

CONCERT MUSIC VERSUS THE MUSIC OF THE SOUND FILMS

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SUMMARY. Concert (independent) music, mostly classical, has largely and decisively influenced the emergence and development of cinematography, but, just like all the other independent arts, mostly remodelled to fit the requirements imposed by the sound film, independent music has also undergone major changes which influenced its structure, form and independence, but which became part of a superior synthetic structure from a psychological, artistic and expressive points of view.

Conceived to serve different aesthetic and dramatic principles and shaped according to other structural patterns, stylistic concepts etc., the analytic patterns successfully used to examine/study independent music can no longer be used for this “newborn” musical genre called the music of the sound film.

Keywords: concert music, film music, Copland, synthetic arts.

The sound film – general aspects

The sound film represents a new branch of synthetic arts, being born from the synthesis of several independent arts, which can be classified from an ontological point of view (fundamental criterion allowing the dichotomy of arts, beginning from their existential frame, simultaneously or successively pre-eminent), into two large groups: spatial arts (generating objects) and temporal arts (generating actions)². The object as an artwork can be created and perceived as tri-dimensional (architecture, sculpture) or bi-dimensional (painting, drawing, photography etc.), information reaching the receiver mostly through the visual system (optic), hence the term visual arts. The temporal arts, such as music or

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² There is, of course, a certain area of intermingling between space and time.

certain literary genres, generate sounds (by performing a musical piece, reciting a poem etc.) transmitted through the air (as vibrations) to our hearing system, therefore making it possible for them to be called acoustic arts.

An independent art becomes truly useful and necessary (as part of the new synthetic structure) in the process of reaching the highest degree of expressiveness only if it is able, by its own specific means, to introduce new and successful ways of artistic expression, thus solving complex problems unsolvable for the other arts with which it synthesizes. The sound film uses multiple artistic means, introduced gradually (because of technical difficulties) on the same transparent, flexible support of various dimensions and perforated on the margins (the film) therefore accomplishing the following:

- a presentation of the phenomena in space, time, movement and during their evolution;
- a characterization of the human being (the most important dramatic element of cinematography) from the outside, through his relationship with the environment (nature, objects), with other human beings etc., as well as from the inside, showing (to the audience) their moral structure and their (hidden) emotions.

The act of sensory perception of a cinematographic image starts at the same time a physical process (**r** - perception), an intellectual one (**i** - interpretation) and a psychological one (**S** - reaction), which can be mathematically represented as follows:

