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# Film Music Across Borders. Localizing Music in the Silent Era

*Kino muzika abipus sienų. Muzikos lokalizavimas nebyliojo kino eroje*

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## Abstract

The extreme variability of musical accompaniment in the silent era forces scholars to question the very definition of silent film: a hybrid between a “closed” text, its visual sphere “frozen” in the film print; and an “open” one, with the accompanying music “reproduced” anew with each live performance.

Among the phenomena that characterize the daily practice of silent film music, none is more indicative of this hybrid semiotic status than localization: the practice of arranging different musical accompaniments to support the distribution of a film abroad, including the composition of multiple scores. The localization of a silent film means “opening” one component of the cinematic spectacle and replacing it with a new one, thus creating a completely new cultural product—or rather, an intercultural product, since localization results from the migration of a plurimedial work outside its context of production and its partial adaptation to the tastes, sensibilities, and cultural policies of the target exhibition context.

Analyzing music localization sheds light on film (-music) production and distribution as inherently intercultural processes. Throughout the twentieth century, multiple musical versions participated in processes of identity construction and cultural transfer—in the form of domestication, foreignization, internationalization, or localist assimilation—against the backdrop of rising nationalisms during a dramatic period of global history.

**Keywords:** Silent film music; music localization; open vs. closed text.

## Anotacija

Didžiulė muzikinio akompanimento įvairovė nebyliojo kino eroje verčia mokslininkus abejoti pačia nebyliojo kino sąvoka kaip „uždaro“ teksto, kurio vizualinė sfera „įšaldyta“ kino juostoje, ir „atviro“ teksto, kurio muzikinis akompanimentas „atkuriamas“ kiekvieno gyvo atlikimo metu, hibrido.

Tarp reiškinų, apibūdinančių kasdienę nebyliojo kino muzikos praktiką, nė vienas taip gerai neatskleidžia šio hibridinio semiotinio statuso kaip lokalizacija: skirtingų muzikinių akompanimentų parengimas, įskaitant kelių partitūrų sukūrimą, filmo sklaidai užsienio šalyse paremti. Nebyliojo kino filmų lokalizacija reiškia vieno kinematografinio spektaklio komponento „atidarymą“ ir pakeitimą nauju, taip sukuriant visiškai naują kultūrinį produktą – arba, tiksliau, tarpkultūrinį produktą, nes lokalizacija yra daugialypės medijos kūrinio migracijos už jo sukūrimo vietos konteksto ribų ir jo dalinio pritaikymo prie tikslinės auditorijos skonio, pajautimo ir kultūros politikos kontekstų rezultatas.

Muzikos lokalizacijos analizė atskleidžia, kad kino (muzikos) kūryba ir platinimas yra iš esmės tarpkultūriniai procesai. Dramatiškai besiklostančių XX a. istorijos įvykių fone daugybė muzikos versijų dalyvavo tapatybės kūrimo ir kultūrinio perdavimo procesuose prisijaukinimo, užsienio kultūros įsisavinimo, internacionalizacijos ar lokalizuotos asimiliacijos forma.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** nebyliojo kino muzika, muzikos lokalizavimas, atviras ir uždaras tekstas.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that during the silent era, the status of film music was characterized by a considerable degree of uncertainty. As Ennio Simeon wrote: “The total dependence on random factors of an economic or organisational nature (cuts, additions, changes of instrumentation, etc., not to mention the cases in which the selection of music was entirely delegated to persons of dubious competence) has long since given ‘musical accompaniment’ an ephemeral and fleeting identity” (Simeon 1987, 104). Under these conditions, the “through-composed” score remained a

mirage for a long time: needlessly expensive and almost impossible to realize within the time constraints imposed by the organizational machine.<sup>2</sup>

Even when an “original” score did exist, there was no guarantee that the composer’s wishes would be respected. This is what film music critic Hans Erdmann reported from the Vienna premiere of the film *Tartüffe* (1925):

Ufa’s eagerly awaited new Murnau film *Tartüffe*, which has already had its Viennese premiere, will soon have its Berlin premiere on the occasion of the opening of the Gloria Haus. The current Ufa programme shows a few images from *Tartüffe*

and the names of the writer, director, photographer, set designer and actors. The composer is left out. That's good so, and it can only be understood if the disastrous musical condition is mentioned as little as possible [...]. The film *Tartüffe* was shown in Vienna without the "composed" music: maybe it didn't work? It worked very well, perhaps better than with Becce's music!<sup>3</sup>

Far from constituting a self-contained text, then, music performed live to accompany film projections gave rise to a variety of compositional, performance, and reception practices. As Rick Altman put it, the music of silent films "varied according to differences in date, location, film genre, exhibition venue, and many other variables, and thus cannot be reduced to a single practice or even a single line of development" (Altman 2004, 12).

Also symptomatic of this ephemeral musical identity is the fate of the score Paul Hindemith wrote in 1921 for Arnold Fanck's film *In Sturm und Eis*. For the premiere on September 22, at the Taubentzenpalast in Berlin, a "very well-known conductor" refused to play Hindemith's music, as it would have required several rehearsals, instead opting to prepare a compilation of existing pieces himself.<sup>4</sup> The same thing happened in other Berlin cinemas, so that, as far as we know, the film was only exhibited in Düsseldorf with Hindemith's original scoring.<sup>5</sup>

Another significant example is provided by a 1924 review of the Zurich premiere of *Siegfried*, the first part of Fritz Lang's epic *Die Nibelungen*. Here, we learn that the original music by Gottfried Huppertz was completely replaced by a compilation of Wagnerian music:

In Zurich we were suddenly disappointed: this new music was left out. Why was that? Because, as the director [of the Orient-Cinéma] explained, they preferred to put together their "own music" in true "film style". This "own music" consists of a chaotic mixture of *Siegfried*, *Valkyrie*, *Rheingold*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, Mendelssohn (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Liszt (*Les Préludes*) and... *Louise* von Charpentier! The battle with the dragon is accompanied by the storm from *Les Préludes*, the treasure of the Nibelungen arrives in Worms to the music of the quarrel scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the conspiracy scene between Brünnhilde, Gunther and Hagen is accompanied by Parisian street voices from *Louise*, and Brünnhilde dies to the sounds of Isolde's *Liebtest!*<sup>6</sup>

Circumstances of this kind, far from uncommon in the film press, oblige scholars to revisit the very idea of composing for films. In fact, the composition of original scores constituted only a fraction of historical practice around musical accompaniment for silent films. The musical accompaniment for moving images was an activity, a process in constant evolution, a sort of "music-making" that hardly ever constituted itself as a work (Finocchiaro 2023, 72).

