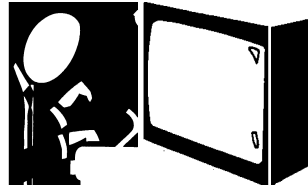


Analysis Assignment Notes



Music and the Moving Image 1 MUSI 223

1 *General description*

In consultation with the course tutor, you should choose a full-length feature film (not a musical)¹ which is either available for purchase or rental on video or which has been recorded off air.² You should then provide a full musical cue sheet of the film and full source information on the film and its music. You should also provide a detailed semiotic discussion of one or two short extracts from the film, as well as a more general discussion of music's functions throughout the film. The assignment is presented orally in seminars as well as in written form.

2 *Aims and rationale*

The main aim of this assignment is to increase awareness of how film music works and how it fulfils important narrative functions in the total audiovisual context. This general aim entails registering, documenting and understanding which musical materials are used in what proportions in which order at which time in relation to what visual action. Such an exercise presupposes intimate knowledge of the music throughout the film.

Since scores of film music are so hard to come by, analysing film music is in the normal course of events a difficult task requiring a good eye and an extremely attentive ear. For this reason, in-depth semiotic discussion is included as an important element in this assignment. Since such analysis demands great attention to detail, it cannot be applied to the whole feature film. Therefore, in order to understand (i) the musical and cinematographic function and context of the musical sequence chosen for in-depth discussion and (ii) the dynamic of providing music for a full-length feature film, it is also useful to study how musical ideas and materials are employed on a

1. By 'full length' is meant over 1 hour in duration.

2. In the case of films video-taped off air, please ensure that all opening and all end credits are included in the recording.

more general basis throughout the film. For this reason, another important element in the assignment is the provision of a complete musical cue sheet. These two important investigative and descriptive parts of the assignment are prerequisites for establishing the basis of informed opinion as to what the music is communicating, and whether or not it is doing so effectively in relation to picture.

Since the results of your work will be shared by all on this course, this assignment also aims to bring a wide variety of film musical styles, techniques and functions, used by a wide range of film composers, for different purposes to the attention of all participants. Apart from aural skills, presentational and general writing skills are also enhanced.

Finally, attention to the kind of detailed work mentioned both above and below provides valuable information and insights into the sort of techniques and aesthetics that you can use (or refuse) in your own work with music and the moving image.

3 Preliminaries

3.1. Filmography and credits

You should provide details of the film's composer(s), director, producer, along with the name of the production company/companies and the film's year of release. For details of filmography presentation, see handout *Assignment Tips*. Filmographic details to most feature films produced in the UK and USA are available in reference works like *Halliwel's Film Guide* or *The Virgin Film Guide*. Information can also be gleaned from such websites as <www.allmovie.com>. Main composer credits usually occur towards the end of the opening film titles. Source details of other music used in the film usually appear towards the end of the film's final credits.

3.2. Summary of action

A resumé of the main story line in the film is also essential to the understanding of music's functions. This resumé should include short descriptions of important characters and environments that are intrinsic to the mood and character of the film. It is also useful to provide readers and seminar participants with an idea of the type of visual narrative employed (e.g. mis-en-scène characteristics, typical camera angles, lighting and editing techniques, etc.).

3.3. Motivation for choice of material

It is also useful to tell readers and seminar participants why you chose the film in question and why the sequence(s) you chose for detailed analysis are particularly interesting, representative, etc.

4 Cue list

4.1. Actual list

The cue list itself consists of two columns: (1) timings since the start of the film; (2) description of action and of music. Timings should be written in hours, minutes and seconds (e.g. 1:08:25 = one hour, eight minutes and twenty-five seconds into the film). To highlight when music enters and exits, use an asterisk (or similar symbol, i.e. *0:00:20 or ♪0:00:20 for twenty seconds into the film). You do not need to note changes of scene that are not highlighted by musical events but you should note all points at which music starts and finishes, as well as important cue points within sequences containing music.

The first few sequences of a hypothetical English film might look like this:

