinated to the narrative that “prevents” its use in films.\textsuperscript{174} One rare occasion where this is played out can be found in the ball scene in \textit{Hell’s An-}

\textsuperscript{170} Gorbman (1987): 50-51.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 89-90.
gels (Howard Hughes, 1930). The whole scene is shot in early Technicolor, and the music at the ball is given a non-diegetic character although it is motivated by the scene as it is appropriate music for that situation and sequence. In an otherwise dramatic film, which only has allowed fully motivated diegetic music, the lighter character of the ball allows not only for colour but also for the music to hide under the dialogue. In other lighter films such as Rio Rita (Luther Reed, 1929) colour and sound could also be played out. Although, as one reviewer noted, sound technology had come a long way compared to colour technology.\textsuperscript{175}

Although lacking non-diegetic music, the first sound films prior to 1930 did have formative music even in the US. However, so far research has not focused on the full importance and meaning of this use of music. It has been argued that it is silent film music, and therefore void of interest in the context of a sound film. As a result, the argument concerning early sound films has been that for example the \textit{Jazz Singer} contained performed songs ... but no underscore\textsuperscript{176}. It is true that the film lacks any underscoring in today’s understanding of the term, but it nevertheless contains formative music throughout, creating a feeling of just that – underscoring. That is, the formative music underscores not the dialogue but the general theme of the film, emphasising its mood and atmosphere, just as silent film music. This goes hand in hand with Christian Metz’ observation:

\begin{quote}
We tend to forget that a sound in itself is never “off”: either it is audible or it doesn’t exist. When it exists, it could not possibly be situated within the interior of the rectangle or outside of it, since the nature of sounds is to diffuse themselves more or less into the entire surrounding space: sound is simultaneously “in” the screen, in front, behind, around, and throughout the entire movie theatre.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

This also concerns the music, be it diegetic, formative or non-diegetic. For non-diegetic music to enter Hollywood it would take until King Kong in 1933. Gorbman has argued that music’s ability to slip in and out “of the discourse of realism” makes it perfect to set up the diegesis in this film, since the “association of music and the irrational predominates throughout the genres of horror, science fiction, and fantasy”.\textsuperscript{178} However, this does not explain why a film like Dracula (1931) almost lacks music completely.

Anyhow, it is not the task of this thesis to answer this question. Rather, what I want to show is that through a different interpretation of the use of music’s function during these years, the question regarding non-diegetic music’s presence or absence can give an alternative explanation as to why the conversion to sound film went seemingly so smoothly in Sweden. It is

\textsuperscript{175} M:\t F, \textit{Nya Dagligt Allehanda}, 27 December 1929, 5.
\textsuperscript{176} Marmorstein (1997): 29.
\textsuperscript{178} Gorbman (1987): 79.
true that it was a process where the uncertainty about what was going to happen was great, but most of the involved parties soon adopted and met the situation with sober clarity.

As I have already emphasised, the conceptual pair diegetic/non-diegetic is very useful in describing the narrative functions of music. At the same time it limits how music in film is viewed. First of all it tends to regard the coherence of a film as disassociated from the music, and therefore does not acknowledge music and sound participation in the construction of the diegesis. Music is seen to be either diegetic or non-diegetic, instead of something in between – in reality it is the relationship between these two notions that is perceived. To approach the question of non-diegetic music, then, the notion of formative music, being outside this pair, helps to clarify how the external and internal logics of perception during the conversion to sound were transformed so smoothly, establishing a slightly different audiovisual contract. As Spadoni argues, it shows how the “film medium was perceived through music, sounds, visuals, and all kinds of cultural aspects”, and how everything soon was “submerged within the total filmgoing experience” resulting in that audiences could process the “added on” soundtrack as routinely and transparently as film intertitles. It is almost as if the constant giving and taking between the image track and the soundtrack finally had created the myth of a total cinema.

Rick Altman argues that what happened was a “reouting of the sound from apparatus to diegesis”, and hence the discourses of sound and music became “masked by the histoire of the diegesis”. It is this which is at the root of the question of non-diegetic music, and something which I argue happened much earlier in Sweden than in the US. This is not to say that there did not exist any experiments in Hollywood. Music was not totally forgotten, and some, like Gilbert Seldes, argued in 1929, that until “the talkies discover masters of dialogue who can create a new system of speech for themselves, they should lean on music; it is a confession not of defeat, but of purpose to succeed”. One Swedish production company literally took the path that Seldes talks about in continuous use of non-diegetic music from 1931 and onward. But why Svensk Filmindustri decided to use music this way is uncertain. Few sources exist, and one would think that thoughts expressed elsewhere about the supposed neutrality of the formative music also were

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180 Kassabian (1992): 42-43, 47. Especially early writings on film music emphasise that the uniqueness of sound film is its ability to make the music diegetic. For a discussion of this see Wallengren (1998): 31.
184 Seldes (1973 [1929]): 146.
prominent in Sweden.\textsuperscript{185} Or could it be that Swedish musical life made it an evident part? I’ll return to this case study in chapter 2.

Thoughts around music’s function was nevertheless prominent at the time even in Hollywood as, for example, when Harold B. Franklin in 1930 describes (by accident?) a perfect use of non-diegetic music, in arguing that “dialogue, too, can be made very effective against a background of soft, appropriate music, for it is well known that stage appeal may be aided by such accompaniment”.\textsuperscript{186} What does not come forward in Franklin’s account, however, is the understanding that music should not be included, unless it fulfills an important part of the story, as argued by Edgar Dale in 1937.\textsuperscript{187} In other words, non-diegetic music was believed to interrupt the flow of the story, making the audience think more about where the music was coming from than concentrate on the unfolding narrative, thereby disrupting the diegetic effect. Even four years after \textit{King Kong}, a high-school manual by Edgar Dale argues that music should help develop the mood, but under no circumstances should it “induce emotions and feelings in the audience when the full possibilities of the picture itself have not been utilized in this direction”\textsuperscript{188}.

As can be seen from these contemporary sources from the 1930s, music was discussed and even, in at least one instance, a more refined music function was addressed. Although what Edgar Dale’s high school manual also illustrates is Max Steiner’s central position, and how he has been elevated to the auteur of film music overshadowing other composers and music uses – or as a later writer comments: “The father of sound-film music was Max Steiner. Arriving in Hollywood around 1929, he was one of the first composers to score music for a large-scale sound feature film – \textit{King Kong}”.\textsuperscript{189}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{186} Franklin (1930): 293-294.
\textsuperscript{188} Dale (1970 [1937]): 176.
\end{footnotes}
Chapter 2: Production – The Companies

So far I have dwelled mainly on a general discussion about image and sound relations prior to the conversion to sound, and during the intermediate years before sound film established itself with a fully integrated sound track with dialogue, sound and music. I have also described the first general reactions to sound film. Before returning to these issues when sound film had been fully implemented, I will first turn to the case of Sweden and how different groups reacted towards these changed circumstances.

Technical innovation, post-war economy: a backdrop

The new communication techniques that were developed during the second half of the nineteenth-century signalled a shrinking world. Through the nineteenth-century, there had been a constant progression towards an abolishment of the restrictions set by space and time, first by the transportation of actual people, and later their messages, and finally their voices.¹ In Sweden in 1853 it did not go faster than a horse could run to send a message between Stockholm and Malmö. A year later the two cities were connected by the telegraph, and by 1859 Ystad in the south could be reached from Haparanda to the north. From a global perspective, by 1874 literally the whole world could be reached by wire.² Soon thereafter, during the 1880s and 1890s, local telephone companies emerged in Sweden, and it became not only possible to send typed messages but also to speak to each other over a distance. However, it was not until the 1920s that it became possible to make long distance telephone calls to foreign countries. In 1925 Sweden became connected to Germany; in 1927 to the UK and France; in 1928 to the US; in 1929 to Italy and Spain; in 1931 to the Soviet Union, and to Iceland in 1935. By then, no matter where you lived in Sweden it was, in principle, more or less possible to talk to anyone in any corner of the world.³ From the wireless telegraph the step was not far to radio, and Radiotjänst, now Swedish Radio, was founded in 1925. In 1927, with the new transmitter in Motala, one third of the country and two thirds of the population could be reached, making it possible to broadcast simultaneously the same programme throughout the

³ Ibid., 23-25.
country. If there only existed one Swedish channel the radio waves made it possible to tune in to channels from other countries around Europe increasing music influences.

The feeling of a shared cultural common ground must have been strong, but at the same time filled with contradictory feelings. The step from being able to share events and impressions only with your nearest neighbour, or in the bigger cities with people in your own part of town, to being capable of giving expression to incidents, experiences and feelings, mediated through a widespread radio programme and telephone ought to have been felt as enormous, although there had been a constant development of fading limitations set by space and time since the nineteenth-century.

These new communication technologies represent, together with the sound film, the radio, the car, and the aeroplane, technologies that are seen as systemic. That is, they are for their function not only dependent on technology alone. Also many organisational, political, social and cultural aspects need to be developed and incorporated alongside the new technology for it to reach its full potential, thereby overlapping one system of technology with another. Yet, this creates instability within the new technology as well, as it is “embedded in social and institutional practice”. In this sense, new technology functions “as translations of the elusive yet structured social, institutional, and economic relations that partake in their constitution”.

It’s important to underline that these technologies, including the gramophone and the sound film, were connected to the city, and were regarded as American, while simultaneously that same technology worked to create a feeling of a culturally common ground for the end users. “The Americanisation” as a constant factor plays an important role as a mediator in the context of Sweden. During the conversion to sound the appropriateness and concern of “American standards of cultural conformity” were augmented. In Sweden one came to argue that technology should not be compared to culture as exemplified with an editorial in the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* about the implications of the sound film from the US. From a Swedish perspective the emigration to the US had also during the 1920s changed face. Instead of an emigration spurred by famine and poverty as in the nineteenth-century, emigrants now consisted more of young travellers seeking new opportunities. This modern traveller was also better prepared for what might meet him or

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10 “Teknik och kultur”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 1 September 1929, 3.
her due to information from newspapers, radio, and so on. Linked to this discourse was also the portable gramophone that allowed everyone that owned an apparatus to bring it wherever he/she wanted.

Indeed, the world was shrinking, bringing with it a new set of values of easygoing world citizens, getting impressions from around the world. But how new was all this actually? As Martin Kylhammar has shown, the Swedish citizen of the 1920s could be seen more as a transmitter of the cultural heritage of the nineteenth-century. More precisely, these values were linked to a heritage of new communication techniques brought on by an increasingly globalised world trade which carried with it radical new ways of looking at the world. The basic idea was that these new communication links would abolish the traditional antagonism between city and countryside, centre and periphery, civilisation and nature. As Mats Björkin has shown, this was linked to a thought of cultural preservation, for instance, in open-air museums like Skansen, founded in 1891, where the knowledge of the past was to be preserved, giving an impression of an organised nature which could be measured in all its details. But it was not only about measuring and preserving, it was also about the longing for a past away from all machines and hectic city life. For example, from the Musicians’ Union’s point of view, the fear of new modern ways of accompaniment (sound film, self-playing instruments) suddenly made the music by Richard Wagner a collaborator, which seemed to stand for all that which the romantic epoch was associated with, and of which an open-air museum like Skansen was also an example. The idea of free universal, instrumental music seemed to fit the cinema musicians, as well as being linked to the discourse of the universal silent film language. As we shall see in chapter 4, the theories of Wagner founded in a nineteenth-century romantic environment of contradictory dualities, and the modern tonalities of the new century, all seem to clash in the Swedish Musicians’ Union and their activities during the conversion to sound film. If you happened to talk to a representative of the Union at the time, there was no question where the support was supposed to be, namely with the Wagnerian tradition. But as Ann-Kristin Wallengren has shown, this was not so much about Wagner’s musical principles, since these were rarely used in Sweden in relation to film music, but instead about how he became interpreted.

This desire for a return to the origin of everything grew even stronger at the beginning of the 1930s after the stock market crash of 1929. Now the

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13 Ibid., 14.
15 “Tonfilmen vållar våra biografägare huvudbry”, Musikern, Vol. 23, No. 7 (1 April 1930): 94.
future was not along the lines of internationalism, but rather on a national cohesion which in Sweden soon was formulated in the doctrine of neutralism and the building of the Swedish welfare state (“Folkhemmet”). In fact, in this context film music came to play a role in emphasising the dualism of countryside and city, in that the music that was associated with urban life was seen as something degenerated, and in one sense not “Swedish” or at least not “European”. Nature, on the other hand, and everything associated with it, was expressed through a European musical idiom of folklore. In short, European romantic classicists were set against “all that jazz” that were heard emanating from the US. The pseudonym Elène-Margot expressed, for example, after the silent premiere of *The Jazz Singer* that the accompaniment was not appropriate and that a jazz rhythm had suited the film better.

In general, the trust in the new communication techniques was mixed with pre-war ideas about a borderless commerce or entrepreneurship which created a feeling of an almost absolute trust for technical innovations as a requirement for progress. Although this faith received a blow during the war, it was still present during the 1920s. When the post-war crises of 1920-1923 ended, big Swedish corporations with their roots in a pre-war environment, such as ASEA, LM Ericsson, SKF, AGA and Alfa Laval, pointed towards a world to be conquered for Swedish companies that had the technical, economic and personal resources. In some way the modern traveller was associated with these global companies, since he/she often was employed by them as technician or economist. Even the common worker on the floor was linked to this traveller, as he/she shared a common ground with all other workers around the world through the mother company. Associated with this was unionisation which made workers identify with other workers around the globe. In this sense, musicians associated themselves with other unionised musicians, although as we shall see they regarded themselves as standing on a higher level than unionised industrial workers.

Although the image reigned throughout the 1920s of a never-ending industrial success story and an easygoing citizen until the stock market crash of 1929, there exists another side of the coin, which can be traced back to the post-war depression. For, just after the war, as the rest of Europe lay in ruins, Swedish companies found an almost bottomless market for their products, making it possible for them to push for increased market shares. However, this post-war boom was short-lived, and was followed in 1919-1920 by increased inflation and speculation as a result of a lack of fuel, raw materials and manpower. This was created through a downward spiral instigated by an almost endless surplus of Swedish products. As export was handicapped by these needs, it forced increased imports, creating a big deficit in the trade balance. Without getting into details, suffice it to say that the result for the

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20 Kylhammar (1994): 30, 156.
Swedish economy was a severe recession. The export of wood, iron and so forth was paralysed, with a heavy drop in prices, resulting in an eradication of non-profit companies, high unemployment figures, and a salary drop for industrial workers of about 35 percent over one and a half years. Although the depression was short-lived and ended in 1922-1923, the solution to meet the recession had been strict credit and financial politics. The goal was to restore and reintroduce the Swedish currency on par with the pre-war gold standard and, it was believed, rectify the economy to pre-war conditions. The result was social and human costs hard to imagine in the form of unemployment, economic and social need.\(^\text{21}\) For the Swedish film industry this meant that production slowly diminished, and had almost reached a standstill at the end of the decade.\(^\text{22}\)

Seen from today’s vantage point, this recession is fairly easy to explain (although the size of the deflation is harder to understand). When international trade after the war started to become normalised, the supply of available resources began to grow, resulting in a drop in prices. Suddenly Sweden was sitting with high investments in stock that literally overnight became impossible to sell at the actual production value. Although the recession ended in 1922 as fast as it had begun, the hard times continued for many groups during the 1920s, since following the post-war depression, the decade was dominated by international protectionist tendencies, and suffered from an almost chronic under-employment with an average unemployment figure in Sweden of about 5%.\(^\text{23}\)

It is important to point out that experiences linked to new communication techniques are not as evidently connected to economic development. If the capitalist system as such was questioned at the beginning of the 1930s, it was not as obvious to question the communication techniques, illustrated by the Stockholm exhibition of 1930.\(^\text{24}\) Rather, these were seen as a way out of the misery, and as a solution to many seemingly unsolvable problems as well as possible sources for revenues. Sound film was connected to radio and telephone technologies, and to the urban life that was signalled from them. Sound film had been developed alongside these inventions, and can be seen in this regard as the last and final innovation from the turn of the century to reach its fulfilment. In hindsight this gives the films in Sweden of the time a rather ambivalent expression in their acceptance of the modern life, yet their reluctance to let go of old values that were fast disappearing in the society at large.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{22}\) Qvist (1994): 40.
\(^{23}\) Lundberg (1994 [1983]): 41, 47.
Early sound film experiments in Sweden

In an informal tone and in the most distinctive French Madame Vrignault tells of her "creation", which she confesses she is a bit proud of. After her witty lecture, which is greeted with applause, Madame Vrignault withdraws. At that same moment the stage turns dark. One only indistinctly discerns a male figure that enters to move the table, while at the grand piano, where a weak, green, and spooky light is shining, a woman’s head [suddenly] emerges. The audience sits in breathless excitement – until a white cloth is rolled down from the ceiling. Ah, Kinetograph.

This is what confronted the audience on 1 September 1901 at the Olympia Hippodrome in Stockholm during an early sound film screenings in Sweden. According to the review, the audience was bewildered to experience different theatrical pieces with synchronous sound. The synchronicity was felt as satisfactory although the phonograph had some difficulties in rendering direct speech. What the audience had experienced was a Phono-Ciném-Théâtre constructed by the Frenchman Henri Lioret but despite the good criticism, the screening should be taken with a grain of salt. The reaction towards it was characterised by its novelty and a fascination in being able to listen, in a sense similar reactions that occurred to the first screenings of silent moving images some years before. Concerning the synchronisation, it was done manually and took great skill by the operator, and until around 1910 many early sound film reproduction systems were handled manually which, of course, could create problems with synchronicity. The following anecdote illustrates the sometime parodic situation:

The gramophone was placed in the cinema on a platform under the screen. It was run by hand – as was the picture machine. To achieve coherence one constructed a meter with one white arrow for the image and one red arrow for the sound. The arrows had to coincide and move with the same speed. However, from time to time the red arrow happened to linger behind, and then it was important to start cranking so that the gramophone caught up the Kinematograph. The race could give the most picturesque results.

However, as a historical account the reviews of these early screenings highlights that experimentation with sound had been a part of the film medium since its beginnings, and that such early sound films resulted in very successful screenings that toured from country to country. In other words, when sound film finally became a technically and economically viable medium for mass distribution and exhibition, it had already been something that contem-

26 "Den odödliga teatern på Olympia", Dagens Nyheter, 2 September 1901, 2.
28 Allberg/Idestam-Almquist (1936): 84.
temporary audiences had been aware of, although few had actually witnessed the early screenings.29

Despite their experimental nature, sound films before the 1920s highlight some common insights about the later, seemingly fast conversion to sound at the end of the decade. As mentioned before, many comments during the conversion to sound looked back to the 1910s and earlier, and used these experiments as a backdrop in trying to reach some kind of understanding of contemporary changes. Like then, audiences once again became aware of the artificial nature of cinema, as “bad” sound quality emphasised the technology behind it.30

However, the first sound experiments should not be seen foremost as a means of integrating the sound into the unfolding narrative, but more as additions in order to highlight and give “life” to images that were already filled with intradiegetic sound, although thoughts of distributing “canned theatre” were certainly seen as a possibility in the near future.31

In Sweden Numa Peterson brought the sound film to the country in 1901 after witnessing a screening of this very Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre at the world exhibition of 1900 in Paris. Peterson’s impressions of the invention resulted in the so-called “Swedish Immortal Theatre” (Svenska Odödliga Teatern). Soon he also started to produce his own films. For the industry exhibition in Helsingborg in 1903, a first film could be screened, but although getting a prominent start, the reception was more lukewarm during its later tour around Sweden, and in 1905 the Immortal Theatre silenced.32 Instead the relay was continued between 1905 and 1908 by a diverse palette of characters, which under the name “Immortal Theatre” screened sound films. The hub for sound film production was also relocated to Gothenburg where Svensk Kinematografi and Otto Montgomery, Jarl Östman and Erik Montgomery started to produce song films, which to a large degree were screened at the Alhambra cinema. Soon this production also dwindled, and in 1909 the company was dismantled.33 As one reviewer noted at the time, while the sound added another dimension to the event he/she was uncertain what benefits the film as an art form could draw from this.34

During the same period, in 1908, Svenska Biografteatern had acquired the exclusive rights to the German Oscar Messters system called Biofon but had also started to develop a similar manual apparatus of their own. In 1909 Charles Magnusson became the new CEO which resulted in the experiment-

29 See, for example, Johansson, “Den talande filmen”, Filmbladet, Vol. 9, No. 5 (1 March 1923): 177-178 where the columnist mocks the future of “the talkie”.
31 Bowser (1990): 204. “Canned theatre” as an expression had a slightly negative connotation just as “canned music” was a label put on gramophone music by musicians who disregarded this medium, see Aaron Copland, Our New Music: Leading Composers in Europe and America (London/New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1941): 243-244. 32 Olsson (1986): 20-28.
33 Ibid., 42-54.
34 “Premiär på biografen”, Dagens Nyheter, 24 January 1907, 3.
tation becoming more goal oriented. Earlier, through Svensk Kinematografi, he had been in contact with sound film production, and now started to produce gramophone-based sound films with song numbers, with the bulk of the production taking place between the years 1909–1910. The machinery was also developed and was automatic and electric. Despite this, the economic result was not satisfactory, and production was soon stopped.35

Besides these occurrences in sound film, Edison’s Kinetophone was presented in Sweden through a Danish-Swedish consortium called Nordiska Kinematofonaktiebolaget. The reactions to a screening, articulated by a reviewer, showed on an audience that did not know how to react.36 Although reproduction of sound and music had become increasingly mechanised since the turn of the century it seems that at least this writer had difficulties merging image and sound technologies into a single whole. The overt intermedial aspect of the technologies came in conflict with the internal logic of perception and created an ambivalence as how to interpret the images and sounds. Nevertheless, it resulted in a few recordings during 1914 until production stopped. Svenska Biografteatern also bought a couple of machines in 1913 but it never resulted in any sound film production.37

Of more interest were the self-playing instruments that during two phases, in 1910-1915 and from 1920 up until the conversion to sound film, played a part in the exhibition practice. The self-playing instruments were used among other things during conflicts with the Musicians’ Union. But although these in reality posed quite a big threat against the musicians, the Union often responded by more or less ignoring them, just like they would do later during the conversion to sound – as if this mechanical way of reproducing music had nothing to do with their jobs.38 These instruments also, as Michael Allen has shown for the case of the UK, filled a function to “prepare” the audience for the mechanical reproduction of sound film.39 However, it seems that these instruments played a lesser role in Sweden during the conversion years than they did in the UK.

I will come back to the Musicians’ Union’s policy regarding this matter in chapter 4, but what (besides organisational aspects) might have led up to their stance was that the Union saw the mechanical reproduction as a limitation of the poetic quality that film was associated with, not least through the

35 Olsson (1986): 77-84. Simultaneously during 1909–1910 Frans Lundberg in Malmö produced a number of song films although very little is known about these recordings, see Olsson (1986): 105.
associative function of music.\textsuperscript{40} This poetic quality of the music formed the medium into a coherent whole, from the beginning of the film to the end.\textsuperscript{41} This is in sharp contrast to how, for example, the Film Exchange Association in Sweden regarded mechanical reproduction. Although they did not see any future for it within the film medium it was nevertheless fully accepted without dwelling on its aesthetic qualities as they forwarded lectures done on the topic in their publication \textit{Svensk Filmtidning}.\textsuperscript{42} The photoplayers and similar instruments during the first phase between the years 1910-1915 seem to have had a relatively short life span, and were also quite unreliable, making them a poor substitute for musicians. During the 1920s, these instruments became better and better, with large cinema organs as the “Mighty Wurlitzer” as the prime example.\textsuperscript{43} However, these organs were not as common in Sweden, among the exceptions being the ones at Röda Kvarn from 1922, and Skandia from 1928. In fact Röda Kvarn’s organ was regarded as the largest in Sweden, with only two church organs in Stockholm and Malmö respectively coming close to its size.\textsuperscript{44} Although all nuances in an orchestral performance could not be replaced, these organs were seen as a possible replacement for the orchestras,\textsuperscript{45} but due to the cost of acquiring an organ in reality made them not a threat to musicians’ job opportunities.

Finally, one other person needs to be mentioned during this period of innovation in sound film in Sweden – Sven A:son Berglund, as a screening on 17 February 1921 was constantly referred to during the conversion to sound. Berglund started experimenting with sound and image synchronicity by 1906. His experiments soon became more focused and in 1921 resulted in the much talked about screening of his Filmfotofon in Stockholm (prior to this event the machine had been exhibited in Stockholm in 1919).\textsuperscript{46} From the outset Berglund had opted out of the gramophone as a sound source since he considered it to be too static.\textsuperscript{47} Instead, he soon came to place the sound on a separate film base, with the first two patents being registered on 17 May 1909. The first was for a primitive amplifier that utilized the changes in a magnetic field for sound reproduction, “Sound Base for Apparatus for Reproduction of Sound” (Patent No. 31332).\textsuperscript{48} The second patent was for a

\textsuperscript{40} “En illustration över Hupfeldspianots ofelbarhet”, \textit{Musikern}, Vol. 14, No. 17 (1 September 1921): 218.
\textsuperscript{41} Allen (2001): 37.
\textsuperscript{42} “En succékväll i Filmlubben”, \textit{Svensk Filmtidning}, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1 February 1926): 69-70.
\textsuperscript{43} Kraft (1996): 35-37, 43.
\textsuperscript{44} “Röda Kvarns nya orgel”, \textit{Filmbladet}, Vol. 8, No. 12 (25 March 1922): 209.
\textsuperscript{45} “Ett instrument med obe gränsade möjligheter”, \textit{Filmnyheter}, Vol. 3, No. 33 (9 October 1922): 8.
\textsuperscript{46} “Problemet ‘den talande filmen’ löst av en svensk”, \textit{Nya Dagligt Allehanda}, 21 October 1919, 5.
recording device, and used, at this time, a light-sensitive plate to record and photograph sound waves, but was soon replaced by a filmstrip, “Process for Sound Photography” (Patent No. 31472).\(^49\) These two patents for recording and reproduction apparatus show the basic principle that Berglund worked towards. Subsequent patents were only improvements of these first two.\(^50\)

As mentioned, on 17 February 1921 a public screening was held in front of several prominent personalities, which explains the impact the screening had. The screen was placed in the garden, with the apparatus positioned in the basement of the house while the speaker was placed underneath the screen in the open air (Fig. 14).\(^51\)

The audience stood at the windows and on the terrace, looking down, or as the company’s CEO Victor Frestadius said – “It is a large lounge with a high ceiling”.\(^52\) The programme for the evening was as follows:

CEO Victor Frestadius explains the principle behind the Filmfotofon.


\(^51\) *Vecko-Journalen*, No. 40 (2 October 1921).

\(^52\) “Den talande filmens problem löst”, *Aftonbladet*, 18 February 1921, 6.
Robert Berglund, the brother of Berglund, pronounces the Swedish sj-sound.
Pauline Brunius recites Gustav Fröding’s “Renässans”.
Gustaf Fredrikszon recites a verse but without any image.
Nils Arehn performs N.P. Ödman’s “Kammarjunkaren”.
Einar Fröberg and Gustaf Fredrikszon perform a dialogue.

After the screening the attending visitors competed in overwhelming exclama-
tions about the benefits of Berglund’s innovation. Oscar Monthelius (ar-
chaeologist and member of the Swedish Academy), for example, considered
that Swedish science had experienced a wonderful day in Swedish cultural
history. Also foreign correspondents that witnessed the screening reacted
with bewilderment. But Berglund’s invention was then used as a backdrop
to domestic inventions of a similar kind, as in the case of The Times article
about Mr. H. Grindell-Matthews invention that would be superior to Ber-
glund’s in every respect.

The feeling of simultaneously – being able to hear and see a person – was
apparently overwhelming, as technical problems were not noted. One of
these was the light sensitive cell used in Berglund’s apparatus, which con-
sisted of selenium. It was the most important part of his innovation, but at
the same time its Achilles heel. At high frequencies selenium heats up and
thereby exercises a resistance against the transmission of the “picture of the
sound”, making the “image” blurry. The result is bad sound quality as well
as bad synchronisation. This was not solved until the photocell became
available during the mid-1920s. On the evening of 17 February 1921 the
Swedish climate could actually have saved Berglund’s day, since the tem-
perature probably cooled the apparatus enough (the average temperature for
February 1921 was 1.6 degrees Celsius below zero). This might explain
why subsequent screenings failed.

Yet, despite the overwhelming reactions, few who visited the screening in
1921 saw any future for the apparatus as a sound device inside a cinema, and
emphasised that the medium was too international to function with sound. It
seems that Berglund and his friends too never really thought of the machine

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filmen klar”, Stockholms Dagblad, 18 February 1921, 1; Olsson (1986): 42.
54 “Den talande filmen”, Filmbladet, Vol. 7, No. 9 (26 February 1921): 171-172; “Problem-
et ‘den talande filmen’ löst”, Nya Dagligt Allehanda, 18 February 1921, 5; “Den talande filmen:
svensk ingenjör löser det svåra problemet”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 18 February 1921, 1.
55 W. Bayard Hale, “Film Photophone: Speech and Action Synchronized – A Swedish Inven-
tion”, The Times, 24 September 1921, 6.
56 “Speaking Films: British Inventor’s Device”, The Times, 28 September 1921, 8.
57 Hugo Blomberg, “Elektrisk bildöverföring”, Uppfinningarnas bok III: elektricitetens an-
vändning, Sam Lindstedt (ed.) (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söners förlag, 1927): 696-697;
58 Historisk statistik för Sverige II: Väderlek, landmäteri, jordbruk, skogsbruk, fiske t.o.m. år
as a cinematic devise for feature films. Rather, it would be used as a tool for linguistics and education.60

The machines and inventors so far mentioned became cases of departure when the sound film during the late 1920s was to be explained in Sweden by contemporary writers. More or less every article from this time included some sound film history, including explanations of its techniques, with an emphasis on the Swedish innovations by Berglund. It is without a doubt so that Berglund left a great impression, despite his failure, and he was routinely mentioned.61 These early and first instances of sound film during the 1920s were set in a greater context of modern urban life when sound film was to be explained, which included other communicative technologies, like radio, telegraph, and the telephone. Originating from the US the rhetoric figure of “all that jazz” with a link to these technologies also came to play a role for specifically the cinema musicians.

Rumour and early debates

Berglund’s innovation and his “success” was first announced and many newspaper’s had the news on their front page, as well as being explained in detail in technical periodicals.62 Although the positive critical opinions that first were voiced after the screening in 1921, these reports had been preceded by opinions that were strongly against anything that had to do with sound. A person within the industry commented in 1920:

The talking film […] is something we should be wary of, as it has nothing to do with film art. Film is the art of silence, and there the spoken word has no place. Film is the opposite of the theatre, and should one acknowledge the talkie, then one also participates in the abolition of film as an independent art form. The spoken word is objectionable, for the less text there is in a film the better it is. Therefore we in the industry are better off regarding an invention of this sort with much distrust.63

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62 “Den talande filmen klar”, Stockholms Dagblad, 18 February 1921, 1; “Den talande filmen: svensk ingenjör löser det svåra problemet”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 18 February 1921, 1; “Problemet rörande den talande filmen har nu funnit sin lösning”, Social-Demokraten, 18 February 1921, 1. One newspaper that did not put this event on its first page was Svenska Dagbladet, see Ted, “Filmen är ej längre stum”, Svenska Dagbladet, 18 February 1921, 8; Chr. S., “Filmtotofonen”, Industritidningen Norden, Vol. 49, No. 10 (11 March 1921): 86-89.
This quote could have been written in 1929, when similar arguments about silent film’s unique properties were highlighted. Sound was to be stopped, and significantly it originated from across the Atlantic, and from culturally impoverished America — or so the cultural elite in Sweden argued.⁶⁴ Now was the opportunity to once and for all settle this matter and show that such phenomena as “mechanical” jazz were not accepted in Europe. For example, in 1926 a private member’s bill had been raised in the Parliament about the so-called Americanisation and its influence on the Swedish film industry.⁶⁵ These fears had been increased with the coming of sound film, as it was American English that would now be spoken from the screen, while simultaneously domestic melodies would be replaced by mechanical and stereotypical jazz music. The debate around jazz became elitist in that the European understanding of classical music was put on a pedestal, and even censorship was seen as a guarantor of musical values,⁶⁶ without contemplating that this would mean the introduction of censorship on taste.⁶⁷

I return to this issue in chapter 4, but as an example in 1928 the Musician Union’s journal included a fiercely worded article against a rendition of Franz Schubert’s *Ständschen* in a “jazz setting”. It did not make it any better that a Swede was behind this rendition, and the article ends with a wish that one could “oppose the violence on culture” through legislation.⁶⁸ For the Union this was the ultimate evidence of what should happen if yet another mechanical recording device would make itself present for real. Obviously, one felt, it was enough that gramophone recordings and radio broadcast were pouring out schlagers at the cost of classical music and at the same time “destroying” traditional music styles.

One should note when reading about the reactions towards the coming of sound film, that the arguments used for or against America and “Americanisation” usually also crossed political borders, and that it is difficult to align them along a common left-/right scale. The debate was more about whether you acknowledged modern technology or not, like the film medium and re-

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corded music, with America being the symbol and model for consumption of leisure activities.69 A second factor played a role concerning the view on American music, and that aspect originated from the US itself. Although things started to change during the turn of the century, an American self-view of their music life prevailed during the 1920s. Since most American musicians of the nineteenth-century were often born outside the country this created “a persistent myth of European sophistication and American naïveté in matters of music”.70

Concerning sound film in Sweden up until the autumn of 1928 few longer articles had been written on the subject, although notices concerning the development in the US were presented and also Al Jolson and The Jazz Singer’s presence was well known.71 After 1928 it was “all” sound just as in other countries, as for example in France where the “rapid development and diffusion of the sound film led to even greater coverage of the cinema in the daily and weekly French press”.72 Prior to this, during the first half of the 1920s comments on the sound film had started to occur among small notices and travelogues in Swedish film periodicals. The first comments almost exclusively made references to the inferior sound films that had been screened from time to time since the birth of cinema, and that anyone that “over the years who have followed the progress of our Swedish inventor engineer Ber- glund must be a bit sceptical regarding the importance of such an invention”.73

The earliest notices in 1926 were otherwise remarkably insightful in that competition between different brands were described, and according to the writers these new inventions would give a better technical result than those presented during the 1910s.74 At the time, this was difficult to refute, since so few people had actually heard a sound film screening. At this early stage thoughts were also raised, both from the industry and reviewers, that the orchestra would be replaced by recorded music, and that most actors would find it difficult to assert themselves since they either failed the language or did not have a suitable voice for recording.75

69 Björkin (1998): 41-42, 44-45, 49. Another aspect was of course if you had any economic interest. For example, one editorial in Svensk Filmtidning, Vol. 3, No. 2 (15 January 1926): 33 (The Film Exchange Association’s periodical) had the headline “Americanise!”
It clearly shows that something was going on in the US, but despite the presence of the premiere of *Don Juan* (Alan Crosland, 1926) the travelogues in the periodicals focused mainly on German and Danish patents, through Tri-Ergon and Petersen/Poulsen. The comments regarding these innovations expressed a feeling that the future of these devices was bright, although for the present might lack capital. Europe was considered to be equal to the US in the area of sound technology, although it was acknowledged that the latter was several years ahead in technological development. This sudden interest in sound film during 1926 might be illustrated by a screening of Lee de Forest’s system in February 1926 at the Piccadilly cinema in Stockholm, of which the Musicians’ Union’s commentary after the screening stated that “not even the worst ensemble at a cinema could surpass the noise from this machine”.

