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THE MUSICAL READY-MADE

On the ontology of music and musical structures in film
A preliminary study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses to what extent it is advisable to talk of music in movies, and aims to question the relevance of applying a concept of musical understanding towards sound in movies at all.

It is the writer's understanding that the use of musical means of expression in relation to any kind of moving pictures is generally to be considered as part of the sound space of the movie and not as genuine musical expressions, no matter if the music is diegetically motivated or not. Music is present as a sort of objet trouvé or ready-made.

In most cases, music accompanying moving pictures appears as a means and not as a purpose. Even when considering movies made to picturize music, this chapter suggests that the expression of the music is forced into the background by the tendency of synaestheticism to emphasize the narrative and quite simply also by the predominance of vision: the preferred sensory supplement to the struggle of gaining access to the story or the myth: a domain outside the reach of music.

MUSIC, FILM MUSIC AND MUSIC IN FILM

Music in film holds a unique position within musical phenomena, whereas music in advertising does not often distinguish itself from music in general as it draws directly on established socio-cultural codes associated with particular current or established styles of music and also on well-known

musical icons, like the evergreen or last year's hit song. For one thing, it is not meaningful to talk of a particular film music style. All music styles can appear in film, thus film music is delimited solely as a particular genre comprising any kind of musical structure and sound, any kind of style or genre, exposed within the workings of film; in this way film music forms a genre in the broadest sense of the concept. However, at the same time and quite paradoxically, film music is in comparison to non-film music deeply rooted and tied up in signifying processes, obviously serving as a conveyor of meaning. Notably, it does so in a way that exceeds the mere ideological and cultural reproductive – or canonical – purposes that can be said to characterize non-film music, and it even seems reasonable to claim that film music (can) produce reductive and almost parodic understandings of idioms peculiar to music within a specific culture or subculture. Unless it is very 'avant-garde' non-film music – like music of the Baroque, Balinese gamelan, country & western, be-bop, thrash metal, contemporary, etc. – it is generally constructed and performed by means of and in accordance with (stylistic) norms and rules that are typical for the music in question. Insofar as a piece of music respects specific norms, it can not only be said to belong to the relevant culture or sub-culture but it also often takes part in the construction and continuous upholding thereof and furthermore can serve as a reference to whoever participates. Although film music, as I will try to show, is actually identifiable even though it is as a kind of negation, it never refers to itself or to film as a cultural product or phenomenon. The questions I am about to discuss are whether film music is really a particular kind of music, and whether it is truly possible to distinguish between sound and picture – and even between sound and music – in (sound) film. Is film music, at least to the film watcher, simply an integrated constituent of film as a multi-media aesthetic phenomenon, thereby distinguishing itself fundamentally from other kinds of music?

The main hypothesis behind these questions is that it is only rare – if ever – meaningful to talk of music in film, commercials and the like, since the use of musical means of expression in multi-media contexts generally appears as part of the field of sound in a text/picture-sequence and not as genuine musical expressions. This understanding of film music is considered to be valid no matter if the music is diegetic or non-diegetic. Broadly speaking, the diegetic aspect seems overexposed in the efforts to

outline and understand music in films and commercials. By and large, the notion and in particular the emphasizing of the diegetic is remarkable as it obviously is not really within – or inside – the film but only in the understanding of the film that a diegetic element can emerge. What is articulated in the dichotomy between diegetic and non-diegetic music could seem to be the assumption that the film watcher is constantly looking for ways to legitimize the presence of the music. This is hard to imagine; to the film watcher, film music is always diegetic – heard or unheard.

Whether the music is written especially for the film or not and whether it appears to be a part of the environment and the surroundings within which the players are acting and, as such, is meant to be understood as belonging to the 'inside' of the pictured scene or not, is really of little importance. Music in film is always contributing to the unfolding and the dramatizing of the narrative; it is never outside – and never neutral – just as the overtures and the intermezzi are not to be understood as detached from the play during the performance of the opera. They belong to the play and entirely operate as part of the play.

Thus I support Kassabian's view that a film is not something you primarily see or watch, films are also heard (Kassabian 2001: 5). But I do not share the understanding that music brings (its own) specific meaning to the film. Instead, music must be understood as one – mostly unrecognized¹ – 'voice' in a 'dialogical polyphony' that makes up the multi-medial entirety that constitutes sound film and other similar cultural products. This voice being in itself a dialogical polyphony in the Bakhtinian sense, as the voice is put together by different types of musical expression that interact dialogically. As such, the meaning of film music is continuously negotiated in relation to all other elements: text, pictures, sound and narrative as well as inner and outer context.

Every element or 'dialogical voice' is just as constituting to the film as any other. None of them are separate entities and none of them can be left out at will without rendering the film either meaningless or thoroughly altered.²

In most cases, music accompanying or integrated in moving pictures stands out solely as a means, not as an objective. Already in this respect, it is not appropriate to talk about music in film, just as it does not make sense to claim that works of art – pictures, sculptures, architecture and so on – that appear in film are works of art in effect and expression. No

matter if they are part of a specially designed setting or if they belong to the location that the movie is filmed in, they appear only as part of the film. They are but roles or props symbolizing works of art.

When we talk about the role of music in relation to moving pictures, it is precisely the role of the music we shall look for, not the music as music or the 'musicness' of the music. By virtue of its role as a role or a prop, film music does not take part in the discourse of music or its cultural space. Instead, within the discourse of film, it forms a musical domain of its own, which of course falls inside the definition of 'musicking' as does almost every kind of cultural sound³, but which is at the same time otherwise fundamentally different from 'common music', comprising performed, broadcasted, distributed and other kind of principally one-way-communicated music as well as every kind of participatory music like dance music, 'unconsciously generated music', work songs, community singing, etc. Consequently, film music manifests a series of characteristics that delimits it from other kinds of music namely:

- Film music is not tied to its own time. It is timeless, asynchronous, ahistorical and capable of crossing any historic boundary at will
- Although particular forms of musical expression at least to some film watchers are related to specific cultures, film music is only referring to a certain culture by way of the universe of the film and it is not or does not need to be rooted in a specific music culture or subculture
- Film music does not form a particular musical style or genre⁴
- Film music is situated outside the circuits of traditional music styles and genres
- Film music can at will make use of and refer to traditional music styles and genres
- Film music is a one-timer; it is not repeated and it hereby separates itself fundamentally from the repetitive praxis that characterizes the conditions of traditional music. If film music is repeated, it leaves the domain of the film and becomes non-film music – possibly referring to the film⁵
- Film music is referential and non-essentialist⁶

Furthermore, film music seems unaffected by the characteristic high-low dichotomy that bourgeois culture continuously insisted upon and sought to maintain through its institutions throughout most of the 20th century. This is probably the main reason why there are remarkably few studies on film music before the rise of a new practise within musicology that focuses primarily but not entirely on popular music and seeks to integrate cultural theory deeply into the core of musicology, and it certainly seems to be the reason why "until relatively recently, academics have mobilized primarily aesthetic discourses in examining music for film, especially in the art cinema." (Gorbman 2004: 14).

