'The Legacy of the Gesamtkunstwerk in Hollywood Film'

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Abstract

The music dramas of Richard Wagner played a central role both artistically and sociopolitically in the culture of 19th century Europe, much as Hollywood film was strongly to influence Western cultural norms in the 20th. This connection between Wagner and Hollywood is much more than a coincidental sociological correlation. The purpose of this paper is show the considerable extent to which Hollywood cinema is indebted to Wagner's musicodramatic legacy, principally through the Wagnerian concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or Universal Artwork. It will do so by briefly tracing historical interactions between the two traditions, studying in detail the manifestations of Wagner's theories and practices in both music drama and film, outlining some dramatic movements antithetical to the Wagnerian stance so as to reveal more fully Hollywood's aesthetic affiliations, and highlighting the very Wagnerian nature of standard cinematic interfaces. Through this process, it is hoped that the passing of the mantle of cultural hegemony from late 19th century Germany to 20th and 21st century California will be emphatically elucidated.

Contents

1. An Introduction

> *"My generation tried to establish the serious motion picture score with a symphonic background. I personally believe in the form of motion picture derived from Wagner's Opera and Drama [1850-51]. He discussed the Gesamtkunstwerk, an all-comprising art of drama, writing and music. What could come closer to this description than motion pictures?"*[1]

These are the words of Miklos Rozsa (1907-1995), a celebrated film composer of Hungarian origin, who was particularly active in Hollywood from the 1930s to the 1950s. His most often cited scores are those for *Double Indemnity* (1944), and *Ben Hur* (1959), for which he received an Academy Award. It is not a huge stretch of the imagination, therefore, to assume that his success in the industry was a sanctioning of the approach described above: that is, the way in which he understood music and image, and the interaction thereof, complied with the aesthetic and practical requirements of the major Hollywood studios. This is not to suggest, however, that Wagner and the producers of such films as *Double Indemnity* and *Ben Hur* employed the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (or Universal Artwork) for the same end- the former may well have been mortified by the fiscal agenda of the latter- but rather, that Wagner's legacy in some way fueled the creative energies of those responsible for the Golden Age of Hollywood.

This assertion raises some important issues regarding Hollywood's cultural baggage. To what extent was Rozsa's technical and aesthetic approach replicated and/or mirrored by his contemporaries and upheld by his successors? Has this methodology been the domain solely of musical practitioners, or has it extended into all parameters of film, as the theory of *Opera and Drama* would seem to require? How exactly does Wagnerian theory manifest itself in the cinematic medium, both in terms of dramatic content and modes of reception? To engage with these concerns effectively, some effort has to be made to identify markers of the Wagnerian tradition within the Hollywood canon, from Rozsa's generation up to the present day. A more penetrative study is then needed, to trace the ways in which these articulations reflect a more extensive dramatic agenda (Wagner in theory) as well as how they are realised through certain musicodramatic tools of the trade (Wagner in practice). Furthermore, some discussion of alternatives to the Wagnerian model is necessary, so as to enable a clear understanding of the significance of Wagnerian principles in the general consumption of film, irrespective of ostensible aesthetic affiliation. It is hoped that by taking this particular course of action, the following discourse will not only outline Hollywood's debt to the *Gesamkunstwerk* concept, but also elucidate its broader role in the popular culture of a globalised world.

[1] Quoted in Evans, Mark. *Soundtrack: The Music of the Movies*, p207.

2. A Pertinent Genealogy

At this point, tracing a detailed genealogy of the inheritors of Wagner's legacy and the corresponding transmission of their cultural trappings from 19th century Germany to 21st century California would no doubt prove advantageous. A survey of the single most significant historical phenomenon in this regard- the exodus of artistic practitioners from Europe to the west coast of America during the '30s, in response to the growing threat of Nazism and its allies- is in itself rich with research potential. It is beyond the scope of this discussion, however, to pursue this to any great extent: the aim here is not to show why, but rather in what fashion Wagner's musical and dramatic thumbprints are evident in the workings of Hollywood film throughout its history. Nevertheless, it is worth briefly touching on the historical connections that Rozsa's comments, quoted above, so tantalisingly invoke, in order to create some kind of broad sense of Wagner's past and continuing hold over Hollywood. This continuity is nowhere more apparent than in the cultural affinities of Rozsa's ilk, the makers of movie music.

One of the most important figures in this regard was Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957). He was born and educated in a Vienna whose musical establishment was dominated by the oeuvre of Richard Strauss and the baton of Gustav Mahler, both of whom were Wagnerians. Under the tutelage of the latter, Korngold established himself as a respected 'art' music composer at a very early age, beginning with the ballet *Der Schneemann*, which was premiered in 1910 when he was only thirteen. He began to write Hollywood film scores in 1934, commuting back and forth from Vienna and Los Angeles, until in 1938, the threat of Anschluss from Nazi Germany led him and his family to settle permanently in California. It is not surprising then to find that Korngold applied the Wagnerian dramatic model he had learnt in his youth to his cinematic endeavours. The score of the *Sea Hawk* (1940), for example, was constructed from the manipulation of nine leitmotivs (a technique discussed below) and accompanied one hundred of the one hundred and nine minutes of the film. The resultant effect "is very much of an ongoing, musicodramatic canvas that comes close to having the uninterrupted flow of Wagner's operas"[2]. That is, the functional role of this score is clearly aligned with the constant interaction of visual and aural elements in Wagnerian music-drama.

Korngold is often considered to be the progenitor of the classic Hollywood musical style: for example, the IMDb- Internet Movie Database- claims that "he is generally credited with 'inventing' the syntax of orchestral film music". If such remarks are justified, then the Wagnerian approach not only held sway during the period of Rozsa and Korngold's professional zenith, but also is now considered to be a foundation for subsequent film-scoring practice. It would be too much of a leap, however, to assume that generalisations about Korngold's significance would automatically speak to the indefinite palpability of Wagner's aesthetic reach. Indeed, by the '60's, European modernism had had a significant effect on the surface, at the very least, of Hollywood film music. The influence of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, both residents of Los Angeles in their later years, was evident in the styles adopted by studio composers: Bernard Herrmann's lean atonality owed much to the former's pre-serial work, and

[2] Brown, Royal S. *Overtones and Undertones*, p.98.

Jerry Goldsmith's rhythmic and metric invention to the latter, albeit largely by way of Copland. The question of whether these new voices essentially eclipsed Wagnerian rhetoric or were merely a veneer placed on top of the old musicodramatic structures cannot be answered in any great depth in the present context. It is clear, nevertheless, that even with the onset of these modernist musical trends, the Wagnerian legacy was not altogether forgotten. Take, for example, Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), which concerns itself with (ostensibly) tragic love: Herrmann's reaction to the subject matter is to draw heavily from the harmonic language and motivic devices of *Tristan und Isolde* for his score to the film. The desire to make a dramatic connection through musical means between this particular pair of famously star-crossed lovers and Vertigo's main protagonists, thus heightening the emotional intensity of the film's central romance, suggests that Wagner loomed large in the cultural heritage of the composer, and presumably large enough in that of the audience to make such references worthwhile.

Whatever its misadventures may have been, the Wagnerian tradition did not go underground for long. With the music of *Star Wars* (1977), John Williams (1932-) " almost single-filmedly revived the fairy-talish, heroic genre popular in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and with it the quasi-Korngold score."[3] The phenomenal popular and financial success of this film, its sequels and prequels, and the subsequent aesthetic influence they have wielded to this day, surely intimate that Wagner's musico-dramatic ideals are still alive and well in the medium. Furthermore, contemporary Hollywood composers would seem not just to take their cue from the Wagnerian agenda of their illustrious predecessors, but also from the very source of their inherited aesthetic, Wagner himself. Consider, for instance, these comments from the composer Hans Zimmer on his scoring for a particular scene in *Gladiator* (2000):

> *"When I first looked at what Ridley [Scott, the director] had done with Rome, I suddenly realised… that this was really a Leni Riefenstahl hommage to Rome, and so I shamelessly put on my German hat and went into the sort of Wagner territory."*[4]

This sketched history of the relationship between Wagner and Hollywood film music does not, of course, provide convincing, ironclad proof that the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept underpins every decision made regarding the production of a Hollywood film. Rather, it serves as a promising starting point: a geological survey, as it were, before the digging for gold can begin in earnest. The goal, however, is not to find the original Rheingold. Wagner's many culturally-specific socio-political preoccupations and his technical innovations in theory and in practice could never be shown to be *consistently* mirrored in Hollywood film, given that technology, fashion, social and moral concerns, and so on have changed considerably since the second half of the 19th century. Of course, should the possibility to make a direct connection arise, it will be pursued, but primarily in a manner which will reinforce an analogous similarity in the metafunctions of music-drama and film. For it is the grand, abstract concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, with all its ideational[5], textual[6] and interpersonal[7]

[3] Brown, Royal S. *Overtones and Undertones*, p118.
[4] Zimmer, Hans. Interview, DVD extras, *Gladiator* (2000), Ridley Scott- director
[5] "The ideational metafunction… provides the terms that 'stand for'… people, places and things in the world, and the system of transitivity, which enables to create different relations between these participants…". van Leeuwen, Theo. *Speech, Music, Sound.* p189.

ramifications, more than any of its specific manifestations, that I believe has weathered more than a century of cultural and social turbulence to bind Wagner inseparably to the Hollywood of today.

[6] " The textual metafunction is the function of marshalling the combined representations and interactions into the kind of wholes we call 'text' or communicative events'…". Ibid. p190.
[7] " The interpersonal metafunction is the function of constituting and enacting relations between the people involved in a communicative event…". Ibid. p189.

3. General Theories

The Universal or Collective Artwork began as a broad, social manifesto and developed into a blueprint for cultural revolution. This transformation can be traced through Wagner's writings, specifically *Art and Revolution* (1849), *The Artwork of the Future* (1849) and *Opera and Drama* (1850-51), where he grapples with this idea of an integrated conglomerate of all Art's forms: poetry, music, sculpture, architecture and so on. In *Art and Revolution*, Wagner bemoans the fate of an art-form he identified with Greek tragedy (discussed below in further detail): "Just as the spirit of the community was fragmented in a thousand egotistical ways, so that great work of art that is tragedy disintegrated into the individual components that it contained".[8] The first manifestation of this ideal was thus as much concerned with art losing its place in the 'total' public consciousness, as it was with art being dissolved into disparate disciplines. Wagner clarifies the aesthetic quantity of the above statement in *The Artwork of the Future*, while still maintaining the sociopolitical bent to his rhetoric: "The great united artwork…must embrace all the genres of art and in some degree undo each of them in order to use it as a means to an end, to annul it in order to attain the…… representation of perfected human nature, - this great united artwork we cannot recognise as the arbitrary need of the individual, but only as the inevitable associated work of the humanity of the future."[9]

This description of the simultaneous completion of a circle and the dissolution of its boundaries in Wagner's "representation of perfected human nature", while of some academic interest, provides no real blueprint for the actual realisation of its sentiments. The corresponding course of action is in fact found in *Opera and Drama*, where Wagner ties together the theoretical threads of *Gesamtkunstwerk* into a more workable form. He does so by denouncing opera as a corruption of true art: "The error in the art-genre of Opera lies in the fact that a Means of Expression (Music) has been made the object, while the Object of Expression (the Drama) has been made a means."[10] In other words, the artistic goal of opera was to highlight the music, at the expense of the synthesis of music and poetry. Wagner wished that all artistic endeavours within opera, including set design, costume and theatre architecture, would somehow merge in service of a single phenomenon, called either "Drama" or "Poetics", the abstract embodiment of what the artist(s) desired to communicate.

For Wagner, the realisation of this vision would always be problematic. The technology of his theatre had severe limitations: it relied exclusively on the corporeal to render both physical and internal activity. Only music had the ability to metamorphose quickly and fluidly, to keep up with the audience's shifting naturalistic and/or abstract-sensory perception of the drama promoted by the (sung) text. Set design, costume and lighting all remained static for considerable periods of time, perhaps for a scene or even an act. The consequence of this was inflexibility in the way in which *Gesamkunstwerk* could be applied. For example, in the first Act of *Tristan and Isolde*, the relationship between the two protagonists undergoes a great change. Tristan is delivering by ship an Irish princess, Isolde (whose lover he has

[8] Quoted in Borchmeyer, Dieter. *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre* p67.
[9] Quoted in Newman, Ernest. *Wagner as Man and Artist*, p187.
[10] Quoted in ibid, p193.

killed), to his lord, King Marke of Cornwall. Naturally, there is some friction between them, though the nature of Isolde's strong feelings for Tristan is ambiguous: is it utter disdain or profound love? Whatever the motivation, Isolde decides to escape her predicament by poisoning both herself and Tristan. However, her handmaiden Brangane substitutes the poison with a love potion, and thus the psychological barriers that prohibited any romantic or erotic attachment are swept away. This focus on the continual fluctuation of the internal is fundamental to the drama of the whole opera: the meaning of the text therefore can only be consistently articulated by the music.