Despite the early more or less insightful comments, however, an uncertainty began to appear in 1927, and the question was asked if there was anything to be gained at all from producing films with sound, although the advantage that the small cinema theatre would be able to get the same musical accompaniment as the major cinemas in the big cities was once more noted. During the late 1927 and 1928, again a shift occurs as sound film started to premiere around Europe, and rumours about audience fascination for these first screenings were reported. This also meant that instead of only general remarks, giving only short descriptions of what had happened, the comments became more profoundly interested in the events, as the discussion focused on what sound film might imply in the Swedish context. Still those circumstances seemed very black and white: sound film would either soon disappear or change everything around.

Once again Berglund’s invention was compared to new sound inventions as, for example, the newly created Nordisk Tonefilm and its purchase of Petersen and Poulsen patents. It was also after a screening of Nordisk’s system during the autumn of 1928 at the Concert House in Stockholm that

sound film was treated with more serious interest. One topic that is well illustrated by a comment from Sven Stolpe was sound film’s connection to the theatre and if sound film would become seen as only filmed theatre. It was argued that the downgraded art form of film would then lower theatre to the same level which eventually, according to the Musicians’ Union, also would mean that jazz music would find an even easier way to be distributed.

The screening of Nordisk Tonefilm was regarded by contemporary writers as the first sound film screening in Stockholm. Although the screening had not been perfect it was afterwards clear for every reviewer that sound film would be something to be reckoned with. It had been emphasised during this event that since the apparatus could be connected to any projector, music could be recorded to make it possible for the cinema owners to release their musicians. The screening had also showed that the audience had appreciated the technology with keen interest. It seems that it was easier for writers to merge the different media compared to the critics during the screening of Edison’s Kinetophone some twenty years earlier.

During 1929 more space was given in periodicals to reports about the shifting circumstances for studios and cinemas in Europe and the US. To begin with, early in 1929, apart from a few insightful articles, several still showed that many had difficulties grasping what was going on, and all kinds of sceptical rumours were put forward as to whether silent film would persist or not, mixed with articles about when the first real sound films would be screened. It is difficult to see how one could have argued differently when actual sound films had yet to be screened. Only one, Wings, had premiered.

in January, but it took until May before sound film started to be screened regularly. Anyway the screening of *Wings* meant that the comments slightly shifted in character. Sound film started to be seen as a threat, and its failures were taken as proof of its inferior quality in relation to silent film. For instance, Tobis’ grand failure on 17 January 1929 in Berlin was taken as an example that it would take years before a German sound film would be able to compete with silent films.\(^90\) In comparison to these, articles interviews were conducted with the American film exchange companies in Stockholm where of course a completely different picture of the future for sound film was articulated.\(^91\)

Soon, after the screenings in May of *Love and the Devil* and *White Shadows in the South Seas*, more or less every reviewer and film industry person had an opinion about sound film. In July Arvid Odencrants held a rather down to earth lecture on radio about sound film and its development,\(^92\) while Olof Andersson of Svensk Filmindustri explained in *Tidskrift för svensk skolfilm och bildningsfilm* his company’s view on the sound film and its history.\(^93\) Otherwise, among other periodicals these opinions were a matter of keeping the discussion going and raising one’s voice for or against sound film, rather than showing any profound insight into the unfolding events. The documents should, therefore, be approached cautiously as they are filled with opinionated comments. One example is the view that the “consistent, thoroughly dialogue driven structured drama talkie does not exist: it falls on its own aesthetic absurdity”,\(^94\) which can be compared to the Film Exchange Association’s periodical *Svensk Filmtidning* that in an unsigned editorial argued that “it will not be long until silent film will be just a memory”.\(^95\) For or against sound film came to be a central issue well into the following season of 1930-1931 despite that lesser and lesser silent films were screened.\(^96\)

However, whether you agreed to the possibility of sound film or not, the matter of fact was that the shrinking of the contemporary world had put the

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\(^91\) “Stockholm är nu hela Nordeuropas affärs huvudstad”, *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 7 February 1929, 14, which is an interview with Harry W. Kahn, representative of Fox Film. In comparison questions like these had already been settled, see “Talking Movies Are New”, *The New York Times*, 3 February 1927, 18.


decision not in the hands of the policy makers in Sweden – the decision lay elsewhere.

**Sweden in a globalised world: market and patent wars**

The conversion spread quickly around the world and Sweden was no exception. From the approximately 40 cinemas that had been adapted for sound in the spring of 1930 the figure raised to close to 700 cinemas at the end of 1931.97 Despite language barriers, the American film industry succeeded not only in keeping its dominant position as producers and distributors, but grew even more powerful. How did this come about, as language should have imposed at least an obstacle to distribution? One answer can, of course, be found in the technology used and the financial aspect of diversification. It was one thing to come up with an ingenious idea, quite another to find financial support, as the case of Berglund showed. His first company Svenska AB Fotoaerofon had, for instance, from the outset severe financial problems, probably due to the failure to attract attention for his innovation. In fact, the company even had difficulties paying off its patent fees.98

Smaller economies like Sweden were under the thumb of France, Germany, UK, and the US, and maybe more so after the stock market crash of 1929. Yet another and maybe more important explanation is that the US companies spoke with one voice. They might have competed fiercely on the domestic market, but when it came to diversifying sound to other markets they did so unanimously.99 Concerning the language problem Harold B. Franklin comments, for example, that “however great the problem, it is no more perplexing than countless others that have succumbed to the vigorous intelligence of American industry”100 – after which he concluded that it is “up to” the consumer if American films will remain desirable, and that it is the American industry’s task to “make available to motion picture patrons throughout the world a product that will interest [the audience], whether they are silent or in dialogue”.101 The Department of Commerce in the US also made a conclusion in 1928 in a similar fashion, and argued that European film industries lacked linguistic and economic unity to be able to compete with Hollywood,102 although, as Paul Rotha noted, it was a situation to monitor closely, as “Italy, Sweden and Czechoslovakia are all producing speech films in their respective languages, thus gradually diminishing the American influence which was so strong in pre-dialogue days”.103

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100 Franklin (1930): 324.
101 Ibid., 333.
One common trope that runs through every periodical at the time, except *Svensk Filmtidning* which was the mouthpiece for the Film Exchange Association, was that the American film industry was, if not about to collapse, nevertheless losing its market share in Europe due to sound film. On the other hand, it is risky to draw too strong parallels between the reduction of US dominance and the arrival of sound film. The trend of the downward spiral had already started during the middle of the 1920s. In Scandinavia the market share between 1925 and 1928 just before the conversion to sound was reduced by approximately 20%, from 85% to 65%.104 Several factors contributed to this, one being that European film industries tried to block American films through legislation, as exemplified with the private member’s bill that was raised in 1926 in Sweden against the taxation on Swedish-based American film exchange companies.105 The Scandinavian countries also tried to create a loose cartel together with Germany, Italy and France, a movement called “Film Europe”. Although not so long lived it had an impact that resulted in the market shares of American films dropping in these countries from around 1925 and 1926.106

Film Europe can be seen as a reaction towards US influence after the First World War as the American film industry had continued to streamline production and saw film as an important export while simultaneously using a restrictive import policy.107 The movement was otherwise more a set of principles originating from the German trade press and set against “Film America” rather than amounting to any concrete practices, although it did result in the development of some international co-productions and an exchange of production crews and actors.108 But as Kristin Thompson has shown, every hope of a more sustained Film Europe soon dwindled during the early 1930s as the depression set in, as well as sound becoming an incitement for an increased competition within Europe itself.109 For contemporary film industry people it could have looked as if the movement had a greater impact than it actually did, as the downward trend for American film in Sweden was temporarily reinforced during the conversion to sound, also giving fuel to arguments that claimed that Europeans would not tolerate mechanised sound reproduction. But as Leif Furhammar has shown, the drop in the attendance rate during the conversion years, when the depression set in, occurred exclu-

sively for foreign films, while Swedish sound films increased every year during the period under investigation.\textsuperscript{110}

Douglas Gomery and Janet Staiger also show that the “US began to feel the results of retaliation by the end of the decade with a subsequent reduction in its share of the market in Germany and France”.\textsuperscript{111} However, this negative tendency does not address how the reduction in market share relates to a decrease in revenue. When the cinemas in Europe started to wire for sound, the American companies received payment not only for the apparatuses but also from rental fees (the first apparatuses were only leased) and from maintenance fees.\textsuperscript{112} These costs could be fairly high and, for example, Svensk Filmindustry had some plans to move parts of its production to Joinville in Paris where the licence fees were lower.\textsuperscript{113} So, simultaneously as the curve of the US market share on the European market continued to go down in 1930, the curve for revenue went up.\textsuperscript{114} This illustrates what Kristin Thompson has shown; that in general “the Depression had more adverse impact on American exports than did problems relating to sound”.\textsuperscript{115} For a contemporary writer this could be hard to see as can be seen in Bengt Idestam-Almquist’s comment on the situation where he argues that Hollywood was more than worried about the future.\textsuperscript{116} What might also have been hard to see for a contemporary writer was that the continued production of silent films in Hollywood was not so much about a disbelief in sound as such, but more about serving parts of the market that still had not adapted to sound.

Although the conversion to sound coincided with the Great Depression, it did not, to begin with, have that big an impact, as one might think. The production facilities as well as the large and middle-sized cinemas in the US had already put the hardware in place before funding started to run out and hard times set in.\textsuperscript{117} What the conversion to sound film brought to Hollywood was that the studio system coalesced, as the studios were forced to streamline production, and at the other end of the conversion years, eight studios


\textsuperscript{111} Douglas Gomery and Janet Staiger, “The History of World Cinema: Models for Economic Analysis”, \textit{Film Reader}, No. 4 (1979): 42.


\textsuperscript{113} “Ljusnande utsikter?”, \textit{Biografbladet}, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1931): 12. The cost for installing Western Electric apparatus was, for example, during the spring of 1929 80,000 Swedish crowns, and added to this was an annual rental over 10 years of 6000, see “På tal om”, \textit{Stockholms-Tidningen}, 4 May 1929, 16. Western Electric was forced due to competition to lower the price in the autumn of 1929, see “Swedish Western Electric Company”, \textit{Biografbladet}, Vol. 10, No. 7 (September 1929): 267.

\textsuperscript{114} Tunstall (1977): 284.

\textsuperscript{115} Thompson (1985): 148.


\textsuperscript{117} Crafton (1997): 177, 216.
emerged as the leaders: Paramount, MGM, Fox, Warner, RKO, Universal, Columbia and United Artists.\textsuperscript{118}

What created problems for a small economy like Sweden was that this period, as Gomery has shown, was characterised by cartelization among multinational companies of the great economic powers. Several loose trusts and cartels were formed only to quickly fall apart,\textsuperscript{119} so no wonder it was difficult to keep track on what was going on. This also raises problems for research, where it has been argued that it is “more difficult to trace technological development through this period of diffusion than through the earlier periods [since the] technology itself, and understanding of its capabilities, was advancing rapidly in many places at once”.\textsuperscript{120} Werner Wolf talks about overt intermediality and that the characteristics of the involved media, seen separately, still can be regarded as works of their own.\textsuperscript{121} Sound film with its different media and rapid development of all media involved affecting a whole industry is an example of the difficulties in describing the unfolding events afterwards. It is easy to fall into the trap of seeing the development as consisting of central dates in time that separates a now and then, as exemplified by the central position that \textit{The Jazz Singer} and its premier has received.

Nonetheless, everything seemed to have been settled for some kind of stabilisation as the German trust of Tobis-Klangfilm with Dutch capital, and the American companies of Western Electric and Radio Corporation of America (RCA), agreed to a cartel on 22 July 1930 (the Paris Agreement) which split the world market for sound films into four regions. Tobis-Klangfilm got exclusive rights for central Europe and Scandinavia, while the American companies obtained the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and the Soviet Union. The UK market was split between one-fourth to Tobis-Klangfilm, and three-fourths to Western and RCA. The rest of the world was open, with no exclusive rights to either side.\textsuperscript{122} One also agreed on a “joint intervention against third part”.\textsuperscript{123}

The road to this agreement was, however, a period of great incertitude for the Swedish film industry,\textsuperscript{124} which increased when the US never formally ratified the agreement because of harder quota regulations in Germany,\textsuperscript{125} and the arrangement only lasted 18 months. Not surprisingly, patent disputes opened up everywhere as companies were filing for their rights. In Sweden

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{119} Gomery (2004): 106. The same realignment towards trusts and monopolies was also prominent in Sweden, see Kylhammar (1994): 160.
\bibitem{121} Wolf (1999): 40.
\bibitem{124} “Tyskland-USA i häftig strid om tonfilmen”, \textit{Dagens Nyheter}, 22 September 1929, 1, 30.
\bibitem{125} Thompson (1985): 157.
\end{thebibliography}
this meant that the dominant Danish company Nordisk Tonefilm (their Swedish subsidiary, Svenska AB Nordisk Tonefilm, was founded in November 1929), pushed for their rights, since during the existence of the cartel their Petersen and Poulsen patents had been under German control. When the cartel ended, Nordisk started to file court proceedings in Denmark with the intent that any film not produced with their system needed to pay a royalty to them if screened with another system. The matter was settled to Nordisk’s advantage in October 1933, and immediately the company started to demand the same rights in Sweden. This particular dispute was not settled until 1934 when US companies signed an agreement with Nordisk for Sweden.

This illustrates that the patent issue was initially the largest problem for the Swedish film industry as it put obstacles on interchangeability. At the outset, a film recorded with one company’s apparatus was not allowed to be screened with another company’s projector. This forced Swedish companies to look for other ways. In 1930 Europa Film started to use a Finnish construction called Filmophon for their first film *Kärlek och landstorm* (Love and the Home Guard, John Lindlöf, 1931), while Irefilm is said to have used a Swedish sound-on-film system in 1931. However, these and other companies were too small to have any real influence on the decisions made by the Swedish film industry at large. The most important decision maker, and the one that everyone more or less waited for, was Svensk Filmindustri. Their decision in 1929 to finally settle for the German system of Tobis-Klangfilm, therefore, was principally important.

What might afterwards look like an industry that was reluctant to adapt to the new technology was, in reality, Svensk Filmindustri’s careful approach towards sound film as the company did not want to start their own sound production until it had properly evaluated the situation. In its role as distributor Svensk Filmindustri can be seen as an example of Rick Altman’s model of the cinematic event. The response from the audience was tested with foreign films before a decision was made to start sound production of its

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126 The National Archive PRV D1AA:520. Nordisk had since its reorganisation in 1928 established itself as a major sound film company controlling many important patents, among them Petersen/Poulsen’s that the company received full control over in February 1930, see Idestam-Almquist (1954): 16-17. Ebbe Nergaard, *Historien om dansk film* (København: Gyldendals forlagstrykkeri, 1960): 98.
own. Despite the positive feedback the company was reluctant to install too many reproduction apparatuses in their cinemas as the future was too uncertain.133

By the time all patent disputes had settled the Swedish film industry, with Svensk Filmindustri at the front, together with the radio industry, pushed for a Swedish sound system to get away from the dependence on foreign companies.134 The situation had prior to this been similar to the one in France where none of the national “sound film recording systems ... [had] proved commercially viable”.135 Although the connection in Sweden between radio corporations and sound film production in general was not as strong as in the US, it was nevertheless the radio company AGA-Baltic that finally in 1930 presented, and soon afterwards came to develop, a Swedish sound system, even if the initiative for continued research came from Svensk Filmindustri and not from the radio corporation.136 The decision was made to try to develop a film-on-sound system, and by the cinema congress of 27 May 1930, a first presentation could be made for the film industry at the Sture cinema in Stockholm. The CEO of Svensk Filmindustri, Olof Andersson, who witnessed the screening, realised that here was an escape from the German influence, and directly inquired if Svensk Filmindustri and AGA-Baltic could join forces,137 and from then on research for a complete Swedish system became more goal oriented.

What can be distinguished from AGA-Baltic’s development is that one first tried out if it was possible to construct a sound system, which is why the screening in 1930 is to be regarded more as an experiment. Given this, the situation is in a sense similar to the development in the US, the difference being that whereas the American radio corporations actively sought new markets, AGA-Baltic was more careful despite the increasing central place radio had taken in many Swedish homes, and did not want to risk its main production, which was radio. It was not until the film industry itself gave directives that testing became more than just a playground for research. If the links between the radio industry and the film industry at first was not as strong in Sweden as elsewhere, it still seems as if the radio industry were more insightful about the technology regarding it as a natural develop-

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ment.\textsuperscript{138} That is not to say that radio did not constitute a catalyst for the new sound film, as noted above, since the audience, just as Donald Crafton has shown in the case of the US, had heard the actors’ voices on the radio during the 1920s, prior to seeing and hearing them in the cinema.\textsuperscript{139} At least radio in Sweden facilitated the implementation of sound film in the repertoire since audiences all through the 1920s had grown accustomed to mechanically reproduced sounds and music.

At any rate, when the initiative finally came to continue developing the system, everything went very fast, and by the end of 1930, forty-seven cinemas in Sweden had settled for AGA-Baltic’s system.\textsuperscript{140} It would take another half year before any recording equipment was ready, and in the meantime Svensk Filmindustri continued to use Tobis-Klangfilm’s apparatuses.\textsuperscript{141} Svensk Filmindustri’s decision to use AGA-Baltic also meant that the company came into conflict with Nordisk, a situation that was not solved until the mid-1930s when an agreement was signed between Svensk Filmindustri, AGA-Baltic and Nordisk for the right to exploit the latter’s patents.\textsuperscript{142}

This patent dispute together with that there did not exist any Swedish sound system was, as mentioned earlier, what makes the situation during the conversion years in Sweden special, especially the outcome of, and the rumours around, the patent struggles between the German and American companies which strongly affected the debate and decision making during the period. To complicate matters even more, Svensk Filmindustri, the industry leader, first installed apparatuses from the American company Western Electric before settling on the German Tobis-Klangfilm.\textsuperscript{143} However, thanks to the fact that the Swedish film industry had found some kind of equilibrium during the late 1920s, it functioned overall well under fast changing circumstances,\textsuperscript{144} although decisions regarding which technique to choose had not always to do with what technology suited Swedish circumstances best. Early on one favoured German technique without, it seems, any profound investigation into the technology as such.\textsuperscript{145} Two other aspects were of more impor-

\textsuperscript{139} Crafton (1997): 520.
\textsuperscript{143} “Krigsförklaringen”, Biografladet, Vol. 10, No. 4 (April 1929): 121.
\textsuperscript{144} Björkin (1998): 139.
\textsuperscript{145} “Främmande filmmän i Stockholm”, Biografladet, Vol. 11, No. 3 (March 1930): 91.
tance. First, Sweden stood closer to Germany, both historically and in terms of business exchange. Second, the stance was that anything European should be supported. Here the arguments became all too murky, in pointing to the negative side of Americanisation. It is as if it was felt that if sound film was to become a reality it should be implemented in a very controlled manner since “all that jazz” emanating from across the Atlantic showed on the contrary.

That the Swedish official stance favoured European technology is evident, as the failed establishment of the American company Pacent Reproducer Corporation illustrates. On 28 August 1929 the company had founded its Swedish subsidiary AB Pacent Ljudfilmsapparater, in an effort to enter the Scandinavian market. Backed in the US by Warner Bros., this sound-on-disc system (later also developed into a sound-on-film system) offered an interchangeable alternative to existing technology at considerably lower cost, at a time when the Swedish market was dominated by the German Tobis-Klangfilm and the American Western Electric. The Swedish CEO Eilif Skaar argued at a meeting with the cinema owners in Stockholm that Pacent was open for interchangeability:

The representative from Klangfilm warned the cinema owners of patent infringement […] I couldn’t agree more […], but would like to stress that Pacent’s patents do not infringe on any other patents. Therefore it is unthinkable that any proceedings will take place for the cinema owner who has installed Pacent machines. Probably anyone who starts such a proceeding would be worse off.146

Very little is known about Pacent’s activities on the Swedish market. To be honest, they left very few traces except for annual stockholder minutes and a multitude of different advertisements in the trade press. It is clear that in the midst of the confusion concerning patents, Pacent tried to enter the market by not demanding any license fees for their machines, as well as arguing that any cinema owner who installed Pacent machines did not run the risk of patent infringement. At first everything went according to plan, and by the 1930-1931 season, several cinemas adapted for sound in Sweden used Pacent technology (the first being Roxy in Helsingborg, Fig. 15).147

147 “Pacent”, Biografägaren, Vol. 4, No. 16 (26 October 1929): 34.
According to an unofficial list from the Film Exchange Association, Sweden had at the start of the season 163 cinemas equipped for sound: Nordisk Tonefilm 50, Aga-Baltic 41, Tobis-Klangfilm 27, Pacent 23 and Western Electric 22. As can be seen from this list the before mentioned AGA-Baltic had started manufacturing reproduction apparatuses. This also meant the demise of Pacent’s actions on the market. For certain their products were priceworthy, as the price for a Pacent machine was between 7,500 and 16,500 SEK – that was all, no rental or maintenance fees. However, not being backed by any economic forces to reckon with in Sweden, the company soon got into financial problems, and in April 1932, due to a fall in the Swedish currency, the company’s debt in dollars had increased severely, forcing them after only three years into receivership.

It is as if the words and excuse put forward by CEO Eilif Skaar in 1929 when the apparatuses could not be exhibited forebode this future soon to come:


150 The National Archive PRV E3A:2546, No. 4521.
First of all, I beg to apologise that I can’t show you our machine here in the winter session. Unfortunately it is advertised in the programme that a screening with our system will take place [...] I had also counted on [the ship] “Olympic” arriving on time at Southampton, so that the machine would reach us by Saturday’s ship from London. Unfortunately “Olympic” encountered fog and didn’t make it to Southampton until midday Saturday, which meant that we weren’t able to make it to Tilbury in time in order to ship it with “Britannia” bound for Gothenburg that Saturday. However, the machine arrives in Gothenburg tomorrow, and will be installed in Stockholm the following week. So if anyone present is interested in hearing it then, you are all very welcome.151

Svensk Filmindustri: a backdrop

Svensk Filmindustri has almost always been regarded as *the* “Film Industry” in Sweden, if not literally at least in the way it was regarded. As such, its economic results were even commented on in business periodicals during the conversion to sound. The picture that emerges from these commentaries during the period at hand gives a slightly different view than the one that emerges from more film-oriented writings of the period. Aside from its first annual report in 1920, the company thereafter is marginalised in press items. This is understandable as the company’s influence on the Swedish economy was small. But what is more important than this marginalisation in the economic periodicals (that Svensk Filmindustri even gets mentioned is thanks to the Swedish financier Ivar Krueger & Toll’s interest in the company),152 are the comments that nevertheless are articulated in the press items on its annual reports. For what in the film periodicals looks like a well-presented report gets heavily criticised for its non-transparency, and that nothing, according to the commentators, can be said about the real standard of the company’s economy, stressing that “since the company’s shares only rarely are traded the public has nothing significant of interest in its financial position”.153

But with this said, the company was still the largest within the Swedish film industry, which made its decisions noteworthy precisely as industry

152 “Svensk Filmindustri”, *Affärsvärlden*, Vol. 32, No. 43 (27 October 1932): 456, 478; “Svensk Filmindustri”, *Affärsvärlden*, Vol. 34, No. 7 (15 February 1934): 186. The only time Svensk Filmindustri receives any longer comment is after Krueger’s suicide in Paris on 12 March 1932, as one speculates about the company’s fate, along with all other companies that were under Krueger’s control.
decisions. In this the situation in Sweden points towards similarities with the situation in the US where, contrary to the French film industry’s fragmented nature, the studios were institutionally integrated,154 which resulted in coordinated efforts to adapt to a new technology such as sound.

Often it is this company’s voice that was heard in the debate, as it was to Svensk Filmindustri that journalists and others turned to receive comments on the emerging sound film. Indeed, the company’s position on the Swedish market was such that representatives from the company felt obliged to comment on anything that happened in this field.155 The conversion to sound film also meant in many ways a watershed for the company. Apart from sound radically changing film as a medium, for Svensk Filmindustri it also meant that their CEO Charles Magnusson from 1919 stepped down in favour of Olof Andersson in 1928.156 In addition, throughout the 1920s the economic result had worsened year by year, resulting in that, as mentioned before, by 1929 production had almost reached a standstill. Svensk Filmindustri was not the only company that ran into financial problems, but it can be seen as a general tendency in the Swedish film industry during the second half of the 1920s. This resulted in an all-time low output of nine films being produced in the country in 1929, and Olof Anderson later confessed that if sound film had not arrived, Svensk Filmindustri would probably have ceased production and instead only focused on distribution.157 The conversion to sound, however, stimulated the Swedish industry, and slowly after the conversion it started to recover.

That the conversion had been fast, even too fast for a company as important as Svensk Filmindustri, was illustrated during a Nordic meeting with the cinema owners’ union, at which the company’s CEO, Olof Andersson, confessed that the sound film came far too fast and that the company had not been prepared for it.158 However, Svensk Filmindustri adjusted swiftly, which gives an impression of a well functioning organisation. When the company realised that sound was a reality, a number of decisions were immediately taken and set into action. First, one of their main cinemas was equipped with Western Electric, while at the same time other systems were

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157 ”Finsmakaren får god film på en biograf”, Dagens Nyheter, 27 February 1931, 1, 9; ”Mera svensk film från utlandet?”, Social-Demokraten, 27 February 1931, 7; Bengt Idestam-Almquist, ”Svensk film allvarligt hotad”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 27 February 1931, 1, 26.
158 Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union, Discussion at Continental, second day, (fall 1930): 27-33.
tried out. The agreement for installing Western Electric machinery was worked out during the spring of 1929, and was exclusive in order to block other exhibitors from screening sound film until they, too, had adapted their cinemas for this purpose. For example, the Olympia cinema in Stockholm was forced to wait one full month after Svensk Filmindustri had had their first premiere of a sound film. Secondly, Olof Andersson went to Berlin to reach an agreement with Tobis-Klangfilm to equip the company’s cinemas and to use this equipment also for production. The final agreement also stipulated the right for Svensk Filmindustri to keep using the previously installed Western Electric equipment. By 1930 approximately 60 apparatuses for cinemas had been ordered and were being installed (although it would take until late 1930 before the installations were made for production), while at the same time taking the opportunity to dispose of smaller and unwanted cinemas. Half a year later Svensk Filmindustri joined forces with AGA-Baltic to develop a Swedish sound system as described above, and finally, a new three-year agreement with STIM (Swedish Performing Rights Society) was worked out to secure the use of music, although the settlement meant a higher cost for production.

**Sound film production at Svensk Filmindustri**

In the late spring of 1929 Svensk Filmindustri made the decision to start sound film production, and plans were made to equip the facilities at Råsunda, the Swedish “Cine-citta” of the time. In September the same year, the short subject *De svenske* (The Swedish, 1929) with song numbers was screened with good reviews, and plans for a feature were taken. The first attempt for a feature with recorded music and some sound effects came to be *Konstgjorda Svensson*, although these plans were disbanded after setting music to the opening scene (this sound track still exists). Together with this screening, however, there was also a spoken prologue, which in a lighter way commented on sound film and its deficiencies (see page 121).

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After this Svensk Filmindustri produced what has become regarded as the Swedish *The Jazz Singer. Säg det i toner*, which premiered on 26 December 1929 at the Palladium cinema, used equipment from Western Electric during production. The film had no spoken dialogue but had sound effects, song numbers and formative music (although the sound track is lost). One thing that characterised the production was the conflict with the Musicians’ Union which forced Svensk Filmindustri to record the music in Berlin under the leadership of Rudolf Sahlberg from the Röda Kvarn cinema. This was an ongoing conflict present during the second half of 1929 as the Musicians’ Union forbade their members to participate in sound film production or in helping to pick appropriate recordings for orchestra machines.

Following *Säg det i toner* everything developed very fast, and for the following seasons of 1929-1930 and 1930-1931 Svensk Filmindustri steadily phased out silent features, and soon after the short subject *Prov utan värde* (Test without Value, Hans Conradi, 1930) was produced with dialogue.

Despite the company’s consistent work towards a feature sound film the first one in Sweden was not a film from Svensk Filmindustri. *När rosorna slå ut* (When the Roses Bloom, Edvin Adolphson, 1930), which premiered on 30 July 1930, had been produced by Paramount in Joinville outside Paris. The reviews about this film concentrated almost exclusively on the dialogue. Some reviewers made a point of the fact that the Swedish dialogue was made by a foreign production company, which made it seem that the company was stealing the Swedish language, although that was something one could be proud of. This was mixed once more by comments on whether talkies con-

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tributed to the film experience or only turned the medium into a hybrid between film and theatre. Often it is this hybrid of film and theatre that is put forward instead of the hybrid between film and gramophone or radio, which would seem an equally plausible fusion. It seems that, for example, the technology of radio that in the US was seen as an evident part of sound film was not the case in Sweden. The relation between these two technologies and how they were viewed might explain Svensk Filmindustri’s freer stance on sound film music. Hollywood with its strong connection to radio focused on the intelligibility of dialogue doing without music, and to begin with saw sound film as a genre in itself. Svensk Filmindustri, on the other hand, with its looser connection to radio, did not see sound film as generic, instead regarding it as a continuation of silent film, in which music was a major part.

A couple of months later För hennes skull (1930) became the first talkie that in its entirety was produced in Sweden, although the recording equipment came from Tobis-Klangfilm. It would take until 1932 and the production of Landskamp (International Match, Gunnar Skoglund, 1932) before a film was produced totally with Swedish equipment.

Yet, if the uncertainty of exactly what to do existed within Svensk Filmindustri, this is difficult to discern from its productions, as the company very quickly adapted to the new technology and the situation at large, thereby seemingly naturally integrating sounds and music into the diegesis of the films. For example, there exists in the previously mentioned Konstgjorda Svensson a record to be played to the first sequence as the military marches by. The song on the record is a Swedish version of Say, Brothers, Will You Meet Us, which in Sweden became a minor success under the name Halta Lottas krog. Despite the record’s existence, the company refrained from using it at an actual screening, although it is obvious that the film was planned initially to include some melodic numbers. An obvious sign of this is that all three of the music sequences are concentrated into a 10-minute period of the film. First, Furir Göransson (Weyler Hildebrand) performs a solo number on the banjo followed by Fridolf Ambrosius Svensson’s (Fridolf Rhudin) exercise on the same instrument. The headline of the sheet of music during his exercise is “Elfsborgsvisan” (Figs. 16-17), a tune.

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178 This sound disk and the two song numbers during the serenade scene that were meant to be performed mechanically exist at The National Library, Audiovisual Media, Stockholm.
that is also included in the film’s song list. The last performance is the above-mentioned banjo number during the serenade scene.

A similar emphasis on the record can be seen in the silent film Den starkaste. At the beginning of act 3 there is as mentioned before a zoom-in on a gramophone playing in a café, followed by a sequence where the spinning record is seen to merge with shots of the various characters in the café (see Figs. 6-10 pages 67-68). From these empirical pointers it can be deduced that without a doubt this film, too, was planned for sound, and that it was not only a speculative rumour during production. In fact, the film contains more sonorous scenes. One is the fog scene with “instruments” making noise in leading some lost characters in the right direction, as well as an emphasised accordion during the Midsummer’s Eve sequence (Fig. 18).

For yet another film, Hjärtats triumf (Triumph of the Heart, Gustaf Molander, 1929), plans first was made to make parts of it with sound, although the sound recording was to take place outside Sweden due to problems once more with the Musicians’ Union.

Svensk Filmindustri worked by trial and error starting with the prologues. In September 1929 the short subject film, De svenske (mentioned earlier),

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had an unannounced premiere in two cinemas, Skandia and Rio. The short film was a song number performed by the male chorus group “De Svenske” under the supervision of Emil Carelius. Also, the sound prologue that was screened for the premiere of *Konstgjorda Svensson* used dialogue, which one reviewer described as a merry prologue that “got the audience in the right mood”, in that it addressed in a comic way several topics of the time. It starts as a silent film with natural images, but before too long we are taken into the studio for an emotional scene. Although there is no sound track to begin with, you can suddenly clearly distinguish the “cracks” of the sound, although the Swedish actor Rhudin continues to act as if in a silent film. But suddenly he turns towards the camera and starts to comment audibly on sound film. A small sketch is then played out in which the sound, for example, disappears for a while. Rhudin comments that “this might happen with a talking picture but never with a silent one”, and therefore *Konstgjorda Svensson* will be screened silent! With these final words he addresses and gestures to the conductor, outside the image, telling him to continue with the screening.

In its first real sound picture, *Säg det i toner*, Svensk Filmindustri used a sound-to-disc system called Lignose-System Breusing. Unfortunately the sound track is lost, but by looking at the film one can draw several conclusions. The film contains many sound effects in the form of city sounds, for example barking dogs, closing car doors, and so forth. Coupled with this, the film is drenched in diegetic music, and so often that the sequence becomes an illustration of the title of a song. For example during the performance of the song “Dog and Cat”, a dog happens to chase a cat, hence giving a title to the hitherto unnamed tune (Figs. 19-20). Besides such obvious examples the title melody “Say it with music” is played in various forms throughout the film. Indeed, the sheet music is shown as tie-ins and is even presented in a display window, making it obvious for anyone in the audience that they could buy the record or sheet music the following day (Figs. 21-22).

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183 “*Konstgjorda Svensson* i ny upplaga”, *Aftonbladet*, 15 October 1929, 11.
184 The disks with the recorded songs exist. It was also with Lignose that AGA signed a deal that allowed the latter company to test their speakers, “AGA och ljudfilmen”, *Biografladet*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (January, 1930): 2.
This was working along an established standard where the melodies performed in the film could be bought, as this advertisement from *Sunnyside Up* (David Butler, 1929) shows (Fig. 23).\footnote{Program Leaflet from Astoria and Rialto for *Sunnyside Up* (Stockholm: 1930).}
One key aspect of the fast and smooth conversion to sound in Sweden was partly thanks to film music but also due to the technologies of radio and gramophone which in a way paved the way. In Sweden, as in the rest of the industrialised world, everyday life was increasingly filled with reproduced dialogue, sounds, and music. During the 1920s the technique for reproduction improved significantly, making people more and more accustomed to these mechanical representations of real life sounds. One needs also to be reminded of how new these technologies were when the first sound films appeared:

It should be remembered that electrically recorded phonograph records had only been in general use for a year [in 1926], and that most of these were being played at home on nonelectric phonographs. Few of the Vitaphone first-nighters had even heard an electrically recorded and reproduced phonograph record, and none had ever experienced theatre-quality sound. What impressed them were not just the synchronization (which would always be a problem [with sound-on-disc

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With the increased power of the electrical industry, the step was not far to implementing all these diverging reproduction techniques in the commodity of sound film. Sound film was thereby, as Crafton puts it, aligned into the “myth of scientific progress and technological determinism” into an easily consumable commodity. Music, and particularly the theme songs, was crucial to diversify this commodity.

