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FILM MUSIC AND MULTIMEDIA

AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE AND A THROWBACK TO THE PAST

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Abstract/Zusammenfassung

Multimedia events are part of contemporary society. Music, theatre, and visual arts have been increasingly collaborating with each other to offer aesthetic experiences that are as immersive and multisensorial as possible. Film music has also entered the multimedia arena. Indeed, a very successful type of concert presentation of the film-music repertoire is the multimedia form: a live orchestra plays to projected film clips. This multimedia presentations of film music should be of interest not only to music scholars – film music has undeniably become a favourite repertoire to fuel concert programmes, and multimedia presentations are the most fitting form to present film music. Multimedia presentations should also be of interest to film scholars, as multimedia presentations are a revival of past film-viewing experiences that can be traced back to the silent era. The case study here is John Williams's conductorship of the Boston Pops Orchestra, which has been seminal not only because it brought more film music into concert programmes, but also highly influential for its experiments with the multimedia presentations.

Multimedia-Events sind Teil der heutigen Gesellschaft. Musik, Theater und die visuellen Künste haben bereits frühzeitig miteinander interagiert, um ästhetische Erfahrungen zu ermöglichen, die so immersiv und multisensorisch sind, wie nur irgend möglich. Auch die Filmmusik ist in diesen Ring gestiegen. Und tatsächlich ist eine sehr erfolgreiche Art der Konzertpräsentation von Filmmusiken die multimediale Form: ein Live-Orchester spielt zu projizierten Filmsequenzen. Diese Multimedia-Präsentationen von Filmmusik sollten aber nicht nur für Musikwissenschaftler von Interesse sein. Filmmusik gehört zwar unbestreitbar zu den Favoriten, um Konzert-programme zu füllen, doch sind es vor allem Multimedia-Präsentationen, die Film-musik in einer angemessenen Form präsentieren. Doch sollten Multimedia-Präsen-tationen auch nicht nur Filmwissenschaftler interessieren, da sie ein Revival von frühen Filmseh-Erfahrungen sind, die bis in die Ära des Stummfilms zurückverfolgt werden können.

Der vorliegende Artikel widmet sich exemplarisch John Williams' Leitung des Boston Pops Orchestras, weil dadurch zum einen mehr Filmmusik in die Konzert-programme aufgenommen worden ist und zum anderen, da dieses Projekt aufgrund seiner Experimente mit Multimedia-Präsentationen einen großen Einfluss auf ähnli-che Projekte hatte.

Multimedia and the Arts

Multimedia – the term originated in the 1980s – is a rich field for academic research and artistic practice, having a long history.[1] In music, multimedia experiments can be traced back to the 1910s, for example with attempts to blend music and painting by Arnold Schoenberg and Vassily Kandinsky (see Lischi 2007: 63), or the 1924 French avant-garde film BALLET MÉCANIQUE by Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy – designed to be projected in concerts as a visual complement to George Antheil's score (see Comuzio 1980: 32), and have continued to the present day, for example with Philip Glass› opera LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE, featuring the projection of Jean Cocteau's 1946 film of the same name (see Walsh 1996). Theatre has also had a multimedia turn: think of Robert Wilson's «Theatre of Visions» (Brecht 1982) featuring changing lights, video projections (see Monteverdi 2007: 320; Molinari 2000: 311) and the use of virtual scenery (Ajani 2007). Art has embraced the trend with its multimedia installations (Cargioli 2007; Lischi 2001) aiming to create synaesthetic and immersive experiences for the viewers, either reinterpreting the classics as in TOTALE DELLA BATTAGLIA by Studio Azzurro (Lischi 2001: 175–76) – a video installation re-interpreting Paolo Uccello's fifteen-century triptych THE BATTLE OF SAN ROMANO – or offering new experiences as in Jeffrey Shaw's THE LEGIBLE CITY, in which the visual exploration of a 3D environment consisting of a maze of multi-coloured words is activated by the viewer pedalling a bicycle (see Lischi 2001: 141). Video-Art is another typical product of the multimedia era. Thanks to its spiral-like uninterruptedly moving electronic flux – as opposed to the film's linear succession of discrete frames[2] – video has inherited the *expanded cinema*'s mission of casting the images beyond the screen borders – think of Peter Greenaway's A TV DANTE (*see* Lischi 2001: 83–88) – in order to create new modalities of fruition and a better social awareness of the power of images.[3] The very idea of multimedia can even be traced back to Richard