It is significant to note that the material of its Einleitung, with its obscure tonality, vague pulse, energising/ dissolving phrase structures, and sensuous orchestration, returns at this point. Abstract-sensory modality[11] is thus increased- the provenance of this music would be unclear to Wagner's audience, since it blurred familiar tonal moves, destroyed a sense of regular beat and in many other ways did not refer explicitly to any other musical or sound event they would have experienced. The union of Tristan and Isolde is thereby portrayed as an 'other-worldly' process, perhaps even as spiritual. In contrast, the promotion of physical action in the plot is accompanied by music that favours a more naturalistic modality[12]. An illustration of this is the arrival of King Marke, which follows Isolde and Tristan's tryst. The music becomes far more diatonic, has a strong beat in duple time, uses more immediately regular phrase structures, and deploys forces more easily contextualised- the blaring brass and pounding timpani reflect the musical topoi of pomp and circumstance. This combination of familiarity and more easily perceived pattern give the audience the impression that this is a 'real' event, if not exactly an every-day one.

On Wagner's stage, technological restrictions on production limit the modal range and flexibility of the visual dimension, such that analogous couplings of narrative and coding orientation can only be made in a very general way. In terms of their representational capacity, set, costume and lighting are adjusted or replaced only at large structural points in the proceedings. Moveable props can be used to provide some variation, but even they are limited in their ability to support the drama by their very physicality. The presentational potential of these media is even more constrained. At worst, staging is merely a tabula rasa on which the drama is played out. At best, it can provide a mood-setting for a scene or act. Take, for example once again, Act I of *Tristan and Isolde*: in the Karajan production at Salzburg in 1972, designed by Gunther Schneider-Siemssen, the stage has two massive sails, stretched across its full length, billowing to the right; there is no discernable shape of a ship; the colours of the set and lighting are murky greys and sickly, pale yellows and greens, as if the whole stage is an oil painting by Casper David Friedrich. The modality configuration

[11] "[Modality is] a set of resources for indicating the truth of presentations/representations, for example for indicating as how real (some part of) a soundtrack should be regarded, or as how sincere a tone of voice should be taken. The modality of a sound event (or some part or aspect of it) is then said to be 'high', 'medium' or 'low'." van Leeuwen, Theo. *Speech, Music, Sound*. p208.

"Abstract-sensory modality [is] a criterion for judging the modality of sound events [that is, a coding orientation] which rests both on the presence of abstract representation (representation concentrating on certain essential or generalized aspects of what is represented) and on emotive effect…". Ibid. p203.

[12] "Naturalism… is here used as one of the criteria used for judging the modality of sound [that is, a coding orientation]. In the case of representation: the more we hear a sound as we (think we) would hear if we heard it 'live', the higher the modality. In the case of presentation, the more the sounds are neither stylized or ritualized, nor dramatized, exaggerated or emotionalized (in other words, the more we judge them 'normal' and 'everyday'), the higher the modality." Ibid. p208.

of this scene favours a mix of abstract and sensory. The sails give the impression of a ship, without actually representing anything sea-worthy, thus engendering the heterotopic world of fantasy or non-reality that Tristan and Isolde's love is to inhabit. The colours do not occur naturally, except perhaps during a violent storm, or in jaundice or other illnesses, and therefore make the audience uncomfortable and on edge, in preparation for the wrenching emotional onslaught which is to follow. In this case, the setting does support the drama, however, it cannot fluctuate; it cannot support any nuance in the action (or indeed the music); after its initial impact, it can only interact in the whole as a very broad and blunted instrument. Furthermore, a production design such as this is the result of both modern theatrical technology and post-filmic aesthetic sensibilities: the opera houses of Wagner's time would have been even more restricted in their ability to realise his dramatic agenda.

For Hollywood film, however, the ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk* as described in *Opera and Drama* is considerably more producible. Its lack of tangibility might seem a serious hindrance in imparting the nature of what is being represented, but in fact, this very quality makes its component parts eminently flexible in their modality configuration and coding orientation, and thus instead allows for a rather ironic intensification of a sense of reality. The stasis of sets, costumes and lighting is done away with by editing (montage): they now have the ability to metamorphose as music can. Sound takes on even greater variation in the form of sound effects and speech, enabling film, if so desired, to avoid the distancing or 'unnatural' qualities of singing and staged drama. Furthermore, cinema can provide both visual and aural perspective, whether as an illusion, or as sound technology progresses with such developments as Dolby surround-sound, some kind of real/ unreal hybrid. There is thus infinitely greater control over how the drama is (re)presented, whether the intent is for physical effect, psychological affect, or some combination of both.

Wagner seems to have been keenly aware of the theatrical issues that film was to make redundant, and addressed them most famously in his design for Bayreuth's Festspielhaus. Yet despite the notable innovation and monumental tangibility of the resulting edifice (see discussion below), the mechanical nature of contemporaneous technology left Wagner dissatisfied with his own solution: in his mind, it just did not go far enough in fulfilling the *Gesamtkunstwerk* vision. His quandary is alluded to in the quote that begins this discourse, where Rozsa condones films derived not "from Wagner's theoretical treatises in general", but far more specifically, 'from Wagner's *Opera and Drama*". This distinction implies that there were variants of the Universal Artwork, either in theory or practice, which were not compatible with Rozsa's aesthetic and technical requirements. And indeed, in articles from 1870 onwards, Wagner disowns his earlier conception of *Gesamtkunstwerk* by making music paramount over all the arts.

> *"What most impresses one is the radical change in his notion of the position of music itself. What did it matter to him that he had once conceived of music as a means …? It suddenly dawned on him that Schopenhauer's theory was much more favourable to the sovereignty of music: music seen as apart from all the other arts … speaking the language of the will directly from the deep source of being … he now became a telephone line of Transcendence."*[13]

[13] Quoted from Nietzche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (NY:Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p.237, in Tambling, Jeremy. *Opera and the Culture of Fascism*,

Wagner seems to have changed his philosophical stance, at least in part, as a reaction both to the shortcomings of the technological standards of the day and his failure to realise the vision of *Opera and Drama* effectively through his own infrastructural entrepreneurship. The only way drama could be actively achieved in tandem with the word was through music. Furthermore, both the literal and metaphysical clarity of the text often suffered in performance as a natural consequence of the need to project the voice without artificial aids. The onus was therefore on music alone to define the particular emotional topography of the poetry. " Music consists generally in a constant succession of chords more or less disquieting … just as the life of the heart (the will) is a constant succession of greater or less disquietude".[14] Within the context of Wagner's theatre, there was no other possibility of expressing this 'will', the part of himself he wanted to communicate so purely and absolutely. The psychological impetus of *Gesamtkunstwerk* may have remained constant, but a shift in perspective was necessary for the dramatic vessel to keep undiluted the essence of its ideals.

There were no equivalent constraints for Rozsa, nor indeed has there been for anyone involved in modern cinematic production. Technology of the 20th century has enabled the speaker not only to articulate clearly to every individual in a sizeable auditorium, but to do so in a perfectly understandable whisper or mumble. This empowering of speech, and by implication the word, makes the realisation of the Universal Artwork in *Opera and Drama* more achievable. Music no longer has to carry the emotional burden of the whole- now the speaker can be as expressive as a singer, and significantly more natural in that expression. (S)he can also rely on the specificity of spoken language, rather than the ambiguity of musical syntax. In fact, one finds in the vast majority of Hollywood movies that music appears subservient to action and dialogue- to use the terminology of film, the former is ground or field, the latter is figure. In the excerpt below from Total Recall, for example, the music is only figure when there are no words to put across. As soon as there is a speaker, the music retreats into the background.

This would seem to tip the balance in favour of speech and visual stimuli, which is structurally analogous to the way Wagner later prejudiced (or wished to prejudice) music in his music dramas. Furthermore, the Hollywood schema has every part, rather than just the music and poetry, contributing actively to the drama in some form and to some degree; in Wagner's theatre, this was just simply not possible. This is not to suggest, however, that the difference between the ostensible 'Means of Expression' in each set of circumstances is by extension indicative of some kind of aesthetic divide. On the contrary, my assertion here is that the 'Object of Expression', or more accurately, the nature of the Object of Expression is common to both Hollywood film and Wagnerian music drama. I believe that as a general rule, all the components that make up a Hollywood film are assigned varying modality in varying coding orientations in such a way that only one (re)presentational interpretation of any given scene is seriously favoured. This not only fulfils the constructional requirements of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in *Opera and Drama*- a symbiotic conglomerate of the genres of Art- but also replicates the aim of all its incarnations throughout Wagner's theoretical output: dramatic unity.

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pp.42-43.

[14] Quoted from Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, in Magee, Bryan. *Wagner and Philosophy,* p.206.

To illustrate all the particulars of this claim, I would like now to look at a sequence taken from the film *Total Recall* (1990), directed by Paul Verhoeven. This mainstream sci-fi offering traces the adventures of Doug Quaid (Arnold Schwarzenegger), whose memory has been altered so that he can unwittingly lead his erstwhile friend and employer, the ruler of Mars, to the hideaway of Martian rebels. Stored deep in his mind are experiences of his morally suspect past, which on one occasion the man cum mutant who leads the insurrection (played, at least in part, by Marshall Bell) is able to unlock. The sequence in question begins with Quaid and the rebel leader entering a room, deep underground. Even though the walls are roughly hewn rock and the lighting is dim, it is obvious this is supposed to be an office: there is a desk; it is adorned by a computer and space-age desk ornaments, which nevertheless look very much like stacked books; the leader sits behind it, while Quaid sits in another chair in front of it. All and all, the impression is of a formal, business-like setting: in other words, there is a high naturalistic modality in both a visual and aural sense. The montage flips from the perspective of one character to that of the other, creating a kind of cinematic third person, both in a syntactical and literal sense. The function of the audience has been defined as observer rather than participant in the exchange, thus heightening the feeling of mundane formality. Their conversation, a quietly earnest discussion of the plight of the rebels and their available options, also promotes this impression.

Their entry and exchange has no musical accompaniment. It is only when Quaid asks after the rebel leader (he is not aware of the role and nature of the individual before him), and the other faces the wall, with his back to the camera, and goes strangely rigid, does the music begin. At once naturalistic modality is reduced, and abstract-sensory increased, perhaps not by much, but enough to suggest a state of transition. In the context of the ordinariness that has been cultivated to this point, the unexpected bodily convulsion and the entrance of the music collude to indicate that something unordinary is about to happen. A tonic minor- to major-chord motif is sounded in strings with a slightly manufactured resonance. This immediately creates a forward motion, a feeling of being uplifted, which is carried by the measured sustaining of the chords. When a fibrous arm appears from out of the rebel's stomach(!), a metallic, crystalline timbre is added to the fray. It's obviously synthetic tone colour and disruptive melodic contour (up to this point, the chords have been 'plain' triads: it traces a min 6^{th}, per 5^{th}, aug 4^{th} and maj 3^{rd} over the tonic), in tandem with a close shot of the arm itself, highlight the simultaneous wonder and psychological discomfort of witnessing such a phenomenon. The viewer has been somewhat acclimatised to genetic mutation, as it is an intrinsic part of the plot and clearly evident in the corporeal abnormalities of many of Mars's inhabitants. However, this example is certainly the most extreme, and the music reinforces this perception: the abstract-sensory modality of the scene is consequently further increased. This incremental step confirms that a process of transition from 'real' to 'unreal' is in play.

The situation reaches its climax in a full frontal view of the mutant (who inhabits the stomach area of the man) accompanied by a struck gong and the shattering of the crystalline sound into reverb. It is at this point that abstract-sensory modality peaks. The man/mutant progresses towards Quaid- the music returns to its previous chordal pattern in the strings, with the addition of a flute part (with reverb) that develops from

even quavers in 4/4 to semiquavers. Metronomic uniformity is usually employed to indicate the familiarity of a circumstance, by way of alluding to the banal regularity of machinery. Here, however, it serves to create a sense of anticipation through forward motion, an affect enhanced by the energising of the semiquaver line through cross-accenting. With the introduction of speech, the music moves from figure to field. This change in focus is mirrored by the textural shift in the music: the metronomic pulse and 'plain' chords are replaced by a motif of resolving sharpened 4^{th} appogiaturas in the 'cello line, which has staggered rhythmic movement. There has been a temporary reduction in the abstract-sensory modality of the scene.

With the repeated words "open your mind", the final transition from reality to dream-world takes place. The social distance between the mutant and the audience is reduced with every repetition of the line. The camera is facing the head of the mutant, at such an angle that suggests the view of the seated Quaid. The manipulation of this perspective, however, is entirely for the audience's benefit. The camera slowly pans in on the mutant's face- there has been a progression from the original informal distance of the interchange of the two men, through the personal distance of the frontal view of the mutant, to an intimate distance where the mutant's head is very close to the protagonist, and by implication, the audience. A similar process can be found in the vocal quality of the mutant. His speech is generally softly spoken, at a high to medium pitch, evoking a wise and gentle grandfather. As each "open your mind" is uttered, and the camera pans closer and closer to his face, the quality of the voice develops from a seemingly naturalistic resonance for the acoustic of the room to one that sounds like he's speaking into a metal tin. Underneath this the music continues in field, with the chordal texture being coupled with serging brass gestures in unmeasured time.

