Aporias of Film Restoration: The Musical Documents of the Silent Era between Film Philology and Market Strategies

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"Silent cinema," as film scholar Kevin J. Donnelly rightly observed, "has become more prominent than at any time since the end of the 1920s."[1] It has been experiencing for some years a true and proper renaissance: interest has grown not only from a historiographical perspective, as attested to by the swelling number of academic books on the topic, but also in the marketplace.

The reasons for this new flowering of silent cinema are several. As Thomas Elsaesser observed already in 1990, it has become commonplace to discuss the early cinema in terms that acknowledge its cultural function.[2] The movies of the silent era are now regarded not merely as a form of entertainment, but also as a part of cultural education, as well as a testimony to cultural heritage. Significantly, it was a silent film, that is, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), that was the first film to be included as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2001.

To cite Donnelly, however, "where there are silent films, there are almost always musical accompaniments."[3] In recent years, we have witnessed an explosion in the performance and production of live music for silent films. Silent cinema clearly represents a promising field of activity for musicians "who are able to improvise and experiment, to write music in a certain idiom . . . or historically reconstruct that music that would have been heard at the time of the film's release."[4] The musical accompaniments for silent films have given birth to a successful industry, consisting of *tournées* of live concerts, international festivals, and, above all, DVD productions. The most authoritative museums and film archives in Europe and the USA—from the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin to the Cineteca di Bologna and the Museum of Modern Art in New York—have started their own projects of film-music restoration. Specialized orchestras have been created exclusively for the performance of music in synch with silent-film projection, and many composers and conductors specialize in this artistic field.

1 Donnelly and Wallengren, *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, 10.
2 Elsaesser, *Early Cinema*.
3 Donnelly and Wallengren, *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, 10.
4 Ibid., 1.

Acta Musicologica 92, no. 2 (2020): 180–99.

If it is true that silent cinema is experiencing something of a renaissance, therefore, music can be said to be an integral part of the process: on a more banal level, the market has taken note of the fact that the contemporary public is attracted by the conjunction between silent-film projection and live performance, which was common practice (if sometimes criticized, incidentally) a hundred years ago, but has since been forgotten by contemporary audiences. Like all "new" things, this long deplored practice now has the appeal of a fashionable phenomenon.

If we look at the recent production of silent films on DVD, we can easily see that some products attempt to reconstruct the original music, when this does exist, while others benefit from new through-composed scores. In theory, as Donnelly and Wallengren observe, there seems to be a "demarcation"[5] between a historically-radical and a creative-innovative approach: between scores that "espouse the notion of historical veracity," laying claim to principles of historical truthfulness and authenticity, and those that "aim to furnish something new."[6] It may be true that this demarcation in the approach to film-music restoration reflects another more radical contraposition at base: between those who consider films as "historical documents, works of art essentially imbued with the period of their production," and those who consider films as "living objects," the components of a show that can (and in some cases must) be updated and adapted to the taste of the contemporary public.[7]

Following the demarcation above between a historically-radical and a creative-innovative approach, Donnelly and Wallengren go further in their analysis of "today's sounds for yesterday's films," charting an alleged dichotomy between "historically-accurate" and "novel" versions.[8]

To make my position clear from the beginning, I believe that such a differentiation might be of some use, but only inasmuch as we limit ourselves to analyzing the rhetoric of musicians, that is, if we just compare the ways in which the two major parties of musicians dealing with restoration projects *tell* us about their work and communicate it publicly. Things get rather more complicated if we pursue in-depth analysis of what they really *do*.

The inescapable way to account for the (sometimes) considerable gaps between communicative strategies and compositional work is only possible by looking into the documentary sources directly, and, then, by comparing the actual state of sources with their final re-elaboration in the service of a modern DVD edition. Relying on the above-mentioned dichotomy between "historically-accurate" and "novel" versions, Donnelly states about the first group that:

5 Ibid., 2.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 3.
8 Ibid., 13.

> The approach is scholarly and the processes often follow those of historical research, with the music as an outcome of archival work. . . . There is the aim to capture "original intentions" or "the author's wishes," approaching film as a *historical* entity, bound by and emanating from its "own time." . . . Scholarly history often gives little concession to contemporary taste and tends to focus on "authenticity" and fidelity to the historical context of the film's initial release. Scholar-conductors like Gillian B. Anderson have reconstructed scores from historical sources, using primary information and often exploiting the musical compendiums of the period to furnish scores as close to what might have been as possible. In historiographical terms, this is closely related to the processes of traditional academic history, and films screened along these lines usually have a strong sense of "historical veracity" and scholarly responsibility.[9]

We could regard it as a sort of archaeological concern: the recovery of the past of the cinematic medium, understood as a reconstruction of the filmic texts in their presumed authenticity.