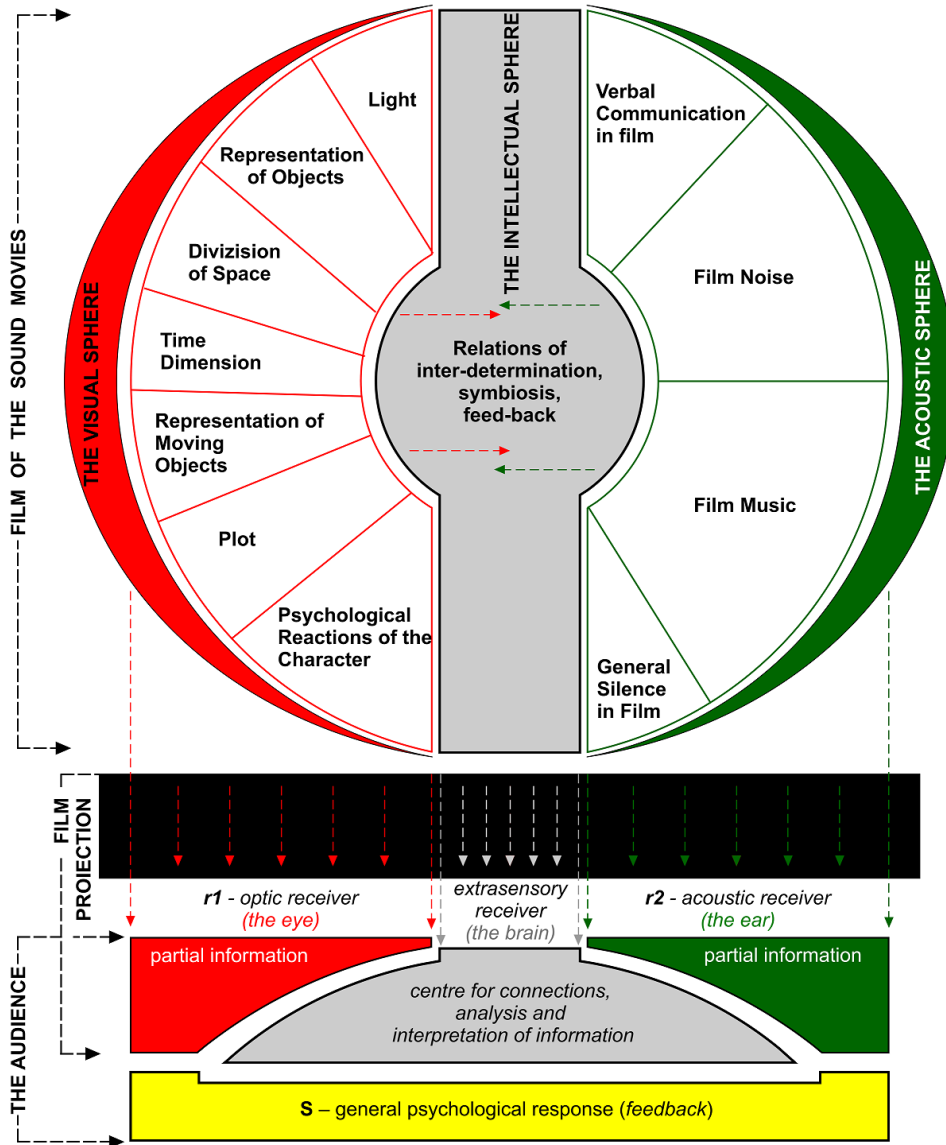
$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{r} + \mathbf{i}$$

S – the general spiritual state of the audience, as a psychological reaction to the total of sensory and extrasensory (intellectual) information received and processed during a cinematographic projection;

r – the sum of visual (**r1**) and auditory (**r2**) stimuli perceived (from the visual and auditory elements of the sound film) and transmitted (in the form of electrical impulses – through the optic/cochlear nerve) to the brain;

i – the interpretation of the sensory data by using the other faculties contributing to knowledge as a process. By means of a complex process (where the quality and quantity of the analyzed information are directly proportional to the intelligence, knowledge, memory, imagination and motivation of the audience) the human being or the object (presented in space, time, movement and during its evolution) is compared to other human beings/objects and defined from the point of view of its nature, meaning, function and value.

Fig. 1



The extrasensory receiver (the human brain) recognizes the possible connections between the two informational entities (partial) perceived from the visual (**r1**) and auditory (**r2**) elements of the film, only active during the cinematographic projection. The psychological *feedback* (**S**), generated by watching and interpreting a film, is entirely individual, largely depending upon age, emotional structure, life experience, education, or sometimes even gender.

The main concern, during the complex and often-difficult process of creating an audio-visual production, is definitely the script, as it is the foundation of any film. It comprises the important details of the cinematographic story in a condensed form, answering the following basic questions: **Who** is the main character? **Where** and **when** does the action take place (space and time)? **What is it about?** (*plot*) **Why?** (*motivation*) **How** does the plot develop? (*denouement*) *etc.* The division of a cinematographic script into a certain number of scenes with technical provisions is called cutting and is finalized by the director.

During filming, the meanings of the words will be translated into images (visual elements) and sounds (auditory elements). As a result, the film is a representation produced by the imagination of a creative team, but it doesn't correspond to reality (fiction), as reality is only the model, the source of inspiration.

An accurate analysis will show that there is a close relationship of indetermination between the two groups of elements (visual and acoustic), as they coexist based on the principle of completing one another. The cinematographic experience proves that the role of the acoustic elements amplifies when the visual ones stagnate and vice versa. A new, supreme aesthetic and dramatic quality is born from the synthesis of the two groups of elements, going way beyond the possibilities of expressing an artistic message of each one of them separately. Even if the audience perceives the film as a whole, a close analysis will easily determine which group of elements plays the main role in the dramatic evolution of the plot at certain point.