Musical accompaniment is more like a contextual component of the cinematic spectacle, namely of the screening of the film in the cinematic venue, than part of the conception and composition of the cinematic text as such.

This is how German critic Poldi Schmidl synthesized the state of the art in 1921:

The number of musical guises a movie can take [...] is as numerous as the number of conductors who work with it. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the theatre to project the film, and there are as many theatres as there are conductors, so there are as many possible sensibilities.<sup>7</sup>

In the face of such accounts of the everyday reality of musical accompaniment, any attempt to describe the textual dimension of a cinematic work and its score as an aesthetically grounded *opus* proves misleading. On the contrary, the extreme range of musical accompaniments to moving images encourages scholars to rethink the semiotics of silent film, which can be regarded as a hybrid between a "closed" text, i.e., its visual sphere "frozen" in the film print, and an "open" text, where the accompanying music is "reproduced" with each live performance (Finocchiaro 2023, 72).

### Localizations

This hybrid semiotic status gave rise to certain idiosyncratic phenomena that characterized the everyday practice of musical accompaniment for silent films. None is more symptomatic than localization:<sup>8</sup> the practice of arranging multiple musical accompaniments to support the distribution of a film abroad, or even composing multiple scores for the same movie.

The Zurich screening of the first part of Lang's *Nibelungen* (1922) mentioned above is a clear example of localization. Localizing a silent film meant "opening up" one component of the cinematic show and replacing it with a new one, thus creating an entirely new cultural product.

One of the most renowned instances of localization was the American premiere of *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920) by Robert Wiene, projected on April 16, 1921, at the Capitol Theater in New York with a selection of works by Schönberg, Debussy, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Richard Strauss.<sup>9</sup> Other famous cases include *Cabiria* (1914) by Giovanni Pastrone, whose original score by Ildebrando Pizzetti and Manlio Mazza was replaced for the American distribution by a score by American composer Joseph Carl Breil. Huppertz's original score for *Die Nibelungen* was replaced for the film's premiere in Zurich by a compilation of excerpts from Wagner operas. This same practice of pairing Wagner and Lang was repeated for US screenings, although the musical compilation differed. As reported by *Moving*

*Picture World*, at the American premiere on April 13 at the Eastman Theater in Rochester, New York, the Philharmonic Orchestra played an incidental music synchronized by conductor Victor Wagner and based entirely on Richard Wagner's opera *Siegfried*.<sup>10</sup> From August 23, Lang's film ran for four weeks at the Century Theater in New York, again accompanied by Hugo Riesenfeld's compilation of Wagner excerpts.<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's film *Der letzte Mann*, which was exhibited with a musical accompaniment by Becce at its German premiere, was shown with a different score by Louis Aubert for the French version. For the American release, Riesenfeld again compiled his own musical accompaniment. Hanns Schwarz's *Die wunderbare Lüge der Nina Petrowna* (1929) premiered in Germany with music illustration by Willy Schmidt-Gentner, while the French version was accompanied by an original score by Maurice Jaubert. The list goes on.

The phenomenon of music localization sheds light on film music production and distribution as inherently intercultural processes. Multiple musical versions—conceived as transcultural adaptations—participated in processes of identity construction and cultural transfer, both in the form of “domestication” and of “foreignization” of the Other, to use a familiar pair of terms from translation studies.<sup>12</sup>

“Foreignization,” in the sense of an adaptation that emphasizes the foreignness of the cultural product being adapted, can be seen in the case of the aforementioned American premiere of Wiene's *Caligari*. First shown in February 1920 at the Marmorhaus in Berlin to music composed by an unknown illustrator, the film was screened in April 1921 at the Capitol Theater in New York alongside a new compilation of works by Schönberg, Stravinsky, Debussy, Prokofiev, and Richard Strauss, arranged by Samuel L. Rothafel and Ernö Rapée and performed by an eighty-piece orchestra. The screening, which was seen by more than 70,000 people in New York alone (Hubbert 2005, 64), represents a unique and unprecedented case of the use of works by “ultra-modernist” composers—namely Schönberg and Stravinsky—in cinema. Music, that is, which was not easily appreciated by contemporary American audiences in the concert hall.

Unfortunately, since the film score has not survived, we can only base our analysis on press reports, notably an interview with Rothafel in *Musical America* magazine (fig. 1), which is worth reproducing in full:

Music of the Ultra-Modernists Employed to Accompany Remarkable Motion Picture at the Capitol Theater—Distortion as Principle in Adapting Motives to Nightmare Mood of Screen Play—Latter an Original Treatment of *Psychopathic* Theme—Impressionism in Two Arts Synchronized—A Genuine Musical Departure Effected.

Properly, the American première of ‘Caligari’ employed music calculated to heighten its exotic character, to underline its fantastic aspects. At the Capitol Theater, where the film was introduced, the admirable symphony orchestra played a special score arranged from the writings of the modernists Debussy, Strauss, Stravinsky and others. Of the compiling and adapting of the music let S. L. Rothafel—in charge of the artistic destinies of the big theater—speak.

“In handling the musical problem presented by ‘The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari’ Mr. Rapee (the conductor) and I felt that the orthodox thing would not do. A film conceived along revolutionary lines called for a score faithfully synchronized in mood and development. We took psychology into reckoning—the psychology of the audience no less than of the play. In the phantasmagorical scheme of ‘Dr. Caligari’ people move and live in a world out of joint. The cracked country is dotted with grotesque houses, skinny twisted trees, enormously steep and rutted pathways. ...

The key principle of this sprawling architecture and wild terrain is distortion. With that steadily in mind we built up the score. We went to Schönberg, Debussy, Stravinsky, Prokofieff, Richard Strauss for thematic material. We assembled our themes, assigned characteristic ideas to the principals of the play, and then proceeded to *distort* the music. The music had, as it were, to be made eligible for citizenship in a nightmare country.

“The score is built up on the leitmotif system; quite in the Wagnerian manner. For *Caligari*'s motif we went to Strauss's ‘Till Eulenspiegel.’ His idea recurs, or is suggested, whenever *Caligari* or his influence is at work on the screen. To identify *Cesare, the Somnambulist*, Mr. Rapee and I borrowed a bit from Debussy's ‘Afternoon of a Faun.’ These main ideas appear singly or together, whole or in part, as the psychology of the tale demands. The scoring is not that of the original, but has been done here and is contrived to emphasize the *macabre*. Muted brass was resorted to for most of the sinister sounds.

