Antanas Kučinskas

Interaction between Music and Image in Film: Presumptions and Typology

The interaction between music and image in film – one of the most fundamental issues of great concern. Music heard from a screen can be virtually perceived as music itself, concentrating on a film music score, its stylistic features, or – as a part of a film plot, concentrating on a interaction between music and image, music and the plot of the film. In the opinion of the David Neumeyer, it is next to impossible to study the score purely from structuralist, formalist positions of musicology, although it is practiced by many musicologists as the principle media of analysis of music; the analysis of film music constantly faces other issues and not only those dealing with the motivation of music by a film subject or image. An approach to it in the light of other film elements – image, script, direction, etc. – unfolds specific aspects of film music.

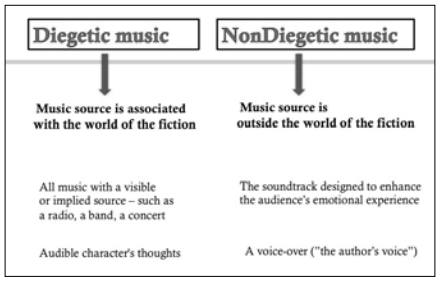
In the opinion of film music theorist Hansjorgen Pauli, film music is not written merely for itself, it always serves for another and principally acts as mediator. In the relationship with an image, it performs the function of the enrichment of dialog, the factor of structure or mood, situation or carry out a lot of other functions: characterizes heroes, locations, time period, comments the action or illustrates it, intensifies an emotional dramatic experience of situations, drawn the public's attention, unites or separates episodes, etc. Sense, we can see that the relationship between music and image in film is multi-edged and heterogeneous.

There are quite a number of articles devoted to the analysis of the relationship between music and image in film in various aspects. They include the first texts devoted to sound in films by Sergey Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Walter Ruttmann written in the 30s–40s, the cornerstone articles by the composer and theorist Aaron Copland written in 60s–70s, a significant books "Asthetik der film Musik" by Z. Lissa (1965), Claudia Gorbmann (Unheard Melodies; Narative Film Music, 1987), Kathryn Kalinak, Michel Chion (Audiovision – Sound on Screen, 1990), Nicholas Cook (Analysing Multimedia, 1998) and a great number of texts by other authors.

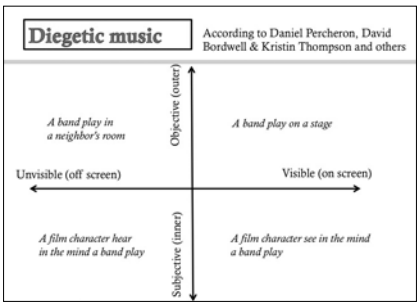
In this article I shall make an attempt to present a systematic model of the relationship between music and image in film, basing its formation and motivation on some of ideas of the above mentioned musicologists, supplementing them with new insights. The core of the presented models – the implication of different aspects for the relationship between music and image.

First of all establishing certain typical film music features, three principle aspects come to light: those of the source, the community of music and image and the domination of music or image. This three-edged image and sound construction acts through certain functions – tasks and aims. Below follows a short analysis of the mentioned issues.

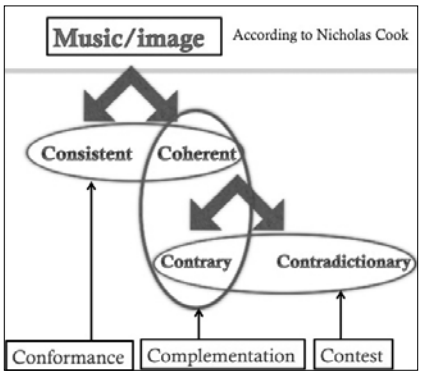
To begin with, any music or sound in film, depending on the type of its **source**, can be divided into spreading "from the screen" and "outside the screen". It goes without saying that any sound or music acoustically reaches us from the screen, however, from the point of view of the being watched story, they can exist on different dimensions. In one case, the source is composite part of the story, in another – the sound source is beyond its boundaries and only spectators can conditionally hear it. The world, where the action of the story takes place, is called diegetic. Therefore, the sounds of environment (nature, domestic sounds) as well as music and sounds heard or possibly hear by personages (i.e. a café band concert, a song heard from radio set, the music performed by the personages themselves, etc.) are diegetic. And on the contrary – music or sounds, which are not part of the film action world, are non-diegetic, i.e. a musical background accompanying an action or image, the music accompanying the actor's dialogues, the author's voice, etc.



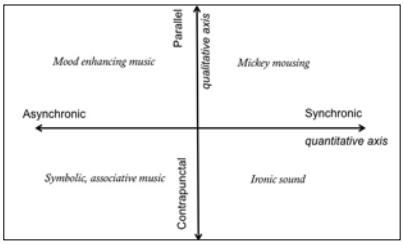
Diegetic music in its turn can be divided in seen and unseen (or temporary unseen), objective and subjective. The source of unseen music can be implied, i.e. the sound of an approaching train, the music heard from an adjacent room. That of subjective – the music sounding in the heroes mind, an "inner voice", the personage's recorded thoughts and the like. All the combinations of these diegetic music subtypes can be found in films.



