Francesco Finocchiaro

"Im Anfang war der Rhythmus":
Aesthetic Abstractions in the Film Music Composition of the 1920s

Abstract. During the silent era, film theory assigned to music an essential role insofar as it claimed the birth and filiation of the so-called "tenth Muse" from the more ancient and noble "art of sounds." The thesis of an elective affinity between music and cinema found a theoretical systematization in the writings of Georg Otto Stindt, Béla Balázs, and Hans Erdmann, who identified the rhythmic dimension as the *trait d'union* between these two forms of art. Filmic rhythm, as Erdmann explains in the *Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Musik* (1927), has a double nature. At a basic level, film rhythm comes into expression where scenic movements are being musically stylized through the principles of dance, march, as well as the motion of machines at work. In instances like these, the music closely follows the narrated events and establishes a painstaking correspondence with the visuals. The artistic link between music and image, however, cannot be reduced to this mere descriptive illustration. This simple synchronization is nothing but a *small-scale rhythm*. The scenic events, indeed, unfold according to a line of feelings whose overall movement describes what Erdmann calls, in clear allusion to Eduard Hanslick, a *large-scale rhythm*. Music in cinema, thus, should not only adhere to the small-scale rhythm determined by the outer movements and the pantomime, but rather comply with the large-scale rhythm that underlies the narrated events. In the *Allgemeines Handbuch*, Erdmann names this structural rhythm with the term *Eurhythmie*, meaning nothing less than the temporal articulation of the film and its dramaturgical construction as a narrational curve. Erdmann's theory of a film rhythm and its significant implications for film music composition are discussed through the analysis of paradigmatic film sequences taken from *Nosferatu* (1922) by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau and *Metropolis* (1927) by Fritz Lang.

Keywords: silent film, film music, rhythm, Hans Erdmann, *Nosferatu*.

1. "Film ist Rhythmus"

The notion of rhythm, along with its metaphorical implications from the musical sphere, constitutes a *topos* for all films from the silent and early sound era. *Film ist Rhythmus* is not by chance the title of the famous short film by Hans Richter and one of the masterpieces of abstract cinema. This "musical calling" in the domain of the cinematic art was not an isolated incident but based on a long-standing tradition.

During the silent era, as we know, "real" music, that is, the concrete accompanying music for film projections was in an extremely precarious state. Nevertheless, there is not a single silent film theory that does not claim, *nota bene*, not only and not so much the necessity of music for cinema but rather the birth and filiation of the so-called "tenth Muse" from the more ancient and noble "art of sounds." The 1920s in Europe saw both film directors and theoreticians draw inspiration from music and its syntactical structures in their attempts to formalize and verbalize the language of cinema – a language that at the time was still being forged, at least in part.

Starting with Walter Ruttmann, Viking Eggeling, and Hans Richter, many filmmakers of avant-garde cinema were influenced by music. A recurring element in their writings is the reference to the language of music, to its laws and terminology: to the notion of counterpoint, for instance, in structuring the vertical dimension of the visual sphere; the notion of timbre for the play of hues; and, evidently, the concept of rhythm for organizing the horizontal dimension. What the short films of Ruttmann (*Lichtspiel Opus I, Opus II, Opus III, Opus IV*), Eggeling (*Horizontal-vertical Orchestra, Symphonie diagonale*), and Richter (*Vormittagsspuk*, as well as the aforementioned *Film ist Rhythmus*) have in common is the "musical" conception of the moving images: the fact that they confer an acoustic, sonic, and even musical semblance to a purely visual material. In his famous manifesto, Ruttmann defined his cinema as "painting with time" (*Malerei mit Zeit*):[1] a sort of visual art composed of lines, colours, and shapes that do not merely arrange themselves spatially but also develop along the temporal axis, establishing relations of symmetry, alternation, and correspondence. This "art for the eyes" aspires to organize time rigorously, according to specifically musical principles. In this way, cinema emancipates itself from narrative fiction and the reproduction of nature, and becomes a self-standing, purely formal art.

In this search for a visual language with a highly formalized syntax, no other art could have provided a richer vocabulary and a more powerful conceptual paradigm than art music – especially pure instrumental music. The drive towards abstraction explains the frequent use of musical titles for the films. But even more significant is the title of the Berlin *Filmmatinee* "Der Absolute Film" – which took place May 3, 1925, at the Ufa-Theater am Kurfürstendamm – in which members of the *Novembergruppe* (Ruttmann, Eggeling, Richter, and

---

[1]   *Malerei mit Zeit* is the title of the famous manuscript of Ruttmann from 1919/20, conserved in the artist's legacy. The document is reproduced in Ruttmann (2010).