In *Svarte Rudolf* (Black Rudolf, Gustaf Edgren, 1928) as well, there is a piano scene with a close-up of a sheet displaying the headline of the tune (in this case the Swedish song “Svarte Rudolf”). At the end of the film this close-up returns followed by a text sign that even highlights the lyrics to the tune. This is also a clear marker for the musicians in the cinema of what to play, although they could, of course, totally ignore it (Figs. 24-25). But showing the sheet music as in *Ådalens poesi* (The Poetry of Ådalen, Theodor Berthels, 1928), or in numerous other films, must anyway have been a strong marker for them to play the tunes (Fig. 26). It was Svensk Filmindustri that owned the cinema, hence functioning simultaneously as producer, distributor and exhibitor, making the company able to control to a higher degree the musical accompaniment. Even more elaborate is *Rågens rike* (The Realm of the Rye, Ivar Johansson, 1929), as the text to a song that Eric Laurent (one of the main characters) is singing lays superimposed over the image so that the words are clearly visible for everyone wishing to sing-along (Fig. 27).

![Figure 24: Svarte Rudolf (1928)](image1)

![Figure 25: “She smiles in the big one’s arms/everything that he took and gave”](image2)

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188 Zielinski (1999): 156.
In Säg det i toner, this commercially lucrative connection to the outside world is highlighted during a two-minute sequence. It starts with a close-up of a sheet folder (in fact the same layout as the film poster), then cuts to a display window with scores and records, followed by a cut to a gramophone with a spinning “Say it with music” record, and then to a violin and piano “playing” the tune at a restaurant (there is no soundtrack as previously mentioned but this is a plausible conclusion one can deduct from the sequence). As the story unfolds, we see a kitchen assistant enjoying music from an open window, while a man shuts his as he is tormented by the music. There is also a variety show with the Swedish cabaret artist Karl Gerhard, followed by Lisa, one of the main characters (Elisabeth Frisk), who plays the piano and reflects back on times that used to be, the stepmother (Jenny Hasselquist) and her lover (Edvin Adolphson), listening to Lisa whereupon the lover says “Wherever you go this tune is played”. The stepmother answers that “my husband has invited the unknown author”. To underline the theme song further its lyrics were presented in the production company’s own periodical Filmnyheter on the day of the film’s premiere.¹⁹⁰ This seems to have been Svensk Filmindustri’s general way of working. In the programme note for the premiere on 3 March 1930 of Atlantic (E. A. Dupont, 1929), distributed by the company, this advertisement is presented on the very first page emphasising Jules Sylvain’s transposition of the theme song onto gramophone (Fig. 28).¹⁹¹

As Såg det i toner was the first real sound film, one might think that the reviews after the premiere on 26 December 1929 at Palladium would have been loaded with comments about the sound. But instead it was only commented upon generally – that the sound was “good”, and that the synchronisation was “adequate” and so forth. This was, surprisingly, more or less everything, if it was commented on at all, before the reviews went on evaluating the film according to traditional criteria.  

If the soundtrack was commented on, it was more in relation to the music and the melodies than the sound as such, showing once more the importance of the theme song for the integration of sound into the diegesis. One exception to this was Bengt Idestam-Almquist’s review where he argued that the sound was much clearer and

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brighter compared to American sound films. The conclusions one can draw from these comments are that the soundtrack had already started to be perceived by these writers as integrated and that the sound track was not felt as external. Instead it worked to strengthen the internal logic of perception. Even in publicity articles during the production of the film, the novelty of the film’s sound track was given the same space as all other selling points.

It is important to stress that there is probably no instance of non-diegetic music in Säg det i toner. It is, of course, impossible to be certain of this since the soundtrack is lost, but it would be very surprising should this be the case as Svensk Filmindustri still had to learn and get accustomed to the technique. Yet the technology was used in highly experimental ways, in that one overall clearly worked very hard at getting the film to include music throughout. This can be seen in other early sound films. At times one even concocted a scene only to be able to use music, and since this was more acceptable in lighter comical films, such scenes became the focus of most early sound production. For example, in För hennes skull a situation is created for an audition to take place at a variety theatre, which then makes room for a special musical comedy number. This film also points to the “liveness” one attempted to create, or at least that the “old medium” of the silent film still lived on in the new, as one underlined that this is still live music although it was reproduced mechanically. For example, at the start of a scene in the film, a reference is made to the radio, as Sven Jerring (a famous Swedish radio reporter) is seen, and heard, reporting from the variety – before there is a cut to the orchestra, and then to the actual variety. The variety’s different parts take a full nine minutes of film time (Fig. 29).

Figure 29: Sven Jerring in För hennes skull (1930)

Perhaps, then, it is better to talk about the feeling of liveness that radio tried to achieve through its programming and the fact that many performances on radio were done live, although they all were mediated through a mechanical device. Despite this link between radio and the film medium it is not of the same kind as in the US, which we noted previously. There the association between the two media was a technical one, in that sound film was an extension of radio technology. In Sweden the relation was based on aesthetics and “all that jazz” in the form of Swedish schlagers, leading back to the discussion about high-/lowbrow culture,196 and the rhetorical figure of “Wagner” put forward by the Musicians’ Union, with its problematic view on modern cultural expressions from America.197

In the use of music in this film and in Säg det i toner (although the actual soundtrack is lost), one can clearly distinguish two Swedish film music traditions: that of the variety show with its popular melodies, and as far as particular film music goes, that of the music drama. This is, as Ann-Kristin Wallengren has shown, a way of accompanying silent film during the 1920s in Sweden.198 The Swedish film music drama with its strong reliance on lighter nineteenth-century pieces became during the 1920s increasingly mixed with popular melodies that could afterwards be sold as sheet music or as a gramophone recording. This tradition of relying on schlagers continued in Svensk Filminjustri’s sound productions and is already visible in the early films. It is played out to its fullest in the short called Prov utan värde. In the first scene Karl Gerhard’s ensemble is dressing up, but soon Gerhard himself is superimposed in one corner of the frame playing a tune while the dialogue continues, which permits for a very advanced use of sound technique, and makes this short exceptional compared to many other test films of the time, as it integrates the music alongside the dialogue and sound effects very well.

This becomes even clearer in another of Svensk Filminjustri’s productions, Fridas visor (Frida’s Songs, Gustaf Molander, 1930). Here one can discern the beginnings of non-diegetic music within sound film. In a scene when the character unhappily in love, Åke Brunander (Bengt Djurberg), and Frida Blomgren (Elisabeth Frisk) look at an Italian label for oranges, there is an instance of non-diegetic music. The short theme that is played is not motivated by any visual source. Instead it materialises and is interpreted as if the characters are thinking of Italy when seeing the label. This is an elaborate use of music in that it comments on the emotions of the characters, and it gives the feeling that the formative music has transformed into non-diegetic music. Significantly, we never see any source for the music and, therefore, need to accept it as their thoughts. In other words, already at this early point one can discern how the formative music starts to transform into non-diegetic music. It is also clear that the company has given this some

thought, as the CEO, Olof Andersson, of Svensk Filmindustri in a Cinema Owners’ minute stresses that these “[sound] films should not be produced as 100% talkies”.199

Overall, the music in this film comments quite strongly on the action, as for example when Brunander plays “Bleka dödens minut” (“Pale Death’s Minute”) while thinking of his own grave where his friend and the desires of his dreams, Frida Blomgren, sits and remembers. During the rest of the film the music functions traditionally, that is, a sound source needs to be present to explain the presence of music, or the scene needs to take place in such an environment that might motivate music. But even here one uses music freely. For example, in the restaurant scene there is music heard throughout which, of course, is motivated by that environment. However, usually scenes of this kind start off by surveying or focusing on the musicians, whereas in this film the establishing shot comes at the very end of the scene – after more than ten minutes! Also, at one moment a music bridge is used with the help of the formative music. In the scene when Hasse Brickman (Håkan Westergren), the son of the family, sees the pile of money the music is continued into the next ensuing train scene. The camera moves towards the notes, and is followed by a cut to a train and a compartment with Brickman and his love Miss Daisy (Lill Lani) while one realises that the music in the previous scene is actually commenting on this later scene. The use of such bridges is even more prominent in Brokiga blad (Colourful Pages, Edvin Adolphson and Valdemar Dahlquist, 1931). Being a film that plays with the medium (it is mentioned several times within the film that it is a sound film variety show), it allows for even greater freedom. For instance, the music bridges are used strikingly often to motivate music from one scene to the other. Otherwise Brokiga blad illustrates how freely the music was used, and during a twelve minute sequence at the beach, music flows constantly between the different parts. At the centre of the sequence are different songs numbers that are interrupted with short sequences of dialogue that are sometimes connected with music.

So how come this extensive use of music? One reason was the integration of the sound crew as a vital part of a film’s production. Here Sweden reveals strong similarities with Hollywood compared to, once again, France with its more fragmented integration of sound crews.200 A second reason (besides commercial considerations) was Svensk Filmindustri’s policy to employ the former silent film music conductors Eric Bengtsson and John Kåhrman, and to give them great freedom.201 Both worked on Kronans kavaljerer (Cavaliers of the Crown, Gustaf Edgren, 1930), a film with many musical numbers

199 Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union, Minutes from Nordic Cinema Owners’ Meeting (1930): 27.
201 Svensk Filmindustri valued their conductors highly and still employed them at certain cinemas as late as during the autumn of 1930, see Tidskrift för svensk skolfilm och bildnings-film, Vol. 7, No. 11 (15 November 1930): 1936-1937.
which the story evolved around. The main focus of the film is a variety show that lasts over twenty minutes where the audience is invited to participate. In the programme note one finds the lyrics to the songs that are performed in the film (Fig. 30). 202

![Image of song lyrics](image.png)

Figure 30: One-step from *Kronans kavaljerer* (1930)

The film does not diverge from similar American films with its intensive use of music, but one may surmise that the music department at Svensk Filmindustri had greater freedom to make decisions, or in any case, was a part of the production for a prolonged time. This small difference might be expressed in Bengt Idestam-Almquist’s review of *The Love Parade* (Ernest Lubitsch, 1929). He sees the film as the first successful sound film where all parts of the film exhibition function together but adds that “it was pleasant that the accompanying music was present when necessary.” 203 Apparently this reviewer had previously experienced that film productions from Hollywood, from a Swedish perspective lacked appropriate sound film music ac-

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202 Program Leaflet from Skandia for *Kronans kavaljerer* (Stockholm, 1930).
companion, illustrating that the split in sound use between Hollywood and Sweden had started to diminish.

At least one can establish that the conductors were valued highly (or at the very least the music). This can be seen in the titles for the silent film, *Rågens rike*, which stipulates that Rudolf Sahlberg had arranged the music (Fig. 31).

After all, this information may have been correct for the initial run at the prestigious Röda Kvarn cinema, but being a silent film, it must have seemed erroneous at other cinemas – unless this information was cut. Music was seen as a self-evident part of the medium, as is illustrated by the signature “Berthold” who wrote in 1930, that the “naturalistic or stylized sound’s inclusion in the [medium] does not make the musical accompaniment superfluous [as it] should still serve the film by following and enhancing the image and the rhythm of the narrative”.

Used to work in a medium where music was a self-evident part, it became natural for Svensk Filminindustri to include similar music techniques in the recorded medium of sound film. Illustrative examples are *Charlotte Löwensköld* and *Dantes mysterier* where the conductor Eric Bengtsson could meticulously synchronise with the image, hitting the points that Adorno and Eisler talk about, thus strengthening the diegetic effect. A twenty minute sequence in *Charlotte Löwensköld* shows how this was played out. During the sequence there is no dialogue and barely any sound effects. Instead it is filled with formative music that is meticulously synched to the image in the same manner as the *Sunrise* Movietone track referred to earlier (see page 62). The music strongly contributes to the creation of the narrative, filling in the gaps and fissures left behind by dialogue and sound effects. Bengt Idestam-Almquist also argues in his review of the film that this is how sound film should be done. From an overt intermedial perspective the participating media seem here to have merged into a whole for the benefit of the inter-

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nal logic of perception. This is also echoed in Jonathan Rosenbaum’s comment that “Sunrise is almost invariably referred to as a silent picture; yet the soundtrack that appears on many prints … has always seemed to me to be an essential part of its experience.” 207

Compared to Paramount’s Swedish films in Joinville the difference is striking. Working in an American style of using music in sound films, these films were, in comparison, void of music material, unless it was clearly diegetically motivated. In Sweden they were therefore experienced as stationary or being “non-Swedish”. The critics who argued that sound film was nothing more than “filmed theatre” had even more arguments to use.208 Although När rosorna slå ut was the first all-talkie film in the Swedish language, it was received with harsh criticism by the reviewers. Even the audience seems to have refrained from this film and the consecutive Paris films, after the first novelty had settled, did not attract such large crowds. Partly to blame was the theatricality of the mise-en-scène, as the actors seemed to be nailed to one setting, before moving on to the next. Others pointed that there was nothing Swedish with this film and other films from Paramount.209 For example, what was seen as one of the benefits with Säg det i toner was that it had “presented exactly such minor features of Stockholm life that each and everyone recognises, and that makes the movie so much more interesting”.210 The Paramount films were thought to lack all this, and together with the “non-Swedish” mannerism that Nataša Durovicová writes about, the reactions towards these films were harsh to say the least.211 Also in the US one recognised the problem, and that something lacked in the multi-linguals:

Yet again there are such films as Clair’s Sous les toits de Paris which has run very successfully in Berlin, Paris, London and New York in its original French version, thus proving that it is the treatment and theme which must be universal and that the language in which the film is recorded is of little consequence.212

Linked to the issue of treatment and theme that Paul Rotha talks about in this quote is the role that music in general played to create this universal feeling. Indeed, of the two surviving films (of 14 films produced for the Swedish market),213 both point in the same direction. Both of these, Vi två (We Two,
John W. Brunius, 1930) and Längtan till havet (Longing for the Sea, John W. Brunius and Alexander Korda, 1931) are heavily dialogue driven, with little or no music. Per-Olov Qvist has argued that the reason that the Paramount films failed publicly was due to their non-Swedish subject matter.\(^{214}\) I would add that it was also due to the lack of music. If there is music in these films, it is always diegetically motivated through a radio or a gramophone being turned on. It is as if the characters within the diegesis need to take certain actions for the music to materialise. Compared to Svensk Filmindustri’s productions, there is no “play with the music” in a “free” manner. Even if the music in the Paramount films may comment on a scene, it does so exclusively only if the characters first have taken some action in that direction, and thereby from their action also control the music by turning it on or off. This is never the case in Svensk Filmindustri’s productions where the music functions traditionally according to today’s principles – that is, the main character does not have “control” over the music until the story is reconciled. The music either comes and goes on its own, and is all-knowing compared to the characters, or alternatively the competing character (usually the “bad” character) controls it. In this sense the music in these Swedish productions functions exactly as today in that the characters seem to battle for control over the non-diegetic music.

The contrast could not be greater than when a comparably small production as, for example, Ulla min Ulla (Ulla, My Ulla, Julius Jaenzon, 1930) integrates the music meticulously. It is a film about the famous Swedish troubadour Carl Michael Bellman (1740-1795), and as such has several musical numbers that are all diegetically motivated. However, at some key moments in the film, when Bellman (Åke Claesson) is thinking about either staying with his friends or joining the court, a French horn is heard in the formative music. It occurs three times, when he otherwise plays a melody on a lute – in other words, the source of the French horn is not present in the image. During these occasions Bellman is uncertain of what to do, and while the character has a distant look in his eyes (as if he was thinking about his choices), the scenes are accompanied by the sound of the French horn. At the very end of the film, Bellman has just decided to stay with his friends, and the distant look in his eyes has gone. Instead of hearing the French horn during this last song he actually mentions it in the lyrics. He is singing about it, and at the conclusion of the film he has in a way gained control of the “non-diegetic music”. In other words this follows the same pattern as a modern film like Die Hard (John McTiernan, 1988) in that Bellman first does not

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\(^{214}\) Qvist (1995): 41. The reactions after the premiere emphasised that the film was not a domestic production, “Svenska filmer”, Biografbladet, Vol. 11, No. 6 (August 1930): 198.
“control” the French horn, which gives him feelings of uncertainty, while at the end he contains it in his own lyrics.215 Many comments during the conversion to sound also illustrate the division between a film like *Ulla min Ulla* and the first Paramount sound films that premiered in Sweden. What one reacted to most was not the sound as such, but the lack of music and pace. Sven Stolpe wrote in 1929 about Swedish films proper that what “was shown has been an intermediate form between the silent film and the talkie, … and this particular form cannot be dismissed as easily as the more consistent talkie”.216 However, even early, more traditionally dialogue driven films in Sweden, like *Markurells i Wadköping* (The Markurells of Wadköping, Victor Sjöström, 1931) have a different pace to the Paramount films showing that it perhaps was the production tempo and the assembly line principle that made these films look so stationary. *Markurells i Wadköping* contains little music, and when it is used it is only diegetically motivated, although the music at the very end could be interpreted as non-diegetic. But, as I have argued throughout, this is to be regarded more as formative music as it occurs just at the end, wrapping things up, and should be seen as “non-diegetic” in the same manner as music for the title sequence.

The question of non-diegetic music II: the case of Svensk Filminindustri

This free use of formative music took an unforeseen turn during the production of *Röda dagen* (1931). Concerning the soundtracks of the time, the film is constructed traditionally, but for one extra feature: it contains non-diegetic music. The first forty minutes of the film is traditional in its use of diegetic and formative music. For example, in the restaurant scene the musicians are seen in the image, establishing the source of the music before it is used “non-diegetically” in a traditional way of the early sound films. The same can be said about the title sequence where the film diegetically presents three theme songs. However, something happens during the phone-booth scene (Fig. 32).

215 Robynn J. Stilwell shows in “I Just Put a Drone under Him…: Collage and Subversion in the Score of Die Hard”, *Music & Letters*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (November 1997): 551-580 how the non-diegetic music in *Die Hard* for the major part is controlled by the protagonists until the very end when the hero redeems the music and hence also succeeds saving everyone from the terrorists.

In the beginning of the scene formative music drowns out all other sounds but suddenly transforms into non-diegetic use of music as the music glides under the dialogue. At first it seems that the formative music has been allowed not to stop as abruptly as usual, and that it soon will disappear under the dialogue before it is silenced. But the music is present throughout the sequence as it cuts back and forth between the two characters in the scene before it ends after four minutes. The presence of non-diegetic music happens once more later in the film during another dialogue scene, this time for a full five minutes.

This way of working with music and dialogue during 1931 demands, as mentioned before, a great deal of pre-planning, as re-recording at the time was not possible. Charles O’Brien notes in relation to *Le Chemin du paradis* (Wilhelm Thiele and Max de Vaucorbeil, 1930) that the film is music-defined from the very beginning, that is, the film is planned, “scripted, rehearsed, filmed, and edited as a function of its musical performances”. This is also the case in *Sous les toits de Paris* (René Clair, 1930) as a gramophone is seen playing while in reality it is formative music that is played out. The record even gets stuck giving the music a strong diegetic effect. René Clair himself has argued that he worked with three different scenes in this film:

I distinguish three kinds of scenes in my film […], a purely visual scene in which sound plays the role of orchestral accompaniment; another in which the images are made comprehensible by means of [natural] sound; and a third in which speech is used either to produce a special effect or else to explain the action.

Furthermore, this created from time to time a non-diegetic music space as, for example, in some scenes in *Le Million* where the formative music starts or ends under the dialogue (for example the scene where the thieves make up their mind to go to the Opéra Lyrique).

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In *Röda dagen* it is not a musical performance that is highlighted but a use of music that is there to strengthen the mood and atmosphere in the ongoing scene. This puts even greater demands on the production as the music, if it was played too loud, would drown out the dialogue. On the other hand, the result is a presentation where sound and music no longer are perceived as an addition. Instead, the auditor is absorbed, like in the French cinema, by the flow of the images and sounds, and loses his/her awareness of the auditorium space.

Sounds and music in Swedish cinema fill the same function as they did two years later in 1933 in Hollywood. The only plausible explanation as to why this happened so early in Sweden is, I would argue, twofold. Firstly, the central position of the musicians and their conductors throughout the production process which made music seem as an important tool to solve many aspects related to the narrative. Secondly, that the Swedish film industry was working in the same idiom as French cinema, which resulted in an atmosphere where music was felt as an obvious tool for creating the diegetic effect. It also seems that this way of working with music entered (perhaps unintentionally) in contemporary writing, since Bengt Idestam-Almquist remarked in 1932 that not only the era of the silent film was over but also the era of the all-talkie.

This way of working with music continues in subsequent films like *Trötte Teodor* (Tired Theodor, Gustaf Edgren 1931) and *Falska miljonären* (The False Millionaire, Paul Merzbach 1931). What is distinguishable here is the continued double use of formative music and non-diegetic music, and how it became more intricately done. In *Trötte Teodor*'s opening scene music is from the outset used in a more complex way as it communicates with the dialogue parts. The scene oscillates between parts with music and parts with dialogue, and it is the music that keeps up the tempo throughout the sequence. In *Falska miljonären* the non-diegetic music starts throughout under the dialogue before it is allowed to take over the scene altogether with formative music. In other words, the music is travelling between the diegetic, the non-diegetic and the formative music worlds, making it possible to let the music travel between scenes in a constant and unobtrusive way. This film is working along traits found in Hollywood two years later of carrying the music over the shots, and in relation to the dialogue parts, thereby avoiding the French way, which tended to make each shot stand alone with sound or music loosely connected to the overall theme of the film. The conclusion that can be made from these films is that Swedish cinema was at that time situated somewhere between Hollywood and France – with a German sound recording crew. Both *Trötte Teodor* and *Falska miljonären* were also produced in French versions – *Service de nuit* (Henri Fescourt) and *Mon coeur*

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et ses millions (André Berthomieu). It is not certain whether they still exist, but it would be of great interest to know how the music was integrated in these films produced with a French crew (except for the sound technicians) but in a Swedish production context.

So far the Swedish films analysed have been of revues, comedies and theatrical plays. These were genres that allowed greater freedom, making this way of working with music perhaps not so implausible. This, for example, has been argued in relation to René Clair’s early films, although the music in these films is in all instances diegetically motivated through the presence of the music’s source:

Because Clair’s early sound films were both musicals and comedies, he could permit himself an impinged audacity denied practitioners of the more serious forms, whose dramatic themes forced them to use more straightforward techniques. Their efforts at realism made it difficult for them to break with the conventional practices.222

In comparison the non-diegetic music was also there in a Swedish dramatic film like En natt (One Night, Gustaf Molander, 1931). In a long dialogue sequence, after approximately forty minutes, the non-diegetic music helps to underscore the mood of the scene emphasising the dramatic situation. The music also underscores the dialogue and thereby supports the construction of the narrative (Fig. 33).

![Figure 33: En natt (1931)](image)

As a final reflection, since Swedish cinema, like the French and other cinemas outside Hollywood, were forced to focus and rely more on their domestic markets, they simultaneously were “relieved from the need to limit dialogue, to minimize national cultural references, and to ensure that a comedy or drama would be intelligible to viewers unfamiliar with the films’ sources”.223 This freer stance of producing films in Sweden also carried with it a different approach to music, ending up with the orchestra literally being

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taken out into the woods, as seen in these images from the set of *Värmlänningarna* (The People of Värmland, 1932) (Figs. 34-35).\(^{224}\)

The conclusion can be drawn that although sound production during the conversion to sound became very industrialised and international, it became at the same time domesticated thanks to the special circumstances at each location where the production was based.\(^{225}\)

What this analysis also shows, and as Kevin J. Donnelly notes in relation to subsequent developments of the soundtrack, is that this use of music has


\(^{225}\) Zielinski (1999): 112.
made the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic rather irrelevant “as music now often occupies a distinct space of its own”. This is very similar to the circumstances during the conversion to sound in Sweden, as the formative music, as I have argued, also occupied a space of its own, hence making discussions of exactly when non-diegetic music entered the film medium somewhat irrelevant. This kind of music is there to shape audience reaction exactly as music in general for film as well (as for television) in “formalising the world and then using subliminal pointing up to ensure a particular view”. In other words, the formative music functions in one sense as non-diegetic music as it too, and in the same manner, underlines important narrative aspects and clarifies the structure of the film. With this said, during the first decades after the conversion to sound, the diegetic/non-diegetic split was crucial for the “construction of the mimetic world on screen”. This is underlined in *Söderkåkar* (The Southsiders, Weyler Hildebrand, 1932) when a brother has difficulty sleeping due to worries about his brother and keeps a monologue about it. The film contains only diegetic song numbers and formative music except for this scene where the non-diegetic music underlines his anxiety.

When looking at films from other production companies in Sweden at the time, it becomes clear that it was Svensk Filminindustri that single-handed worked this way throughout its productions. Europa Film’s first production, *Kärlek och landstorm*, contains, for example, no use of non-diegetic music whatsoever. Throughout the film there is diegetic and formative music in a traditional way, making for a big contrast between this film and other films outside the sphere of Svensk Filminindustri, meaning that the use of non-diegetic music was company-specific.

One might think that after this start Svensk Filminindustri would continue to use music extensively throughout the 1930s. However, as music elsewhere grew in importance after *King Kong* in 1933, music in the company’s productions started to diminish except for theme songs. Swedish films in general from the 1930s can, in musical terms, be seen as fairly standardised products, where the films, in the same manner as in Hollywood, did not use music as much. The music was concentrated in the titles and end credits, with the exception of theme songs which stopped the motion of the narrative. *På solsidan* (On the Sunny Side, Gustaf Molander, 1936) is a telling example in that all music needs to be diegetically motivated through a source before it can be present during dialogue sequences. In this film popular songs were also used in a manner of a chorus which made small comments to the unfolding narrative.

Instead of continuing to work towards a more naturalistic sound, which came with simultaneous sound and image recording, as French cinema did

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227 Ibid., 4, 93. Page 4 for the quote.
228 Ibid., 13.
well into the 1930s, Swedish cinema changed paths and followed a Hollywood-style of production, separating the sound recording from the image recording. Or to put it differently, Swedish cinema ended up on the American side of the “intelligibility/fidelity split”, and probably due to economic reasons, film music diminished in Sweden. The average production was just over thirty films per year, a production rate that, together with rather small budgets and with the majority of films being produced during the summer months, contributed to the music’s diminished role.

One exception to this latter trend in Swedish cinema can be found in comedies or “pilsnerfilmer”, as they are popularly called in Sweden, a word that carries with it negative connotations. These films with their light tone of goodness, justice and happy endings, used music to underscore the dialogue and the narrative in an ironic way resulting in an explicit music use where it was highlighted. After the stock market crash of 1929 – in Sweden symbolised by the suicide in 1932 of the financier Ivar Krueger – and in a society with high unemployment rates and large parts of the population living under great stress, happiness could only be reached if you lived a life of sobriety, common sense, following law and order, while humming a popular song made easily available by the emerging radio and gramophone industries – or, so the films said.

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230 Ibid., 121.
Chapter 3: Reception – The Cinemas

The last premiere of a silent film in Stockholm was *Flickan från Värmland* (The Girl from Värmland, Erik A. Petschler, 1931) which opened on 22 February 1931. Concerning the cinemas’ musicians they were not automatically fired overnight if a cinema had installed sound. Who knew if this was just a passing thing? For example, Otto Trobäck continued to conduct his orchestra at the China cinema during intervals and overtures throughout 1929, although the new deal between the Union and Paramount permitted that he and his orchestra could move to other cinemas if their films were to be screened in their silent version.2

In short the changeover to sound in Sweden follows the same pattern as elsewhere. First the most prominent cinemas were equipped, followed by medium sized cinemas, and finally the really small ones if they managed to cover the initial cost at all. The cinema structure in Stockholm consisted of large stylish premiere cinemas that to a certain degree were economically viable. Due to their size the films needed to be changed after a period of time, and moved first to more modest cinemas, and later to the very small local cinemas that were lowest on the ladder. Svensk Filmin industri owned three large cinemas in Stockholm (Röda Kvarn, Palladium, and Skandia), but had just prior to the coming of sound made the decision to build two more, China and Göta Lejon.3 The question was raised if Stockholm had a big enough population to sustain so many cinema seats, and if the company could manage the increased costs. To spread the costs Svensk Filmin industri also leased China to Paramount for ten years.4 One could believe that this would have led to a debate about the increased American influence over Swedish distribution but the sources show the contrary. In fact, the material studied is void of any critique against this decision and these circumstances.

When dealing with the Cinema Owners’ union one cannot avoid Mauritz Enderstedt, a person who had difficulties with, among other things, acknowledging the central position of Svensk Filminindustri.5 One organisational dilemma was if Svensk Filminindustri’s cinema proprietors should be allowed to become members. This could be problematic as they surely would act

2 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 31 (9 August 1931): §5.
5 Björkin (1998): 139.
collectively and support each other in numerous decisions. Creating a group of people inside the Union, which would have strong affiliations with a production company, was a sensitive question. One was reluctant to open this Pandora’s Box, and refused to let it come to an open vote at the annual meetings.\(^6\)

From time to time, the relation to the Musicians’ Union had also been strained. Especially on the issue of sending in music lists to STIM over performed music where the conductors refused to compile the lists. This had been an ongoing struggle since the mid-1920s where, for example, Carl Lovén had raised a private member’s bill in Parliament against STIM’s supposed high rates.\(^7\) I will not go into detail, but suffice it to say that a precedent was set on 30 May 1930 when STIM won a legal dispute in the Supreme Court. The court ruling emphasised that it was the owner of an establishment who also was responsible for sending in the lists. The proceedings had started in 1928 when STIM had lost in the first court, but won in the second. Throughout the Musicians’ Union had boycotted certain music periodically that was protected by STIM, and furthermore encouraged its members to civil disobedience. This strained the relation to the cinema owners which in the long run did not facilitate the negotiations when the sound film conversion eventually happened, although when the final verdict came, this was not really an issue any longer since sound film had made the musicians redundant.\(^8\)

The largest problem for the cinema owners during the first years of sound film was the ongoing international struggle over patent rights. In a sense the situation was impossible to survey, and any cinema owner risked being sued for patent infringement. How was one to choose a technology that might soon be obsolete? This question was thoroughly debated, although the problems around it were severely exaggerated in the periodicals. In reality the cinema owners took a neutral stance and looked to the future with confidence.\(^9\) Often the dispute was settled through conciliation but for the individual cinema owner it must nevertheless at times have felt as an impossible situation, with the looming threat of penalty fees.

Maybe the biggest concern was that everything around the patent struggles could result in a ban on American films which contributed to the majority of the income. Many cinema owners would not be able to continue for long if forced to screen only German or other European films. But contrary

\(^6\) Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 1 (17 May 1928); Minutes from General Meeting, No. 1 (18 May 1928).

\(^7\) “Den tredje Stim-motionen”, Auktorn, No. 3 (May 1929): 10-30.

\(^8\) “Svenska Musikerförbundets action mot STIM”, Auktorn, No. 3 (May 1929): 3-9; “Konungen fastslår tillsynsplikten”, Auktorn, No. 5-6 (June 1930): 23-30; Musikern, Vol. 22, No. 9 (1 May 1929): 114. When the fact finally had sunk in the Union Board instead encouraged the members to follow STIM’s demands, “Musikerförbundets medlemmar och programrapporterna till STIM”, Musikern, Vol. 23, No. 23 (1 December 1930): 321.

to the Musicians’ Union, as will be shown in the next chapter, the cinema owners approached the situation in a down-to-earth manner. Also in comparison to the musicians they had the financial possibilities to approach the issue in a different way. For example, plans were made to send out End-erstedt to Europe and the US to study how far the development of sound film had come and what implications this had for cinema owners elsewhere.10

In general the cinema owners approached the arrival of sound film cautiously considering several topics of concern, and even assembled the cinema owners from the other Nordic countries for a meeting over several days where sound film was meticulously debated with invited speakers such as Svensk Filmindustris CEO, Olof Andersson.11

Added to the question of which company’s apparatus you should install in your cinema was the issue of which system you should choose – sound-on-disc or sound-on-film? Throughout the first years of sound production the former was used although the latter came to be preferred more and more among production companies and cinema owners.12 During 1930 most production companies decided to gradually phase out sound-on-disc since sound-on-film was easier to edit and was above all cheaper.13 In Sweden the Cinema Owners’ association initiated a two-day meeting on 5 and 6 December 1929 where the larger manufacturers on the Swedish market were invited to present their machines. The first day the subject was sound film proper followed the second day by music machines mentioned in chapter 2.14 Despite this careful approach, Gilbert Seldes’ summary illustrates well the general uncertainty among cinema owners also in Sweden, due to the uncertainty of what could be the end result of the conversion. In 1929 he sees three probable paths that sound film might follow:


11 Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union, Minutes from Nordic Cinema Owners’ Meeting (1930): 26-52; Minutes from General Meeting, No. 1 (15-16 May 1931): §23-24; Minutes from Meeting with Working Board (22 April 1932). As noted before it was this company’s central and dominant position both as exhibitor and producer that made the situation in Sweden different from many other countries.

12 Swedish Cinema Owners’ Union, Minutes from Meeting with Working Board (14 April 1931): §13. The Cinema Owners’ periodical decided that from the start of 1932 they would no longer make any difference between the two systems, see “Fotoljudet”, Biografägaren, Vol. 6, No. 20 (19 December 1931): 8.


The talkie may develop as a separate medium, having hardly anything to do with the movie except that it uses the same mechanism for entirely different purposes;

It may create a sort of hybrid with itself and the movie as the component in variable proportions;

The movie may incorporate the talkie, or vice versa, creating an entirely new form – cinephonics, perhaps, in which the principle of the movie will not be abandoned.\textsuperscript{15}

In comparison there was not much difference in the Swedish context, although it first may seem as if there was an opportunity for more choices for the Swedish cinema owners. However, as the recapitulation below of the events during the second half of the 1928-1929 season shows, there really was not much choice at all.

In the following chapter I will show, through an analysis of the advertising campaigns during the late winter and spring of 1929, how sound film gradually phased out silent film. It will also show how the audience played an active part in this process, and how their reactions led back into the advertising campaigns, making them participants in the cinematic event, to use Altman’s concept.\textsuperscript{16} Important in this context is also Chion’s notion of the external logic of perception, as the advertisements for the sound films after a while came to emphasise the mechanical accompaniment, which facilitated the internal logic of perception to strengthen the diegetic effect.

\textbf{“See and Hear”: \textit{Wings} and sound as success}

As I argued, \textit{Wings} is regarded as the first sound film screened for a larger audience in Sweden. The film was not only a curiosity and an event for one evening, but was planned for a prolonged run in the repertoire and was the first film that used a well-crafted advertising campaign to sell sound. Although at first sound was not emphasised – as if the distributor was not certain if this novelty would receive good criticism.

However, this initial uncertainty soon disappeared. The film became a huge success, and was shown at the China cinema between 10 January and 6 February 1929 before it went on to other cinemas, the last screening being at the Sirius cinema on 3 March.\textsuperscript{17} How could it not have been a success, given that from the start of the 1928-1929 season the sound film was described and widely discussed? It was almost as if following the trail of a plague or a virus, spreading out from America and getting closer and closer to the Swedish borders. First it was the domestic market in America that was infected by

\textsuperscript{15} Seldes (1973 [1929]): 124-125.
\textsuperscript{17} Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, \textit{Stockholms-Tidningen}, 3 March 1929, 4.
Suddenly it reached London, followed by Berlin, and it “was only a matter of time” before it reached the shores of Sweden. In this context, one should not forget Paramount’s impressive advertising for the 1928-1929 season in Sweden (Fig. 36).

![Image](image.png)

Figure 36: “The complete menu for the season 1928-1929”

Worth emphasising again is that the China cinema was owned by Svensk Filmindustri, but leased to Paramount for ten years, along with Otto Trobäck’s twenty-piece orchestra. Svensk Filmindustri had nothing to do with this screening as the film was distributed by Film AB Paramount.