With the blurring of the visuals and the swelling of the music, as if the viewer has passed through a semi-permeable membrane into a new medium, the abstract-sensory modality of this sequence attains its highest level and plateaus. The mutant has tapped psychically into the mind of Quaid, in order to dredge up memories which will aid the rebellion and the common people (and mutants) of Mars. Quaid's vision is of an edifice he visited in his former incarnation as an ally of Mars's ruler (a relationship which is yet to be exposed). The cold, blue ice of the glacier, the gargantuan metal cylinders of some unknown machine: these images are intended to invoke wonder and awe. However, they do not necessarily denote the 'unreality' of memory in of themselves: indeed, Quaid and company visit these environs later on in the movie, and the naturalistic modality of the images is very similar. This task falls instead to perspective and music. From the onset of this vision to its disintegration back into reality, the audience is given an airborne view, that is, the camera moves around the construction as if it is flying! Quite aside from such an action being impossible in the 'everyday', this perspective has no foundation in the imaginary context of the film. A sci-fi adventure may allow characters to fly by way of some mechanical contraption, but there is certainly no visual or aural evidence of such in this situation. Thus the audience are prejudiced to believe that despite the tangibility of the images, this is indeed not real. The music reinforces this further. As soon as the last "open your mind" has floated off into the ether, the music returns from field to figure. The material is an obvious extension of the string/flute texture mentioned above- the measured and sustained string chords now feature some syncopation, while the flute part has sextuplets with cross-accents, rather than semiquavers. It is more kinetic than

its previous version, implying that the possibility of inhabiting an intangible world has now been realised. The forward momentum, however, is still there, as if the music is a metaphysical mechanism that drives the virtual viewer through this memory.

At one point, the hegemony of music is interrupted by a vocal interjection, momentarily forcing the music back into ground. This is a deft way of reintroducing the possibility of speech, with all its realistic resonances, back into this fantasy. And indeed it manifests itself shortly afterwards: the virtual eye progresses to walking, talking figures on the giant construction, and follows them with more restrained and fluid motions than before. Their conversation becomes figure and the music ground, in a more intense and syncopated version of the appoggiatura 'cello figure used earlier to accompany the mutant's speech. The illusion of reality within illusion is further accentuated by the naturalistic modality of the vocal projection. When the characters move into the tunnel, their voices become boomy yet slightly constricted. When the viewer finally moves away from the speakers, their voices become distant and echo-like. The 'unreal' is still in action but it has compromised for the sake of narrative development. The discussion reveals that the machine, if engaged, will melt the glacier that exists just below the surface of the planet: to what end, they are uncertain. It is as if this information is validated because it has an increased naturalism in the context of otherwise high abstract-sensory modality.

The perspective eventually draws away from the people, and the string/flute texture returns in full force. As the view becomes more and more all-encompassing, the music builds itself up, increasing the emotive temperature to emphasis the significance of what has just been witnessed. The visual focus then becomes the sculpted indentation of a clearly alien hand or foot, an artifact which is later to play a crucial part in the narrative. Its future importance is invoked by the music, which continues to increase in intensity; it is in the process of climaxing, with the inclusion of a brilliant horn gesture, when a faint rumbling is heard. There has been no naturalistic sound so far in the sequence, let alone one resembling this, so even at low levels (in ground or field), its intrusion is jarring. There is a short cross-over between music and sound effect, where the music winds itself up… and is suddenly cut off. At that moment, the visuals return to the office; the old perspective of third person returns (where the audience alternately has the view of both characters); the rumbling grows in volume and intensity; the music does not return. There has been a sudden return to reality. While previously the audience were lulled gently and persuasively into a representation of the 'unreal', their return to the representation of the 'real' is violent, in preparation for the ensuing battle scene and bloodshed.

One will have noticed that at every point through the sequence, the intent of the moment is magnified by all the contributing parts, no matter how slight the nuance. Both the method and intent of the Gesamtkunstwerk, as described in *Opera and Drama*, have been maintained throughout. One will also notice the intricacy of the above description of *Total Recall*, in contrast to the broad discussion earlier of the extract from *Tristan and Isolde*. While this emphasis is of course in some way *my* choice, it cannot be ignored that the film has in fact greater breadth and depth in its capability to achieve the ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk* than the music-drama does. It therefore allows greater scope for the analysis of affectivity, at least in the contrast of 'real' and 'unreal'. *Tristan and Isolde* has only music, with its broad and ambiguous syntax, as a tool for articulating the drama. *Total Recall* has all the flexibility of visual

and aural manipulation that modern cinematic technology provides. In comparing analytical potential, one must also remember that Act 1 of the music-drama lasts for some eighty minutes, while the sequence from the film is of less than five minutes duration! The psychological depth of *Total Recall* may not rate a mention alongside that of *Tristan and Isolde*, nevertheless the former manifests Wagner's structural ideals in ways he would have been hard-pressed to conceive, let alone realise, given the limitations of his theatre. One has only to refer back to the description above of the 1972 Salzburg production of the latter to highlight the inherent restrictions on (re)presentational innovation in theatrical media.

It is hoped that the presence of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept in Hollywood's aesthetic, whether consciously Wagnerian or not, has been demonstrated by the above analysis. As an indicator of prevalence or relevance, however, this kind of approach is problematic. The impracticality of the methodology I have used in providing any kind of broad survey of Wagnerian influence is inherent to its reliance on the minutae of the filmic phenomenon: any attempt to achieve a statistically relevant mass of information in this way would be, by and large, futile. So how then to progress? The reason for employing the microscopic approach in the first place stems largely from the ostensible cultural gap between Wagner's 19th century Europe and Hollywood's 20th and 21st century America. Some effort has already gone into explaining how the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal, while arguably common to both parties, manifests itself independently in accordance with technological and consequent aesthetic differences. This is largely a product of the severe practical restrictions placed on Wagner's ability to realise the 'Gesamt' of his vision. There is one parameter, however, where Wagner had incredible freedom in this regard, and that, of course, is music. In other words, "Music is the *Kunstwerk*, the rest is *Gesamt*"[15]. Wagner's musical legacy is clearly the most convincing articulation of the ideal of the Universal Artwork within his own cultural context, and this capability was certainly not lost on subsequent generations, even given the wondrous possibilities that modern theatrical and cinematic developments have provided. The makers of Hollywood film embraced without reserve Wagner in practice, as it were, as a way of refining and adapting, consciously or otherwise, the broad brushstrokes of his theory. It is thus a study of the specifics of Wagner's music and their consequent application in cinema which will provide consistent and readily available insights into the legacy of the Gesamtkunstwerk in Hollywood film.

[15] Braddock, Rowena and Routley, Nicholas. *The Moving Stage: Writing about Opera*

4. Leitmotiv and Überleitmotiv

A common element to all discussions of Hollywood film music- and indeed, to much scholarship concerning other cinematic traditions- is the inevitable reference to the technique of *leitmotiv*, and its appropriation from Wagner's music-dramas for analogous employment in film. The technique was first used consistently in *Der Fliegende Hollander* of 1841, though Wagner was only to articulate it formally in *Opera and Drama* (1850-51), as the orchestra's "organic alliance with gesture, by bringing up the remembrance of an emotion,….. and by giving a foreboding of moods yet unspoken"[16]. In practice, this was the use of short melodic/rhythmic motifs, which were assigned not only to physical objects (eg. the sword in *Der Ring*) and characters (eg. Siegfried in *Der Ring*), but also to psychological or emotional states whose boundaries are less definite (eg. Love-Death in *Tristan und Isolde*). The term now used to describe these musical gestures, *leitmotiv*, was not coined by Wagner himself, but by an antagonistic critic: it was then promoted, somewhat ironically, by his supporters, such as friend and acolyte, Hans von Wolzogen. Wagner, for one, did not approve of its nomenclative associations. In one instance (1st August 1881), for example, he responded to the labeling of the 'wanderlust' and 'disaster' motives in a vocal score of *Götterdämmerung* with "And perhaps people will think all this nonsense is done at my request!"[17]. He believed (or at least wanted others to believe) that in tandem with its dramatic purpose, his network of basic themes was a sound structural model for musical unity, analogous to the autonomous structures of symphonic writing. The commonly dramatised perception of the *leitmotiv* phenomenon, however, became culturally entrenched, and henceforth was the form taught by and to theoreticians and composers. In any case, the gulf between Wagner's intentions and audiences' perceptions has not been an overly wide one, at least in the context of effect/affect. As the American composer Roger Sessions remarked, " [the leitmotiv's] introduction is often motivated by dramatic, not musical, necessities and once introduced it intentionally dominates the scene, to the obliteration of what surrounds it. The musical coherence is there to be sure – but in a passive sense: the detail is more significant than the line, and the 'theme' more important than its development"[18].

In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner justifies this effect as a way of combating the tyranny of 'absolute' music forms in opera. He believed (at the time) that the divisive nature of aria and recitative as well as the contemporary preference for balanced and logical melody destroyed the metre, the emphasis and thus the meaning of the poetry.
Looking at this explanation through the prism of Barthian thought reveals its limitations: what is this 'meaning', after all, and how exactly does it come about? Is it what Wagner originally assigned to the words, or what each person in the audience will be "motivated" to accept? Or are they one and the same? An explanation of the term "absolute" music and its now acknowledged redundancy will clarify the situation. Despite a composer's conscious desire for extramusical "meaninglessness", each audience member, by their very sentience, gives the music their own set of references, even if it's such nebulous concepts as "exciting" or "sad". Therefore, the

[16] Newman, Ernest. *Wagner as Man and Artist*, p.244.
[17] Quoted in Borchmeyer, Dieter. *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre,* p.156.
[18] Quoted in Brown, Royal S. *Overtones and Undertones*, p.15.

difference between "absolute" music and Wagner's music dramas can't be non-representational and representational. In Barthian terms[19], both their meanings are categorised as motivated, which means they can only be described in relative terms: the former is closer to the arbitrary ideal (ie could mean anything) while the latter is closer to the iconic (that is, has only one possible interpretation). So explaining Wagner's intentions in the rhetoric of 19th century cultural politics does little to reveal the full extent of the leitmotiv's efficacy. Rather, it is more helpful to see his creative choices as limiting the possible meanings of a given dramatic instance through a collusion of both musical and extra-musical means, thereby controlling as much as possible the reaction of the audience to *his* great utterance.

But how then does the leitmotiv have this condensing effect on meaning? As mentioned above, Wagner acknowledges the "faculty of conveying foreboding and remembrance" inherent in its application. That is to say, the leitmotiv is an internal reference: it is a aural gesture attached to a physical object or abstract idea within the "text" of a given work, and therefore is given a recognisable meaning through relationship. But is it this intra-interconnection that gives the leitmotiv its power? As Wagner discusses it, and as he seems to have consciously employed it, the leitmotiv is used to replace the structural integrity of 'pure' music, which was considered non-referential, with a type of cryptogram involving music/drama. An analogous situation would be to connect say the numerals 6,6,6[20] arbitrarily with the letters, R,E,D. But how does this even emphasise, let alone reveal, the "meaning" the Wagnerian thinker desires of the numerals or the letters? Their only significance in this situation is in the context of the other, merely a code of readily definable limitations. The real impetus of the *leitmotiv* technique, which Wagner never articulates but nevertheless surely exploits, is in the ability of the motif to refer not so much to points within the "text" (defined in this case as the music drama as a whole), but to a myriad of phenomena outside it. To take the above analogy further, one doesn't consider the essential meaninglessness of 6,6,6 and R,E,D as hieroglyphics, but rather firstly their intrarelationships, producing the number 666 and the word RED, and subsequently the cultural resonances assigned to them. Within a Judeo-Christian context, 666 can be construed as the number of the Beast, the embodiment of the abstract Evil. Adding an English speaking component to the given situation, RED can then represent a phenomenon of light, which refers further to Fire, which in turn indicates Hell, the place where the consequences of Evil are punished. So rather than being incidental, their relationship suddenly takes on meaning: it is the simultaneous iteration of two sets of conditions known to the observer, which in theory interact to form a conglomerative 'message'.

The leitmotiv, therefore, is a sign which refers not just to the object or psychological state with which it has been coupled intratextually, but also to the common cultural and/or genetic baggage of the composer/dramatist and his/her audience, thus enabling a moral and/or sociopolitical perspective of the given entity, in addition to a correlative one. It can act either in tandem with or contrapuntally against any visual components in play. In the case of the latter, the images may be giving one impression, while the leitmotiv's "commentary" may reveal the true nature of what is being observed, or vice versa. It is important to note that in such instances,

[19] The theoretical framework employed here is taken from Barthes, Roland. *Music, Image, Text*.
[20] For the sake of clarity in this particular illustration, the relational significance of repeating the numeral 6 within a defined semiotic space has been ignored.

the consequent dramatic counterpoint is not the Brechtian kind discussed later in this discourse. The counterpoint of Brecht is not regulated: no attempt is made to prejudice the observer as to the meaning of the image and music. In other words, both parameters act as arbitrary signs, so making any connections between them (ideally) becomes the sole responsibility of each individual mind in the audience. The Wagnerian model, on the other hand, limits both the image and music as signs: that is to say, they are prescribed through various methods a definable set of possible meanings. The counterpoint here occurs (ideally) within a binary opposition: it is something or it is its opposite, thus removing the possibility of any shading of meaning from the immediate communicative process. The leitmotiv therefore has enough perceptual distinction to act in a prophetic or judgmental way, even sometimes behaving somewhat as a narrator, or an all-seeing fool in the Shakespearean sense.