“I think I may confidently, and justly, say that the whole represents the most daring musical achievement in the history of the American motion-picture theater. We tried very hard with this picture, because we think so much of it. ‘Caligari’ is, to my mind, an imaginative masterpiece and a triumph as directing. Musically no less than pictorially it opens up a virgin country.”

As briefly back as five years Stravinsky or Schönberg in the movie-house belonged to the inconceivable. To-day it calmly happens, and the audience calmly swallows the pill. It would have been far simpler, in preparing accompaniment for this film, to dish up the old safe and sickening potpourri. The more admirable, then, is the departure made by Messrs. Rothafel and Rapee. The thing took more than courage; it meant double labor and it meant considerable expense. Four rehearsals were called. But the tune was worth the toll. The acrid air of Stravinsky has been borne into the film theater. It may clear the sweet murk before the last reel is run.

B. R.<sup>13</sup>

# COMES STRAVINSKY TO THE FILM THEATER

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At that point the young man left off his eerie recitation. . . . Together with his solitary auditor he entered the marmoreal house that rose from the wet and twining shrubbery. . . .

With the opening of that mad-house door the creators of the "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" let in the light of imagination upon the movies. With a gesture, bold and admirable, they raised the blazing flag of futurism where the prosaic has from the first held title. At last the camera promises to inherit its rich and rightful portion.

"The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" is to the regulation film play as a canvas by Cézanne to a Meissonier. One shows you a viewpoint and personal vision, the other holds up the microscope of the many. One is art, the other artifice.

The makers of "Caligari" have taken as a springboard the premise that the principles of modernism applied in the plastic arts are perfectly applicable in motion pictures. In the strange domain where *Dr. Caligari* plies his grisly trade, the windows and doors and roof-tops are joined at crazy and disturbing angles. The "lighting" proceeds from strange planets; the shadows are extra-somber and intense. Of the terrestrial as we understand it there is virtually nothing. Extraordinary as all this is, it is seen to have its logic, its inevitability, as the film spins on. For all that one sees on the sheet is the puppets which dance in a diseased brain. The play, in short, is a psychopathic study.



"Cesare" (the Somnambulist) Bears Off the Heroine in the Night—A Striking Scene from "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari"

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A Piece of the Prison—A Remarkably Somber Effect Achieved with Pyramidal Planes

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"Cesare"—Released by His Master, "Caligari"—Seeks Out His Victim

## Expect Admissions Tax to Be Either Reduced or Abolished

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 13.—While it is understood that the excise tax on musical instruments is to be eliminated from the revenue law, there remains considerable uncertainty as to the disposition of the admissions tax. The writer has been unable to secure a direct expression on the subject of the retention of the admissions tax in the law, but it appears to be the general view that the tax on tickets will be either reduced—or—repealed. Several

members of the House Ways and Means Committee with whom I have talked point out the fact that the admissions tax brings in a comparatively large revenue, and that for this reason there may develop some opposition to its being dropped from the law. It is expected that representatives of concert, opera and amusement interests will present a strong protest to the House Ways and Means Committee at the hearings on the revision bill against the threatened increase in the tax, and favoring abolishing the tax entirely if this be found possible. A. T. M.

## Urges Harding to Have Congress Sessions Opened With Music

WASHINGTON, April 13.—President Harding has been appealed to to recommend to Congress that the sessions of Senate and House be opened with music as a fitting and inspiring start for the day's activities. He is also asked to suggest that this be done in the case of the various State legislatures. Secretary Phillips, of the Columbia Grafonola Dealers' Association of Washington, has written the President pointing out the advantages of incor-

porating music in the daily round of activities. Nothing, he thinks, could be so conducive to the doing of a good day's work, whether it be in commerce, the professions or in making laws for the people.

President Harding has responded to Mr. Phillips's communication, commending his views and expressing the hope that music is to have a larger place in our national life. A. T. M.

The Brooklyn Academy of Music is claiming \$43,000 from the city for taking its courtyard rights.

Figure 1. B. R., "Comes Stravinsky to the Film Theater", in: *American Music*, April 16, 1921.

In the central part of the article, the author speaks in the first person. Rothafel states that he drew thematic material from Schönberg, Debussy, Stravinsky, Richard Strauss, and Prokofiev, using “a leitmotif system in the Wagnerian manner”: Caligari’s theme is taken from *Till Eulenspiegel*, Cesare’s from *Prelude à l’après-midi*, etc. The musical choices of modernist authors are intimately linked to the “psychopathic theme” of the film, as “impressionism in two arts,” i.e., the musical and visual, “synchronized.” In addition, Rothafel stresses that the instrumentation was rearranged and slightly distorted to give more emphasis to brass and other instruments that better suited the film’s modern look and disturbing subject matter. The aim is clear. Rothafel points out that his score was “designed to emphasise the macabre” and “enhance the exotic character of the film.” The unprecedented use of ultra-modernist music in cinema was intended to correspond acoustically to the film’s disturbing imaginary: a kind of sonic companion to the sinister narrative with open allusions to psychic pathology.

### Odyssey Between Moscow and Berlin

If the music localization of *Caligari* in New York was intended to emphasize the “exotic character” of the film through an unprecedented use of musical Modernism, we find instead an opposite dialectic of assimilation and counter-assimilation in the case of Sergei Eisenstein’s *Bronenosets Potemkin* (*Battleship Potemkin*), whose story unfolds along the unusual Moscow-Berlin axis and extends across the eras of silent and sound film. Premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in 1925 and repeated in a different version in Berlin a year later, the film was met with huge public success in both cities. Different prints, both approved by the director and each coupled with different music, circulated in the two capitals. Over the following pages, I outline the “Odyssey of the Battleship”<sup>14</sup> in five stages, in order to reconstruct the “musical history” of Eisenstein’s film. On this basis, I argue for the multidimensionality of cinema as the antithesis of a historical practices of film (music) restoration.

1) Eisenstein received the commission for the film in March 1925 as part of the celebrations for the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution of 1905 (“The Year 1905” is, not coincidentally, the film’s subtitle). This began in St. Petersburg on January 22 (January 9 according to the Julian Calendar) with the infamous “Bloody Sunday,” when a popular demonstration outside the Winter Palace was suppressed by machine-gun fire and a Cossack cavalry charge. The uprisings of 1905 culminated in a full-scale civil war in Odessa and the mutiny on the morning of June 27 by the sailors of the battleship named after Prince Potemkin of Tauria, anchored in Tendra Bay on the Black Sea.

