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APPROPRIATED MUSIC – AN ALTERED SYSTEM OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MUSIC AND IMAGE

Abstract: It is noticeable that the relationship between music and image has been considerably altered since a few decades ago. But what is the nature of it? If we persistently stick to analyzing the scores, we are prone to miss it, and if we assign the innovations in film music to technological developments alone, the final assumption will not be the one of a musical nature, or a musicological one, respectively. This article is looking into alternative approaches that have emerged within the fields of sound theory and the aesthetics of popular music in the last decades. Aside from this, the modern art concepts require the implementation of the specialized vocabulary. The aim is to gain a closer look at characteristics of both 'sides' and suggest a new place for film music, preferably beyond the common commerce versus art frontier.

Key words: sound film, musical aesthetics, musical material/parameters, cultural values, representation, recording

The discourse on music of the narrative cinema is stagnating whereas the one on sound has been flourishing for the last three decades and has established its own aesthetic discourse. By integrating technology as a matter of course, the sound

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discourse has brought something else to the forefront quite naturally: that film music occurs in *composed* or/and *appropriated* forms. Although these categories will be varied throughout the following I am borrowing Jerrold Levinson's[1] terminology as a starting point for two reasons: firstly, it bears the common discourse on the music-picture-relation, which I want to question in this paper; secondly, this terminology will serve the trial to build a bridge between sound theory and film music. It has to be emphasized that Levinson actually distinguishes between composed and appropriated *scores* to describe a dramatic situation where music functions as a comment to the story provided by the pictures.[2]

That he sticks to the expression 'score' indicates the ontological misunderstanding that corresponds with the alleged division between inside (diegetic) and outside (non-diegetic) the fictional world. Under this condition the nature of film music can be nothing than an added comment and would never be theorized as an inherent part of film. There are actually quite different reasons why questions of diegetic/non-diegetic functions became *the* methodical strategy of analysing and theorizing the music of the story film. In terms of film history the binary model seemed to impose itself, last but not least for the new phenomenon of synchronisation. After the blend of pantomime and musical repertoire of the silent film, which was inclined to be compared to ballet, synchronisation was *too new* not to be theorized as the fundamental alteration of the movies. In terms of musicology the model worked well in accordance with the already established approaches within art music concepts which directly a) assigned film music to popular music, that is, to consider it a mass produced commodity governed by the machinery of the cultural industry which has to be analysed functionally (whereby narrativity is only a membrane to canalize profit interests invisibly onto the puppet-like consumer), or b) stayed within music aesthetics and transferred traditional methods of analysis upon film music *scores* as if they would not differ from any other kind of autonomous works. Nevertheless, if it is not explicitly art house cinema or an acknowledged art music composer we are dealing with, it goes without saying that these examples still are not permitted to be considered aesthetic objects, at all.

Thus, these examples, though objects of traditional analysis could not enter the canon of masterpieces which are the basis of Western music history; and if there is a department of systematic musicology, one will find film music mainly there. Contrary to historical/traditional musicology, the systematic department concentrates on empirical and data-oriented research and has become a haven for *noise-sound, musique concrète, sound installations* and other *sonic* occurrences of the twentieth century, preferably those which use new technology. When alongside of especially composed film music, pop songs and excerpts of (classical and other)

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1   Jerrold Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency", in: *Post-Theory. Reconstructing Film Studies*, ed. by David Bordwell, Noel Carroll (Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 248–282; 249.

2   Ibid. 249.

musical pieces appeared more often from the late 1960's, they were referred to as compiled scores (!). In 1987, Claudia Gorbman stated that film music in the appearance of "recorded popular music" shows a "changing status of music in films which is, in turn, producing an altered system of relationships between music and image."[3]

This did not radically change her future writing or the position of film music within musicology although her translations of Michel Chion's writing on sound have indicated a possible direction. Influenced by Pierre Schaeffer and by his own musical works with recording and collage, Chion's model assumes that there is no "natural and pre-existing harmony between image and sound"[4], as sound engineer and editor Walter Murch puts it. According to Murch, "recording magically lifted the shadow away from the object and stood it on its own (…)."[5] New techniques of recording, like mixing, mastering, or digital editing, have allowed sound engineers and composers in the field of cinema 'to re-associate' sounds with images of objects or situations that are different from their sources, which "*stretches* the relationship of sound to image to create a purposeful and fruitful tension between what is on the screen and what is kindled in the mind of the audience."[6] In this paper, this phenomenon, which Chion calls sound *en creux* (sound *in the gap*), is the basis of the idea which we shall call appropriated. Surprisingly, Chion did not want to apply it to film music for which he prefers to "rely on terms that simply designate the place where each (supposedly) comes from".[7] On this background he restrains film music to the diegetic/non-diegetic dichotomy as most of the film music scholars do. But Chion's model provides the big advantage to set off principally beyond the traditional aesthetics of absolute versus functional music. It is no accident that Walter Murch, one of the front men in the field of new sound developments appreciates what Chion calls sound *en creux.* This *gap* has been the fundamental field of creativity for Murch's editing in the field of images and sound: "the shadow that had heretofore either been ignored or consigned to follow along submissively behind the image was suddenly running free".[8]

