

Film Music *avant la lettre*?

Disentangling Film from Opera in Italy, c. 1913

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An Italian city with a history stretching back to antiquity, soaring orchestral music, and a singer named Tosca: this is what awaited the audience in Florence's Teatro Verdi on the evening of October 23, as the city's largest opera house hosted the local premiere of an innovative new work. But the spectators had not gathered to hear yet another performance of Puccini. The year was 1913, not 1900, and it was the young mezzo-soprano Tosca Ferroni on stage that night—not the fabled (and fictional) Floria Tosca. Indeed, despite the venue, this was not to be an operatic performance at all. It was the first performance (if that is the right word) of an early feature film, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*.

This film, an adaptation of a well-known novel published in 1834 by the English writer Edward Bulwer-Lytton, would become a landmark in the history of Italian cinema.¹ Produced by one of the leading Italian film studios of the time, the Società Anonima Ambrosio (hereafter simply Ambrosio), and directed by two of Italy's most prolific directors of the era, Mario Caserini and Eleuterio Rodolfi, *Gli ultimi giorni* was always destined for success.² Received rapturously at its glitzy Italian premiere, which took place on August 23, 1913 in Rome's Teatro Costanzi, the film conquered audiences across Italy, Europe, and the United States.³ In fact, it cemented Italy's position as one of the leaders of global cinema at this time and is considered one of the high points of the Italian film industry's so-called *anni d'oro* (Golden Years) during the silent era. At 1600 meters, corresponding to a running time of approximately 90 minutes, the film took full advantage of both the feature-length format and the capabilities of Ambrosio's vast studio complex in Turin; with its elaborate crowd scenes involving hundreds of extras, it remains a sterling example of the historical epics that would become the country's silent-era specialty.⁴ Along with *Quo Vadis* (1912), whose technical achievements it built upon, and *Cabiria* (1914), whose worldwide success it prefigured, *Gli ultimi giorni* ranks, in English-speaking lands at least, among the best-known Italian films from this period.⁵

In addition to its heroic dimensions, the film was noteworthy for another reason: music. *Gli ultimi giorni* boasted a full-length, continuous, specially composed

orchestral score by the Italo-Belgian composer Carlo Graziani-Walter (1867–1926).⁶ In this respect, it differed from most Italian films from the silent era, which were typically accompanied by smaller forces. The repertoire of such ensembles (whether lone pianists or small salon orchestras) consisted mainly of arrangements of pre-existing music—popular songs, light instrumental music, and hits from the operatic and symphonic literature.⁷ Thus, although the film was an attractive enough proposition in its own right, Graziani-Walter's score (and the large orchestra playing it) would certainly have presented an additional draw for spectators. Such scores were a significant rarity: according to a list drawn up by the musicologist Marco Targa, of the thousands of films produced by the Italian film industry during the silent era, only forty-two featured some form of specially composed accompaniment.⁸ But the score is an exceptional artifact in another sense as well. Most of those forty-two “scored films” have been lost, either in part or entirely;⁹ *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* is one of only nine films to have survived the significant degradation of the archival record with all of its component parts intact.¹⁰

Surprisingly, these specially composed scores of Italian cinema have been little explored by musicologists. Within opera studies, Pietro Mascagni's symphonic score for *Rapsodia satanica* (1914) is probably the best known, having been discussed in a number of recent works.¹¹ Within film music studies, meanwhile, *Cabiria* is the most familiar; but its score, featuring a small contribution by the composer Ildebrando Pizzetti, was otherwise compiled from pre-existing music by one of Pizzetti's students.¹² Graziani-Walter was hardly one of the leading lights of the Italian music scene during his lifetime, and he languishes in obscurity today. Nevertheless, his music for *Gli ultimi giorni* deserves to be better known, for it has much to tell us about film's entwinement with music in its early years, and about the conflicting aspirations of the filmmakers, composers, and critics who grappled with the musical potential of the new medium.

Indeed, *Gli ultimi giorni* can help us confront a vexed topic in film music scholarship: the extent to which the musical aesthetics of silent film are rooted in the music-theatrical genres that preceded it. To that end, this article provides an in-depth examination of Graziani-Walter's music for the film. The score, as I will discuss, features an eclectic mixture of styles typical of silent film scoring: upbeat marches rub shoulders with graceful dance tunes, and melodramatic agitation follows on from sentimental melody. The most intriguing passages, however, are those which show an undeniable debt to the tradition of Italian opera. There is, of course, a wealth of evidence to show that opera served as a guiding influence on cinema in its early decades, a high-register ideal to which the cinema could one day aspire. But recent scholarship has demonstrated that early film accompanists borrowed many (if not most) of their musical techniques not from opera, but from other, more popular genres—and especially melodrama and pantomime. With its allusions to styles, techniques, and structuring devices drawn from the operatic sphere, the score to

Gli ultimi giorni fits neatly within neither of these genealogical narratives (or rather, fits both equally well). By exploring Graziani-Walter's music, we gain a good vantage point from which to evaluate the various lineages of influence, operatic ones among them, that guided the development of early film music.

Yet my aim is not merely to assign operatic, pantomimic, or melodramatic valences to different parts of the score. In the latter part of this article, I consider the (poorly attested) early reception of *Gli ultimi giorni*'s music, in tandem with its dissemination in sheet music form. Despite Graziani-Walter's evident reliance on nineteenth-century music theater as a compositional default, the extracts of the score selected for publication are distinctly un-theatrical in conception; rather, they seem oriented toward popular music of the period. The resulting tension, between music oriented toward the past and music assuming the mantle of modernity, is emblematic of the ambiguous nature of composing for film in 1913, when it was not yet clear what film music should be (or should become), or even what film really was as an art form. Nonetheless, these extracts offer a glimpse, I contend, of the trajectory that film music would traverse as the medium continued to mature—and an insight, therefore, into the processes by which it assumed a distinct identity of its own.

A CINEMATIC “ARIA”

Let us begin our exploration of Graziani-Walter's cinematic *magnum opus* with a strikingly operatic point in the score. Some twenty minutes into the film, near the end of the first of its five parts, Nidia, a blind slave girl, approaches an open doorway.¹³ The camera cuts to an interior, where, in the back of the shot, a man and a woman can be seen embracing. Nidia pushes her way into the room through a curtain in the foreground, and enacts a pantomime of forlorn despair: the man in the background is Glauco, Nidia's master and the object of her affection; the woman, Jone, is his lover (and Nidia's rival).¹⁴ The music devised by Graziani-Walter for this prototypical love triangle is reproduced in [Example 1](#). What stands out immediately, to modern listeners, is the presence of a vocal line—and not just any vocal line, but a distinctly operatic one, reminiscent of *verismo* in its melodic sweep and harmonic trajectory.¹⁵ Its words, based around the phrase *Glauco, io t'amo!*, are evocative of the poetic idiom of Italian opera, but are not actually in verse; the climax of the phrase rests on the insistent repetition of *t'amo t'amo t'amo*. Meanwhile, the orchestration implied by the piano reduction also gestures toward the operatic stage: high violins doubling the melody, over *tremolando* lower strings. This miniature aria belongs to Nidia alone, as the supertitle annotations to the score make clear.¹⁶ At this moment of heightened emotional expression, then, Graziani-Walter intended for Nidia to be given a voice, and for the film's habitually mute world to become vocal, at least temporarily.

15) Le spine della gelosia
15) *The thorns of jealousy*

Nidia prorompendo internamente
Nidia's internal outburst
(canto che si può omettere a piacere)
(vocal part that can be omitted)

Gla - u - co io t'a - mo!
Oh Glau-co I love you!

Gla - u - co io t'a - mo! son tua nel - la vi - ta e nel - la mor -
Oh Glau - co I love you! I am yours in life and in

- te Gla-u-co io t'a - mo t'a - mo t'a - mo!
death Glau - co I love you love you love you!

(Apparizione di due Colombi)
(Appearance of two Doves)

pp *f*

Fine della prima parte — End of Part One

Example 1 Nidia's first "aria." Musical example adapted from Carlo Graziani-Walter, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, piano score, 34–35. The original score features dual-language supertitles and vocal underlay in Italian and French. For the purposes of this article, the French in this example (and all subsequent examples) has been replaced with my own English translation.

What to make of this operatic outburst? It is now common knowledge that opera influenced cinema greatly in its early decades, and scholars have uncovered a wealth of affinities between the two media. It would be easy, therefore, to chalk up the presence of such an “aria” in a film score of the silent era to this operatic chain of influence. However, while it is beyond doubt that opera provided an aesthetic lodestone for film industries around the world during the silent era, the ways in which it informed musical *practice* are less clear. It is easy to find examples of early filmic adaptations of operatic works, or of experimental technologies that, in attempting to synchronize sounds and images, had technologically mediated opera serving as their ultimate objective.¹⁷ It is much harder, though, to trace a direct line from, say, famous opera stars moonlighting in silent film productions to the manuals of pre-existing cues and collections of light instrumental music that made up the bulk of cinematic musical accompaniment; or to connect the occasional high-profile composer dabbling in film to the day-to-day activities of a small-town cinema organist.¹⁸ And as Scott D. Paulin has argued, the high-flown, operatic—and specifically Wagnerian—rhetoric that studios, filmmakers, and critics invoked in connection with cinematic spectacle was often just that: rhetoric, bearing little relation to music’s deployment “on the ground.”¹⁹ Extracts from operas found their way into cinematic accompaniment very frequently, but their inclusion wasn’t necessarily motivated by an operatic conception of film music *per se*.

