Copland on Wilder: Scoring Existential Theatre in Early American Film

Speculum Musicae: From Stage to Screen: Musical Films in Europe and United States (1927–1961)

Though Copland wrote prolifically both for and about film, little scholarship has emerged to explore the ways in which his work in this area contributed to the development of an American style in cinema. In Sol Lesser's 1940 cinematic adaptation of Thornton Wilder's Our Town (1938), Copland's film score treats expressly American characters, familial archetypes, and Wilder's knack for underscoring tragedy through life cycles within a delicate, introspective fabric of thematic development and internal reference. Despite the stylistic kinship in simplicity apparent between its renowned collaborators, Our Town marks Copland's singular partnership with Wilder and warrants closer scrutiny.