Gillian B. Anderson is the author of at least one hundred musical reconstructions of silent films, many of which are distributed on DVD. The American composer, musicologist, and orchestra conductor knows too well the limits and difficulties of an approach inspired by an alleged *scholarly history* to second such a simplistic portrayal of her work. Her own voice seems much more genuine when she maintains the uselessness of the concept of "authenticity" in reconstructing the musical accompaniment for a silent film:

> Modern performance/screenings and DVDs (although there are precious few with original orchestrations) certainly qualify as translations. However misleading they may be, they increase our knowledge about film music's early practices (synchronized sound arrived way before the talking picture, for example), and augmented our sense of perspective about present ones. As with any translation, the artistry and creativity of the translator is important, and it would be completely unreasonable to expect this element to be absent. We are dealing with music and moving images, after all, and value-laden reactions are expected, even desirable. Inevitably, what is regarded as a "successful" restoration or reconstruction has to be a subjective as well as intellectual judgment.[10]

Concerning her own compositional process, Anderson remarks: "I consider, in particular, my reconstructions . . . to be experiments, the results hypothetical. . . . I did it one way. Someone else might have a different solution."[11]

The notions of hypothetical reconstruction, translation, and even adaptation describe more genuinely the work of a composer called to reconstruct the musical accompaniment for a silent film. Therefore, those who take the claims for authenticity, historical truthfulness, and scientific responsibility literally end up being, so to speak, "more royal than the king."

It is the sources' condition, indeed, that asks that we use extreme caution. This can be said, first of all, about the state of film preservation. It is worth remembering

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9 Donnelly and Wallengren, *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, 13 and 22.

10 Anderson, "The Shock of the Old," 201–2.

11 Ibid., 202.

what the film archivist Nikolaus Wostry declared on the occasion of the presentation of *Der Rosenkavalier*, "reconstructed" by Filmarchiv Austria in 2007:

> Even today, a film-interested audience has not fully realized what film archives actually do in so-called reconstructions and how significantly their conservational approaches can differ. Let's ask the question: why reconstructions?—the answer will often be directed toward a noble goal: the restoration, the release of an "original." But if you look at the state of preservation of silent film in general, it is easy to comprehend how illusory this claim is. Worldwide, we have to consider the films of that era to be ninety percent lost. Despite spectacular new discoveries and much-honored reconstruction projects, nothing more will basically change—the film culture of the era before the sound film is largely irretrievably lost. Our knowledge about it consists mainly of gaps—lists of missing films that film scholars meticulously compile. . . .
>
> The tremendous amount of destruction of film culture that occurred around the world in the early 1930s forces film archivists to be cautious. If they speak of a surviving film, they are accustomed to imply also incomplete films, even fragments. If they speak of a "complete film," it is often meant that the beginning and the end are still present and that the plot, despite gaps, can be reconstructed in rough strokes. But even if films show no major leaps in action, they are still rarely preserved in their original length.
>
> In blatant contrast to source preservation nowadays is the presentation of silent films, which—regardless of whether it is organized by archives, film festivals or other organizers—is mainly limited to complete films or those that appear so. It is so easy to create a distorted picture of the actual source condition. As a result, film preservation faces the serious problem of having to meet audience expectations for completeness.
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> The magic word "reconstruction" suggests an apparent solution. Reconstructions are more likely to attract public attention than simple copies of well-preserved film titles. However, due to the condition of sources, reconstructions can often only be seen as new constructions, as post-creations, *never screened in this form and never seen by a historical audience.*[12]

If the state of preservation of silent films seems highly problematic, that of their musical accompaniments is cause for despair. As is well known, handwritten scores with the orchestration intended by their authors are rare (an almost unique case is the score by Gottfried Huppertz for *Metropolis*, on which I focus below); in cases where piano scores have been preserved (for example, that of Edmund Meisel for *Battleship Potemkin* by Sergei Eisenstein), these were often produced in a different context and for a completely different purpose. In contrast, a large repertoire of mood music pieces has come down to us from the silent film era, which according to their nature, however, could either precede a "musical illustration" or descend from it *a posteriori* (as in the case of the *Fantastisch-romantische Suite* by Hans Erdmann, derived from the accompanying music to the Murnau film *Nosferatu*).

Musical documents of such varied nature, which could represent completely different moments in the compositional process, raise notable problems of interpretation when they are assumed to be the starting point for a film-music restoration. In contrast to alleged authenticity, emphatically proclaimed for mostly commercial reasons, it will be noted that even the most historically accurate procedures for

12 Wostry, "Defekte und Dignität," 139–40 (translation by the author).

film-music reconstruction often require arbitrary interventions in the musical documents—which imply different assumptions regarding the ontological status of the score and the film, as well as their respective authorship.

Opus-Philology vs. Premiere-Philology

It would be easy to find proof for this matter by closely examining procedures such as those employed by Helmut Imig in his reconstruction of Meisel's score for *Potemkin*, to mention a celebrated case of "scholarly restoration." Not by chance, the *rekonstruierte Fassung* of the visuals of *Potemkin* has been edited by two distinguished film scholars, Enno Patalas and Anna Bohn, with the scientific supervision of a prestigious archival institution, the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin.

In contrast, the frailty of the musical choices is evident simply by outlining more generally the restoration procedures. It will be enough to say that the reconstructed version of *Potemkin* is a conglomeration: the joining of two elements that occurred in separated times and spaces. The visual sphere reconstructs the montage of the Moscow version, as it was screened in December 1925; the music is instead that of the Berlin version, projected in April 1926: an adaptation, made by Phil Jutzi, which saw cuts, documentary inserts, changes of intertitles, even a different articulation in six acts rather than the original five. It follows that the music of Meisel, under Imig's hands, had to be cut and sewn together, reassembled and lengthened, as well as integrated with other materials.