Since the 1970's, sound experts have started discussing technological issues for demonstrating their share in the creative process, even if it is limited to post-production. Film music studies still do not seem to be interested in that discourse, but popular music researchers who had been struggling with loosing their main subject, namely, music, took it up and started to focus on sound as a *sensory* though *aesthetic* musical issue (viz. capable of being theorized philosophically)

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3   Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies* (Indiana University Press, 1987), 162.

4   Walter Murch, 'Foreword', in: Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision. Sound on Screen*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), XVII.

5   Ibid. XVI.

6   Ibid. XIX; emphasis original.

7   Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision. Sound on Screen*, 80.

8   Walter Murch, "Foreword", in: Michel Chion, XVI.

instead of a purely sociological or psychological one. It seems that after having spent years in foreign fields, this approach provided a chance for popular music to 'put music back into musicology'.[9] In regard of the prevailing linguistic concept within the humanities, this has been a move towards brand new terrain.

It shall be added that the English term "sound" as an aesthetic category of popular music shows some advantage in this matter. Comprehending music and noises, it *could* transcend the narrow definition of Western art music. If it is understood that way sound comprises the technical aspects (components of musical instruments, technical equipment, etc.), the interpretation (playing technique, timbre, etc.), as well as the structural aspects of a composition (harmony, typical lines and phrases) and represents the *total amount of sensory qualities that define music*.[10]

To sum this up, the sound discourse is quite promising to build a new model for further discussions in musical aesthetics and referring to music as a cultural component. Binas-Preisendörfer puts it as follows: '[I]n the course of mechanical-technical and electronic recording processes of diverse phonographs, sound has been turned into a kind of writing. Oral transfer – in its broadest sense – replaces the literacy of music (the abstraction of music into notation symbols, the score). This is not just a difference based on technological development but a shift within the cultural self-concept of the Western modern world.'[11]

But keeping in mind the idea of 'the shadow that had heretofore either been ignored or consigned to follow along submissively behind the image was suddenly running free'[12] (Murch) we shall dwell briefly on the potential of this kind of *altered system of relationship*s concerning film music. It is Nicholas Cook's model of music and his theory of film music that points at a crucial thought in this context: 'The existing literature of multimedia suffers, as I see it, from two associated problems: the terminological impoverishment epitomized by film criticism's traditional categorization of all music-picture relationships as either parallel or contrapuntal, and a largely unconscious (and certain uncritical) assumption that such relationships are to be understood in terms of hegemony or hierarchy rather than interaction.'[13]

This quotation refers explicitly to film music, but its background lies in Cook's critique on the primacy of text, scene or pictures over music in general. He refuses the idea of absolute music, of music *alone,* as he puts it, because music appears to

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9   Nicholas Cook, *What is Musicology?* (www.rma.ac.uk/articles/what-is-musicology. htm), download 2009 (originally published in BBC Music Magazine 7/9, May 1999, 31–33)

10   Peter Wicke, *Handbuch der populären Musik,* quoted by Binas-Preisendörfer in: see note 11

11   Susanne Binas-Preisendörfer, Rau, süßlich, transparent oder dumpf – Sound als eine ästhetische Kategorie populärer Musikformen. Annäherung an einen populären Begriff. (www2.hu-berlin.de/fpm/popscrip, © 2008, download 2009), online version without paging; quotation translated by AG.