The coexistence of the acoustic elements (sounds) with the visual elements (images) as established by tradition (convention) was implemented in the conscience of the audience even from the period of the silent film (1895-1929). The role of the sound effects and especially that of the film music changes significantly with the emergence of sound films. While the music of the silent films was mainly justified by its illustrative character (being an acoustic replica of the image), the music of the sound films is no longer a permanent presence along the film. By diversifying its means of expression, by enlarging its range, by gaining greater emotional power, the music of the sound film has earned the right to fulfil multiple roles with the purpose of following the dramatic effects just like the visual elements, even if they will probably never be equal.

The acoustic elements of the sound film can encompass four types of independent acoustic phenomena at once: human communication, film noises, film music and general silence. The degree of complexity, the recurrence, the dramatic importance of these acoustic elements depends first on the unique requirements of every audio-visual production. There are countless possibilities of combinations and syntheses. The acoustic elements are carefully chosen for every scene being rigorously fixed and edited on the same physical base (film) together with the visual elements.

Music + Film = Film music?

“What is proper music to be put to a film seems to be highly problematical. It is a subject open to discussion, a subject that no one has finally solved to the satisfaction of either of them or that of the film. There are no cut and dried solutions about film music. It is a very live subject,” affirmed the composer Aaron Copland (1900-1990) at the Modern Art Museum in New York during a course on film music (on January 10th 1940) following his recent experience in Hollywood.

Today, 70 years later, we can identify several tendencies pre-established by tradition regarding the efficient use of film music (developed and successfully used by the important companies producing audio-visual consumer goods destined to the public).

In Copland’s opinion “film music is not concert music, and listening to film music is not like listening to a concert. That is very hard blow to a composer because a composer generally likes to feel that he is the centre of things. He likes to feel that people have come to the hall to hear what he has to say, an expression on his soul, and it is hard for him to take a feeling he has in Hollywood that the music, after all, is only there to help the picture and the composer out of necessity must keep himself in the background. In other words, the music is subordinate. One has to keep that in mind always. Moreover, Hollywood is no place for a composer to go in order to express his soul. It would be much better for him to stay in New York and write symphonies. He has to keep in mind all the time that he is writing music in order to help the picture”³.

Next, in order to enumerate the palpable differences between independent music and sound film music, we suggest a short comparative analysis.

Live Performance *versus* Playback

Independent music belongs to the family of temporal arts requiring a new performance each time. It becomes perceivable (and thus accessible) to the public only by these recurrent resuscitations made by musicians (instrumentalists, singers etc.) grouped in various vocal-instrumental ensembles lead by conductors.

Even if (in the case of cultured music) the score firmly sets the basic characteristics (orchestral component, key signature, measure etc.) and the (thematic-structural) proper musical content (pitch, note values, the precise place of breaks etc.), certain relations (dynamical, antagonistic, timbre) or elements affecting duration (tempo) as well as the character of the musical work to be presented *live* in concert are relative and unique in every performance.

³ Copland, Aaron, *Talk on Film Music*, Museum of Modern Art, January 10 1940, New York City, p.6.

Every performer (conductor, instrumentalist or singer) involved in the process of translating the artistic/compositional idea (transformation of the musical notation in a viable acoustic form, able to transmit a psychological message, an emotion etc.), adds his/her own artistic vision to the performed piece.

Film music though DOES NOT need recurrent re-interpretations as, being acoustically generated just once (during the recording session), its later presentations are mere reproductions (*playbacks*) and therefore completely identical.

Film music consequently relinquishes the chance of recurrent reincarnation in favour of constant, identical eternity, but without fluctuations in value, the only version to accompany the visual elements (constant as well) from the premiere of the film being considered (by the creative team, producers etc.) as representative for all the artistic needs imposed.