Reconstructed with the fidelity of a film diary, the director gave the chronicle of events an organic structure that followed the strict rules of a classical tragedy in five acts. In his essay *On the Structure of Things* (1939), he stated:

*Potemkin* looks like a chronicle of events, but acts as a drama.

The secret of this effect is that in it the chronicle stages of events have been timed to the strict composition of tragedy. In addition, it is the composition of tragedy in its most canonical form—the five-act tragedy.

The events, taken almost as bare facts, are divided into the five acts of tragedy, in which the facts have been chosen and selected in a sequence where they answer those demands that classical tragedy imposed on the third act as opposed to the second, on the fifth act as opposed to the first, etc. etc. [...]

Let us briefly mention these five acts.

Part I—“Men and Maggots”: Exposition of the action. The situation on the battleship. Maggoty meat. Discontent among the sailors.

Part II—“Drama on the Quarterdeck”: “Hands on deck!” Refusal to eat the maggoty soup. Scene with the tarpaulin. “Brothers!” Refusal to shoot. Mutiny. Revenge on the officers.

Part III—“The Dead Man Appeals”: Mists. Vakulinchuk’s corpse in the Odessa port. Lament over the body. Meeting of insurrection. Raising the red flag.

Part IV—“The Odessa Steps”: Fraternization of the shore with the battleship. The yawls with provisions. The shooting on the Odessa steps. The battleship firing on the “Germans’ H.Q.”

Part V—“Meeting the squadron”: Night of expectation. Meeting the squadron. Engines. “Brothers!” Refusal of squadron to shoot. Battleship passes victoriously through the squadron (Eisenstein 1987, 12–13).

According to the intentions of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Communist Party, the film had to present the events of 1905 as the most important antecedent to the October Revolution. In this spirit, the film was introduced by a significant motto from Trotsky:

The spirit of revolution hovered over the Russian land. A powerful, mysterious process was taking place in countless hearts. The individuality that had just discovered itself was merging with the masses, and the masses with the great dynamic.<sup>15</sup>

For the first time in the history of Soviet cinema, a film was accompanied not by piano but by an orchestra. According to a late statement made by the director in the 1940s, the original project included the composition of original music by Prokofiev.<sup>16</sup> At the official Moscow premiere of *Potemkin*, on December 24, 1925, the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra instead performed a high-class compilation by Nikolai Golovanov, Leonid Sabaneev, and conductor Yuri Freier in front of the members of the 14th Congress of the Communist Party. The compilation included excerpts from Beethoven’s *Egmont* Overture, Tchaikovsky’s *Francesca da Rimini*, and Henry Charles Litolf’s *Robespierre*.

2) The Goskino production company released a single negative of the film (1,617 meters) without intertitles (Patalas 2005, 33). In early 1926, the negative was sold to the German distributor Prometheus, which was responsible for distribution in Europe and the United States. After Prometheus entrusted the reel to director Phil Jutzi and asked him to make an adaptation, the five acts of the original expanded to six, and new intertitles and pseudo-documentary inserts were added that almost completely eliminated the film's symbolic value as a precursor to the October Revolution (Patalas 2005, 34).

Prometheus also commissioned an original score from Viennese composer Edmund Meisel, who had made a name for himself in Berlin with innovative stage music for Erwin Piscator's political theater.<sup>17</sup> In March 1926, Eisenstein traveled to Berlin to supervise the adaptation of the film for the censors and, above all, to meet Meisel. As Eisenstein recalled years later, he worked with Meisel "as *one should work* with the sound track, always and everywhere, with the creative cooperation and friendly cocreation of the composer and the director" (Eisenstein 1987, 32). During the weeks he spent in Berlin, the director discussed his ideas step by step with the composer, expressing the need for unconventional music, without melodic outbursts or symphonic emphases. Above all, Eisenstein asked Meisel for music that would emphasize the rhythm of the montage, prompting the concise musical character of the score. Contrary to the conventions of late-Romantic accompaniment, Meisel's music features typical avant-garde elements such as timbral-dynamic paroxysms, rhythmic-melodic ostinatos, heterophony, and a free use of dissonance.

In contrast to the psychological reading of musical modernism in *Caligari's* American premiere, where it was employed to represent the uncanny, Meisel's work on *Potemkin* aimed to actualize the language of film music and place the film in an international musical *langue*. Innovative orchestration, distortion of military anthems, jazzy rhythms,

and caricature-like accentuations are the most obvious features of a musical style that, in line with the composer's intentions, breaks away from the *topoi* of "bourgeois" music and becomes the voice of the masses. *Potemkin's* music uses modernist compositional techniques to express the "rhythm of modernity" (Meisel 1984) in a unique, even paradoxical combination of the socialist ideal of anti-individualist, anti-bourgeois art and a futurist spirit enlivened by the noise of machines, engines, and "concrete" music.

After an initial ban by the censors, who considered the subject matter a threat to public safety, the film was cleared on April 10, but no fewer than fourteen cuts were imposed on the scenes of the mutiny against the officers and the more gruesome moments of the shooting on the Odessa steps: a total of thirty meters of excised film (Patalas 2005, 34). Jutzi's version—much altered, but still approved by Eisenstein—was shown for the first time in the West at the Apollo-Theater in Berlin on April 29, 1926, with Meisel's original score.<sup>18</sup>

3) In 1930, Prometheus also produced a sound version of the film, with dialogue, sound effects, and music synchronized to a gramophone, the soundtrack adapted by Meisel himself for the occasion. The film was cut to 1,349 meters, and the intertitles from the silent version were removed (Patalas 2005, 35, 40). It is in this version that the famous reversal at the beginning of the shooting on the Odessa steps took place. In the Moscow original, the words "I vdrug" ("And suddenly") are followed by four fragmentary close-ups of a panicked woman, her hair swaying (figs. 2–3). The cause of her terror is only understood a few seconds later with the arrival of the Cossack squadron. The new German version sought to restore this linear cause-and-effect relationship by placing two shots before the shot of the woman's face—the detail of the marching squadron (fig. 4) and the gunfire (fig. 5)—in order to provide a motivation to the viewer for the woman's reaction (Patalas 2005, 35).<sup>19</sup>



Figures 2–3. Sergei Eisenstein, *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin—Das Jahr 1905*, reproduced courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek—Transit Classics, 2007.