21 Berglund (1993): 244-245; “China inför öppendet”, Biografbladet, Vol. 9, No. 15 (1 October 1928): 494. Apparently the decision to lease the cinema to Paramount did not come from the Svensk Filmindustri’s board of directors but from Ivar Kreuger himself who owned the building. Paramount was as surprised when the offer came and was forced to screen MGM’s Love (Edmund Goulding, 1927) with Greta Garbo as their opening film on 20 Octo-
From the outset Paramount made sure of advertising that the China cinema would also be used for sound film, the first being *Wings* with sound effects emphasised particularly the battle scenes. Overall the reviews recounted the feeling of heightened realism thanks to the sound effects, which seems to indicate that the combination of image and sound created a feeling of a more “total” film, to cite Crafton. One reviewer even felt that the sound effects made the audience feel the “complete illusion of real air warfare” and that the “machine guns rattled and the explosions were marked in such a way that the audience trembled with horror”. In other words, the sounds for this screening seemed to have functioned similar to early sound experiments where the sound underlined certain aspects for effect, and at this point it is perhaps better to consider the surplus value that the sound created rather than addressing thoughts around Bazin’s idea of total cinema.

The film premiere of *Wings* was preceded by a large advertising campaign that, however, at the start said almost nothing about sound. Instead it was the film’s exemplary success prior to the Swedish premiere that was emphasised. Also it would have been difficult to find a better-suited film than *Wings* to present sound in Sweden since battle scenes are very suitable, as these sound effects do not need to be in exact sync to be perceived as such, allowing for loose synchronisation. The synchronic/representational effect was easy to achieve, thereby strengthening the internal logic of perception. Compare this to a dialogue sequence where the ear tolerates only a deviance of less than one frame before interpreting it as out of sync, revealing the technology behind everything. If the machinery at China had minor defects, this would probably not have been noticeable as the sounds presented were there to create a general feeling of a sonorous landscape. In this case this was crucial as it is likely that the expectations of the film had increased considerably up to its premiere. At least the reviewers and the audience who witnessed the screening should have listened more attentively to the sound effects if they were experienced as “real”.

Indeed, how could anyone interested miss this event? The days before its premiere the film had dominated the advertising sections in the daily news-

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26 ibid.
papers where the campaign started on 7 January with this advertisement (Fig. 37):

Although nothing was said of the sound it was probably common knowledge due to rumour as the advertisement talked about something “completely new for Stockholm”. What goes against this reading is that the advertisement for the following day still did not mention sound accompaniment but did at the same time dominate the spread (Fig. 38). Instead it talked about the film that “the whole world had noticed”. This advertisement could be about just another American film, one in a long run, which was advertised similarly. It is interesting as to why sound was not emphasised – perhaps it was not considered newsworthy enough? Or could it be that in hindsight we have put too much emphasis on the fact that the film was to be screened with sound, and that this was not such a novelty? After all, mechanically reproduced sound and music was not so new, as illustrated in chapter 2, even though from today’s vantage point it has been singled out as the first important feature film on the repertoire with synchronous sound effects in Sweden. However, for a contemporary audience, on one hand, and for the distribution company, on the other hand, this might have been only another sonorous presentation in line with gramophone and radio. Yet, given that the distribution company was American, one would expect that it should have had reason to press the novelty of sound.

30 Advertisement for Wings, Stockholms-Tidningen, 7 January 1929, 4.
31 Advertisement for Wings, Stockholms-Tidningen, 8 January 1929, 3.
The campaign built up the expectations step by step, and if the sound was lacking initially in the “buzz” around the film, it was something that grew afterwards along the film’s wandering between cinemas in Stockholm. The day of the premiere there were advertisements on two consecutive pages, and now sound was specifically mentioned. The first advertisement was more detailed than any before it, and simultaneously was the most dominating one on the page (Fig. 39).\(^\text{32}\) Besides an illustration of a battle scene, there was, in small print, a text that noted that the film will “receive the same presentation as in New York, London, Paris, and Berlin with sound and other effects”. However, this was emphasised as much, or more correctly as little, as the information that the film used “German and English aviators” for minor characters “to give it as as much of an international feel as possible”. Once more this illustrates how little significance the sound was considered to have for the launch of the film – although a similar ad with this very text had been shown one day in December 1928 as China presented its New Year’s Eve menu.\(^\text{33}\)

\(^{32}\) Advertisement for *Wings*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 10 January 1929, 3.

\(^{33}\) Advertisement for *Wings*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 24 December 1928, 5.
The other advertisement on the following page had a standardised look that the China cinema used for all its films (Fig. 40). The advertisement followed the page of the spread from top to bottom, often in the margin, and affiliated itself with the rest of the campaign by giving general information about the programme, and why it was important to see this particular film. The content of this advertisement would shift according to the success of Wings, but it seems that it was mainly due to its informative character that sound was given its due place. Even the name of the apparatus, Phanatrop, was mentioned, and that it was used for the “first time in Scandinavia”. The origin of this machine is uncertain; it is also not clear if it was a sound-on-disc or a sound-on-film system although it almost certainly was the former. All advertisements in the newspapers include the name Phanatrop. I have not succeeded in finding any such system in the American literature, which most likely points to a confusion of names in the Swedish advertisement. To complicate matters even further, the film was shot with General Electric’s system Pullophotophone, a system that came in both a sound-on-disc and a sound-on-film model.

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34 Advertisement for Wings, Stockholms-Tidningen, 10 January 1929, 4.
Figure 40: Wings
With the success of *Wings* others tried to capitalise on the film. Advertisements turned up for the brand Biophone, and that it had been used in the China cinema. Without doubt this name leads one to think of the British system of the same name.\(^{36}\) In this case it had nothing to do with any synchronous sound system. Behind the use of this brand name we find one Axel Öhlander, with an office at Klarabergsgatan 58 in Stockholm. He sold orchestra machines mentioned previously in chapter 2, that is, several gramophone players that were connected which could play continuously without stopping the music.\(^{37}\) In the UK the sales of these machines increased after *Wings*,\(^{38}\) and although exact numbers for the Swedish market do not exist one notices an enormous increase in advertisements for these apparatuses in the trade press. To select music for these machines former cinema musicians were used in many countries, although in Sweden the Musicians’ Union refused to let their members take such employment despite the fact that it might have saved some from unemployment.\(^{39}\) For the Union it meant that it would participate in destroying proper job opportunities through acknowledging a technical device that could be associated with the gramophone, and in extension recognize “all that jazz” that the Union was against.

To return to *Wings*’ advertising campaign, after the premiere the sound was finally included in the advertisement.\(^{40}\) Now one advertisement with the catchphrase “See and Hear” dominated (Fig. 41).\(^{41}\)

![Figure 41: “See and Hear!”](image)

This advertisement turned up at even intervals during the following months, and not only for the screenings at China. In fact, this specific advertisement

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\(^{37}\) Advertisement Leaflet for *Biophone* (Stockholm: Axel Öhlander, 1929). This marketing was also criticised, “Tillfälligt sammansatt grammofonmusik”, *Svensk Filmtidning*, Vol. 6, No. 17 (16 October 1929): 405.

\(^{38}\) Allen (2001): 78. According to Allen *Wings* was also the first film in the UK with sound that received wider attention.


\(^{40}\) The Film Exchange Association’s periodical even included a whole section of several pages for the film, “*Wings*”, *Svenska Filmtidning*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (22 January 1929): appendix.

\(^{41}\) Advertisement for *Wings*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 12 January 1929, 3.
followed exactly the recommendations made in Harold B. Franklin’s *Sound Motion Pictures* from 1930. The catchphrases that are presented there are worth citing at some length as one can clearly see that the American distribution companies in Sweden followed the book, or at least were well acquainted with the phrases:

**Catchlines for an Inaugural, for Talking Feature Pictures, Talking News, and Talking and Singing Shorts**

See and Hear!
Hear! Hear!
...
They Talk!
...
See and Hear 70 Minutes of [name of celebrity] Voice [or song or song] and All in [name of picture] with [explain whether Vitaphone or Movietone, and accompaniment, if any].
...
The “Talkies” Are Coming! [or “Are Here!”]
...
The [name of theatre] Screen Speaks – See It! Hear It!
You Hear What You See!

**Catchlines for Sound Pictures without Dialogue but with voices of Some other Sort, or Effects**

Hear What you See!
Hear! Hear!
...

**Catchlines for Mere Musical Synchronization**

...
Note: When a musical accompaniment is the subject advertised, what is significant should be singled out: the conductor, the size or the reputation of the orchestra; or phonograph fame.

**Catchlines Adaptable for Personality Presentations**

...
See and hear two hours of Jolson…the picture with voice and soul!42

One feature that stands out is the imperative “See and Hear!”, the possibility of simultaneously seeing the moving images and hearing the actors articulate.

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42 Franklin (1930): 266-270.
the dialogue. As Harold B. Franklin continues to describe a whole advertising campaign in several stages, he concludes that the “lobby card should feature: ‘See and Hear’ or words to that effect”.\textsuperscript{43} The ad and slogan are a thematisation form, to use Werner Wolf’s intermedial notion, which connects the announcement to the event of sound film giving a pre-knowledge to what an audience can expect from this particular experience.\textsuperscript{44}

Now that the gates were open, the feeling of seeing and hearing was meticulously played out by the cinemas that later ran the film. “See and Hear” turns up in more or less every advertisement, despite the fact that the film was not always screened with sounds produced for the film. Rather, it was showing with machines like Axel Öhlander’s as described above.\textsuperscript{45} For example, the Rialto cinema used a Panaponal, a machine manufactured by Pathé, which according to the advertisement would give the same effect as at the China cinema.\textsuperscript{46} although Rialto did not equip for sound until the sound premiere of \textit{The Jazz Singer} on 2 July 1929.\textsuperscript{47} But in the advertisement it was a selling argument, as the cinema was the first after China to screen \textit{Wings}. In Rialto’s advertisements, slogans such as “straight from China”, “see and hear”, and “only at Rialto”, were launched, and more cinemas followed this.\textsuperscript{48} An article for the following season was even headline as “The new season’s motto: See and Hear”.\textsuperscript{49}

To turn to China’s campaign, the size of the advertisements did not diminish as the weeks passed by. Instead one emphasised that the film had been shown at “sold-out screenings”, and that its run was now on its third, fourth or fifth week without loss of turnout.\textsuperscript{50} Paramount worked hard to see that it stayed like this. When the film’s fourth week started it was, according to the advertisement, the last week, but when the week drew to a close the caption of the advertisement read: “only a few days left”.\textsuperscript{51} However, when the fifth week began, the film was still screened, now with reference to the high turnout.\textsuperscript{52} Paramount had probably no plans of stopping the film’s run. Normally one started the campaign for the next film while the previous was still running, but this never happened during \textit{Wings’} fourth week. On the

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 276.
\textsuperscript{44} Wolf (1999): 44.
\textsuperscript{45} Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 11 February 1929, 5.
\textsuperscript{46} Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 7 February 1929, 3.
\textsuperscript{47} Jungstedt (1977): 132.
\textsuperscript{48} Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 25 February 1929, 5.
\textsuperscript{50} Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 21 January 1929, 3; Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 22 January 1929, 3; Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 28 January 1929, 3; Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 4 February 1929, 3.
\textsuperscript{51} Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 2 February 1929, 3.
\textsuperscript{52} Advertisement for \textit{Wings}, Stockholms-Tidningen, 4 February 1929, 3.
other hand, this occurred during the fifth week when the campaign for *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928) started.53

So far this is about the advertising campaign, and how the distributor and the cinemas tried to steer the audience, and later tried to capitalise on the film’s popularity, but what about the reviews? It is clear that the total impression of the evening had made an impact. The whole evening was aimed at emphasising the film. A short film that summarised Sweden’s aviator history preceded the feature, and in addition to this the musicians performed as a prologue “a European air roundtrip in tones”, as one reviewer expressed it.54 Under the headline “*Wings* at China”, Bengt Idestam-Almquist wrote that the film received heavy applause, both after the first part and at the ending. He agreed with the enthusiastic audience, and considered the film to be a “photographic triumph”. But curiously enough, his review was more focused on the camera movements than on the sound effects, which he only referred to in passing as being reproduced in an “illusionary and encouraging” way.55 A similar experience was noted in a review in *Stockholms Dagblad* where the reviewer (unsigned) emphasised the audience response and the sound’s illusionary quality, which together with American music created a great cinematic event. This reviewer also concentrated more on the battle scenes, and that the film was superior when compared to many similar films.56 As a matter of fact, similar expressions about the sound quality, and that the sound had been well received (though not dwelling too much on it) turned up in every review.57 The only article that diverges is *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*’s critic who expresses a feeling of fatigue as the effects mostly became “tiresome” after a while.58

The conclusion that can be drawn from these reviews is that the writers were captivated by the film’s total presentation. Being a mix of silent and sound film, the effects seem to have added a small amount of spice to the menu.59 The sound effects were there, but barely noticeable, as they were well integrated into the diegesis. The codified live music during the evening probably also helped assimilate the sound effects so that they merged with

53 Advertisement for *The Crowd*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 5 February 1929, 3.
54 Program Leaflet from China for *Wings* (10 January 1929); “Sensationer i luften: Chinas nya program *Vingarna* gjorde succés”, *Aftonbladet*, 11 January 1929, 10.
59 This also seemed to be the way sound film would exist on the Swedish market. Even the new chairman of Fox film for the Scandinavian market, Henry W. Kahn, expressed in a lengthy interview that it was unlikely that talkies could find a place in these markets, “Stockholm är nu hela Nordeuropeas affärshuvudstad”, *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 7 February 1929, 14.
the music and did not disturb the internal logic of perception. A reviewer (unsigned) in *Dagens Nyheter* does not even mention the sound. He/she exclusively focused on the film’s story and presentation in general.60

Another striking aspect of the China cinema is that even though it came to use its sound system from time to time after *Wings*, most often for the Sunday matinees, by the middle of March it all ended.61 Why were the machines not used to a greater extent? Was it because there were no films available – or something else? And also why were dialogue films not screened? For instance, for *The Wedding March* (Erich von Stroheim 1928) one used the apparatus in the chorus scene,62 but this can only be viewed in a few advertisements, and in one review which only briefly mentions the sequence. In his review of *The Jazz Singer*, Bengt Idestam-Almquist mentions the chorus, and that the “tone was hoarse and erratic as with a speaker with atmospheric disturbances”, and concludes that if this was the future, it was no future at all.63 Some of the advertisements for *The Wedding March* could also make one believe that it would be screened in the same manner as *Wings*, thereby capitalising on that film (Fig. 42),64 but the question remains why it was not used more or why at least was the sound not emphasised more? One reason as to why this was the case after *Wings* can be the problems relating to the Auditorium cinema, which I will soon return to.

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61 Advertisement for *Wings*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 10 March 1929, 3; Advertisement for *Wings*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 21 April 1929, 4.
63 Bengt Idestam-Almquist, “Röda Kvarn: Jazzsångaren”, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 19 February 1929, 10. The programme also mentions that the music was arranged by J. S. Zamecnik (who composed the love theme for the film), see Program Leaflet from China for *The Wedding March* (15 February 1929).
64 Advertisement for *The Wedding March*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 19 February 1929, 3.
Let us conclude, then, that the screening of *Wings* was the first time that a Swedish audience was allowed to experience the combination of the image and the soundtrack, how two media were mixed, and that the advertising campaign took as its starting point the film’s success outside Sweden before it emphasised the success at China. The sound became a selling tool, while the actual subject matter of the film took a back seat for the experience to “See and Hear” simultaneously. What is missing in the campaign, as well as in the reviews, are any more reflective comments on the sound accompaniment, leading to the conclusion that the sound must have been experienced as being well assimilated and regarded as an integrated part of the diegesis.

**Sound as disappointment: The *Jazz Singer* as event**

*The Jazz Singer*’s premiere in Stockholm turned out to be somewhat of an anti-climax. The rumours around its popularity had reached Sweden well before its first screening on 18 February 1929 at Röda Kvarn, that is, almost one and a half years later than in the US (6 October 1927) and nearly a half year later than in London (1928). The main reason for this delay was the negotiations between Vitaphone and the Swedish distributor, Biörnstad Filmbyrå, for renting sound apparatuses. The film exchange company had, in fact, had the film since August 1928, but held on to it in the hope of screen-

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ing it with sound.66 Even large posters were exhibited in Stockholm for the upcoming event (Fig. 43).67 Nothing happened but one continued trying to find a way to screen it and in November 1928 it was planned to happen in January 1929.68 However, Vitaphone was not the main problem. The distributor did not own any cinemas of its own and, therefore, could not find any one interested in this project. Finally, when all negotiations had come to an end, the company nevertheless decided to screen the film as silent, with the Norwegian singer, Ola Isene, singing Al Jolson’s parts during the film’s entire run at Röda Kvarn.69

Figure 43: Poster on Kungsgatan in the summer of 1928, Stockholm (10x10 meters). The caption reads: “This Autumn’s Feature Film”.

The film received the same presentation in Uppsala where the singer N. Jonsson performed the songs. A striking feature of one of the reviews after this premier was when a critic, Torsten Eklann, emphasised that it had been a mistake to reveal the singer after awhile, implicating that this had destroyed

the cinematic illusion. This writer illustrates how strong the internal logic of perception is once in place, but also how fragile the integration of image and sound is to external factors.

If *The Jazz Singer* was in a sense a failure, because it was screened in its silent version, it still became as popular as *Wings* staying on the repertoire until May, and Svensk Filmindustri (owner of Röda Kvarn) described the film as “a success in image and tone”. The campaign prior to the film had also capitalised on the rumours around the film, which presupposed that the film was general knowledge among the audience. The advertising campaign, therefore, became very “soundy”, although the film as noted was screened silent. By focusing exclusively on Al Jolson’s character, with his hands outstretched towards the reader, without any complementary text except the title and the word “next”, the advertisements almost screamed the words – “sound film” (Fig. 44).

![Figure 44: “next”](image)

The following advertisements were similar to the ones for *Wings*, as they emphasised the film’s prior success as “the film that the world is talking about”, even mentioning *Variety*. Also in comments before the premiere it was the film’s connection to Vitaphone that made it special and something out of the ordinary. Another aspect of the campaign was its emphasis on the

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71 Advertisement for *The Jazz Singer*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 25 February 1929, 3.
73 Advertisement for *The Jazz Singer*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 13 February 1929, 3.
75 “Jazzsångaren: den länge omtalade filmen får i de närmaste dagarna sin svenska premiär på Röda Kvarn i Stockholm”, *Filmjournalen*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (17 February 1929): 18. This num-
film’s jazz feeling and lightheartedness, combined with an exceptional advertisement “drawn” from a cinema’s balcony. The advertisement covered the major part of a page, and featured a picture of a whole auditorium, with Al Jolson dominating the image (Fig. 45).76 The sound implication was also underlined in production stills with a full orchestra visible in the frame.77 The film was also heavily advertised on the streets. Display windows in different stores were, for example, exclusively used to market the sheet music and records from the film. Two sources state that as many as fifty display windows in Stockholm had an Al Jolson exhibition (Fig. 46).78 But connections to the film did not stop at music stores, as even toothpaste was marketed with the help of the famous character. This can be seen, for example, in the advertisement for the brand Stomatol in which Al Jolson almost seems to speak to the reader, begging you to buy this particular toothpaste (Fig. 47).79
This branding also underlines the disappointment that the audience must have felt when one had not been shown the true version - the version “that everybody talked about”.

![Figure 45: The Jazz Singer (1927)](image)

76 Advertisement for *The Jazz Singer*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 26 February 1929, 3.
At least the professional critics’ comments after the premiere were brief, and clearly the reviewers had hoped to have heard the film with its real sound; now the film was felt to be a little slow and without any real excitement. It is possible, too, that the impression from *Wings* that was still on the repertoire lingered on, and that one now lacked something one had not reflected over before. *Wings* had set a new standard, and it was no longer acceptable to view a film “half done” – if there in fact did exist another version that one was aware of. Probably the campaign for *The Jazz Singer* had followed the standard set by the production company, but here it hit back. For although the film, according to the advertisements, was screened to sell out crowds, and had a long run on the repertory, between the lines one can still distinguish that something was lacking. This is noticeable in the reviews for the sound premiere of the film on 2 July 1929 at Rialto. If anything the reviewers expressed a feeling of satisfaction in finally being able to see the true version, although Warner-First National pushed for this version too. But since the sound version premiered during the summer, between two seasons, it was not given such a prominent placement in the daily papers, although receiving good reviews.

Seen together the screenings of *Wings* and *The Jazz Singer* show how fast everything went. If the former had showed what sound could add to a

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screening, the latter’s silent premiere showed how important sound had become. In this sense *Wings* should be regarded as more of an important event in Sweden than *The Jazz Singer*, even though the latter has been regarded as the most important film for the conversion to sound in general.\(^8^3\)

**Sound as failure: *Midnight Madness* and the “logic of perception”**

The screening of the silent film *Midnight Madness* (Harmon Weight, 1928) at the Auditorium cinema on 22 February 1929 became one of the biggest film failures ever in Sweden. Here one tried to capitalise on the fact that *The Jazz Singer* was about to premiere the following day, and therefore created something similar to a radio theatre event by having Swedish actors mime a dialogue over the otherwise silent images.\(^8^4\) The decision to screen the film this way must have been made in an instant. It was not until the day before its premiere that the advertisement carried anything about there being dialogue: “Clive Brook in the first speaking film”.\(^8^5\) It is as if the rumours around the talking film had made the decision makers believe that a film would automatically be a success if it had dialogue, just as *Wings* had been a success thanks to sound. But as this analysis will illustrate the screening came to put the internal and external logic of perception completely out of sync, making the audience well aware of the medium as such.

The day of the premiere, the advertisements encouraged the audience to “witness the sensational moment when the film and the radio met”,\(^8^6\) and that “the well-known director Harry Bergwall from Radiotjänst” would be leading the experiment (Fig. 48).

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\(^8^3\) Donald Crafton has pointed out that the reception and the long run of *The Jazz Singer* in the US was good but not exceptional and that *Wings*, for example, fared better. Crafton concludes that “the ‘unprecedented success’ of Warner Bros.’ first part-talking feature [*The Jazz Singer*] was more of a retrospective creation of the media than a box-office reality”, see Crafton (1996): 476.

\(^8^4\) Jungstedt (1977): 133.

\(^8^5\) Advertisement for *Midnight Madness*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 21 February 1929, 4.

\(^8^6\) Advertisement for *Midnight Madness*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 22 February 1929, 3.
It is interesting to see how radio was emphasised, which otherwise was not a prominent factor in the Swedish film business. Once more this shows the different functions of radio in the US and Sweden for the conversion to sound. This can be illustrated by, for example, an US advertisement from Radio Pictures in February 1929: “Radio… fulfilment of daring dreams… colossus of modern art and science… now enters the motion picture industry!”, 87 or by Kenneth MacPherson’s comment in 1927 that “everyone knew that sooner or later radio would somehow link up with films”. 88 Nothing compared to this has been encountered in the Swedish material that has been surveyed for this study. The closest are ads like the one from Philips (see page 73), but in that case it is more about radio as a different technology, to be enjoyed when you return home after a hectic work day. In Sweden one came instead from the very beginning to associate and link the sound film to the film medium as such, rather than associating radio technology with sound technology. This is why the advertising campaigns and articles on the films exclusively dealt with “filmic” aspects, and a film’s prior success. The campaign for Midnight Madness can, therefore, be seen as unique in this context.

No doubt one had calculated on a success at the Auditorium cinema, as the advertisement the day after the premiere described the screening the night before as “the biggest success Stockholm has experienced in many days, and that was by way of a talking film”. In reality it was a grand failure that even had implications for subsequent films. For example, the advertisement for the next film in the cinema, *King of the Rodeo* (Henry MacRae, 1929), made clear that it was a silent with only a few sound effects, and that these sounds of “Roaring hoofs! Banging revolvers! Striking whips!” were produced on the spot by the orchestra, emphasising that it was a silent film. Apparently the live sounds were felt, to use Werner Wolf’s intermedial terminology, as imitating stronger than what was motivated by the images.

At any rate one truly believed in this project, of *Midnight Madness* and the day of its premiere there was an article on *Stockholms-Tidningen*’s front page by Bengt Idestam-Almquist. The author had participated at a press screening, where he had been shown how everything related to the sounds functioned. The article looks remarkably like advertising, as the fascination over the procedure is given much more space than any criticism over how it actually sounded.

The reviews after the screening were unambiguous on this subject. Not one single daily appreciated the Swedish dialogue, which in many instances was called laughable. But the reviewers agreed that it had been a nice and entertaining evening for the audience on behalf of the cinema. Although, they added, “the whole thing was only an experiment, which the audience however valued … In any case, one had fun, though perhaps not always in the right place [as the] actual movie … was rather serious”. Between the lines one can see that it was not the Swedish dialogue as such that was laughable, but that the sounds of the voices continued while the actors were not present in the image, which reminds one of Torsten Eklann’s dismay when the singer for the silent premiere of *The Jazz Singer* revealed himself to the audience. For this particular audience the sonorous non-diegetic space did not yet exist – set against the relation regarding the decisions (described above) made by production companies not to include too much non-diegetic music. Seen in this light Svensk Filmindustri’s decision to give music a strong non-diegetic function becomes even more striking.

Is there anything positive to say about a failure like this other than it was an attempt made by enthusiasts? If nothing else, *Midnight Madness* made

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90 Advertisement for *King of the Rodeo*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 28 February 1929, 3.
sound film something to be talked about. With the short but intensive run of this film, together with the successful screening of Wings and the disappoint-
ing screening of The Jazz Singer, sound film as such started to be discussed and debated in daily papers and periodicals. Bengt Idestam-Almquist wrote in Stockholms-Tidningen shortly after the failure of Midnight Madness that after both this film and Wings there now existed a “living interest” for sound film with dialogue in Sweden. The sources prove him right, as one month later, in March, Biografbladet started to cover more systematically what was happening nationally and internationally with regard to sound, and this continued until the spring of 1930. It was also in March that Biografägaren engaged in a discussion with the Musicians’ Union, and a month later started conducting sound system tests. Interestingly, that same month, Musikern started to see signs that sound film was losing its grip on the audience, concluding that their members’ jobs, thanks to audience criticism, were safe. And in April, Svensk Filmtidning, the mouthpiece for the Film Exchange Association, entered the debate arguing that sound film was the future. In other words, everything was building up for May and the premieres of Love and the Devil and White Shadows in the South Seas.

No turning back: Love and the Devil and White Shadows in the South Seas changes exhibition practices

The 400-seat Piccadilly cinema at Birger Jarls gatan 6 in Stockholm came to surprise everyone. During March and April there had been several articles about the soon-to-come premiere of Love and the Devil at the Palladium, and the focus had been solely on this Svensk Filmindustri cinema. Suddenly, just before the film’s premiere, advertisements started appearing in the daily papers about the premiere of another sound film, White Shadows in the South Seas at the Piccadilly cinema – on the same day as Love and the Devil. The silence from Piccadilly had been total, so commentators therefore had to rely on information, which to a large degree was taken uncritically, at face value.

Piccadilly’s sound system was argued to be a Swedish invention by Gustaf Nordquist who, since a Movietone presentation at the Concert House in 1926, had worked on an apparatus similar to Vitaphone. But he gave no answers to questions relating to what made his system different from Vitaphone, except that he would not file for patent or manufacture more equipment. What kind of machine was placed at the Piccadilly is still unknown, and something of a mystery since after the premiere the cinema refused to

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96 “Svarta skuggor över Piccadilly processen”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 3 May 1929, 14.
answer any questions. That it was a Swedish system is unlikely as Nordquist did not file for patent. At this time everyone understood that there were large amounts of money involved if you succeeded in developing a Swedish system which would free the industry from foreign patent disputes and rental fees. Whatever the system used, the people at Piccadilly worried about the actions by Western Electric, as the film was only allowed to be screened on the company’s own apparatus. The response from the company came also almost immediately, as their Swedish representative Richard M. Handin was ordered to hand in a protest against the cinema, and after some discussion, a settlement was met to the effect that the American company would not file a complaint if the cinema installed Vitaphone equipment.

As mentioned, the screening came as a surprise and nothing had leaked to the press. Only the day before the screening an advertisement stated that the cinema would be closed in the near future, because it was being adapted for sound film. This advertisement was barely noticed, as Svensk Filmindustri was in the middle of its campaign for their own sound premiere, with large advertisements occupying most of the spread. The next day an advertisement mentioned that the film that was going to be screened that same evening was “the first sound film from MGM”, and that it was recorded “by MGM’s Vitaphone-system” (!), (Fig. 49). Without a doubt Piccadilly tried to capitalise on the situation and the screening in Svensk Filmindustri’s Palladium, which had been prepared for a long time.

Figure 49: “The first sound film from M.G.M.”

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97 Ibid.
98 “Ljudfilmins krönika”, Biografbladet, Vol. 10, No. 5 (May 1929): 178-179; “Den oklara situationen”, Biografbladet, Vol. 10, No. 8 (October 1929): 274-275. In one newspaper the resolution of the case was biased as it was argued that this opened up for cheaper equipment, see “Alla Sveriges biografer med ljudfilm”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 5 May 1929, 1.
99 Advertisement for Piccadilly, Stockholms-Tidningen, 1 May 1929, 4.
100 Advertisement for White Shadows in the South Seas, Stockholms-Tidningen, 2 May 1929, 3. In reality the film was recorded with the Movietone system.
If nothing else, this screening certainly illustrates the controlled chaos in Stockholm at the time. For the audience, and even for film industry people, all these events were hard to know anything about. True, the world may have been shrinking, but information nevertheless did not travel fast, and the subject of sound film was obviously surrounded by too many contradictory rumours for anything to be possible. So why could not one of the largest film producers have a system of its own? In any case, in interviews the day after the screening, Piccadilly representatives had to admit that the reference to MGM’s own system was a “mistake” in the advertisement.\textsuperscript{101}

*White Shadows in the South Seas* had also already been screened at Stockholm’s Filmstudios, but then as a silent. The film had at the time given a strong impression which now, with the sound version, had been augmented. As one reviewer concluded, a conductor could never have presented such a suitable musical theme,\textsuperscript{102} while another reviewer exclaimed that the “excellent jazz rhythm gave rich opportunities for the sound film to show its strength”.\textsuperscript{103} The reception was otherwise overwhelming and the film came to run the whole summer. So in a sense Piccadilly’s coup which also included an exhibition in the cinema’s foyer gave good results (Fig. 50).\textsuperscript{104}

The premiere of *Love and the Devil* thereby in some way ended up in the background behind *White Shadows in the South Seas*, despite being the one that initially got the most space in the daily press. Already in March, articles had been written in the press about Svensk Filmindustri’s upcoming installation of Western Electric equipment at the Palladium. If no obstacles arose

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{101}“Svarta skuggor över Piccadilly processen”, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 3 May 1929, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{102}Bengt Idestam-Almquist, “Ljudfilm: sensationsfri Sverigedebüt”, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 3 May 1929, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{103}Refil, “Ljudfilmen blev en upplevelse men ingen sensation”, *Aftonbladet*, 3 May 1929, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{104}Advertisement for *White Shadows in the South Seas*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 29 July 1929, 3; “Söderhavet vid Birger Jarls gatan”, *Svensk Filmtidning*, Vol. 6, No. 10 (16 May 1929): 212; “Vita skuggor för sista gången”, *Aftonbladet*, 8 August 1929, 3.
\end{itemize}
from the patent fights between the American and German companies one could look forward to a premiere of *The Singing Fool* around 10 April 1929. However, sometime later it was announced that the premiere had been postponed until May, and further that one had now reached an agreement with Tobis-Klangfilm. Although Palladium was equipped with Western Electric machinery, and that two technicians from that company was present during the first screening (R. R. Back and C. H. Grotefeld) this uncertainty around the negotiations with the German company may have been one reason why the premiere was postponed.

The premiere of *Love and the Devil* was preceded by several articles in the press, and thereby the advertisement campaign was relatively small as the film already had been advertised. Compared to the campaigns for *Wings* and *The Jazz Singer*, respectively, this advertising was considerably smaller, resulting in that Piccadilly’s advertisement for *White Shadows in the South Seas* got their message through. For the same reason the advertisement the day before the premiere was similar to other advertisements found in the newspapers. The film was launched as the “first sound film in Scandinavia”, simultaneously highlighting that it was a film from Vitaphone, from the “sound film pioneer” (Fig. 51). Once again the name Vitaphone returns, as it had in the campaign for Piccadilly’s screening. Apparently, emphasising this brand was a viable way to attract attention for your film, as it signified a sound film, associating it to the most well known technology and brand on the market.

105 “Allt klart för talfilm på Palladium”, 28 March 1929, 1; -it-, “På upptäcksfärd i ‘den talande glädjens hus’: febrilt förarbete till ljudfilmspremiären”, *Filmjournalen*, Vol. 11, No. 7 (28 April 1929): 6, 30; “Ljudfilmen får premiär på Palladium”, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 27 March 1929, 1. There circulated many rumours about which film was to be screened. Even *White Shadows in the South Sea* was mentioned, see Topsy, “*Vita skuggor på Söderhavet*: en märklig ljudfilm snart inför premiär”, *Filmjournalen*, Vol. 11, No. 7 (28 April 1929): 15, 27.

106 “Tonfilmsvägen hit”, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 10 April 1929, 1; “Tonfilmenspremiären idag”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 2 May 1929, 12. Probably this had been a fast decision as a couple of days earlier a critic had written extensively about the sound film, see Bengt Idestam-Almquist, “Inför talfilmspremiären”, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, 7 April 1929, 11.


Both films received a tremendous amount of space in the newspapers the day after the premiere, in which not only the sound was discussed at length but also the "people of the street" as well as "the experts" gave their opinion on what they had heard. The reviews for this film and White Shadows in the South Seas were otherwise mixed, perhaps surprisingly so. Everyone agreed that sound had added something significant to the film, but there was some disappointment expressed over the lack of dialogue, and that the sound effects did not fill the whole sonorous environment on the screen. That is, some objects had effects while others lacked them, making one aware of the technical nature of the film. The fact that the sound had been post-synched made one experience the film as "very similar to a silent film plus orchestra". This feeling towards the film can be explained by the musical accompaniment. Alan Williams’ analysis of the score shows that one noteworthy aspect of the accompaniment to White Shadows in the South Seas is how the various materials are associated with fictional elements, given that they are character- or even situation-specific. That is, the film’s score consists of large units that were felt as repetitive compared to post 1933 scores. There is a draw-back to such a score in being both time-consuming and needing to come to an appropriate stopping point before changing the theme. This made the score difficult to use for specific character association, as the music from time to time was forced to stop abruptly,

110 Moje, “Bion klarar strupen men hjälten tiger”, Social-Demokraten, 3 May 1929, 1, 11.
113 Williams (1999): 239.
instead of letting the music come to an appropriate closure. For part-talkies this was especially problematic as it was difficult to keep an even flow between dialogue and music, destroying the internal logic of perception. This might be another argument as to why Hollywood refrained from using music to any greater degree. On the other hand this is a silent film music technique that was continued within sound film in the formative music and, as illustrated by how Svensk Filmindustri used the technique, it simultaneously allowed for music to move freely between the diegetic and non-diegetic worlds.