As if this were not enough, moreover, the "Theme of the Battleship" (figure 1), which opens Imig's "re-composition," does not come from either of the two versions mentioned above, but from the music for the subsequent film *Oktober* (1928); the theme, indeed, was incorporated by Meisel into the score for *Potemkin* only in 1930, when he released the recorded sound version. Paradoxically, as a case of a sort of "opus-philology"—that is, an attempt to restore the work to its supposed ideal version, by connecting *a posteriori* the "original" screening with the musical accompaniment conceived for it—a fake version came into being: something "never screened in this form and never seen by a historical audience."

It is still more surprising to find a similar level of arbitrariness even in the most celebrated example of a film-music restoration in recent years. We refer here to Frank Strobel's reconstruction of Huppertz's score for the film *Metropolis*. Lang's film epic is one of the very few silent films for which an original, through-composed musical accompaniment exists. The music composed by Huppertz for the film premiere on January 10, 1927, represents a milestone in the arduous journey that led to the birth of original scores for cinema and the individuation of film-music dramaturgy. Huppertz was involved from the start in the conception of this film, as documented in the production reports. According to various testimonies, including that of the composer's widow, Huppertz and Lang regularly met during shooting in the UFA studios in Neubabelsberg, and they discussed at the piano many of de-

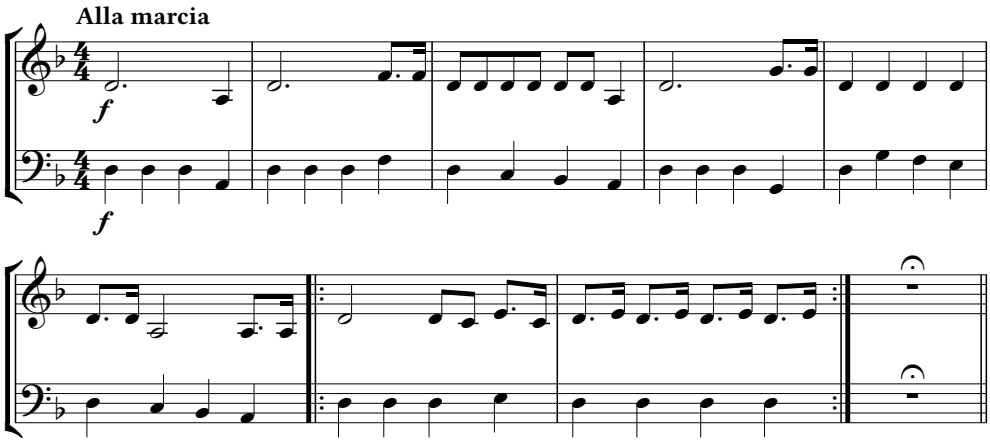


Figure 1. Meisel, *Battleship Potemkin*, mm. 7–12.

tails of the score and the screenplay.[13] This apparently self-evident fact stands out in all its exceptionality, if one keeps in mind what was the general modus operandi of the time: accompanying music was generally compiled *ex post facto*, only when the movie arrived at the film venue. Huppertz instead wrote the majority of the music for *Metropolis* during shooting, between May 22, 1925, and October 31, 1926, therefore not, as was the case in other productions, after the film was edited. This suggests, according to Strobel, that Lang intentionally involved the composer in structuring the movie: in short, music constituted a fundamental component of the creative process, rather than occupying the final stage in the chain of production.[14]

The film has, nevertheless, experienced a troubled history since its first release: an uninterrupted series of revisions, cuts, and adaptations shaped the fate of the film and its music. It is worthwhile quickly to summarize the main stages of this odyssey.

The first screening of the film took place on January 10, 1927, at the UFA-Palast am Zoo, the movie theater owned by the production company and one of the most important in Berlin. On the occasion of the premiere, the film was accompanied live by the original music for large orchestra composed by Huppertz. The film was then 4,189 meters long, with a running time of approximatively 153 minutes.[15]

The movie was deemed a fiasco by the critics and received coldly by the public. As a result of this, Paramount, in charge of distributing the film in the USA, commissioned playwright Channing Pollock to adapt the film, which led to the cut of about a thousand meters of the film (ca. thirty minutes). In his own words, Pollock sim-

13 Fabich, *Musik für den Stummfilm*, 195.

14 Strobel, "Rekonstruktion und Originalmusik von *Metropolis*," 81.

15 For more details about the film restoration, see Eisenschitz, "Wege und Umwege zu *Metropolis*," 45–63.

plified the story after the model of *Frankenstein*. Shortly thereafter, *Metropolis* was extensively shortened in Berlin, following the American version and provided with new subtitles. The adaptation by Pollock, not the premiere version, was distributed internationally, and as a result about a quarter of the original was destroyed.

The score by Huppertz has also experienced a troubled history. The manuscript score has in fact only been known since 1979, when the composer's widow left her husband's estate to the Deutsche Kinemathek. The rediscovery of the handwritten score marked an extraordinary event in many respects: this is, in fact, one of the rare scores of the silent era that has come down to us in the instrumentation for large orchestra provided by its author.

When comparing the score with surviving film copies of the 1970s, a discrepancy immediately arose: the film copies did not correspond to the duration of the music, and some film sequences, which are mentioned in the score by synch points, were missing completely. This proved that the film had been cut significantly. Not so the forgotten score, which was preserved—paradoxically—in virtue of its oblivion. Huppertz's score was used in 2001 for a digital restoration released by the Murnau Foundation and edited by Martin Körber and Berndt Heller.[16] In this reconstruction, however, approximately one-quarter of the film is missing. Accordingly, a large part of the original score had to be cut because the corresponding scenes were absent.