Figures 4–5. Sergei Eisenstein, *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin—Das Jahr 1905*, reproduced courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek—Transit Classics, 2007.

4) Heavily edited and shortened by nearly 250 meters from the original, the *Potemkin* negative found its way back to Moscow in the late 1930s and early 1940s. It is not known whether this was a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact,<sup>20</sup> but it is more likely that the German negative reached Moscow after the war (Patalas 2005, 36). In the USSR, the Jutzi version underwent what could be considered an “ideological restoration” aimed at re-Sovietizing the film. The task was entrusted to Grigori Aleksandrov, a long-time assistant and close collaborator of Eisenstein who had died the previous year. The Aleksandrov version partially retains the German cuts: not only the censorship cuts but also certain shifts, including the aforementioned reversal at the beginning of the shooting scene on the Odessa steps. The intertitles were completely rewritten. And, in a historically significant move, Trotsky’s epigraph was replaced by a quote from Lenin:<sup>21</sup>

Russia is experiencing a great historical moment. The revolution has flared up and is spreading wider, engulfing new localities and new strata of the population. The proletariat stands at the head of the fighting forces of the revolution (Patalas 2005, 36).

In order to restore the political significance of the film as an authentically Russian-Soviet work, it was necessary to rewrite the film’s music. The task of creating a new musical commentary was assigned to composer Nikolai Kryukov, who distanced himself from suspected modernist techniques of Western origin and instead produced a score filled with popular and revolutionary songs. Contrary to Meisel’s internationalizing reading of the score, Kryukov proposed a localist approach, drawing inspiration from the Russian tradition of folk song.

5) The penultimate stage in the Battleship’s Odyssey was the fiftieth-anniversary version, made in 1976. The responsibility for reworking the film to achieve the greatest possible fidelity to Eisenstein’s original vision was entrusted to the director Sergei Yutkevich, who received expert guidance from Naum Klejman, a leading authority on Eisenstein’s work. The sequence of shots was once more modified, this time in accordance with a contemporary assessment of the film by the film historian Ippolit Sokolov. New intertitles were created, with the text and graphics differing from both the 1949 version and the Moscow original (Patalas 2005, 36–37). The film was introduced by a new quotation from Lenin, which differed from the previous one:

Revolution is war. It is the only legitimate, reasonable, just, truly great war of all the wars that history has known. This war has been declared and begun in Russia (Patalas 2005, 37).

The Yutkevich version has long been regarded as the most complete and philologically accurate version, yet it also underwent several changes. The soundtrack was completely reworked, with a free collage of Shostakovich’s symphonies performed by the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. However, the composer played no role in the project, as he had died the previous year. Furthermore, the image format was reduced and the projection speed was decreased to make room for the elaborate musical commentary (the sequence on the Odessa steps alone is forty seconds longer). Overall, the process was the opposite of the usual practice for compilation soundtracks: instead of shortening the music, the film was lengthened to fit the soundtrack, so that the result can be considered an adaptation to the sound-film format.<sup>22</sup>

If Eisenstein’s masterpiece was to be shown to the sounds of “authentic” Soviet music, Shostakovich’s *Eleventh*



Figures. 6–7. Sergei Eisenstein, *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin—Das Jahr 1905*, reproduced courtesy of Deutsche Kinemathek—Transit Classics, 2007.

*Symphony* was the obvious choice. The piece suited the task for a number of reasons: of all Shostakovich's symphonies, the Eleventh comes the closest to program music. Every movement is given a descriptive title (1. The Palace Square, 2. The 9th of January, 3. Memory Eternal, 4. Tocsin) and the symphony contains quotations of Russian folk songs. References in the work align with Eisenstein's film narrative: like *Potemkin*, the symphony is entitled *The Year 1905*. The composer conceived the work as an evocation of the event that first foreshadowed the Bolshevik Revolution in that historic year: "Bloody Sunday," the January 22 (or 9) demonstration in front of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg that was violently put down—an event marked, like the steps of Odessa, by the intervention of a Cossack squadron. There could not have been a better match between the audiovisual subject of the film and the programmatic content of the musical work.

*Potemkin's* odyssey does not end there. In 2005, one of the most celebrated cases of film restoration in recent years began—once again in Berlin—with the reconstruction of *Potemkin* (*rekonstruierte Fassung*) released by the Deutsche Kinemathek.<sup>23</sup> In their restoration, film scholars Enno Patalas and Anna Bohn attempted to approximate the Moscow version as closely as possible, regarded as the "original" *par excellence*.<sup>24</sup> To this end, the restorers even reintroduced montage errors that had occurred in the Moscow print and that Eisenstein subsequently corrected for the Berlin version. The close-up of the priest's hands holding a cross is a well-known example: in the Moscow print, the cross appears first in his right hand and then, by mistake, in his left (figs. 6–7). Although Eisenstein corrected this error when he re-edited the film for the Berlin screening, the restorers reintroduced it as part of their reconstruction. They seem to have conceived the reconstruction as a restoration of the version shown at the premiere, with all the inaccuracies that attended that historical event.

These historical scruples, meanwhile, had no effect on the musical component. The editors chose Meisel's score, which, although composed in close proximity to the director and with his approval, was conceived for the Jutzi version and not the Moscow original. The modern restoration was therefore compelled to commission the German composer Helmut Imig to rework the score. Imig extended the duration of the composition and reorchestrated the score on the basis of the few surviving instrumental parts (Patalas 2005, 40).

When applied both to the visuals and the music, such stark differences in underlying philosophies around restoration make the process of "reconstruction" extremely fragile. In the end, the "reconstructed version" of *Potemkin* is a hybrid: the cold fusion of two elements that date back to different historical events and exhibition locations. The visual sphere reconstructs the montage of the Moscow version as it was shown in December 1925; the music, by contrast, derives from the Berlin version projected in April 1926. As mentioned above, Jutzi's adaptation included cuts, documentary inserts, new intertitles, a different montage, and an articulation in six acts instead of the original five. It follows that, in Imig's hands, Meisel's music had to be cut and spliced, reassembled and expanded, and even integrated with external material. Indeed, as if this were not enough, the "Theme of the Battleship" (Mus. Ex. 1), which opens the "reconstructed version," comes from neither of the two versions mentioned above but from the music for the subsequent film *October* (1928), and was not incorporated into the score for *Potemkin* until 1930, when Meisel readapted his music for the recorded version.

Rather than a "reconstruction" or a "restoration," then, one might speak of a "new construction": something "never shown in this form and never seen by a historical audience" (Wostry 2007, 140).<sup>25</sup>

**Alla marcia**  
Tr.

Trb.