- 0:00:00 Blackout. Sound of wind and sea crashing against rocks. Dark night, rain, flashes of lightning reveal ship in difficulties and high cliffs. Scraping, grinding and smashing, desperate faces of sailors (quick cuts between coast and engine room) as ship inevitably crashes on to rocks and water floods the vessel.
- * 0:00:56 Cross fade sound effects and main theme played on solo accordion over first titles (frozen image of captain's face at hour of death).
- * 0:01:20 Cross fade captain's face and summer country lane as main theme repeats on clarinet with string accompaniment. Slow pan over rural England (looks like Dorset).
- * 0:01:44 Old bus comes into view as major key B section of theme is played by full orchestra. Bus winds down lane into distance.
- * 0:02:08 Fade back to pastoral panorama. Also back to minor key A section of theme (this time oboe lead) as composer credits revealed. Music starts to fade over held quartal chord (strings) at 0:02:33.³
- 0:02:57 Music out and sound effects up as bus arrives in village. Smart young woman in 1950s garb gets out of bus. She is probably in about the 6th or 7th month of pregnancy. She walks into the sweet shop where she is told that the Horsewhip-Ffyingtons will soon be down in the Bentley to collect her. Cheerfully chatting customers enter and leave the shop and gossip outside about the newcomer. The Bentley arrives and after formal introductions Christine (as we subsequently know her) leaves with the landed gentry.
- * 0:06:20 As inane upper-class conversation continues in the Bentley, Christine's thoughts drift off as the 'unreal' theme (see no. 5 in list of themes, page 5) overrides the drowsy effects of conversation and the car's engine...

4.2. List of themes / musical ideas

In the example above, expressions like 'main theme' and 'B section' act as labels for musical ideas that recur throughout the film. Such recurrent musical ideas require detailed description only once. Those descriptions should be presented in a separate list or table preceding the actual cue sheet.

3. For non-musicological qualification of this chord, see 4 on page 5.

It is a good idea to name and number all the musical ideas you list. Sometimes it is possible to find the composer's (or director's) own name for a theme in the information provided with the relevant soundtrack album. If no such information is forthcoming, you should name the theme yourself. In either case it should be clear where the names have come from.

Any student may include music examples in their initial list of musical ideas, motifs, etc. Students following the W300 or W320 single honours degree courses are expected to provide such music examples in their listing (see ex. 1). Please note that example one represents a thoroughly acceptable list of themes from the film in question but that the student in question lost some marks for omitting [1] indication of tempo (all examples), [2] instrumentation (most examples), [3] underlying harmonies (some examples).⁴

Ex. 1 Recurrent ideas in *The Usual Suspects* (1995)

The image displays 18 musical notation examples, labeled (a) through (r), representing recurrent ideas from the film *The Usual Suspects* (1995). Each example is presented on a single staff with its corresponding dynamic marking. Examples (a) through (r) include: (a) opening scene (p), (b), (c) wood block (mf), (d), (e) Verbal's theme (mf), (f), (g), (h), (i) love theme: piano arpeggios (p), (j) 'rural' theme (mp), (k), (l), (m) elevator scene (ff), (n), (o), (p), (q), and (r).

All other students are expected to provide a verbal description of each idea or motif. Each musical idea should be uniquely identified by the exact timing(s) at which it first occurs, for example (referring to the hypothetical cue sheet presented under §4.1.):

1. The "People's" theme: a simple, quite happy-sounding, easily singable major-key tune. Occurs in three main forms: [1] played slowly (88 bpm) on solo accordion [0:00:56, 0:53:20, 1:18:18]; [2] played fast (136 bpm) by folksy ensemble as source music at barn dance [0:32:39]; [3] in cheery march arrangement for brass band during pit strike scene [0:42:40] (116 bpm).
2. Pastoral theme: a wistful, wavy, legato tune (in medium tempo) reminiscent of a mixture of Vaughan Williams' *Variations on Greensleeves* the *Emmerdale* theme (72 bpm). Occurs in two main forms: [1] played by oboe with full string accompaniment [0:02:08]; [2] ...
3. Pastoral theme B section: occurs played by strings in the main titles in conjunction with the pastoral theme itself [0:02:32] and once on its own

4. Example 1 (reduced) provided by Gina Davis (W320, 1997).

as a brass band piece [0:40:37]. Slow or medium tempo (like the pastoral theme itself) but more of a dignified than wistful quality. Reminiscent of a low-key 'Land of Hope and Glory' (Elgar).

4. The 'open space question-mark' chord: occurs in at least ten places (first at 0:02:33, for other occurrences see cue sheet). Lasts for between 5 and 8 seconds. Starts very weak, fades in very quickly (<2 seconds to maximum volume) and holds. Always cross-fades into sound effects.⁵
5. The 'Unreal' theme: a blur of unreal-sounding synthesised pitches, quite soft but eerie, a bit like the quiet section before the murder music in *Psycho* except more high-pitched. Occurs at 0:06:20, 0:19:02, 0:45:33 ...

5 Detailed analysis

For purposes of detailed analysis you select a passage from the film that is of particular interest from the viewpoint of music and the moving image. The passage may also be particularly representative of the film or constitute a high point in the narrative. The length of the passage selected may vary according to factors mentioned under 5.1.

5.1. Presentation

The detailed analysis is presented in two parts: (1) a graphic score of events (see §5.2.1); (2) a discursive analytical text. No-one is expected to undertake transcription of the music to the passage selected as part of this module.