Wagner and his *Gesamtkunstwerk* and *Wort-Ton-Drama* concepts (see Balzola 2007: 29–30): multimedia as a blend of different art forms combined into an unprecedented artwork that engages the viewer multisensorially. In this respect, the project of the Bayreuth theatre was itself a manifestation of this agenda, being very different from the coeval theatre venues *all‹Italiana*, as it promoted a new conception of spectacle being more emotionally involving and perceptually immersive – the orchestra pit hidden from the audience's view; the lights dimmed so as to make the audience focus on the stage action; the seats oriented so as to face the stage as directly as possible (see Basso 2006: 1248–49). The technological advancement and the pervasive spread of technology at each layer and facet of the present ‹Digital Era› have transformed our world and reality into multimedia environments themselves: think of the information technologies now present in each aspect of our society thanks to the constant development of graphical user interfaces which have become more and more user-friendly and interactive (see Manovich 2001). Among the many players in the multimedia arena, one is film music.

Multimedia and Film Music

Film music is studied by scholars from either music or film departments. While music scholars are generally more interested in the analysis of the musical text – the film score – film scholars favour the analysis of what the music does within the film. However, both departments do not seem to be much interested in film music when it is played in concert. For film scholars, concerts have nothing to do with the film text, so this perspective is beyond their interests. For musicologists, film music is not concert music and it should be studied only as what it is: something written as a functional accompaniment to visuals, not for concert performance – often this view is influence by the prejudice that only *Absolute Musik* is *the* Music and therefore applied music is deemed to be less important and less worth being studied.[4] I am a film scholar specialising in film music, and one of

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1   On the history of multimedia and on the term itself (see Balzola & Monteverdi 2007: 7–24).

2   On video art, see Amaducci (2003). On the language of video as opposed to that of cinema, see also Lischi (2005).

3   On *Expanded Cinema* see Youngblood (1970), now downloadable at http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/PDF_ExpandedCinema/ExpandedCinema.html   [15.08.2014]. Youngblood's text is discussed in Lischi (2003).

4   On the origin of the term *Absolute Musik*, its philosophical context and its aesthetic implications, see Dahlhaus (1978). The prejudice against the concert presentations of film music is discussed in Audissino (2014b).

my interests is the multimedia concert presentation of film music.

Why should a film scholar be interested in the extra-filmic aspects of film music that seem to be of no interest even to music scholars – those who should be more motivated and are likely better equipped? From such a study film scholars can derive interesting historical and cultural insights on the reception and circulation of films. The existence of film music outside of the films can be seen as one of the film's ‹epitexts›, one of those supplemental texts that exist outside of but in connection with the main text and can influence the reception of it and/or be influenced by it (see Genette 1987). Film music is one of such film's paratextual elements as posters, tie-in memorabilia, soundtrack albums, and fanzines whose circulation, consumption and relation with the films are indeed studied by film scholars even if these are outside of the film text sensu stricto.[5]

Apart from this culturalist perspective, what I, as a film scholar, find even more interesting in the multimedia presentations of film music is their significance from an aesthetic and historical perspective. Multimedia presentations of film music provide an immersive experience that allows of a better appreciation of film music: better than hearing it as a stand-alone musical arrangement – in this case, the visuals that film music was designed to accompany are missing – and better than hearing it on the film's soundtrack – where music is often ‹drowned› by sound effects, dialogue, and ‹distracting› visuals. Moreover, from a historical perspective, multimedia presentations of film music are a throwback to the past, when music was played live to accompany the film screenings. Multimedia presentations are a re-enactment of film-viewing experiences that are otherwise lost.

Where can we typically find film music played in concerts? Leaving aside amateur ensembles and marching bands, film music finds a place in those concert programmes aimed at larger audiences and featuring light symphonic music, such as the BBC Proms in London – concerts given by London's major orchestras having popular programmes and affordable prices and taking place in Summer at the Royal Albert Hall[6] – or the summer concerts at the castle of Schönbrunn by the Wiener Philharmoniker – and at the Waldbühne by the Berliner Philharmoniker.[7] Similarly, in the United States, film music is now a staple of the seasonal programmes of the so-called Pops orchestras – the oldest being the Boston Pops Orchestra, nicknamed «America's Orchestra». I will concentrate on one particularly significant and influential case study, that of composer/conductor John Williams and his concerts with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Williams has pioneered the multimedia presentation of film music and his now thirty-four-year long association with «America's Orchestra» has been a fundamental terrain to experiment with multimedia presentations.

