

A level MUSIC—Area of study 3 Music for Film



PSYCHO

Bernard Herrmann (1960)

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- How the music creates tension and horror
- How the limited orchestration is fully exploited
- How the music reflects the on screen action
- Modernist as opposed to Romantic style of composition (American vs European influence).

'PRELUDE', 'THE CITY', 'MARION', 'THE MURDER (SHOWER SCENE)', 'THE TOYS', 'THE CELLAR', 'DISCOVERY', 'FINALE'

HARMONY AND TONALITY:

- Avoids traditional tonal centres and keys
- Atonality in Murder and Finale
- Basically tonal in Marion.
- Highly dissonant and chromatic harmony
- Chords used for the sound, rather than for the tonality.
- Non-functional harmony
- 'Hitchcock' chord (minor chord with added major 7th)
- Complex vs conventional harmony
- Chord clusters
- Augmented 4th chords
- Diminished 7th and half diminished chords
- Parallel chord movement

TEXTURE:

- Varied string textures
- Ostinato textures
- Monophonic, homophonic, homorhythmic, polyphonic and fugal can be found at different points.

CONTEXT:

- Herrmann: Conductor and composer often associated with films by Alfred Hitchcock. Other films include 'Vertigo' and 'North by Northwest'
- Born in New York, he had a varied and Modernist influence in composing.
- Insisted on artistic freedom in his music for film. Orchestrated his own scores in a detailed way.
- Broke the mould of previous film scoring style: atonality, dissonance, ostinati and leitmotifs.

RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO:

- Tempi chosen for each cue matches the moods/psychological intentions.
- Incessant quaver movement, syncopation, downbow accents, rhythmic displacement, moto perpetuo in faster cues.
- Use of augmentation of Marion's theme in 'Toys'.

MELODY:

- Uses repetition and sequence to develop longer melodic structures from motifs..
- The Steiner motive: upwards semitone figure. Used as an ostinato, doubled and inverted, augmented and inverted, as a verticalisation (chord) in the bass.
- Fugal texture in 'Cellar' uses an 8 bar subject and 2 countersubjects.

SONORITY:

- Uses only orchestral string section.
- Conventional 5 part string section: 2 violins, viola, cello, double bass.
- Strings play con sordino (muted) for entire film apart from shower scene.
- Various string textures:
- Hammered chords
- Pizzicato
- Fingered tremolo
- Octave doublings (lush Romantic style)
- Shrieking, extreme ranges, sfz

STRUCTURE:

- Use of leitmotif unifies musical cues.
- Extension of Wagnerian model: develops leitmotif rhythmically, melodically, harmonically and texturally.
- Despite modernist influence, often uses balanced phrasing of 2,4 and 8 bar units.

PSYCHO



'PRELUDE', 'THE CITY', 'MARION', 'THE MURDER (SHOWER SCENE)', 'THE TOYS', 'THE CELLAR', 'DISCOVERY', 'FINALE'

Composer: Bernard Herrmann Date: 1960

WIDER LISTENING PIECES

FRANZ WAXMAN- THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN

- 'Suite'- Busy tremolo strings descending chromatically causes uneasiness.
- Waxman was only provided a 22-member orchestra, so he had to be resourceful and creative in using a limited palette of sounds. He used an organ to double up on his instruments and have an enlarged sound.

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI- THE EXORCIST

- Highly dissonant/atonal to create unease.
- In 'Polymorphia', tremolo strings used in busy, chaotic way with a piercing tessitura and extended bowing techniques to create discomfort.
- 'Fright stabs', sudden dynamic contrasts and extreme ranges.

JERRY GOLDSMITH- THE OMEN

- Suspense motifs are thought to be influenced by Hermann's motifs in the violins in Psycho.
- Musical themes are highly dissonant and atonal in nature.
- Choirs singing in Latin create unease= 'religious damnation'.
- One lush love theme similar to Marion's theme, lyrical melodies contrast to highly dissonant score.

PHILIP GLASS- DRACULA

- Uses string quartet rather than orchestral score, but for different purposes: to reflect the chamber setting of, "libraries and drawing rooms and gardens."
- Uses trills to evoke eeriness.
- Music used for aesthetic purposes rather than closely accompanying film action.
- Suspense built with rising arpeggio figures reaching a shrill sudden ending.
- Staccato strings.
- Chromatic, ambiguous sense of key.

JAVIER NAVARRETE- PAN'S LABYRINTH

- Oppressive subject of film reflected in score.
- Uneasiness created with dark lullaby/fairytale element. Choirs, lulling piano, minor melodies being hummed in main theme sets the scene, but the score gradually moves from 'fantasy' to 'horror' as the narrative progresses.
- 'Bosque Profundo': Tremolo strings, sudden build ups, extreme ranges and Chromatic rising melodies.