The ability of the leitmotiv to restrict meaning makes it an ideal tool in bringing to fruition the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept. Furthermore, its ready discernability provides perhaps the easiest way of detecting whether or not the Universal Artwork agenda is in play. This particular attribute, in turn, allows for an accumulation of data to the point where broad generalisations about the presence of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* phenomenon in Hollywood film can carry some weight. This is not to imply that one should be searching exclusively for signs of 'classical' leitmotiv in any given Hollywood offering: the fiscal and practical conditions under which such films are made mean that often the *leitmotiv* construction, while certainly recognisable in terms of musicodramatic function, has nevertheless been greatly reduced in ostensible sophistication and/or distanced stylistically from its original model. Any discussion of the nature and context of these quasi-leitmotivs, however, should occur after some recognition of the importance of the original Wagnerian leitmotiv, with all its musical and psychoacoustical particulars, in contemporary Hollywood. In my opinion, this connection is made no more apparent than in a comparison between the function of music in *Parsifal* (1882) and *Star Wars* (1977).

There is some poetry in putting these two cultural leviathans under the same microscope. As Wagner's last work, *Parsifal* marks a glorious end to a lifetime of creative endeavour, while Star Wars, being the musical, if not technical and aesthetic progenitor of the modern Hollywood schema, was a fresh beginning for the Wagnerian tradition. But of course, this sense of historicity is not the primary motivation for any comparison within the context of this discussion. John Williams not only makes clear use of the *leitmotiv* technique in his score for Star Wars, but does so in a strikingly similar way to Wagner's approach in *Parsifal.* Of all Wagner's mature music dramas, *Parsifal* uses the least number of leitmotiv: there are perhaps seven that have consistent dramatic significance. The resulting semiotic soup is therefore relatively transparent, as the listener/observer is not having to comprehend a musicodramatic texture akin to multiple conversations occurring at once. The score of Star Wars is very similar in this regard, making economic use of just six motives, fleshed out by only a handful of incidental cues.

A much more meaningful correspondence, however, can be found in comparing the nature and function of these two sets of motives. *Parsifal*'s leitmotiv predominately represent abstract ideas of a spiritual and/or psychological bent. There

is one for the sacrament (Example 1)[21] which occurs most markedly in the Vorspiel and the communion services of Acts I and III; and another for the Grail (Example 2), though this pertains not so much to its physical reality, but rather more to the manifold spiritual ramifications of its existence. The fact that Wagner appropriates the then well-known *Dresden Amen* to act in this role provides an intercontextual boost to these connotations. It is employed, along with another associated with Faith (Example 3) in the Vorspiel, in the Transformation music of Act I and in the final scene of the music drama.

The leitmotiv of *Star Wars* are similarly biased towards expansive metaphysical constructs rather than personalities or corporeal objects. The main theme (Example 4) heard initially in the opening credits, becomes associated in part with Luke Skywalker: it occurs when he is first introduced, and often in subsequent battle scenes in which he is an active participant. But there are also instances where it expands beyond the heroism and adventurous spirit of this particular individual and encompasses the noble actions of other characters. This would suggest that it reflects certain ideals in abstraction, irrespective of who is exhibiting them. It is heard, for example, when R2D2 makes his daring escape to find Obi Won Kenobi, and in a minor version during a prolonged wait by R2D2 and C3PO for an errant Luke. The theme ostensibly associated with Leia (Example 5) functions in a similar manner. Even though it only occurs emphatically early on in the film, as part of the process of familiarisation with the character of Leia and the romantic elements her interactions introduce to the psychological fray, clear allusions to it are apparent in the scene where Darth Vader 'slays' Kenobi as Luke looks on, helpless to intervene. This intimates it is less concerned with sexualised love as it is with a sense of kinship or loyalty. The 'Force' motive (Example 6) is clearly employed to invoke the metaphysical agenda of the film. It surfaces continuously throughout at any mention of its namesake, and also more significantly, when the 'Force' appears to be instrumental in the corporeal proceedings.

The leitmotiv discussed so far have all been complicit in creating a morally and/or dramatically positive dynamic at given points within their respective 'texts'. Tellingly, they are all nearly entirely diatonic, uncluttered by melodic chromaticisms, and rarely if ever accompanied by chromatic harmonies. To a somewhat informed Western ear, this attribute gives them an unambiguous and clear character, and creating in turn an impression of stability and purity. One could even argue that this understanding of diatonicism stems from a 'motivated' position somewhere between intrinsic and culturally constructed ideals of 'naturalness', in which case, the strong correlation between this musical phenomenon and the lower audible section of the harmonic series lends an air of 'naturalness' to the ideas and personalities in question. This resonates well with the clear dramatic impetus in both *Parsifal* and *Star Wars* to paint their respective heroes as 'natural', that is, uncorrupted by social expectation or affectation. Diatonicism can then be construed as 'classically' mythic, since it at least in part sidesteps learnt responses to signs in favour of some sort of inherent reaction thereto. Its effect is further reinforced in both these contexts by mythic devices that are unmitigatedly 'cultural'. The Grail motive in Parsifal would be recognisable to a late 19th century audience as a symbol of institutional, and hence dependable spirituality, through both its liturgical use and its incorporation in Mendelssohn's

[21] See Appendix

'Reformation' Symphony of 1830. Similarly, the deliberate anachronisms of William's musical rhetoric invoke the swashbuckling fantasies of a bygone era: the target audience- post-Vietnam Americans, disillusioned with their culture's trajectory- would perhaps have found these allusions to an ethically simpler world appealing. The diatonic/positive correlation is not only used to denote general tracts of good feeling, but also to highlight the essential purity of certain characters. For example, Parsifal's own motif (Example 7) which occurs at his entrance in Act I, his arrival in Klingsor's garden in Act II and his return to the Grail's castle in Act III, is clearly indicative of the hunting horn, free from the kind of musical sophistication made possible by late Romanticism as much as his character is from worldly guile. Similarly, when Luke and Leia's themes are used specifically in conjunction with their namesakes, diatonicism provides unconditional moral support for their thoughts and actions.

The leitmotiv associated with the less appealing characters, in contrast, are dissonant, chromatic and harmonically unstable. For example, Kundry's motive (Example 8), prominent during her entrance in Act I and the prelude to Act II, is overtly jarring, constructed as it is from the piling up of an augmented triad, a minor 7^{th} and a minor 9^{th}. The leitmotiv of Klingsor (Example 9) is less confronting melodically, but the considerable tonal instability and ambiguity of key- the harmonies are non-functional within the common practice of the time, as they are based on the equal division of the octave into minor thirds- give rise to a feeling of disquietude. These disruptions in the diatonic fabric represent a usurpation of the natural order; the strain and anticipation inherent to these musical devices echoes the madness and decadence of these two characters in their individual pursuit for unlawful hegemony. The corresponding music in Star Wars, while notably less grating, is analogous both in terms of its characteristics and its musicodramatic relationship with diatonicism. There is an uncanny similarity, for instance, between Klingsor's theme and a musical gesture which, in lieu of formal categorisation, could be labeled 'imperial might' (Example 10), as it occurs during the Empire's altercations with the Rebel Alliance. Once again, one finds the division of the octave into minor thirds, which in conjunction with the parallel major triads, results in a similar blurring of key and tonic. Chromaticism and harmonic instability again are employed as a disruptive force in the musicodramatic framework. A comparison can also be made between the fanfare-like figure (Example 11), which acts as a precursor to foci on Imperial activity, and Kundry's motive. The chromatic density of the latter perhaps outstrips the ferocity of the former, but the common characteristics of harmonic instability and preemptive application in the narrative give them very similar musicodramatic functions. When dealing with Imperial subject matter in general, Williams compensates for the blander harmonic palate evident here by the incorporation of militaristic rhythms and instrumentation. This acts as a 'culturally' mythic device, reinforcing aurally the impression of institutionalised violence that the visual allusions to the Third Reich have incited. The Darth Vader theme (Example 12) has the clearest manifestations of this.

While the comparison of *Parsifal* and *Star Wars's* leitmotivs has been relatively straightforward so far, there are a handful of musical gestures whose nature and function are not so easily articulated. For example, the pure fool/prophecy motivic lattice (Example 13), which surfaces before Parsifal's entrance in Act I, and again in the very final scene, incorporates dissonance and tonal flux, yet the progression is essentially functional, and indeed ends with a plagal cadence, reminiscent of a

traditional Amen (and of course the *Dresden Amen* used throughout). This would seem to denote the very tenets of a prophecy: a tortuous struggle with an inevitable resolution, which through the culturally mythic Amen, has overtones of spiritual fulfillment. There is no obvious equivalent in Star Wars, however the 'force' theme, while being analogous in neither purely musical terms nor musicodramatic character, would seem to have the same musicodramatic function. It has a mixed minor modality and is often presented by a solo horn accompanied by tremolo strings, Romantic conventions which still carry enough cultural weight- rather ironically because of Hollywood film, for the most part- to lend the aural/visual interaction an air of both nobility and melancholy. These two leitmotifs are thus in contrast to many of their brethren, as their plasticity is not only evident within the structural lattice of the film but also in the nature of their semiotic properties: that is, they are both able to colour the emotive topography of a given situation in whatever manner it necessitates, rather than merely gripping to a particular psychological profile irrespective of context.

The music of the flower-maidens in the magic garden of Act II of *Parsifal* (Example 14) has another type of sophisticated musicodramatic function. It is basically diatonic and hence invokes in the context both the virtuous characters of the music drama and their virtues in abstraction. Yet one knows the garden is a trap laid by the evil wizard, Klingsor: these maidens are meant to entice knights away from the straight and narrow road of their religious convictions. The unmitigated levity of the music lets the audience know that these sensuous sirens pose no real threat to Parsifal, the pure and incorruptible fool. The rhythmic character of the music, strongly reminiscent of a waltz, captures this mood of impotent lasciviousness. In *Star Wars*, there are a number of equivalents: the cue as the droids wander in the desert, the jovial romp of the scavenging Jawas, and even the music for the altogether unpleasant Sand People provide some sort of psychological release in the narrative. Their harmonic language is certainly more dissonant than the flower maidens', but once again the culturally and kinetically transparent nature of their rhythmic signatures provides assurance that the danger faced by the main protagonists, which is clearly articulated through the images, is without merit. These examples from both *Parsifal* and *Star Wars* are illustrations of Wagnerian musicodramatic counterpoint. The interplay of aural and visual elements creates in tandem an opposition between the concepts of 'danger' and 'security' and a consistent resolution of that opposition. For the (ideal) target audience, their relationship is such that ideas of 'motivation' in the Barthian sense are practically redundant.

Some mention has been made in this discourse of the concepts of 'classical' and 'cultural' myth. The term 'myth' has two important meanings in the immediate context. The first is that of a traditional tale of historical and/or supernatural nature which highlights the significance of certain beliefs, practices and/or environmental phenomena to and of a given people. The second is a reduction of the first to encompass only one particular communal ideal. Both definitions rely on the idea of a group of people sharing something definable, and therefore broadly representable. This in turn gives rise to a pragmatic distinction between 'classical' and 'cultural' myth, the former being a construct with commonality beyond the target audience, the latter only within the target audience. Both Wagner and Lucas recognised the importance of these concepts of myth to their creative agenda. Indeed, the very nature of their utterances would suggest that they did not so much see the mythic as informing their narratives as being its lifeblood. Certainly *Parsifal* and *Star Wars* are

crypto-mythic in both form and content: they ostensibly transcend the familiar and mundane, and thus enable the articulation of certain quasi-religious convictions which their creators felt were lacking from the lives of their audience. Wagner, for one, intended to emphasise the threat he believed Jews, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, women's liberation et al posed to the racial, cultural and sexual purity of his society. The somewhat historical, somewhat imaginary Teutonic mediaevalism of *Parsifal*'s setting was designed to invoke a time and place considered more ethically sound and spiritually attuned than late 19th century Germany, thereby accentuating the latter's moral quandaries. Similarly, the universe of *Star Wars*, with its allusions to the machinations of Ancient Rome and the trappings of mid-20th century science fiction, was a distillation of the sociopolitical dilemmas Lucas identified in his own cultural context. Furthermore, both worlds possess a clear distinction between good and evil- as epitomised by Klingsor and Parsifal on one hand, and the Light and Dark Sides of the Force on the other- and a strong aversion to sex, sexuality and sensuality. In fact, Lucas's ideology is strongly analogous to Wagner's, if obviously less contentious: he wanted nothing less than a return to what he considered to be true 'American' values.

A thorough exploration of the role of myth and mythology in *Parsifal* and *Star Wars*, and by extension, in Wagner's music dramas and Hollywood film in general, is of course beyond the scope of this discussion. It would be rash, however, to ignore entirely the *Gesamt* qualities of myth: after all, the universality of response that mythic (re)presentations can engender would seem ready-made for any realisation of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* principle. As the focus is on Wagner in practice at this time, it seems worthwhile, therefore, to touch on the mythic potentialities inherent to musical discourse, and how these properties can be harnessed by other elements of the artistic whole to produce particular modes of reception.

In broad dramatic terms, myth has the ability to distance and engage simultaneously. A narrative may unfold in an altogether alien time and place, but it is these very circumstances which serve to enunciate certain emotional and psychological states considered culturally or intrinsically familiar to the target audience, thereby communicating them all the more keenly. Music plays a vital role in this process. It can never have the same semiotic specificity as language, and hence a veil is inevitably cast over its intended 'meaning'. On the other hand, music has the power to incite broad emotional reactions without using specific or definite signs, an attribute that language in no way can emulate. Music's uniqueness in this regard makes the externalisation of the internal possible. Furthermore, it can become a conduit for the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal by allowing members of a given audience to share in certain emotive responses.