John Williams and the Boston Pops Orchestra

Founded in 1885, the Boston Pops Orchestra is the Boston Symphony Orchestra minus its 12 principal players. Its annual season begins in May and lasts throughout June. The Boston Pops specialises in light symphonic music ranging from the most popular classics – say, Rossini's overtures or Tchaikovsky's ballet suites – to American popular music – John Philip Souza's marches and Jerome Kern's or George Gershwin's Standards – to show tunes – Broadway hits and Hollywood music. The traditional Boston Pops programme is divided into three parts: the first contains the classics; the second is devoted to a soloist performing some pieces either from the classical repertoire – say, André Previn playing one movement of Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F – or from the popular repertoire – e.g. Ethel Merman singing Broadway show tunes; the final third presents the lightest selections, spanning from concert arrangements of hit songs – e.g. by the Beatles – to Hollywood music. The Boston Pops play classical music for «people who hate classical music,» as Arthur Fiedler used to say – he led and shaped the orchestra from 1929 to 1979.[8] In 1980 the famed Hollywood composer John Wil-

5 Some recent studies on cinema epitexts are Resnick (2010) and Slide (2010). An example of film music studied as a paratext – as regards the film-music albums in the record market – is Smith (1998).

6 See online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/archive. Accessed 24 February 2014 [14.08.2014].

7 See online: http://www.glockenturm.de/geschichte/waldbuehne [14.08.2014].

8 On Fiedler and the history of the Boston Pops, see Adler (2007; Boston Symphony Orchestra Inc. 2000; DeWolfe 1931; Dickson 1981; Fiedler 1994; Green Wilson 1968; Holland 1972; Moore 1968).

liams was appointed to succeed the late Fiedler. During his fourteen-year conductorship Williams seized the opportunity to erode the ‹iron curtain› that segregated ‹applied› film music from ‹absolute› concert music. Since Williams‹ appointment, film music has become an important part of the pops concerts, and the trend is still going on with his successor, Keith Lockhart, and with Williams› annual appearances as Laureate conductor. Other orchestras followed in his footsteps, from the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, to The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, to the «Film Nights» with the New York Philharmonic and The Chicago Symphony, to the BBC Proms in London.[9]

Film music can be presented in concert in the traditional way: arranging the best selections from the score so as to turn them into stand-alone pieces – as has been done for a long time for the concert presentation of ballet music or incidental music, using such forms as the suite, the medley, the pot-pourri, the fantasy, etc... The traditional form allows film music to evolve from its subordinate role to a leading role by freeing the music from all those cinematic ‹distractions› like visuals, sound effects, and dialogue and thus allowing music to be enjoyed and evaluated as to its intrinsic aspects. However, this way film music loses its essence: to separate film music from its visual counterpart means losing a conspicuous part of the composer's creative efforts. A film composer has to be judged both for his musical skills and for his understanding of the film medium and its needs. The second way to present film music in concert is the multimedia form: the cinema medium meets the concert medium.

Multimedia Presentations of Film Music

As the orchestra plays live, film clips are projected onto a big screen above the stage, the clips being synchronised more or less tightly with the music's phrasing and gestures. In this audio-visual presentation music receives the proper emphasis as *music* – in most cases the film clips have either no sound or their soundtrack is conveniently dialled down so as to give prominence to the live music. However, being played along with the visuals which inspired its creation, music can also maintain its specific nature of music *for film*. When film music

9 John Williams' conductorship of the Boston Pops Orchestra is examined in Audissino (2012; 2014a).

is presented through the traditional non-multimedia formats, its extra-musical referents are evoked in the visual memory of those listeners who have some degree of familiarity with the film. With the multimedia form, the extra-musical referents are shown on the screen. In this way, those multi-modal cognitive processes operating during film viewing are also activated during the concert – music has a modifying effect on the visuals and, in turn, visuals have a modifying effect on the music.[10] Yet, having a live orchestra before one's eyes and having the music thus foregrounded, the listener's attention is now more focussed on the music and on the conscious aesthetic evaluation of it.