12   Walter Murch, "Foreword", in: Michel Chion, XVI.

13   Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 107.

him as a *multimedia instance* (Cook) – not only in the context of film. That is why he criticizes Chion for overemphasizing the sonic part in his *audiovisual contract* (Chion) which suggests looking at movies the other way around, that is, to put the sound part above the visual: "The conceptual model in operation – unitary conformance – does not change; all that happened is that the primary and subordinate terms flip over."[14] Thus, the problem lies in an approach that begins by "identifying one medium as the origin of meaning and uses this as the measure of other media through a series of pair-wise judgments of similarity or dissimilarity."[15]

Both Chion and Cook are looking for an alternative approach to analysis, but whereas Chion actually isolates sound from music in the way electronic music has been doing by being rooted in serialism (viz. in the realm of art) *and* in media devices (viz. in the realm of reproduction – we will return to this in detail) at the same time, Cook's theory aims at the creative process of any kind of Western musical production regarding the still prevailing aesthetics of absolute art. Cook analyses musical multimedia on the assumption "that media such as music, texts, and moving pictures do not just communicate meaning, but participate actively in its construction. The *mediate it.*"[16] He refuses the idea that the meaning of a musical work is just in the music; in his concept of music as a *multimedia instance* meaning is created in interaction with shifting contexts: "That is why we can do justice to multimedia [viz. music, AG] only by means of a theory that is based on the concept of attribute transfer, and on the structural framework within which such a transfer takes place."[17] Under this condition, film music's ontological composition reaches far beyond being an add-to, or in terms of its cultural significance, it reaches far beyond being a substitute for what pictures might be 'lacking'.

But from this perspective of aesthetics, how do the features of sound and the cross-over model of film affect the compositional strategies of film music? I want to open a short parenthesis here that does not 'judge film music by its worst examples' but on what it *can be*[18] and compares the potential of usual musical notation to the one by electronic means. When written notation changed from being only supportive to establishing its own terminology, it turned into a resource of compositional strategies and hence became itself material for creativity. Alongside of experimenting with notation on paper the notation system developed symbols

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14   Ibid. 108.

15   Ibid. 115.

16   Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 261; emphasis original.

17   Cook, Analysing Musical Multimedia, 115.

18   Cf. Tony Thomas, *Film score: the art & craft of movie music* (Burbank, Calif.: Riverwood Press, 1991), 2–4; "The truly interesting thing about composing for the screen is not so much what it is, as what it can be." (p. 4). Concerning Cook as well as this paper, this is not an idealistic approach in the sense of escapism from the real situation but one that takes into account that we are in the field of theory, which means, that not every kind of individual case of film music composition would help building the idea like an ingredient for a recipe would do.

for physical movements provoked by affections. In those cases, the parameters pinned to the paper are not the material as such, but a detour or *gesture* of affection. Both levels of notation, the system and the symbolisation, are part of traditional film music scores. But they are part of the recording process, too, which in turn is inseparable from the genre of film music. Apart from how much any interpreter would change the written or graphic notation by transferring it into audibility, when it comes to the recording process, the expectations from sound and any kind of recording conditions on their part will alter more or less the sonic material, that is, the musical performance or any samples. This *appropriated composition* is based on the level of system, as the know-how of a sound designer is taken as the starting point in the same manner as the knowledge of notation can be presumed. The level of symbolisation takes place within the psychoacoustic area that matches the aesthetic categories of sound. Inner sensory as well as cognitive imagination is needed at both levels in any case to generate music out of sonic. New is the coalescence of technical and sensory aspects. Their interacting has been imprinting Western culture ever since (be it by architectural concepts of churches, concert halls or microphone systems), but only became highly criticized within the context of electronic media which were accused of using it for manipulation.

Probably the most prominent concept of modern music (and in correlation with it on cultural industry) is the one on material evolved by Adorno. Helga de la Motte-Haber, a German musicologist whose work lies in the field of systematic musicology, which she has defined by and large in the German-speaking area during the last decades, did not hesitate to use it in her standard work *Film music. A systematic demonstration*[19]. Actually, not to start an aesthetic discussion on film music but to prove the contrary – that an aesthetic discussion on music of the narrative cinema would be impossible. Let us recall: Adorno defines the material of the aesthetic production as something that is not just here. It can be created only by the "artist's work, which is imbedded in a historical situation". Thus, a composer who wants to create relevant art works must take account of the status of both the current social practice and the present compositional issues.[20]

Motte-Haber applies this historically imbedded understanding of material to film music, which leads her to the assumption that any kind of film music has at least two kinds of deficits: plurality of styles and openness to all kinds of materials, whereas the *genre* of film music only refers to a small period of time, mainly defined as being the sweet, tonal symphonic music of the Classical Hollywood. The plurality that has been developed until today has become possible because film music is composed 'regardless of any historical imprinting'.[21] Along these

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19   Helga de la Motte-Haber, Hans Emos: *Filmmusik. Eine systematische Beschreibung*. (München, Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag 1980).

20   Cf. Matthias Vogel, 'Medienphilosophie der Musik', in: *Systematische Medienphilosophie*, ed. by Mike Sandbothe and Ludwig Nagl. (Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie, Band 7; Akademie Verlag 2005), 163–179; 170/171; quotation translated by AG.