**Mus. Ex. 1.** Edmund Meisel, *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin*, Music for Eisenstein's silent film from 1925. Instrumentation and adaptation for the Russian premiere version by Helmut Imig, Berlin, Ries & Erler, 2007, bars 7–14.

## Conclusion

These peculiarities surrounding the “reconstructed version” of *Potemkin*, due to inconsistencies in restoration philosophies, are part of a more general concern about the plausibility of film music restoration at large. The reconstruction of the historical events of the Battleship's odyssey and its music illustrates the ontological problem of all films passed down from the silent era without a fixed musical component, but with a multitude of historical musical versions.

The point is that silent film music comprised a variety of compositional, performance, and reception practices that call for a new historiographical approach. It matters to the history of cinema as an art form—and of music as an integral part of it—to know that while *Potemkin* was being shown at the Apollo-Theater with the original score written by Meisel and approved by director Eisenstein, the salon orchestra director Hansheinrich Dransmann was composing his own music for the almost simultaneous screening at the Piccadilly (Erdmann 1926, 17). Such differences in musical practices, music selection processes, and audience habits, which are all the more striking when one compares the musical accompaniments played in parallel in the highest and lowest cinemas, or in large cities and provincial towns,<sup>26</sup> are not mere accidents of history that film music scholars can afford to ignore. This diversity of performance and reception practices deserves instead to be given prominence from the perspective of microhistory: a story on a smaller scale that, rather than composing a cinematic canon of aesthetically exceptional works, seeks to isolate and magnify the smallest elements of the general macroscopic picture (Finocchiaro 2024, 81).

Instead of getting caught up in a rhetoric of restoration, which is usually driven by commercial demands, film music historians should become aware of multiple dimensions

of space and time. The study of phenomena such as music localization shows that audiences in different countries, from Western Europe to Russia, from the United States to Asia, were not only affected differently by art and media events, but also experienced different temporalities, to the point that, with Siegfried Kracauer (1969, 148), we are compelled to speak of a paradoxical “nonsimultaneousness” (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*) of history.

Moreover, from a philological point of view, the phenomenon of music localization compels us to consider the film as a dynamic object in the process of becoming: a syncretic, multimedia text whose internal components vary in time and space. The history of a film like *Potemkin* actually reveals the “open” nature of the cinematic text as a whole. While it is certainly possible to speak of a “closed text” in relation to a mechanically reproduced film print that remains essentially unchanged from one projection to another, this does not exclude the possibility of multiple film versions, with altered montage, rewritten intertitles, or even added (or cut) scenes. Recognizing this “open” nature of the cinematic text cannot but have consequences on a philological level when commencing a restoration. After all, what does it mean to “restore” a film like *Potemkin*, which has had at least five different versions and as many scores? How misleading is it to speak of a “reconstructed version”?

Concepts of restoration and reconstruction should be reconsidered in the face of a textual tradition that branches into multiple versions. As a tradition “in motion by its very nature” (Caraci Vela 2005, 193), the phenomenon of music localizations lends itself to innovative methods of analyzing the paths and modes of radiation and transmission of artifacts over time and across national boundaries. What is needed for this kind of analysis is a philology that focuses not so much on the restitution of a text in the form closest to authorial intention or the premiere, but “on the dynamics of the text over time” (Caraci Vela 2005, 193–194): i.e.,

on the changes that take place in the textual tradition and crystallize different but recognizable variants of it. Faced with a dynamic object in the process of becoming, any idea of reconstruction as the crystallization of a “chosen version,” in the name of a supposed aesthetic primacy, can only be inadequate—all the more so when the version chosen does not correspond to any that have existed historically.

I have argued that the practice of reconstructing a cinematic text that has existed as multiple versions in time and space cannot be guided by aesthetic principles, but by historical ones. The attempt to reduce the multiple versions of a film (and its music) to an aesthetically idealized *opus*, crystallizing something that was subject to historical contingency beyond temporal and geographical boundaries, is inadequate because it is ahistorical: by merging disparate historical objects, making variants unrecognizable, masking the *facies* of the text, it contradicts the first ethical principle governing restoration work, namely the “truth paradigm” (Muñoz Viñas 2017). Rather, it would be not only acceptable but even mandatory to reconstruct, on the basis of documentary evidence, a historically ascertainable version as a document of a particular space and time in the actual existence of a given text.

A philological approach to the cinematic text as a dynamic text also makes it possible to explain the phenomenon of music localization in the context of other adaptation phenomena that are not limited to the musical component or to the silent era. In fact, music localizations of the silent era can be seen as counterparts to the multilingual versions of the early sound age and could be studied with comparative methods similar to those developed in that field.<sup>27</sup> We should remember that the method of multiple versions, which began in the early 1930s and lasted until the 1960s, consisted of producing several language versions in order to overcome the limitations that national languages imposed on the distribution of talkies after the introduction of recorded sound. Production companies, both in America and Europe, found it convenient to prepare several different language versions of the same film rather than dubbing it—often shooting the same scenes in the studio with different troupes of actors. A notable example is Wilhelm Thiele’s *Die Privatsekretärin* (1931), which was shot in German and then produced in three language versions (French, Italian, and English), each ranging from a slight modification of the first version to a complete remake of it. Not infrequently, such adaptations involved rewriting the music, realizing new songs, sometimes in the same style and by the same authors, but in different languages. As Paola Maganzani (2015) has shown, the film *Una notte con te* (1932), an Italian-German production directed by Emmerich Wojtek Emo, features the song “Starò con te,” a slow-fox sung by Elsa Merlini, with lyrics by Oreste Biancoli and music by Fred Raymond. The English version of the same film, titled

*There Goes the Bride* (A. De Courville, 1932), includes the song “I’ll Stay with You,” composed by Raymond himself and sung by the female protagonist, Jessie Matthews. The German version, *Ich bleib’ bei Dir* (J. Meyer, 1931), features the song of the same name with lyrics by Charles Amberg and music by Raymond.

The analysis of multiversion films reveals the fallacy of the (often presupposed) notions of original and copy, and with it the hierarchy attributed to the versions themselves (Maganzani 2015, 55). Multilingual versions, like music localizations understood as multimusical versions, manifest a plurality of meanings and relations attached to a cultural artifact, grasped through a prismatic viewing from multiple perspectives and turned *de facto* into a *transcultural* product, resulting from the migration of a plurimedial work outside its production context and its partial adaptation to the tastes, sensibilities, and cultural policies of the receiving context.