The audio-visual coupling which once happened between the original film and its music in the safe and secluded space of the recording stage – where re-takes are possible and frequent in case of lost synchronisation – and in the editing room – where unsatisfying synchronism can be adjusted by slightly cutting either the music or the visuals accordingly – is performed live before an audience in the ‹unsafe› setting of the concert stage. Apart from the ear-catching music, the evocative images and the consistent audio-visual blend, what makes these multimedia presentations even more spectacular is the risky, not completely controllable nature of such performances. A multimedia presentation of film music provides viewers/listeners with a more immersive experience because part of the show is being created before their eyes. In a regular film show, unless there is some breakdown in the projection system, all the components in a film unfold smoothly and in a perfectly timed manner from beginning to end because they are fixedly interlocked. With one of the component being performed live, there is an added character of potential unpredictability: What if some player stumbles over a passage? What if the orchestra loses the synchronisation? It is similar to the excitement that one experiences when watching acrobats do their reckless stunts mid-air: although we do not sadistically wish that the acrobats fell down – not most of us – the chance that such a thing may happen is what adds excitement and makes the show more engaging.

Similarly, keeping the synch while playing to film is not an easy task and involves quasi-acrobatic efforts from the orchestra and conductor, even with

10 Some cognitive approaches to the function of music in films are Carroll (1996), Smith (1999), Cohen (2000; 2013).

the technical aids available – clicktracks, streamers and punches, stopwatches...[11] Such a task requires a considerable amount of practice and is generally in contrast with the typical training of conductors, used to giving the music their personal rendition and tempi and to following the music's own free flow, not the pace imposed by some projection. The very mechanics behind multimedia presentations are quite complex and the technological apparatus mobilised on such occasions adds a further spectacular touch to the experience. This 1997 article – about the 20th anniversary multimedia medley from Star Wars (Krieg der Sterne, George Lucas, USA 1977) that Williams presented at the Tanglewood Festival – explains the many preparatory steps:

Putting such an audiovisual experience together is no mean feat, however. First, the planners had to get permission from Steven Spielberg and George Lucas to «edit out some of the scenes from their movies that show what music can contribute,» Williams explained. Then the composer had to extract the music from those scenes and stitch the excerpts together in a musically and dramatically cohesive way. «You have to make sure there are no musical bumps,» whether harmonic, orchestral or melodic. After doing this «cut-and-paste» work, Williams and his editors go back over the roughly eight-minute first draft and see how it plays, then rearrange segments if necessary to make everything flow better. Then, there may be more musical editing. Once the draft version is complete, Williams has to extract the individual orchestral parts from the complete score and get them printed. […] For Williams, there is also a videotaped version of the film excerpts with precisely marked cues projected on a small monitor so he can conduct the music in synchronization with the images.   *(Pfeifer 1997)*

Particularly outstanding for their spectacular quality are some multimedia pieces from Hollywood musicals in which the level of synchronisation reaches the peak of virtuosity. The orchestra has to accompany flawlessly and very tightly each dance step and each synch-point: here, it is not the dancers to dance to the music but the orchestra to play to the dancers. Some multimedia dance numbers presented by Williams during his Boston Pops years are the famous Gene Kelly scene from

Singin' in the Rain (Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly, USA 1952, music by Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown),[12] Gene Kelly's roller-skating dance to the song «I Like Myself» from It's Always Fair Weather (Vorwiegend heiter, Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly, USA 1955, music by André Previn, Betty Comden, Adolph Green);[13] the dance duet of Gene Kelly and Jerry Mouse from Anchors Aweigh (Urlaub in Hollywood, George Sidney, USA 1945, music by Sammy Fain and Arthur Freed),[14] Fred Astaire's ceiling dance to the song «You›re All the World to Me» from Royal Wedding (Königliche Hochzeit, Stanley Donen, USA 1951, music by Burton Lane and Alan Jay Lerner),[15] the Nicholas Brothers' tap-dance numbers from Orchestra Wives (Archie Mayo, USA 1942, music by Harry Warren and Mack Gordon), Sun Valley Serenade (Adoptiertes Glück, H. Bruce Humberstone, USA 1941, music by Harry Warren and Mack Gordon), and Down Argentine Way (Galopp ins Glück, Irving Cummings, USA 1940, music by Harry Warren and Mack Gordon);[16] the «Barn Dance» from Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (Eine Braut für sieben Brüder, Stanley Donen, USA 1954, music by Johnny Mercer and Gene de Paul).[17] This last piece, the «Barn Dance,» is particularly spectacular and very demanding: the music is extremely lively and runs for six and a half minutes without a pause, having fifty-nine precise synchpoints to be neatly hit by the orchestra, which also has to keep the right tempo so that the steps and movements of the complex on-screen choreography match the flow of the live music performance.