Depending on the degree of difficulty concerned, the passage(s) selected for detailed analysis should contain between 4 and 12 minutes of music.

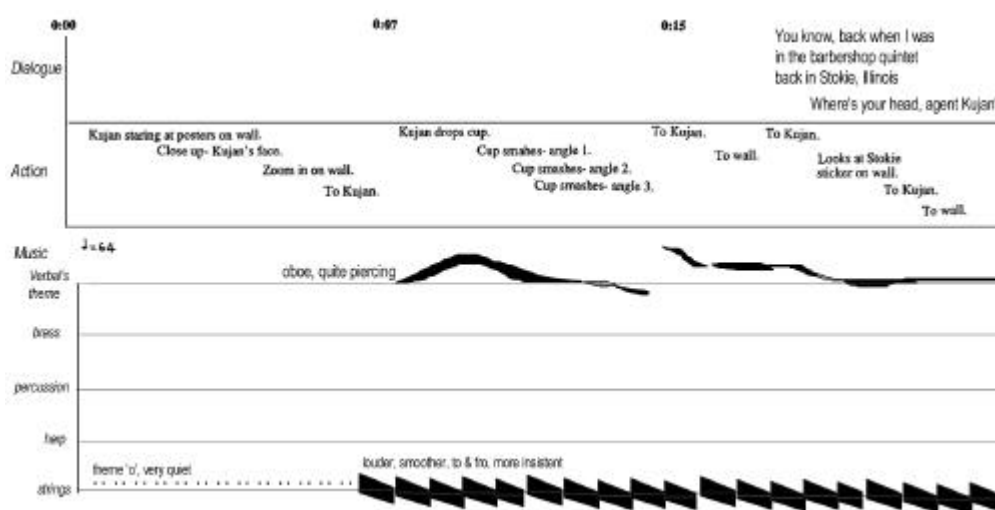
5.2. Presentation

5.2.1 Graphic score

The score should consist of the following lines: (1) a time grid, starting at 0:00 (zero minutes and zero seconds); (2) a story board consisting of either (i) visual representations of on-screen events or (ii) concise verbal descriptions of those events; (3) the spoken word (if applicable); (4) sound effects (if applicable); (5) a graphic representation of musical events, for example in the form of a table of musematic occurrence (handout available).

5. This chord was referred to structurally as 'quartal' under 0:02:08 in the fictitious film's cue listing on page 3.

Ex. 2 Sample of acceptable graphic score: 20 seconds from penultimate scene in *The Usual Suspects* (1995)⁶



Use A4 landscape (time running parallel to the long edges of the A4 paper). If using paper larger than A4, you should reduce your work to A4 size before submission.

5.2.2 The analysis

This section of your work consists of a text containing the following elements: (i) explanations of shorthand, abbreviations, symbols, etc. used in the graphic score; (ii) details of events not contained in or not readily interpretable from your 'score'; (iii) the analysis itself.

The most important aspects of the analysis itself are: (i) to discuss how the musical events you have recorded in the 'score' create particular moods or effects in relation to the visual, verbal and paramusical sonic events (such analysis also entailing the use of semiotic concepts⁷); (ii) to discuss in more general terms how music is used throughout the film.

Finally, your own opinion and evaluation of music in the film is also an important aspect of the assignment. Such opinion and evaluation should of course be based on the observations you have made and on the musical events and functions you have registered, both in your work with the cue sheet and with the detailed analysis.

5.2.3 A few extra tips

5.2.3.1 Suggested order in which to do the assignment

(1) cue sheet; (2) graphic score; (3) list of themes at top of cue sheet; (4) analysis text.

5.2.3.2 Calculating times

If you use a PC I can let you have a time calculation routine for free. This routine is written in QBasic and runs under DOS or Windows. Otherwise, ei-

6. Based on transcription by Gina Davis (W320, 1997).

7. Handout *Introductory notes to the Semiotics of Music* available at £2.50 from IPM office.

ther (i) multiply minutes by 60, add that number to the number of seconds, do the sum in seconds only and then redivide by 60, the remainder being the number of seconds, e.g. $12:20 - 3:45 = (720+20) 740 - (180+45) 225 = (515 \div 60) 8:35$; or (ii) add or subtract directly, carrying units of 60 instead of 10. In this way you can work out how much of the film contains music and how much is without it.

5.2.4 Checklist

Check that you have covered the following: [1] motivation for choice of film; [2] filmography; [3] table or list of main musical ideas in film; [4] cue sheet; [5] graphic score; [6] motivation for choice of particular scene; [7] semiotic analysis of music of particular scene; [8] discussion of music in film generally.