In fact, scholars of early film music have delineated an alternative theatrical inheritance from the nineteenth century, one that largely bypasses opera. We know that early cinematic exhibition was incorporated into theatrical traditions and performance spaces dedicated to popular variety theater, such as American vaudeville or the French *café-concert*.²⁰ Because music featured heavily in both, it seems likely that they left their imprint on developing cinematic musical codes; as Gillian Anderson suggests, “for the most part the movies have modest origins, [and] it is logical to assume that music for the movies would share these [modest] roots and that musical conventions that had become standard fare in music halls . . . and lower class theatres would have been transferred to the new medium.”²¹ Opera seems out of place in these lowbrow or middlebrow spaces, unlike other common forms of music theater.

Pantomime and melodrama, in particular, seem to offer a more plausible ancestry for the organizational principles underpinning musical accompaniment in cinemas. Composers of music for pantomimes prioritized the mapping of musical sounds onto dramatically charged movements, just as cinema musicians would seek to pair physical gestures of on-screen actors with musical equivalents; close synchronization between music and action was thought desirable in both cases.²² Music for melodramatic theater, meanwhile, exploited the capabilities of highly conventional music to narrate and emote; emotional immediacy and legibility were also prized in the accompaniment of silent cinema, where it was thought desirable to

pair music of an appropriate affect with on-screen events.²³ Indeed, the collections of music for cinematic accompaniment that began to proliferate across the United States and Europe after c. 1910, arranged by stereotyped affect, often imported affective labels from melodrama (*mysterioso*, *agitato*, “hurry,” and so on).²⁴ Finally, the scores for pantomimes and melodramas were written to be nonspecific in terms of instrumentation, favoring adaptation for local conditions and the capabilities of the musicians at hand—if, that is, they were composed at all, for scores were often assembled through the compilation of pre-existing music.²⁵ Both of these practices (flexible instrumentation and compilation) would later become typical elements of cinematic accompaniment.

It is for these reasons that Janina Müller and Tobias Plebuch write that “neither Italian opera nor the Wagnerian music drama was as good a working model as was music for pantomime, ballet, vaudeville, and spoken drama. They do not constitute film music *avant la lettre*, to be sure, but they provided materials, methods, and models that turned out to be useful when pictures were set in motion.”²⁶ Yet the “aria” in Graziani-Walter’s score for *Gli ultimi giorni* invites us to sound a note of caution. For one thing, to perceive an incompatibility between idealized, “high-art” operatic aesthetics, on the one hand, and the pragmatic realities of providing music for films, on the other, is to exaggerate the differences of register and compositional sophistication between genres. For much of the nineteenth century, Italian opera was itself formula-driven and conventional. Operettas, another common form of entertainment at the turn of the century, employed operatic procedures in a less exalted manner.²⁷ And even “serious opera,” from Wagner to Verdi, Bizet to Strauss, was hardly free of melodramatic accents in its music, or pantomimic elements in its staging.²⁸ Early twentieth-century opera, in particular, often relied on gestural *coups de théâtre* for its effects (consider Tosca’s candlelit ministrations to Scarpia’s corpse, or Salome’s antics with Jochanaan’s severed head).

More than this, however, there are good reasons to suspect that in addition to melodrama, pantomime, and other genres, opera would have been one of the influences guiding Graziani-Walter as he composed his score for *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*. Chief among these is opera’s unquestionable centrality to Italian musical culture at this time: in the early 1910s, it was still Italy’s *de facto* national art form, even in the face of calls to reform the genre, or abandon it wholesale for symphonic music. In fact, the connections between opera and cinema were stronger and more pervasive in Italy than elsewhere. In its early years, cinema made a home in the *politeama*, a mixed-performance space that would have also been the venue for regular operatic performances (especially in larger cities).²⁹ Later, during the creative ferment of the *anni d’oro*, the peninsula’s operatic capitals—Turin, Milan, Rome, and Naples—would become key sites of cinematic production: and indeed, the same aristocratic patrons underwrote both industries. As the Italian establishment became ever more invested in the idea of “elevating” cinema to the status of Art, opera

was the cultural benchmark toward which studio bosses, filmmakers, and composers alike all turned.³⁰

AN ILLUSTRIOUS LINEAGE

In taking on Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*, the Ambrosio firm would have known that they were producing only the latest in a long line of adaptations of the novel, and of volcanic spectacles more broadly. The novel's plot, encapsulated neatly in its title, stages the futility of human entanglement in the face of sublime, destructive Nature—in this case, the famous eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, which was an extremely popular topic for representation in stage media and the visual arts throughout the nineteenth century.³¹ Particularly in the first few decades of the 1800s, a vogue for Vesuvius reportage gripped European cities, in high and popular culture alike.³² Serious opera and spoken theater, popular melodrama and pantomime, paintings, engravings, and historical novels like Bulwer-Lytton's all succumbed to the Vesuvian craze. The popularity of the subject is hardly surprising, especially in operatic contexts. Eruptions provided ample opportunity for spectacle and stretched the representational capabilities of stagecraft by demanding the use of the most up-to-date technologies; indeed, one of the major draws of the operatic stage throughout the nineteenth was its deployment of the most technically advanced theatrical illusion.³³

It is possible that Bulwer-Lytton himself drew on existing operatic stagings of Pompeii's destruction as he wrote his novel. For instance, the film historian Riccardo Redi cites Pacini's *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* (1825) as a potential influence, but the opera shares little with the novel except for its setting.³⁴ Auber's *La muette de Portici* (1828), by contrast, is not set in antiquity, but it does feature a climactic eruption of Vesuvius. *La muette* also has a central character afflicted by sensory deprivation, and Fenella's mutism finds resonances in Nidia's blindness: both characters are deprived of the primary form of engagement with the medium in which they appear. Auber's opera was a great success in theaters across Europe and remained well known throughout the nineteenth century.³⁵ It could plausibly have influenced later adaptations of the novel as well, particularly the operatic ones—for practically no sooner had Bulwer-Lytton's novel been published than it was already being adapted for the stage, including at least three attempts to turn the subject into an opera.³⁶ Only one such attempt, however, was successful enough to have influenced Ambrosio and Graziani-Walter directly: Errico Petrella's *Jone, o Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (1858). Wildly popular in its day, the opera was still (if only just) in the active performing repertory of the early 1900s, and, besides Bulwer-Lytton's book, was probably the best-known version of the story in Italy at that time.³⁷

During the first decade of the twentieth century, cinema struggled to establish that its special representational capabilities could surpass those of the stage. Thus it

was only a matter of time before a film portraying the destruction of Pompeii, based on a highly popular narrative treatment of the subject, emerged in Italy.³⁸ The first such cinematic treatment, however, was not Ambrosio's 1913 film, but rather a shorter film of 1908 produced by the same studio. Directed by Luigi Maggi, and based directly on Petrella's opera, this 1908 film represented the pinnacle of cinematic innovation at the time. At twenty minutes, it was one of the longest films yet produced in Italy and was a significant motivating factor for the increasing length and complexity of films in the years to follow.³⁹ Small wonder, then, that Ambrosio would seize the opportunity to replicate the global success of Maggi's film in the novel feature-length format. In so doing, the studio capitalized on cultural trends that had kept Pompeii in the public imagination—including recent discoveries at the archaeological site itself.⁴⁰

Gli ultimi giorni thus represents an early instance of the cinematic remake, for the director of the 1913 version, Eleuterio Rodolfi, based his film on its illustrious predecessor.⁴¹ Expansions notwithstanding, the overarching plot remained the same. In both of the Ambrosio films, the story centers on two intersecting love triangles, both of which include the Pompeian dandy Glauco and his lover Jone. Arrayed on opposing sides of this axis are the villainous Arbace, the priest of the cult of Isis, who desires Jone; and the blind slave-girl Nidia, who desires Glauco.⁴² Nidia becomes the unwitting dupe of Arbace's schemes to dispose of Glauco, but at the end she redeems herself by saving both Glauco and Jone from the eruption—sacrificing herself in the process. The novel contains several additional characters with more or less substantial roles; but in giving prominence to this central quartet, Ambrosio boiled the story down to its essentials.⁴³ In this simplified form, the story had proved its worth in 1908, and would do so again in 1913.

Contemporary audiences, then, were more than likely to have come across *Gli ultimi giorni* in some form prior to their encounter with the Ambrosio adaptation, whether this came in the form of the original novel, Petrella's opera, Maggi's film of 1908, or even other, more exotic representations: some spectators might even have been among the thousands across the United States and Europe who saw a spectacular Pompeii "pyrodrama," staged by the fireworks expert James Pain, at both Alexandra Palace in London and in a purpose-built outdoor theater at Coney Island, just outside Manhattan.⁴⁴ Consequently, *Gli ultimi giorni* was a perfect subject for Ambrosio as it sought, like other studios, to raise the critical profile of cinema among elite audiences. The subject had been tried and tested in a way few other subjects had; thanks to the company's 1908 version, it was known to be a success with audiences even in cinematic form; and it had the requisite narrative elements to show off spectacular innovations in cinematic technique. Finally, Ambrosio could point to an illustrious pedigree in "high art" for those critics who continued to hold the cinema in low esteem by default.

One element that the studio could not have foreseen—but which certainly didn't harm their film's success—was the unexpected competition that arose in 1913 between Ambrosio and other Turin-based studios. No fewer than three (including Ambrosio) declared their intentions to produce a *Pompei* film, though one (the newly founded Film Artistica Gloria) eventually withdrew from contention.⁴⁵ Pasquali Films, however, proceeded to make its own version of Bulwer-Lytton's novel, which was released a week or so after the Ambrosio version in most cities. Pasquali's film nominally bore the title *Jone* first and *Gli ultimi giorni* second, but this pretense of difference only served to emphasize the competition between the two firms. The prospect of comparing the two versions thus served as an additional incentive to go see both films; reviews of the Ambrosio film mentioned the upcoming release of the Pasquali film, and reviews of the Pasquali film inevitably juxtaposed the two versions.⁴⁶ Both studios made significant efforts to ensure that their films had sufficient grandeur to bear the weight of such intense public interest; both Ambrosio and Pasquali recruited composers to their cause.