BATMAN RETURNS

Danny Elfman (1992)



POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The relationship between the music and the on screen action
- How the music reflects 'darkness'.
- The '(dark) Superhero' element
- The chaotic nature of the music
- The comic aspect of the music
- Leitmotifs

BIRTH OF A PENGUIN PT 1, BIRTH OF A PENGUIN PT 2, BATMAN VS THE CIRCUS, THE RISE AND FALL FROM GRACE

STRUCTURE:

- All through composed pieces
- Direction of music reflects on screen action

TEXTURE:

- Constantly changing
- Layering
- Octaves
- Rare monophony
- Melody driven homophony
- Polyphonic texture.

MELODY:

- Development of 2 leitmotifs:
- Batman: Low brass, leaps and semitones
- Penguin: semitone steps, theatrical, uses organ
- 4 different melodic ideas

CONTEXT:

- Elfman: Self taught composer and rock musician in band 'Oingo Boingo'
- Close working relationship with director Tim Burton- Have often collaborated: Beetlejuice, The Nightmare Before Christmas, Planet of the Apes.
- Scores much of his music around leitmotifs.
- Film is sequel to 'Batman' (1989)
- A darker adaptation of the superhero, with almost a dual personality- the potential to be hero and villain.

RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO:

- Augmentation and diminution
- Constant time signature changes
- Rhythmic ostinati
- Cross-rhythms
- Syncopation
- Triplets
- Sextuplets
- Rhythmic displacement

HARMONY AND TONALITY:

- Minor keys
- Pedal notes
- Whole-tone scale
- Open chords/bare fifths
- Diminished 7th
- Dominant 7th)
- Chromatic shifts
- Unprepared modulations
- Parallel chords
- Tertiary relationship between keys and chords
- Tritone

SONORITY:

- Strong resemblance to classic film scoring
- large orchestral score including unconventional instrumental forces: Pipe organ, harp, celeste, accordion, vibraphone, temple blocks, tubular bells, sleigh bells, xylophone, marimba, piano, fairground steam organ, synth choir and choir.
- Large range of playing techniques:
- Arco
- Pizzicato
- Tremolando bowing
- Glissando
- Con Sord
- Oboe extreme vibrato
- Horns stopped
- Trumpet extreme lip trill
- Cymbal and timpani roll
- Flutter tonging
- Snare drum with snares off
- Percussion rolls.

BATMAN RETURNS (1992)



BIRTH OF A PENGUIN PT 1, BIRTH OF A PENGUIN PT 2, BATMAN VS THE CIRCUS, THE RISE AND FALL FROM GRACE

Composer: Danny Elfman

Date: 1992

WIDER LISTENING PIECES

JERRY GOLDSMITH- GREMLINS

- Humorously chaotic atmosphere- like clowns causing mischief in BvtC. bizarre synthesised sounds mimicking the voices of the gremlins.
- Upbeat tempo.
- Persistent quavers, 'Om-pah' ostinato, syncopated rhythms.

WOJCIECH KILAR- DRACULA

- Similar to Batman's leitmotif. Both 'dark' characters of the night (bat/vampire.) Same melody and tonality with slight variation in rhythm, consists of rising 4th and descending semitone
- Low brass timbres
- Triplet rhythm creating suspense in military march manner.

JOHN WILLIAMS- SUPERMAN/STAR WARS

- 'Superhero' elements: leitmotif has strong emphasis on brass instruments and fanfares
- Major keys used instead of minor (Batman is an antihero)
- Harmonic stability (as opposed to chromaticism). Uses perfect 5th leap, Batman's leitmotif mainly consists of semitones.

JERRY GOLDSMITH-PLANET OF THE APES 'THE HUNT'

- Exploits instruments (muted brass, false harmonics on strings) uses timpani rolls that crescendo to a climax.
- Unconventional instruments give 'other worldly' feel. Elfman uses synthesisers, sound effects and 'childlike' instruments like Celesta and temple blocks to convey eeriness. Goldsmith uses ethnic instruments (boo bams) to reflect the apes.
- Driving ostinato rhythms, syncopation and frequent time signature changes.

DANNY ELFMAN- EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

- Main title has similar features to BoP1. childlike/magical celesta dominates with high strings and Choir 'ooh' and 'ah' countermelodies.
- Minor tonalities used in soundtrack with semitone movement in melodies.
- 'Sighing' choir idea explored
- Similar use of instrumentation, (symphony orchestra) including glissando's and harp flourishes before build ups, 'playful' bass clarinet in 3/4 time ('Castle on the Hill')