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COMPOSING ON SCREEN: THE MUSICALITY OF FILM

Music has been used as an inspiration and role model for film since the invention of cinema. This dissertation explores the theoretical basis for the comparison of film with music and investigates different aspects of the influence music has had on film and its creators, from the days when a divergence with music was a strategy for proving a film's artistic autonomy to the present-day impact of MTV. As its main proposition, this thesis declares that musicality is a potential inherent to the film medium that can be realised through various devices, in different stages of the film-making process. The fulfilment of that potential invests film with a fluency, immediacy and affective impact similar to music.

The method that underlies the key discussions and conclusions in this thesis can be described concisely as a comparative analysis, under which all-inclusive title one will be able to identify different types of formal and interpretative analyses of film, music and film music, discussions on film and music theory and aesthetics, as well as references to cognitive and Gestalt psychology. Comparative analysis in this thesis is based on the assumption that comparing film to music can reveal certain new aspects of it, highlight some obscure or neglected elements of film as a multimedial form, or provide a new way of thinking about some familiar issues. Even though the comparative analysis of music and film is in many aspects based on connections that are more actual than metaphorical, the underlying nature of the comparative method in general proposes metaphor as the most suitable model for the comparative investigation and the metaphorical experience as one of the most insightful conceptual approaches to knowing.

The basis for creating analogies between film and music and identifying the sources of film's own musical potential is established through the comparison of the features shared by both arts – temporality, rhythm and kinesis. Since film is a multimedial form which contains music as part of its audio-visual structure, the comparative analysis is combined with the exploration of interactive relationships between film and film music. These comparative and interactive aspects of analysis are regarded as complementary because the former provides the theoretical basis for exploring what is here called film's *musical potential*, while the latter addresses the matter of realising that potential.

The thesis has 220 pages (excluding the bibliography and filmography) which are organised in three parts containing seven chapters in total. The first part/chapter (*Music as Model and Metaphor*) provides a broad historical context for the film/music analogy and presents it as the descendent of a tendency as old as the history of Western culture to use music as the reference model for other arts, and

even science. This chapter also discusses the influence of visually-biased culture on the conventions of film music practice and explores the possibilities of achieving film musicality in this context.

The second part of the book establishes the theoretical basis for the comparison of film and music by examining the common denominators of the two arts: temporality, rhythm and movement.

Chapter Two (*Time*) gives a concise overview of the numerous and often controversial philosophical approaches to the subject of time in order to establish the context for the exploration of temporality in arts, music and film in particular. It also presents an overview of relevant writings about music and film time before investigating their common features in the context of contemporary theories about time.

Chapters Three and Four emphasise the ubiquitous nature of rhythm as a phenomenon deeply involved in structuring our reality and in the processes of communication and self-expression, while also presenting rhythm as a universal parameter that can cut across different music and film traditions and genres. The subject of rhythm is divided into two chapters, the first one (*Rhythm*) being concerned with *constitutive* rhythm created by a periodic movement or a structural grouping on the small scale, and the second (*Macro-rhythm*) exploring the sense of proportion and rhythmical “pulsation” produced on the large-scale between the segments of a completed piece of music or a feature film. Chapter Three thus reveals the analogy of complementary relationships which are in film established between the external rhythm of editing and internal rhythm of the shot and in music between chronometric and integral time as temporal dimensions formed interactively by metre and rhythm (D. Epstein). Chapter Four concentrates more on the structural value of rhythm in the context of macro-form, exploring the idea of art form as a set of conventions ultimately governed by rhythmic patterns of tension and relaxation, conflict and resolution, anticipation/expectation and fulfilment. The relationship between music and film macro-rhythm is investigated mainly by comparing the procedures of repetition and different types of patterning.

Chapter Five (*Kinesis*) further explores the idea of film musicality by comparing the kinetic features of film and music and investigating the connection between these and affective responses to individual works of art. It also emphasises the importance of sound and music in establishing the kinetic profile of film and enabling aspects of visual kinesis to realise their full affective potential.

The third part of the thesis contains two case studies which promote the “musical poetics of film” as the conceptual framework for exploring the ways in which the musical potential of film is realised in practice. The choice of Jim Jarmusch’s *Dead Man* (1995) and Darren Aronofsky’s *Pi* (1998) reflects the author’s intention to conclude the subject of film’s musicality by presenting two very different examples which emphasise the fact that there is neither one single type of musicality nor one way of achieving it in film. Since *Pi* and *Dead Man* have been chosen as representatives of the aesthetics of the cut and the shot respectively, their analysis provides an insight into how the contrasting treatments of film time, rhythm and kinesis can create very different yet effective examples of composing on screen.

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