Throughout the spring articles about the talkie had also been prominent in the press, and this seems to have created an interest in sound that previously did not exist. It was not enough anymore to screen a film that only contained some sound effects and formative music. It seems that dialogue had been discussed at such length that the audience had become receptive to it. As one reviewer stated, “the sound film’s premiere in our country was an experience of great interest, but no sensation”.¹¹⁴

What was seen as positive was that despite sound’s entrance, the film as such was still the main thing, and that sound was not considered essential if a film was to be perceived as good or not, even if, as I already indicated at the beginning, others saw nothing comforting with the sound screenings. These reactions primarily concerned the sound quality, and that the “sound engineers have elevated this splashing to the valued see and hear, something one should pay money in a cinema to hear”.¹¹⁵ What the writer expresses is the debate about how authentic a recorded sound really is, while other comments on the premieres also illustrate the ongoing discussion around high and low culture. Herbert Grevenius wrote, for example, about Love and the Devil that the “fact that this bastard between film, music and theatre now was to drive away the artistic, infinitely more developed silent film from the country’s largest cinema is completely upside down”.¹¹⁶ Although when it came to White Shadows in the South Seas, it happened to be a film which the publication that Grevenius wrote for owned the book rights to. It is perhaps significant, then, that he wrote that “the best thing to say about this film is […] that the sound is what you least think of”.¹¹⁷

After the screenings of White Shadows in the South Seas and Love and the Devil it was taken for granted that from now on any film coming from the US existing in a sound version should also be screened that way.¹¹⁸ Or, as a reviewer commented after the screening of Love and the Devil:

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 35.
The scenes from the Italian opera, with choirs and music, was excellent, and if you consider that even the smallest rural cinema will be able to achieve something similar, then you understand the value of sound film. In such cases it certainly belongs to the future.119

The only organisation that had a different opinion was the Musicians’ Union. For them these screenings were almost proof that sound film would never establish itself as a real threat. The editor-in-chief of Musikern argued that the tone quality had been so bad that no one in his or her right mind could fall for such an invention.120 In a sense the Musicians’ Union echoes what William Hunter wrote a few years later:

It is natural that, at the time when the maximum number of words and ‘realistic’ sounds were jammed into the film hocus-pocus, one’s reaction should be altogether against sound, and that one should look back regretfully to the pre-talkie days when films had an independent existence.121

I will return to this discussion around authentic sounds in chapter 5 since it is at the core of upholding the internal logic of perception. If a recorded sound is not accepted as a real rendition of an authentic sonorous reality the cinematic illusion is instantly broken, revealing the technology behind the medium.

The following seasons: the dialogue and language trouble

Following these films development progressed rather quickly and silent films were phased out.122 During the 1929-1930 season silent film and sound film were screened in tandem and as soon as sound films had proven their popularity, all-talkie releases were implemented. The second film which contained a spoken dialogue was The Shopworn Angel (Richard Wallace, 1928) that was in production when The Jazz Singer was released, which made the producers add a dialogue sequence at the last minute. This suited Swedish circumstances especially well as the film then became seen as a sound film, with some additional dialogue at the end, which now heightened the experience even more. Despite some technical difficulties most review-

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121 Hunter (1932): 51.
ers only saw the added value of the dialogue. It seems from these reviews that at this stage sound in general had started to be well integrated into the cinematic experience. Dialogue at this time, half a year later, added something that was felt as valuable without disturbing the illusion, as opposed to the previous examples of the silent premiere of The Jazz Singer with its live singer and the “radio theatre” of Midnight Madness.

Although the talking film raised some opposition to begin with, sound film with only effects and recorded music was now regarded as an economical and natural development. Lewis Jacobs argues similarly in the US in 1937:

The musical films of these directors [René Clair and Ernst Lubitsch] showed, moreover, that a pictures’ movement need not wait on vocal renditions; that songs and music could be a natural and integral part of the whole, neither forced upon it nor made paramount in it.

At the China cinema, for example, there was a test screening during the autumn of 1929 when the cinema screened The Wolf of Wall Street (Rowland V. Lee, 1929) in two different versions on the same evening. If sound film with effects and music soon was accepted, during 1929 arguments such as exemplified by Torsten Eklann’s against dialogue still existed: “the talking film as such is against the very principle of the idea of film, film will no longer be film; it becomes some sort of pantomime on record [as] the theatre has the voice and the word; film has movement in the image”.

In addition, there was also the language barrier that initially created problems as one was not certain how to deal with it. Dubbing techniques were fraught with technical problems, forcing the American industry (as one among many) to delve into multi-lingual versions. Despite sharing the costs, these films rarely returned any profit or broke even. In Sweden, therefore,

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128 But as Kristin Thompson has shown by the end of 1931 the language barrier was more a thing of the past, see Thompson (1985): 163.
one quickly settled on subtitling, after it first had become an issue with *Fox Movietone Follies of 1929*, the first film that was screened with non-Swedish dialogue. Bengt Idestam-Almquist wrote after its premiere that if it had not been for the song and dance numbers, the plot would have been hard to follow:

*Fox Follies* is the first sound film without text that has been shown here. People sing, dance and – talk! The sound was very good at the Palladium, especially towards the end. Yet, it was difficult to appreciate the American dialogue. Sometimes the dialogue was so quiet that even Swedes used to American English could not understand everything. I only comprehended half of it. Certainly most [of the audience] did not understand a word. Judging from the atmosphere in the auditorium, one found the dialogue scenes and the lengthy revue songs tiresome.131

The signature Pius in *Aftonbladet* experienced something similar:

Another tiresome element is the marked disproportion between the dialogue and the dramatic action. The dialogue totally dominates instead of completing the dramatic action. It is clear that the talking film has not yet reached the technical feasibility of a natural recording with proper proportions between dialogue and movement.132

In other words, it seems that although dialogue no longer broke the cinematic illusion as easily if there was too much dialogue, it still broke the diegetic effect, even if sound as such had started to be accepted as an integral part of the medium. Even the non-diegetic space seems to have grown in importance at this early stage. René Clair expressed, for example, that after these kinds of films (he is referring to *The Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont, 1929)) sound film had shown that it was “neither theatre nor cinema”.133 What was especially bewildering with the films was that you could hear things without the source being shown, which created a strong emotional effect especially if the reactions to the sounds could be distinguished in the faces of the characters who heard it. It is almost as if witnessing how the sound track slowly merges with the image track into seemingly one entity, which at the end once more resulted in the disappearance of technology.

Concerning the language problem and the question of dubbing this was really no issue at all in Sweden. After *Fox Movietone Follies of 1929*, some

experiments were tried out. In one the Swedish translation of the dialogue was printed in the programme note, as can be seen in the programme to the German version of *Atlantic* (Fig. 54).\(^{134}\)

**Figure 55: Atlantic (1929)**

Dubbing was also tried, but it was deemed to violate the diegetic effect too much. There is the infamous live “dubbing” of *Midnight Madness* and one mechanical dubbing of *An American Tragedy* (Joseph von Sternberg, 1931) produced by the Joinville studio in Paris.\(^{135}\) After the latter, no more experiments were attempted in Sweden, and although the debate from time to time turned up in the periodicals it seems from the sources that this was a non-question.\(^{136}\) Instead, subtitling quickly became standard after its success-

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\(^{134}\) Program Leaflet from Palladium for *Atlantic* (Stockholm: Svensk Filmindustri, 1929): 7-23.

\(^{135}\) M. E., “Dubbleringsmetodens svenska premiär”, *Biografägaren*, Vol. 7, No. 6 (19 March 1932); 28; Qvist (1994): 47. I have only found one source, which is from the Film Exchange Association, and which reacted positive to this screening, “Minst tre svenska Paramountfilmer”, *Svensk Filmtidning*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (21 March 1932): 81.

ful introduction with *The Singing Fool* in 1929, and it seems that it was not felt as disturbing at all.

Today, subtitling is in many countries taken as something natural and one does not even consider it. At the time it could be experienced as bewildering. For example, the critic and writer Sven Stolpe exclaimed with surprise that he did not find it disturbing that film now contained “no less than three texts, first the spoken, then the ordinary texts, and finally a third kind, on the image itself simultaneously with the dialogue”.

This reaction towards subtitles seems to have been general in Sweden at least among the critics. Bengt Idestam-Almquist commented for example in a review that “the subtitles occur as frequent as the exchange of words, disappear fast and disturbs nobody”. This reaction goes against what Joseph Garncarz argues in “Made in Germany” that “audiences of the period were not receptive to the idea of reading subtitles at the same time as they were trying to follow the pictures”.

As this chapter, as well as chapter 2, have shown, it took less than a year for sound film to establish itself on the repertoire. Technical questions, international patent disputes, and other issues like the uncertainty of comprehensively understanding non-Swedish films showed in the end not to be obstacles at all. Instead, the Swedish film industry smoothly realigned itself to the new circumstances. This is well illustrated with Bengt Idestam-Almquist’s experience of *Why Be Good?* (William A. Seiter, 1929), the second sound film at the Palladium cinema, where he notes that you only think of the missing orchestra for the first minutes - thereafter your ears have got used and adjusted themselves to the new accompaniment.

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141 The CEO of Svensk Filmindustri, Olof Andersson, expressed on several occasions his concern for how “talkies” would end the uniting aspect of film, see for example “Filmen är ej mera ett föreningsband mellan nationerna”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 4 July 1930, 1, 24.

For the musicians the story was different, as they faced mass unemployment due to the conversion. But, as the next chapter shows, what stands out among the Musicians’ Union’s reactions towards the changing environment was the lateness to address sound film as a problem. For example, after *The Singing Fool*, and despite its success in 1929, the Musicians’ Union still argued that this was only an expression for a passing novelty that soon would disappear when the first novelty had passed, and that sound film would eventually find its place between the theatre and the silent film.\(^{143}\)

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Chapter 4: Practice – The Musicians

So far I have considered the conversion to sound from a top to bottom perspective in analysing the course of events during the conversion. My conclusion is that producers, distributors and cinema owners had established organisations to meet sound film, resulting in a smooth conversion. In this chapter, I turn the focus upside down and look at the arrival of sound film from a grass-root perspective by addressing a group that strongly became affected by the sound film – the musicians. I will focus on the Musician Unions’ organisation and the events in its Stockholm branch prior to the arrival of sound in order to illustrate an organisation that had become a strong part to reckon with but at the same time was not prepared to meet the quickly changing environment during the conversion to sound. The reasons behind the Union’s sometime arbitrary actions go back to that its member base consisted of several different categories of musicians. Cinema musicians were a large group but you could also find musicians employed within a concert associations, restaurants, cafés, and in military bands. All these groups of musicians had different aims and hopes of what the Union should work towards, creating tension within the Union itself. As for sound film, it could prove devastating for a musician only employed at a cinema, but could be beneficiary for others since the strong connection between the film medium and the recording industry made the increased popularity of gramophone recordings a new outlet for employment.

It was not easy being a musician outside the larger orchestras in Stockholm during the last years of the 1920s. As noted, one reason was that with the conversion to sound film, one of the major outlets for employment disappeared. For a regular musician dependent on salaries from several employers, this meant that he/she needed to take any work available, forcing him/her to stretch the regulations of the Musicians’ Union. However, the Union was reluctant to accept any exceptions from the rules, and severely punished anyone breaking them. The situation was similar to the one during the beginning of the decade, as the post-war depression forced many musicians to reduce their salaries or lose their work. Some cinema owners then decided, with mixed results, to test self-playing instruments as a substitute for musicians. Naturally parallels were now drawn to these failures as the new technological innovation of sound film arrived, and the official com-

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1 See Wallengren (1998): 154-162 for a short recapitulation, and especially page 156 for a discussion of the situation in the early 1920s.
mentaries from the Musicians’ Union to the situation in 1929 saw sound film as nothing more than just another gimmick or device soon to be forgotten.

In some sense this view can be explained by how the 1928 – 1929 season in Hollywood looked like. Because of the prevailing uncertainty regarding sound, producers began making films that could be either called talkie or silent, just to be sure they had an outlet for their product. This must have given the bystander a sense that the silents were not in danger of disappearing. On the other hand, it would be an oversimplification to see this as a major explanation for the Musicians’ Union’s sometimes strange behaviour during the conversion to sound in Sweden. At least two other reasons are of crucial importance, firstly, the special nature of the Union as an organisation, and secondly the mixed characteristics of the post-war 1920s. As for the latter, an examination of the debates, standpoints, attitudes and discussions among the musicians during the conversion to sound cannot be done without being set against the wider framework of the aftermath of the First World War. As we have seen, the new techniques that were refined by the war industry, and the cultural heritage of the late nineteenth-century, created the backdrop for several seemingly contradictory discourses during the 1920s which affected the Musicians’ Union’s decisions. In general the Union was against “all that jazz” which meant that the organisation took a somewhat cautious stance towards mechanised reproduction of music. During the course of the 1920s the Union had only reluctantly looked at the development from the side as popular music increasingly filled everyday life with mediated music through different sound carriers. One public place where classic instrumental music still was in abundance was within the cinemas, and it seems that this became the place where finally the Union’s policy regarding high- and lowbrow music came to a clash.

Yet, film music was not much discussed in the Swedish media landscape until the second half of the 1920s. When it was discussed prior to the 1920s, it more often than not dealt with the inferior quality and the bad musicians who were employed to play the piano. It was emphasised, for instance, in an article from 1909 that it were for the benefit of all if a small well trained ensemble was employed instead, since good “music in a cinema may suspend many other shortcomings [in an] unpretentious cinema and mediocre image”. One debate of special interest in relation to this, and one I will return to shortly, addresses Wagner’s notion of the leitmotif, a technique that Ann-Kristin Wallengren has shown was not used much in Sweden. Instead, Swedish conductors worked more with themes to construct an overall feeling through the musical structure to comment on the unfolding narrative, a

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6 Ibid., 244.
technique that was used for formative music and continued for sound film production as was shown in chapter 2. Wagner was also viewed as a good example, in contrast to the recorded music that followed with the sound films from the US. The “Europeaness” that Wagner stood for was seen in the Musicians’ Union as a guarantee of job opportunities, and that sound film would never catch on in Sweden.

The Musicians’ Union Stockholm branch in 1929

If one reads the comments in the Musicians’ Union department 1 annual report of 1930, the following picture emerges. In 1929 the branch in Stockholm consisted of 846 members, a reduction from 939 the previous year. Svensk Filmindustri renegotiated the contracts and enforced a weaker agreement. A contract had also been met with the China cinema which otherwise mainly screened sound film. The Union had also decided to substantially increase the tariff for cinemas that screened sound film and only temporarily engaged musicians. Several measures had been taken to help unemployed members, and a decision had been made to institute an unemployment fund. 525 Swedish crowns in total had been handed out in support for unemployed members.

No major conflicts with other organisations had existed during the year. Some minor differences had nevertheless occurred, and two cinemas had been blockaded. On forty occasions, the chairman (Joseph Gelhaar) had been forced to intervene in matters concerning employment. The major part of the differing of opinions had dealt with either payments or the (erroneous) conduct of playing with non-members. One member had caused such problems in breaking the rules over and over again that a whole page in the report was devoted to this case alone. The board had at first won authority but lost at the arbitration board. Through an investigation the board had understood that the expulsion of the member had not been in parity to the crime committed. Also fourteen applications from foreign musicians for work permits were handled. All but two (who already were in Sweden) had been recommended for rejection. In all cases the Socialstyrelsen (Social Board of Health and Welfare) had approved the applications. An association for the conductors had been founded outside the Union. At first the board had been against such an association but as its members simultaneously were members of the Union the board had approved of its creation. During the year a total of 328 matters had been noted in the diary. Finally, in the report the board expresses the hope that members should show more solidarity amongst themselves and work for the joint cause of the Union. The final words of the report hoped that “everyone should not only follow the regulations [but] also oversee that other members are doing their duty”.

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7 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from General Meeting, No. 1 (20 March 1930): §5.
What the annual report does not reveal, is that this is a union that yet has to find its position and aims. For one, the question of what constituted a “musician” had not been settled, nor was the organisation as such settled into a coherent framework. The Union’s periodical is therefore saturated with editorials about conduct, behaviour and other organisationally related aspects.8 First of all it is difficult to estimate exactly how many musicians actually worked at a Stockholm cinema in the late 1920s. During the early years of the decade, roughly 40% of the Union’s total members were employed in a cinema,9 a figure that increased throughout the decade. However, far from all musicians were members, and these musicians outside the Union have never been accounted for. Also the official unemployment figures do not correspond to reality, as union musicians who played more than one instrument were counted once for every instrument, making the figures dubious. What is nevertheless certain is that the bulk of the Union’s branch of Stockholm’s members worked in cinemas.

What is also not revealed in the annual report is the attempt to reach an agreement with the smaller cinemas, which had been futile since Mauritz Enderstedt had said that he would stop any such contracts as the arriving sound film made the future look too uncertain.10 The Musicians’ Union had also been forced, due to sound film, to make concession after concession during the autumn of 1929.11

Also, initially the tariff that was decided by the Musicians’ Union for sound film was high. The tariff was criticised and resulted in Svensk Filmindustri making, as noted before, its very first music recording of their first sound film in Germany.12 In 1929 it was decided that the remuneration should be 20 Swedish crowns per hour and musician, with a minimum of two hours employment per occasion. Twenty-five percent of the salary was to go to an unemployment fund,13 a fund that had been debated throughout the 1920s without the decision makers in the different branches agreeing the

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8 “Politik”, Musikern, Vol. 23, No. 7 (1 April 1930): 89-90.
10 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from General Meeting, No. 4 (6 October 1929): §9.
11 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 37 (18 October 1929): §4; §12; No. 44 (November 1929): §5.
13 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 25 (13 June 1929): §4. See also “Tariff för medverkan vid inspelning av tonfilm”, Musikern, Vol. 22, No. 12 (16 June 1929): 165. The tariff was, however, soon lowered see Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Letter from the Board, No. 4 (2 January 1930).
Because of the sound film the question was approached with renewed fervour but without getting anywhere.15

The musicians: a background

In one sense the Musicians’ Union was unique compared to other more industrially based unions, since the latter, as James P. Kraft has noted in relation to the situation in the US, often were created to confront “the sudden introduction of labour-saving machinery, [while] musicians faced the threat of mechanization after they had built a strong national union”.16 This becomes clear in the reactions of the Swedish Musicians’ Union towards sound film at a time when union policies had reached a certain equilibrium and stability. Initially the increased mediatisation of music did in not affect music life general. The sound quality of the recordings as well as the relatively high cost to acquire for example a gramophone during the turn of the century vouched for that. However, the development of sound recording technology together with better and cheaper apparatus made such machines more easily available, as illustrated by radio and the portable gramophone players during the 1920s.

From its foundation in 1907, the Union had been struggling for rights and decent working conditions. By the mid-1920s it had became a force to be reckoned with, succeeding after the big cinema conflict in 1922 to reach reasonable settlements with the cinema owners.17 Yet both outside and within the Union itself many initial problems still existed. Here lay one answer to perhaps the most striking issue of the Musicians’ Union’s policies during the conversion period - the lateness of its reactions. When the Union reacted during the end of the 1929-1930 season, it was stated as a matter of fact that probably many musicians will be unemployed by the start of the

next season and that this would have immense consequences for the Union.\textsuperscript{18}

In a way to salvage the situation the Union board even wrote to the ministry and urged that foreign musicians would be stopped.\textsuperscript{19}

Instead of acknowledging sound film as a dilemma from the outset, the Union became involved in disparate arrays of unresolved problems, despite the fact that the unions in the US agreed on heavy cutbacks in 1928, and that by 1929 most musicians in the film industry were obsolete.\textsuperscript{20} The Musicians’ Union’s officials in Sweden did not mention these reports, and instead brought forward negative audience reactions towards sound film in Europe.\textsuperscript{21}

On the few occasions that news from the US was published it was simultaneously stressed that the sound film was losing market share, and that the musicians in Europe could look with composure toward the future.\textsuperscript{22} It seems that the Musicians’ Union was not aware of the seriousness of the situation, as its officials only gave reflex responses, putting forward the need for “higher” cultural values of Swedish origin, which supposedly would serve as guarantee against something that was regarded as an invasion of mechanical noise.\textsuperscript{23} Yet, as Kraft notes in relation to the musicians in the US, the technological change brought on by sound film “affected wages, working conditions, patterns of hiring, definition of skills, and above all job opportunities” in such a strong way that they must have understood that their days were numbered.\textsuperscript{24} So why did the Union not react when, apparently, information about the seriousness of the situation existed?\textsuperscript{25}

In a Swedish context much has to do with its chairman Carl Lemon and his colleague at the Stockholm department, Josef Gelhaar (Fig. 56). The latter ran his department with a strong hand and controlled his branch completely. No question was too small or too big that it could be settled without first consulting Gelhaar.


\textsuperscript{20} Crafton (1997): 220.


\textsuperscript{24} Kraft (1996): 2.

Indeed, after having consulted the board minutes for the years 1928 – 1932 of the local branch, my conclusion is that he solved many questions before the department board and its members had given their opinion, forcing them to approve his actions afterwards. Together with an environment in which its members had difficulties in separating person from fact, the board created a conflict-ridden atmosphere, making it sometimes difficult to sort out the details afterwards. Since it seems that Carl Lemon and Josef Gelhaar did not at first give too much thought to sound film, the Musicians’ Union’s official policy saw sound film as something that would not change working conditions, despite the fact that opposite opinions obviously existed among the members. For instance, when the musician G. Berlin in May 1929 sent a letter to the Stockholm branch expressing concern for the future (the first time in the material that sound film is mentioned), the board decided without much further ado to defer the matter until later. It took until 1931 before the Musicians’ Union changed official stance and finally acknowledge the seriousness of sound film and one more year until the Union’s 25th anniversary in 1932 before it officially proclaimed that they had been wrong from the beginning. In other words, the Union’s periodical did not encourage any kind of critique towards the official stance, as many other organisations did, and it took to the autumn of 1929 until unemployment became an issue within the official publication Musikern. Although it was not sound film as

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26 See Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 51 (18 December 1928): §8 for only one example.
28 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 21 (7 May 1929): §12.
such that was the problem, at least the way it had turned out in Sweden so far, but the effect that mechanised music would have on Swedish culture at large. It seems that the Union as an organisation did not know how to handle an increased mediated music landscape. For its officials music was performed live - not through a technical device. It is this seemingly simple detail that governed many Union decisions during the conversion to sound. Still, in early 1930 when more and more musicians lost their income the Musicians’ Union representatives dwelled on this issue instead of acknowledging the seriousness of the implications of sound film.32 Also, since everything around union policies was so centralised, it was hard to get another picture except the one articulated in the press. And why would one react when even the CEO of Svensk Filmindustri, Olof Andersson, as late as in November of 1929 after a round trip to Berlin, Paris and London, expressed that the sound film had still not broken through,33 or that the newly-built Flamman cinema in 1930 was not equipped for sound film, and instead opened with a 14-piece orchestra?34

**Organisation, policies, areas of conflict**

The Musicians’ Union consisted of one main union board located in Stockholm. Under this were several local branches with executive powers over their own region. Every local board was elected annually for one year, although several of its members were continuously re-elected. Between the local board meetings, four to six general membership meetings were held annually. Usually these meetings were not well attended, resulting in a small group of members controlling most of the branch’s affairs. The number of participants only increased if special problems were addressed. To apply for membership, a musician needed either to perform a “dexterity” test or get credentials from at least two other musicians proving his/her artistry.35 Another aspect of the Union’s organisation was that musicians were not allowed to move freely between branches but were forced to apply for admittance and hence restrain the competition between musicians from different towns.36

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Since its foundation the Union had struggled both with being accepted as an organisation, and with their self-identity which mainly revolved around one issue: were they to be seen as artists or as workers? This seemingly simple question had pursued the Union from the start, and was the origin of many disputes since it was not easy to draw a line between amateurs and professional musicians, as many amateurs played for wages while many professionals took non-musical side jobs. In fact many of the Union’s reactions towards sound film can be traced back to this question. The whole union idea for musicians was debatable in the first place, as a union would link them to other unions for industrial workers. On this question the Musicians’ Union in Sweden was not any different from, for example, the union in the US which struggled with the same issue from the late 1880s onward, or the Union in Germany which had initiated an investigation on the matter in 1926, the result of which was published in Musikern.

One crucial difference between the Swedish union and its counterparts in the US was that the former from the start addressed labour related questions, while the latter, during their first years, functioned more as a labour exchange association than a true union. In this sense the US unions acknowledged the differences between musicians, and tried to solve the contradictory agendas that they lived by. Although for a long time they struggled with the division between a self-validated “elite” group, consisting of mainly white classically trained musicians, on one hand, and a group consisting of folk/country musicians, as well as black and Hispanic musicians on the other hand. In Sweden, however, instead of recognising such differences, the Musicians’ Union tried to fit every musician into the same fold, thereby created tension among its members. One such tension existed between the civilian musicians and the military bands, and in 1924 the situation had become so infected that three conductors formed a new organisation. Although it did not result in anything more than strong words events like this were constant within the Musicians’ Union. This is well illustrated by a negotiation between Radiotjänst (the Swedish national broadcaster), Konsertföreningen (The Concert Association) in Stockholm, and the Union, again as presented by the minutes. After a settlement with Radiotjänst on 18 October, 1926, the Union had the right to attend negotiations concerning musicians’ employ-

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38 Ibid., 22, 26.
41 Kraft (1996): 23,
ment relations. After three months of dispute concerning the tariff for radio broadcasting, Radiotjänst had grown tired of the Union’s unreasonable requirements, and instead wanted to reach an agreement with the association directly without the Musicians’ Union’s involvement. The main issue was that the Union could not accept that the symphonic orchestras agreed to sign a contract without some of the Musicians’ Union’s regular demands – requirements that these orchestras did not need. It would take until the acceptance of sound film before the Union acknowledged the differences among musicians and that this was what made their union unique. Despite such differences, the core issue that, according to the Musicians’ Union, separated all musicians from others was that “musicians did not labour; rather they performed”. It seems that participating in a recording and being under the supervision of an engineer was associated with “labour”, equating the musician with common workers. According to the Union a musician should perform live in front of an audience.

In fact, most of the issues discussed in this chapter can be traced back to the conceptual pair artist/worker. For, on the one hand, there was the Labour Movement, of which the Union was a part, which had grown in strength during the 1910s and 1920s, pushing for decent working conditions and better salaries (and they certainly had something to fight for, as the salaries after the First World War had diminished considerably due to the inflation during the war). On the other hand, the Musicians’ Union did not want to be associated with industrial workers since musicians performed artistically and, in their own view, belonged to the last defenders of Swedish cultural values. Such values were, in turn, seen as part of European values, which were supposed to be guarded against modern inventions from America. This negative interpretation of Americanisation was not only shown in the documents from the Musicians’ Union. A review of Sous les toits de Paris notes that it was “an excellent sample of what sound films should be and a manifestation of the European and eventually truly authentic trends in this direction – as opposed to all the spiritual poverty from the USA”. Bengt Idestam-Almquist used even stronger words to describe the inferiority of American film, as he concluded that it gives honour to the European film that “it has managed to salvage something of the filmic tradition from the chaos of the sound film, in the same way that the monks rescued a part of ancient culture through the dark ages of the medieval night”. When it came to Sous les toits de Paris he

43 The Concert Association, Minutes from a meeting between Radiotjänst, The Concert Association and The Musicians’ Union, 15 September 1927.
44 The Concert Association, Letter from Radiotjänst to the Concert Association, 20 December 1927.
concluded that it was “the ideal for sound film”. As mentioned previously it is the extensive use of music in French and Swedish film that makes them different from many early sound film productions in Hollywood, resulting in such negative comments regarding films from America.

One can see how this view on America hooks into what Sara Danius has called the myth of the modernist split “between, on one hand, authenticity, autonomy, and art; and on the other degradation, technology, and mass culture”. Gustaf Gille, the editor-in-chief of the periodical Musikern, summarises it as such in 1928: “Man lives not by bread alone, but by each and every word that comes from the mouth of God”, and according to him this was supposedly mediated through live music, and could “never” be achieved with recorded music. Therefore the Union came almost exclusively to emphasise reviews that put forward the inferiority of sound film, like the one Herbert Grevenius wrote about Love and the Devil:

One might almost say that everything that happened is that [Svensk] Filmindustri attracting large audiences and getting the greatest attention from the daily press demonstrated how to reduce the orchestra. Unfortunately, one has also then reduced the beautiful sounds.

However, as Karl-Olof Edström has pointed out, central to the dualism of artist/worker is the fact that being a musician in the 1920s was not the same as being a musical artist. Socially speaking, the artist was regarded as standing at a higher level and could be classed together with great composers or with great virtuosos touring around the world.

At the same time, there was the everyday musician who often, through double engagements, was trying to earn his/her living, and added to this was the fact that the regular musician worked in cafés, restaurants and cinemas, that is, public places associated with low or popular culture. In order to cope with tension, bad environments and long working days, many musicians turned to alcohol, as the following anecdote illustrates:

All his features, as well as limbs, drooped; his nose drooped, his cheek, chin, arms, and legs and the little potbelly drooped. Alcohol had become his ruin; he was never sober when he worked. In between he worked to find employment.

The citation is from an autobiography and may be an expression of poetic license but alcohol indeed was a problem as illustrated in the following example from Ernst Rolf’s orchestra during a radio broadcast on 21 July 1928:

Last Saturday, at a cabaret [broadcast on radio], Sixten Brandes (trumpet) turned up in a very drunken state. This destroyed the entire broadcast. When reprimanded he acted scornfully and under the influence. Not only the conductor Pierre de Caillaux tried to intervene to salvage the situation but also Sven Jerring.\footnote{Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 180 (24 July 1928). Ernst Rolf was a very well known revue artist in Sweden. Bengt Idestam-Almquist wrote, for example, in the review of Fox Movietone Follies of 1929 that the “vast majority of us have no chance to follow the example of Rolf and study Broadway’s legendary glory on the spot. It is no longer necessary. One needs only go to Palladium. There one can at a low cost get a good apprehension of a fairly typical New York revue – at a considerably lower price than Rolf had to pay”, Bengt Idestam-Almquist, “En glimt av Broadway i Palladium”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 30 July 1929, 9.}

This is very nicely commented on in Fridas visor by an establishing shot of a musician, who is seen drinking (Figs. 57-58).

![Figure 57: Fridas visor (1930)](image1)
![Figure 58: Fridas visor (1930)](image2)

But as James P. Kraft has pointed out, and something that the Swedish Musicians’ Union never addressed, it is difficult to appoint some musicians ahead of others. For example, in a cinema perhaps improvisational skill, individuality of interpretation, and stage presence may have proved more important than skills in sight-reading music. Despite that cinema musicians were thought of as being unskilled whereas symphony orchestra musicians were associated with professionalism (even if it would be wrong to place cinema musicians only to the former group).\footnote{Kraft (1996): 14} They too needed, for example, to be very good at sight-reading due to the special nature of their working conditions. If they had the luxury of seeing the film in advance, as often was the case at the larger cinemas, this was allowed only one day ahead of the performance. The conductor then worked out the music, and later handed his decisions to his orchestra, usually during the day of the actual screening. From there they relied on sheet music or played bits from memory from an
entire catalogue of selections. Also public changes in musical taste made it difficult to differentiate one musician from another. For a cinema musician it was crucial to follow changing tastes in order for their employer to fill his/her cinema. But as I will show below, this was not an aspect that the Swedish Musicians’ Union acknowledged, and it took until sound film had become a reality that some changes can be discerned. This happened when Union seems to have given up on the dualism idea and instead argued that “artist workers” too have the same right as industrial workers to fight for their rights in a similar manner as the latter. Then it was also argued that a musician’s work is considerably more demanding than the work done by industrial workers as during a performance they also have to deal with the stress of meeting an audience.

Seen in this light, the dualism artist/worker helps to explain the conductors’ position and their self-image. This was an image that put him/her in a central position vis-à-vis their employers. It was the conductor who decided on the music, although in Hollywood one tried from the beginning of the 1920s to provide cue sheets for each film in order to steer the musical selections. Regardless of how the music was set to a film every conductor and musician was in a very central position as a mediator between producers, distributors and audiences, a fact that was utilised by cinema proprietors where well-known conductors could draw an audience just by their name. Not so strange then that the conductors regarded themselves as knowing what to play. This also put them from time to time at odds with the Musicians’ Union board since the conductors were very well acquainted with the changing tastes of their audience, making them pick for their scores melodies made popular through radio and gramophone recordings. In this sense the conductors used for their own benefit the same technology that the official stance of the Union had such difficulties to handle.

Membership issues: the case of Wentzell Wanca

By the second half of the 1920s, more and more union members had started to grow tired of the tensions between various categories of musicians, and during the 10th congress in December 1927 the question of artistry were debated. This issue had also been discussed during the congresses in 1920 and 1922. Back then the dexterity test had never been questioned, although one

60 “Musikutövning som kroppsarbete”, Musikern, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1 February 1930): 41-42.  
61 Kraft (1996): 42. Cue sheet refers here to sheet music that was “distributed as a separate commodity” to use Altman’s words, contrary to musical suggestions that appeared “as part of a publication”, and not only containing music cues, see Altman (2004): 346. In Stockholm the most well-known conductors were Rudolf Sahlberg at Röda Kvarn, Otto Trobäck at China, Eric Bengtsson at Göta Lejon and John Kährman at Palladium.
discussed how detailed the tests needed to be.\textsuperscript{62} Now, on the other hand, many advocated that the Union should change direction completely from a union-artistic organisation to a pure union, that is, the artistic or dexterity requirements for admission should no longer determine membership. The Union board member Walter Karlander’s investigation had shown that big differences existed between the Union’s various departments, and that this was linked to the issue of musicians who lacked membership. If the artistic requirement was abolished, and the Union entered the Stockholms Fackliga Centralorganisation (Central Union Organisation of Stockholm), it was believed that the member base would increase, thereby making the member/non-member problem obsolete and the organisation stronger. This reorganisation would, however, one stressed, not affect the demand for artistically trained/skilled musicians, but rather more musicians would now feel the safety of being part of the collective. In addition, the membership of the central organisations was believed to help the Musicians’ Union to uphold and make the bans more severe.\textsuperscript{63} It was a bigger step than one might think for the Musicians’ Union to enter a central organisation. By doing so they finally chose sides on the controversial issue regarding artist versus worker by saying that they were a union among others, and that there was nothing special about musicians – the only thing separating them from common labourers was their work which, however, in their own view was extra ordinary.