It has to be noted, that music in advertising differs from the suggested characteristics of film music on at least two major points. One is, that in order to avoid providing the advertised product in question with a sense of the outdated and corny music in advertising needs to be much closer tied to the time and place of its presentation than film music has. For this reason it will often work either as a deliberate travesty or as an iconic symbol when it does not as we shall see later. Another point is that it cannot be restricted to work as a one-timer. On the contrary, it has to have sufficient musical quality and significance needed for continual presentation and repetition without being worn out; a situation that resembles the demands that charge music and other momentary cultural products – which it often has to be able to work alongside – has to meet.

However, in the subsequent discussion, I will generally focus on music in film seeking to investigate the relation between film music and other forms of music, mainly by evaluating the relevance of various means and methods for the description of music when applied to film music.

FILM MUSIC PERCEIVED AS MUSIC

In the following, film sound is generally left out, as sound alone, and the discussion will concentrate on the organization of sound within the perspective of traditional musical structuring principles. In other words, the discussion is as widely as possible restricted to the prevailing temporal structuring of primarily instrumental and vocal pitches and durations traditionally associated with music, referred to above – and generally – as 'common music' or 'non-film music'.

Taking this point of departure, obviously reveals an open flank, as the implied limitations can easily be criticized; especially today where, on the one side, sound design, sound production, etc. have become common, thus gaining increasingly larger cultural importance, and where, on the other side, the borders between the structuring and designing of sound and the composing of music, be it in the studio, on the computer or even on stage, are rather undefined.

However, as the goal is to discuss relations between film music and non-film music, it is music, in an essentialist understanding in which the definite piece of music is central, and also music's path into other media that is reflected. Thus, film sound as a whole is not included, regardless that the use of foley-techniques, acoustics, spatialization, shaping, etc. are very often characterized by a design that gives witness of a musical way of thought. Later, I shall however return to these matters.

There can be no doubt that in a technical and music-theoretical sense, film music is a legitimate and genuine form of music. It is made of elements we traditionally expect to find in pieces of music: organized pitches, chords and chord progressions, rhythms, dynamics and various repetitive patterns that stand out through combinations of these elements allowing for the emergence of themes, melodies, motives, sequences, etc. But whereas every other kind of music is restricted and obliged to follow inner logics and constructive principles that secure adequate (inner) coherence necessary for the establishment of meaningful syntactical and structural entities, film music is not submitted to the same kind of logics. Formal demands that traditional musical pieces of work have to meet in order to be recognized and appreciated as such are generally either only relevant for title music and similar musical elements in film, or on a small-scale 'local' level. Film music usually emerges and fades away at will, leaving only vague hints of a music that could have been, or excerpts of passages from musical sequences whose beginning or end is never heard. In this respect, film music is fragmented and syntactically uncompelled.

CONCEPTS OF MUSIC AND FORMS OF DESCRIPTION

The peculiar absorption that often characterizes listening to music without the simultaneous watching of moving pictures, be it the concentrated

listening, the two-sided integration or participation, music while working, or merely the distraction we experience whilst doing the dishes or driving the car, is fundamentally distinct from the way we listen to or, rather, hear film music. Whereas film music as 'film music' is inextricably linked to the universe of the film and the complex of interpretations that is contained within the interaction between the narrative, the music, the articulations, the conceptions, etc., non-film music is linked to the participant, the listener, and eventually to a mental sculpting of the musical structures and aesthetics or, maybe, even to a visualization of the musicians performing the music if it is mechanically reproduced.

Aside from the recent widening of the concept of film music towards a general concept of music as simply audio or sound, it seems common to many criticisms and understandings of the complex interaction between film and music that they are generally reluctant to reflect upon the concept of music that lies behind the discussions (Prendergast 1992, Gorbman 1987). Music is ostensibly understood as a commonly acknowledged definite phenomenon, a given fact, and in this way it appears implicit in the performed examinations.

Furthermore, music is often sorted out in a kind of implied system making it appear as if it can be enrolled into forms of description that are as firm as those available regarding the visual and the narrative. This understanding – that can be summarized in a concept of music as formal and objective – appears untenable and difficult to substantiate, especially considering film music.

The referentiality of music – and film music – as well as its objectivity is essentially different from what characterizes the pictures. Whereas it is possible to distinguish between operative categories as outside and in-door-shootings, camera angles, various perspectives, types of lenses, lightning conditions, etc. in the case of pictures, it is not possible to refer to objective and exact conditions and situations to the same degree when dealing with music, and most certainly not in such a way that it becomes broadly understood.

On the contrary: The declarative concerning music is very difficult to accomplish with just a limited degree of significance for everything else but the kind of music in question (this is also true if it is the sound production of the music we wish to describe). No single tone, chord, timbre,

rhythm or beat and no multiplication or combination of either is ascribed to – or can take on – just one particular, unambiguous meaning, function or character. And the same piece – or more often extract – of music can even perform very different, frequently contradictory tasks in different films (e.g. Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* or Johann Strauss Jr. *An der schönen blauen Donau* that both are used in numerous films, some of which oppose each others' descriptions).

Contrary to most other agents of film, music apparently cannot be neutrally described 'from the outside', so to speak. In itself, this cannot imply that film music falls outside the domain of 'common music', quite the contrary; it could support the idea that it has to be evaluated and described from inside a musical discourse. As we shall see this does not seem to be true.

TECHNICAL OR SYSTEM SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION

It goes without saying that the generally system-dependent methods for the description of music that have been developed and continuously refined within musicology by and large are inadequate when striving for commonly understood descriptions of the forces evoking the emotive and psychological responses generally associated with music. It is even more so if the description is supposed to consider how the music affects and maybe contextualizes a particular film scene. Whereas there is absolutely no difficulty in describing how the film camera's selection significantly affects our experience of a scene, it is quite different when it comes to describing the way the music influences the scene in similar, objective terms.

None of the traditional musicological methods for the description of music are capable of showing and explaining how the character and the significance of a piece of music in a particular scene work internally and externally. Furthermore, even on the expert-level, the methods are in principle only capable of describing how music obtains meaning internally, how it works or makes sense in a particular theoretical perspective that is exclusive to music. What is described in this way is music's mere denotative capacity or syntactic meaning⁷ referring to e.g. "the manner

in which individual notes relate to one another melodically, harmonically and rhythmically." (Shepherd & Wicke 1997: 103).