In 2005, the Universität der Künste Berlin released a study version under project management by Enno Patalas.[17] The 2001 digitally restored film version was compared with the handwritten *Particell*, assumed to be a faithful documentation of the premiere version, and modified accordingly. The music, arranged for two pianos on the basis of the *Particell* and the salon orchestra score, was recorded at the correct tempo. Gaps in the film version were replaced by black spots, texts, and image documents.

In 2008 *Metropolis*'s story saw its turning point. At the Museo del Cine "Pablo C. Ducros Hicken" in Buenos Aires, the film historian Fernando Peña found a copy of the film that apparently corresponded to the first version of 1927 in its entirety. This copy owed its existence to the Argentinian film distributor Adolfo Wilson, who had seen the film's premiere in Berlin and took time to acquire a copy of the film before the cuts were made.

A new restoration was undertaken by the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin and completed in 2010 by Körber and Strobel.[18] The missing settings and scene sequences of about one thousand meters, corresponding to ca. thirty minutes running time, were thus found. In the restored version, labeled significantly as *The Complete "Metropolis"*, they are easily recognizable because their image size is smaller and of lower quality. The discovery of the Argentinian version has given us back entire scenes

16 *"Metropolis" by Fritz Lang*.
17 *"Metropolis": DVD-Studienfassung*.
18 *The Complete "Metropolis"*.

from the film that no one, after 1927, had ever seen, while well-known episodes can be appreciated now in all their expressive potential.

The narrative of the events of the film, the cuts, the adaptations that occurred to the film copies, the rediscovery of the score, and the fortunate resurfacing of the Argentinian version are somewhat eschatological, and that has certainly contributed to the enormous interest in the film and its music in recent years. *Metropolis*, thus, serves as an outstanding example of a long practice of film restoration. In particular, the DVD edition of this film raises important questions about the theory of film music restoration and the editing principles used for a silent film with musical score.

The reconstruction of the film seems, like few others, inspired by the ideal of what we could call a "premiere-philology," that is, the attempt to restore a film to the first documented screening thereof, assuming its aesthetic primacy simply because of its historical priority. In the context of a theory of film (music) restoration, however, theoretical problems arise if one attributes to the Argentinian version the value of an exact copy of the premiere version and to Strobel's music that of an exact copy of the composer's intentions, as the title of the DVD restoration *The Complete "Metropolis"* suggests. In his report in the commemorative volume, *Fritz Langs "Metropolis"*, Strobel explains that he aimed for no less than the "reconstruction of the world premiere's montage."[19] In truth, as we see below, the Argentinian version, too, suffers from many gaps, and the musical reconstruction does not lack gray zones.

Film (Music) Philology and Beyond

It is worth remembering that, even if it is true that Huppertz's autograph score and the *Particell* have been known only since 1979, the UFA published a piano score the year of the premiere. The importance of this reduction has so far been overlooked in film music scholarship, if one considers that it is the only printed source for the music of *Metropolis*, the only one that the composer authorized during his lifetime. And that's not all: the more than one thousand synch points in the piano score show that

- it was conceived for the German version of the film, before the cuts were made;
- it implies a refined audiovisual synchrony, as a result of close collaboration between the composer and the director;
- the cues in the piano score largely confirm those of the handwritten score and the *Particell*, therefore no major change occurred to the film between the completion of the manuscript and the publication of the music—the only exceptions are some minimal cuts indicated in the piano score by the word "vide!".

19 Strobel, "Rekonstruktion und Originalmusik von *Metropolis*," 79.

In 2020, ten years after the release of *The Complete "Metropolis"* on DVD, dozens of publications have appeared about the film and its music, all celebrating the fortunate discovery of the "premiere" version. Nevertheless, no attempt has been made to compare Strobel's musical restoration with the piano score of 1927. This comparison shows some non-secondary discrepancies, which are evidence of two basic things:

- The Argentinian version itself was altered by many cuts, probably as the result of local censorship, which deviate from the version of Lang and Huppertz. This means that the Argentinian version is not "the premiere version," but one of the innumerable versions of the film that circulated, certainly the closest to the premiere, but not identical to it.
- Extensive parts of the 2010 musical restoration not only diverge significantly from the piano score of Huppertz, but partially contradict its dramaturgical principles.

We base our analysis on two scenes in which the discrepancies between the piano reduction and the restored version are particularly evident.

The Foxtrot of the Yoshiwara

Toward the end of act 1, the worker Georgy has an astonishing vision of Yoshiwara, the nightclub of Metropolis. Having escaped from the city's underground, the worker sees life on the surface for the first time and is struck by the metropolis's charm. The film sequence derives entirely from the Argentinian copy. This means that no one had seen the scene and heard its music before 2008, except for a few thematic variants that occur later in the story. Nevertheless, the sequence cannot be said to be complete. Many scenes are still missing and can only be reconstructed in part through the synch points in the score.

A thorough comparison of Huppertz's piano reduction and the version released by Strobel for the film restoration shows that major changes were made to the music:

(1) At measure 62, eight introductory bars have been omitted (mm. 62.1–4, 62.7–10): the musical cut coincides with the loss of twelve seconds of footage (cues: "Schmale schreibt," "Autoinneres," "Licht an").
(2) At measure 63, an eight-bar theme has been omitted (figure 2), despite the survival of the corresponding scenes (cues: "Bremse," "Frau im Auto"; figures 3 and 4).