Hirschfeld-Mack), along with a few French colleagues (Léger, Picabia, and Clair), presented their experiments. The idea of an "absolute cinema" after which the *Matinee* was titled, explicitly recalled the notion of "absolute music" – music freed from any external link and supposed to be an end in itself. Just like pure instrumental music, abstract cinema aspires to an autotelic language, a language that relies solely on intratextual references, to the point of being ultimately reduced to the temporal unfolding of lines, colours, and forms.

2. *Musica mundana*

In the same period, the thesis of an "elective affinity" between music and cinema found theoretical systematization also in the writings of Georg Otto Stindt and Béla Balázs, who both identified the rhythmic dimension as the *trait d'union* between these two forms of art.

In the preface to *Das Lichtspiel als Kunstform*, Georg Otto Stindt peremptory asserted: "Cinema is a new form of art" (Stindt 1924: 5). And like any other form of art, it has its own "formal law" (ibid.), which for Stindt is summed up in the formula "action (pantomime + rhythm) = unity of effect" (*Handlung (Pantomime + Rhythmus) = Wirkungseinheit*) (idem.: 25). In other words: the unity of effect of a successful film consists of the harmony between "internal and external movement" (idem.: 24). The external movement comes into expression through pantomime: external events "are based on action, alternation of spaces, contrast between the characters" (ibid.). Nonetheless, beneath the surface of external events, at a deeper level, an inner movement also operates, which "has its roots in the excitations of the psyche" (ibid.): "Pantomime – indeed – is not inner life, but only its consequence, an expression of psychic motions" (idem.: 27). In film, Stindt pointed out, this inner movement is expressed through rhythm.

Here, the role of music as a metaphorical model for cinema becomes evident. "It is rhythm – so Stindt – that images and music have in common, and that alone gives life to both" (idem.: 18). The motto "*Im Anfang war der Rhythmus*" [In the beginning was the rhythm], attributed to Hans von Bülow, is taken up by Stindt and used to seal his argument (idem.: 25).

In truth, Stindt gives rhythm a rather generic definition: "Rhythm is the periodic and alternating succession of external impressions on the ear and eye of the human being" (ibid.) so as to allow, by analogy, its application to optical stimuli. With the term "rhythm" he alludes to the possibilities of visual construction made possible by montage. In that it determines the timing of frames and sequences, montage organizes the film on a temporal level, giving the succession of images more or less regularity and symmetry. The horizontal organization of images constitutes a "potentiated rhythm", whose possibilities of construction are virtually unlimited: "Film has at its disposal all things living and dead between heaven and earth to excite the eye" (idem.: 25–26). Elaborating on this analogy, Stindt comes to assert that, insofar as the speed of the montage and the succession of images create a visual rhythm (*Bildrhythmus*), one can even speak of an "inner musicality" (idem.: 46) of film. In this way, he concludes, "film tends towards pure music" (idem.: 47).

This raises the question of what kind of musical accompaniment can be appropriate and plausible for a film that already possesses its own musicality. First of all, Stindt observes, "it seems a contradiction to accompany a film with pre-existing music, for this is based on completely different rhythms" (ibid.). The film therefore must have its own music; music that, however, does not merely illustrate the outer movements and the scenic events, as was the custom in contemporary musical illustrations. On the contrary, the task of musical accompaniment for the film must comply with the visual construction, that is, with the rhythm of montage: "A good film must certainly have its own music, but music whose sound waves vibrate at the same rhythm as the light waves of its visual sphere" (ibid.). The relationship whereby musical rhythm is subordinated to visual rhythm is ultimately expressed in clearly Wagnerian terms: "Music that rather than being a means seeks to represent the end itself must be considered as not artistic, false" (idem.: 50).

In his *Der sichtbare Mensch* (2001/1924), Béla Balázs also devotes an important chapter to filmic rhythm, later reprised and expanded in *Der Geist des Films* (2001/1930). The discussion carried out by the Hungarian film critic unfolds in chapters whose titles – *Optische Musik*, *Bewegung des Ornaments*, *Kontrapunkt verschiedener Sphären* etc. – already show a deep metaphorical inspiration from the domain of music.