Single cases of audio-visual concerts have been occurring since the early 1990s.[18] Though, Williams and the Boston Pops are an exemplary case because they have regularly performed multimedia presentations with unmatched synch-precision,

proficiency and variety since the 1993 season.[19] Particularly, two forms have been developed by Williams in the following years: the *multimedia concert piece*, i.e. a montage from the film/films with a medium-high level of synchronisation – e.g., the overture to Lawrence of Arabia (Lawrence von Arabien, David Lean, UK 1960, music by Maurice Jarre) accompanied by a montage of the most representative selections from the film – and the *multimedia film piece*, i.e. an excerpt from a film accompanied by its original score – e.g. the «Barrel Chase» sequence from Jaws (Steven Spielberg, USA 1975), the «Circus Train Chase» that opens Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (Indiana Jones und der letzte Kreuzzug, Steven Spielberg, USA 1989), or the dance numbers mentioned above. In 2006 a fixed panoramic screen was installed in Boston's Symphony Hall, replacing the temporary «Film Night» set-up. Multimedia presentations are now a regular feature of the Boston Pops concerts and are employed to enhance the musical experience of non film-music pieces as well: recent examples include the newly commissioned piece The Dream Lives On: A Portrait of the Kennedy Brothers (2010)[20] – accompanied by archival footage of the Kennedys – and Gustav Holst's The Planets with projections of space footage and astronaut Buzz Aldrin as a narrator.[21] Lighting effects also play a considerable part in the multimedia multisensorial package. Refurbishments to the lighting design – already undertaken in the Williams era (Dyer 1988) – have continued, aiming to produce improved light and colour effects that coordinate with the mood of the music being played. For instance, when the Pops plays «Adventures on Earth» from E.T. the Extraterrestrial (E.T. – Der Ausserirdische, Steven Spielberg, USA 1982, music by John Williams) scattered star-like luminous points are projected onto the stage to create the effect of a starry night sky.[22]

So far we have dealt with occurrences of multimedia presentations within otherwise traditional concerts. Yet, the multimedia form can also characterise the entirety of an event. Two recent cases are again associated with Williams. On 16 March 2002 – on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of E.T. the Extraterrestrial – Williams conducted the whole E.T. score against the whole film. This *multimedia film* presentation is something often done with silent films, but at that time unheard of with such a complex and musically rich sound film. The second event was *Star Wars in Concert*, a *multimedia concert* featuring the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Dirk Brossé, Star Wars' C3-PO Anthony Daniels as narrator, projected film clips, smoke, laser-light effects and a spaceship-like stage.[23]

Since multimedia is a very topical and ‹fashionable› phenomenon in the present day, multimedia formats are a way for film music to move into the spotlight and gain visibility from an attention-catching contemporary trend. Engaging in multimedia means being up-to-date and future-oriented. Yet, these phenomena are not to be read as merely opportunistic gimmickry. All the multimedia formats which have been discussed so far – «multimedia concert piece,» «multimedia film piece,» «multimedia concert» and «multimedia film» – also have a heritage older than it appears and a history that can be traced back many decades into the past. Even before the term *multimedia* existed as such, the combination of live music and projected films was already a well-established practice: in the silent cinema era.

11 On the various cueing devices – among them, the less-used «Newman System» (see Karlin & Wright 2004: 111–13; Prendergast 1992: 249–73; Lustig 1980: 42–43).

12 18 May 1996, taped for Evening at Pops, episode #1905 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 14 May 2001, taped for Evening at Pops, episode #2501 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

17 18 May 1996, taped for Evening at Pops, episode #1905 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

18 For example, the 1992 David Lean tribute concert (Later released as Maurice Jarre: A Tribute to David Lean, directed by L.A. Johnson, DVD, Milan Records, 2007)

19 The first two outstanding presentations took place in the inaugural concert of the 1993 Boston Pops season, taped for the TV show Evening at Pops (episode #1601, WGBH Archive, Boston MA, USA).

20 For narrator and orchestra, music by Peter Boyer, text by Lynn Ahrens.

21 11 June 2009 (Boston Symphony Archives, Symphony Hall, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

22 Personal testimony, concert of 28 May 2009, Boston, MA, U.S.A.

23 Recent examples of multimedia films include Ludwig Wicki and the 21th Century Orchestra playing the scores to The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of Ring (Der Herr der Ringe – Die Gefährten, Peter Jackson, New Zealand/USA 2001); The Gladiator (Gladiator, Ridley Scott, USA 2000); Pirates of Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest (Pirates of the Caribbean – Fluch der Karibik 2, Gore Werbinski, USA 2006); and Alice in Wonderland (Alice im Wunderland, Tim Burton, USA 2010). In February 2014 David Newman conducted the West Side Story score live to film (Jerome Robbins, Robert Wise, USA 1961, music by Leonard Bernstein) with the Boston Symphony Orchestra – the multimedia film had debuted in 2011 with Newman conducting the New York Philharmonic.