THE SCORE

The score to the Pasquali film has not survived. We know, however, that it was prepared by Colombino Arona, a Turin-based composer of popular operettas, vaudevilles, and other works of comic musical theater. Arona's score was apparently a compilation of pre-existing music that included—not coincidentally—the overture from Petrella's *Jone*.⁴⁷ In this respect, it was absolutely typical. Most specially composed or compiled scores in Italy were by historical figures we have entirely forgotten (small-town music directors, composers of popular songs, music educators, and so on). By contrast, composers of the highest echelons of Italian music often had a marked distaste for the cinema, and were concerned that associating their music with the new medium would tarnish their reputations.⁴⁸ This goes some way toward explaining why, despite the contemporary desire to “elevate” cinema, Ambrosio should have chosen the now-forgotten Graziani-Walter to compose the music for their film (likewise Pasquali with Arona). Like most Italian composers of his generation, Graziani-Walter had tried his hand at opera early in his career, but by 1913, he was best known as a mandolinist, pedagogue, and composer of easy piano pieces in the modish dance genres of the day.⁴⁹

But why did Graziani-Walter's score survive, when Arona's (for instance) did not? Ambrosio's decision to have the score published would prove instrumental in this regard (see [Figure 1](#)). Of the nine surviving scores of Italian silent cinema, only one—Manlio Mazza's compilation score for *Cabiria*—survives in manuscript.⁵⁰ Publication produced many copies of a score, which were thus more likely to survive intact somewhere, even if many were lost. Even so, only a handful of copies of Graziani-Walter's score are currently preserved in Italian libraries (and none of the



Figure 1 Front cover of Carlo Graziani-Walter's score for *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Turin, Ris.Mus.VIII.51). Reproduced with permission. Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino. Further reproduction prohibited.

associated orchestral parts, though the back of the score makes it clear that such parts were for sale).⁵¹ In addition, Graziani-Walter elected not to compile a score from pre-existing music; again, Mazza's score is unique among the nine surviving scores in being a compilation score. (One surmises that scores produced by compilation were often literal collections of disparate scores and sheet music—easily dispersed after the original motivation for keeping them together disappeared). Finally, most of the surviving scores accompanied films that were highly prestigious: often the historical epics set in antiquity for which Italian cinema was renowned.

Ironically, despite its status as an original composition, Graziani-Walter's score is, for the most part, constructed according to principles not dissimilar to those operative in a compilation score, or from the developing systems for organizing musical "cues" found elsewhere in Europe and the United States. Thus, it is worth considering how, exactly, the score would have worked as filmic accompaniment. Graziani-Walter himself elucidated his conception on the back cover of the score, declaring: "The Author has composed the music in an accessible style for the Pianist, such that he may, during projections of the Film, coordinate the tempo of individual movements with the action taking place. To achieve a perfect fit, it is necessary to align oneself with the indication of the Metronome."⁵² But the metronome alone would not have been sufficient to reproduce the music to an adequately precise standard; redundancy is built into the score, in case of unexpected errors of timing (or, one imagines, of imperfectly metronomic playing).

Consider [Example 2](#), which reproduces a typical passage from the score. In addition to the promised metronome marks, this example reveals a number of further means devised by the composer to keep music and image coordinated. Perhaps most importantly, there are the supertitles above the staff. These come in two forms, numbered and unnumbered. The unnumbered supertitles are descriptions of the actions taking place on screen, for the benefit of the pianist-cum-conductor. Deployed in the score at approximately the point at which the relevant action occurs (a practice borrowed from the musical scores to pantomimes), they ensured that the musicians knew they were keeping time with the film. The numbered supertitles offer even greater precision; they correspond to the intertitles of the film, whose text they reproduce exactly. The filmic intertitles, then, serve as musical anchoring points, showing clearly where to transition between longer passages of music. Perhaps as a result, modulations in the music usually occur over intertitles—though not in this case, where the half cadence on the dominant of F minor is followed by a harmonic non-sequitur, the B-flat minor opening of the *agitato* section that follows.

Intertitles in film convey information about the images around them in a succinct manner, so it is perhaps unsurprising that Graziani-Walter pairs them with a rough musical equivalent—the recurring motif. The intertitle in [Example 2](#) refers to the villain of the piece, Arbace; the music beneath the equivalent numbered

20) L'uccello da preda
20) *The bird of prey*
♩ = 116

Arbace passeggia nel suo parco in attesa di Jone.
Arbace walks in his gardens while waiting for Jone.
Agitato ♩ = 108

f Quartetto e Legni
p
mf Corda
Violoncello e Fag.

Cambia scena
The scene changes
dim.
continues

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system begins with a piano introduction in 3/4 time, marked *f* for the Quartetto e Legni and *p* for the strings. The tempo is 116 beats per minute. This is followed by a section marked 'Agitato' with a tempo of 108 beats per minute, where the piano part features a dense, rhythmic texture of chords and the strings play a more active, melodic line. The second system continues the 'Agitato' section, showing the piano part's complex chordal patterns and the strings' rhythmic accompaniment. The score concludes with a 'Cambia scena' (The scene changes) instruction, marked *dim.* (diminuendo), and a 'continues' box indicating the passage is not the end of the score.

Example 2 A typical passage from the score. *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, piano score, 43–44.

supertitle consists of a recurring motif associated with him, one of several motifs permeating the score (all of which are reproduced in [Example 3](#)). Graziani-Walter generally only uses his motifs as calling-cards, employing them to identify the most important character on screen at any given point. They do not change significantly in form over the course of the score, though they appear in different keys and are often curtailed from a longer, melodic prototype. In this respect, Graziani-Walter was reproducing typical Italian tendencies in the use of recurring motifs in operatic composition, which tended to be far less freighted with meaning than their

- 4) Nidia la fioraia cieca
4) *Nidia the blind flower girl*
- Essa vende i fiori a Glauco che l'accarezza
She sells flowers to Glauco, who caresses her

Andante Espressivo (♩ = 60)



Nidia's theme • First appearance Part 1

Si vedono Glauco e Jone in barca che amoreggiano
We see Glauco and Jone in a boat embracing

Molto Espressivo (♩ = 60)



"Love" or "Jone" or "Jone and Glauco in love" • First appearance Part 1

Il Falco
The falcon

Maestoso Truce (♩ = 160)



Arbace's themes (often appear combined) • First appearance Part 2

17) La trama d'Arbace

17) *Arbace's plot*

(♩ = 100)

Example 3 Recurring motifs from the score to *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*.

much-debated Wagnerian counterparts, the leitmotifs.⁵³ Yet it is worth noting that in distinguishing the heroine (Nidia) and the villain (Arbace) through characteristic themes, Graziani-Walter enacted in 1913 what would become typical practice in American silent film accompaniment, showing the extent to which musicians across Europe and America converged on similar strategies for satisfying musical commentary on cinematic action.⁵⁴

Indeed, Graziani-Walter frequently devises "bespoke" accompaniments that end up looking like generic film cues from the encyclopedic collections that would become common in the United States and Germany in the later 1910s and 1920s. The *agitato* section of Example 2, for instance, is distinctly reminiscent of a "hurry," a broad category denoting music suitable for accompanying frenetic activity of various kinds (such as chase scenes).⁵⁵ In the example, a chordal harmonic pulse in the right hand (i.e., the strings) overlays a periodic melody articulated in the left hand

(cello and bassoon), which is divided into distinct melodic “cells” by rests. One could, theoretically, repeat any of the cells as many times as necessary to accompany a given section of film (particularly because Graziani-Walter’s quirky, five-measure antecedent defuses expectations for regular, four-measure phrasing). In this way, the “*Agitato*” fulfills most of the criteria of a cinematic “modular form” described by Müller and Plebuch: pieces composed in a series of small musical cells, frequently broken by rests, that can be extended or compressed in the moment to match the action on screen.⁵⁶ The primary difference is that Graziani-Walter composes it out to meet a precise, metronomically defined span of time.

Example 2 demonstrates how difficult it can be to parse the various strands of influence operative on film music at this time. None of its features point exclusively toward one genre, and similar ambiguities appear at many junctures in the score. Recurring motifs carry an operatic charge, but in truth similar motifs appear in any number of music-theatrical genres. In the climactic eruption scene, the use of chromaticism, diminished sevenths, and rapid scales and arpeggios to evoke the destruction of Pompeii seems borrowed from the world of melodrama: yet those were also time-honored techniques for evoking pandemonium in other genres, including opera. Again, it is difficult to determine definitively what a given passage owes to one tradition or other.

That being said, there are passages that bear the marks of an operatic conception more explicitly. Consider **Example 4**, for instance, which reproduces the moment in the score when the eruption of Vesuvius is first sighted. In the film, Intertitle 67 interrupts the previous scene with its urgent declaration: “Look at Vesuvius!” The music, similarly, features a sudden interruption of the previous mood and tempo, and the “voice rising above the tumult” is rendered, literally, by voices. The injunction to look at the mountain is set to a stentorian, declamatory vocal gesture. A choir then reacts to this information with a horrified sequence of diminished sevenths, each articulated by the universal syllable of shock: “Ah!” This passage could, arguably, have been lifted straight from the pages of *ottocento* opera (perhaps the only way it could be more operatic is if the choir were to exclaim “Error!” instead). Moreover, the choir has been present for the entire preceding scene, set in Pompeii’s gladiatorial arena, where a baying mob of spectators calls for the incapacitated Glauco to be thrown to the lions (an unnumbered supertitle in the score informs us, with curious precision, that the choir represents a crowd “of more than 1800 people”).⁵⁷ Choruses, of course, had a long pre-history in opera, where they have always served as a reliable sonic symbol of massed humanity. That Graziani-Walter made recourse to a choir when confronted with a scene of this nature strongly suggests an operatic component to his compositional method.⁵⁸ Indeed: voices, understood in a broad sense, seem to have been Graziani-Walter’s standard method for dealing with sections of the film eliciting strong, operatic levels of emotional intensity.