Towards the 'inner' signification of music, the methods are more or less irrelevant and one does not get far with the technical description at least not without outlining where, how and to whom the music in question is 'functioning'. Analyses and descriptions of the music's technical composition are in themselves only capable of showing how the music is composed. In addition, it can only do this within a framework of understanding whose categories and terminology is determined in advance – and is known to all who participates in the communication. To the uninformed, they are of no use at all.

If it is not determined in advance what tasks the music is carrying out in the culture in which it belongs, the technical description only makes sense as far as music is acknowledged as a self-enclosed phenomenon, as pure aesthetics. A position that is rarely relevant towards film music.

Technical descriptions are generally irrelevant for the understanding of film music in its context. It may even act to obscure or derail in the same way as the technical description of the engineer's accomplishments behind the building of the scenery or the setting of the lights will hardly contribute to the understanding of the drama, and certainly will not support the theatrical experience.

The minute we try to understand film music on the premises of non-film music by applying traditional methods for music analysis and description, we are obviously neutralizing the music's filmic element. However, this does not imply that descriptive forms that focus on the music are automatically inadequate. They can only exclude descriptive procedures that primarily concentrate on normative structural features and elements.

CATEGORICAL DESCRIPTION

Categorical descriptions of genre and style are compilations of complex concepts or conceptualizations, which on a kind of meta-level contain relatively detailed information on the form, structure, character, origin and use or function of the music. As such, categorical descriptions also give hints to implications regarding signification, on at least a general level.

Form typologies and genres such as ballade, symphony, schlager and waltz, may, as well as style designations as punk, romantic, electronica and bebop, anchor and contextualize a scene deeply into sub-cultural, historical and ethnical milieus and situations. But they bring only little help to the understanding (and workings) of the specific music in the concrete scene. Of course, in many ways, they yield loud and clear signals but they are on the level of headlines and, furthermore, just as the usefulness of applying technical descriptions depends upon theoretical understanding, categorical descriptions also require knowledge of the cultures to which they refer.

Categorical descriptions are learned descriptions. They are meaningless to the unqualified, that is, to the one who stands outside the culture in question. From a Western-European viewpoint, this is well known from the encounter with exotic music styles and genres: besides the exotic and maybe a sense of the geography implied they do not tell us anything specific unless they are accompanied by pictures. And in these cases, we have to trust the authenticity of the combination. Is the music we hear actually related – or at all relevant – to the events depicted? We are in the hands of the picture and filmmakers.

Behind this scenario lurks one of post-modernity's most disturbing consequences: Does it really matter if we accidentally – or deliberately – mix the categories? To the informed, it can be entertaining to mix, and to the outsider it is merely a coincidence if it has or ever will have any importance at all.

Insofar as categorical descriptions are nevertheless considered to be viable means of explaining musical signification in film, it has to be taken into account that this kind of signification is also defined dialectically in the exchange between the music and the 'rest of the film'. Seen in this way, it is hard to ignore that film music, for instance, supports or may even have become one of the generators of the notion of historical époques and thus of époques in the history of music. If we are not specifically taught in advance, it is hard to see how we should be able to connect the music of Lully with the court of the Sun King, Louis the XIV, or just to the 17th century, without the special settings, the rhetoric of the mediated presentation. Film can produce a totality of information, a specific discourse, inside which all elements interact leading to a kind of mutual

signification. And even musical means of expressions that fall outside traditional categories can, as we shall see later, form a category of their own.

As strong as categorical definitions may work, they are dependent upon signification processes that are continuously negotiated and ever transient. They can never deal with the 'musicness' of the music and they tend to provide an understanding that allows for interchangeability and negotiation to a degree that minimizes or overrules the importance of the specific piece of music in question, thus generally excluding music's capacity to form the *Barthenian* 'punctum' (Barthes 1993) to a scene, a situation that does not seem advisable.

METAPHORICAL DESCRIPTIONS

More objective or at least objectively sounding descriptions such as fast, slow, loud, weak, and well known dead metaphors – which however in certain cases may have a denotative non-metaphorical content through the principle of homology – such as light, dark, heavy, seem – through what appears to describe universal conditions – characterized by a sort of neutrality. This apparent neutrality seems, however, highly questionable. What do metaphors like these really imply?

Almost every metaphor that is used in connection with music takes off outside musical discourse – stating this is practically a tautology – and as such they stand out as external descriptions: "The music is gloomy" or "the quick ornamental runs in the accordion endow the piece with a carefree and light atmosphere," etc. However, what is considered 'gloomy' seems relative and very possibly ethnocentric, and this also seems to be the case when it comes to metaphorical descriptors such as 'ornamental', 'carefree' and 'atmospheric'. In the end, metaphorical descriptions are culturally determined, too, and they are to a great extent developed inside distinctive discourses belonging to certain historical and cultural spaces. The kind of understanding they bring forward is situationist and intimately dependent upon the participant's pre-understanding.

Metaphors are not objective or independent. They require familiarity with both the current musical code (or idiolect) and with the use of metaphors within the given socially, technologically, historically and culturally determined field of communication.

Culture, and especially the professional traditions that establish themselves towards music, develop certain forms of description based on metaphors that add up as musical types of character: a jolly song, a happy melody, a mournful ballad, a burden march, etc., paving the way for the notion of musical archetypes.

Towards sound or timbre it is common to use descriptive metaphors very often organized in contrasts of hard/soft, sharp/hollow, etc., and going a bit further it is well known that musical instruments can be endowed with certain spirits or even anthropomorphized; thus, the individual instruments are associated with specific animals or types of human beings.

Technical, categorical and metaphorical descriptions based on their use in non-film music do not present themselves convincingly as candidates for an adequate approach to the understanding of film music. Categorical descriptions probably stand out as the most informative followed by the metaphorical, but to work they both require a distinctive degree of familiarity with cultural practice and tradition and all three turn out to be ethnocentric and in case of at least the technical to a certain degree even elitist. However, this discussion gives a hint on one of the difficulties in dealing with film music as a distinctive form of music: the whole investigating apparatus discussed hitherto is tied up in practices that are closely entwined with non-film music. On the other hand, if film music is fundamentally dependent upon the existence of non-film music as a reference, then clearly the problem is to decide whether its signification, or coding, is inherited from the socio-cultural coding of the music in question, or has been taking place outside a filmic discourse – suggesting a coding established in a musical discourse – or if it is generated primarily in the encounter with the film.

However, no matter how the coding takes place, film music forms a fragmentary nature as a result of its primary conditions being closely entwined with the narrative and the pictures and it can only be analyzed in concordance with the film, as the pictures can only be meaningfully analyzed in tandem with the narrative, the music and so on.