Certainly, this aspect of film music has its advantages:

- perfect synchronization of the film music with the animated pictures (visual elements), by the exact mastery of the development in time of the musical events (tempo – perfectly controllable time frame).
- well layered dynamic relations between the various elements of the acoustic group of any sound film: film noises, human communication and film music.
- dynamic, agogic, timbre relations layered at the level of vocal-instrumental ensembles.
- even if, along the years, the symphonic orchestra proved most useful by its adaptability to any type of narration (literary text, theatrical play, film script), the recent experimental tendencies in film music tend towards enlarging the acoustic horizon. This expansion of the usual vocal-symphonic construction (by introducing / largely using various ethnic instruments, electronical sounds etc.) is financially possible because of this characteristic of unique performance of film music.
- the surpassing of technical-interpretative limits / the possibility of terraced recording (in several layers overlapped later on) of the musical text requiring atypical vocal or instrumental performances (from the point of view of intonation, rhythm, range etc.).
- the manipulation (application of effects, filters etc.), the processing, mixing and post-processing of the musical material recorded in optimal conditions (digital signal without background noise, on several individual channels etc.)

Continuity in Time versus Discontinuity (*Cue List*)

Continuity in time is an important characteristic of independent music. Even if during the performance of a musical work/part of a work there is a continuous timbre fluctuation determined by the ever changing orchestral architecture, the musical discourse is rarely interrupted by general breaks, always justified from a dramatic (the suspense break before the climax) or musical (the break preceding a tonal change, a change of tempo, the appearance of a new thematic material etc.) point of view.

The music of the sound film though is intermittent. This discontinuity is its most important characteristic, being made up of a variable number of musical interventions/fragments with the duration (usually between 1 second and approximately 360 seconds) totally depending on the period imposed by every film sequence.

A film (with duration of approx. 90 minutes) generally contains approximately 30-80 minutes of music. Every musical intervention, regardless of its temporal, timbre, stylistic, dramatic characteristics etc., is called *cue*, the document summing up/organizing all the *cues* making up the music of a film is called *Master Cue List* and is the result of the artistic vision of an entire creative team.

What is very interesting is the fact that the audience is not bothered at all by the intermittence of film music, this being perceived as perfectly continuous. The various interventions can be interrupted by long minutes of general silence (we don't refer to the total absence of the acoustic element, the general silence of music not influencing the presence of human communication or that of film noises). The audience will not be bothered neither by the lack nor by the periodical recurrence of music, correctly interpreting (subconsciously) these interventions as acoustic "pieces" of an enormous puzzle.

In Zofia Lissa's opinion (1908-1980), the film music seems continuous to the audience due to the tendency of the human brain to gather and overlap over animated images the acoustic "memories" perceived in various prior moments during the film. Consequently, the viewer's brain will continue to make connections between the visual and the acoustic even when one of them is temporary missing, based on the reactions persistent in his mind, this "tendency" being an essential aid to deciphering the artistic intention of the film.

In order to exemplify as logically as possible this phenomenon Lissa⁴ makes a comparison with the periodical appearance of different fictional characters in films. In the virtual world of the film, the viewers imagine a continuous existence for the characters even when they don't appear on screen (even if it's for a longer period). Otherwise, their recurrence would not be justified.

⁴ Lissa, Zofia, *Estetyka muzyki Filmowej (The Aesthetics of Film Music)*, Kraków, 1964.

The intermittence of film music is also favored by the rapid change of its roles during the film (it can be a subjective comment of the composer, a brush-up of certain noises from everyday life, it can evoke or represent visual moments, it can appear in its natural state, it can show emotions or ensure the unity of the whole etc.)

Consistency, Unity versus Imposed “Freedom”

(From a thematic, formal and stylistic point of view)

Opera has formed its own conventional system, totally replacing speech – as an articulate language – with singing. The unusual situations emerging lead to a certain extent to a lack of authenticity, the characters singing in every situation: while they eat, when they suffer and even in times filled with maximum of dramatic feeling: when faced with death.

Even if largely used, film music doesn't generate such artificial situations because:

- the presence of music doesn't exclude the active participation of noises and dialogues among the acoustic elements of the film, from their synthesis emerging the proper score of an audio-visual production.
- film music constantly resorts to its infinite thematic, formal, stylistic resources along the film, using even silence in its favor. Therefore general silence will not only be the absence of the three acoustic elements: dialogue, noise and music, but it will become an independent element with true dramatic characteristics.

In the volume „*Morfologia și structura formei muzicale*” (*The morphology and structure of the musical form*), Valentin Timaru (1940-) highlights the idea that the musical form (the way sounds are organized) materializes musical creation (autonomous n.a.) as an entity that, in time, moulds on certain architectonic patterns.