21   Helga de la Motte-Haber, Hans Emos, 110 ; quotation transl. by AG.

lines, she interprets that every extension of film music by contemporary developments (serial, atonal, etc.) must be nothing but a replication, and obviously in the wake of media critique, she maintains that film composers have taken up new styles only because their new sounds have guaranteed them a *high amount of effect*, in the sense of the increased emotional impact of the pictures on the audience. Based on this, new sounds or styles are not motivated by "intrinsic musical parameters of film music."[22] Because film music studies are dominated by this approach, even if they do not explicitly refer to Adorno, two clarifying comments have to be made on this issue: first, in *Composing for the Films*, Adorno introduces also a definition of material specifically concerning film music which differs from the historical one when he suggests separating the handling of the material from the material itself. But eventually, he cannot accomplish this idea because he restrains himself to the line he has drawn for outlining his prominent theory on cultural industry, which rejects any attempt to reconcile media and art. Adorno is convinced that electronic means cannot be part of artistic musical work, comparing them to the uselessness of knowing anything about printing for a writer;[23] which leads us to the second point that regards modern concepts of creativity and the ontological definition of artistic work.

By taking into account the musical reality and the social practices of the twentieth century, the *current musical material* of our days shows an altered attitude to historical continuity and technology. Based on this, we could analyse certain instances of multimedia as a musical matter not only in the way of scale frequencies that end up in   multicoloured diagrams or in measurable psychological interpretations of their emotional impact. Film music could be looked at as one option of dealing with current musical awareness in the context of a crossover media, instead of as a mingle-mangle of many styles. Accordingly, Adorno's concept of material keeps its advantage of allying the inside with the outside, but not under the premise that the *sociological consequence of music* that depends on *the division of technical realisation and musical composition* shall tell *the truth of human society* by *resisting the norm of obedience* that *hides the will of those who dictate the production.*[24] The whole scenario shifts towards accepting that technological parameters have become musical parameters. On this background appropriated music establishes itself not as failure or violence upon the score, but as an extension of the definition of an authentic musical expression or experience.

We have to be aware that there are features within either the art music or popular music discourses that contain high values. Right after being complex, being spontaneous as a synonym for being *authentic* or *true* is highly acclaimed

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22   Ibid. 110.

23   Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, Hanns Eisler: "Komposition für den Film", in: *Theodor W. Adorno, Gesammelte Schriften Bd.15* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2. Auflage, 1996), 86.

24   Adorno, "Musik und Technik" quoted in: *Elektroakustische Musik*, ed. by Elena Ungeheuer (*Handbuch der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert,* Bd. 5; Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2002), 29; quotation transl. by AG.

within the arts. *The musical topos of 'live'*[25] – live performance, live concerts, etc. – lays claim to be original, natural and therefore better, and it naturally seems to be inclined to clash with any record/media. Moreover, aesthetically it includes the *cultural value and sociological ideal of 'communality'*[26] that any electronic media is denied because of the presumption of   being incapable of interaction. This affects the 'feedback loop' between performance and audition[27] as well as the real-time concept of spontaneity – two major pillars of modern arts of the Western civilisation since the 1960's.

In his manifesto "Silence" (1961), Cage declares that "an experimental action is one the outcome of which is not foreseen' and is necessarily unique"[28]. Cage's radical emphasis upon spontaneity for music and performance is revolutionary in reference to the previous, more or less 200 years of European art music (later American, as well), but certainly, completely different to the understanding of spontaneity and uniqueness we know, for example, from jazz, which Cage disavowed – although both focus on the real-time structure of music, liveliness and presence. Cage's attitude towards jazz improvisation as *playing what you know* leads naturally to the opinion that it "does not lead you into a new experience."[29] Therefore it cannot be "truly spontaneous or original."[30]

Mostly discussed in an ideologically burdened and dogmatic manner, James Lastra offers another perspective on this topic I want to add here, because it leads into the midst of the conflict between music as a real-time concept, on the one hand, and as a cognitive concept of formal composition, on the other, and provides an aesthetic alternative to media-critique-oriented standpoints. Lastra suggests that "sound recording is better thought of as sound *representation* than as sound *reproduction*." In his words"reproduction" is only a "special case of representation" and it is not the "the most important relationship a representation can have to what it represents." Thus, "absolute fidelity to the *original* sound is only one obvious, possible goal for representing sound", and hearing a recorded sound is just as unique an experience as hearing one "live".[31] No deception is in operation here as performance theory or media critique would assume and, therefore, not *necessarily* manipulation either.

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25   Cf. Elena Ungeheuer, *Elektroakustische Musik*, 31–35.