The non-member issue had been one of the most central and debated issues in the Musicians’ Union since 1919 and had an impact on the whole organisation,\textsuperscript{64} including the response towards sound film. It was even the second point on the Union’s list of reminders. As mentioned, it was linked to the artist-worker dualism and Swedish cultural values since according to the Union only a musician that held a member card was able to contribute to the music life. As such the card issue was also the one that most frequently led to punishments of various kinds.\textsuperscript{65}

For a musician it could sometimes be difficult to refuse to play with a non-member as he/she always ran the risk of being fired. However, as a rule, cinemas, theatres, restaurants, cafés, and other establishments often disregarded this requirement, employing so-called amateur musicians in pursuing lower salary costs. The board meetings with department 1 in Stockholm between 1928-1932 that I have reviewed (approximately four meetings per month) are full of discussions and proposals on admonitions around such

\textsuperscript{62} Edström (1982): 73, 76.
\textsuperscript{63} Erik Ahlberg, “Jubileumskongressens resultat i fackligt hänseende”, Musikern 1928, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1 February 1928): 34-35.
\textsuperscript{64} Edström (1982): 60.
\textsuperscript{65} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 16 (3 April 1929): Appendix 2; National Tariff for Swedish Musicians’ Union, 1 August 1928, 4. The non-member issue seems to have been of major concern also in the US, see Kraft (1996): 28.
cases.\textsuperscript{66} One tool of inspection used was a severe control of the orchestras and its members. In fact the Union encouraged members to spy on fellow musicians, as it was seen as such a heavy misdemeanour to take commitments alongside non-members. The member revealed was not only fined, but he/she also ran the risk of getting expelled or being forced to make a public apology.\textsuperscript{67} For a cinema owner this in effect meant that he/she could be boycotted and be forced to screen the film in silence. The exception was once again Svensk Filminindustri, which by their sheer size negotiated a contract in 1928 with the Union that stipulated that employed non-members should be allowed to continue at their cinemas but that henceforth only members should be hired.\textsuperscript{68}

The Union’s argument was that by employing a member, the employer would benefit the most as the musician in question was artistically “enlightened”, and would not fall into the habit of playing the sort of music regarded as being below the accepted cultural standard. Putting a blind eye towards the cultural opinion, the Union’s argument is plausible in one sense. The ever-growing orchestras during the 1920s forced the employers to look for more educated musicians among the smaller ensembles than they had needed to do earlier, and here the Union could be a guarantor that these musicians were educated enough to meet the new requirements.\textsuperscript{69} However, this self-inflicted defence for the artistically acceptable often governed the Musicians’ Union decisions in important negotiations, making this argument disappear in disparate arrays of claims. For example, this can be seen in the debate with the Musical Establishment’s Association (Musiketablissemangets förening, MEF) in 1922 over new tariffs which eventually led to the big cinema conflict.\textsuperscript{70} This issue of what was artistically acceptable also coloured Union arguments against sound during the conversion period, as they argued that Swedish audiences would never fall prey to “the mechanical noise” and everything that was associated with it since they had been trained by artistically validated musicians from the Musicians’ Union.\textsuperscript{71}

Concurrent with the discussion of a reorganisation of the whole Union, the Stockholm branch was in January 1928 split into different districts to

\textsuperscript{66} See, for example, for the year 1928 - Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 34 (9 February 1928); No. 49 (24 February 1928); No. 67 (13 March 1928); No. 71 (13 March 1928); No. 118 (25 April 1928); No. 220 (6 September 1928); No. 242 (21 September 1928); No. 270 (October 1928).

\textsuperscript{67} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 9 (13 March 1928): §3; No. 10 (20 March 1928): §3; Minutes from General Meeting, No. 3 (22 May 1928): §11. These are only a few minutes that discuss the issue. As I mentioned before the question in one form or other took up the better part of the meetings.

\textsuperscript{68} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 55 (23 February 1928); No. 88 (5 April 1928).

\textsuperscript{69} Edström (1982): 70; See also “Tonfilmen en katastrof för muskier”, Svenska Dagbladet, 19 December 1929, 13 for a recapitulation.

\textsuperscript{70} “Musikarbetsgivarna bilda enhetlig front”, Göteborgs-Posten, 28 March 1922, 2; Wallengren (1998): 168.

\textsuperscript{71} “Musikeryrkets problem”, Musikern, Vol. 21, No. 23 (1 December 1928): 333-334.
survey employment conditions. The cinemas were allocated to the third district which was monitored by the department’s chairman, Josef Gelhaar. It is difficult to say with any certainty, and one can only speculate, but choosing Gelhaar as responsible for the third district became in the long run problematic. True, he drove a hard bargain against the cinema owners, and many musicians could thank him for settling many problems with the employers. But at the same time he was not a diplomat and seldom listened to advice, which created unnecessary tension not only with the cinema owners but also among the Musicians’ Union’s own members.

As mentioned above, a regular musician needed to have double employment most of the time to make ends meet. Normally, a musician worked during the day in a café or hotel and at night in a cinema or restaurant. From a musician’s point-of-view, obviously having a place to work at was more important than if his/her friends were members of the Union or not. Closely related to the non-member issue was the payment of the membership fee. If you did not have a salary you were unable to pay the fee, which eventually would lead to a cancellation of membership. This became a vicious circle, as the Union started to expel all members who were late with their fees during the second half of 1928 (just before the conversion to sound started in Sweden), which resulted in the problem of non-members increasing rather than diminishing (as was the hope of the 10th congress). After the new regulation had been initiated, the Musicians’ Union was forced to warn, fine, and finally expel many more musicians than before, and after a while this became such a problem that the Stockholm department saw no other way out than asking the central body to loosen this regulation.

From my research on the Stockholm branch, it becomes clear that Josef Gelhaar worked hard to collect the fees, and sometimes even paid visits to musicians who dared complain about board decisions on the matter. For example, after the musician Fritz Brandt at the Rivoli cinema lost his membership and complained, Gelhaar saw fit to give him a word or two of “advice” on how to behave towards a member of the department board. However, Brandt did not listen to this and demanded an apology from Gelhaar for behaving aggressively. Gelhaar did not see the need for this as Brandt, according to the board minutes, “had used abusive language against Mr. Gelhaar”. This was not a unique situation, and it is clearly shown by the minutes that it often happened that a member complained about Gelhaar’s ap-

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72 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 2 (17 January 1928): §9.
74 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 218 (30 August 1928).
76 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 2 (8 January 1929): §1; Correspondence, No. 11 (10 January 1929).
77 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 37 (25 September 1928): §6.
proach. Before sound film it never led to any reprimand against the chairman, forcing the member, willingly or not, to accept the circumstances. One must also emphasize that due to this new regulation the willingness to pay the fees in Stockholm increased in 1928, although some of the increase was due to a rise in new memberships.

But the best example of the Union’s policies and organisation, along with how it affected the relation between musicians, are the case studies of Wentzell Wanca and the Austrian, Eduard Hladisch (more about him on page 196). In the case of the former, the department board had found out through gossip that the clarinettist, Wanca, had played with a non-member at Hotel Anglais (he was also a cinema musician). The inquiry led to the board deciding to fine him as he did not respond with any acceptable explanation as to why this had happened, a fine Wanca refused to pay leading to a clash with the board. Wanca finally decided to pay the fines but reserved the right to appeal to the representative assembly and the congress since he felt that he had been unjustly treated. Wanca also applied for exemption from the rule against playing with non-members. Naturally the department board declined the proposition. Apparently Wanca saw it as a right to play with non-members, since he asked the board to include on the agenda for the next general department meeting the item of “collaboration with unorganised in different orchestras”. Of course the department board could once more only decline such a request since it was against the regulations. However, the board soon found out after another anonymous message that Wanca had been playing with the conductor Georg von Kraskowski, who by this time was no longer a member. In answer to why he broke the regulations once more, Wanca renewed his application for playing with non-members since it was, he claimed, impossible for him to follow such a rule. As a consequence the board decided to expel him from the Musicians’ Union, although Wanca demanded that an arbitrary board should rule in the case, and after a year the decision was reached that the Union had made an error.

One can wonder why it was seen as such a major problem to play with a non-member. The simple answer is most likely that by allowing this rule, the

78 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No 38 (25 October 1929): §12.
79 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 86 (1928).
80 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 18 (10 May 1928): §10; Correspondence, No. 121 (11 May 1928).
81 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 21 (22 May 1928): §4; Correspondence, No. 121 (19 May 1928).
82 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 43 (6 November 1928): §4; Correspondence, No. 285 (November 1928).
83 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 37 (25 September 1928): §9; Correspondence, No. 251 (September 1928).
84 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 44 (13 November 1928): §2; No. 48 (27 November 1928): §1; Correspondence, No. 292 (November 1928).
85 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 308 (9 November 1929).
Musicians’ Union would not be able in the long run to uphold the salaries since non-members were paid less. From an organisational point of view it was, of course, important that as many musicians as possible were connected to the Union, as this made it stronger. But the question remains as to why it was seen as such a big error to try to make ends meet by taking side jobs with non-members. From the minutes it can be concluded that this was the worst fault a member could commit, resulting in all sorts of penalties and punishments which actually were not in parity to the actual “crime” committed.

If one links the above to the artist/worker dualism, a slightly different picture emerges. Although not explicitly expressed, one can sense, for example, a feeling of uncertainty with regard to future influences. For instance, with the coming of radio, new musical styles spread and became more popular among the public. Usually it was not members of the Musicians’ Union who first adapted to these styles, but amateur musicians living from hand to mouth. These amateurs also adopted a rather laidback approach towards their music, adopting the previously mentioned laissez-faire attitude of the “world citizen”, by playing only two-three days a week. The Union’s view was that these musicians were not true musicians or “workers” of music since they supposedly did not take their work seriously enough.86 These amateurs represented a musical style that was not accepted by the Musicians’ Union, styles that for the Union symbolised everything that sound film stood for. Seen in this light, it becomes more understandable as to why playing with non-members was seen as the worst breach against the rules since it meant an acceptance of the same music styles that represented the “mechanical noise”. Also these musicians had often learned this music from another recording medium – that of the gramophone – instead from a professional or semi-professional musician (usually a family member). The emergence of the gramophone industry had crucial implications for musical education as aspiring musicians no longer needed guidance from private teachers, family members or music schools. Instead they could learn by listening to different recordings.87 This became even more the case during the 1920s with the advent of electrical recording which would offer radio sound reproduction at a high enough quality together with better amplification of loudspeakers. The elimination of headphones and the possibility of plugging the apparatus straight into an ordinary electrical circuit, instead of using batteries, and a dramatic drop in price, resulted in radio’s strong attraction to audiences.


Finally there were also the increasingly popular gramophone programmes.\textsuperscript{88} Despite the Union’s arguments, these amateurs often made more money per performance than regular musicians as they drew better and bigger audiences according to the employers.\textsuperscript{89} The popularisation of these reproduction devices and the easy accessibility of popular music also had implications for the smooth acceptance of sound film as it affected the external logic of perception since audience’s already was familiar with certain kind of music. Although it probably was not a specific melody encountered during a screening, they were at least familiar with how schlagers and other popular melodies were constructed. Equally important was the amplification in a cinema that surpassed that of gramophone and radio in the home giving the audience a different and larger experience of the melodies. Together this made these songs a perfect tool for moving between Werner Wolf’s notions of imitation and thematisation facilitating for the integration of the sound track into the diegetic world.

One can ask how representative the case of Wanca was, or how typical he himself was. Could he have been just a troublemaker, making life difficult for everyone around him, in a way asking to be treated in this way? This could be answered in the affirmative, at least in one sense. He was indeed a troublemaker in that he demanded answers and explanations from the Musicians’ Union of its actions, and by doing so questioned the Musicians’ Union’s organisational policies. The question could also be answered in the negative as he was a typical musician who only tried to make ends meet, forcing him to break some rules while following others. For instance, during this process, when Wanca tried to avoid paying the fine for playing with a non-member, he nonetheless accused a fellow musician, G. Almgren, who apparently (by mistake) had played with a non-member during one of the Royal Dramatic Theatre’s dance evenings. When Almgren found out that some of the musicians were not members he had, he claimed, immediately stopped playing with them. The board had at first come to the conclusion that he should not be punished, but Wanca’s accusation forced the board to investigate the case further.\textsuperscript{90} On this score Wanca was a dutiful member (and it happened several times),\textsuperscript{91} spying on his fellow musicians, but at the same time he was obviously a troublesome member as he broke the same rule. From this case one can draw the conclusion that the Musicians’ Union was not used to being questioned, and that a simple musician “worker” should not demand explanations on issues that he or she did not understand.

\textsuperscript{89} Edström (1982): 150-151.
\textsuperscript{90} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 32 (23 August 1928): §9; Correspondence, No. 213 (24 August 1928).
\textsuperscript{91} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 249 (14 September 1928).
What the resolution of the case of Wentzell Wanca furthermore illustrates is that the Musicians’ Union was divided internally. There was a distance between the board members (many of them, in fact, practicing musicians) who tried to uphold the regulations, and the regular members. This came to an open clash during the autumn of 1929 when sound film had started to make its presence felt in Sweden. Then it was for most members no longer a question of following regulations or not, but to rescue their employment altogether which can be seen in the musicians’ reactions towards a written communication from the main body of the Union. Even the department’s chairman Josef Gelhaar was against this communication but was overruled:

To the board of the central union body in…

The undersigned, the board of the Swedish Musicians’ Union’s local department in…, hereby honourably requests, in support of our department’s association with your central organisation, for your assistance in the struggle that we have been forced to pursue against the so-called tone [sound] film.92

The communication ends with a call against recorded American music and a wish to boycott sound film. It was also stressed in a comment in Musikern that the action was foremost in support of Swedish cultural values in response to the mechanised American music.93 On this occasion the members went against their representatives as the job opportunities grew fewer and fewer. After a couple of weeks the Union was forced to take a step back.94

This statement also instigated a prolonged debate about the functionality of silent film music versus recorded music where, for example, Bengt Idestam-Almquist argued that as accompaniment to film, mechanically reproduced music was better in every respect except for the tone quality. He emphasised the inferior quality of most of the ensembles present in Stockholm. The comment was written in the autumn of 1929, and shows how this reviewer had grown accustomed to sound as an integrated part of exhibition.95 Although the sound that emerged from the speakers did not come up to a live performance it still felt authentic enough to be accepted as a rendition of a lived reality.

Foreign musicians: the case of Eduard Hladisch

Wentzell Wanca illustrates the difficulties that union members faced, both from the Union and in relation to fellow musicians. This is further illustrated

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92 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 244 (6 September 1929).
by the musicians who had been expelled and tried to re-apply for new membership, or by the foreign musicians who tried to enter the Union. The case of the Austrian Eduard Hladisch (Fig. 59) shows both sides, as it not only illustrates the Union’s policies towards members that had been expelled but also their ambivalent view on foreigners.

The situation in Swedish music, and its relation to film in the 1920s, points towards strong similarities with policies in the US in the 1930s and 1940s. As Caryl Flinn has phrased it, there existed in the US a utopian ideal of a collective cultural identity realised through music. The strongest way to achieve this was believed to be the expulsion of foreign influences and a paring down of the formal complexities of a given musical work.96 This utopian ideal was strongly present within the Swedish Musicians’ Union during the 1920s as most foreigners came to be associated with “all that jazz” that followed with the increased mechanisation of music. Foreign musicians competed with Swedish musicians for employment since they often entered Sweden through a contract that paid lower salaries than the Musicians’ Union tariff. The Union felt that the authorities did not do enough to help them, and apparently this was a view shared by unions in other Nordic countries.97

The arguments against foreign musicians revolved around concerns that they were not as skilled as Swedish musicians, or did not reach certain Swedish cultural standards.98 If this was thought to be the case, one could neglect that foreign ensembles attracted audiences, and performed music that the audiences wanted to listen to. Instead the editor-in-chief, Gustaf Gille, on the topic of jazz argued in the Musicians’ Union’s publication, Musikern, in

1926 that Swedish musicians should learn these simple instruments, as it only took a few “weeks of training” to master them professionally. A couple of year’s later, unemployment forced the Union to arrange benefit concerts with jazz, and reluctantly becoming a part of the popularisation of jazz. Again the old debate concerning foreign musician’s entering Sweden turned up with the difference that Swedish musicians did not need the help of foreign jazz bands to reach out to the audience. Harsh reality proved that it was not that easy to learn these instruments or music styles, and employers therefore continued to import foreign ensembles. From an employer’s point of view, hiring a foreign musician or orchestra could boost revenues as the musicians’ often exotic names and different repertoire appealed to the audience. According to a law from 1 October, 1926, the Socialstyrelsen (Social Board of Health and Welfare) was the highest authority on the issue, and gave clearance to everyone entering the country. One of their policies stipulated that they ask the Musicians’ Union whether they agreed to a new musician. Since the Union as a rule was against every foreign musician, it responded negatively to such questions, proposing a Swedish musician instead. As the Union dryly concluded, such responses were actually never taken into consideration. But as has been argued from the Union’s point of view, this was the root of the problem around unemployment.

It is here that the Musicians’ Union’s aforementioned double counting of musicians became dubious. For, with the help of statistics, they could argue that there did not exist any valid reasons for allowing a foreign ensemble into Sweden, since too many of the country’s own musicians were out of work. The Musical Establishment’s Association (MEF) acknowledged the problem in a letter to the Socialstyrelsen on 28 June, 1928 and accused the Union of not giving a correct picture. The response by Gustaf Gille in Musikern was full of accusatory formulations, concluding that the Musicians’ Union’s intention had never been to give a true account of the number of unemployed musicians but, rather, to give a figure of how many musicians were available in every instrument group. In other words, his conclusion was that the Union followed law and order, while in reality the situation

101 Dagens Nyheter, 23 February 1930, 10.
104 “Lagtolkning och arbetslöshet”, Musikern, Vol. 23, No. 7 (1 April 1930): 96.
in MEF was completely different.\textsuperscript{106} Although Gille argued that the document which the Union had sent to the Socialstyrelsen stipulated that it was for unemployed musicians within every instrument group. The fact remains that the first original document that the department in Stockholm used to assemble the unemployed musicians that I found among the Musicians’ Union’s correspondence, was not listed after instrument group but by name, resulting in a much lower unemployment figure (for Stockholm 86 instead of 117).\textsuperscript{107}

When Eduard Hladisch and his ensemble applied for entry into Sweden in 1924 to play at the Fenix restaurant in Stockholm, the Musicians’ Union did not want to give them permission, something that the Socialstyrelsen (Social Board of Health and Welfare) overruled. For several years Hladisch was discussed as he simultaneously made himself a place in the Swedish society. Yet, he was, at first, not allowed to become a member despite the fact that he met all credentials after first unknowingly breaking some regulations. However, the Musicians’ Union was divided into two factions: Stockholm against the rest (or, more precisely, union department chairman Gelhaar against the rest). This resulted in a ban against Hladisch where the question was not settled, and did not reach a conclusion until the end of 1927 at the 10\textsuperscript{th} congress when he finally was admitted into the Musicians’ Union.\textsuperscript{108}

The Musicians’ Union drove a hard bargain against individual musicians who were banned. As a rule, members were alerted against playing with these musicians, usually by a message in the Musicians’ Union’s periodical during the time of the ban.\textsuperscript{109} This was not only a problem for the musician in question, but also for those musicians who had played with the banned member, and later wanted to apply for admission. For example, the musician Nikolaus Manditz, who had played with Hladisch during his ban, was forced to pay a lump sum to the department’s protection fund, apart from the admission fee.\textsuperscript{110}

As for Hladisch, the ban against him became the subject of a lively debate during the Musicians’ Union’s 10\textsuperscript{th} congress. Some advocated a harder blockade while others held the view that Hladisch, after having done concessions, should receive access to the Union. The discussion ended with the decision to permit his admission in exchange for certain conditions.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{107} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 172 (1928). See also Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 245 (21 September 1929) for a similar list.
\textsuperscript{109} “Observandum”, \textit{Musikern}, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1 January 1928): 10.
\textsuperscript{110} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 8 (6 March 1928): §5.
One of these conditions was to publish an apology in *Musikern*, an apology in fact written by the department:

**Apology**

Feeling sincere regret for the crime that I committed against the regulations and provisions of the International Musicians’ Union, which resulted in an international blockade declared against me, I hereby ask the Swedish Musicians’ Union and its members for forgiveness for what happened.

I hope that from now on, through collegial conduct, I may regain the confidence that I thoughtlessly forfeited through my previous actions. Hoping for indulgence for that which has passed, I have the honour to sign:

With excellent esteem

Eduard Hladisch

This settlement, and especially the apology, resulted in several letters of protest from fellow musicians. Some argued against the unnecessary hard conditions while another fraction was critical of Hladisch’s admission altogether. This compelled the Union to include a message in *Musikern* explaining that the admission had been settled in the congress, and that now, when Hladisch had fulfilled his part, one could only follow the congress’s decision whereby no protests would be taken into further consideration.

During the discussion of Hladisch’s entrance, Joseph Gelhaar’s strong leadership came into focus. Axel Willners (one of the co-founders of the Musicians’ Union and the first chairman of the Stockholm branch) accused Gelhaar of putting pressure on members who had signed a protest against Hladisch’s settlement. Gelhaar, of course, denied having exercised any pressure at all, but this was the first time that he so openly met such fierce criticism. It would take until the aftermath of the sound film for such open criticism to return.

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112 Eduard Hladisch, “Apology”, *Musikern*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1 February 1928): 42; Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 17 (1928).
113 “För medlemmar att beakta”, *Musikern*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (16 February 1928): 59, Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 5 (13 February 1928): §2; Correspondence, No. 33 (February 1928).
114 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minute from General Meeting, No. 1 (6 March 1928): §5. A short recapitulation of the discussion can also be found in “Från våra avdelningar”, *Musikern*, Vol. 21, No. 6 (16 March 1928): 91-92.
Richard Wagner versus “degenerate” music: the case of Georg von Kraskowski

Since the foundation of the Musicians’ Union, it had struggled to increase salaries or tariffs which were one of the main issues debated at the 1909 congress. What was problematic for the Union, and the Stockholm branch, during the 1920s, was its difficulties (despite Gelhaar’s strong leadership) in controlling the members, as well as the fact that decisions from the board varied. Often exceptions were given to some to play for a lower tariff while others were forced to follow the rules. This created a situation where the employers could dictate terms. The issue was debated at every single congress, and this was also the case at the 10th congress in 1927. The task during this congress had been to try work out a new tariff which, once and for all, would normalise the diverging local tariffs around Sweden. After long discussions, the congress agreed on forming a committee comprised of four members from Stockholm and four from the rest of the country in order to continue to work out a suggestion on how best to adjust the tariff. The branch board decided to emphasise that there existed several members who played a second instrument without any compensation, and that a tariff for this extra work needed to be prepared. It also decided to protest against a proposal that conductors should be excluded from the tariff, thereby making them accountable towards the employer.

One remnant from the Musicians’ Union’s foundation was still in existence, namely that each musician received their payment through the conductor and not, as one could be led to believe, from the Cinema Owners’ hand. In fact, the conductors were agents too, and signed contracts with the cinema owner for an ensemble. It was then up to him or her to form the ensemble and find the appropriate musicians, and sometimes the money intended for the musicians never reached them. The conductors became the supervisor of all music-related issues and were also responsible for organising rehearsals, fine, or even dismiss musicians who did not follow Musicians’ Union regulations. This organisation, with the conductors posted in the middle taking directions from the cinema owner while at the same time directing the musicians, easily created tensions within the Union. The case of Georg von Kraskowski illustrates this. Kraskowski was appointed as conductor and musical leader at the Rialto cinema in Stockholm for the 1927-1928 season (15 August 1927 to 15 April 1928). He was as-

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117 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from General Meeting, No. 1 (6 March 1928): §11.
119 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 7 (28 February 1928): §5.
120 Edström (1982): 18. This kind of organisation was also present in the US, see Kraft (1996): 46.
signed to contract seven musicians, with himself on violin for a stipulated sum per month. It seems that after half the season he had a conflict with some of the musicians, especially the drummer Albert Bennhold.\textsuperscript{121} Exactly what happened is not known, but it is clear that it was about how to interpret the contract between the cinema and the conductor, resulting in the musicians arguing that the money intended for them ended up in Kraskowski’s pockets.\textsuperscript{122} To complicate matters even further, in January 1928 the director of the cinema, Sture Aschberg, released Kraskowski from the contract and signed a new contract directly with the musicians. An uncommon way of working; soon the musicians ended up in all sorts of small disputes concerning their employment, and unpaid salaries.\textsuperscript{123} Kraskowski withheld the last salary from the musicians, as he argued that he was entitled to a fine.\textsuperscript{124} As a result, he also wanted to leave the Musicians’ Union but was not allowed to until this matter was settled.\textsuperscript{125} In 1929 he was also blockaded resulting in that Kraskowski sued the Musicians’ Union and its publication, Musikern. The musicians who had played with him were also listed in the Union periodical with a request that none should furthermore play with them.\textsuperscript{126} This case took up a lot of time, and was regularly commented upon until its resolution when Kraskowski finally lost the case in court during 1930.\textsuperscript{127}

His case is particularly interesting as it clearly shows how the Musicians’ Union took sides with the musicians and not with the conductor, despite the fact that both parties were members. In one sense one could argue that they took sides with the workers against the artists – the raison d’être of the artistically “correct”. At least the minutes I have read clearly show that this case was not an exception. Rather, a musician should have done something severely wrong against his/her conductor for the Musicians’ Union to take their side. In such a case, it most often had to do with musicians who turned up for work drunk.

But as a debate between Arthur Nordén, Gustaf Gille and Gunnar Malmström illustrates the Musicians’ Union also strongly defended artistically “correct” music. Arthur Nordén, a journalist in the daily newspaper Stockholms-Tidningen, found this out in 1928. After an article about the leitmotif principle and its use in film music, he was fiercely attacked by Gustaf Gille.

\textsuperscript{121} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 23 (13 January 1928); No. 24 (1928).
\textsuperscript{122} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 35 (6 February 1928).
\textsuperscript{123} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 100 (April 1928).
\textsuperscript{124} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 25 (16 January 1928). Apparently Bennhold gets himself into problems with the leadership of the cinema as he, in March, is reported to have been drunk during a performance – Correspondence, No. 66 (12 March 1928).
\textsuperscript{125} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 35 (6 February 1928).
\textsuperscript{126} “Musikern har fått sitt första tryckfrihetsmål”, Musikern, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1 February 1930): 46; Vol. 23, No. 11 (1 June 1930): 166; Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 37 (? 1929): §4b.
in the Musicians’ Union’s periodical. Part of Gille’s criticism concerned Nordén’s lack of musical knowledge, as in his views only a “true” musician, that is, one who was a member of the Musicians’ Union, could be in possession of such knowledge. Nordén’s reply was interesting, as it resulted in a general discussion about the use of the leitmotif principle in a filmic context and also touched on aspects concerning the felt difference between the Union’s official positions of the benefits of live music versus recorded music. The discussion was also coloured by Nordén’s criticism of the Musicians’ Union as an elitist organisation, utilising a high culture perspective towards everyone deemed not worthy of its supposedly high standard of artistry. Although Nordén and Gille agreed that music played a central role in the experience of a film, they had diametrically opposed views on how to interpret a leitmotif’s function in relation to a film. Nordén argued in great detail against its literal use (in fact similar to the criticism against the leitmotif later expressed by Scott Paulin), while Gille, in turn, took a position that firmly emphasised the whole discourse around Richard Wagner, arguing for this musical tradition as the only way of musically accompanying a film. One gets the sense that the representative from the Union felt that accepting Nordén’s standpoint also meant a recognition of “all that jazz”. This is also confirmed by the Union sources, which tend to equate recorded sound with jazz.

Film music borrowed the basic idea of the leitmotif from Wagner despite the fact that his original use of it differed from the later, filmic uses. Where film simply took the signifying role of the leitmotif at face value, Wagner used it together with the libretto to put the language-like character of music into play, forming a dialogue between libretto and music. Also, a leitmotif in film is seldom allowed to arrest the cinematic flow for a summarising statement of that motif in the way that Wagner halted the dramatic flow of his musical drama in order to make way for a statement of his motif. That is to

132 David Schroeder, Cinema’s Illusions, Opera’s Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film (New York/London: Continuum, 2002): 75-76.
say, the story unfolding in the libretto was temporarily delayed for the music to clearly state its meaning. During the silent period and during the early sound film, the unfolding story constantly moved on. However, during theme songs or during parts of a film reminiscent more of a music video, one can argue for Wagnerian similarities, as the motion of the film’s story is temporarily halted. But contrary to Wagner’s use, a musical leitmotif in a film narrates by indicating the presence of a character, object, or place. It can then underscore an obvious presence of a character, place or something else that is clearly visible on the screen, or it can indicate the presence of someone/something that is otherwise vague, and finally it can point to the psychological presence of a character or idea – that is all. The rhetoric figure of Wagner and that theme songs show on Wagnerian similarities is perhaps a reason why the Union took such a fierce position vis-à-vis recorded music since it would mean also an acceptance of the recording technique of sound film that seemed to threaten job opportunities so severely for its members.

Ann-Kristin Wallengren has shown that in Sweden the original score was a rarity. Instead, the most common way to set music to film was to make a compilation of already existing sources where it soon became a standard to use compositions from the classical romantic period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a musical style taken from the melodramatic theatre of the late nineteenth-century which was characterised by its strong emphasis on an actors’ actions. During the 1920s there was also an increased use of other melodies made popular through radio and gramophone recordings - although the lyrics to the songs seem to have been excluded.

Although, music programmes never became obligatory in Swedish cinemas, they existed regularly from 1925 onward. One reason for this was perhaps that, according to the Cinema Owners’ Union, cinemas should foremost be just that – cinemas. If song performances and other acts did not belong in a cinema, songs might be performed during a screening but one should refrain from it before or between films. This is very different from how cinema programmes in the US were put together, and the sole reason why the cinema owners emphasised this to such a degree had to do with Swedish tax regulations as cinemas paid less than theatres and cabarets.  

134 Wallengren (1998): 119-120, 124. The only scores are for *Sången om den eldröda blomman* (The Song of the Scarlet Flower, Mauritz Stiller, 1919) and the latecomer *De uståta* (The Outcasts, Matts A. Stenström, 1931). See also, “Filmen och musiken”, *Biografläget*, Vol. 8, No. 10 (15 May 1927): 243-244.

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That is, if song performances and other numbers were introduced between the films, the cinemas might have been forced to follow another tax scale. The debate around the mixed programmes soon also reached a conclusion when it was decided against them in 1928.\textsuperscript{138}

Even if pure musical programmes were rare they did exist, and, for example, as can be seen in an excerpt from a programme from the Auditorium cinema in Stockholm from 1922, the works of lighter composers from the nineteenth-century were used. According to the programme, the audience was first welcomed by an overture followed by shorts and newsreels, then a solo performance and finally, the feature film. Throughout music was played, and one can argue that the conductor, Adolf Amigo, tried to create a unified feeling and to integrate the accompaniment into the filmic discourse. The idea was that the audience should be drawn into the space of the cinema and in doing so become absorbed by the event.\textsuperscript{139}

This way of presenting the programme was established during the 1910s, and was thereafter elaborated on until the conversion to sound film.\textsuperscript{140} But as the artist/worker dualism illustrates, music in the cinemas was regarded as a lowbrow form of music, and complaints of its inferior quality before the mid-1910s is found in contemporary periodicals:

Is there not a touch of disdain in this specific word [film music]? Some people considers film music to be something vulgar and stereotyped. Such music cannot be regarded as real or genuine art. Thoughts from the earliest days of cinema interfere with later experiences of a small cinema box, where a lonely hack pianist plays polkas and mazurkas every night for 2 to 3 crowns to keep the audience in mood.\textsuperscript{141}

Before the 1910s, what characterised film music in Sweden and elsewhere was its improvised character on a single piano or another instrument, although there is evidence that exceptions existed with better planned accompaniment. Some cinemas could have smaller ensembles, although they generally were limited to quintets. It seems that cinema owners were reluctant to employ musicians, although the Musicians’ Union argued that it was economically viable.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{139}Program Leaflet from Auditorium for Excentriska klubben (18-20 November 1922).
\textsuperscript{140}Wallengren (1998): 95.
As can be seen in for example this image from the newly-built Karla cinema at Nybrogatan in Stockholm 1909 (Fig. 60), the space for the musicians was not big.143

No ideal cinema exists in Sweden. There are those who have some kind of proper music, mediocre and bad, but none exists, which could be much better. Hopefully improvements will come about with time. The music that accompanies the images, and that should be in perfect harmony with these, is usually not given too much importance, as it should. Piano and some sound equipment for the imitation of water noise, etc. are considered sufficient for several of the capital’s major cinemas.144

The situation was similar in, for example, the US where a typical ensemble consisted of five to six musicians, and accounts abound about inappropriate accompaniment. Much was due to the distribution system which made it almost impossible for a musician to prepare for what was to be screened due to time restrictions.145 Exceptions from this rule do, of course, exist and in one sense it was for the benefit of the film with small ensembles, as it made it easier to improvise and follow the anticipated action on screen. For larger orchestras this was impossible, so they were forced to play some general score throughout the film.146

In general, before some standardisation of music accompaniment was developed, one used for the audience familiar pieces taken from other contexts.

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See also Bowser (1990): 13; Kraft (1996): 34 for the situation in the US.
This music was rather autonomous vis-à-vis the image and could be rather unrelated to image content. Whatever the circumstances and to which degree music was improvised, all music shared the same aim of absorbing the audience into the diegesis with the help of continuous accompaniment, a correspondence between the music and the overall theme of the film, and the use of musical motifs for structural coherence. In this way music accompaniment contributed to the internal logic of perception and strengthened the diegetic effect.

As Gunnar Iversen has observed, the musicians are more to be seen as cinema artists or as intermediaries between producers, distributors and audiences. That is, besides contributing music to the screening, they also added sound effects and fulfilled various other tasks during the run of a film programme’s various acts. As Ann-Kristin Wallengren points out, that many times it even looked as if the music did not fit the images, and one can sense that the overriding ambition of some cinema owners was to lure the audience into the cinema with the help of music. However, something happened at the beginning of the 1920s, and both in Swedish and in international periodicals, the role of music in cinemas became more and more debated and criticised. This coincided with music starting to be used in a different way, becoming more closely joined with the film. As help, conductors started using catalogues with labelled motifs to facilitate the establishing of an audiovisual coherence where music worked along all of Werner Wolf’s notions of imitation, thematisation, integration and adaptation. These musical illustrations were characterised by periodical constructions of a melody which did not change or develop, that is the same mood was heard from the beginning to the end. Since there was no development, the motif could be interrupted anywhere, which was very useful in a cinematic screening situation. Once more, this shows differences between Wagner’s leitmotifs and film music motifs.

The foremost question, then, during the 1920s in Sweden, was what kind of music belonged in cinemas, and what one needed to take into consideration when scoring the picture, even if leitmotif was a good solution to the question? Such questions came to the fore in Sweden approximately ten years later than, for example, in the US, the UK and Germany – in spite of the fact that the use of musical illustrations quickly spread throughout the world, which may be claimed to have contributed to a standardisation of music in the silent period.

The Auditorium cinema in Stockholm of 1922 is a good example of how music was used in the cinemas of the time, not only as to what kind of music

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151 Wappler (1927).
was played but also how this came to influence Musicians’ Union decisions during the conversion to sound. The cinema was situated in an old and abandoned gasworks, sharing it with the Konserthuset (Concert Association) which at the time did not own a building themselves (the present Concert House was not built until 1926). This meant that once a week the Auditorium became a concert hall, playing a standard repertoire of classic symphonic compositions and some lighter nineteenth-century pieces. In comparison, film music had started to move towards lighter music, popular songs and film illustration music. In this very cinema then it can be argued that the two different positions and views met, as represented by the Musicians’ Union - the elitist and the popular.