Silent Cinema as a Multimedia Experience

Rick Altman describes how several media – projected moving images, live music and live spectacles – were the ingredients of the typical show offered by nickelodeons from 1905 on:

A more satisfactory approach to the nickelodeon phenomenon would recognize the fundamentally multimedia nature of the storefront theater program. While a few nickel theaters concentrated exclusively on films, by far the majority of nickelodeons combined films with illustrated songs or vaudeville acts. ... It is the multimedia capacity of contemporary projectors that made illustrated songs and moving pictures such perfect partners. *(Altman 2004: 182–83)*

Later, with THE BIRTH OF A NATION (DIE GEBURT EINER NATION; David W. Griffith, USA 1915, music by Joseph Carl Breil) and the replacement of improvised and often inconsistent musical accompaniment with more stable and fitting solutions (see Wierzbicki 2009: 33) – from scores compiled from the classical repertoire to original music expressly composed for the film – live music became a key feature of film shows. As a consequence of the success of THE BIRTH OF A NATION – «a landmark year in film-music history because it witnessed [...] the introduction into the industry of the specially composed/compiled score that could only be performed by a large, well-rehearsed orchestra» (Wierzbicki 2009: 48) – the *Road-Show Film* trend was launched. A road-show film was a prestige film touring across the country along with a symphony orchestra sumptuously playing the original orchestral score during each show. Famous films touring in such a package were INTOLERANCE (David Wark Griffith, USA 1916, music by Joseph Carl Breil), THE QUEEN OF SHEBA (J. Gordon Edwards, USA 1921, music by Erno Rapee), WHAT PRICE GLORY (Raoul Walsh, USA 1926, music by Rapee e R.H. Bassett), THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE (DIE VIER REITER DER APOKALYPSE, Rex Ingram, USA 1921, music by Louis F. Gottschalk), and HUMORESQUE (HUMORESKE, Frank Borzage, USA 1920, music by Hugo Riesenfeld) (see Wierzbicki 2009: 62–63).

However, the venues in which the combination of live music and cinema could be enjoyed at the highest possible standard were the «Picture Palaces», «film cathedrals» (Gomery 1999: 132) like the Strand, the Rivoli, the Rialto and the Roxy in New York, or the Riviera in Chicago (see Gomery 1992: 34–36). These luxury film theatres boasted an in-house symphony orchestra – in 1929 Roxy's counted one hundred and eleven players (see Altman 2004: 303) – and live music was the core element of those shows of proto-multimedia nature: «Balaban & Katz's multi-media package of pleasure kept audiences enthralled and they looked forward to queueing up for the next show» (Gomery 1992: 55). As a matter of fact, the film screening was just one element of the show:

Picture Palaces always presented more than «silent» movies. Music accompanied all films; the problem of how best to select music was widely discussed and debated. The biggest picture palaces had orchestras upwards of fifty or more, but all houses, however small, had some music, at the minimum one piano player. … An overture to the show was common in picture palaces … The house conductor, who doubled as an arranger, had to prepare a new score every time the program changed, at least once a week and more often twice a week. The largest of the picture palaces built up and maintained vast libraries of sheet music … By the mid-1920s, movie theatres were the foremost employer of musicians in the nation, almost as many as all other live orchestras combined. *(Altman 2004: 216)*

Samuel L. «Roxy» Rothapfel – owner of a chain of Picture Palaces, among them the Roxy in New York – was especially famous for the spectacular nature of his shows and the rich variety of his programmes (see Altman 2004: 274).

‹Light design› was another feature making those shows akin to contemporary multimedia events:[24] «Lighting played a key role throughout the performances. Auditoriums were lamped with thousands of bulbs, often in three primary colors. Thus a silent film with live music could also be accompanied by changing light motifs through the show» (Gomery 1992: 48). Music was a constant presence over the entire show and the cohesive element which kept together all the varied elements of the programme: an orchestral overture, a live show – whose theme was linked to that of the feature film – a few short films, some newsreels, a feature film and a closing organ solo.[25] Music was deemed to be so important that some soloists – one of the most famous being the organist Jesse Crawford (see Gomery 1992: 52) – were veritable superstars.