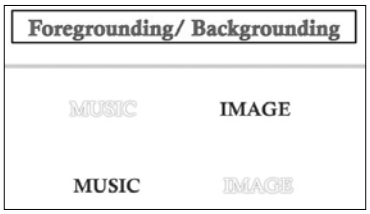
Second – several variants can be singled out according to relationship between the **community o**f music and image. According to Nicholas Cook, author of a prominent book "Analyzing Multimedia", a model of three basic interactions can be applied to multimedia genres, when the components interact in the relationship of conformance, complementation or contest. The first two are in some respect of a positive relationship and the third one – of negative. Making an attempt to establish a type of interaction, a test of similarity and difference is conducted. At first similarity is studied and the relationship of complete *consistency* or simply *coherence* are ascertained. The second variant in future examined in the aspect of difference and the *contrariness* or a complete *contradiction* of the relationship is established.



In film music theory separate tradition have synchronic and asynchrony as well as parallel and counterpoint musical conceptions. These terms have consolidated their position since the times of the first sound films and the first theoretical texts for sound in cinema by Sergey Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Walter Ruttman and others. These terms are often employed synonymic. However, regardless of it, mention should be made, that the aspects of synchronicity and parallelism are not completely identical. In the aspect of synchronicity / asynchronicity we could speak about a more or less detailed coincidence of musical and image events, whereas in that of parallelism and counterpoint – the conformity of music and image on the plain of their meaning. The first accentuates more an outer structural aspect of coincidence and is associated with a horizontal (quantitative) standpoint axis, the second – an in-depth aspect of the plot and is associated with a vertical (qualitative) axis.



Third – music in film can be in the **foreground** and **background**. Usually it "accompanies" an image (text, acting), yields to it, does not drown it and reaches us prior to the concentration of our attention on it, first of all by the so called background musical parameters like articulation, timbre, dynamic and etc., or a zonal sound sensation – registers, localization – and the like. The mentioned "second rate" musical parameters of pure music acquire a particular importance in film music, because they reach a spectator's consciousness without demanding a greatly active listening and do not disturb him/her to watch the image. However, the best film music is not always that which is unheard, like another one of the famous film music theorists Claudia Gorbmann described. Depending on an artistic idea and genre conditions it can force its way to center of attention or relative balance can be kept. This kind of foreground music embraces a dance, a song or other "authentic" musical piece, i.e. a shot of the concert, singing or playing personage. the music during the initial or final subtitles, etc. This kind of music require an action "to stop" and open a dramaturgical space for it to occur.



Another basic criterion, speaking about the relationship between music and image in film, as mentioned before, is a **functional approach**. It is beyond doubt that music in film simultaneously performs many different functions. Depending on the situation, some of them are more important, others – secondary, equivalent, variable and the like. Making an attempt to systematize a great number of musical functions (different researches distinguish from several to tens independent functions), we shall base our analysis on a three-dimensional model, which in some sense correspond semiotic approach to sign functions.

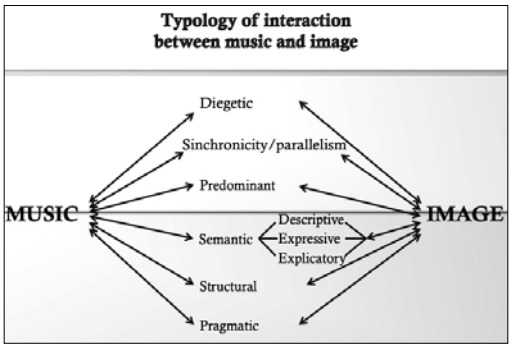
The first group – **pragmatic functions** directed to the usage of music in concrete sociocultural (economic, ideological, social, psychological, etc.) or genre situations. In this respect, the relationship between music and image can be determined by purely practical reasons. I.e. music is employed in an attempt to neutralize a noise of the audience, of discomfort of darkness in the cinema hall during a show; or due to ideological-commercial motifs serves, according to Th. Adorno, as a kind of narcotic, suppressing dangerous, anarchistic impulses and ensuring the drawing of the spectator in a certain uncritical state to overtake some ideological values rendered by the film.

The second group of functions – **structural functions**. They are directed to internal organization and arrangement of structural elements without necessarily considering their meaning. In this respect, the relationship between music and image is determined by specific joining / separation, preparation / finishing, highlighting / masking functions and etc. Sometimes music start sounding prior to the next scene and inform the spectator of some future changes in the story – in cinema terms it is called "sound foreshadowing", "sound flash forward". In some cases it remains sounding on the screen after the appearance of a new image or returns from an even earlier episode – in cinema terms it is called "sound flash back". Finally, the changes in music, culminations and low tide episodes, the logic of music development and etc. determine the macrostructure, which can both coincide and not coincide with a visual film form. In some cases a general film structure can echo typical musical forms (like rondo, variations), but more true would be to look for basic principals of development neither for concrete form models.