The music at the Auditorium cinema also highlights another important aspect of the music in use and the subsequent conversion to sound in Sweden. For, if one of the main arguments against synchronised sound was that the Swedish market would be flooded with culturally “degenerate” jazz music, then the Konserthuset (Concert Association) was seen as a guarantor of good, “quality” music. Quality music here, of course, was equal to the classics. The question of for or against jazz was, in fact, a very heated one, and as Mats Björkin and Johan Fornäs have pointed out, it originated in a fear of modernity, but also (as I will develop further below) with explicit notions of racism, originating from the conceptual pair artist/worker. Similar thoughts had been expressed in the US at the turn of the century in relation to gramophone music and fears that recordings would help “to bring forms of ‘disreputable’ music into the mainstream culture”. It was even argued, in a fashion similar to that in Sweden, that reducing work possibilities for musicians in the US would not only hurt this particular group, but American culture at large. It seems that this argument continued well into the 1930s, that is that “better” music in films would raise the general cultural level of music in the population at large. Aldous Huxley, for example, expressed relief after witnessing the first part of the programme during a screening of *The Jazz Singer*:

> The jazz players were forced upon me; I regarded them with a fascinated horror. It was the first time, I suddenly realized, that I had ever clearly seen a jazz band. The spectacle was positively terrifying. …

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153 Ibid., 119-120.
156 Ibid., 83.
157 Copland (1941): 275.
When, after what seemed hours, the jazz band concluded its dreadful performance, I sighed in thankfulness.158

What is distinguishable in the debate in Sweden, and runs throughout the 1920s, culminating during the conversion to sound film, is the frequent collisions between, on one hand, a new technology, and its ability to mechanically reproduce dialogue, sound and music, and on the other hand, the established society. Here sound film, radio programmes, the young record industry, and the culture critics at established periodicals and newspapers, highlight this complex process of assimilation of a new technology. These technologies did not only modify the experience of time and space, but also came to compensate for a felt lack in everyday life produced by an increasingly mechanised society.159

As Scott Paulin has pointed out in this context, Wagner was “one artistic justification through which film could hope to gain prestige” and “to convince audiences that cinema was both aesthetically worthy and sufficiently entertaining to merit the repeated expenditure for admission tickets”.160 This is also the case in Sweden, as Wagner, in the Musicians’ Union’s view, heightened the status of the screening. In fact, one of the major contributors to this view was the Union. Gustaf Gille, the editor-in-chief of the Union’s periodical, Musikern, wrote, for example, in March of 1922:

Is not the satisfaction of [current] taste, through incorporating jazz bands, equal to profiteering on the audience’s lowest affections? Or has jazz music the right to be counted as a musical art in a restaurant? No, this ‘art’ belongs in American primeval forests among its original inhabitants or, as we have said before, among the fools.161

The Musicians’ Union was not alone in giving expression to this view. Similar thoughts prevailed among other associations as well. For example, let me quote the reasons as to why someone should buy an annual subscription with the previously mentioned Konsertföreningen (Concert Association):

Because through this You will leave a most substantial contribution to the cultural efforts of the symphonic concert activities in Stockholm. The economic support that Your subscription constitutes, is, however, welcome and necessary, in reality of minor importance. Of greater importance is the presence of a large, permanent, and musically cultivated audience, free from the sensationalist hunger that increasingly has started to dominate concert life in general, and which can give the necessary support to the ambition of giving the great, elevated musical

art works their due place in the concert association’s programme. Because through this You guard a cultural value which You would not like to see lost in a time when forces hostile to culture seem to gather to strike at all that, which through easy spiritual accessibility is not capable of acquiring the favours of many.  

In other words, finances seem to have been of minor importance; the association only needed a little help in fighting everything new and degenerate. Clearly, it was American film that best represented all that was deemed degenerate. However, it is important to emphasise that it was not the films as such that were criticized since too much money and vested interests were involved but certain aspects of them as, for instance, jazz music.

This view led to the Musicians’ Union regarding itself as expert on how correct musical accompaniment should sound in the cinema which is something that can be noticed early in the debates around film music. It was, in fact, this that lurked at the bottom of the debate on the leitmotif. Soon Arthur Nordén received support from the conductor Gunnar Malmström at the Metropol-Palais cinema in Stockholm. Malmström pointed out the evident differences between a film music motif and a leitmotif which he traced back to the lack of preparation time. He emphasised that this put special demands on a filmic motif, adding that “one can illustrate film without leitmotif, and one can use leitmotif without imitating Wagner”.

Malmström’s entry into the discussion developed into a virtual verbal fight between himself and Gustaf Gille. In his petition Malmström had described Weber’s use of the leitmotif and received criticism from Gille, who considered a leitmotif Wagnerian by definition, wherever it turned up. We see here how two musical positions clashed. Malmström with his more pragmatic view, taken from the actual working conditions which forced the musicians towards certain musical uses, and Gille with his more official view on how musical accompaniment should function. For him the acceptance of Malmström’s view would result in a rejection of what Wagner musically stood for in a Swedish context, acknowledging more modern ways of accompaniment, and thereby indirectly recognising mechanical reproduction. This official view of how things ought to be and how everything was in reality, clashed more than on one occasion, and sometimes it seems that the department in Stockholm (read Gelhaar) had difficulties in realising that, most of all, the musicians and conductors had to deal with the wishes of their em-

162 The Concert Association, Minutes from a meeting with the worker’s commission within the board, 21 January 1928, §1.
163 Similar arguments can be found in the Music Academy, see “Tonfilm sänker musiknivån, fruktar akademisekreteraren”, Stockholms-Tidningen, 25 November 1929, 7.
166 “Film och leidmotiv”, Musikern, Vol. 21, No. 4 (16 February 1928): 55.
167 Ibid., 55-56.
ployer. One illustrative example that once more put Gunnar Malmström at the centre, was when he on 26 January 1929 hurt his finger and was unable to play for one day. The owner of the Metropol-Palais cinema, Frans Nilsson, refused to pay for a substitute as the injury had occurred during spare time. Instead Malmström was forced to pay the substitute out of his own pocket.168

To return to the debate, Malmström emphasised that one should not define leitmotif from the context of only opera, but from its importance for the filmic situation in a cinema as such. Therefore he wished to speak of film music as an art in its own right. According to him, the first twenty-five years of the film medium had not heard film music in the correct sense of the word at all, since it was there first in order to drown out the noise from the projector, and later, when it became more elaborate, still tended to add only one composition after another, as if in a long line. He argued that this began to change during the 1920s, as one no longer tried to fit music to a film in such a way that it created two different entities, although he clearly saw that there was an intermedial connection between the two media, to use a modern concept. During the late 1920s musicians had started to seek coherence between image and music, and here the leitmotif had played a part in pointing towards a possible way of doing so.169 Malmström argued that it was enough to put a “label” on the music to use, as illustrated by Wappler’s catalogue. As long as one knew what to choose, one did not run the risk of creating displeasure. Such choices carried with them not only questions of how best to make the illusion work, linking the internal and external logic of perception for a proper synchronic/representational effect, but also helped clarify how the use of musical motifs in film was developed in the silent period, and how techniques were perfected which are still in use today.

What this amounts to is the Musicians’ Union’s policy of “correct” music - that is, the rhetoric figure of Richard Wagner, against “improper” music, that is, jazz and new dance styles from the US. Actually, from a closer perspective, Malmström and Gille largely agreed on how film music should function. What they differed on was what kind of music should be deemed appropriate enough to play. Gille’s view, more accepted at the time, was in the long run hard to sustain as new musical styles continuously came along. Unfortunately, one way of meeting any change was, as mentioned, to work for the upholding of a unified front by severely implementing the regulations. This did not only affect the Union’s relations towards its members, but also its relations to other organisations and, in the long run, towards sound film.

The emphasis on appropriate music and its relation to mechanical reproduced music shines through when looking at a questionnaire about the future of sound film that the Musicians’ Union sent to some of its conductors in

168 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Correspondence, No. 53 (8 February 1929).
David Ymer answered that the sound film would be a competitor to the silent film, but that the “fastidious audience” in Sweden would not respond lightly to recorded music, although he did see a danger if sound film should overcome its problems, which then might be on the cost of the musicians (only for economical reasons). To the question how to meet such a future, he only responded with a “Wait and see”.

Gunnar Malmström, who never believed that a European would accept “a mechanical substitute for a product of the soul”, put forward similar arguments but added that to begin with, and as long as sound film was a novelty, there might be some difficult days for the musicians, but afterwards everything would get back to normal.

Sign of a weak organisation: Carl Lovén’s private member’s bill on free days

As a last discussion concerning the Musicians’ Union, I want to show its weakness as an organisation vis-à-vis other groups, and how this came to affect Union members’ situation during the conversion to sound.

As has been described, in the 1910s many cinemas settled for one pianist only. The majority of these musicians had little interest in becoming members of a union. Although they played for wages that were well below the Musicians’ Union’s tariffs, they preferred this instead of losing their jobs, since rarely, if ever, were cinema owners interested in following these tariffs. The working conditions during the late 1910s were anything but good. Many places were draughty and had bad ventilation, and long working hours – two programmes per day, six days a week, and three on Sunday, a total of almost nine hours playing. In this context one should not forget the social status a musician working in a cinema had which, as I have emphasised before, was seen as unskilled labour. However, when compared to other groups, the working conditions were not quite as bad as the Musicians’ Union maintained, and one also needs to take into account, as James P. Kraft argues, that most musicians were dedicated to their trade, pursuing long days by choice in the hope of improving their skills.

Nevertheless the issue that was discussed throughout the 1920s was the question of a statutory free day. In fact, this topic had lingered on since the international congress in 1919, and reached its peak in Sweden in 1927 after the international work council in Geneva had submitted a report about musicians’ working conditions which showed that they were one of a few

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174 Ibid., 70.
working groups that still lacked a statutory free day. In order to rectify this, Carl Lovén (of the Social Democratic Party) handed in a private member’s bill to the second parliament’s chambers on 18 January 1928 proposing an investigation. Lovén stressed that the musicians had been exempted from the eight-hour law, and that they had been forced on their own to negotiate solutions with the employers who had proved more than reluctant to agree on anything. At the same time, Lovén had an understanding of the fact that the musicians could not demand a free day on Sundays as it was the most important day for the cinemas, but still maintained that one should be able to find another day in the week. Not surprisingly Lovén got support from Musikern’s editor-in-chief Gustaf Gille, who stressed that the musician’s trade was even more demanding than common manual labour. As evidence he put forward the findings of a Norwegian doctor who in 1922 had detected that musicians suffered from many of the injuries associated with hard labour. Again we see how the conceptual pair artist/worker shines through, although this time with a stress on the latter since the report fitted well with the musicians’ view of themselves as a trade group that got very little back from the society it served.

A similar idea is evident in the Musicians’ Union’s statement to the Socialstyrelsen (Social Board of Health and Welfare) on Lovén’s private member’s bill. The statement was written by John Holmberg and Erik Ahlberg from the Malmö branch. They stressed that musicians were as entitled to a free day as other trade groups, but they also emphasised that the Musicians’ Union was itself partly to blame for the present situation since it had not actively participated in policy making. Now with the new and, as they put it, stressful work premises for jazz venues and cinemas, it was absolutely necessary that a free day regulation would become statutory. The situation was fairly acceptable in the larger cinemas in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö since musicians had been able to negotiate one or two free days per month, but the situation remained serious in the rest of the country as the musicians had begun to show various occupational diseases. To little surprise, the authors condoned the bill as a whole. They also emphasised that free days should not result in any salary reduction, and would be stipulated by the terms of employment.

The employers, through Bernhard Garsten of the Music Establishment’s Association (MEF), also issued a statement on the private member’s bill.

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177 “Bihang till Riksdagens protokoll vid lagtima riksdagen i Stockholm år 1928”, Vol. 4, No. 68 (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1928): 5-6. One of few countries that had a free day for musicians was Great Britain as their Sunday Observance Act stipulated that each Sunday and public holiday were free.


According to MEF, the net hour of work for a musician was at its highest 40 hours per week, and moreover, he argued, if one included the summer period when musicians are without commitments, the hours of work become appreciably lower. MEF did not mention that in order to survive between the cinema seasons, all musicians needed to take summer employment. Nor did they acknowledge that most musicians worked double shifts.

After this, Gunnar Huss and Kurt Bergström from the Socialstyrelsen (Social Board of Health and Welfare) gave a statement on the private member’s bill. Their conclusion was that the Swedish musician’s work regulations constituted no exception from those in other countries. According to them, the claims did not lack justification, but that it was difficult to meet a general legislation in the current situation, partly due to the musicians’ relatively short employment times, and partly due to the problem of finding good replacements. This was contrary to the Union’s argument for not admitting foreign musicians into Sweden (as we saw above in relation to Eduard Hladisch). Huss and Bergström referred to a report from 2 November 1925, which suggested that the law of work protection would be augmented with the intention of securing night and Sunday rest for most working groups, which was a law revision still under examination in 1928, although they were of the view that there existed sufficient reasons, in the current bill, for further investigation.182

After the statement from the Socialstyrelsen (Social Board of Health and Welfare), the second law committee gave its statement over the question. According to the Board’s investigation, approximately one-third of the organised musicians with permanent employment had free days stipulated in their contracts. The Board further considered that it was questionable if legislation would serve any function, but that an investigation could still be in place. However, the committee did not find it necessary, since such an investigation also needed to take other trade groups into consideration, and the way the law now was worded, it applied only to manual labourers. As a further justification it was stated that free days for musicians were not regulated by law in other countries. With such arguments, the law committee recommended that the private member’s bill should be rejected, and when treated in plenum on 12 May, the parliament granted the committee’s rejection.184

One general problem for the Union in this case, as well as in other similar cases, was that their contact net was very small compared to the employers who among their ranks often counted both politicians and other policy makers. It was never articulated, but after reading the minutes and editorials, one gets the feeling that many times the Musicians’ Union had given up even

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182 Ibid., 168-169.

183 Ibid., 167-168.

184 Ibid., 167.
before a settlement had been reached. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that it was still quite a young organisation (despite the fact that the Swedish Musicians’ Union had existed since 1907), and not capable of handling major issues such as lobbying for a legislative free day, or meeting the threat of sound film. The organisation was still in the late 1920s more prone to negotiating local agreements around salaries and other aspects of the musicians’ contracts. If nothing else, this is illustrated by the lengthy debates within the Stockholm department whether they should instigate an unemployment benefit fund, or not. As late as 6 October 1929, at an extra general meeting, the matter was deferred. Instead, the decision was reached after a vote, and against the Board’s expressed wish, that money from the support fund for the sick and old musicians should be used instead.

Greta Håkansson: The case of a woman conductor

With the advent of sound film, the general working conditions for music production changed significantly. From being controlled by a conductor, that is, a musical leader, who made most of the decisions regarding the music, the control was now taken over by the person (usually not even a musician) in the control booth, signalling commands to musicians when to start according to the technological “instruments”. But as was shown in chapter 2, musical leaders in Sweden, at least to begin with, exercised a larger influence on the production process, resulting in an “a-typical” early sound film use of music.

For the practitioners of the music the conversion to sound meant even more. As this chapter has shown, for a short period of time several Union policies came into question as the changing environment put greater demands on the Swedish Musicians’ Union as an organisation. To further illustrate the conceptual pair artist/worker in relation to the issue of non-members, and addressing questions relating to the social change many musicians faced when sound film was introduced in Sweden, Greta Håkansson in her role as a conductor becomes of special interest. In 1928 the Musician wrote:

> We can also mention that Miss Håkansson, who has been with the Union since 1921, is a particularly devoted member ... on several occasions has she showed an interest for Union policies that unfortunately many of her male colleagues lack.

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185 Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from General Meeting, No. 4 (& October 1929): §5.
186 Ibid., §7.
In a time when sound film was just a year away, the conductor Greta Håkansson was put forward as an example to follow. Further on in the article her musical skill was emphasised, but it was foremost as a loyal union member in a time of crisis that the Musicians’ Union periodical, Musikern, published a honorary article in 1928 emphasising her devotion to Union concerns. Greta Håkansson was born in 1890, and studied piano and music theory. Later she took a position as an assistant teacher at Richard Andersson’s School of Music in Stockholm, and after joining the Musicians’ Union in 1921, she started working in small cinemas in Stockholm and finally, in 1928, becoming the musical leader, conductor and pianist of the small ensemble at Påfågeln (the Peacock) in central Stockholm for the 1928-1929 season. In addition to Greta Håkansson, the 300-seat cinema counted three male musicians.

One could believe that she was unique in reaching the position as conductor, but it seems that women were well represented in this job. For one, since its foundation in 1906, the Union in Stockholm had counted among its members many women. All-women ensembles played in restaurants and cafés, and many orchestras in the cinemas had female musicians. Some women, like Greta Håkansson, also reached the position of conductor. Another conductor was Siri Hildebrand at the Orion cinema. But compared to her the contrast could not be larger. Hildebrand was also a conductor and pianist, but contrary to Håkansson she was a non-member, which in the autumn of 1929 forced branch executive Joseph Gelhaar to make a visit to the Orion cinema in order to investigate and compel Hildebrand to become a member. Another problem was that she had played with other members of the quartet below the stipulated tariff.\footnote{Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 38 (25 October 1929): §12; No. 46 (6 December 1929): §4. By 1 January the Stockholm branch of the Musicians’ Union counted a total 54 female musicians. Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, List of Female Musicians, No. 72 (2 April 1930).}

To return to Greta Håkansson, she worked in a middle-sized cinema, which exemplifies the conditions during the conversion years. Being a musician outside the larger cinema orchestras in Stockholm during the last years of the 1920s meant that the presence of the sound film was felt strongly. With the conversion to sound film, one of the major outlets for employment disappeared. In Sweden the first musicians to lose their job due to this new technology worked precisely at small- or middle-sized cinemas. The bigger orchestras in the larger cinemas were in some sense protected by their reputation. These cinemas kept their orchestras at least a year after they had installed sound equipment, using them for overtures and so forth. For a musician in a small- and/or middle-sized cinema, however, releasing the musicians often covered the costs of equipping for sound. This meant that the musicians in these places needed to take any work available, forcing him or her to stretch the regulations of the Musicians’ Union.
As has been shown, one such regulation was the prohibition against playing with non-union members, and the problems related to this. Before and during the time Greta Håkansson became responsible for the music at the Påfågeln, the cinema had been troubled with internal tensions, both among the musicians themselves and against their employer (notably the conductor Victor Brandt who had not bothered to pay the membership fee to the Union). Thus, the Musicians’ Union board in Stockholm forcing to step in and try to sort things out.\textsuperscript{190} Interestingly, too, the cinema had occurred frequently in the minutes, but as soon as Greta Håkansson took control of the music, the cinema literally disappears from being mentioned in the minutes - evidence as good as anything that things were running “according to protocol”. So, in some sense one can read the honorary article about Greta Håkansson in December the same year as follows: Finally there had arrived a conductor who by following union policies had turned the Påfågeln into a functional workplace, earning Greta Håkansson a type of article normally only given to musicians when celebrating an important award or anniversary.

More interesting, however, is that the article emphasised the relationship between the Påfågeln’s conductor and the ensemble’s musicians, and touches on a question which was consistently returned to in Musicians’ Union discussions, about whether they should be seen as artists or workers. As a union member, Greta Håkansson was obviously an example to follow which in turn was contrasted against the conduct of her male colleagues. But more importantly, her artistic qualities were emphasised as well, as with all conductors that were given an honorary article.

Linked to the non-member issue is the fact that conductors like Greta Håkansson were seen by the Musicians’ Union as gatekeepers, protecting Swedish audiences against foreign influences:

One is supposed to dance to and for everything, there is supposed to be dancing between tables and chairs, between meals at dinner or late night supper, dancing in the mornings and evenings and at night. But the music must be adapted to that rhythmic perversity, and to this end jazz music is perfectly matched. When the fools dance, of course, the music as well must be as if emanating from a lunatic – the home of jazz music therefore should be at an institution, and there it certainly will finally end up.\textsuperscript{191}

Seen in this light, it becomes more understandable as to why playing with non-members was seen as the worst breach against the rules since it meant an acceptance of new music styles which, through the technology of sound film, would flood the country.

\textsuperscript{190} Swedish Musicians’ Union, department 1, Minutes from Board Meeting, No. 25 (12 June 1928): §5.
This is also a way one can read the advertisement for the silent version of *The Jazz Singer* on page 159. Although this advertisement, like the whole campaign prior to the silent premiere on the 18 February 1929, in some sense expresses the “soundness” of the film, by concentrating on Al Jolson, the advertisement can also be read from a musician’s point of view. On one hand we see the mechanical noise, eager to make its presence felt; on the other hand, we see the representatives of Swedish cultural values, equally eager to turn their ears away. In the middle of this fight against the unwanted, we find the Musicians’ Union with their conductors in front of their music workers at the time still debating over a disparate array of unresolved issues.

By the time these disputes had been settled the development of the film medium had already left them behind resulting in many musicians losing their jobs. Some cinema musicians found work at restaurants or gave up a professional music career altogether, finding employment elsewhere. But for most it only resulted in unemployment as the hard times of the stock market crash swept over Sweden.192

From here on the discussion around sound and music did not dwell on whether recorded music from the US met Swedish cultural values but moved elsewhere, focusing on if recorded and reproduced music and sounds were authentic enough in relation to its original. This is a debate that I started discussing in chapter 1 and one to which I now will return.

Chapter 5: Image, Sound, Audience II: “Authentic” sounds - the disappearance of technology

A visit to-day to a silent picture would amaze you now that we are used to sound and talk on the screen - one wonders how we ever got along without it. And, as the years go by, sound-recording is, day by day, improved so that those early recordings in the days of The Singing Fool now seem almost fantastic. Yet, as you know, in their time, they were something quite sensational.¹

When John Paddy Carstairs wrote these words in 1937, a decade had passed since sound film had started to become a reality and something that was on everyone’s lips. In Sweden the sound film entered during the first half of 1929 with the imperative “See and Hear”, and in emphasising the “and” it left no one ignorant of the fact that film had finally succeeded in uniting the senses of eye and ear. The conversion was fast, and had in only one year almost completely changed exhibition practices. In the words of Bengt Idestam-Almqist one “do not love the dialogue when it is there but one misses it if it is not - that is how spoiled one has become”.² Written in late 1930 his words illustrates how fast the integration of the sound track went as only one and a half years earlier dialogue had been felt as destroying the cinematic illusion.

Production and distribution companies, as well as cinemas, adjusted swiftly to the changed circumstances, while the Musicians’ Union was not facing up to the task, missing opportunities to salvage the situation and to help its members. After the conversion to sound film in Sweden, the medium continued to be a tool for story-telling such that its different parts, for example musical practices developed during the silent era, continued to prevail. However, one fundamental and obvious change took place during the conversion to sound: the addition of a recorded soundtrack. Once in place, the standard of sound recording developed fast during the initial years of sound where at first, in the 1920s and early 1930s, it was aimed at matching sound

scale with image scale. Very soon this gave way in Hollywood to a reproduction of sound that sought to create a soundtrack that had an equal-level volume and unbroken characteristics. At the same time this changed the perception of dialogue, sounds, and music forever. The Musicians’ Union emphasis on live music changed for an increased experience of music that was mediated through a recording and reproduction device, although live performance with dance bands and such continued and benefitted from the popularity of these recordings. As for sound effects and their connection to a specific object they became increasingly disconnected from the actual production of the image where the object was visibly present. Although separated this split between the object in the image and its sound effect facilitated the integration of the soundtrack and the re-establishment of an audiovisual consistency where sound technology disappeared within the diegesis.

Regardless of what model of sound reproduction you favoured, it was shown during the conversion period that the ideas behind machines like the Kinetograph and the phonograph had finally reached a technical standard that made it feasible to merge the senses in a large cinema theatre. As mentioned earlier, this was, at least according to André Bazin, an endeavour that had been latent within the medium since its birth, the ultimate aim inherent in the medium reaching as total a representation of the world outside the cinema as possible. In reality the conversion to sound did not only result in the coming of sound as such, but also that a specific representational system came out victorious over another, in this case a narrative-driven system favoured by Hollywood rather than a discursive-driven system as exemplified by for example Eisenstein. As was shown with Svensk Filmindustri’s use of music during the conversion, sound technology became not only international but also national thanks to diverging production practices. The way post-synchronisation was used in Hollywood was far from the vision nurtured by, for example, Eisenstein and Pudovkin, of sound being a new cinematic element in the construction of a film in which sound could be used in creating a meaningful conflict with the image. For Eisenstein and Pudovkin this kind of synchronisation that the following quote illustrates added nothing:

If sound, recorded with the assistance of photography, is only to be a new sign of the photographed object or person then that sound will add something only to the moment described and that is all. It will

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have no influence whatsoever on the development and deepening of cinema language.7

To begin with the two systems came to compete and alongside each other depending on where the sound was produced, as national specificities concerning sound influenced production. For Sweden this meant following a middle road between French cinema’s use of sound staged as a performance, and Hollywood’s aim to make the sound seemingly merge with the image for the benefit of the narrative. In this sense, Swedish sound production came to emphasise sound as a novelty, simultaneously staging the sound to clarify and underline narrative aspects of a film, acknowledging thoughts expressed by, for example, René Clair in 1929 as he emphasised that a distinction must be drawn “between those sound effects which are amusing only by virtue of their novelty (which soon wears off), and those that help one to understand the action, and which elicit emotions”.8 What this quote makes clear is that although the acoustics of a sound are not aligned with the actual event in the image, the emotional aspect of it can be. This explains how emotional associations that are produced on the soundtrack seem to belong to the images despite the fact that the sounds which created this effect of associations are not. Swedish conversion to sound films focused on making the sound strengthen the diegetic effect, and followed Hollywood’s sound use of working to immerse the audience in the illusion. In Sweden formative music was an active part to reach this goal, resulting in a very early non-diegetic use of music.

If the merging of the senses had been something latent in the medium, as Bazin argues, sound technology at large had in the beginning not achieved the dreams that had spurred, for example, Berglund’s experiments which resulted in erratic development. But there had nevertheless been a constant progression, together with other sound reproduction technologies, making audiences perceptive to the novelty of sound when sound film finally presented itself during the conversion years. These reproduction techniques had also, in the words of Mats Björkin, brought with them “a contamination of the real by emphasising sounds (or noises) we have never perceived before”.9 At the outset, as both James Lastra (see chapter 1), and Mats Björkin have shown, this “contamination” was virtually visible, very much making itself known. It was not until the recorded sounds could be merged with “real” sounds during the 1920s that these mechanical sounds were perceived as representing the original sounds, and became able to disappear into the

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Consequently this opened up for sound film proper during the conversion period, as the technology of sound reproduction was absorbed and transformed into a mechanism and tool for the process of making meaning, thereby also altering the audiences’ media literacy. An articulation of this can be seen in Bengt Idestam-Almquist’s review of Cimarron where the writer concludes that sound film is as much “film” as silent film ever was and that one had grown accustomed to the mechanical sound accompaniment.¹²

At the outset of the conversion to sound there was, however, great uncertainty regarding how to achieve this effect, and how to merge recorded sounds with “real” sounds. It first became natural for the film makers to look at how sound effects and music had been produced in the silent days, resulting in sound staged as if for a performance, making the sounds very much present. Although similar there were also some striking differences in the words of Nancy Wood, the “early sound film was obliged to create an effect of continuous time within a scene in contrast to the relatively pliable temporality of its silent precursor [where] musical accompaniment, composed to reinforce the continuity of diegetic time and space, could, by its own abstract nature as a sign-system, install ... a competing temporality”.¹³ Overlapping these differences formative music linked the diverging temporalities. Recorded sound as such was not only compared with authentic sounds, but also with how sounds “should” be constituted, and familiar ways of accompaniment.¹⁴ This is, at least, one way of explaining why the speakers in the cinemas were placed where the musicians had previously been seated.

After the conversion to sound

Soon in most countries the performance character of sound production disappeared in favour of a sound constructed to support the creation of cinematic illusion. With the conversion to sound film, “authentic” sounds, and their quality of creating a diegetic effect together with the music, therefore became a real issue, as they seemed to have been produced simultaneously by the object visible on the screen. As illustrated through the analysis of the reactions to Wings (in chapter 3) this effect is strong. For instance, it has been argued in relation to the film Hallelujah (King Vidor, 1929) “that the source of a sound is less important than its quality, that sound can create an emotional aura about a scene quite independent of the words and faces of the

¹⁰ Ibid., 37.
actors”.15 Despite the fact that the sounds in this particular film on several
occasions are clearly not in sync, they are perceived as if they were, and in
conjunction with the diegetic music create an independent sonorous envi-
ronment, which seems to merge with the images. There are also occasions in
this film when the diegetic music is produced with formative music, illustrat-
ing once more the importance of music for diegetic effect. What is empha-
sised in Hallelujah, then, is the importance of post-synchronisation, which is
a technology that allowed sound to become more disconnected from its au-
thentic roots, but at the same time made it possible to assimilate the new
technology of sound into the diegesis more easily. Or to use Werner Wolf’s
vocabulary the recorded sound imitated the authentic sound event to such a
degree that it was perceived as a true rendition. This helps the sound not to
be perceived as a realistic reproduction of a particular sound although, as
Altman points out, interpreting something as “realistic” in this context actu-
ally only means that it is realistic in this particular representational form.16

Another film that illustrates this particular aspect is All Quiet on the
Western Front (Lewis Milestone, 1930). This film uses post-synchronised
sound effects extensively, especially during the battle scenes, but due to all
the gun fire and numerous visual explosions, the effects do not need to be in
perfect synch to be perceived as such (as was illustrated in the case of Wings,
see page 146). Instead the synchronic effect that is created upholds the
diegetic contract - the illusion that what is seen in the image also has
produced the sound.17

Recorded sound does not duplicate an authentic sound but only represents
it, in the process, as John Belton puts it, eliminating “any noise that inter-
feres with the transmission of meaningful sound”.18 This process reaches
initial fulfilment with the Dolby noise reduction and stereo sound system of
the 1970s, which allows for a clean sound permitting louder playback. This
is achieved without increasing noise, since surface noise is considerably
reduced in the process, being a method for recording sound that simultane-
ously cuts the tops and bottoms of each sound. This effect, together with a
noise level that is almost eliminated, results in a final sound which as it
reaches the listener is too perfect, and in a way unnatural.19 Mick Alleyne
concludes that this has implications for how sounds are understood:

Sound technology effects reification of our emotions and sensory re-
 sponses in ways which we have come to accept as normal. However,
the constructed aural combination of dialogue, sound effects and mu-
sic in a film virtually demands that we establish new frameworks for
what constitutes experiential reality. How, for example, is our recep-
tion of recorded soundtrack music affected by the technological me-

15 Knight (1957): 161.
16 Altman (1986): 118.
19 Ibid., 67.
According to Alleyne, this means that “sound technology in cinema has created the referential soundscape on which we base the reality or inauthenticity of sonic events, potentially making the experience of sounds in real life conversely other-worldly.” In the age of the digital, we have reached another stage far from the sound recordings during the conversion to sound. From the first early sound recordings, which bore resemblance to a documentation of the sound event, to the early 1930s and later construction of a sound event, we have reached the total dismantling of the notion of a pre-existing original event. The recorded and mechanical reproduced sounds have meant that little by little, from the live sounds of the silent period to the digital era of our times, the process has gone towards ever more immersion into a mediated acoustic reality. It has transformed listening from the perception of sound as a reproduction in the late 1920s, to a listening that is perceived to be in more direct contact with the recording event. Simultaneously it is these recorded sounds which increasingly have become, as Michel Chion puts it, the “abstract reference we call on conceptually” – while the live sounds, the unmediated acoustic reality, have become mythical, as we have less and less experience of them.

Digital sound recording might be richer in detail, giving what may be perceived as a sound very close to its original, but it is nevertheless coloured by the technical process, perhaps even more so seen in the light of nearly eighty years of development in sound recording. Or to quote Harry Alan Potamkin’s 1930 anecdote: “Bernard Brown finally got the hum of a beehive and it is in the First National collection [but] why the effort, when a sneeze in the microphone simulates thunder?”

Anthony Asquith expressed similar thoughts in 1933 as Alleyne and Chion did several years later when he emphasised the strong connection between the visuals and sound. Asquith argued that instead of film being a medium characterised by the rhythmical relations between images, as in silent film, sound film was characterised by “the combination of these images with their accompanying sounds”. Essential in upholding the audiovisual contract is the rhythm of sound film with its “relation between the sound and the ‘cut’”.

21 Ibid., 19.
of the change of angle in the visual stream to the sound or dialogue which accompanies it”. Chion argues that what is at play here is the notion of synchresis that gives an added value to the moving images and that this in turn creates an audiovisual illusion, which creates a coherent intermedial presentation.

As illustrated in Swedish film, such phenomena could be seen in various short sequences which were abruptly stopped sonorously, as this makes the viewer jolt out of the audiovisual stream (the notable exception being the films of Svensk Filmindustri). In Ungkarlsparadiset (Bachelor Paradise, Matts A. Stenström, 1931), a film produced by Swedish Irefilm, the dialogue is cut short as soon as formative music enters the soundtrack. Also in this film, the music is occasionally not even integrated into the story at large which underlines the performance character of the sound reproduction. One sequence in the film, when the different characters walk around the island, illustrates this staged quality of sound and music particularly well. The music can almost be argued to be intermittent, and rather than carrying the narrative forward almost stops its flow. This connects the film to contemporary films of today that from time to time halt the motion of the film’s story to let a theme song present itself. There are also instances, as in Hallelujah, where the diegetic music is actually performed in the formative music, giving one the impression that the actor is “lip-synching”. For example in a sequence where a theme song is performed on a veranda, all sounds and music are produced with formative music, giving the whole performance an artificial quality which underlines the presence of these sounds. Furthermore, what this film shows in its use of sounds and music is, once more, how “open" formative music was used. If Hallelujah used formative music diegetically, it was nevertheless instantly diegetically motivated by a source of some kind. This is not the case in Ungkarlsparadiset where it sometimes takes several minutes before a piece of music becomes motivated, as in the first veranda scene, which actually makes the music in this particular film hard to define as diegetic or non-diegetic (Fig. 61).

Figure 61: Ungkarlsparadiset (1931)

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26 Ibid., 147.
When eventually sound and music started to merge with the images, one also, as emphasised by James Lastra, began to discuss the authenticity of these very sound representations. During the silent days this had never been an issue, as silent cinema had clearly defined roles for the sound space and its source as well as for “speech.” After the conversion, the space in which the sound was constructed disappeared, but through the use of sound technology film sound still gave the impression that an object on screen had created it.

Sound was contaminated by the technical process that produced it, illustrated by our problem of historically defining different mediums and perceptions as they are contaminated on one hand through the relation to other media practices and on the other hand the perception of the real. But as Mats Björkin has pointed out, this is not a question of how sounds represent the real in an uncontaminated way (or not), since it is contaminated by definition, but a question of what is excluded and/or added by the recording and reproduction of these sounds. As Leonid Sabaneev pointed out in 1935, this “constructionedness” of sound shows “combinations which are very effective ... when transferred to the film [and it] must be borne in mind that, before sound of an orchestra can be recorded on the celluloid strip and reproduced as sound, it has to undergo a series of transformations and elaborations.” Perhaps this is another explanation to the Musicians’ Union’s instinctive reaction towards mediated music. The music that emitted from the loudspeakers sounded for an ear that was used to live sounds as a distant echo that was far from any authentic rendition. This can also be exemplified by today’s discussions regarding the differences between analogue and digital sound.

What should be emphasised, then, is how thoroughly the contamination is merged with real sounds in order to make the audience believe in it and regard it as correct. As has been shown in previous chapters, contemporary response towards sound film shows that it took a while (although the process developed rapidly) for audiences to accept the disappearance of the space and source of a sound. They clearly sensed that something was not correct when their eyes could not “see” the source of the sound. Today it is very hard to imagine the reactions of an audience of the 1920s towards such an event as we see such a phenomenon as natural and, therefore, as Michel Chion puts it, “devoid of cinematic interest”. But in viewing these early sound films today with this in mind, makes one almost jolt out of the diegesis on those rare occasions when dialogue is heard “outside” the image, and hence not anchored to a source within the frame, as in the one short instance

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31 Chion (1994): 64.
in *Ungkarlsparadiset* where parts of a dialogue start off-screen before the character enter the image.