CODING AND SIGNIFICATION

The complex of technical, categorical and metaphorical descriptions and their foundation within a certain culture, sociality and time also seem to govern the musematic notion of musical composing that, above all, is known from Philip Tagg – and to a certain extent but in a less indexical form from Asafjev. The musematic approach and understanding describes a great referential framework whose permutational capacity appears to be inexhaustible, but whose status and significance as basis, defining the conditions for musical communication on the whole, works as a matrix – a matrix that could be understood as an imprisonment, as references that fall outside the matrix cannot obtain status as musical expression.

The musical work, or actually the composer, can take an oppositional position towards this imprisonment by challenging or breaking down the borders. This is well known within the classical tradition as well as within the popular. Film music is, however, prevented from pointing out the imprisonment as it has been determined as referential. The imprisonment is the conditional basis for film music but film music itself is outside this imprisonment, thus actually confined in another: a negation of the imprisonment.

This is, of course, a very awkward way of defining why film music cannot gain genuine denotation or primary signification, only secondary.⁸ It points towards signifying processes that fall outside the specific film music itself, but eventually towards other forms of music, and – in a non-concrete temporal understanding – also before the music. Film music can thus be seen as continuously dependent upon music that has been.

While traditional music is playing into a cultural space, where music materializes as music in a reflected articulation of the cultural space's technological systems, a gesture; film music – as long as it remains film music and aspires to be comprehended *as* music – is playing into an already established musical space that it stands outside and cannot influence. It is in the negation of that space that it is imprisoned. And if film music breaks out of its imprisonment, it really *breaks in* and shifts position; it becomes part of traditional music.

In consequence thereof, the signification or connotation that music is supposed to bring into or contribute to the film has to exist either as a cliché or a potentiality. In order to be considered film *music* and not just

film sound, the musical code in play has to have been established previously – at least to a certain degree. No matter if the music is supposed to contradict or support the pictures and scenes it escorts, it can only do so if it is sufficiently coded beforehand.

Doing so, film music is dependent upon the practices and coding of non-film music and upon the coding and re-coding that film music and pre-existing music has undergone as they have been exposed in other, earlier films.

Although the coding is not entirely acknowledged by every film watcher – and does not need to be – almost every musical expression, any musical sound that occurs in film, is in a way already coded. The only other possible coding of the music is the one taking place inside the framework of the film, its pictures and narrative.

Coding is not limited to specific musical works, styles and genres. It also encompasses general voice leading principles, orchestration, instruments etc. not surprisingly in close relation to the practices and technologies that belong to Western-European culture.⁹

A single musical entity, like a note from a cembalo or the sound of a distorted electric guitar, is to many Western-Europeans a sufficient indication of a level within a specific social structure in a particular historical époque, to contextualize and characterize a dramatic situation.¹⁰

At the same time, and as already touched upon, it has to be considered that, to many filmgoers, the specificity of music's signifying content may as well have been generated within film discourse as within a musical pattern, meaning that the sign value and signification of, say, old music forms has been established in close relation to film. If the affinity between specific music forms and certain historic periods, cultures, social classes, etc. is maintained continuously, it will most likely be within generative media practices and not as much a result of educational efforts. Thus, the cultural learning process that entrusts us with the ability to distinguish between different types of music could in this way be seen as partly taking place within a filmic discourse. Within postmodernity's hyperrealistic modus of simultaneity, this observation is trivial. Still, it may be difficult to retain these relations or associations inside the filmic practices in the present, as film also makes use of music in asymmetrical ways, for example the well-known use of music by Rossini and Beethoven

in Stanley Kubric's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) – the apparent conflict is dependent upon the knowledge or a sense of the music as prerequisite (see later).

Returning to the question of coding, non-film music can be seen as shaped and developed through dialogical (inter-textual) processes, whereas film music is doubly monological: non film music inflects monologically upon film music as an external source. At the same time, the dialogical field that relates to film music is sterile: any exchange between the expressive means of film music unavoidably takes place in a context that includes and prioritizes the film. Hence, any dialogically based exchange is encapsulated within the universe of the film and the music is tied up as a single voice in the complex multi-media polyphony that constitutes the film.

Film music is as such excluded from the circuits of traditional music, leading an aesthetically unique existence and forming a separate idiosyncratic realm, which nevertheless is based upon structural and expressive techniques and methods that constitute what could be summarized as the rhetorical means of the circuits of non-film music. To a large extent, film music is seen in a similar way as rhetorical effect by Jon-Roar Bjørkvold (1996) a viewpoint, supported by Claudia Gorbman (2004).

However, contrary to what Bjørkvold – with references to Plato and a respectful reflection upon the theorizing of Eisler and Schönberg – suggests, film music is not able to unfold inner, structural qualities of music in a rhetorical way that calls for rational appreciation. No matter if the music is of the highest compositional complexity or plain trivia, there is no way it can escape being judged almost entirely on an emotional level. Film music – just as music in advertising – is always pathos, and even forms of expression that are traditionally considered to be mainly rational like Serialism and Elektronische Musik stand out as pathos, articulating, for instance, the dispassionate, cold and estranged nature of a scene appealing to emotionally determined response and signification.

MISSING LINK

Present signifying processes in relation to music become increasingly blurred and difficult to deduce. Whereas musical meaning as a social

construction traditionally seems tied to the uses, knowledge and reception of music in various forums where music has been in the centre in one way or another, secondary signification emerges in close interaction with late modernity's almost omnipresent sound-picture-relations and within the practises that surrounds these. The coding that is traditionally imprinted upon music within specific practices – the club, the work, the concert hall etc. – in accordance to which musical expressions are perceived and eventually understood as codes and signs, is now taking place outside dedicated musical forums. Instead, secondary signification increasingly emerges in relation to practises and norms that are established inside the complex dialectics that characterize media in which pictures and music converge, eventually in what stands out as a synthesis, an enclosure that cannot be split up into separate entities. The extreme consequence being that music will only exist as (a kind of) film music.

Film music exists in its own domain that is obviously related to and dependent upon the current music-domain but does not belong to it. No matter if the music is written exclusively for the film or if it is either pre-existing or written as a contribution to the film, or released simultaneously on its own as potential chart-material; the inclusion into the film implies that it is installed as an element alongside dialogue, sound-effects, voice-over, text, and so on. Hence, it always appears as if it existed in advance, like the ready-made. And like the ready-made, it inevitable takes on a new form or presence.

For this reason, it is hard to support and substantiate the idea of identification as a function of association, a process of affiliation, in the case of non-film music used in film, as brought forward by Kassabian (2001). Whatever piece of music the film watcher could associate the 'local' or 'individual' discourse of the music in question with, its exposition in the film will almost certainly lead to a re-coding of its significance.