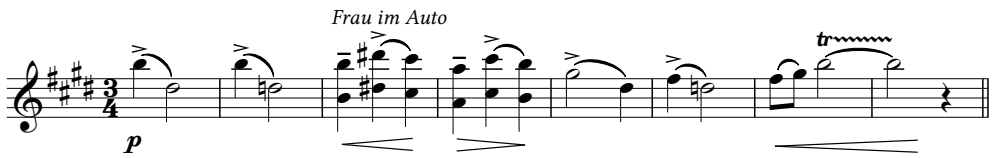


Figure 2. Huppertz, music for *Metropolis* (Huppertz, *"Metropolis"*), mm. 63.5–12.


Figures 3 and 4. *Metropolis* (screenshots).

(3) The sequence above was scored by advancing the eight-bar theme that follows (cues: "Frau lächelt, Mantel fällt," "Cigarette"; figure 5), for which the corresponding scenes have been lost.

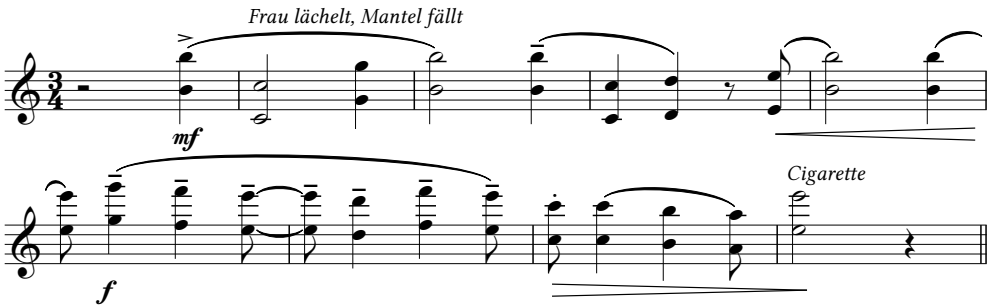


Figure 5. Huppertz, music for *Metropolis* (Huppertz, *"Metropolis"*), mm. 63.13–20.

(4) The large section at measures 63.21 through 63.38 (cues: "Autofenster Georgy," "Gitterwerk"; figure 6), consisting of an articulated thematic sentence of two pairs of fore- and afterphrases (a-b, c-d), has been reduced to a ten-bar sentence, assembled from the first forephrase and the second afterphrase (a-d). The suppressed musical parts (mm. 63.25–32) do not exactly coincide, however, with the film cut.

To sum up, only fifty-two seconds out of 1'33" of the music for the first part of this scene survive. Musically, what remains are thirty-eight measures out of sixty-two. With the exception of point 1, there is generally no coincidence of musical omissions and film cuts. For points 2 and 3, the position of the musical themes has been shifted, while at point 4, the musical sentence was cut in the middle parts, leaving the opening and closing intact.

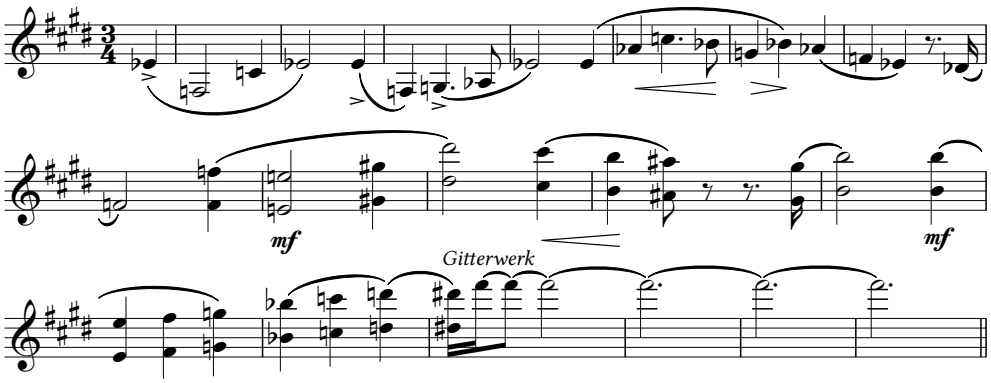


Figure 6. Huppertz, music for *Metropolis* (Huppertz, *"Metropolis"*), mm. 63.25–32.

A different procedure was followed by Strobel in the second part, "Tempo di Foxtrot." The sequence has been preserved almost entirely, except for a cut in the finale (cue: "Nackte Frau"). Strobel only omitted measures 65.14–17 (figure 7), which do not correspond to the missing footage, and he kept the rest of the music unaltered. In order not to omit other musical material, he preferred to increase the execution speed just enough to let the remaining sixty-two measures match the running time of 1'34".