In the style of filmmakers such as Eisenstein and Ruttmann, Balázs recognizes the evolution of the montage technique "at the stage of an absolutely unique and extraordinarily diversified art" (Balázs 2001: 49). The *Bildrhythmus* determined by montage shapes the overall breath of the film as an alternation of stresses and rest points. The rhythm of the montage, in its elaboration as a self-contained syntax, can even be detached from the dramatic content of the story: it "can earn its own, completely autonomous, musical valence, and establish an entirely remote and irrational relationship with the visuals" (idem.: 50). Images seemingly devoid

of any dramatic content such as a landscape – says Balázs, anticipating Sergei Eisenstein's theory of musical landscape by almost twenty years – receive a "musical" rather than a purely pictorial treatment, in the sense that the graphic forms of the visuals are elaborated and constructed according to strictly musical principles. This makes the landscape scene a self-standing expressive and dramaturgical unity with its own emotionality:

> The images of a landscape, images of buildings or objects, which are completely void of dramatic content, can restore visual rhythm through montage, which is no less expressive than music (ibid.).

The "musical" composition of the visual sphere, indeed, does not necessarily have to match the outer content of the events being represented, but can even establish a dialectical relationship with them: "The visual music of the montage flows in its own dimension alongside the conceptuality of the visuals" (ibid.). The two spheres may be placed in a contrapuntal relation to each other: they can interact, be placed in tension and sometimes even in antiphrasis. The filmic rhythm, per se, can create a refined polyrhythmic play: the rhythm of montage, the movement of the camera, and the motion of objects within the frames create separate rhythms, which too interact according to a variety of relations, ranging from coincidence to counterpoint.

Visual music, in other words, can give a metaphorical representation of various aspects of the musical universe, from counterpoint to polyrhythm. Yet, by a strange paradox, it is not allowed to unite with "real" music. The notion of *Bildrhythmus* does have its elective reference in music, but leaves music itself in silence. It is a wonder that Balázs spends not a single line of his chapter on *Rhythmus* about musical accompaniment, as if cinema possessed an inner musicality so preponderant so as not to bear union with external, effectively resonant music.

On closer inspection, this paradox reveals a contradictory and ambivalent relationship towards music, which, despite different nuances and stresses, is common to the positions of several film theoreticians. What role could music ever have, Lydia Goehr (2008: 215) rightly asks, in an art that aspires to be "musical" by itself? Silent cinema aims to be "musical" but in a totalizing manner, without music, in the silence of moving pictures (idem.: 214). The "music" that film theory figures out, thus, is a purely imaginary movement, in the same way as the *musica mundana* envisioned by Boethius, which resonates by an abstract play of numbers and proportions, marked by the "great motion" of the spheres, but that wants to share nothing with the concrete and precarious *musica instrumentalis*. The "inner musicality" of silent film makes the actual musical component redundant: at most, a useful complement to the projection at the film venue, but not an essential component of the filmic text.

The dichotomy between *musica mundana*, the abstract music of images rooted in the composition of the visual sphere, and *musica instrumentalis*, the precarious complement to film projection, forges the thought of film theorists, at least as much as their apparent "musical calling," and upon closer examination, constitutes the ineluctable assumption of the theory of a filmic rhythm.

3. *Musica instrumentalis*

In perfect continuity with Stindt's and Balazs's theories is the thesis that opens the *Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Musik* (1927), a theoretical-practical treatise written by Hans Erdmann in collaboration with Giuseppe Becce and Ludwig Brav. Between cinema and music, Erdmann states, there is a common substance, which is precisely the rhythmic element. Cinema and music are both temporal arts (*Zeitkünste*), they "unfold in time" and organize their material "rhythmically, through the periodic succession of stressed and unstressed time parts" (Erdmann 1927: I, 1).