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24 On *light design* in multimedia shows, see Barsali (2007).

25 On the programmes featured in the Picture Palaces, see Altman (2004: 379–388).

What kind of music was typically played in Picture Palaces? Altman provides us with a thorough account:

Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Beethoven's Fifth were rarely played *in toto*. Most often, a single movement would be used as a unit. As amateurish as this may appear to us today, during the teens it was common even in the concert hall. The choice for most overtures would fall, however, on compositions specifically designed for maximum variety in a short duration. Opera and operetta overtures were thus objects of choice. While orchestras regularly repeated the standards of previous years, especially those by Flotow (MARTHA), Gounod (FAUST), Mascagni (CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA), Rossini (WILLIAM TELL), Suppé (POET AND PEASANT, LIGHT CAVALRY), Tchaikovsky (1812), Thomas (*Mignon*), Verdi (*Aida*), Wagner (*Rienzi*, *Tannhäuser*), and Weber (FREISCHÜTZ), the repertory was substantially expanded during the mid and late teens to include additional overtures by the same composers. […] Several symphony movements and shorter pieces were also regularly pressed into service as overtures: pieces by Dvořák («Carneval»), Grieg («Peer Gynt Suite»), Liszt («Rhapsodies» and «Symphonic Poems,» «Les Preludes»), Rimsky-Korsakov («Capriccio Espagnol,» «Scheherazade»), Saint-Saëns («Danse Macabre»), and Tchaikovsky («Capriccio Italien,» «Marche Slave,» «Romeo and Juliet,» movements from the Fourth and Sixth Symphonies). […] So proud were theaters of their musical program that overture music was often mentioned in theater ads, and trade press organs regularly published overture lists as a measure of the theater's prowess. *(Altman 2004: 310–13)*

It is striking to notice that the repertoire is the same featured in Pops concerts, and the custom of playing excerpts or single movements from symphonies and concertos is again another typical trait of the Pops programme-making.

A Throwback to the Past

In the light of all the accounts and descriptions above, one realises that the multimedia formats used to present film music in concerts are nothing but revivals of old formats of presentation and forgotten modalities of film experience dating back to the silent cinema. Attending a Boston Pops concerts at Symphony Hall today is not very different from spending an evening in a 1920s Picture Palace. There is the overture from the classical repertoire; there is the live show with musical accompaniment: during the years many theatre and film personalities have performed short sketches and numbers on the Symphony Hall stage accompanied by the Boston Pops – Peter Schickele's musical parodies,[26] Victor Borge's comedic musicianship,[27] or Gregory Hines' dance numbers[28] come to mind; there are famous soloists – Itzhak Perlman[29] or Yo-Yo Ma,[30] to name two; and there are film clips with live musical accompaniment. Not to mention the Pops' traditional ‹sing-alongs› with the lyrics prompted on the big screen, which are a sort of revival of the ‹illustrated songs› that were similarly presented in nickelodeons in the early 1910s. Like the Picture Palace shows, these multifaceted concerts take place in a prestigious venue – Symphony Hall – decorated with an attentive light design and with lighting effects coordinated with music to make the experience more immersive and synaesthetic.[31]

Similarly, multimedia concerts like STAR WARS: in Concert – featuring a symphony orchestra, film projections, a narrator, themed scenery, light effects, lasers and smoke – are somehow the heirs of those Picture Palace shows. On the other hand, multimedia films like THE LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy, E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL and the several silent films now touring the world are simply the contemporary versions of the old road-show films of the silent era.

Music was so important in the silent era that the introduction of sound was not really urged by the desire to hear the characters' voices and to add dialogue. The main reason was that of providing all viewers – not only those who were able for geographical reasons or could afford for economic reasons to attend the shows at the Picture

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26 18 May 1994, taped for EVENING AT POPS, episode #1701 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

27 7 June 1986, taped for EVENING AT POPS, episode #8004 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

28 7 May 1983, taped for EVENING AT POPS, episode EAP-23-83 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

29 18 May 1994, taped for EVENING AT POPS, episode #1701 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

30 3 June 2000, taped for EVENING AT POPS, episode #2404 (WGBH Archive, Boston MA, U.S.A.).

31 Curiously enough, Boston's Symphony Hall was one of the concert venues that hosted high-class film shows with live orchestral accompaniment during the silent era: the première of CARMEN (Raoul Walsh, USA 1915) took place in Symphony Hall on 1 October 1915, under the musical direction of film-music specialist Hugo Riesenfeld (see Altman 2004: 295).