READY-MADE

The situation is comparable to that of the ready-made. When Marcel Duchamp, in 1917, exhibited a urinal under the title *Fontaine* at The Independent's Exhibition in New York, the urinal was transformed into a work of art. It ceased to be a urinal. Even if someone should decide to use

it as such that action would in itself become a part of the work of art, or transform it into a new, a happening. It would never (re-)reach the trivial or mundane: a man relieving himself.

The aesthetic status of the ready-made can seem arguable but it certainly questions the authority of the artwork pointing towards its elements of intentionality and associative measures, not towards its inherent qualities. As Lars Qvortrup points out, this is basically a Kantian observation and not as much a modernist move as one might expect given that Kant acknowledged that the quality of a piece of art does not originate from qualities in the work itself, but from the observation or recognition of the work (Qvortrup 2001: 231).

The essential determination of the ready-made manifests itself through contextualization or rather re-contextualization. It is not as much the conferring upon the status of art on a urinal by exhibiting it as the element of entrusting an artefact with(in) nonnative coordinates, evoking a conflict or dialectic space as the ready-made challenges the surroundings. Hereby, the object acquires new values, which profoundly deprives it of its original qualities and uniqueness. The conferred object enters a kind of situationist dialogue in which it becomes a single voice in what can be acknowledged as multi media and polyphonic.

The idea of transforming existing (everyday) artefacts into artworks by the mere act of transformation appears to be a specific move and the parallelism is obvious, music exposed in film cannot be considered a traditional piece of music, it becomes film music. And neither is it of any importance here whether the music is diegetically integrated or not. In other words, music that is included in film will always become a kind of ready-made no matter if it is made for the film or not. The mere process of being installed into filmic context or employed in commercials renders the music transformed and functionalized.¹¹

Stanley Kubrick's use of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as the musical accompaniment for the dystopian highly misogynistic brutality depicted in *A Clock Work Orange* turned the music into a ready-made. The transformation was further intensified by the fact that the piece was performed by means of synthesized sound, outlining the determination of the operation. Even without the film, this brilliantly orchestrated synthesized version¹² of the piece is in itself a kind of ready-made in an almost true Duchamp

sense: in a way, the sound of the synthesizer resembles Duchamp's contribution to, for instance, Leonardo's *La Gioconda*, the moustache and the goatee, dragging the emblematic anthem of European culture¹³ out of its traditional field and entrusting it with the characteristic electrified timbre of the 20th century.

However, whereas the Duchampian ready-made rearticulates the well-known – be it a work of art or a plain everyday artefact – this way bringing an object into the foreground forcing the spectator to consciously (re-)interpret the object, the musical ready-made dissolves in the process and submerges into the film. The music is not accentuated and it does not stand out as a 'mis-placed' or re-contextualized object.

As it becomes tied up in the dramatizing of specific actions and values, the musical ready-made gains a metaphorical quality that music cannot else acquire. This is why for instance the (theme of the) second movement of Mozart's 21st Piano Concerto can serve as a reference to the sentiment of (ill-fated) love affairs as the piece was used as signature music in Bo Widerberg's film classic *Elvira Madigan* (1967). The kind of metaphorical signification goes way beyond the metaphorical quality music can achieve on its own even if it is put forward as (part of) a programmatic piece or a tone painting since the music is closely associated with specific narratives and pictures that are generally shared in a given culture.

FUNCTIONALIZATION AND MUSICALIZATION

Music installed in film is in this way functionalized sound that has ceased to be music. It is functionalized as a consequence of the way in which it contributes to the current story. It can be a picture or a reflection of music but it does not stand out as a piece of music anymore; the circumstances deny what it has been or what it refers to. It may be perceived but not received as music. The functionalization of the music implies – besides possible references to a specific original work – that generally merely the aesthetic and rhetorical 'elements' of the music stand out. Any reference to the inner logics of the work never becomes active except in the cases of specific music film,¹⁴ a film that is entirely shaped and cut in accordance to the music, or of a film that only makes use of a single piece of music.

Luchino Visconti's use of the Adagietto, the 4th movement of Gustav Mahler's 5th Symphony (1901-02), as signature music (strongly leaning towards a genuine *leitmotiv*) in *Death in Venice* (1971) the filming of Thomas Mann's novel of the same name (1912), exemplifies a typical kind of functionalization. The sombre but enchanting, alluring piece serves as a deepening of not just the qualms and yearnings and at the same time joyous longing of the main character, Gustav Aschenbach, but also of the painful gravity of the decline of the romantic-bourgeois culture. Here, the pathos of Mahler's music is almost literally turned loose by the convincing interplay between the narrative, the pictures and the music, inducing a strong emotive sensation almost insisting upon the spectator's identification and leaving the austerity and transparency of the score behind. As the music is thus turned into a vehicle, the logic of the narrative overrides that of the music. Instead of being drawn into the music's meticulously neatly woven spatiality, the spectator is firmly taken even deeper into the psychological drama of the film.

In a way, Mahler's music is deprived of its authority and autonomy as a work of art. It is far away from the concert hall and the participation of the educated audience it was aimed at. It is not even performed but simply reproduced just as it is detached from the context of the symphony, making it appear as a piece of its own in the form of a ready-made installed in a montage. But the case is tricky, as the leading role of Aschenbach could be built upon Mahler's person and character, suggesting that the music is to be understood as heard by Aschenbach's inner ear. As such, the status of the music changes from simple underscore to what can be referred to as inner-diegetic, thus making room for the music's presence as a 'real' piece of music.

However, even if the setting is interpreted in this way, the music is still functionalized. It has merely shifted from one structural level to another, from that of an effect deeply integrated in the setting of the scenes to that of a role exposed on the stage.

In order to understand the Adagietto in either of the ways suggested here, the first obviously being integrated in the second, one has to have some kind of knowledge or at least vague idea about romantic music of the 19th century, and its aesthetic and ideological implications. And, in the second case, one even has to know the music in question and also

have a notion of the life of Gustav Mahler. To the uninformed, who were never introduced to or took any interest in European cultural history and romantic music or who simply were brought up in another culture, the historical contextualization is maybe not lost but it can only appear as yet another example of heavy symphonic music in film, true to the idiom of classical film music. Mahler's music does not form a special case in the history of film, although maybe the film does.

Whether film music is compiled of pre-existing music, or composed solely for the film, it cannot escape its dependency on non-film music and it will continuously stand out as ready-made one way or another. It is however possible to talk of a particular form of music that is altogether exclusive to film although it seems to be closely related to certain areas within the field of electronic music and also to installation art. This particular kind of music stands out as a result of a process that could, with a term borrowed from Julia Kristeva (1987), be called musicalization,¹⁵ and it comprises the hidden, almost secret music that emerges as the sound space is forced into systematic mapping.¹⁶ This is, of course, also based on ready-mades as the sounds and effects in question are developed as effects symbolizing unfamiliar typically unearthly cultures, technologies, ages, etc.