As mentioned above, the analysis of music localizations, as well as multilingual versions, sheds light on film(music) production and distribution as inherently intercultural processes, inevitably affected by changes linked to historical events, the evolution of cultural relations, and the outbreak of conflicts between nations. Throughout the twentieth century, transnational cultural adaptations participated in processes of identity construction and cultural transfer—at times in the form of domestication, foreignization, internationalization, or localist assimilation of the Other—against the backdrop of rising nationalisms in a dramatic period of world history.

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- <sup>1</sup> A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the opening session of the conference *Music History Beyond State Borders: Micro-, Meso-, and Macro-Regionality of Musical Culture*, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, 29–31 October 2024. Some of the ideas expressed here were previously developed in German; see Finocchiaro 2012 and 2025.
- <sup>2</sup> In German-language film journalism, this problem of film-music accompaniment was already addressed in the silent era by Poldi Schmidl (1919, 1920).
- <sup>3</sup> “Der neue, mit großer Spannung erwartete Murnau-Film der Ufa *Tartüffe*, dessen Wiener Premiere bereits stattgefunden hat, wird demnächst gelegentlich der Eröffnung des Gloria-Hauses seine Berliner Uraufführung erleben. Das gegenwärtige Programmbuch der Ufa bringt einige Bildchen aus *Tartüffe* nebst den Namen des Dichters, des Regisseurs, des Photographen, der Architekten und der Schauspieler. Den Komponisten hat man weggelassen. Das ist auch ganz in der Ordnung, und es ist nur zu verstehen, wenn man auf die fatale Musikgeschichte möglichst wenig zu sprechen kommt [...]. Der *Tartüffe*-Film ist in Wien ohne die ‘komponierte’ Musik aufgeführt worden, ist das vielleicht nicht gegangen?

- Gut ist's gegangen, besser vielleicht als mit der Becce-Musik!" (Erdmann 1926, 36).
- <sup>4</sup> According to a letter from the director Arnold Fanck. For more on this letter, which is now in the possession of the Hindemith Institute in Frankfurt am Main, see Hust 2003, 150.
- <sup>5</sup> For a closer analysis of Hindemith's music for Fanck's film, see Finocchiaro 2017, 45–66.
- <sup>6</sup> "In Zürich wurde uns nun eine jähle Enttäuschung: man hat auf diese neue Musik verzichtet. Warum? Weil, wie der Herr Direktor [vom Orient-Cinéma] erklärte, man hier vorgezogen hat, eine 'eigene Musik' in echter 'Filmweise' zusammenzustellen. Diese 'eigene Musik' besteht aus einem chaotischen Durcheinander von Siegfried, Walküre, Rheingold, Tristan und Isolde, Parsifal, Mendelssohn (Sommernachtstraum), Liszt (Les Préludes) und... Louise von Charpentier! Der Kampf mit dem Drachen vollzieht sich zur Begleitung des 'Sturmes' aus den Préludes, der Nibelungenhort zieht in Worms ein zu den Klängen der Prügelzene-Musik aus dem Sommernachtstraum, die Verschwörungsszene zwischen Brünhilde, Gunther und Hagen wird durch Pariser Straßenerufe aus Louise begleitet, und Brünhilde stirbt zu den Klängen von Isoldes Liebestod!" (J. T. W. 1924, 30).
- <sup>7</sup> "Jeder einzelne Film bekommt so viel Vertoner [ . . . ] als Kinokapellmeister sich mit ihm befassen müssen. Das sind nämlich die Theater, welche den Film spielen. Und soviel Theater, soviel verschiedene Auffassungen, weil soviel verschieden geartete Kinokapellmeister" (Schmidl 1921).
- <sup>8</sup> This concept was introduced by Sergio Miceli (2009, 114).
- <sup>9</sup> For information on this and the following films, see Miceli (2009, 114–33).
- <sup>10</sup> See the anonymous article, "Premiere of *Siegfried*," *Moving Picture World*, April 4, 1925, 481.
- <sup>11</sup> "The film, shown at the Century Theatre in New York with a large symphony orchestra in full harmony with the music supplied by Dr. Hugo Riesenfeld, was received with generous enthusiasm by an audience of opera-goers and music-lovers to whom it has undeniable appeal" (Pardy 1925, 1275).
- <sup>12</sup> I use the terms "domestication" and "foreignization" with reference to the semiotic theory of translation by Anton Popovič, in particular his *Teória umeleckého prekladu* (1975), commonly regarded as one of the foundational texts of modern translation theory. Cf. Anton Popovič, *Teória umeleckého prekladu* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1975); and idem, *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976).
- <sup>13</sup> Signed with the letters "B. R.," the article "Comes Stravinsky to the Movie Theater" appeared in *American Music*, April 16, 1921, 5. On this topic see Hubbert 2005, especially pp. 66–70.
- <sup>14</sup> The metaphor is taken from Enno Patalas 2005.
- <sup>15</sup> "Der Geist der Revolution schwebte über dem russischen Lande. Irgend ein gewaltiger, geheimnisvoller Prozess vollzog sich in zahllosen Herzen. Die Individualität, die eben erst sich selbst erkannt hatte, ging in der Masse und die Masse in dem großen Elan auf" (freely adapted from Trotsky 1909: *I. Die rote Flotte*).
- <sup>16</sup> "Among some old documents from the time of the making of *Potëmkin*, I found, yellowed by the years, the minutes of the 1925 Memorial Commission of the Central Committee of the USSR [...] which mention the decision to entrust the music of the film to... Prokofiev. A comrade who was going abroad was instructed to contact him and propose this work. The extreme urgency of the engagement did not allow Sergei Serge'vič to arrive in time, but nevertheless I date the beginning of our cooperation to that memorable year of 1925" (Eisenstein 1976, 20).
- <sup>17</sup> For more information on Edmund Meisel, see Finocchiaro 2017, p. 72–83, Morris 2008, Sudendorf, 1984.
- <sup>18</sup> The Jutzi version was distributed in the rest of Europe and the USA. Of the copies distributed in the West, the most important source is held by the London Film Society, which is certainly derived from the German one, since it retains the censorship cuts. It is also the only source in which Trotsky's original motto appears (Patalas 2005, 32).
- <sup>19</sup> The vinyl recording of the film's soundtrack was rediscovered in Vienna's Technisches Museum in 2003 and restored under the direction of Enno Patalas at the Film Institute of the Berlin University of the Arts. For an account of the discovery and restoration process, see Tode 2003.
- <sup>20</sup> The event was celebrated by the intelligentsia in both countries with a series of "cultural events," including the 1940 Moscow production of *Die Walküre*, directed by Eisenstein. Cf. Bartlett 1992 and Motazedian 2021.
- <sup>21</sup> As a result of his opposition to Stalin's regime, Trotsky was exiled in 1929. He took refuge for a time in Mexico, where he died in 1940 at the hands of a Stalinist agent. The persecution of Trotskyism also forced Eisenstein to remove from the subsequent film *October* (1927) the scenes depicting Trotsky and Zinov'ev, leaders of the so-called "leftist opposition" (Bohn 2005, 24).
- <sup>22</sup> Enno Patalas (2005, 37).
- <sup>23</sup> *Panzerkreuzer Potemkin—Das Jahr 1905*, restored by Enno Patalas with the collaboration of Anna Bohn, Deutsche Kinemathek—Museum für Film und Fernsehen, Berlin, distrib. Transit Classics, 2007.
- <sup>24</sup> The video restoration was based on first-generation prints kept at the British Film Institute. According to Patalas, the Gosfilmofond camera negative should have served as the basis for the reconstruction of the film, but it was not made available to the Deutsche Kinemathek. For a detailed account on the video restoration, refer again to Patalas (2005, 38–41).
- <sup>25</sup> According to film archivist Nikolaus Wostry, this irreconcilable contradiction characterizes most of the current attempts to reconstruct silent films: "In stark contrast to the preservation of source material is the presentation of silent films today, which—whether organized by archives, film festivals or other organizers—is mainly limited to complete films, or those that appear to be complete. It is so easy to create a distorted image of the actual source condition. As a result, film preservation faces the serious problem of having to meet the audience's expectations of completeness. The magic word 'reconstruction' offers itself as an apparent solution. Reconstructions are more likely to attract public attention than simple copies of well-preserved film titles. However, due to the condition of the sources, reconstructions can often only be seen as new constructions, as post-creations, never shown in this form and never seen by a historical audience" (Wostry 2007, 139–140).
- <sup>26</sup> Instructive here is Erdmann's article "Breslauer Reiseerinnerungen," published in the *Reichsfilmblatt* in 1927, in which he describes visits to the cinemas of Breslau in Silesia (Erdmann 1927).