Palaces – with a stable musical accompaniment, bringing even to the smallest film theatre the same great soloists and the high-quality musical accompaniment that could be previously found only in few selected venues or on special occasions (see Gomery 2005: 38; Larsen 2005: 77). Sound films made it possible to bring the sound of a high-class symphony orchestra to each viewer in each corner of the nation. Though innovative and inevitable this might have been it caused the end of an era: not just the demise of silent films but also that of live accompaniment. The film experience ceased to be a multimedia experience.[32] As pointed out by Peter Larsen: «The music of the silent film is not film music in the modern sense – it is *cinema music*, an external addition to the moving pictures, part of the total *performance* more than part of the film and its narrative» (2005: 26). Film music in its multimedia form of concert presentation provides an immersive experience that, aesthetically, allows of a richer appreciation of film music in both its musical and cinematic components and specificities; historically, it is like a time travel that makes it possible to partially retrieve the film-going experience of the silent era.

Why should one also study film music in its extra-filmic manifestations? For musicologists, film music in concerts seems to be a due topic to be studied, given the increasing popularity and the undeniable presence of this repertoire in concert programmes. Multimedia and audiovisual combinations can be fruitful resources for music, and the combination has already been attempted in art music too – think of Alexander Skriabin's Prometheus: The Poem of Fire (1910) featuring the ‹clavier à lumières›, an organ projecting coloured light-beams around the concert stage.

For film scholars, the study of film music in concert is not something out of their jurisdiction. It is a way to recover the lost ‹cinema music›, that is experiencing a type of film fruition which looks new while being old, a film experience which has been lost for a long time and whose retrieval is the retrieval of both a piece of film history and a piece of spectatorship history. Film music does have a life beyond the films and outside of the screens. This paper, though not exhaustive and deliberately

introductory, has perhaps given some rationales for tackling this topic and provided some insights that might be developed and deepened in the future. What's next? I can only suggest that some interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary work may be needed: music scholars, film scholars and multimedia scholars teaming up to study the phenomenon in historical and aesthetic terms. Maybe an archival research similar to the one I conducted on the Boston Pops case should be conducted in the BBC Proms archives and elsewhere in Europe to map the forms and formats of film music in concert outside of the USA too. But these are just tentative and provisional pieces of suggestion. My scope was that of reporting a problem (a gap in film-music studies) and providing an example of how and why it should be approached, not so much that of offering the solution.

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32 The coming of sound was a veritable historic change and caused a severe crisis in terms of unemployment within musicians (see Gomery 1992: 101).

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AT FIRST IT'S JUST AN EMPTY SPACE…

ARI BENJAMIN MEYERS' MUSIKINSTALLATIONEN

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Zusammenfassung/Abstract

Ausgehend von zwei Musikinstallationen des Komponisten und Dirigenten Ari Benjamin Meyers, der seit 2012 als Künstler seine Kompositionen im Kunstkontext platziert, widmet sich der Text der Darstellung eines innovativen Immersionsverständnisses von Musik. Kompositorisch wie aufführungstechnisch manifestiert sich dieses als eine Konzeption von Musik, die den Zuhörer situativ, sozial und räumlich in die Musik integriert. So entsteht ein reflektiertes, ästhetisches Erleben von Musik, das mit Konzepten wie jenem der Präsenz, der Wiederholung oder der Soundscape arbeitet. Immersion wird anders als es ein modernistisches Verständnis von Klang propagiert hat, nicht als Hörerlebnis in dafür bereitgestellten, von der Außenwelt abgeschirmten Räumlichkeiten gedacht. Es ist vielmehr ein naturalisiertes Immersionsverständnis von Musik, das die Parameter des musikalischen Geschehens, die Präsenz der Performer ebenso wie der Zuhörer und des Raumes bewusst integriert und damit einen neuen künstlerischen Ansatz konstituiert.

Based on two music installations by composer and conductor Ari Benjamin Meyers, an artist, who, since 2012, has been invited to situate his compositions in an art context, this text discusses an innovative approach towards a new understanding of immersion in music.
Meyers' compositions as well as performances work with a concept that integrates the listener socially and spatially into the music. In doing so, the listener is encouraged to perceive music in a both aesthetic as well as reflected way. Making use of concepts such as presence, the soundscape and repetition immersion is not understood or used in a modernistic sense, that is to say as an abstract experience in sealed off spaces. Meyers' rather propagates a naturalised understanding of music in which the presence of the performer is just as important as that of the listener and the space.