This kind of psychological communion by way of music is most thoroughly realised through ritualistic process and temporality. Ritual uses the memory, or in the case of (re)presented 'realities', the perceived memory of particular musical, linguistic and gestural configurations to bind a body of people together in a common purpose, and by extension, a common state of mind, (ideally) dissolving constructs of individuality and individualism for its duration. It does so through the formal, often repetitive presentation of these elements, a structural schema which is immediately recognisable to the outside observer, even if the content is unfathomable. The mythic resonances of ritual, therefore, can be manufactured artificially, as it were, by any theatrical form. An audience member may not experience the same depth of feeling

from an invented ritualistic sequence as (s)he would from familiar, 'real' equivalents, but because of their common formal devices, (s)he may well feel (s)he *should* be reacting with greater profundity to the fabrication. This is where the amorphous semiosis of music truly comes into its own. Because it may of itself invoke real emotion, it can in turn lend a particular situation emotive overtones which that situation might not otherwise convey. Within (re)presented ritual, therefore, music not only reinforces and amplifies sentiments shared by the 'real' audience and 'unreal' congregation, but also provides the desired reaction to those aspects of the experience with which the external audience has no preordained response. This ability is especially evident in one particular kind of musical phraseology, the leitmotif. Its inherent nature as a bite-size chunk of memory makes it strongly analogous to the syntactical units of ritual, enabling it to affect the perception of both form and content within a given ritual experience.

The capacity of music to limit Barthian motivation in favour of an iconic, mythic ideal is thus considerably increased within a ritualistic context. This is clearly a boon in any attempt to realise the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept, and both Wagner and the team of Lucas and Williams make good use of it in *Parsifal* and *Star Wars*. For example, throughout the Transformation and subsequent Communion scenes in Act I of *Parsifal*, the rite's mythic constructs are defined most effectively and readily by leitmotifs. The Faith and Grail motives reflect the symbolism of the wilds of the wood transmogrifying into the sanctity of the Grail Castle much more effortlessly than any staging could; the weight of the Sacrament is expressed most emphatically by the trombones; and the Grail motive brings real gravitas to the unveiling of its namesake. Furthermore, when Gurnemanz asks Parsifal for his opinion regarding the religious pageantry he has just witnessed, the latter can only clutch his heart: mere words are not enough to express the enormity of his emotional response, so he is obliged to rely on the broad semiotic brushstrokes of music and corporeal gesture. In a similar vein, the closing ceremony of *Star Wars*, where Luke Skywalker and Han Solo are receiving medals for bravery, has no dialogue. Indeed, this scene is smothered with non-diegetic music, martial but never militaristic in character, reminiscent in all parameters of the triumphant march in Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. The implication of this external commentary, with its formal bearing and cultural mythic armoury, is the idealisation of the two main characters as heroes. Music allows for those outside the film's world to share in the diegetic audience's understanding of Han and Luke as embodiments of the Rebellion: the boundaries between individuals and ideals for both reality and representation are thus dissolved. It is small wonder then that ritual is used to give a sense of completion to *Star Wars*, much like it is at the close of *Parsifal*, with the rite of the Grail and the redemption of Amfortas.

This comparison between the dramatic function of music in *Parsifal* and *Star Wars* has ramifications beyond merely illuminating the presence of Wagner's heritage in one particular film. Its most immediate elucidation is the attributes of the *leitmotiv* construct which make it such an effective conveyor of meaning. These are, in summary, the ability to create relationships not just within a text, but also with outside texts and other phenomena; the use of diatonicism and chromaticism (or proxies therefor) as a binary opposition within a text in order to create contrasting kinds of psychological space; and the harnessing of concepts of 'cultural' and 'classical' myth to give cognitive depth to surface particulars. It is important to note that these qualities and the leitmotiv as a component of musical syntax are not mutually

exclusive. Wagner used the 'technology' of his day- that is, the leitmotiv- to realise a particular musicodramatic agenda: there is nothing to stop a Hollywood filmmaker from pursuing the same end with the notably more expansive technical capabilities at his/her disposal. To be sure, intent listening for the presence of leitmotivs in any given Hollywood film score is an easier way of identifying the thumbprint of Wagner than eking out the accompanying psychological abstractions. It is clear, however, that while the leitmotiv makes an appearance in very many film scores throughout Hollywood's history, it would be stretching the bow a little too far to generalise about Wagner's legacy focusing only on this particular trapping. One has a better chance of judging the enormity of his cultural weight, therefore, if one concentrates on the attributes of the leitmotiv, rather than the *leitmotiv* construct itself.

I may seem to be asserting at this point that Hollywood embraced Wagner the dramatist more wholeheartedly than Wagner the composer, a contentious claim given how much the latter is generally held to have overshadowed the former. This is in fact not my aim: indeed, I do not wish to make any analytical division between music and drama in the context of this particular methodological approach. Rather, I would like to propose the existence in Hollywood film of 'überleitmotivs', musical phenomena which have the same dramatic capabilities as leitmotivs but which are not articulated syntactically and temporally in the same way. As discussed above, cinematic technology empowers speech and sound effects to the detriment of musical sophistication: there is no need necessarily for the grammatical integrity of the leitmotiv in a text whose meaning is so readily transmitted through words and the sounds of the everyday. Hence the Hollywood film composer can choose to paint his/her musical canvas with much thicker brushes, stretching out and diluting the semiotic properties of the leitmotiv in this differently balanced representational medium. In other words, there is no need to render Wagner's musicodramatic interactions- interrelationships, intrarelationships, binary oppositions and the like- as intricately as he himself did in his music dramas.

Take, for instance, the 1996 sci-fi film, *Independence Day*. The courageous endeavours of mankind (or at least of American-kind) are consistently accompanied by a diatonicism strongly reminiscent of Aaron Copland's more consciously public, patriotic style. The evil machinations of the alien invaders, on the other hand, are met with extreme dissonance, the most striking example being the Penderecki-like clusters, with all their connotations of war, suffering and communism, which herald the alien mothership's trajectory towards earth. This dichotomy mirrors the opposition of diatonicism and chromaticism in Parsifal, but only in the broadest sense: there is no substantial attempt to use melodic contours as memory aids or allusive devices, only broad harmonic fields- überleitmotivs- which through both cultural and classical myth indicate certain clearly defined political and moral affiliations. An analogous approach is used in *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999)[22], where contrasting musical styles serve to differentiate between two of the main characters. The anti-hero, Tom Ripley, is associated intermittently with 'classical' music, particularly the keyboard repertoire of J.S.Bach, which he himself performs: this belies his humble background and murderous inclinations, while articulating his social aspirations and (somewhat

[22] The fact that this film is an adaptation of a book, as well as patently having art-house aspirations, make it a problematic example in any attempt to generalise about Hollywood film's dramatic agenda. It is included here, nevertheless, as a very striking example of the use of musical style as an überleitmotiv.

contentiously) his sociopathic objectivity. Dickie Greenleaf, odious playboy and object of Ripley's desire, is typified by jazz, both through his own saxophone-playing and its occasional use diegetically and non-diegetically in field: this music (again somewhat contentiously) speaks to his lascivious nature, animal attractiveness and decadent lifestyle. These musical styles are rich with the cultural and sociopolitical concerns of the narrative's social setting; that is, the complex frictions of 1950s American society between elitism and social mobility; high art and low art; black and white. Their use as überleitmotiv thus lends the two characters in question their semiotic weight, giving Ripley and Greenleaf archetypical, if not mythic personae. Once again, musicodramatic depth is achieved without the direct employment of the leitmotiv.

The überleitmotiv is an especially attractive construct in the analysis of Hollywood film and film music for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is readily applicable to scores written outside the Wagnerian musical tradition, either orchestral music not wholly reliant on late 19th century Romanticism or music using the forces of other genres, such as jazz or pop. Even compiled scores, which are a hotchpotch of pre-existing musical chunks (often popular songs of the day), are by way of their strong cultural mythic content suitable candidates for this approach. Another favourable characteristic of the überleitmotiv in this context is the fact that it takes neither a good ear nor substantial musical training to recognise it in play. After all, the films themselves are not necessarily designed for the educated listener, so why should the finesse of a turn-of-the-century, upper middle-class opera-goer be needed to perceive the mechanics of their musicodramatic interactions? The further implication of this is that the überleitmotiv is very easily and quickly identified by anyone with the appropriate inclination to do so. Consequently, one does not necessarily have to watch vast tracts of film to know whether or not the principles of *Gesamtkunstwerk* are at work.

The facility with which one can apply the *überleitmotiv* construct leads me to make the following assertion in support of my thesis: if one were to make a broad survey of Hollywood cinema throughout its history, one would find evidence of überleitmotiv in the vast majority of cases, thus cementing without a doubt the significance of Wagner's musical and dramatic legacy within this particular tradition. Of course, making such a statement and actually acting out its sentiments are two very different things: for one, a thorough review of the Hollywood canon through this particular analytical prism is clearly well outside the boundaries of this paper. Nevertheless, I would like to attempt to shore up the validity of this claim by, somewhat perversely, posing some questions which attack that very validity. Firstly, isn't there the danger of assuming that certain ideas and ideals which fall within the bounds of überleitmotiv are peculiarly Wagnerian, when they are in fact 'universal' to human drama? To this, I would say that the present mainstream perception of how music and drama interact within music theatre and cinema finds its roots very strongly in the operatic innovations of Peri and Monteverdi at the turn of the 17th century. Indeed, the whole idea of music having the ability to communicate- that is, to have an inherent psychology- is an Enlightenment paradigm from the same period. Much of the antagonism towards many 20th century and 21st century forms of 'art' music stems from the fact that they do not conform to this particular aesthetic, and are

consequently in universalist terms deemed 'non-music'[23]. With this in mind, one could perhaps argue that the überleitmotiv is pan-European- remembering that both Wagner and Monteverdi's generation drew as directly as they were able from Ancient Greek tragedy- but it cannot be construed seriously as a 'universal' construct. The next question would then be: in the absence of any other models, what is to stop the analyst from pushing any material at all into the mould of the überleitmotiv? This I would like to deal with in some detail, predominately by describing alternatives to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* approach.

[23] These issues are explored more thoroughly in the discussion below of Marxist-inspired theories of theatre.

5. Alternative Aesthetics

Perhaps the most antithetical aesthetic to the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* is that developed by the playwright, director and poet, Bertold Brecht (1898-1956). Predicated on Marxist ideology, his mode of theatre encouraged the ability to think rationally and critically when grappling with dramatic intent and its vehicles. The most practical manifestation of this theory is the process of *Verfremdungseffekt*, translated either as 'alienation-effect' (emphasising the interpersonal) or 'anti-identification' (emphasising the ideational). This technique is designed to discourage an audience from identifying with any of the characters in a theatrical production: Brecht believed that feelings of empathy, sympathy or repulsion for the (re)presented would undermine critical detachment. This distancing effect not only highlights the division between the observer and the actor(s), but also the conceptual gap between the reality of the audience and the (re)presentation of reality on stage. This methodology would seem on the face of it to demand a rejection of emotive response, however the subject might attempt to appeal emotionally, viscerally or intellectually. A more useful interpretation would favour the concept of accountability, of being responsible for one's own perception and conception of what is being (re)presented. Every practical attempt is made, therefore, to avoid *influencing* the observer's conclusions, which will undoubtedly always have some emotive elements.

Brecht's attitude towards the process by which music is incorporated into theatre and cinema encapsulates this idea of *Verfremdungseffekt* and, by proxy, the responsibility of the individual. "For its part, the music must strongly resist the smooth incorporation which is generally expected of it and turns it into an unthinking slave. Music does not 'accompany' except in the form of a comment."[24] This anthropomorphic description of the function of music clearly reflects the sociopolitical reason for this aesthetic: "the process of fusion extends to the spectator, who gets thrown into the melting pot too and becomes a passive part of the total work of art"[25]. These comments appear fundamental to the ideology of *Composing for the Films* (1947), a political critique of film music by fellow Marxists Hanns Eisler and Theodor Adorno.[26] It opens with a frank discussion of their ideological stance. Popular culture is treated pejoratively as the product of an oppressive "cultural industry". The semiotic musical codes it employs to communicate are defined as purely socio-specific phenomenon: "[they] only seem to make sense as a consequence of standardization within the industry itself, which calls for standard practice everywhere"[27]. The assumption that they are not, that they may stem in part from more universal understandings of narrative, is dismissed as having "originated in the intellectual milieu of Tin Pan Alley"[28]. This acceptance of ideology as non-contextualised truth is to be negated by educating the proletariat, since "public

[24] Quoted from Willett, John. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, p.203, in Bruce, Graham. *Bernard Herrmann: Film Music and Narrative*, p.12.
[25] Quoted from ibid., p.38, in ibid., p.12.
[26] The original English version of this book is published under Eisler's name alone, however it is generally accepted that both Eisler and Adorno are contributors, particularly in light of the German translation, which acknowledges them both as co-authors.
[27] Eisler, Hanns. Composing for the Films, p.3.
[28] ibid.

realization of the antiquated character of these rules should suffice to break their hold"[29].