The organization and distribution of effects, samples and concrete sounds by means of tempering into pitch and temporalizing into rhythm renders musical structures and forms of expression that are in many ways unique to film or at least to mixed media.

Since it is applied in order to qualify diegetic noise, the use of Foley-technique as a procedure that resembles musicalization is obvious. However, musicalization goes much further as the sound space is thoroughly organized according to given music systems that have dominated Western European music since the late middle ages. It is tempting to suggest that this approach is chosen because it produces a kind of familiarity – a Schein des Bekannten – that is or is considered to be vital to the fullness and narrative of the film.

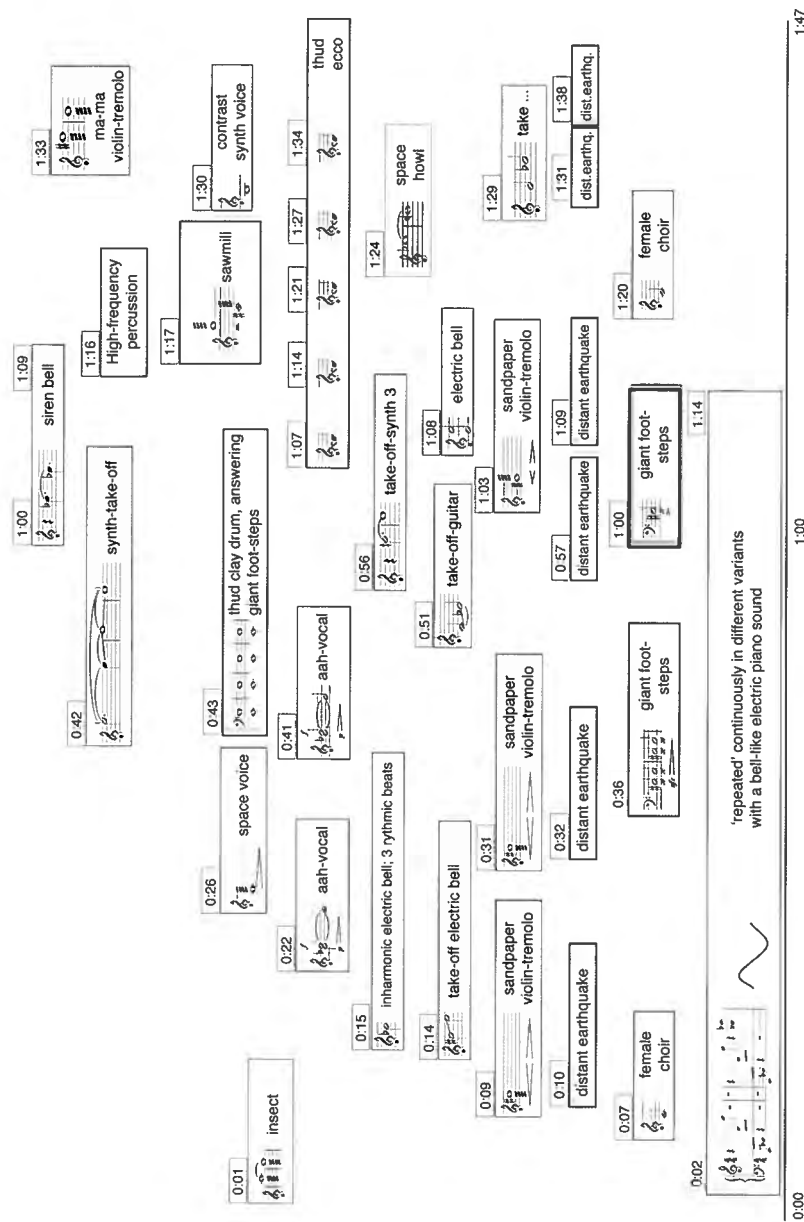
An example of this is found in Eric Serra's music to Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* (1997), a science fiction action movie with an impressive amount of amusing and subtle references to other films. The soundtrack presents a number of passages that utilize well-known space sound allu-

sions that have been continuously developed and apparently stand out as a peculiar bricolage of heavily processed sounds generously trimmed with reverberation and echo.

The example shows a thoroughly composed – musicalized – sound setting, which discreetly but efficiently forms the atmospheric ambience surrounding the dialogues and environmental sounds of the scene. The montage is neatly put together by a number of highly different sound syntheses and possibly samples. Some, like the “giant foot-steps” which stems from the foley-effect that serves to illustrate the controlled dignity and weight of the good Mondoshawans as they walk, are collected from the soundtrack, while others are more indefinite effect sounds, supporting the gigantic size of the space-station, the space hotel *Fhloston Paradise*, as well as the impression of a remote location.

It is remarkable that almost all sounds of the setting, even the many concrete sounds, are organized in accordance with the common Western-European pitch system and temporalized in the meter of 4/4, tempo 72 BPM. In this case, it is not just the sound-sources that become a kind of ready-made, so does the tonal system and temporal organization into well-known rhythm patterns – a practice that could find its way into the realm of advertising insofar as the ongoing approaches for sound setting are liberated from mirroring the aesthetics of current popular music and the well established codes of musical articulation.

Furthermore, musicalization can also be understood as ‘sonic decoration’ implemented to ‘colour up’ the scene very similarly to the way that the visuals are pre-interpreted and charged by means of lights and camera lenses and angles. Within a strictly musical sense, the tonal quality of the ‘sonic decoration’ as transcribed in Fig. 1 builds a highly complex chord – a cluster – and give no evidence of any form of melody or harmonic progression. The absence of a musical syntax – apart from the continuous, Tintinnabula-like arpeggios in the electric piano – implies that the film watcher never becomes aware of the musical organization of the sound-design. Because one does not hear or reflect upon the sonic decoration as a musical expression – a reference to a musical idiom – this harsh and in a musical sense highly avantgarde structure is never judged or processed as anything but the ‘sound’ of (or) the sonification of the environment.

Fig. 1. Graphic mapping of a selection of pitched sounds in Eric Serra's sound scenery for Luc Besson's *Plavalaguna*, 1997.

Among the many remarkable proportions in the small piece, please notice the use of the falling third at 1:33: A true European icon symbolizing the worried child's plaintive call for Mama.

Applying a similar procedure towards another axiomatic system such as language would produce a montage of words, word-like utterances, sounds – and even letters – with no inner coherence. However, unless we find a way to produce these sounds that did not call for human or human-like voices, this could not lead to a similar unrecognized result, as the film watcher would immediately appreciate the sound's origin in a humanly constructed communicative system and thus would continue to 'interpret' the decoration as a kind of reference. This does not happen in the case of musicalization, as it is a very sophisticated and obscured application of music as "... a system of signifiers without signifieds." (Tunstall 1979: 62, DeNora 1986: 87).