Erdmann's contention, however, adds something new to this position. He does not limit himself to merely repeating the thesis of an intrinsic rhythmic quality of cinema but brings this assumption to unheard conclusions that have significant consequences for both film music theory and practice. Erdmann's argument is guided by an aesthetic ambition: the foundation of a film-music work of art (*Film-Musik-Kunstwerk*) in a Wagnerian sense, in which music is no longer an incidental element but rather an integral part of a total artwork; here, "the artistic link" (*künstlerische Bindung*) (idem.: 8) between film and music should finally be achieved.[2]

Film, Erdmann claims, has its own rhythm that demands an acoustic equivalent. This point raises the question of how this filmic rhythm finds expression: through montage, as in Stindt and Balázs, or by other

---

[2]   The reference to Richard Wagner is highly significant, for it reveals Erdmann's aim to include film music composition in the realm of operatic music. In an article in the *Reichsfilmblatt* in 1924 Erdmann wrote: "The film in its artistic fulfillment is a piece of music theatre, in a certain sense similar to ballet and pantomime, and maybe even in a higher sense than opera and music drama" (Erdmann 1924a).

artistic means? Moreover, which aspects of the film should be supported by the musical accompaniment, asks Erdmann as a composer?

Filmic rhythm, Erdmann explains, actually has a double nature. At a basic level, rhythm comes into expression where scenic movements are being musically stylized through the principles of dance, march, as well as the motion of machines at work – to mention a *topos* of 1920s-cinema.

In our first example, from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), with music by Gottfried Huppertz, the motion of the Moloch-machine and the synchronized movements of the workers are typically rendered by a rhythmic ostinato (Ex. 1, Fig. 1):

Figure 1. Fritz Lang, *Metropolis*, UFA (Germany 1927)

Example 1. Gottfried Huppertz, *Metropolis*, Act I *Auftakt*, mm. 379–382

Similarly, Erdmann admits, music can take actors' pantomime as a pretext for what he calls a "description." In this case, the musical accompaniment closely follows the outer movements represented in the visuals and realizes an acoustic stylization of them. Consider, by way of example, the dramatic scene of the porter's demotion (Ex. 2, Fig. 2) in Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's film *Der letzte Mann* (1924). Here, Giuseppe Becce's music adopts the typical rhapsodic style, usually defined as motoric illustration (*motorische Illustration*).

Figure 2. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, *Der letzte Mann*, Union Film (Germany 1924)

Example 2. Giuseppe Becce, *Der letzte Mann*, Act I, numbers 3–5 [3]

In instances like these, the visual sphere displays a plastic rhythm, which can find, and usually does find, an acoustic equivalent in the musical accompaniment. The music closely follows the narrated events and establishes a painstaking correspondence with the elements of the visual representation.

The artistic link between music and image, however, cannot be reduced to this descriptive correspondence. This mere synchronization, Erdmann states, is nothing but a "small-scale rhythm" (*kleiner Rhythmus*) (Erdmann 1927: I, 8). The scenic events, indeed, unfold according to a line of feelings (*Gefühlslinie*) (idem.: 14) whose overall movement describes what Erdmman calls, in clear allusion to Eduard Hanslick, a "large-scale rhythm" (*großer Rhythmus*) (idem.: 9). Music for cinema, thus, should not only adhere to the small-scale rhythm determined by the outer movements and the pantomime, but rather comply with the large-scale rhythm that underlies the narrated events.

By the next example, we will see to what extent we can state that a line of feelings underlies the scenic events on the surface and in what sense the emotional events tend to describe a large-scale rhythm. We will also recognize that, despite all expectations, it is a highly rational procedure that drives Erdmann's thought. Erdmann's linguistic roots lie in a domain forged by vitalistic philosophy and psychological aesthetics: Erdmann recounts artistic rules in terms of "lines of feelings" (*Gefühlslinie*), "inner rules of tension" (*innere Spannungs-gesetze*), "emotional events" (*seelische Vorgänge*), and he compares the dramaturgical construction of a film with a sort of "musical intuition" (Erdmann 1924b). This presumed vitalistic and intuitive aura, however, runs the risk of being overestimated if we fail to compare Erdmann's thought with the concrete results of film-music analysis. Indeed, the latter seems to reveal to us a completely different state of things. As we will see, what determines the overall structure of the narrative has nothing to do with a mere vitalistic or spontaneous intuition, but it is a definite, historically determined formal conception.

---

[3]   Reproduced in Rügner 1988: 111.