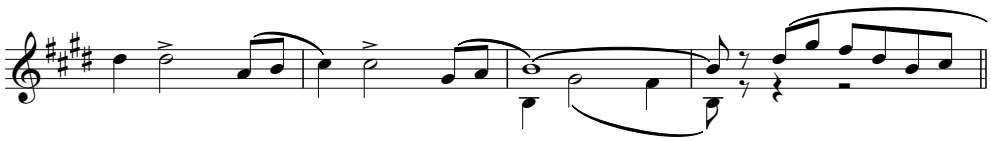
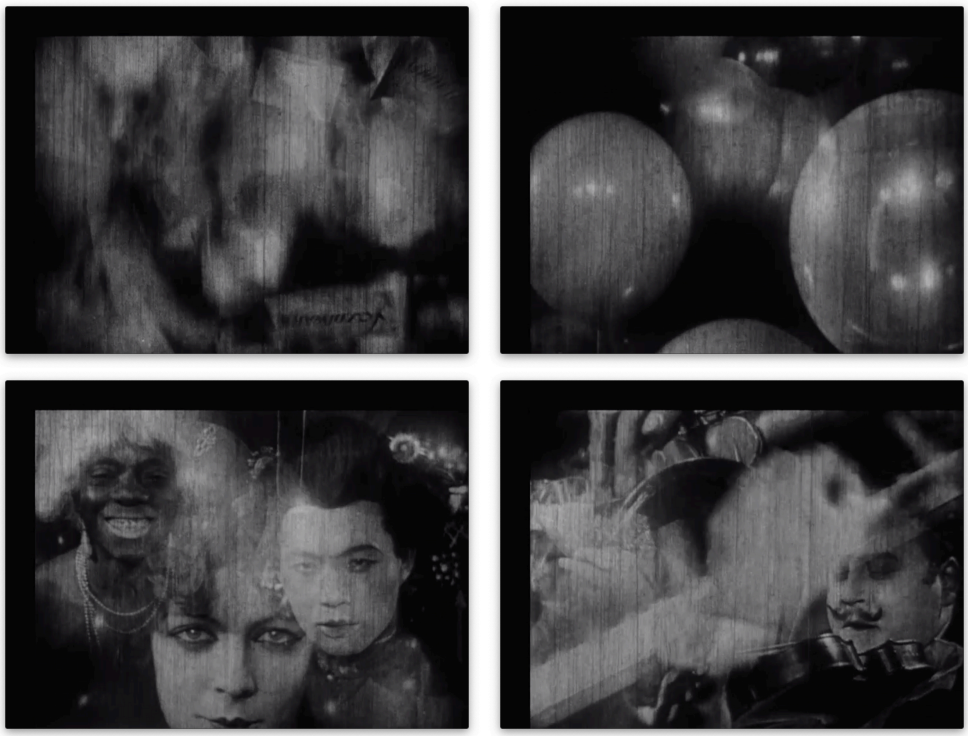


Figure 7. Huppertz, music for *Metropolis* (Huppertz, *"Metropolis"*), mm. 65.14–17.

However, this "conservative" approach caused almost all the synch points to slide. The reason is obvious: by compressing superabundant music within a reduced amount of film footage, one can easily respect the first and last synch points, but the synchrony in the middle part will be irretrievably lost.

This is what can be seen at score numbers 64 to 65, indicated in the screenplay as "Expressionsbild," an accumulation of chaotic images—"nur Zettel," "Ballons," "3 Frauen," "Geiger" (figures 8–11)—which symbolizes the progressive derailment of the worker's consciousness. Huppertz and Lang intended that each new image had to correspond to a new motivic incipit: each synch point is placed exactly above the motivic incipit, and all musical phrase are four bars apart (figure 12). What seems to have been intended here was a demarcation effect: each new musical motif should mark the transition to a new visual unit. The coincidence of visual and musical segmentation was the result of accurate planning: evidently, the sequence had been edited starting from the rhythm of the music.



Figures 8 to 11. *Metropolis* (screenshots).

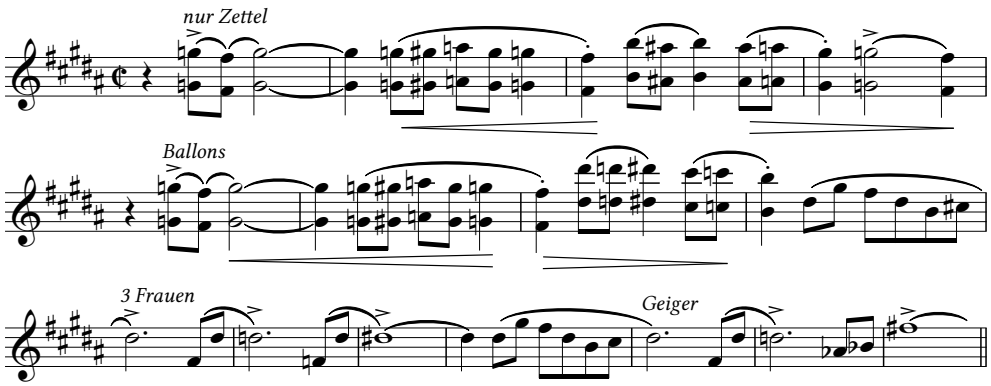


Figure 12. Huppertz, music for *Metropolis* (Huppertz, *"Metropolis"*), mm. 64.15–65.8.

No trace of this remains in *The Complete "Metropolis"*: due to an increase in the execution speed, the marking points of montage and motivic incipits have been misaligned by ca. two seconds, with consequent alterations in the intended audiovisual synchrony.