When musicalization is implied, the whole principle or 'Ge-stell' of the musical system is at hand as a ready-made. But it never stands out as such by itself. The ready-madeness is shrewdly hidden. The lack of motives, significant musical elements as well as familiar musical sounds implies that the average film-watcher never hears anything but 'the sound' of the setting or scene; its musical organization remains unacknowledged. And the unrecognized familiarity of the sonorous environment, the musicalized design of the decoration, ensures that a subliminal sense of confidentiality, vitality and (aesthetic) 'well-formedness' can emerge allowing for identification and regression. It is tempting to claim, that this is actually the way music generally works within film and possibly even in most other multi-media contexts as well.

SIGNATURES AND JINGLES

Signatures and title-tunes are often exposed in what seems to be full length at the beginning and/or the end of a film or a TV-series. At these positions, where the narrative is typically either no longer or has not yet become the core of the event, they seem to stand out as 'complete' music pieces forming a link between the universe of the film and the real world, as just another tune in a continuous sequence of tunes available everywhere and at all times in the modern world.

Placed at the beginning, they form an escape or gateway – a 'sesamic' sign – into the realm of the film. In the case of a TV-series or a film-sequel, signatures can even signify the well known and reassuring like the

tolling of the church bell requiring or allowing you to let everything else go and attend the church service. Placed at the end, they can form a kind of relief letting the soothing familiarity of music come into focus as the end-titles start rolling thereby building a bridge out of the filmic universe into 'reality' helping the film watcher to comfortably 'step back' to reflect upon the experience of the film. Musical instances like these constitute a kind of middle-form between the ready-made and the autonomous piece of music. As such, they can enter a recursive loop as far as the motives and passages from the signature are used as sonic decoration throughout the film or the episode whereby the ready-made actually becomes a kind of own-breed. This is the case in numerous films and also TV drama series like the British *Midsomer Murders*, where motives and short arrangements derived from the characteristic signature-theme in many episodes brilliantly formed the entire musical decoration of the series' inconsistent postcard-like universe.

The signature-tune for the American sitcom *Friends, I'll Be There For You* performed by The Rembrandts, forms a somewhat special case of the ready-made. For one thing, the song is obviously a pastiche, a revival or rehash of the aesthetic practices from the Sixties on both sides of the Atlantic giving strong allusions to early Beatles and Hollies songs in Britain and to songs by the Byrds and The Monkees in the US. Furthermore, the song only became a hit after the series had its debut (1994) implying that its primary reference was the (universe of the) series and not 'itself'. The song was actually written for the series, so although it stands out as ready-made in the sense that it can point towards and this way re-introduce – but not converge with – a carefree and juvenile atmosphere of – the myth of – the sixties, it does so by being a pastiche and not a known and authentic number from the sixties. *I'll Be There For You* is as such freed from specific associations and distinctive values except for its link to the series, and it takes on the form of a paradox pointing towards a historical construction by bringing references to aesthetics and values from another époque than that of the series whose setting is obviously contemporary. This way, the choice of music, the ready-made, stresses the series' deliberate lack of 'true' realism, its senselessness.

In Cook's study of a 1992 commercial for the Citroën ZX 16v, he suggests that the alignment of a specially segmented version of the opening of Mozart's overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* with the advertized car form a composite dialectical message making the car stand out as "the ideal synthesis of art and technology" (Cook 1998: 6). However, Mozart's music is not really presented or performed. It is present in the form of a reference, pointing towards the highly esteemed symbolic value of the work – or of the classical genre as a whole – it maintains in present time and not towards (definite values of) the work. As such, it is merely a kind of second-order signification.

In a recent commercial for the Danish financial institution, Danske Bank, the first 37 seconds of Isaac Albéniz' *Asturias Leyenda*¹⁷ is performed by a female harpist who, from about a third into the commercial and onwards, is accompanied by a male so-called 'Human Beatbox'. The performance takes place on a stage in an apparently empty music theater and, at first, only the harpist is seen (and heard). Therefore the viewer is not able to decide whether this is a presentation or rehearsal of a musical performance or something different. However, the concentric moving of the camera encompassing the harpist (having completed half a circle as the Human Beatbox becomes visible just before joining the music) quickly makes it clear that this is not a (documentation of a) performance. This recognition unavoidably weakens the viewer's attention towards the music and its performance in favour of the complete presentation, pictures, progression and all. Even before the introduction of the Human Beatbox, the music has become an installation in a compound communicational event and the addition of the percussive sounds not associated with the otherwise familiar piece of music merely stresses this determination. To complete the picture – and the marginalizing of the music – commercials produced for Danske Bank have reached over a longer period of time a unique style or sub-genre, presenting apparently 'real' people in situations doing "what they are best at". So, the music is not only present as a ready-made by definition, so to say; this element is actually stressed by the doing-what-you-are-best-at-theme of the commercials, focussing on the element of human action not on the 'product'.

CONCLUSION

Given that “the picture fills the music with meaning and the music fills the pictures with meaning” (Bjørkvold 1996: 57) music obviously loses its own unique meaning in the interaction with pictures. Insofar as music brings “musical meaning” to the pictures, this meaning is either dependent upon music that exists before the film, or upon the meaning the particular piece may have (gained) in advance. In both cases, there is talk of a sign, a ready-made that is exposed and re-contextualized in a foreign discourse; this is even true if the music is exposed in cultural and historical settings with which it is traditionally affiliated. However, it probably stands out most strongly when historical, cultural, social discourses are mixed as in the use of *The Dies Irae* from Verdi’s *Requiem* (1874) in Hans Alfredson’s film *The Simple-Minded Murderer* (1982) about the life of a mistreated farm-hand in Sweden in the late 1930s. Contrary to music in advertising, which can seem to draw heavily on the conventionalized significance that is attributed to music – be it the use of a classical idiom as a signifier of distinguished elegance and class (Den Danske Bank, Anthon Berg, Citroën), or the use of jazz-like music and setting to signify a relaxed intellectual and refined atmosphere (Den Danske Bank, Smirnoff, Schweppes) or the use of popular music signifying youth, power and freedom (Den Danske Bank, Mentos) – thus profiting from music’s pre-contextualization, it’s culturally ascribed values and codes, film generally redefines the significance of music through re-contextualization.

Music becomes pure connotation – or secondary signification – and is deprived of its capacity as self-contained communication. It loses its primary signification – its syntactical and semiotic coherence – and, at the same time, its secondary signification deviates from that of non-film music. The situation seems to closely resemble the ontology of music within the ancient Greek concept, *mousiké*, in which musical expression only forms one inseparable component alongside poetry and dance.