67) Ma una voce domina il tumulto: Guardate il Vesuvio!
 67) But a voice rises above the tumult: Look at Vesuvius!

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system shows the vocal line (Voices) and the piano accompaniment (Piano). The vocal line is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major, and has a tempo of 80 (Voices). The piano part is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major, and is marked 'Piano' and 'f' (forte). The lyrics are: 'Guar - da - te il Ve - su - vio! Ah! look at Ve - su - vius! Ah!'. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked 'Moderato (♩ = 60)'. The piano part continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. The lyrics are: 'Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!'.

Example 4 The eruption is sighted. Adapted from Graziani-Walter, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, piano score, 160 (piano part reduced to one stave).

ENVOICING NIDIA

And voice, of course, is what prompted our original interest in the cinematic “aria” reproduced in [Example 1](#): the moment at which, according to Graziani-Walter’s score, an *ad libitum* female voice would have sung in tandem with approximately forty-five seconds of film. It is here—and in the two subsequent “arias” in the score—that opera’s influence is felt unequivocally. Unlike the choral example discussed above, in which the vocal lines belong to the anonymous crowd, this voice is clearly associated with a single character on screen; we might say that Nidia has been “envoiced.” To be clear, this effect is not one of close synchronization between music and image, in the way we might expect from, say, a filmed opera. The character of Nidia isn’t lip-synching to the words sung by her ventriloquist (her lips don’t really move at all), and the singer’s words aren’t dictated, or even implied, by anything on screen—not even an intertitle. In this respect, these scenes diverge from contemporary efforts to synchronize filmed opera scenes with notable recordings of the time, in which lip-synching (or at least an impression of genuine operatic recitation) were prioritized.⁵⁹ Graziani-Walter’s decision to envoice Nidia seems, then, to be a reaction to the emotionally heightened tenor of the filmic images themselves; in seeking an appropriate musical effect, he reached for the emotionally heightened resources of song.

Crucially, envoicing in this film is only associated with Nidia, the sole character in the film who is deprived of one of her senses. Portraying blindness on screen seems to have been a stumbling block for the filmmakers, whose solution was to

have Nidia adopt an exaggerated, groping gait for most of the film. One could imagine that Graziani-Walter's use of operatic singing was a response to scenes in which this exaggerated pantomime was particularly evident—thus translating an excessive visual semaphore into an equivalently excessive aural one. But the scenes in which Nidia sings are also those in which her disability is emphasized the least, for she is stationary in most of them. This is the case, for instance, in the second example of envoicing in the score, from the end of Part 2 (see [Example 5](#)). As in the first “aria,” Nidia enacts a lament about her place in the love triangle: she arrives at the Temple of Isis and, falling before the feet of an enormous statue, implores the deity to help her. Whereas [Example 1](#) was suggestive of *verismo* opera, though, the music in [Example 5](#) hearkens back to the musical aesthetic of a few decades earlier. The rolling triplet accompaniment and the melody's persistent appoggiaturas seem to recall middle-period Verdi, as does the harmonic language. Entirely diatonic at first, the climax of this miniature “aria” features unprepared leaps to dominant 6/4 chords a third apart, a favorite trick of Verdi's in his mid-century works.⁶⁰ The words, meanwhile, are a collection of generic expressions of heartache, but “O amore, amor fatale” chimes distantly with the words of a famous distressed Verdian heroine: Princess Eboli's “O don fatale,” in the Italian version of *Don Carlo* (1884).

Irrespective of Graziani-Walter's reasons for selecting these particular scenes for envoiced accompaniment, the compositional procedures within them are without doubt his most operatic. For one thing, the envoicing passages all take place at the concluding sections of the score's internal divisions: Parts 1, 2, and 5 (of five) end with a singing episode, thus articulating filmic structure with a complementary musical strategy.⁶¹ Further supporting this architectonic interpretation is the fact that the envoicing episode that ends Part 1 (reproduced in [Example 1](#)) returns at the end of the Part 5, to serve as a transcendent dénouement—itsself a typical *verismo* procedure. And it is in this final example of envoicing that we find Graziani-Walter's most overtly operatic music. At this point in the film, the eruption is destroying Pompeii: Nidia finds Glauco and Jone and leads them through scenes of destruction to the sea, where a boat awaits to bear them away to safety. Nidia helps the lovers onto the boat, and then pushes the boat away. After visibly despairing, she walks into the sea and disappears beneath the waves. Underscoring the tragic nature of the scene is Graziani-Walter's music, which makes use of every available expressive resource to give to the scene a potent emotional charge. Indeed, the final minutes of the score constitute nothing less than an operatic *scena* in miniature (see [Example 6](#)).

Throughout the score, two motifs are associated with Nidia (see [Example 3](#)). The first is her personal theme, a calling card that accompanies most of her appearances on screen, and is transmuted into song in her first “aria.” The second is a more general theme signifying Glauco and Jone's love for one another (with unhappy resonances for Nidia, of course). This motif, however, remains wordless until the end.

30) E chi soffre...
 30) And who suffers...
 (♩ = 84)

Tempio. Nidia implora l'idolo
 Temple. Nidia prays to the idol
 Andante Espressivo (♩ = 60)

Oh a - mo - re a - mor fa -
 Oh love oh fa - tal

-ta - le ren - di pa - ce al mio cor ques - ta fiam - ma che mi di -
 love grant me peace in my heart This flame that de -

-vo - ra mi tor - men - ta mi fa mo - rir! A - mo - re a - mor fa -
 -vours me that tor - ments me that makes me die! Love! oh fat - tal

Example 5 Nidia's second "aria." Graziani-Walter, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, piano score, 75–76.

Wordless, that is, until the moment Nidia pushes away the boat and sacrifices herself. Then, an arpeggiated dominant seventh of A-flat ushers in a *pianissimo* vocalization of the second motif in A-flat major, to words that leave no room for error in interpretation: "Oh t'abbandono Glaucio nelle braccia di Jone" (Oh Glaucio, I abandon you into the arms of Jone). This gives way to an operatic *preghiera*, its final, high *pianissimo* A-flat borrowed, perhaps, from Desdemona's "Ave Maria" in *Otello* (1887). Following a brief transition, the music from [Example 1](#) then returns for

-ta - le A - mo-re a-mor fa - ta - le
love Love oh fa - tal love

ren - di la pa - ce al mio cor!
grant me peace in my heart!

Fine della seconda parte — End of Part Two

Example 5 Continued

grandiose final peroration, in which the words “Glauco, io t’amo!” are replaced with “Glauco, addio!” Thus, at the moment at which Nidia quite literally renounces her love for Glauco, the motif symbolizing this love is given voice—and immediately destroyed, along with Nidia’s motif, in the aftermath of the Vesuvian conflagration.

For the most part, we can only imagine the effect that the sudden irruption of a singing voice in a cinematic environment might have had on audiences of the period. The vocal line is marked *ad libitum*, and it is likely that provincial theaters, with fewer resources, would simply have omitted it. Even so, considering the ersatz Puccini and knock-off Verdi in Graziani-Walter’s vocal experiments, the critical silence on these passages is striking. Reviews of the film’s first performances in Rome, Milan, and Turin—Italy’s principal cinematic cities—make no mention of a singer, to the extent that they mention music at all.⁶² Herein lies the significance of the Florence performance of *Gli ultimi giorni*, with which I began this article: it is the only occasion for which we can definitively say that the vocal part was employed, thanks to a review that appeared in the Florentine broadsheet *La Nazione* the following day.⁶³

The fact that this was the only review to explicitly thematize music (a far from unusual situation, in the history of silent cinema) means that it may not support

77) Salvi!
77) Safe!

Nidia giunge la prima presso la barca. Jone e Glauco la seguono senza accorgersi di lei.
Nidia reaches the boat first. Jone and Glauco follow her without noticing her.

(♩ = 96)

Nidia spinge la barca al largo restando a riva.
Nidia pushes the boat away, staying on the shore.

(♩ = 80)

Oh t'ab-ban-do - no Glau - co! nel - le brac-cia di Jo - ne
I a-ban-don you oh Glau - co in - to the arms of Jo - ne

io pre-ghe - rò dal ciel per la tua la tu - a fe - li - ci - tà
I shall pray from heav'n for your hap - pi - ness for your hap - pi - ness

Example 6 Nidia's third and final "aria." Adapted from Graziani-Walter, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, piano score, 181–83 (music reduced to one stave where appropriate).

generalizations about the wider reception of the score. Yet the Florence review is difficult to ignore, because it was written by a musically skilled listener. "Jarro," under whose byline it appears, was the *nom de plume* of the writer, journalist, humorist, and gastronome Giulio Piccini, a longstanding presence on the Florentine arts scene. Piccini was an erudite critic of both music and theater, and he would have been among those most sensitive (for better or worse) to the score's gestures toward

Musical score for the first system of "La povera cieca". The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a melisma on "heav'n" and then continues with the lyrics. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

Lyrics: *pre - ghe - rò dal ciel pre - ghe - rò per la*
— I shall pray heav'n — I shall pray from heav'n — for your

Dynamics: *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo).