Essential to this aesthetic perspective is that music is not a semiotic system, but the abstract art "farthest removed from practical things"[30]. The irony here is that this in itself is a particular sign-laden reading of music as autonomous, with its own intrinsic coding. Their position is an ideology that stems from the dominance in the 19th century of the concept of 'absolute' music, music which does not ostensibly allude to anything beyond itself. A detailed examination of this sociopolitical agenda is beyond the scope of this paper, however their exclusion of other ways of constructing film in the context of their own ideology is relevant in contrasting the varied employment of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and quasi-*Verfremdungseffekt* models. As Anahid Kassabian notes, when concluding her brief but lucid analysis of Adorno and Eisler's position in *Hearing Film*, "… because perceivers do not drive …. [their] prescriptions for film scores, the two theorists can dismiss these practices as bad habits in spite of the extent to which perceivers rely on them for understanding not only film music, but also films as wholes" (p.40). Their approach to film music is prejudiced if not by material privilege, at the very least by obvious educational advantage: the condescending tone towards popular culture and its contemporaneous focal points (Tin Pan Alley, for instance) defines them as outside the majority, as part of a social or academic elite. By extension, their model therefore represents this privileged position. They have, after all, portrayed themselves as antagonists to the cultural pursuits of the populace within the first couple of pages of their critique!

With this in mind, it is logical to intimate that films drawn from Brechtian theory are appropriate for a highly educated and informed audience, while by implication the consumer of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* product tends not to have to exercise comparable critical faculties. The key here is to what degree a film expects to be scrutinised, contemplated and judged; that is, what are the characteristics of its interpersonal metafunction? The Brechtian film relies heavily on the ability of each member of the audience to absorb every separate component simultaneously, supply distinct judgements for each of them, and then integrate those opinions into a single, albeit internalised response. The Universal Artwork, on the other hand, strives to project a single interpretation of what is being (re) presented, so that the audience is persuaded or coerced (depending on one's politics) to accept one set of meanings. The former expects active perception and dissection, while the latter merely passive absorption and acceptance. This is not to imply that the psychological and material content of Adorno and Eisler's model is always more significant than that of the Wagnerian: one would never attempt to dismiss Wagner's oeuvre as frivolous! Rather, it is to suggest that in the case of the Gesamtkunstwerk, the vessel through which the audience is stimulated is far less structurally tortuous, and thus less mentally taxing.

It should be pointed out, nevertheless, that since the conceptions of these constructs are in opposition, so too will be their *ideal* social function. Adorno and Eisler's system lends itself to subject matter that encourages a multifaceted psychological approach. For example, in 1955, Eisler wrote a continuous score for the film *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog), directed by Alain Resnais. This 30min documentary is about German concentration camps in the Third Reich. Eisler's music

[29] ibid.
[30] ibid., p.20.

is for chamber forces: a solo flute and clarinet are used during the open sequence, for instance. It comments on the visuals in various ways; a malformed 'Deutschland über alles'; a coupling of the might of the German war machine with a pizzicato violin and snare drum; and so on. The intention here is not to vocalise the tragedy of the images, but rather to express perhaps a sense of futility in the face of such horror. It could be argued that the enormous emotional power of the subject neutralises any affect the somewhat muted contemplation of the music might have, but one way or the other, there is at least an attempt to realise the theory of Eisler's favoured model in this case. The structures of films such as this are more palatable to an enlightened, critical audience: in terms of promoting the film (most likely for artistic capital in this context), it is advantageous that the substance suits the tastes of that segment of society as well. A rather ironic process of integration, one might say.

The nature of this kind of cinematic experience, and the nature of those who will ideally experience it, identifies it as 'art'- indeed, one commonly brands films with an obvious intellectual agenda as 'art-house'. On the other hand, movies such as *Total Recall*, which are strongly in the *Gesamtkunstwerk* mould and also not overly concerned with ostensible profundity, are the ideal of 'entertainment'. They are required to relax or amuse rather than confront their target audience, who theoretically have been sweating away all week in menial or corporate jobs which inspire neither relaxation nor amusement. In this case, Brecht's observations of immersion/fusion are correct: the viewer is a passive participant, who shirks responsibility for his or her own reactions and instead is told what to think, albeit gently through sensory and cognitive persuasion. But how can one justifiably criticise this, when the object of derision has no pretensions to be 'art', but rather promotes itself as 'entertainment'? Regardless of whether the message itself challenges or lulls the sensibilities of the receiver, the process of *Gesamtkunstwerk* packages it in an immediately consumable way. Again, this is not to suggest Wagner's music-dramas aspire merely to be entertaining, but rather that the theoretical basis of their communicative powers is eminently compatible with the similarly straight-forward psychological impetus of entertainment. An alarming parallel can be drawn between this assertion and Heidegger's musings on Nietzche's *The Will to Power.* In the words of Jeremy Tambling:

> *"…for Heidegger, the destiny of art is to be enframed by technology: in the modern world, art exists only to be used, not as autonomous, not as an alternative or a critique of it……..He sees Wagner's attempt to evoke the Gesamtkunstwerk as a proof of the disappearance of autonomous art: as the concept of art becomes impossible, so Wagner tries to shore it up by making the term cover more and more phenomena."*[31]

Dated constructions of autonomy aside, this commentary actually describes the rise of popular culture, its vehicle, its aesthetic and most significantly, its antecedent in the form of Wagner's Universal Artwork. By extension, it intimates that the blueprint of Hollywood film, the albeit flagging juggernaut of the entertainment industry, is found in his music-dramas.

[31] Tambling, Jeremy. *Opera and the Culture of Fascism*, p.63.

The binary opposition formed in the course of the above discussion, with intellectual, quasi-*Verfremddungseffekt* cinema at one end and sentimental *Gesamtkunstwerk* at the other, is of course an academic construct. The two positions are idealised correlations of ideational/textual and interpersonal metafunctions to connect analogous affect/effect in the service of social function. The reality of cinema is altogether more elaborate and obtuse: to take one other possible combination, there are indeed many "art-house" films which exhibit some or all of the characteristics of the Universal Artwork. Furthermore, the degree to which a certain structural device and/or psychological topography can be employed as a film progresses allows for infinite variation between the two theoretical extremes. The purpose of this construct is to denote potential: a film with artistic aspirations will *tend* to favour Brechtian modes of theatre, while the arbiters of cinematic entertainment will *tend* to employ concepts of integration. This trend can be further elucidated by exploring how certain films aimed at an educated, 'active' audience favour communicative ambiguity, regardless of the presence or absence of Wagnerian structural devices.

Within the cinematic canon, the classic examples of aesthetic hybrid were produced by the collaboration between director Sergei Eisenstein and composer Sergei Prokofiev during the '30s and '40s. They made three films together: *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), *Ivan the Terrible, Part One* (1945), and *Ivan the Terrible, Part Two (The Boyars' Plot)* (1946). Eisenstein was one of the earliest film-makers to grasp onto the idea that film could be constructed according to musical parameters, most significantly counterpoint, instead of relying wholly on the naturalistic progression of the visual narrative. Various musical parameters were used to connect all the disparate parts of the cinematic medium, including music, in such a thorough fashion that Royal S. Brown asserts in *Overtones and Undertones* that "with *Ivan the Terrible*, …….Eisenstein was able to use the cinema as the jumping-off point for a veritable *gesamtkunstwerk*, that synthesis of all the arts that Wagner had aimed for using music as his point of departure"(p.134). However, this is not necessarily a sound analogy to make. Eisenstein's approach was formalist: if the perspective moved up, the musical line mirrored this rise; if the shot was static, so too was the music. This would seem to align it to practices in Hollywood at the time: one is reminded of the scene in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), when Scarlett's father jumps a fence on his horse, to which Max Steiner provides an ascending and descending slide in the strings. But the Eisenstein/Prokofiev interaction was not so one-dimensional to warrant the slur of 'mickey-mousing'. Even though the latter's music may have strictly outlined the former's montage, or vice versa, the separate parts that made up the sound and image individually, and hence the divisions formed within their synthesis, were not themselves integrated. An anecdote from their collaborative process, where Prokofiev was absorbing a visual sequence, will highlight this structuralist approach.

> *"On one occasion Prokofiev exclaimed 'Marvellous!' over a montage sequence in which, as Eisenstein recalls, there was 'cleverly interwoven a counterpoint……the protagonist, the group making up the background, and the column of men cutting in close-up into the view of the panning camera'."*

Despite every effort to integrate the disparate arts of cinema in this process, the viewer is still confronted by a multi-faceted entity that does not necessarily have one dramatic intent. As Brown himself puts it: "Eisenstein's tendency to edit the film as a series of discontinuous compositions organized along formal principles keeps the

viewer at a certain distance from the temporality of the narrative flow (and therefore from its affective implications)"(p.138). There are some similarities in construction to the Gesamtkunstwerk, but its intrinsic purpose is negated by the use of counterpoint in a style of commentary not unlike that of Adorno and Eisler. Were the Soviet audience expected to revel in the might of their homeland and/or reject the social premises of unenlightened periods in their history? Who's to say. In any case, Eisenstein and Prokofiev were working under Stalin: it would therefore seem appropriate that erudite Marxist ideology would govern the final product, especially given that these films can be simultaneously construed as glorious depictions of Pre-Soviet times and propaganda for the then regime through allegory[32].

This early and much critiqued example of aesthetic hybridity is certainly not the only such instance in the cinematic canon. Film-makers have employed concepts of counterpoint for varying purposes and to varying degrees right up to the present day. Most other manifestations of this phenomenon, nevertheless, are not directly aligned with the pseudo-Brechtian experiments in viewer dissociation that characterise Eisenstein's films. Rather than speaking to the external context in which the cultural product is consumed, they generally seek to communicate aspects of the world created by the text. This is not to say that the musical 'commentary' cannot contain material relevant to non-diegetic sociopolitical realities, but rather that the avenues through which the parameters of cinema interact internally and externally are not in themselves intentionally politicised. Theo van Leeuwen's analysis of one of the dramatic highpoints from Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993), which describes the interaction of music and image in the rhetoric of counterpoint, encapsulates this particular approach. The scene, which is concerned with one character (Stewart) cutting off the finger of another (Ada), is full of visual and aural violence, yet the accompanying music is that used previously to portray Ada's sense of loss and entrapment. Thus "the inner world has, for her, and hence also for us, the audience, more reality and more relevance than the outside events, however cruel and oppressive they may be"[33]. Here the music as commentary does not act 'objectively' in its response to the drama as Brecht would have liked, but rather in a more Wagnerian collusion with the internal narrative, however oblique its reinforcement may be.

An example of yet another aesthetic stance between the extremes of *Verfremddungseffekt* and *Gesamkunstwerk* can be found in Stanley Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange* (1971). The scene in question focuses on a stylised tussle between two rival gangs, replete with knife-flashing, window-smashing and judo chops. All this is accompanied, rather bizarrely, by the overture to Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* (The Thieving Magpie). If one were to take this scenario in isolation, one would assume that the fickle kineticism and campery of the music were being used primarily to portray the slapstick nature of the exchange. But moments before, the audience has witnessed one gang preparing a rape, which their rivals interrupt only because they prefer violence to voyeurism (they are willing participants in similar acts of violation throughout the film). The comic interaction between music and image, in

[32] Stalin seems not to have comprehended the ambiguity of the films' content, or the 'bourgeois' formalist tendencies of Eisenstein. He enjoyed *Ivan I*, because it portrayed the triumph of absolute power, but was less impressed by the allusive actions of Ivan's secret police in *Ivan II*.

[33] *Speech, Music, Sound* p19, in reference to Van Leeuwen, Theo. *Emotional Times: The Music of the Piano* (1998)

consequence, takes on much more sinister overtones: the violence may be somewhat choreographed, but who is to say it will not revert to 'the real thing' (within the (re)presented world) in an instant? In fact, who is to say the stylisation is not a portrayal of the characters' own disturbed interpretation of their actions, rather than an attempt at irony on the part of Kubrick? One is reminded here of the dramatic device so often used in horror films, where the tinkling of a music box or the singing of a children's nursery rhyme, indicators of 'innocence' or ' domestic comfort', make an unheralded appearance in an otherwise violent, nail-biting and bloody narrative.

But to categorise this situation in these terms alone would be to oversimplify. For one, the culturally mythic resonances of Rossini's music cannot be ignored[34]. On the surface, it is easily recognised by a broad audience as 'classical', a generic indicator of sophistication and thus an obvious contrast to the rampant animalism of the action. Many members of this 'average' audience would also associate Rossini with the scores to several famous Looney Tunes cartoons, making the parallel between this (quasi-)light-hearted, cartoon-like rumble and the machinations of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd readily apparent. A more obscure connection, accessible perhaps only to a few initiates, is formed through contemporary perceptions of Rossini's place in the pantheon of classical composers. Alex, the main protagonist and leader of the aggressors, is an ardent fan of that great icon of high European art, Beethoven. Firstly, this is rather paradoxical, given the general debauchery and criminality of this character's lifestyle. Secondly, and more significantly here, this involves Alex in the traditional, stereotypical contrast of impassioned German intellectualism, as epitomized by Beethoven, and cheap Mediterranean frivolity, championed in this case by Rossini. His violence in this scene is thus denoted as without depth, as if the lack of real ferocity in this (quasi-) mock battle is somehow decadent. The more serious acts of violence he perpetrates throughout the rest of the film are thus by implication given the cultural, and therefore moral profundity of Beethoven. The tortuous perversity of this particular association reflects the semiotic quagmire of this scene in general: Kubrick is clearly commenting on his characters own commentary, but exactly who is saying what? Is the profligacy of reference meant to push us into Brechtian detachment, where our sense of decency is so dulled that we must judge anew; or is it designed to intensify the dramatic end in an ironically Wagnerian articulation of anarchy? If nothing else, this scene's musicodramatic structure is as multilayered and as pluralist as the decadence it seeks to (re)present.