The Eternal Gardens

The most sensational discrepancies concern the encounter scene between Maria and Freder in the Eternal Gardens, in which the misalignments between the piano reduction and the restored version are indisputable and have blatant consequences on a dramaturgical level. It must be said that, despite the new inserts derived from the Argentinian version, about one minute of footage is missing. That is why ninety measures have been omitted in Strobel's version. As a result, entire musical themes were removed, and many synch points shifted. Even in the surviving sequences, however, it is clear that the audiovisual montage in the restored version is not the one planned by Lang and Huppertz, partly because of the gaps and partly because of decisions that were made in the course of the restoration process.[20]

If one considers that the piece contains twenty-six synch points overall and only seven of them were maintained by Strobel, it becomes clear that in three-quarters of the film, the visual sphere is associated with musical material that was not intended by the director and the composer! This observation is striking in itself, but it becomes critical if one adds that the *Metropolis* score consists of a dense network of leitmotifs. The musical accompaniment of the scene discussed here is based on the interplay of three main themes: the Maria theme, the Freder theme, and the Love theme. Even a minimal shift in the correlation between leading themes and visual sphere, thus, has an enormous impact on cinematic dramaturgy. We will discuss the most blatant cases below.

The scene of Maria's entry is announced by three progressions of the musical idea associated with her (figure 13). None of these is meant to be coupled with the image of the woman, as Strobel on the contrary arranged. According to the piano score as well as the *Particell*, the three progressions are associated with the frames of Freder, the chamberlain, and Freder again (figures 14–15).

Figure 13. Huppertz, music for *Metropolis* (Huppertz, *"Metropolis"*), mm. 15.4–7.

Figures 14 through 22 compare the audiovisual synchrony prescribed in the 1927 piano score and the *Particell* (left side), with the 2010 restored version (right side).

20 We cannot but observe that the 2005 studio version at this point also shows blatant discrepancies from the points of synchronization in the documental sources. The result is a questionable audiovisual montage that differs from both the 1927 piano score and the 2010 restored version, and is openly contradicted by the *Particell*.

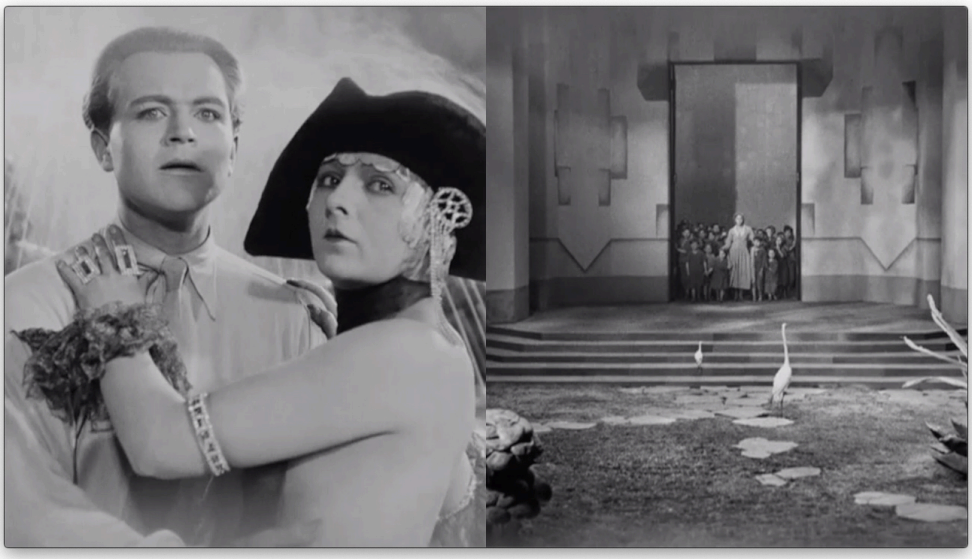


Figure 14. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 15.4 (cue: "Freder aus der Umarmung").

Figure 15. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 15.14 (cue: "Freder").

The Maria theme was thus intended to have a foreshadowing function: Huppertz and Lang prescribe that Maria's character is announced through her musical idea, reflected through the astonishment on the faces of those beholding her before she appears in the visual sphere. In the restored version, this finesse has been eliminated,

and the function of the leitmotif has been reduced to mere identification. In the course of the film, there are other cases in which Lang and Huppertz wanted to see such foreshadowing fulfilled by the Maria theme. In the scene at the catacombs, for example, the exposition of the theme must correspond to the cue "Freder Augen auf" (figure 16). Once again, the phrase announces the character of Maria to the viewers before they can directly see her. At this point, the spectators could (and should) have recognized a reminiscence of the scene in the Eternal Gardens, but this reference, internal to the film, has also been lost.

Figure 16. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 84.1 (cue: "Freder Augen auf").

Let's go back to the Eternal Gardens, in which the Love theme occurs twice. According to the piano score (and the *Particell*), the phrase in both cases should be coupled with Freder (figure 17). In Strobel's version, the theme is instead first associated with Maria, then with the dialogue between Freder and the chamberlain (figures 18 and 19).

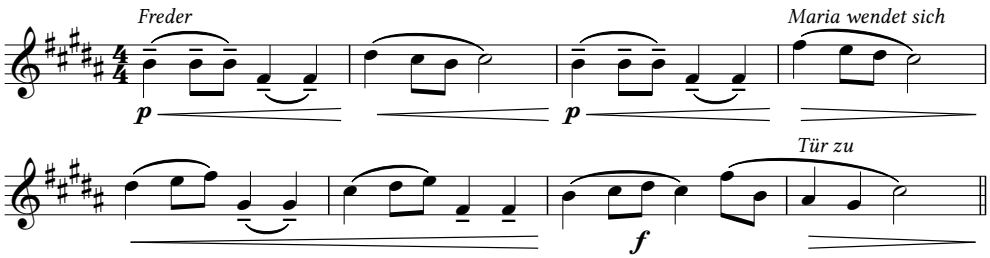


Figure 17. Huppertz, music for *Metropolis* (Huppertz, *"Metropolis"*), mm. 19.9–16.