78) La povera cieca ha compiuto la sua opera d'amore. Ora ella non cerca altro che pace!
 79) The poor blind girl has completed her labour of love. Now all she desires is peace!

Musical score for the second system of "La povera cieca". It continues the vocal and piano parts from the first system. The tempo is marked as $(\text{♩} = 100)$.

Lyrics: *tua fe - li - ci - tà — pre - ghe - rò — pre - ghe - rò —*
hap - pi - ness I'll pray I shall pray I shall pray

Dynamics: *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo).

Musical score for the third system of "La povera cieca". It continues the vocal and piano parts. The tempo is marked as $(\text{♩} = 84)$.

Lyrics: *Gla - u - co ad - di - ol Gla - u - co ad - di - ol La tu - a Ni - dia*
Oh! Glau - co fare - well! — Oh! Glau - co fare - well! — Your Ni - di - a is

Dynamics: *f* (forte), *appass.* (appassionato), *cresc. un poco* (crescendo a little).

Example 6 Continued

muo - re ad - dio Glau - co ad - dio ad - dio ad -
dy - ing fare - well Glau - co fare - well fare - well fare -

f

8^{va}

79) Nidia non soffre più!
79) Nidia no longer suffers!
Nidia sparisce nel flutto.
Nidia disappears into the waves.

- di - o oh Glau - co
- well oh! Glau - co

8^{va}

Si vede il corpo di Nidia galleggiare ricoperto di rose.
Nidia's body is seen floating in the water, covered in roses.

pp *dolciss.*

8^{va}

pp *f* FINE

Example 6 Continued

opera. Moreover, he was overtly engaged with cinematic culture: in 1910, he had published a collection of five short stories set in and around the film industry.⁶⁴ It is thus worth quoting extensively from his review:

Maestro Graziani-Walter knows, as a musician, how to take advantage of his own riches, as well as those of others. . . . It is hard to judge, except superficially, the music in the lackluster [*monca*] performance it received last night. And yet, as always, what emerges from this work is that maestro Graziani-Walter is a good harmonist, a good orchestrator—no laborious seeker of novelty, but rather a confident navigator of well-trodden paths; this way, he knows he cannot err. . . . The overall effect of the score is varied, lively. There are no peregrinations—quite the contrary, there is much simplicity of means. Maestro Graziani-Walter has achieved his goal: that of directing the public's attention ever more favorably towards cinematic reproduction, and he has worked on an effect that came off splendidly: that of blending the action of the cinematic drama, descriptive instrumental music, and the human voice. The notes that signora Tosca Ferroni sang simultaneously with the actions of the character of the young blind girl in the film made a profound impression on the audience. *It really seemed as though the character in the film were singing.* This is certainly an effect to be studied, and which has the potential to add considerably to the allure of cinematic reproductions.⁶⁵

Piccini's frank assessment of the score indicates that the stylistic eclecticism and conventional musical language of Graziani-Walter's music were already known quantities (it is difficult not to hear a veiled barb in his mention of "the riches of others" and "well-trodden paths"). Slightly more surprising is the picture of the performance that emerges, and one wonders what it was (poor playing, perhaps, or an under-rehearsed orchestra?) that led Piccini to label it "lackluster."⁶⁶ But the review's most intriguing passage concerns the contributions of the singer, the aptly named Tosca Ferroni.⁶⁷

The key phrase, I would argue, is also one of the hardest to pin down: "it really seemed as though the character in the film were singing." Paolo Russo, who cites only the latter half of the review, interprets it in a straightforward manner as evidence of approval from a venerable establishment figure.⁶⁸ Taken at face value, it is true that Piccini's statement expresses a wonderment that seems incommensurate, from our perspective, with the film's actual qualities—recall that Nidia does not *visibly* sing on screen. In this view, the "elderly Piccini" (as Russo calls him) stands as the archetypal early observer of cinema, so struck by the strength of the cinematic illusion as to accept it as reality. Cinema, at this time mute and necessarily unable to "sing," becomes opera—a genre where people really do sing. Yet Piccini's comments in the first half of the review belie this interpretation. For Nidia's envoicing is described in rather circuitous terms, as a "blend" of cinematic action, instrumental music, and the human voice—that is, with "voice" and "music" distinct from "cinematic action." In other words, Piccini may well have thought it seemed like Nidia were singing; but he also seems cognizant of the mediated nature of that impression, of the material constitution of the filmic spectacle, and perhaps of the

hierarchical order of precedence between film and music engendered by the film-making process. In spite of their operatic trappings, Piccini seems to have intuited, however subliminally, that Nidia's "arias" were fundamentally cinematic artefacts.

A TURN TOWARD THE POPULAR

To see why this might be the case, let us consider one more example from the score to *Gli ultimi giorni*. The scene it accompanies occurs in the middle of the film—a long sequence that largely reinscribes the Jone-Glauco-Nidia love-triangle dynamic. It consists of only three shots: in the first, we see Jone and Glauco flirting on a stone bench in a garden; in the second, they walk away from the camera toward a shady colonnade, while Nidia follows at a distance, crying; in the third, the camera angle is reversed, and Jone and Glauco walk through the colonnade toward the camera, followed again by the weeping Nidia. With its garden setting and its obviously flirtatious tone, the scene recalls that most operatic of numbers, the love duet—making it an obvious candidate for musical accompaniment in elevated style. Yet in register, style, tone, and more besides, the music devised by Graziani-Walter for this scene seems quite the opposite of opera, not least because of the striking absence of a singing voice (see [Example 7](#)). In fact, it clearly indexes popular music of the period—witness the octave-heavy texture, the stride bass, the tonic-dominant alternation, and the modular construction. These qualities, though not totally foreign to art music, were more often found in Neapolitan songs, music for brass band (especially patriotic marches), and light instrumental music in popular dance genres, including traditional European favorites (such as the waltz) but also dance crazes imported from the Americas (such as the foxtrot).

At first glance, this music appears to conform to the model of most musical accompaniment for silent cinema, and perhaps even that of "modular form": the phrasing is exceedingly regular, and there are many literal repeats of material. On the other hand, the music is continuous, and its structure is determined by musical concerns above all. The piece is in a strictly observed ABA form (as is the B section itself), but this structural symmetry does not map neatly onto the scene's three constituent shots. The two unnumbered supertitles appear to fall at musically significant junctures (phrase boundaries and a switch to the minor mode, in both cases); but following the metronome means that the unnumbered supertitles are out of alignment with the actions they describe.⁶⁹ In short, there are no obvious points of synchronization. The piece also bears a curious designation as a "gavotte," despite having few of the characteristics of that dance (such as a half-measure anacrusis), which nonetheless emphasizes the extract's nature as an independent musical structure. Indeed, even in the score the piece is marked out by the fact that it bears a title ("Amore! Amore!") borrowed from the intertitle that introduces the scene.

27) Amore! Amore!
27) Love! Love!

$\text{♩} = 80$

The musical score is written for piano in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. It begins with a treble and bass staff. The first system shows a piano introduction with a tempo of 80 beats per minute. The second system is marked 'Tempo di gavotta' with a tempo of 104 beats per minute and includes the instruction 'pizzicati'. The third system features a vocal melody line with lyrics 'Jones and Glaucus sit, talking lovingly to one another.' and piano accompaniment. The fourth system continues the piano accompaniment, marked 'cantabile appassionato'. The score concludes with a 'Fine' marking and a 'Continues to Da capo' instruction.

Tempo di gavotta $\text{♩} = 104$
pizzicati

p *leggero e staccato*

Jone e Glauco siedono, discorrendo amorosamente.
Jone and Glaucus sit, talking lovingly to one another.

f *p* *f* *p*

cantabile appassionato

Continues to Da capo

Fine

Example 7 “Amore! Amore!”, extract. Adapted from Graziani-Walter, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, piano score, 66–71 (repeat marks not original).

The presence of a title in the piano score is explained by the fact that the music also appears in other formats. For, in what appears to be an unprecedented move (with respect to music with cinematic origins), the music from this scene was also published separately in sheet music form, under the same title: “Amore! Amore!” It was one of only two extracts from the score that were given this treatment—the

other being “La sfilata dei gladiatori,” from the aforementioned scene set in Pompeii’s gladiatorial arena (see Figure 2).⁷⁰ The music in this latter extract, written *alla breve* and replete with fanfares, is clearly in the style of a march for brass band; featuring a recurring main theme and an independent middle section in the sub-dominant, it is also in dialogue with the typical form of the genre.⁷¹ Thus both “Amore! Amore!” and “La sfilata dei gladiatori” referenced popular music, and were marketed as such—targeting, it seems, the large market for sheet music in genres such as the waltz, the march, and the foxtrot.⁷² None of the other surviving film scores of the *anni d’oro* were split up in this way, which raises the question: Why, given the ongoing efforts to “ennoble” cinema at this time, did Ambrosio select the most popular-sounding music from the score for separate publication?

A comparison with opera is instructive here. Had *Gli ultimi giorni* been an opera, we could imagine that Nidia’s “arias” might have been published separately, as *pezzi staccati* circulating in various formats. Publishing operatic extracts was a relatively common practice in the early 1900s, even if doing so contravened the prevailing aesthetics of contemporary Italian opera, which—at least in theory—privileged a continuous musical thread, inspired by Wagnerian notions of “endless melody,” that resisted excerpation of any kind.⁷³ In this way, operatic extracts circulated in Italian society in a manner not unlike the popular music channeled by “Amore! Amore!” (even if, ultimately, they referred back to a parent work whose respectability mitigated the unsavory aura of commerce surrounding popular dissemination).