In contrast to this extreme of semiotic ambiguity are cases where musicodramatic polyphony actually works to *reduce* possible meanings of a given situation down to (ideally) one possible interpretation. This phenomenon is explored in some detail in the earlier discussion of the *leitmotiv* construct and the comparison between *Parsifal* and *Star Wars*, and for the sake of this paper, has been termed (aptly enough) Wagnerian counterpoint. This control of dramatic affect/effect through binary opposition rather than through constructs of unity is usually the territory of mainstream cinema which is considered or considers itself to be more intelligent than the average fare; that is, has obvious arthouse pretensions. Take, for example, the scene in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) where a German soldier plays J.S.Bach on a piano belonging to a Jewish Polish family, whose home he and his compatriots are ransacking in search of fugitives. The music of Bach is generally held

[34] There is also of course a facile nomenclatural correspondence between the 'Thieving Magpie' and the thieves it accompanies…

to be an embodiment of European civilization, and more significantly in this context, of German cultural sophistication. The juxtaposition of this with the violations perpetrated by the soldiers creates a clear dramatic counterpoint between two conflicting perceptions: German society as both erudite and primitive. In isolation, this interaction could be construed as Brechtian, as the two extremes presented provide no easy consensus for viewer consumption. In the context of the film's world and the general attitudes of the target audience to the subject material, however, the number of possible moral interpretations of this scenario is greatly reduced: we are forced to ask 'how can such a sophisticated culture be capable of such brutality?'. This question may be unanswerable, but it is nevertheless clearly enunciated in this scene through the collusion of cultural and classical myth, thus placing this moment of counterpoint firmly in the Wagnerian camp.

It is the hoped that the discussion above has to some extent revealed the rich diversity of possible approaches within the motivated space between Brechtian dissociation and Wagnerian immersion. Furthermore, an understanding of Brechtian counterpoint and related methodologies should by process of elimination bring into relief überleitmotiv- and in consequence the *Gesamtkunstwerk* model- if they are indeed inherent to a given filmic text. It has to be acknowledged, however, that this process of identification is hardly 'scientific': the ready application of Barthian analytical paradigms in this paper speaks volumes to this quandary. Nevertheless, one can assert the following general rule with some confidence: the less dramatically and technically polyphonic a film, the more likely it is to be in the Wagnerian mould (the most notable exception being, of course, the Wagnerian counterpoint outlined above). The fact that Hollywood film tends to avoid incorporating musicodramatic elements whose contrapuntal nature places them within a spectrum from Brecht to binary opposition, is testament to the debt it owes Wagner's cultural legacy. Furthermore, this desire for ideational and interpersonal clarity in communicating the (re)presented is even more explicitly reflected in the physical reality of the way Hollywood film has (ideally) been accessed throughout its history. In fact, I would now like to explore how regardless of aesthetic affiliation, *all* film is informed by the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept through its standard modes of consumption.

6. Modes of Reception

Through much of his writings, Wagner links the progress of society, a major European preoccupation since the Enlightenment, with advances in Art. This is particularly explicit in *Art and Revolution* (1849), his first major theoretical work. It is here that Wagner's blueprint for a pseudo-communist state is first outlined, a Utopia where Art becomes the only necessary public institution, since it is an expression of the public by the public for the public. This model draws heavily from the classical aesthetics of Schiller and Hegel, in particular their conception of 'beauty'. For example, Hegel, in his Jena lectures of 1805-6, describes the Greek *polis* as a work of art: "In olden times beautiful public life was a universal custom, beauty the direct union of the general and the particular."[35] Wagner's sentiments are consequently expressed in similar terms: his terrestrial Elysium, where political and artistic concerns were one and the same, would be a return to the social structure of the Ancient Greeks. These so called Greeks, however, were patently products of his fertile imagination rather than reflections of accepted historical fact. His descriptions have some weight as a glorification of the citizenry, but lose any credibility with the inclusion of the slave classes, some 90% of the population. This bias is acknowledged, but then twisted rather gauchely to his own end. In comments indebted to Marx and the disciples of Hegel, he likens his contemporaries to slaves of gold, the "emancipated slavery [of] bourgeois society"[36], as if the allegory can somehow outweigh the reality of disempowerment.

Nevertheless, this misrepresentation does not undermine his aesthetic stance, that "the public art of the [idealised] Greeks, which reached its highest point in tragedy, was the expression of the deepest and noblest consciousness of the people: with us the deepest and noblest consciousness is the direct antithesis of this, - the denial of our public art."[37] The tragedy of these Greeks was witnessed, experienced and savored by all, a communal religious rite without the contamination of socioeconomic concerns. On the other hand, the so called "high" art of Wagner's time, most particularly opera, was in his opinion institutionalised decadence. The aristocracy and the wealthier merchant classes demanded and were given purely frivolous entertainment, as they controlled the purse strings, which in turn reduced artistic endeavours to mere "artistic handicraft".[38] His description of Italian opera-goers is particularly indignant: such an audience "passed its evenings in amusement; part of this amusement was formed by the music sung upon the stage, to which one listened from time to time in pauses of the conservation ……. the music still went on, and with the same office as one assigns to table music at grand dinners."[39]

Now, to claim that Wagner's vision of the Artwork of the Future is fully realised in Hollywood film would be extremely problematic, especially given the obvious commercial imperatives of the latter. Nevertheless, it is possible to make significant

[35] Quoted in Dieter Borchmeyer, *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre* p60, from Hegel, *Jenenser Realphilosophie.*
[36] Quoted in Ibid. p62, from Marx and Engels, *Die heilige Familie*.
[37] Quoted in Ernest Newman, *Wagner as Man and Artist*, p183. (p216)
[38] Quoted in Ibid. p183. (p216)
[39] *Zukunftsmusik* (1860): tr. William Ashton Ellis in Goldman/Sprinchorn, *Wagner on Music and Drama: A selection from Richard Wagner's prose works*, p45.

parallels between the communal Art of Wagner's Greeks and the sociological position of popular cinema. Film has been the standard entertainment for a large percentage of the modernised world since the 1930s, even with the onset of television[40]. Certainly today, it continues to act as an important centre for social interaction in Western or Westernised societies, particularly for teenagers and young adults. It is quite the norm to structure leisure time with friends or a partner around the screening of a film, to the extent where it mirrors the social function of Wagner's Greek tragedy. Furthermore, much of cinematic etiquette is in direct lineage from expected protocol at the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth, which Wagner had build from 1872 to 1875 solely to produce his music dramas, and in keeping with his concepts of Ancient Greek theatrical aesthetics and customs. The darkening of the performance space and aversion to conversation and applause while the (re)presentation is in progress, for instance, are practices common to the (ideal) consumption of both film and music drama.

The connection between contemporary and idealised Grecian culture can be further ratified by a comparison between Wagner's innovations in theatre, as realised in the Festspielhaus, and the physical reality of modern cinema. Indeed, Wagner himself believed that his " 'theatre of the future' " had become more than merely a " 'preposterous idea' ": "For what our not always very brilliant wags had formerly made merry over with the senseless term a Zukunftsmusik [music of the future] has now exchanged its cloudy shape for the solid masonry of 'Bayreuth' ".[41] In his *Bayreuth* essay of 1873, Wagner outlines the reasoning behind certain features of his edifice, which were profoundly different to the architectural norms of the day. The primary modification was the often cited concealment of the orchestra. Wagner explains that in his opinion fine performances of ideal musical works neutralise the prejudice of sight, through the enveloping nature of the aural experience (in this he refers to his own article on Beethoven and the Ninth Symphony). However, within the context of primarily dramatic (re)presentation, the eye focusing on an image is only hindered in its comprehension thereof by such things as "the technical apparatus for projecting the picture".[42] This comment, at least in translation, makes uncanny allusions to the technology of film. While Wagner was able to sink the orchestral pit, in order that the spectator could witness the drama without visual distraction, he could not cover it over, for fear of blocking out the sound. In today's cinemas, however, this aesthetic can manifest itself more completely, as the 'orchestra' is a recording which is projected in a 'surround-sound' environment: the aural dimension is experienced as a wall of sound, with no discernable point of origin, thus more effectively fulfilling Wagner's desire for the isolated perception of the end product. This is not to imply, however, that the music is entirely subsumed into the reality of the image; that is, it does not have to take on an entirely diegetic role within the visual narrative, such as a radio playing or a person singing in the Field of a given scene. Rather, the music consistently complements the image in various ways, sometimes within the visual context, but more often than not non-diegetically[43].

[40] Though, of course, the introduction and ready access to DVDs over the last decade is having a massive impact on the general form and content of 'entertainment'.
[41] *Bayreuth* (1873), Ibid, p361.
[42] *Bayreuth*, Ibid., p365.
[43] The reason for this prevalence in both Wagner's music dramas and Hollywood film is to do with the importance of communicating mythic constructs in the most efficacious manner. While this is not the forum to explore this position thoroughly, some insight into it can be found in the discussion above of myth in the context of *Star Wars* and *Parsifal*.

Another aesthetic convergence is apparent through a comparison of seating designs. In a typical theatre of Wagner's time, one found a system of tiered boxes arranged to a lesser or greater extent in a horseshoe shape. Wagner could not abide this arrangement, since a large percentage of the audience was able to look either down on the orchestra or at each other! This of course reinforced the barrier between reality and the illusion on stage. The modern film-goer would be familiar with the Bayreuth solution to this problem, for it is similar to today's cinema design: gradually ascending rows, that nevertheless all face the visual apparatus (stage or screen) at much the same angle, and whose ultimate height is set by a feasible line of sight thereto. They are certainly not identical, since Wagner's theatre "acquired the character obtaining in the antique amphitheatre"[44], a description with only the most tenuous links to a cinema's interior. Nevertheless, in the construction of Bayreuth, the 'arms' of the traditional Greek, semicircular amphitheatre were excluded, because the projected outer limits would have had a significant view of the orchestra. The semicircle was thus replaced by an elliptical segment: Wagner's comment is in regard to the *effect* of the construction, rather than the construction itself. This new design enabled every spectator to see the happenings on stage in the same way the ancient Greeks were (ideally) able to focus on the chorus of their tragedies, with a minimum of external distraction. Similarly, the result of modern cinema seating (if one excludes tall people with oversized heads) is the enabling of an unfettered line of sight to the screen.

In reality, the difference between this arrangement, and that of Bayreuth or the Grecian amphitheatre, is merely a product of the screen's two-dimensional nature. To design a curved theatre to view a flat surface would be architecturally asinine; a rectangular viewing area is far more sensible. The consequent loss of seats to the sides is countered by the fact that the ascending rows can be continued further back. The reason for this is found in the distinction between perceived and actual perspective that is encouraged by the cinematic medium. The images in film can portray an entity from any angle at any magnification, from a ground view of an ant at work to an aerial take on an entire mountain range. The amount of perspective variation possible is further increased by the manipulation of these images through time. And yet, the perspective of what one *really* sees never changes: the brain is merely tricked temporarily into believing that the phenomenon (re)presented by the image and, more importantly in this case, its relationship to oneself, is real. The fact is that the actual vessel through which these pictures are filtered, the screen, never alters its shape or size, nor does one (ideally) change the angle at which one views it. The screen is not inhibited by the perceived reality of what it projects: its size is therefore dictated solely by architectural concerns. So the number of ascending rows of seats is adjusted according to the size of the viewing apparatus, which is malleable, from a modest suburban cinema to a monstrous IMAX theatre. Wagner's Festspielhaus, on the other hand, was constrained by the common physicality of the image and its vessel. That is, the singers could never be more than their actual height (some six feet at the most) and the sets had to be designed with this restriction in mind. The seated audience member, furthermore, would have absolutely no variation in the angle at which he or she viewed the action on stage. So while Bayreuth had the advantage of a slightly broader seating arrangement in relation to the vehicle by which images were projected

[44] *Bayreuth*, Ibid., p365

(the stage and its contents), the seating design of modern cinema has the enormous flexibility of being independent from the corporeal constraints of what is being represented as physical by images on the screen.

The extrapolation of this point might seem only to emphasis the architectural, and thus aesthetic differences between the Festspielhaus and today's cinemas. What it actually highlights, however, is a disparity merely in the technological resources of 19th century Germany and 20th/21st century California. In both cases, the aesthetic impetus and even the methodology are to a large extent the same: the only striking divergence is in regard to their technical capabilities in the realisation of their common artistic vision. This distinction has been a major leitmotiv in this paper, consistently recurring throughout, albeit within the parameters of the specific material under discussion at any given point. While Wagner was limited by the physical stage, Hollywood is freed by the virtual image; where as Wagner favoured music, Hollywood prioritises visuals, speech and sound; where Wagner employed leitmotiv, Hollywood expands and dilutes to give rise to überleitmotiv; while Wagner designed the Festspielhaus, Hollywood champions its modern and modernised equivalent. These seemingly conflicting approaches all in fact belie the mutual agenda of the Wagnerian and the Hollywood film-maker: that is, the articulation of 'Drama' through the structural and semiotic principles of the Gesamtkunstwerk. Furthermore, the technological realities of cinema, which have been shown largely to carry through the Universal Artwork ideal, are not magically reconstituted when they are drawn upon by material with a more Brechtian flavour. Arthouse film-makers are thus forced to conform in part to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept, whether they are aware of the aesthetic bias of cinematic infrastructure and its consequences or not. The design of the modern cinema alone assures that Wagnerian immersion will continue to be the dominant ideology in Hollywood, at the very least, if not in filmic circles everywhere.