<sup>27</sup> For historiographical and theoretical insights, see the work of the two editions of MAGIS—Gradisca International Film Studies Spring School (2004 and 2005), published in the monographic issues of the journal *Cinéma & Cie*: 4 (Multiple and Multiple-language Versions / Versions Multiple, Spring 2004, edited by Nataša Durovicová), 6 (Multiple and Multiple-language Versions II/Versions Multiple II, Spring 2005, edited by Hans-Michael Bock and Simone Venturini) and 7 (Multiple and Multiple-language Versions III/Versions Multiple III, Fall 2005, edited by Francesco Pitassio and Leonardo Quaresima).

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## Santrauka

Nebyliojo kino eroje kino muzikos statusas buvo labai neaiškus. Toli gražu nesudarydama savarankiško teksto, filmų demonstravimą lydinti gyvai atliekama muzika „skyrėsi priklausomai nuo datos, vietos, filmų žanro, rodymo vietos ir daugelio kitų kintamųjų“ (Altman 2004: 12). Esant tokioms sąlygoms, „nuosekliai sukomponuota“ partitūra ilgą laiką liko tik mirażas, kurį paversti realybe per organizacinės mašinos nustatytą laiką buvo pernelyg brangu ir beveik neįmanoma.

Tokia padėtis verčia mokslininkus abejoti specialiai kino filmams kurtos muzikos koncepcija. Iš tiesų originalių partitūrų kūrimas buvo tik vienas iš istorinės nebyliojo kino muzikinio akomponavimo praktikos elementų. Muzikinis akomponavimas buvo kontekstualus kinematografinio spektaklio, t. y. salėje rodomo filmo, o ne kinematografinio teksto kaip tokio, komponentas.

Didžiulė muzikinio judančių paveikslėlių akomponavimo įvairovė skatina mokslininkus permąstyti semiotinę nebyliojo kino kaip hibrido apibrėžtį („uždaro“ teksto, kurio vizualinė sfera „iššaldyta“ kino juostoje, ir „atviro“ teksto, kurio muzikinis akompanimentas „atkuriamas“ kiekvieno gyvo atlikimo metu, hibridas).

Ši savita takoskyra sukėlė tam tikrų ypatumų kasdienėje muzikinio akomponavimo nebyliojo kino filmams

praktikoje. Simptomiškiausias iš jų – lokalizavimas: praktika, kai siekiant paskatinti filmo sklaidą užsienyje parašomi keli muzikiniai akompanimentai, kartais tam pačiam filmui sukuriant kelis garso takelius. Muzikos lokalizavimo reiškinys atskleidžia, kad kino muzikos gamyba ir platinimas yra iš esmės tarpkultūriniai procesai. Keli muzikiniai variantai, sukurti kaip transkultūrinės adaptacijos, dalyvavo tapatybės kūrimo ir kultūrinės sklaidos procesuose – kartais kaip prisijaukinimas, užsienio kultūros įsisavinimas, internacionalizacija ar lokali „kito“ asimiliacija.

Tokie muzikinės praktikos, atrankos procesų ir žiūrovų įpročių skirtumai nėra tik sutapimas, kurį kino muzikos tyrinėtojai turėtų ignoruoti. Šis atlikimo ir priėmimo praktikos spektras nusipelnė ypatingo žvilgsnio vertinant mikroistorijos žvilgsniu: istorija arba, tiksliau sakant, istorijų serija gali atskleisti mažiausias didesnio paveikslėlio detales, o ne sudaryti estetiškai išskirtinių kūrinių kinematografinį kanoną.

Kino muzikos istorikai turėtų atkreipti dėmesį į daugialypį erdvės ir laiko matmenį. Tokių reiškinų kaip muzikos lokalizacija ir versijų įvairovė tyrimai rodo, kad nuo Vakarų Europos iki Rusijos, Jungtinių Valstijų ir Azijos žiūrovai ne tik patyrė skirtingą meno ir žiniasklaidos įvykių poveikį, bet ir turėjo skirtingą santykį su laiku – todėl kartu su Siegfriedu Kracaueru galime kalbėti apie paradoksalų istorijos „nesimultaniškumą“ (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*).

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