We will examine a lengthy sequence from the first act of *Nosferatu*, Murnau's film of 1922 with music by Erdmann himself. This sequence can be taken as a paradigm for Erdmann's musical dramaturgy.[4] It can be divided into four episodes:

1) an initial situation of release with the introduction of the protagonist couple: Hutter and his wife Ellen (Fig. 3);
2) a contrasting episode, as the climax of tension, dominated by the character of Knock (Fig. 4);
3) the return to the initial situation of calm, with preparations for Hutter's trip to Transylvania (Fig. 5);
4) finally, the epilogue, with Hutter and Ellen's parting (Fig. 6).

A thematic section in F major occupies the first episode. The theme is derived from Erdmann's *Fantastisch-romantische Suite* and is labeled in Erdmann and Becce's *Thematisches Skalenregister* (Erdmann 1927: II, 127) as *Idylle. Verschlafene Städtchen, Morgenstimmung* (n. 1691). It consists of three musical ideas, the first (*a*) performed by the strings, the second (*b*) by the winds, and finally a phrase by the oboe (*c*):

Figure 3. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, *Nosferatu. Eine Symphonie des Grauens*, Prana-Film (Germany 1922)


Example 3. Hans Erdmann, *Fantastisch-romantische Suite* IA: "Idylle"

The second episode consists of conventional horror music taken from Becce's Suite *De Profundis*: harmonic dissonances, sharp dynamic contrasts, and slow semitonal progressions serve to build tension until the climax of "dramatic expression" (Erdmann 1927: I, 40) is reached:

---

[4]   As known, a collection of ten music numbers by Erdmann titled *Fantastisch-romantische Suite* is all that remains of the original score for *Nosferatu*. On the basis of this document, two different reconstructions of the score have been carried out respectively by Gillian Anderson in 1995 and Berndt Heller in 2007. Although they used Erdmann's suite differently, both versions adopted an ABA form with coda at the beginning of the first act. For the purposes of this analysis, we will refer to the musical reconstruction of Heller (Edition Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin, Eureka, 2007).

Figure 4. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, *Nosferatu. Eine Symphonie des Grauens*, Prana-Film (Germany 1922)
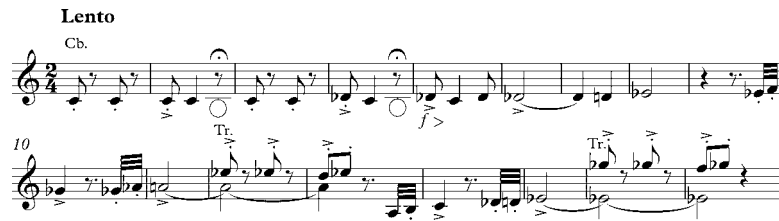
Example 4. Giuseppe Becce, *De Profundis-Suite* II, 2: "Visionen eines Irren" (our transcription)

The third episode is nothing but the repetition of the phrases *b* and *c* from the first thematic section. Then a new thematic idea comes in: in truth, it is none other than the oboe phrase (*c*), now in the strings and transposed into D major. This last theme – also derived from Erdmann's *Fantastisch-romantische Suite* and labelled at number 994 in the *Thematisches Skalenregister* (Erdmann 1927: II, 77) as *Ergebung, vergangener Schmerz, Hoffnung* – constitutes a climactic point of "lyrical expression" (Erdmann 1927: I, 40). Repeated in G major, it concludes the entire scene as a coda:

Figures 5–6. Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, *Nosferatu. Eine Symphonie des Grauens*, Prana-Film (Germany 1922)

Example 5. Hans Erdmann, *Fantastisch-romantische Suite* IB: "Ergebung"

This lengthy sequence has, therefore, a regular conformation. Altogether, it consists of three main thematic ideas, used so as to create a three-part form, closed by a coda. In Erdmann's rhythmic analogy, the first movement would have the effect of an anacrusis; the second is stressed on the downbeat; the third is also upbeat; the fourth forms the thetic cadence.

In the *Allgemeines Handbuch*, Erdmann names this structural rhythm with the term 'eurhythmy' (*Eurhythmie*) (ibid.: 9), meaning nothing less than the alternation of tension and release, of culminating points of dramatic and lyric expression. With this notion with a long-standing tradition within German-language music aesthetics, Erdmann indicates the "great motion" created by the line of feelings, in which the "small motion" of elementary rhythmics is surpassed and re-comprehended.

