

The unsung Oscar nominees

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newwave@tulane.edu

Derek Toten, who was heard on [WTUL radio](#) first as a student at Tulane University in the summer of 1986, has hosted WTUL's "Stage & Screen" show for 28 years. Here are his picks for the unsung [Oscar nominees](#) ? Best Original Score and Best Original Song.



William Butler and Owen Pallett's *Her* has a contemporary sound, and though not my favorite of the bunch, is very right for its film. *Gravity* from Steven Price, on the other hand, also has a contemporary feel, but is also interesting in its own right. It's suspenseful, atmospheric and tuneful, with a great use of voice within the symphonic arrangement.

Alexandre Desplat's score to *Philomena* can be lyrical and light at times, and also strangely serious, but ultimately comes off as repetitive. Not his best work. Thomas Newman's *Saving Mr. Banks* had a tough needle to thread as the musical score to a film about a movie musical featuring several well known and much loved songs. Enjoyable, but not a standout in any way.

I am an unabashed John Williams fan and believe that his scores always add an extra dimension to any film, but in the case of *The Book Thief*, the music sounds just a little too familiar, like he's borrowing musical phrasing from himself. In this case, a little too much like *ET* meets *Harry Potter* ? perhaps Mr. Williams has visited the well once too often?

My pick for Best Score: the exciting and unique *Gravity* by Steven Price.

I'm not really tuned into pop music, so I often find myself at odds with the choices for Best Song. To my ear, each year's selection sounds like that season's pop radio song du jour ? I'm usually drawn to something more distinctive. The nominee from *Frozen* is "Let It Go" but I much prefer Josh Gad's snowman's lament, "In Summer." I'm also not a fan of the song that doesn't really have a connection to the film and is added to the credit sequence for no good reason.

My vote for Best Song: "Happy" from *Despicable Me 2*.