Just as the musical elements of the ancient Greek *mousiké* are ‘processed’ as established entities exposing or symbolizing specific, commonly acknowledged values and characters, it is precisely because music, consciously or unconsciously, is perceived as ready-made that it can work the way it does in film. If this were not the case, music would steal the picture and muffle or invalidate the film’s fundamental polyphony.

The circulation of film music in culture is given in advance: It is introduced and distributed as part of the film. And it is in this particular context, its meaning emerges. By virtue of its dependency on non-film music, it stands out as a double parasitic construction contrived from non-film music and the film itself, its pictures and narrative. If, however, film music escapes the film, it becomes part of the musical domain. It is transformed.

To modern culture, film music is a prominent reading of the musical phenomenon. It may be referential towards traditional music but it articulates its references in a sort of twisted artistic almost anarchistic form. As proposed, this is closely related to film music’s fundamental but hidden otherness but it also has to be a product of the absence of historicity in post-modernity.

At the same time, film music has a life of its own, which in certain cases leads to exceeding the traditional limits of musical articulation – at least on the surface.

Michel Chion (1982: 12f) insists that there is no such thing as a sound track, except for the material or physical layer in the media. Film music and film sound cannot be separated from the film implying that both the picture and the music would otherwise degenerate. The film will literally fall apart. And not only that: Neither the pictures nor the sound can survive the separation without being transformed. Published as a sound track, film music forces its way into the music domain and ceases to be film music thus stressing that, as far as the aesthetical significance of music goes, it is in a way definite while its rhetorical and cultural meaning is inconsistent and negotiable.

However: as pointed out, one can speculate if the non-existing sound track sets the agenda for the larger part of the cultural signification that is attributed to music. And maybe this seemingly awkward kind of external signification is even unavoidable to music. If this is true, we are facing a double negation: The ready-mades that pound out of loudspeakers everywhere do not originate anymore from music. They arise in the sound settings of Tinseltown’s exclusively light-wave carried scenarios and they are continuously redefining the works of the music domain. The light-wave carried music thus becomes the ultimate reference, an insuperable perfect negation casting the musical setting of the modern world.

NOTES

- 1 Surveys from the first half of 1990s strongly suggest that "filmgoers are typically unconscious of most film music" (Cohen 2000: 366).
- 2 Although silent movies have been very influential to modern film – and almost any kind of contemporary audiovisual media communication – they form a specific genre that distinguishes itself from other kinds of film not just with respect to the lack of sound and music but certainly also in terms of pictures, epic style, and the drama as a whole.
- 3 Small 1998.
- 4 As far as film music can be considered a particular genre, it is in the broadest sense of the designation namely precisely as film music.
- 5 Music in advertising, TV-series and similar reoccurring audiovisual artefacts do not comply with these characteristics – and others on this list. Quite to the contrary, music installed in these repetitive forms generally relies on elements of recognition and consequently on identification patterns.
- 6 By describing film music as referential, I only mean to suggest that it refers to conventions ascribed to non-film music and that it is dependent upon such references in order to 'communicate' or work. In brief, film music is dependent upon non-film music and non-essentialist.
- 7 The use of the term 'denotation' is motivated by the need for its opposition 'connotation'. As it is pointed out by a number of scholars (e.g. Middleton 1990, Shepherd & Wicke 1997) denotation in a literal sense is absent in music, as music and musical structures do not have specific meaning in the linguistic sense. Middleton suggests the use of the terms 'primary signification' and 'secondary signification', which without being identical correspond to a distinction between syntactic and semantic levels.
- 8 The distinction between primary and secondary signification is depended upon Middleton's clarification (1990 and 2000). Broadly taken primary signification concerns how intramusical coherence and 'meaning' is gained through the observation of specific structural means whereas secondary signification refers to the fact that music gives rise to complex associations and connotations of extra-musical observation.
- 9 The dominance of the aesthetics and techniques of Western-European music within film music is massive. It may be related to the fact that many German composers were forced to leave Europe and came to USA at a time when the practices of sound film were established. As a counterfactual exercise it is interesting to consider what classic film music would have sounded like if the composers who 'populated' Hollywood had mostly come from Japan.
- 10 See for instance Walser 1993.
- 11 The only exceptions being concert and music film. They like music video, form a special case where the music is the film's guest, its possessive – or a subordinate part given that the musician is often considered the leading actor – thus the music is not a part of the film as form. Here, music is not a part of the film's communicative structure, but the subject for the communication. It falls outside the definition of film music.
- 12 The orchestration was done by Wendy Carlos, who also performed the piece.
- 13 The fact that the piece later became the hymn of European Union seems to support the element of montage.
- 14 Film versions of for instance musicals and operas.

- 15 Hroar Klempe called my attention to this in his paper Mediateksternes flertydelighet – et musikalsk anliggende? held at the seminar on *Music, Media and Meaning* at Aalborg University, 2000: <http://www.musik.aau.dk/musikogmedier/2000Seminar/Seminarprogram11.htm>
- 16 Donnelly (2005) uses the term 'musicalising' as a, as I understand it, more general description of the developments within sound design.
- 17 The piece that derives from the Suite Española (1886) for piano solo to which it was added in 1898, is probably best known as a transcription for Spanish guitar.

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MUSIC IN ADVERTISING

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and Other Settings

Edited by:

Nicolai Graakjær & Christian Jantzen

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INTRODUCTION

Music for Commercial Purposes

Nicolai Graakjær and Christian Jantzen

THE SOUND OF MONEY

It is a simple fact that most music of today is composed, performed, produced, distributed, sold and bought, stored and listened to for some commercial purpose. More 'noble', e.g. artistic intentions may prevail, but modern music is always actively seeking an audience, so that the artist, the record company, the event organiser, the sales outlet or some other party may prosper. In modern capitalist economies, the cultural field of aesthetics is inevitably entangled with a commercial field of financing, production and sales. Furthermore, the social and especially the technological development of such economies imply that music is increasingly utilized for the main purpose of selling. What are being sold, are not merely records or performances, but also – and ever more so – quite 'unmusical' goods ranging from detergents to customer services.

This volume is about the use of music in commercial settings outside its 'proper' field of cultural production and reception: e.g. music in TV- and radio-commercials, in web-ads or in shops. This kind of music is also actively – sometimes even desperately – seeking an audience. But a defining characteristic of this use of music might be that it is not primarily intended for active listening. Only very few, if any, compilations of music for TV-commercials exist. At best, music in these commercial settings is to be heard. When remembered, it should help the hearer to recall the overall message of the commercial (e.g. the brand name), not the artist nor the composer. In this realm, catchy sounds are crafted not