26   Cf. ibid. 33.

27   Cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 115.

28   Cage quoted by George E. Lewis, "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives", in: *Audio Culture: readings in modern music*, ed. by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (N.Y.: The Continuum Intern. Publishing Group Inc, 2009), 272–284; 275.

29   Cage quoted by George E. Lewis, 278.

30   Larry Solomon quoted by Lewis, 278.

31   James Lastra, "Reading, Writing, and Representing Sound", in: *Sound Theory. Sound Practice*, ed. by Rick Altman (New York, London: Routledge, 1992), 65–86, 71/72; inverted commas original.

Manipulation is a keyword of performance theory, which derives its premises from John Cage and related artists. Its associated real-time concept requires avoiding any conventional communication, i.e. avoiding a story as such. The avant-garde scene has found its *readable* language, though, but this kind of understanding is an exclusively semiotic and cognitive process that the narrative sound film has been generally judged to lack (even if it has been analysed that way). By thinning out narration to an unambiguous meaning the fiction film was assumed to operate with *fixed contents*, an approach that is unacceptable for modernity after 1945. In the field of political awareness, it means that unquestioned conventions sweep over us without any chance for reflection. And within the aesthetic discourse and based on experiences of undemocratic regimes, the still valid premise that a *true work of art must incorporate a cognitive potential which is to be unravelled rationally* (to paraphrase Adorno) reduced the blend of technology, sensory and visual-narrative aspects to its own prejudice of "expressive unambiguousness" (Motte-Haber). [32]

One could say Adorno could not look at the microphone as being more than a communication device and at electronics as blurring the essence of art for the then-current conventions. But meanwhile, the technological developments within music and film (especially since the 1970's as Chion depicts) have made it obvious that recorded visual-narrative and musical instances do not have to be understood as *degraded forms* of originals. On this background, film and music studies are obliged and responsible for reflecting on the categorizations of mainstream and art house cinema, as well as on trivial and art music more diligently. The most recent thoughts in the field of popular music and sound theory – where Cook's claim to "put music back into musicology"[33] is on its way – indicate that the whole process of *producing* film music might be understood as a *musical* criterion. The technical (re)production, the "modus of recording", can be considered an "immanent moment" (Rolf Grossmann)[34] and an essential element of musical *and* of cinematic innovation, which has altered the relationship between image and music profoundly. Maybe these developments have finally allowed the sound film to maintain its emancipation from being nothing more than a *synthesised form* (Zofia Lissa, 1965) which combines different arts but does not stand on its own.

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32 Motte-Haber, 110.

33 see note 9.

34 Rolf Grossmann, "Die Geburt des Pop aus dem Geist der phonographischen Reproduktion", in: *PopMusicology*, ed. by Christian Bielefeldt, Udo Dahmen, and Rolf Grossmann (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), 119–134, 121 & 123.

Ана Гацински

АПРОПРИРАНА МУЗИКА – ПРОМЕНЉИВИ СИСТЕМ ОДНОСА МУЗИКЕ И СЛИКЕ

РЕЗИМЕ

Технолошки развој на пољу филмске музике током протекле четири деценије истакао је улогу снимања, које више није само начин коначног фиксирања „неопипљиве" уметности звука и музике, већ би *могло бити* сасвим нов концепт музичког разумевања и рада са музичким материјалом. Иако заступљен и на подручју концертне музике, на пример у делима *Musique concrète*, овакав приступ није прихваћен у студијама филма, па ни у музикологији, услед, иако застареле, још увек преовлађујуће поделе на апсолутну и примењену музику. Радови истраживача попут Николаса Кука (Nicholas Cook), Мишела Шиона (Michel Chion), и појединих естетичара популарне музике, нуде различите интерпретације, које могу бити корисне за разумевање вредности и онтологије нових развоја на пољу филмског звука и теорије филмске музике. Филмска музика, увек *апроприрана* форма, била она специфично компонована за филм или не, развила је креативне поступке који нису саставни, анализирани део досадашње музичке композиције. Третман технолошког и звучног материјала не разликује се од третмана присутног у музичкој нотацији од када је она постала део композиционог поступка. Однос музике и слике којим се последњих деценија бавимо (али какав постоји још у појединим примерима раног звучног филма) показује не само промену на подручју филмских техника, већ и параметара западноевропске музике. Нови принципи захтевају и имплементацију специјализоване терминологије, а са циљем дефинисања специфичног места које филмска музика заузима, негде између употребног и уметничког.

Кључне речи: звучни филм, естетика музике, музички материјал/параметри, културне вредности, репрезентација, снимање