The third, very important group of functions is – **semantic**. They are directed, as semiotics put it, to the links between signs and what they represent without necessarily considering their use in concrete situations. I single out three basic subgroups of this semantic relationship – descriptive, expressive and explicatory. This grouping in some aspects correspond to main compositional techniques of film music, described by Claudia Bulleryah in the prominent book "Grundlagen der Wirkung von Filmmusik": 1) *descriptive* – when music is determined by an attempt to characterize external (physical) features of the image: emphasize moving, imitate sound qualities of the objects, describe geographical locality, historical period of the action, highlight a social context and etc. 2) *expressive* – when music is determined by an attempt to define inner (emotional) aspects of the image: the hero's emotional states or their mental processes (thought, dreams, hallucinations) or a general emotional context of an dramatic situation. 3) *Explicatory* – when music is determined by an attempt to comment, to explain, to specify the context or to inform the spectator of additional hidden information. That usage

of music in a symbolic role is an essential to the leitmotif technique, which occupies an exceptional place in the composing for films (and other narrative genres).

As Umberto Eco have stressed "It is known that syntax and semantics, when found in splendid isolation, became perverse disciplines, therefore, interpreting relationships between music and image it is always important to keep a reasonable balance between structural, semantic and other aspects of analysis. Summing up this concise report, it is reasonable to state that relationship between music and image in film is manifold. Music and image interact by different, complementing each other, ways. In a phenomenological respect music and image interact through the relationship of a musical space, the community of music and image as well as the domination of music or image. In a functional aspect – by pragmatic, structural and semantic relationships. The latter in its turn is composed of descriptive, expressive and semantic combination of relationships, see the schema bellow:



The discussed typology of music and image in film is far from exhausting a great number of other film music aspects, however it is expected to help to clearer articulate specific film music peculiarities, to detail its role in the relationship with other film elements and to be exploited as a methodological instrument for the analysis of film music.

Santrauka

Muzikos ir vaizdo sąveika kine: prielaidos ir tipologija

Kiekviename filme galima išskirti santykiškai autonomiškas sudedamąsias dalis – muziką, vaizdą, dramą, vaidybą ir pan. Jos plėtojasi skirtingose plotmėse ir pasiekia mus per skirtingus pojūčius – klausą ir regą. Dar XX a. pirmoje pusėje kino režisierius Sergejus Eizenšteinas teigė, kad garsas gali paryškinti, prieštarauti arba būti paralelus vaizdui, o muzikos ir vaizdo (muzikos bei draminės situacijos) santykis yra daugiau nei paprasta suma – susiliesdami vienas su kitu tiek vaizdas, tiek muzika, tiek drama įgyja naujų prasmių, plečia, koreguoja esamas, kuria naują visumą.

Į muzikos ir vaizdo sąveika galima žvelgti įvairiais aspektais. Anot žymaus šveicarų kino muzikos teoretiko Hansjörgo Pauli, kino muzika – tai visų pirma funkcinė muzika, ji nėra sukurta dėl savęs pačios, o tarnauja kitam ir iš esmės veikia kaip tarpininkė. Tokia muzika yra sąlygojama ne tik klausymo tikslo, bet ir taikomojo – atliekamų funkcijų efektyvumo, o tikrasis jos tikslas, galima sakyti, telkiasi už jos pačios. Taigi funkcinis aspektas būtų vienas esminių kalbant apie muzikos ir vaizdo sąveiką teatro ir kino žanruose.

Žvelgiant šiuo aspektu galima išskirti keletą skirtingų tokios sąveikos tipų. Visų pirma muzikos panaudojimas kine/teatre gali būti nulemtas grynai praktinių ar pragmatinių funkcijų, komercinių, ideologinių priežasčių (pragmatinė sąveika); antra – formaliųjų kompozicinių tikslų, jungimo/atskyrimo ir kitų struktūrinių funkcijų (struktūrinė sąveika); trečia – semantinių funkcijų, nemuzikinių (literatūrinių, naratyvinių ir pan.) reikšmių perteikimo tikslų (semantinė sąveika). Kiekviena šių sąveikų realizuojama tam tikromis fenomenologiškai išskiriamomis muzikos ir vaizdo sąlyčio situacijomis: diegetiškumo/nediegetiškumo (šaltinio aspektas), sinchroniškumo–paraleliškumo/asinchroniškumo–kontrapunkto (bendrumo aspektas), dominavimo/fonavimo (pirmavimo aspektas). Fenomenologinių ir funkcinių aspektų visuma sudaro šešiabriaunį garso ir vaizdo sąveikos modelį, aprėpiantį svarbiausius kino teatro muzikos analitinius taškus.