The development of acoustic events can be noticed on two different levels:

- the morphological level – where language organizes its semantic units
- the syntactical level – where a certain pattern is formed (usually in the same unity of movement) or several formal prototypes unite in the different movements of a musical genre.

The general internal laws of these structural patterns were gradually formed, during several musical eras, undergoing modifications imposed by the development of arts in general as well as by the alternation of stylistic trends belonging to certain cultural stages set by history.

In time, film music doesn't mould on architectonic patterns, depending entirely on the period of the visual, thus gaining dramatic characteristics, but losing at the same time its independence (structural, stylistic etc.).

The *cues* of film music are not coerced neither by the need of thematic integration, nor by the demand for unity or stylistic continuity. At the level of the *cues* any stylistic succession becomes possible if justified by the visual elements of the film. Therefore the modal-ethnographic musical world (ethnic music), the tonal-functional system, the modern tonal systems (dodecaphonic, aleatory, repetitive music etc.), pop, rock music, jazz, electronic music (concrete) or the new experimental techniques (music composed on computer) can combine freely even on the same score.

Composed individually for every audio-visual production, film music will only gain meaning in synthesis with its visual elements. Consequently, the unique period of the animated images will also set unique characteristics of the acoustic elements. Like a human print, this structure is particular for every production and it cannot perfectly fit in another audio-visual autonomous production.

Sergei Sergeyeovich Prokofiev (1891-1953) rearranged the musical text initially composed for the film *Alexander Nevsky* (directed by Sergei M. Eisenstein 1898-1948) later transforming it in an autonomous *Cantata* (op. 78, in 7 parts) for mezzo-soprano, mixed choir and symphonic orchestra⁵.

Many composers - John Williams (1932-), Ennio Moricone (1928-) etc.) - with a rich and valuable activity in film music as well as independent music (for the concert halls) frequently do the same, proving that film music is not seen by its composer as inferior in value, only created for financial reasons.

The musical process of "regaining" autonomy (the process of subsequent transformation of film music into independent music) definitely represents an exciting theme for the future researchers by identifying (using thorough comparative analyses) the structural differences between the two versions based on the same core theme.

General *versus* Concrete by Synthesis / Indetermination

The perception of certain acoustic stimuli can easily generate modifications in the emotional state of the perceiver, also triggering various psychological reactions (rarely also physical). These profound feelings are unique and strictly personal though, being influenced by the intelligence, knowledge, memory, imagination and motivation of the spectator, also reflecting his psychological tendencies.

Animated images on the other hand have a very substantial, tangible content and by the relationship between the two components (visual and acoustic) in an audio-visual production, film music will be invested with concrete content completely unknown to independent music.

⁵ World premiere on May 17th 1939 in Moscow.

The composition of film music is motivated by the already existing images and consequently, the audience will be guided by the visual element in understanding the artistic meanings. A major chord becomes thus the expression of joy, a single cluster informs of human presence and has the power to start genocide (*Schindler's List*⁶), the moral structure of the character will be questioned when doubled by a dissonant chord (augmented) etc.

We can firmly state that film music, by its symbiosis with the visual, will gain new attributes and a tangible content.

Author versus Group Creation

While an independent musical creation usually bears the signature of one person (composer, orchestration, sometimes even librettist), a successful film requires first of all an up-to-date artistic vision which generates an entire set of operations lead by departments specialized in logistics, coordination, supervising etc.

Inspiration versus Express Art (deadline)

Express art requires sacrifices: the composition and orchestration of approximately 60 minutes of music, mostly symphonic, in a few weeks is done according to the principle of assembly line production, similar to the factories where every worker only supervises one stage in the production of the finite product.

An ideal sequence of events would be according to the following logistic plan (Davis⁷):

Week 1	Composer receives the locked picture. Reviews tape at home. Spotting session with director, producer and music editor. Music editor begins preparing timing notes.
Week 2 to 5	Writing begins. Composer gives sketches to the person that orchestrates. Orchestrations go to copyist as they are completed. Music editor finishes timing notes and prepares for synchronization.
Week 6	Recording the music: three to four days, six hours per day of recording. Approximately 18 minutes recorded each day. Mixing the music: two to three full days.
Week 7 to 8	Dubbing music with sound effects and dialogue.
Week 9	Film goes to lab for answer prints and colour correction.
Week 12	Film delivered to theatres.