Had they been excised from their original cinematic context, though, Nidia’s “arias” would have been revealed as poor substitutes for the operatic styles they imitated. The music is run-of-the-mill; the words are unpoetic, lacking meter and rhyme.⁷⁴ Generic as they are, the words lose much of their meaning without accompanying images, and yoke Nidia’s arias to the film in a way that precludes effective performance outside the cinema. And because the arias are through-composed, forgoing the flexible modularity found elsewhere in the score, it is hard to imagine them being repurposed to accompany other films. The same cannot be said for “Amore! Amore!” Indeed, it succeeds as an extract because it essentially lacks any intrinsic connection to the segment of film it accompanies. Despite being incorporated into a continuous score, it is not firmly embedded within it; the music is easily cut, lifted out, and pasted into other contexts. But this is ironic: for with little to distinguish the extract musically from other light music being written at this time, the filmic connection would have been its unique selling point.

Ambrosio’s answer to this conundrum was to splash across the cover of the sheet music a posed still from the relevant scene. This was, of course, a venerable practice in the production of operatic mementos, but it seems to serve an additional purpose here: that of asserting a filmic identity for the music contained within. Indeed, without this visual support—and the strapline “Gavotte from the film *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*”—one senses that potential consumers would be



Figure 2 Sheet music extracts from Graziani-Walter's score for *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*. Left: "Amore! Amore!: Gavotta della Film 'Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei'" (Bibliomediateca "Mario Gromo," Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin, MUS. 560). Right: "La sfilata dei gladiatori: Marcia della Film 'Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei'" (Bibliomediateca "Mario Gromo," Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin, MUS. 559). Reproduced with permission.



Figure 2 Continued.

hard-pressed to identify “Amore! Amore!” as “film music.” Yet it is clear that Ambrosio put considerable stock in this scene’s ability to stand, metonymically, for the film as a whole. The image on the front of the sheet music to “Amore! Amore!” is also used on the front cover of the piano reduction of the full score (compare Figure 1 with Figure 2.1). Furthermore, the scores to the sheet music extract replicate exactly the layout from the piano reduction (or vice versa), suggesting that

Ambrosio envisaged the publication of the sheet music even at the stage of setting the music for the piano score. In other words, the studio appears to have foreseen the success of these extracts outside the bounds of the cinema.

That the studio did not feel the same about the “arias” for Nidia, on the other hand, underscores their ambivalent status within the score. They are generic, in that they essentially comprise a collection of operatic clichés. Yet they are not generic in the same way as “Amore! Amore!” The clichés make the arias unique to *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, but they also highlight the ways in which Graziani-Walter’s music does not constitute bona fide opera. By contrast, the anodyne character of “Amore! Amore!” distances it from the film’s narrative specificities: but this is, paradoxically, what enables it to represent the film effectively outside the bounds of the theater. Fundamentally, the effect of the “arias” depends on their realization *in situ*. For audiences at this historical moment—for whom specially composed musical accompaniment to a film was still novel, and for whom a moving image of a woman combined with a woman’s voice was utterly new—Graziani-Walter’s envoicing experiment could have the profound effect recorded by the critic for *La Nazione*. But this effect needed the support of a professional singer, of the moving images, of an impressionable crowd.

A GLIMPSE OF THINGS TO COME

This tension illuminates some key differences between opera and cinema at this time. To see these two media as related is to privilege certain basic homologies in presentation: both have a visual and a musical component, which, combined, result in a unified audio-visual experience. The comparison, however, is limited. In an operatic performance, the singers on stage are constitutive of the musical work-made-manifest. Their singing is part of the music, regardless of the visual spectacle to which they contribute. But actors in a silent film projection generally have no role in the creation of the music that eventually accompanies them. Communication occurs, but only in one direction; music follows the image, but the images cannot respond to the music. Only the audience can mediate between the two spheres and forge a connection between them.

The varying fortunes of the extracts from *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* illustrate the practical consequences of this difference. Since music was almost always added retrospectively, it took an extraordinary effort to write music that aligned with filmic images in ways that were not formula-driven and conventional. Graziani-Walter offers two solutions to the problem. The first, exemplified by “Amore! Amore!,” was essentially not to try: beyond the need to begin and end roughly in time with the scene, the light, popular style of music made few demands for explicit synchronization with the film. The other, as seen in Nidia’s “arias,” was to try to make the music a feature, to make its presence feel impelled by the images on screen. But he could

not, ultimately, make those same images need the music—or rather, need *his* music.

During the 1910s, critics not only sought to understand film within the framework of earlier multimedia genres; they also wanted to make of it a new audio-visual art form on a par with them. As Giulio Piccini declared in *La Nazione*, “this is an effect that should be studied”: the envoicing of Nidia represented one option for the further evolution of film as a musical genre, one prized by a critical establishment keen to see film flower into opera’s mechanically mediated cousin. But this was essentially a utopian vision, sustainable only during the good years before the First World War, when the commercial, mass-media potential of early film was yet to be fully realized. Indeed, the overall trajectory of film music in the years following *Gli ultimi giorni* would turn away from projects of “elevation.” In the 1920s, with the Italian film industry decimated by a postwar economic crisis, no one had much of an appetite—or the cash—to provide films with expensive full-length scores. Instead, the (mostly foreign) films distributed in Italy were fitted with popular songs and instrumental numbers, known as *motivi*, which served as “main themes” for the films in question.⁷⁵

Like “Amore! Amore!,” these *motivi* were published as sheet music, and their identification as “film music” relied on various visual and verbal markers: the examples in Figure 3 feature photographs and signatures of the actors, pertinent filmic imagery, and descriptive tags like “love theme from. . . .” Outside the cinema, they circulated freely on the popular market, their filmic connection no hindrance to their commercial success. Indeed, artfully integrated into the musical accompaniment to a given film, *motivi* probably benefited from cinematic presentation. But music and image remained detached, on a fundamental level. In other words, in *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, we can see (however embryonically) the beginnings of a way of musicalizing film entirely particular to the medium. The traits of this distinctly filmic form—let’s call it film music—that would prove most durable, in the decades to come, are precisely those discernible in “Amore! Amore!”

Yet while *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* seems, to modern audiences, like a step in the direction toward mass-mediatization, this is unlikely to have been evident to its creators. The idea that music could be instrumental in raising cinema from a commercial enterprise to an artistic one was a collective fantasy to which filmmakers, composers, and critics would continue to subscribe; Pietro Mascagni and Luigi Mancinelli, who both wrote specially composed scores that postdate *Gli ultimi giorni*, were among those to wholeheartedly embrace this narrative of elevation. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that these scores seem like something of a cultural dead-end. Thus the “operatic” music in Graziani-Walter’s score remains a solitary experiment, its influence on later film scoring limited. But it sits alongside music that bespeaks new modes of dissemination and new relationships between media: and it is this music, perhaps, that constitutes film music *avant la lettre*.



Figure 3 Sheet music for two *motivi* by the Italian composer Dino Rulli (1891–1929), for the Italian releases of *Seventh Heaven* (1927) and *Revenge* (1928). Author's personal collection.



Figure 3 Continued.

NOTES

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1. Numerous cinematic adaptations of *The Last Days of Pompeii* were made in the silent era; for an overview, see Adrian Stähli, “Screening Pompeii: The Last Days of Pompeii in the Cinema,” in *The Last Days of Pompeii: Decadence, Apocalypse, Resurrection*, ed. Victoria C. Gardner Coates, Kenneth Lapatin, and Jon L. Seydl (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2012), 78–87. On Italian adaptations specifically, see Vittorio Martinelli, “Sotto il vulcano,” in *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, ed. Riccardo Redi (Naples: Electa Napoli, 1994), esp. 40–46.

2. Ambrosio Film was one of the major studios of the Italian silent era. Founded by accountant Arturo Ambrosio as Arturo Ambrosio & Co. in 1906, the studio became a publicly listed company in 1907 and was thereafter known as the Società Anonima Ambrosio. From then on until its eventual liquidation in 1924, the studio produced well over 1,000 films. See Claudia Gianetto, “The Giant Ambrosio, or Italy’s Most Prolific Silent Film Company,” in *Italian Silent Cinema: A Reader*, ed. Giorgio Bertellini (New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing, 2013), 79–86.

3. The film was first released in France, in May 1913; elsewhere in Europe, it was released in August. Following its Roman premiere, the film reached other major Italian cities by late September or early October. In the United States, the film was distributed by George Kleine and premiered on August 11, 1913. Attesting to the success of the film is the wide selection of contemporary reviews collated by Aldo Bernardini and Vittorio Martinelli, in *Cinema muto italiano: I film degli anni d’oro. 1913. Seconda parte* (Turin: Nuova ERI, 1995), 313–18.

4. Technical details of the film can be found in Redi, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, 56.

5. *Quo Vadis* is sometimes cited as the “first blockbuster” in the history of cinema. *Cabiria*, meanwhile, is considered one of the most important silent films ever produced in Italy; its epic scope served as an inspiration for the equally influential *Birth of a Nation* (1915). See Silvio Alovio, *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastroni, 1914): *Lo spettacolo della storia* (Milan: Mimesis, 2014).

6. Carlo Graziani-Walter, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei: film in cinque parti con musica descrittiva composta espressamente dal maestro Carlo Graziani-Walter* (Florence-Turin: Edizione Al mondo musicale, 1913). Copies of the complete score (a piano score) are preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria in Turin, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice, the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence, and the Biblioteca Marucelliana, also in Florence. However, high-quality images of the entire score are freely available on the web site of Progetto Cabiria, an interdisciplinary research project based at the Università degli studi di Torino dedicated to the “census, cataloguing and study of manuscript and printed music for the cinema in Piedmont,” <http://www.progetto-cabiria.eu/en/>. All musical examples in this article have been prepared with reference to these images.