When eventually dialogue, sound, and music found a way of being incorporated into the diegesis it was utilised quickly in Sweden, and already by 1931, through the production company Svensk Filmindustri, Swedish films with a fully integrated soundtrack was a reality. In *Skepp Ohoj!* (Ship Ahoy!, Gustaf Edgren, 1931) there is, in several sequences, a constant negotiation between dialogue, sound effects and music. In this film, sound and especially music hide and disappear under the dialogue, in a manner similar to productions after *King Kong* in Hollywood in 1933. Although foremost having the characteristics of formative music, the music is carried over into the non-diegetic world with the help of dialogue, making for an advanced use of all the aspects of the soundtrack. Concerning sound, *Skepp Ohoj!* also produces “room sound” in, for example, a bazaar scene to give the feeling of a sonorous space in open air, hence manipulating the two-dimensionality of the image. This is carried even further in *Skepparkärlek* (Captain’s Love, Ivar Johansson, 1931) in which some sound effects, alongside the formative music, create a strong non-diegetic effect during most of the scenes around the harbour, as the formative music or the diegetic music is transformed and disappears under the dialogue, thus strengthening the internal logic of perception.

**The function of music in sound film: the internal logic of perception**

Although the war film as a genre today has become almost synonymous with an extensive use of music, there is barely any instance of music throughout *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In those rare occasions in the film that contain music it is always diegetically motivated. Even in a place such as the café where Gene Harlow works, music is not present. Restaurants, cafés, and other such environments were during the conversion years the place to normally put music, which was used in film after film. In, for example, *Anna Christie* (Clarence Brown, 1931) it is the bar scene at the beginning and a part of the amusement park scene that contains music in a film that otherwise lacks any kind of music accompaniment.

In this regard the film medium had obviously reached a state in Hollywood where music was believed not to fill any important function despite that if used correctly it facilitated in upholding the internal logic of perception the way bad sound effects always run the risk of doing. This also echo those writers who in the 1920s argued against the extensive use of music. Back then the argument was that music had taken too large a role, and that film music to a certain degree had controlled audience interpretation of the images too much. It was argued, for instance by Ernest Betts in 1928, that this happened at an unconscious level which made the audience exception-
ally responsive towards the music. This distrust of music carried over into sound film, as music suddenly had to share the soundtrack with dialogue and sound effects making it disappear in an extreme fashion, as was the case in *Anna Christie*.

With the return of music several techniques were established with which music was mixed. As has been shown, the formative music in Sweden almost immediately transformed into “non-diegetic” space, sneaking underneath the dialogue and sound effects, while in Hollywood, after *King Kong*, one started to work according to certain principles which were supposed to prevent the music from “disturbing” the audience. Among these principles, one was precisely the practice of sneaking a melody in under the dialogue which soon would take over the whole soundtrack. It was recognised that “much of the music in dramatic scenes must be so handled that the audience does not become music-conscious at the expense of dialogue or drama”.35 Another technique consisted of developing tone colours for specific situations, for example “Asian music” should the scene take place in South East Asia. Yet another one consisted of developing the technique of “click-tracks” which made it possible to synchronise music to the image very closely. The different functions that music was given from now on in Hollywood but had already been present for some years in Sweden can be summarised in Aaron Copland’s five points (as previously mentioned on page 34). That is, the music should create a convincing atmosphere, underline psychological refinements, function as a kind of neutral background filler, build continuity, and lastly build up a scene.36

Although music in sound film from time to time functions in order to underline certain moods, the ideal being that the audience should not “hear” it, music cannot be reduced to functioning on such an unconscious level. It needs to be heard, recognised and interpreted. As Robynn J. Stilwell notes, when music is heard the only difference from other parts of the soundtrack is that it is not “apprehended with the same semantic precision as dialogue or even sound effects”.37 The question becomes not whether the audience hears the music or not, but on which level the perception takes place, and above all how it functions. As Kathryn Kalinak’s reading of the musical codes of *The Informer* (John Ford, 1935) shows, these motifs are so conventionalised that they neither weaken nor dispel the illusion, but rather encourage narrative

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34 Copland (1941): 264-268.
35 Herbert Stothart, “Film Music Through the Years”, *The New York Times*, 7 December 1941, Section 10, Pt. 2, 8.
comprehension since we recognise cultural connotations in the music.\(^{38}\) Kalinak is referring to the same phenomenon that John Naubauer has pointed out that music both carries with it a meaning that is understood and at the same time uses narratives already present in culture.\(^{39}\) This has implications for audience participation which becomes more silent since the music demands higher attention as shown by Rick Altman,\(^{40}\) and it underlines how important the musical accompaniment, together with other aspects of the medium, has been for the development of the medium in establishing audience relation and integration with the narrative.

The process can be illustrated by the music theme catalogues, like Wapper’s, with their labelled motifs, which show that sound film adopted from silent film the function of music as explicator of emotional response. But, as has also been argued, initially the possibility of a synchronised soundtrack with dialogue and sound effects caused the momentary disappearance of music in Hollywood.\(^{41}\) If music’s presence within the film medium diminished it increased in other arenas where music before had not been present. Just a generation before sound film it was virtually impossible to enjoy a full symphony in your own living room.\(^{42}\) Nancy Wood argues, that “the most far-reaching spatial disjunction between the silent and sound film arose because the advent of sound introduced a ‘sonorous landscape’ no longer circumscribed by auditory events occurring in the theatrical surroundings, but by those transpiring in a recorded acoustical environment”.\(^{43}\)

One event on the film soundtrack that came to strengthen the internal logic of perception after the advent of sound film was the possibility to use silence as a structural device for the construction of the diegesis.\(^{44}\) Silence challenges the concept of the “unheardness” of music in sound film, for as a writer noted in 1935, “music itself may not be noticed [consciously] but if it is stopped without being replaced by other sounds the gap becomes perceptible, as a false note and a cinematographic dissonance”.\(^{45}\) Another “crucial spatial ‘indicator’ was provided by ambient sound, this time not in the service of a continuous temporality, but invoked to establish a specific acoustical ‘character’ for any given filmic space.”\(^{46}\) This was made possible thanks to post-synchronisation which allowed the technician to build up a sound from scratch. What this also illustrates is that the emphasis on the intelligibility of specific sounds at the same time allows for a blurry use of other sounds, like the subordinated role often given to music. On the other hand, since every sound (dialogue, sound effects, and music) is used to support the

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\(^{38}\) Kalinak (1992): 113-134.


\(^{40}\) Altman (1999): 42.

\(^{41}\) Kalinak (1992): 45.


\(^{44}\) Iversen (1994): 16.


narrative they need to “be fully comprehensible”, to use Rick Altman’s words.⁴⁷ This in turn opens up for Michel Chion’s notion of the “acousmêtre”, a ghostly voice that has no connection to any seen character in the image.⁴⁸ As illustrated by the comments regarding that the source of an object or a person talking also needed to be visible in the image, there has always existed a deep-rooted feeling that something is not correct, this is not the case, creating a feeling of unease. According to Chion one aim for the narrative is to reveal the voice, to contain it in a body. That is, a narrative cannot be reconciled unless the acousmêtre is exposed. This works similarly to the protagonist’s endeavour to get control over non-diegetic music, as illustrated by the analysis of *Ulla min Ulla* (1930) in chapter 2 giving another example of why non-diegetic music within sound film in Hollywood to begin with was felt as filling no narrative function. If there was music it was only there as a flat entity, while the Swedish and French films show on a music accompaniment that participates deeply in the construction of the narrative and as such also work along similar principles as exemplified by Chion’s acousmêtre.

If the performance character of sound and music use during the conversion period was seen as a plausible and a possible model for sound reproduction, it was, as mentioned, the function of sound and music to support the narrative as practiced in Hollywood that came to dominate. Seen in this light, the role, as argued by John Belton, of the part-talkies cannot be overestimated as they can be seen to function as intermediaries between silent films and sound films. For a short period of time they were in the process of becoming the norm for sound film production before Hollywood’s model was put in place.⁴⁹ The part-talkies could, in line with Donald Crafton, be seen not as a transnational step but both as a part of the silent films and as a part of the all-talking films.⁵⁰ For Swedish film production the importance of formative music also needs to be taken into the equation.

Regarding these part-talkies it was not, as the following quote illustrates, until the film medium had merged the soundtrack with the image track that both producers of sound films and contemporary writers saw them as autonomous products:

> A sound film is a sound film, not when it is simply a silent film intelligently or otherwise synchronised, not when it is simply a dialogue film, a mechanically reproduced stage play, but when it is an independent work, based on its own peculiar techniques and not capable of reproduction in any other medium.⁵¹

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⁴⁷ Altman (1986): 112.
⁴⁹ Belton (1999): 235. These part-talkies could easily be converted back to silents if a particular cinema had not installed sound apparatus.
⁵¹ Hunter (1932): 55.
As my analysis of the music in the Swedish conversion films shows, the part-talkies were, at least in Sweden, the link between silent films and the films with a fully integrated soundtrack. Here formative music played a crucial role for establishing not only the non-diegetic space as such but also the relations between dialogue, sound effects, and music on the soundtrack. This can be illustrated by yet another Swedish film, *Landskamp* mentioned before. The film contains long stretches of both formative music and non-diegetic music which are associated with certain aspects of the narrative. The formative music is associated with dream sequences and used in the overall construction of the narrative while the non-diegetic music is only used in scenes that carry with it negative connotations (Fig. 62). Non-diegetic music is used solely in instances when the main character starts to abuse alcohol which, according to the rules of how music functions in film, illustrates the character’s lack of control - as described in relation to the film *Ulla min Ulla* with its use of the French horn, and in a modern film like *Die Hard*, where the protagonist “takes control” of the non-diegetic music at the very end of film.

![Figure 62: Landskamp (1932)](image)

*Svärmor kommer* (The Arrival of Mother-in-Law, Paul Merzbach, 1932) illustrates this further and shows how intricate non-diegetic music was used in Sweden by Svensk Filmindustri. In this film, the non-diegetic music arrives when the son-in-law first understands that his mother-in-law will make a visit, hence underlining that it is she who “controls” the music and the son-in-law.

What these Swedish part-talkies illustrate is that sometimes music stands out, as with theme songs, while at other times the music “hides” behind the dialogue, sound effects and visuals. Both instances serve a narrative function.\(^\text{52}\) If it is heard or not heard is the wrong question to ask, for what is interesting is the *effect* the music has on its audience, to use Kevin J. Donnelly’s words.\(^\text{53}\) Music participates in both unconscious and conscious processes, challenging psychoanalytic readings of film as a medium that works more or less unconsciously and that often ignore the fact that these processes

\(^{52}\) Kassabian (2001): 52.

are also historically determined, as exemplified by Wappler’s music catalogue with its labelled motifs. Added to this are external factors affecting how susceptible a particular viewer is to a certain accompaniment. For example a representative from the Swedish Musicians’ Union might react negatively to a mechanically reproduced piece of music due to the tone colour while perhaps another viewer would be drawn into the diegetic world out of familiarity with the melody.

Edgar Morin has, for example, described his feeling while seeing a silent film in total silence, and that he after a while “seemed to perceive by synesthesia a kind of internal music, an inner orchestra ... as if the cinema expressed the music included, implied, in things”. I would also argue that this is an example of how our minds are constantly at work listening for sound and music cues to help us interpret images. This process of “listening” associates certain expressions, gestures, and narrative situations with certain kinds of sound and music. Rick Altman’s model of cinema as a cultural event clarifies that it is all about a continuing interchange between an audience and the production apparatus around a filmic text. The importance of this structure can also be shown in relation to memory. Annabel Cohen has demonstrated how memory and audiovisual relations function during reception. Material in short-term memory is constantly checked against hypotheses from long-term memory, and more importantly, it is not, in general, the acoustic phenomenon that is interpreted but its emotional meaning.

This evidence illustrates John Mowitt’s argument that “the conditions of reception actually precede the moment of [film] production”. In other words, this goes against Béla Balázs’ notion that music adds a third dimension “to the two dimensions of the screen ... [but] as soon as the moving pictures really become silent, they at once appear flat”. I argue that music (as well as sounds) is always present through intradiegetic sound cues, adding another dimension to the two-dimensional screen. It happens unconsciously due to the fact that it is not perceived but nevertheless heard by our inner ear. Morin calls this “silent audition”, and emphasises that we collect memories of sound, although we are unaware of these memories when confronted with them.

The visuality of the medium tends to give primary attention to the images, although in most cases it is the sound effects and music that guide us as to how we receive images. For example, the music can invoke our interpreta-

58 Balázs see Morin (2005 [1956]): 132, note 15.
tion of the images so that we experience the same image as ironic, melodramatic or frightening, depending on the musical accompaniment. Furthermore, as soon as mastery over the dialogue was achieved, it was not long before this was “no longer a matter of simply hearing people speak but [also] of hearing them think and dream” according to Jean Epstein. The focus on specific sounds in favour of others resulted in what Rick Altman has called the “voyeurism of the ear” or the “eavesdropping syndrome”.

According to Altman, generally speaking the demand was for intelligibility at the expense of fidelity to the pro-filmic event. This suggests that in Sweden, just as in Hollywood, this insistence was narrative led. Altman points out that in Hollywood, point-of-audition came to function solely in relation to the narrative, “not as external auditors, identified with the camera and its position ... nor as participant in the dialogue ... but as internal auditor”. This is codified to such a degree that even if the sound track is turned off the sounds are experienced inside our inner ear. Exactly as with point-of-view, then, point-of-audition is a representation of space taken to be real within the diegesis, and as Robynn J. Stilwell has described, the latter is perhaps more common and “is frequently associated with female characters”. Point-of-audition puts the audience in the subject position of a character out of control rather than in a subject position of a character in control like point-of-view does. The audience “must [thereby] relinquish even the illusion of control”. Kaja Silverman has made similar conclusions when she argues that “Hollywood’s soundtrack is engendered through a complex system of displacements which locate the male voice at the point of apparent textual origin, while establishing the diegetic containment of the female voice”. Due to the constructed nature of sound, the auditor is never made aware of the soundtrack as such, obscuring the fact that the effect of synchronisation is a representative effect of the original which “is independent of its representation”, as the sound with all probability has gone through a whole set of standardised technical settings to make it sound appropriate.

During the first years of the conversion to sound, the auditor was aware of this constructedness, not because of any heightened realism but rather, in the words of Ernest Lindgren, “through an excess of artificiality”. In order to

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60 Jean Epstein, “Slow-Motion Sound”, *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985): 143.
63 Ibid., 60.
64 Lastra (1992): 77.
66 Ibid.
achieve the representative effect several techniques were, as mentioned, established, and among them were, for music, the notions of counterpoint and parallelism. Both are closely tied to the leitmotif technique theorised by Richard Wagner, and such procedures were used with the goal of combining music and image to reach this effect “with motifs being introduced and returning ... to follow or duplicate the action onscreen” as proposed by Scott Paulin.70 This desire to make the music follow or passively be fitted to the images, however, soon fell over into explicit Wagnerism in Sweden as well as in other countries. Wagner was seen as an ideal for film music composers and performers, and concepts such as the Gesamtkunstwerk, unendliche Melodie and the Leitmotif were widely circulated. However, more often than not, as illustrated by the debate between Arthur Nordén, Gustaf Gille, and Gunnar Malmström (in chapter 4), these concepts became detached from Wagner’s theoretical treatment of them in such a way that the dominant role of the music in Wagner’s theory was reduced.71 In the words of Paulin, the sound and image validate rather than duplicate each other so that “the sound/image parallelism involves the mutual invisibility of visual work [where the] inaudibility of the soundtrack works in the service of creating a realist illusion that is nearer to Bazin’s total cinema than to the more mythic illusion Wagner hoped to achieve”.72 Werner Wolf describes it when talking about literature and music as a move from adaptation towards an increased integration resulting in that the two medias are seen as one.73

For Wagner a particular musical idea is uniquely linked to a dramatic situation, character, object, or theme. The meaning of the motif may first be unclear or even seem to change across the course of the drama, but nevertheless presents itself, and even draws attention to itself as an integral part of a unique artwork.74 In film, by contrast, the match between image and musical suggestion is far from perfect, although there is generally an attempt at pretending that a fixed and necessary relationship exists between the musical and filmic events. But this presupposes that a different accompaniment to the images will not create anything, and certainly not a different meaning, or will simply create dissonance between the image and the music. I contend that any pre-existing composition will inevitably create something together with the image, and at least from the audience point of view will most likely suit the appropriate filmic situation. As I have already mentioned, film music borrows the basic idea of the leitmotif from Wagner, albeit that his use of it differs from filmic uses as it has to share the soundtrack with dialogue and sound effects as well as aligning itself to the images.

71 Ibid., 58, 66. See also Dominique Nasta, Meaning in Film: Relevant Structures in Soundtrack and Narrative (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1991): 51.
72 Ibid., 73.
From a Swedish perspective formative music with its silent film music technique created a unique use of music as it was carefully recorded simultaneously with other parts of the sound track. This also meant that if not Wagnerian by the strictest of definitions, motifs were still used in film, together with sound and dialogue, to emphasise what happens in the image and to achieve a representative effect. A sequence in the Swedish film *Hans livs match* (The Game of His Life, Per-Axel Branner, 1932) illustrates this well. The music is constantly participating in the construction of the diegesis as the same melody and theme travels from the non-diegetic world to the diegetic, communicating with sound effects, dialogue, and the unfolding images. However, the motifs that are used are not as integrated as a Wagnerian motif would be, and could easily be replaced by something else. During both a scene at a construction site and in a café scene, sound and music (music only present in the latter scene) are first used to run under the dialogue, before they are allowed to drown out the dialogue, and hence function as a sound device to interrupt the audience’s understanding of the dialogue. This participation in the construction of the diegesis is carried to its fulfilment in *Svarta rosor* (Black Roses, Gustaf Molander, 1932). The film starts with non-diegetic music in a dramatic scene which opens the film, and with advanced use of music under the dialogue, music then builds up the atmosphere of the whole sequence illustrating the emotions the characters have. This film also shows how far Svensk Filmindustri had come at this time in integrating all parts of the soundtrack into the diegesis, as several scenes contain perfect use of mixing dialogue, sound and non-diegetic music, thus having reached a state of reconciliation, to use Michel Chion’s words. That is, the film medium had once again contained the technological aspects behind the medium in favour of the diegetic effect, or, to put it differently, the audiovisual contract was still present albeit a little altered.

**The intermedial aspect of sound film: the external logic of perception**

Although the aim of the film medium has been to assimilate dialogue, sound and music into the diegesis, the medium in general has since the beginning simultaneously put great emphasis on making the audience conscious of its auditive part emphasising the external logic of perception. Concerning film music, for example, this is clear through the use of sheet music and musical recordings like the gramophone, or as in the case of a close-up of an AGA-Baltic speaker in *Skepp Ohoj!* (Fig. 63).
The awareness of sounds including music illustrates that while the image is projected onto a flat screen, sounds and music are also projected as well as they transfer meaning onto the image. Although they might alter the meaning of the image, its centrality for attention is still, according to Chion, left untouched.\textsuperscript{75} Adorno and Eisler, for their part, felt that early soundtracks were not able to create an “image of voices/sounds” in the sense that pictures provide an image of figures.\textsuperscript{76} This phenomenon was felt as being particularly awkward a couple of years after the conversion to sound, before non-diegetic music had started to fill the void. As shown, all talkies were more or less silent unless there was some diegetic source that motivated music while part-talkies with its formative music ended up somewhere in between.

A question throughout this thesis has been why audiences of the late 1920s and early 1930s seemed to give up on the silents so fast? One argument often put forward is that audiences soon after the first sound films started to reject the earlier silents out of pure enjoyment of sound’s novelty. As several examples illustrate, the first sound films did not succeed only because they replaced the silents but because audiences saw them as an improvement on the silents. Already by 1929, Will H. Hays wrote that almost “over-night sound had ceased to be merely a novelty [and that there] was no longer a [question of] development for the future”.\textsuperscript{77} It is true that when sound was regarded as a novelty it was this fact that made it successful. Its astonishing synchronisation with the action on screen startled audiences and became sound film’s selling point. After a few years, however, sound was assimilated, so that the technology worked to make sound invisible, just like other aspects of the film medium like “editing, lighting, framing, and camera movement”,\textsuperscript{78} although the external factor of sound still was emphasised as illustrated by the speaker in the still from \textit{Skepp Ohoj!} With the integration of the sound followed Hollywood’s strong emphasis on inaudible environ-

\begin{footnotes}
75 Chion (1994): 144.
76 Adorno and Eisler (1994 [1947]): 51.
77 Hays (1929): 57.
\end{footnotes}
ment sounds, unheard music and noiseless silence in order to let their stars act with natural voices. 79

As the acoustics of reproduced sound gave a different feeling to the event, they were at the same time linked to other competing forms of entertainment of the time, for example concerts with jazz music. 80 Leonid Sabaneev and S. W. Pring noted in 1934 that all these different mechanical accompaniments “threaten to overturn the whole edifice of musical culture, to alter the very structure of the musical world and the actual process of musical creation”. 81 As we have seen, in Sweden this mechanical accompaniment was contrasted against the live music performed by “culturally elevated” musicians, as the Musicians’ Union saw themselves. In one regard the “liveness” of the music accompaniment that the Musicians’ Union put forward was linked to the rhetoric figure of Wagner and contrasted against “all that jazz”.

As has been shown, in a Swedish context mechanically reproduced sound and music had been available since the turn of the century. It had been a part of film experience since at least the early 1900s. Mechanically reproduced sound fulfilled the ideal of a continuous music throughout the screening, and made the cinema owners less dependent on their musicians, as Ann-Kristin Wallengren has pointed out. 82 It also helped attract an audience with the novelty of mechanical apparatus. Although the technology of the camera was hidden, the technology behind the sound was thereby emphasised - if not for its inferiority which made it noticeable, then at any rate for its ability to promote the cinema programmes. From then on the development was constant, but even during the conversion to sound it was not certain whether sound film would change exhibition practices or only become another gimmick soon to fade away, to cite the representatives of the Swedish Musicians’ Union. It was not until the sound technique could be contained and hidden from view with the help of music that the sound film could embark on its success story for real. Mechanised sound brought increased standardisation, making the products from Hollywood more normative, 83 a development that not everyone during the conversion was comfortable with. 84

What sound film also brought with it was a tighter control of audience reception. Before the late 1920s the same images could circulate in various markets and be interpreted very differently depending on the musical accompaniment. With a soundtrack, production companies could narrow down possible interpretations, making it possible to control their product more

79 Ibid., 249.
80 Ibid., 265.
thoroughly, due to the fact that sound effects and music could now be linked
closer to the image, along with the mixing of the sounds which at the same
time altered their character. This is, for example, illustrated by the radio
quality of music in a scene in Kärlek och kassabrist (Love and Cash Short-
ages, Gustaf Molander, 1932). Although a radio is never visible in the im-
age, the music is reproduced and given a character as if coming from such a
source. This process of manipulating sounds has since been developed to
near perfection making what is seen as an authentic recorded sound quite far
from actual sounds.

However, the new technology of sound film did at first seem to go against
the principles of narrative cinema. In the words of John Belton, one thing
that was “fascinating about early sound film [was] that they [appeared] to
violate all sorts of established conventions of narrative sound cinema”. But
as Belton continues to argue, sound conventions did at the outset not exist
and had not yet been codified opening the field for all kinds of approaches
towards sound film production. Few that were involved in the creation of the
first sound films had any prior experience. Instead there existed a plenitude
of sound practices with films being part silent or part sound. The different
sound practices can also be exemplified by the differences between Holly-
wood’s use and, for example, Eisenstein’s approach, the former, in the words
of Vlada Petric, working after a “mechanical accompaniment of the image”
to reach synchronicity while the latter worked for a “juxtaposition of sound
and image” to create a synchronous effect. Of the two approaches it was
Hollywood’s use that after the conversion period came to be the standard of
sound recording and reproduction.

What has been shown, then, is that sound was first regarded as a novelty,
and seen as a genre in itself, but soon it became only generic. There is no
other way to interpret the fast disappearance of sound from comments in
various sources. Here Hollywood’s conventions, which balanced voice and
music, had an enormous impact. Sound film succeeded to provide some-
thing new, but still worked along well-known practices – in the words of
Rick Altman about new inventions - “it must sound like the old, and yet be
new”.

In this context it is telling that the musical themes and motifs in Wap-
pler’s film catalogue from 1927 mentioned above were labelled with de-
scriptions of what kind of impression they should give. This procedure of
letting the music “describe” the images lived on into the sound film where

87 Belton (1999): 236.
88 Vlada Petric, “Sight and Sound: Counterpoint or Entity?”, Filmmakers Newsletter, Vol. 6,
No. 7 (1973): 27.
90 Rick Altman, “Toward a Theory of the History of Representational Technologies”, Iris,
91 Wappler (1927).
the music, although “unheard”, filled the gaps and fissures between dialogue and sounds. This had fundamental implications since the basics of the medium did not change with the coming of sound. Both before and after the 1920s films were steeped in music and sound effects which linked all parts of the medium to a single whole.92

Summary and Conclusions

Today we are used to sound film to such a degree that it is perhaps hard to imagine the bewilderment a contemporary audience felt during the end of the 1920s. Suddenly you could hear the voices of your favourite actors, adding another element to the flat, two-dimensional black and white screen.

What this dissertation shows is not only that the conversion to sound changed production and exhibition practices but also that after the initial uncertainty it was, for most groups, business as usual. Soon the production companies (especially as illustrated in the case of Svensk Filminindustri) approached the situation in a down-to-earth manner, which resulted in a smooth conversion. The cinema owners also ended up taking a rather straightforward and casual approach on how to act as their organisation was flexible and strong enough to adjust to the changing environment. However, for the musicians who increasingly during the 1920s had been associated with the cinematic event, it meant unemployment. For them it was not a question of deciding on whether to accept sound film or not, but rather on how to act to save their jobs in the first place. What is emphasised in this dissertation regarding their case was the lack of action in encountering the fast arrival of sound film, which was illustrated by the Swedish Musicians’ Union being the least prepared organisation to meet the rapid changes during the conversion period.

But the replacement of the musicians with a recorded and mechanically reproduced soundtrack did not change the foundations of the medium as it was still narrative driven. Instead, as is shown in chapter 1 and 5, the new technology of sound film brought with it either a heightened representation of the reality outside film, or brought new sensations to the experience of the cinematic event. The external logic and internal logic of perception worked together to give sound film an illusion of representing authentic sounds outside the walls of the cinema theatre while simultaneously augmenting the event.

The overall development of sound technology (furthermost telephone, gramophone and radio) during the first decades of the 20th-Century and the conversion to sound film in the late 1920s fundamentally changed the relationship between image, music and sound, and in so doing also altered how a contemporary audience perceived these. What this dissertation emphasises with regard to the film medium is that developments in sound technology and the musical accompaniment, as well as developments in the technology
of the soundtrack and of texts outside the film, all modified audience perception.

The conversion to sound film exemplifies that the film medium is constantly refining itself in relation to new technology and exhibition practices. Here one may only think of the journey taken by the soundtrack after the conversion to sound as it has passed through sound-on-disc, optical sound, magnetic tape, Dolby Sound, THX, and so forth. This process was instigated with the first mechanical recordings of sound and music in the late 19th Century. For the new medium of film it took a couple of years for technology to develop before a “realistic” sound practice could be put in place - the period that one usually calls “the conversion period”. In Sweden this period stretches from late 1928 to 1932.

Prior to the conversion to sound film live sounds and music had filled a narrative function. To a certain degree this seemed to end with the arrival of sound film. One general characteristic of the conversion to sound phase that has been argued throughout film history was the “disappearance” or increased “invisibility” of music. But as is illustrated in chapter 2 this never really happened in the case of Sweden, as formative music continued in the same manner as silent film music to fill the void before it transformed into non-diegetic music. This was the case already by 1931 with the film *Röda dagen* – two years before Hollywood continuously started to use music in this manner with the film *King Kong* in 1933. In Sweden the production company of Svensk Filmindustri started to use non-diegetic music in 1931 to meet the narrative aims of the production, which resulted in an intricate (for its time) way of setting music to film. In comparison, during the conversion period and the first years thereafter, music almost disappeared in Hollywood, unless diegetically or generically motivated.

In chapter 2 what is illustrated with the case study of the early Swedish sound films is that it was music’s presence that could assimilate sounds and dialogue within the diegesis. As chapter 1 demonstrates, during the first sound years dialogue and sound created a heightened media-sensitivity, breaking the diegetic illusion. But as is also shown, music adheres more to the demands of the narrative than to the image per se, and thereby also once more significantly helped to mask the technical construction of the medium that had been highlighted through the first sound films.

Initially two competing ways of using film music came during a short period of time to co-exist in the Swedish repertoire. Here Swedish film productions reveal strong similarities with French cinema of the time. While Hollywood focused on the intelligibility of the dialogue in relation to the narrative, for which music was seen as less important, French cinema and Swedish cinema, worked with a different model in which the sound was supposed to reproduce a performance staged for recording. This reliance on direct sound was prominent, and reproduction was understood as a recording of actors’ and singers’ performances, thereby also giving music overall a more
central place in the production. This explains the later strong emphasis on song performance in Swedish films of the 1930s.

Since it was impossible to re-record music, the performance idiom also meant that the productions were forced to simultaneously record dialogue, sound effects and music. To begin with dialogue and music could not be recorded simultaneously. Thus the music that was produced for the first sound films had a special character and in one sense was outside both the diegetic and non-diegetic world of the film. To describe this kind of music, I proposed in the introduction to use the notion of “formative music” as an umbrella term, which addresses this musical accompaniment’s functions in line with Werner Wolf’s intermedial terminology - thematisation, imitation, integration and adaptation. That is, formative music helps to construct the other parts of the soundtrack in their relation to the diegesis, as it is to be seen as standing outside diegetic and non-diegetic music. This kind of accompaniment was motivated through the presence of a live orchestra playing off screen, which contemporary audiences were very well acquainted with. In the overall structure of a film, formative music is, therefore, to be regarded as an important structural component that is a forerunner of non-diegetic music, and that this kind of “silent film music” came to play a crucial role for the construction of, if not the non-diegetic space as such, but for the existence of non-diegetic music.

The conclusion, then, that can be made through the analysis of early Swedish sound films is that although sound production during the conversion to sound became very industrialised and international, it simultaneously became domesticated thanks to the special circumstances at each location where the production was based. In other words this shows strong similarities with the findings of Charles O’Brien in the case of the French film industry.

In chapter 1 and 2, I pursue the argument that sound technology also meant a domestication of sound, illustrated by the importance of radio for sound film. In the US sound film came to be seen as a continuation of radio technology as it was foremost radio corporations that diversified the technology. In contrast, radio corporations in Sweden initially had not such a large impact although the know-how existed. However, when the Swedish film industry decided to develop a sound system of its own, the radio corporation of AGA-Baltic played a crucial role. With their help, the Swedish film industry finally succeeded in developing a sound system, and liberated the industry from high rental and service fees on foreign sound equipment. Simultaneously this solved many obstacles concerning the interchangeability between competing sound systems that had been so prominent during the ongoing patent disputes between foreign companies during 1929 and 1930.

Another distinguishing feature of the conversion period was the speed with which silent film was replaced by sound film. As is shown in chapter 3, and the analyses of the advertisements of the first US sound films on the Swedish repertoire during 1929, it took less than a year for sound film to
establish itself in Sweden. Technical questions, international patent disputes, and other issues like the uncertainty of comprehensively understanding non-Swedish films showed in the end not to be obstacles at all. Instead, the Swedish film industry smoothly realigned itself to the new circumstances.

The exception in this process was the Musicians’ Union. As is demonstrated in chapter 4 the Union showed instead on an astonishingly late reaction towards the changing environment, and initially did not address sound film as a real problem for their members. Well into 1931 it was still argued that sound film was only an expression of a passing novelty and that eventually this kind of film would find its place between the theatre and silent film. Partly this was due to internal and organisational disputes, and by the time these disputes had been settled, the development of the film medium had already left the Union far behind.
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Kameradschaft (G.W. Pabst, 1931): 8 February 1932, Palladium (German version).
King Kong (Ernst B. Schoedsack/Merian C. Cooper, 1933): 8 September 1933, Grand.
King of the Rodeo (Henry MacRae, 1929): 1 March 1929, Auditorium (silent).
Kongress tanzt, Der (Erik Charell, 1931): 26 December 1931, Röda Kvarn.
Landskamp (International Match, Gunnar Skoglund, 1932): 29 March 1932, Skandia.
Last of Mrs. Cheyney, The (Sidney Franklin, 1929): 20 November 1930, Metropol-Palais and Piccadilly.


Love (Edmund Goulding, 1927): 20 October 1928, China.


M (Fritz Lang, 1931): 31 August 1931, Skandia (German version).


Medan båten glider fram (While the Boat Floats Forward, Gustaf Sjöström, 1930): 26 December 1930, Röda Kvarn.

Midnight Madness (Harmon Weight, 1928): 22 February 1929, Auditorium (live dubbed into Swedish).

Million, Le (René Clair, 1931): 31 August 1931, Ritz, Ritz, Riviera.

Natt, En (One Night, Gustaf Molander, 1931): 14 September 1931, Röda Kvarn.


Prov utan värde (Test without Value, Hans Conradi, 1930): 5 May 1930.


Rio Rita (Luther Reed, 1929): 26 December 1929, China.


Sous les toits de Paris (René Clair, 1930): 28 October 1930, China.


Svarta rosor (Black Roses, Gustaf Molander, 1932): 29 February 1932, Röda Kvarn.

Svarte Rudolf (Black Rudolf, Gustaf Edgren, SF, 1928): 29 October 1928, Göta Lejon and Skandia (silent).


Symphony of Six Million (Gregory La Cava, 1932): did not premiere in Sweden.

Sången om den eldröda blomman (The Song of the Scarlet Flower, Mauritz Stiller, 1919): 14 April 1919, Röda Kvarn (silent).

Säg det i toner (Say it with Music, Edvin Adolphson and Julius Jaenzon, 1929): 26 December 1929, Palladium.

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Trötte Teodor (Tired Theodor, Gustaf Edgren 1931): 31 August 1931, Palladium.

Ulla min Ulla (Ulla, My Ulla, Julius Jaenzon, 1930): 27 October 1930, Röda Kvarn.

Ungkarlsparadiset (Bachelor Paradise, Matts A. Stenström, 1931): 2 November 1931, Rialto, Ripp, Riri, Rita and Ritz.


Vi två (We Two, John W. Brunius, 1930): 18 September 1930, China.

Värmlänningarna (The People of Värmland, Gustaf Edgren, 1932): 10 October 1932, Röda Kvarn.

Wedding March, The (Erich von Stroheim 1928): 15 February 1929, China (silent); 6 July 1929, Astoria (sound).


White Shadows in the South Seas (W. S. Van Dyke, 1928): 2 May 1929, Piccadilly.


Wings (William Wellman, 1927): 10 January 1929, China.


Woman on Trial, The (Mauritz Stiller, 1927): 14 January 1928, Rivoli (silent).

Ådalens poesi (The Poetry of Ådalen, Theodor Berthels, 1928): 27 October 1928, Metropol-Palais and Sibyllan (silent).
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