⁶ *Schindler's List* (1993), Directed by Steven Spielberg, Original Music by John Williams.

⁷ Davis, Richard, *Complete Guide to Film Scoring – The Art and Business of Writing Music for Movies and Tv*, Berklee Music, 1999, p. 85.

The Degree of Difficulty of the Musical Writing – Technical and Interpretative Requirements

The music of the high-budget films, performed by a large orchestra, often imposes technical and interpretative requirements similar to instrumental concerts destined to the concert halls. Therefore, we won't be mistaken comparing Sigismund Toduță's *Concert for Oboe, English horn / Oboe d'amore and String Orchestra* with *Viktor's Tale* signed by John Williams for the film *The Terminal* (2004). The instrumental writing (especially the one for the soloists) addresses in both cases mature interpreters, mastering advanced instrumental techniques, with a shaped artistic vision, consequently the composers carefully chose their soloists. Toduță's concert was dedicated to the oboe player Aurel Marc (1947-, who actively participated in the creative process, offering solutions for interpretation, phrasing, tempo etc.), while Williams sometimes notes directly on the drafts (instead of the name of instrument) the name of the instrumentalist to play the finite musical text, organically connected to the visual aspect of the film: Itzhak Perlman (1945-), Emily Bernstein (1959-2005), Yo-Yo Ma (1955-) etc.

CONCERT FOR OBOE, ENGLISH HORN / OBOE D'AMORE AND STRING ORCHESTRA

III. Finale

Composer: Sigismund Toduță
Interpret p.a.a.: Aurel Marc

The image shows a musical score for Oboe, measures 31 to 41. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various dynamics and articulations. Measure 31 starts with a tempo marking of ♩=92 *leggiermente scherzando*. The dynamics range from *pocof* to *mf*. There are triplets and a 7-measure rest. Measure 33 features a triplet and a dynamic of *pp*. Measure 36 has a dynamic of *f* and a tempo marking of *Un poco muovendo e fluente*. Measure 41 starts with a tempo marking of ♩=92-96 and a dynamic of *pocof*. The score includes various articulations and phrasing marks.

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THE TERMINAL

Viktor's Tale

Composer: John Williams

Interpret: Emily Bernstein

Solo Clarinet
in B \flat

43 *mf*

45 *f*

49 *f*

52

55

57 *cfc.*

Technical and interpretative requirements common to both musical texts:

- virtuosity,
- extreme range,
- quality of sound,
- expressive ,
- dexterity and accuracy of execution,
- rhythmic variety (exceptional divisions, small values),
- timbre requirements.

At a closer look we also notice tangible differences: from the point of view of dynamic requirements, Toduță's score proves to be much more elaborate. While Williams only resorts to *mf*, *f* and *cresc.*, Toduță presents a much more extensive range (*pp*, *p*, *decresc.*) and differentiated (*poco mf*, *ben mf* etc.) range. This shows first of all Toduță's minuteness, but, at the same time, the dynamic "simplicity" of Williams' score can be due to the music being only a „co-participant" to the film score, together with the other acoustic elements (dialogue and noise). Permanently fluctuating film music would hinder the *dubbing session*. It is easier for the sound engineer to mix "static" musical fragments.

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At the level of the general score both composers offer multiple timbral indications (*con sord.*, *senza sord.*, *sotto voce*), as well as many requirements regarding the ways of execution (*div.*, *uniti*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *sul ponticello* etc.).

Toduță gives more fluency and dynamism to the musical text, by frequently changing the tempo. Even if this is not thoroughly noted by Williams, the same phenomenon happens during the recording session. The conductor has permanently in front of his eyes the animated images of the film and changes very often the tempo in order to synchronize the acoustic with the visual.

This comparative analytical sketch is merely the starting point, the primary theoretical sketch needed in the process of gaining knowledge about an extremely vast cognitive territory, created in order to realize and develop the peculiarities of musical creations in cinematography.

(Translated from Romanian by Roxana Huza)

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