7. The Future

Through its brief identification of Wagnerian traces in the Hollywood canon, its exploration of the manifestations in Hollywood film and film music of Wagner's theory and practice, its discussion of alternatives to the Wagnerian model in the filmic medium as a whole and the consequent elucidation of strong Wagnerian tendencies in standard cinematic infrastructure and reception, it is hoped that this paper has established just how much Hollywood is indebted to Wagner and the Wagnerian tradition. Miklos Rozsa, whose aesthetic stance was the springboard for this entire discourse, must have been well pleased that the musicodramatic model he had championed in the Golden Age of Hollywood was to remain viable throughout his long life. What's more, it shows no signs of becoming obsolete. Indeed, even as the global and domestic audiences the Hollywood film industry has traditionally attracted become more and more disinterested in its products, Wagner's legacy continues unabated. Just as the *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept made the transition from opera to film as the former become more and more culturally marginalised, so it has found a new home in the world of interactive computer games, as the hegemony of cinema begins to wane. The producers of such cyberspatial offerings as *Half Life*, *Diablo* and *Tomb Raider* have deliberately adopted the immersive- that is, Wagnerian- qualities of Hollywood film in an attempt to capture its spirit, and in turn, its consumers. Perhaps these games will end up being even 'purer' examples of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* principle: after all, they not only have all the advantages of being able to limit and control abstract thought, but also the intrinsic ability to turn once passive viewers of the Universal Artwork into active participants, through the direct and immediate manipulation of physical responses. Many may find this newest and most insidious version of the Gesamtkunstwerk to have even more acutely disturbing sociopolitical overtones of dominance and coerced oneness than past incarnations. Either way, it would seem that the communal Art of a unified and immutable Public, for which Richard Wagner proselytised more than a century ago, is becoming more and more of a reality.

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Star Wars. George Lucas, direction; John Willams, music. 20th Century Fox, 1977.

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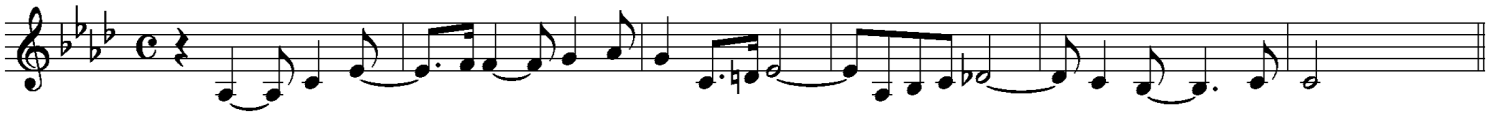
Total Recall. Paul Verhoeven, direction; Jerry Goldsmith, music. Artisan Entertainment, 1990.

Vertigo. Alfred Hitchcock, direction. Bernard Herrmann, music. Paramount Pictures, 1958.

Appendix

Example 1



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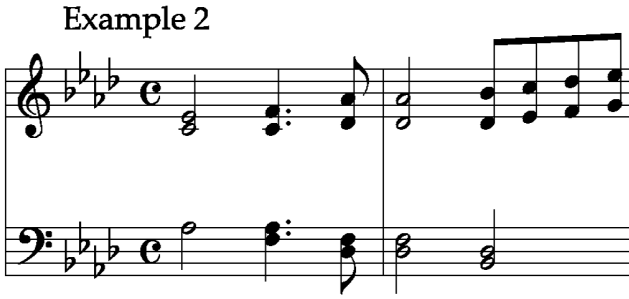

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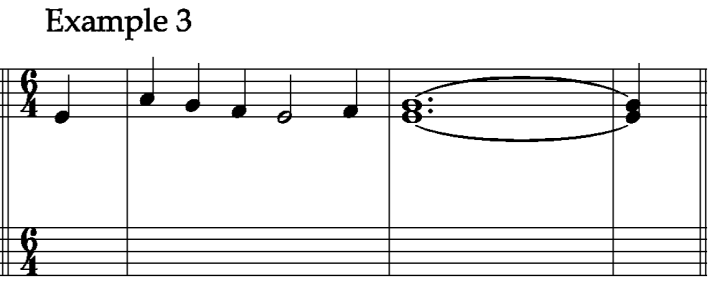

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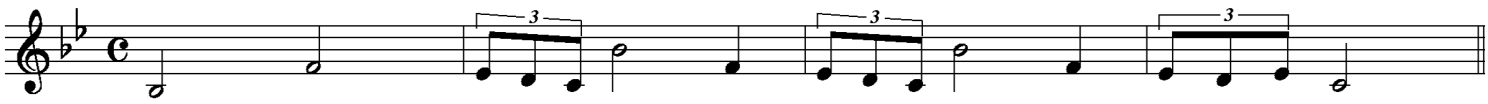

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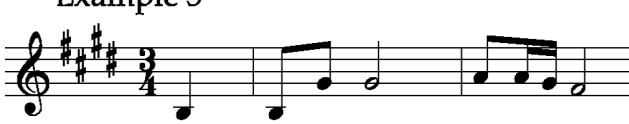

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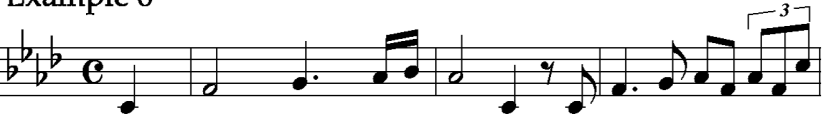

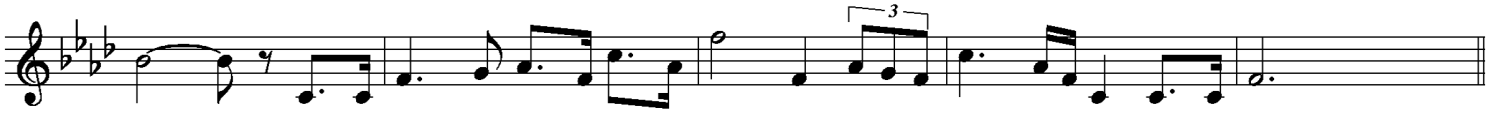

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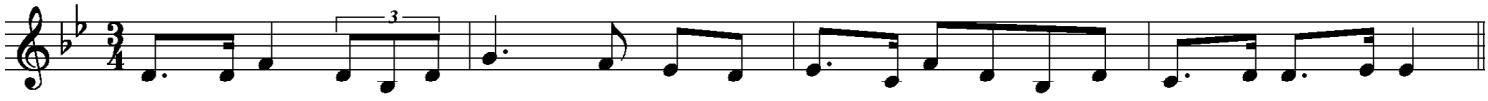

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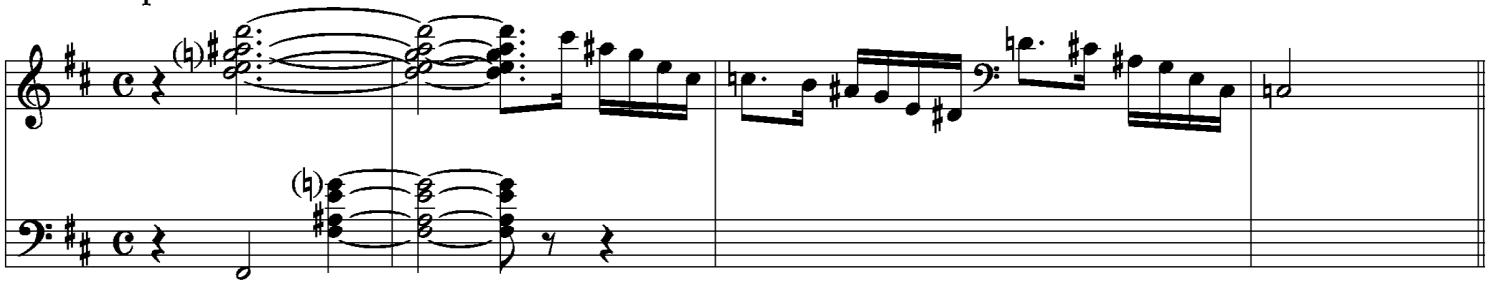

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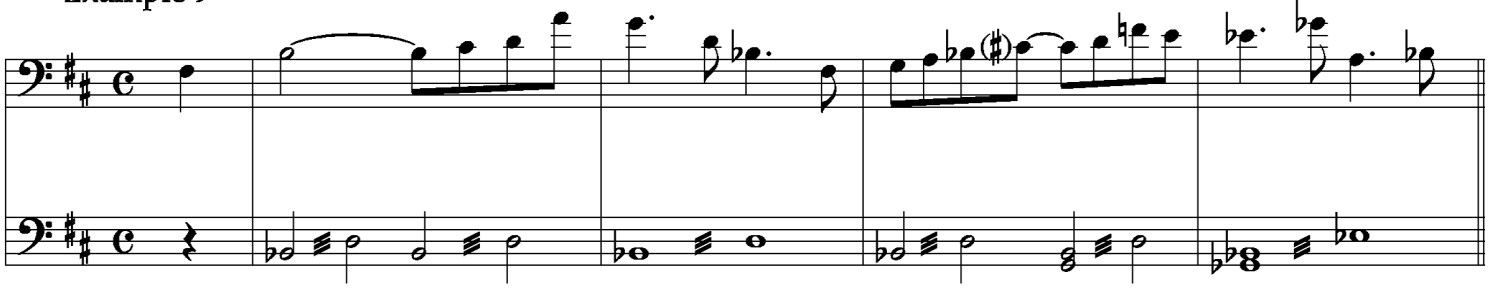

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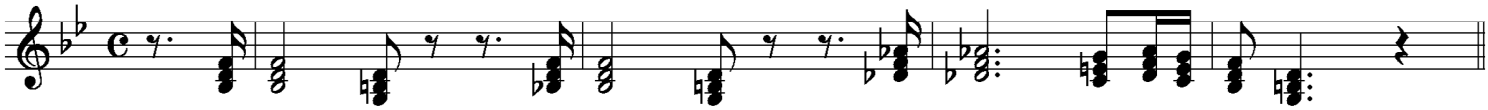

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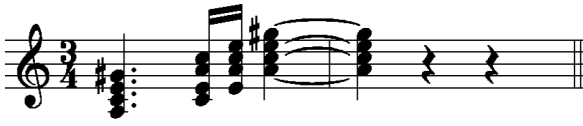

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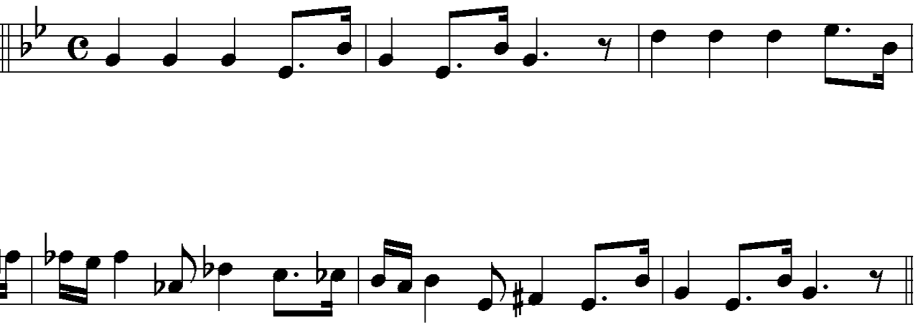

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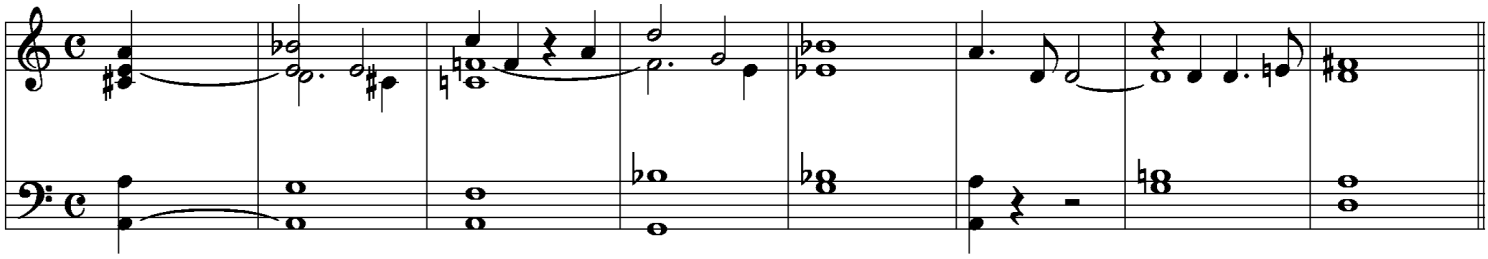

Example 14