Figure 18. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 19.9 (cue: "Freder").

Figure 19. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 20.1 (cue: "Freder geht").

Displacement among the points of synchronization not only removes the intended link between the Love theme and Freder's character, but also creates new, unwanted connections. The new alignment between film footage and leitmotifs seems to be deliberate where at least two more synchs between the Maria theme and her image

(once in close-up) are re-created by Strobel in places where Huppertz and Lang did not intend (figures 20 and 21). In the opposite way, Strobel linked Freder's image to Maria's theme where the *Particell* prescribes her image (figure 22).

Figure 20. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 19.1 (cue: "Haushofmeister hin und her").

Figure 21. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 19.5 (cue: "Diener bei Maria").

Figure 22. *Metropolis*, screenshot from m. 15.16 (cue: "Maria"; in the *Particell* only).

The "Incomplete" Metropolis

How does one explain such heavy-handed interventions? What might have been the reasons for such arbitrary changes in the dramaturgy of the film? Remarkably, the most problematic interventions during the music restoration occurred in scenes in which the music has an accentuated dance character (for example, a foxtrot or a waltz).

In cases of lacunae in the film footage, the easiest intervention is to remove the music. It goes without saying, however, that a vertical cut does not have the same consequences on the visual sphere and the music. The reasons for this are rooted in the different syntax of cinema and music, that is, in the fact that these artistic languages are based on completely different temporalities. Filmic language has "prose-like fluidity," as Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler put it. Film is based on montage, namely on the break of continuity, ellipse, extreme brevity.[21] In such concentrated language, a cut of a few moments disappears imperceptibly within the découpage. Musical language, in particular the harmonic-tonal language of a late-Romantic style, is instead characterized by internal processes of repetition, progression, musical rhyme, and symmetrical phrasing, which generate large-scale rhythm. This is even truer in dance music, where the omission of any fragment in the musical line is not without consequences.

21 Eisler, *Composing for the Films*, 25–26.

In order to get beyond this problem, namely that of the inherent syntax of music and its intrinsic temporality, Strobel decided to make horizontal shifts of musical themes in relation to the visual sphere. In doing so, he largely kept the musical periods unchanged and coupled them with the surviving scenes. The choice of a horizontal shift of thematic units has one advantage: keeping the music as a closed text, taking into account the intrinsic references on the thematic surface, rather than turning it into something of a Gruyère. Nonetheless, this choice also has one clear disadvantage: impacting the film dramaturgy. In the preceding examples some more caution would have been necessary at those places in which the alteration of the synch points modifies the audiovisual synchrony to such an extent that we are left with a false idea of Lang and Huppertz's film music dramaturgy. The result is mostly a simplification and impoverishment of the leitmotif technique, reduced to a mechanical mirroring of the visual sphere.

The only viable alternative, with full respect to the genuine state of the sources, would maybe have been to insert black spots with titles—similar to the 2005 study version—corresponding to the loss of film footage, so as to clarify the missing scenes. This would have preserved the corresponding music, but it would also have made the film a cumbersome, obscure, and ultimately non-enjoyable text, yet another studio version, but certainly not a commercial product. Above all, the insertion of black spots would have taken legitimacy away from the sense of "completeness" claimed for this restoration—it could not have been *The Complete "Metropolis"*.

As more extensive insight from the documentary sources shows, thus, even a scholarly, accurate, and rather successful restoration, like the one at stake here, can only be judged as a compromise. In spite of simplistic dichotomies and false representations for the benefit of the market, a film restoration of this kind reveals itself as a commercial product, situated between differing or even opposing demands. *The Complete "Metropolis"* does not aim to reconstruct an unrepeatable segment of the past of the cinematic medium in alleged faithfulness to the *intentio auctoris*. An incidental consequence, however, is that those who want to explore Huppertz and Lang's film music dramaturgy on the basis of the sequences above would suffer from considerable misunderstanding.

Despite all declared claims for philological completeness and historical truthfulness, the reconstruction of silent film music proves rather to be a process of translation and adaptation. And it could not be otherwise for a DVD recording in post-synchronization—a market product that, in and of itself, remains foreign to the historical existence of silent cinema to every extent. The final result of such a procedure—whatever one wants to label it, either as "scholarly-accurate," "historically-radical," or "creative-innovative"—is not only historically new and indirectly derivable from the state of the sources, but also completely rooted in the aesthetic expectations of the present era.

Acknowledgments

This article presents, in an extended form, the content of a paper given at the annual conference of the Austrian Musicological Society, "Musik Quellen Denken," Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, December 6 to 8, 2018. I would like to thank the following colleagues for their help with this article: Alexander Rausch for inviting me to lecture on this subject at the conference, Julia Bungardt, Elisabeth Reisinger, and Scott L. Edwards for their criticism on the first draft, as well as Gillian B. Anderson for her gracious suggestions. A special thank-you goes to Ornella Calvano for her precious support at the Deutsche Kinemathek's music archive.

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