7. The production of *Gli ultimi giorni* is roughly contemporaneous with the first efforts, in the United States, to systematize cinematic accompaniment through the use of “cue sheets.” Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 271–85. For equivalent developments in Italy, see Marco Targa, “The Use of Cue Sheets in Italian Silent Cinema: Contexts, Repertoires, Praxis,” in *The Sounds of Silent Films: New Perspectives on History, Theory and Practice*, ed. Claus Tieber and Anna K. Windisch (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 49–65.

8. Marco Targa, “Reconstructing the Sound of Italian Silent Cinema: The ‘musica per orchestra’ Repertoires,” in *Film Music: Practices, Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives: Studies around Cabiria Research Project*, ed. Annarita Colturato (Turin: Kaplan, 2014), 135–68; esp. 133.

9. The other films with surviving scores, and their composers, are: *Lo schiavo di Cartagine* (1911), Osvaldo Brunetti; *Rapsodia satanica* (1914), Pietro Mascagni; *Cabiria* (1914), Manlio Mazza with Ildebrando Pizzetti; *L’histoire d’un Pierrot* (1914), Mario Costa; *Christus* (1916), Giocondo Fino; *Frate Sole* (1918), Luigi Mancinelli; *Giuliano l’Apostata* (1920), Luigi Mancinelli; *Joseph* (1921), Giocondo Fino.

10. According to Marco Targa, an estimated 90 percent of the thousands of films produced in Italy during the silent era have not survived. This means that the survival rate for the scored films—at 9 out of 42, just over 20 percent—is actually much higher than for the average film produced in Italy at this time, which, given the direct

relationship between special scores and the prestige of their associated films, is perhaps not surprising. Targa, "The Use of Cue Sheets," 51.

11. Alessandra Campana, for instance, discusses *Rapsodia satanica* extensively in her recent monograph *Opera and Modern Spectatorship in Late Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 172–90. See also Christy Thomas, "Casa Ricordi and the Emergence of Cinema, 1905–1929" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2016), 331–48.

12. Pizzetti was deeply ambivalent about the cinema and backed out of the project having only written the "Sinfonia di fuoco"—a dramatic piece for baritone, chorus, and orchestra intended to accompany a pivotal scene in the Temple of Moloch. See Roberto Calabretto, "Tra equivoci e ripensamenti: Ildebrando Pizzetti e il cinema," *Musica/Realtà* 108 (2015): 71–86 [Part I] and 109 (2016): 63–71 [Part II]. On the contributions of Manlio Mazza, Pizzetti's student, see Emilio Sala, "For a Dramaturgy of Musical Reuse in Silent Cinema: The Case of *Cabiria* (1914)," in *Film Music*, ed. Calturato, 73–112.

13. Nidia was played by Fernanda Negri Pouget. Thanks to its worldwide distribution, several prints of the film survive today. My observations in this article, however, are based on the DVD edition of the film released by Kino Video. See *The Last Days of Pompeii*, DVD edition (New York: KinoVideo K186, 2000).

14. The actors playing Glauco and Jone were, respectively, Ubaldo Stefani and Eugenia Tettoni Florio.

15. Some features characteristic of *verismo* opera present in this "aria" are its construction in regular four-measure phrases, and its end-weighting, whereby the trajectory of the melody is directed toward a climactic high note (here an A-flat). See Marco Targa, *Puccini e la Giovane Scuola: Drammaturgia musicale dell'opera italiana di fine Ottocento* (Bologna: Alibis Editore, 2012), 104–21.

16. The relevant supertitle is "Nidia prorompendo internamente"—Nidia's internal outburst. Later in this article I give a fuller account of how these supertitles function. All translations are my own.

17. Thomas Edison, one of the pioneers of cinema, famously envisaged a technology that would not only place opera within every American home, but also perfectly preserve the works of the operatic canon for posterity. For a recent study of an operatic adaptation contemporaneous with *Gli ultimi giorni*, see Christy Thomas, "From Operatic Stage to Silent Screen: Casa Ricordi and Film d'Arte Italiana's

1911 *Aida*," *Opera Quarterly* 32/2–3 (2016): 192–220.

18. Geraldine Farrar's star turn in Cecil B. DeMille's *Carmen* (1915) is perhaps the best-known example of an opera singer exploring the world of silent cinema. For one discussion (among many) of this film, see Mary Simonson, "Screening the Diva," in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 83–100.

19. Scott D. Paulin, "Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music," in *Music and Cinema*, ed. James Buhler, Caryl Flynn, and David Neumeyer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 58–85.

20. See Rick Altman's discussion of vaudeville in *Silent Film Sound*, 95–118.

21. Gillian Anderson, "Musical Missionaries: 'Suitable' Music in the Cinema 1913–1915," in *Civiltà musicale: trimestrale di musica e cultura* 51/52 (2004): 173–89.

22. Gillian Anderson, "Synchronized Music: The Influence of Pantomime on Moving Pictures," *Music and the Moving Image* 8/3 (2015): 3–39. See also an influential essay by the Swiss musicologist Carlo Piccardi, who draws a parallel between efforts to "ennoble" cinema in the years around 1910 and the drive to rehabilitate pantomime in France and Italy in the late 1800s; "Pierrot al cinema: il denominatore musicale dalla pantomima al film," *Civiltà musicale: trimestrale di musica e cultura* 51–52 (2004): 35–140.

23. The *Journal of Film Music* has dedicated a special issue to the connections between melodrama and cinema: see Katherine K. Preston, "Introduction: From Nineteenth-Century Stage Melodrama to Twenty-First-Century Film Scoring," *Journal of Film Music* 5/1–2 (2012): 7–14.

24. Tobias Plebuch, "Mysteriosos Demystified: Topical Strategies within and beyond the Silent Cinema," *Journal of Film Music* 5/1–2 (2012): 77–92. (This idiosyncratic spelling of "mysterioso" is common in English-language sources.)

25. Theater ensembles (and their cinematic counterparts) were generally led by a pianist-conductor who could, if necessary, play the music alone. For more on compilation in cinematic contexts, see Martin Marks's discussion of the score to D. W. Griffiths's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) in *Music and the Silent Film*, 141–66.

26. Janina Müller and Tobias Plebuch, "Toward a Prehistory of Film Music: Hans Erdmann's Score for *Nosferatu* and the Idea of

Modular Form," *Journal of Film Music* 6/1 (2013): 31–48; 48.

27. For a range of recent perspectives on operetta, see a recent special issue of this *Journal*, which asks "what [would] it mean to take operetta seriously?" Carolyn Abbate and Flora Willson, "A Note from the Guest Editors," *Opera Quarterly* 33/1 (2017): 1–6.

28. On this point, see Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

29. On the *politema* as a cinematic space, see Elena Mosconi, *L'impressione del film: contributi per una storia culturale del cinema italiano, 1895–1945* (Milan: V&P, 2006), 123–44.

30. As well as the rush to adapt operatic subjects, numerous studios hit upon the strategy of hiring high-profile cultural collaborators. Mascagni's cinematic turn as the composer for *Rapsodia satanica* is one example; also noteworthy are the (very wordy) intertitles for *Cabiria*, provided by none other than Gabriele D'Annunzio—whose works served as the basis for several operas of the 1900s and 1910s.

31. In the visual arts, a good example is John Martin's painting *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* (1822).

32. Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20–56. Hibberd has written extensively on the representation of cataclysmic natural events on stage, for instance in her "Le Naufrage de la Méduse and Operatic Spectacle in 1830s Paris," *19th-Century Music* 36/3 (2013): 248–63.

33. On this development, see Gundula Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong, Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 6–12; on eruptive stagecraft specifically, *ibid.*, 132 and 168.

34. Redi, "La tragedia di Pompei in teatro," in *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, 63.

35. Sarah Hibberd, "La Muette and Her Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to Grand Opera*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 147–67.

36. Donizetti himself could have provided the fourth. Though nothing came of it, he mentioned Bulwer-Lytton's novel as a potential basis for an opera in a letter to the librettist Felice Romani, dated 18 November 1841: "saria non male far cadere la scelta sovra un oggetto cognito di Shakespeare, Bayron, Valter Scott o Bulver . . . Sai tu la cieca di quest'ultimo dell'Ultimo giorno di Pompei?" Cited without attribution in Redi, "La

tragedia di Pompei in teatro." The other operas include a five-act opera of 1869 by Félix-Victorin de Joncières. Though it receded rapidly from public consciousness, Ambrosio's scriptwriters may have known the libretto; see Paolo Russo, "Echoes of Opera in the 'quadri stupendi di una evidenza portentosa' of *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*," in *Film Music*, ed. Colturato, 111–34; 119.

37. William Ashbrook, "Jone," entry in Oxford Music Online, accessed January 2, 2018.

38. Indeed, so popular was *The Last Days of Pompeii* that filmmakers returned to it repeatedly as cinema continued to evolve and mature as a medium; in Italy alone, films were made on the *Pompeii* subject in 1908, 1913, 1913, 1925, and 1959.

39. See Stähli, "Screening Pompeii," 79–80, and Martinelli, "Sotto il vulcano," 35–37, for evaluations of Maggi's film.

40. For example, the House of M. Obellius Firmus had been excavated in 1911. Baldassare Conticello, "Scienza, cultura e cronaca a Pompei nella prima metà del nostro secolo," in *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, ed. Riccardo Redi (Naples: Electa Napoli, 1994), 15–26. Another factor possibly influencing Ambrosio's decision to approach the *Pompeii* subject again was the cataclysmic earthquake of 1908; images of the destroyed city of Messina had been captured in a series of films shot *dal vero*, "from life," and thus communicated to a large swathe of the viewing public. Aldo Bernardini, "Non-fiction Production," in *Italian Silent Cinema: A Reader*, 153–60.

41. As Maggi's film was, in turn, based on Petrella's opera, Paolo Russo has argued that the opera's structure and pacing are echoed directly in the 1913 film (though not its music: Russo's account of Graziani-Walter's score is brief and essentially descriptive). See Russo, "Echoes of Opera," 119–21 and 125–27.

42. Throughout this article, I use the Italian spellings found in Graziani-Walter's score—hence Arbace, Glauco, Jone, Nidia, rather than Arbaces, Glaucus, Ione, and Nydia.

43. In particular, Ambrosio omitted the character of Giulia—the original instigator of Arbace's plot to undo Glauco, inasmuch as she was Jone's rival for the latter's affections.

44. Fireworks, unsurprisingly, were used to recreate the Vesuvian eruption. Redi, "La tragedia di Pompei in teatro," and Stähli, "Screening Pompeii," 81.

45. Martinelli, "Sotto il vulcano," in Redi, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, 37–41.

46. See collated reviews for Ambrosio's film in Bernardini and Martinelli, *Cinema muto italiano: I film degli anni d'oro. 1913. Seconda parte* (Turin:

Nuova ERI, 1995), 313–18; and Pasquali's film in Bernardini and Martinelli, *Cinema muto italiano: I film degli anni d'oro. 1913. Prima parte* (Turin: Nuova ERI, 1995), 295–301.

47. See Targa, "Reconstructing the Sound of Italian Silent Cinema," 133.

48. Puccini, for instance, resisted allowing his music to be used in cinematic contexts; see Thomas, "When Opera Met Film," 367–89.

49. Though born in Brussels, Graziani-Walter spent most of his career in Florence and became a naturalized Italian citizen. His first opera, *Silvano*, premiered at Florence's Teatro Nuovo in 1879. Though he wrote several other operatic works, he was something of a jack-of-all-trades: he served, for instance, as composer and director for the Circolo reale mandolinisti Regina Margherita, the royal mandolin orchestra.

50. Mazza's score is preserved in the Bibliomediateca "Mario Gromo" at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin, Italy.

51. By itself, the score cost ten lire (or ten francs); adding the parts for a small orchestral complement of four to eight instruments (violin, viola, contrabass, flute/clarinet, trumpet, trombone) brought the total to fifteen lire/francs. Additional parts (e.g., harp, oboe, timpani, etc.) were for sale *ad libitum* at one lira/franc per part.

52. The original Italian reads: "L'Autore ha composta la musica in uno stile facile per il Pianista affinché questi possa, durante la proiezione della Film, coordinare la misura dei tempi coll'azione che si va svolgendo. Per avere una combinazione perfetta bisogna attenersi all'indicazione del Metronomo." Note that the grammatical gender of "film," masculine in modern Italian, was feminine when the word was first borrowed into the language.

53. Targa, *Puccini e la Giovane Scuola*, 123–40. Debates around the use of leitmotifs in cinematic accompaniment (and the legitimacy of the practice) are almost as old as the medium itself; for a recent survey, see Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

54. Katherine Spring, *Saying It with Songs: Popular Music and the Coming of Sound to Hollywood Cinema* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 35–38.

55. On historical antecedents of the cinematic hurry, see Anne Dhu McLucas, "The Continuity of Melos: Beginnings to the Present Day," *Journal of Film Music* 5/1–2 (2012): 15–28.

56. Müller and Plebuch, "Towards a Pre-History of Film Music," esp. 31–34.

57. Graziani-Walter, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*, piano score, 114.

58. That being said, choral contributions to the musical world of silent films were far from unheard of. Unsurprisingly, they were especially prevalent in the depiction of religious scenes. Four of the Italian surviving special scores feature religious themes and also a choir; indeed, Luigi Mancinelli's score for *Frate Sole* (1918) is more like an oratorio that happens to involve filmic images (which is, in fact, exactly how Mancinelli envisaged his music for the film). See Carlo Piccardi, "Agli albori della musica cinematografica: 'Frate Sole' di Luigi Mancinelli," in *Musica/Realtà* 16 (1985): 41–74.

59. Gabriele Dotto, "'Cantava nel silenzio': Glimpses of Nineteenth-Century Stage-Acting as Reflected in Examples of Silent Movie Shorts on Operatic Subjects," in *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 33 (2013): 133–51.

60. Roger Parker, "Giuseppe Verdi," entry in Oxford Music Online, accessed January 2, 2018.

61. The descriptor "film in cinque parti" is found in the title to Graziani-Walter's score itself. Though these divisions are clearly labeled in the score, the equivalent transitions in the film are not always obvious visually; projection practices may have played a major role in creating the five-part structure. It is worth noting that there is a run-on transition between Parts 3 and 4 of score.

62. For instance, music makes no appearance in the initial review of the Roman premiere that appeared in the broadsheet *Il Messaggero* on August 24, 1913. Only in an additional review from the following day did the reviewer see fit to mention (almost as an afterthought) that "the musical accompaniment, highly appropriate and well executed by the distinguished musicians that make up the orchestra, was also very much appreciated." (Molto è pure piaciuto l'accompagnamento musicale, bene appropriato ed ottimamente eseguito dai distinti professori che compongono l'orchestra.) See "Teatro Costanzi: Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei," in *Il Messaggero*, August 25, 1913.

63. Indeed, were it not for this review, the Florence performance would not be particularly important. Florence was not a major center of Italian cinema; *Gli ultimi giorni* was shown in the city nearly two months after the film's original premiere, and several weeks after the film had first been shown in Turin and Milan.

64. Giulio Piccini, *Le novelle del cinematografo* (Florence: Bemporad, 1910). For more on this collection, see John P. Welle, "Tales of Cinematic Customs: Early Italian Cinema Literature, Reception, and Historiography," in *A nuova luce*:

Cinema muto italiano. I. Atti del convegno

internazionale, Bologna, 12–13 novembre 1999, ed. Michele Canosa (Bologna: CLUEB, 2000), 25–32.

65. “Jarro” in *La Nazione*, October 24, 1913, reproduced in Bernardini and Martinelli, *Cinema muto italiano: I film degli anni d'oro. 1913. Seconda parte*, 317. The original Italian reads: “Il maestro Graziani-Walter sa . . . , come musicista, valersi delle sue ricchezze, e anche di quelle degli altri. . . . Non si può giudicare, se non sommariamente, della sua musica nella monca interpretazione che ebbe ieri sera. Pure, al solito, scaturisce da questo lavoro che il maestro Graziani-Walter è buon armonizzatore, buon strumentatore, non affannoso ricercatore di novità, ma percorritore sicuro di vie già battute: così sa di non sbagliare. . . . L'insieme della sua partitura è vario, vivace: non vi sono peregrinità, anzi, vi è molta semplicità di procedimenti. Il maestro Graziani-Walter ha ottenuto il suo scopo: quello di rendere sempre più animata l'attenzione del pubblico verso la riproduzione cinematografica e ha studiato un effetto, che gli è riuscito stupendamente: quello di temperare insieme l'azione del dramma cinematografico, una musica strumentale descrittiva e la voce umana. Le note che la signora Tosca Ferroni cantò simultaneamente all'azione del personaggio della giovinetta cieca nella film, suscitano nel pubblico una viva impressione. Sembrava veramente che il personaggio della film cantasse. È questa un'applicazione da studiarsi e che può avere effetto di aggiungere attrattiva alle riproduzioni cinematografiche. . . .” Emphasis added.

66. Literally translated, *monca* means “truncated,” though a figurative interpretation seems apt in this case.

67. Ferroni was a native of Florence and would go on to have a successful career as a mezzo-soprano in the 1920s. More importantly, at the time of *Gli ultimi giorni*'s first performances she was one of Graziani-Walter's students, which might explain why the only place in which the vocal part was definitively performed was the city that Piccini, Graziani-Walter, and Ferroni all called home.

68. Russo, “Echoes of Opera,” 123.

69. The extract, not counting the intertitle introducing the scene, numbers 138 measures in total; at Graziani-Walter's stated tempo of $\text{♩} = 104$, it should theoretically last 2 minutes and 39 seconds. The relevant film segment on the KinoVideo DVD edition of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, however, takes up only 2 minutes and 20 seconds. Even accounting for variable projection speeds and flexible tempos in performance (and the interventions required to digitize the film), the discrepancy remains.

70. Carlo Graziani-Walter, “Amore! Amore! Gavotta della Film ‘Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei’” (Florence-Turin: Edizione Al mondo musicale, 1913); and “La sfilata dei gladiatori: Marcia della Film ‘Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei’” (Florence-Turin: Edizione Al mondo musicale, 1913).

71. Jonathan Elkus, “Defining the Sousa March: Its Formal and Stylistic Constants,” in *American Musical Research Center Journal* 15 (2005): 41–54.

72. “La sfilata dei gladiatori” is explicitly identified as a “March from the film *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*.” Because the “Sfilata” is self-evidently a genuine march, one could imagine that the odd “gavotte” label for “Amore! Amore!” was selected for its ability to conform to marketing strategy, rather than for its musical accuracy.

73. A recent example at the time of *Gli ultimi giorni*'s premiere was the aria “Ch'ella mi creda libero e lontano,” from Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* (1910); see Emanuele Senici's discussion in *Landscape and Gender in Italian Opera: The Alpine Virgin from Bellini to Puccini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 241–43.

74. Graziani-Walter's setting of those words, moreover, breaks elementary rules of Italian versification, splitting the name “Glaucò” into three syllables—Gla—u—co—instead of two, “Glau-co.”

75. Mario Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata: l'incredibile storia dei film stranieri in Italia nei primi anni del sonoro* (Gemona: La Cineteca del Friuli, 1986), 8–14.