4. Between cinema and opera

As a result of this metaphorical extension, however, the notion of rhythm is substantially reinterpreted. In fact, this large-scale rhythm – as Carl Dahlhaus already pointed out concerning Hanslick's category – is not an "augmentation" of the small-scale rhythm: it is not its mere "imitation on a higher dimension" (Dahlhaus 1975: 439). Eurhythmy reaches well beyond the nature of rhythmic phenomena as a succession of accents. On the contrary, it alludes to the temporal articulation of the film and its dramaturgical construction as a narrational curve.

It is not by coincidence that Erdmann redefined the concept of eurhythmy in a later article:

> With this term, we intend everything we usually mean by "tension and dynamics," "climax and rest point," everything related to artistic rules, everything that in music is the subject of the "theory of form" and in drama or opera is the subject of a "dramaturgy." The cinematic work of art must possess this rhythm of a higher degree, and, in fact, it also does (Erdmann 1928).

In short, the music-theoretical notion of rhythm has been raised, here, to an aesthetic category. Eurhythmy indicates a regular large-scale form that is structured by a well-studied alternation of points of tension and release, and that relies on the aesthetic rules of correspondence, balance, and good proportion among the parts of an organic whole.

This aesthetic abstraction reveals itself to be rich in implications for the film composition.

The definition of the musical form as "large-scale rhythm" – as Dahlhaus observed – is closely tied to a particular formal type based on what can be referred to as "grouping principle" (Dahlhaus 1975: 440), that is, the grouping of a series of elements in a coherent and rational schema. In other words, Erdmann conceives film as segmentable into a series of musical scenes, each having a self-standing meaning and conformation. The relationship between the scenes is supposed to be similar to that between the elements within the measure, or between a fore-phrase and an after-phrase, or even between two or more formal sections, like a three-part form A-B-A.

The grouping form, in short, is based on an architectural balance, correspondence, similarity, or even contrast among the parts of an organic whole. It is worth remembering, however, that this principle has an exact historical origin: the classical style. That is to say that Erdmann's conception of film music is decidedly rooted in the operatic composition of the classical or at least pre-romantic style. Erdmann's model for film music composition is the opera with so-called closed forms: a series of musical numbers, juxtaposed according to a principle of symmetry and good proportion. Furthermore, these musical numbers are connected by looser and more fluid instrumental passages, which make up the drama's connective texture. Erdmann calls such transitional moments by the only possible name for his paradigm: *filmisches Secco-Recitativ*:

> As regards "neutral music", we see how it already has a far from irrelevant role in the opera, and there is no doubt that it must have a very similar role in film. … There is a "secco film recitative", and in passages like these there is no use inserting a superfluous "accompagnato recitative"; if something can be said with one note or chord, you don't need two. Where music doesn't help, it only does harm (Erdmann 1927, I: 43–44).

The culminating points of dramatic and lyrical expression, therefore, must be supported by *Stimmungsmusik*, mood music with a self-contained form and its own coherence. These musical numbers are then connected by neutral, descriptive music, which instead uses a rhapsodic and looser style. In the latest extension of the musical metaphor, "rhythm" has definitively become the alternation of recitative-like passages and self-contained musical numbers. And *Eurhythmie* has become nothing if not this dramaturgic plan, evidently inspired by opera.

The opening sequence of *Nosferatu* is a brilliant example of this grouping form, along with other moments of the score: for example, in the third act, where the *Ergebung* theme (Ex. 5) precedes and follows a fleeting appearance by Bizet's *Galop*, and then again in the finale, which Erdmann refers to in the *Allgemeines Handbuch* as a three-part form with a coda (idem.: 50 note).

In conclusion, according to Erdmann, a movie should have an episodic structure, based on the juxtaposition of self-contained musical numbers. Each act constitutes a sort of macro-formal container, inside which a sequence of stand-alone musical scenes unfolds. These scenes follow one another and occasionally repeat

in compliance with a logic that has in music, much more than in the visual narration, its dramaturgic point of reference, and which thus implies a subordination of the second, i.e. narrative, to the first, i.e. music. For Erdmann, in fact, the culminating points of the film, such as the finale of the acts, the dramatic episodes, or the points of lyrical relief should be designed and arranged according to a musical plan, the so-called *Musik-szenarium* (idem.: 22). A film has to be rationally designed by principles of symmetry, contrast, and alternation, which are primarily determined by music.

There is no doubt that the inner coherence of a film score would be notably strengthened. But it is also true that a dramaturgical problem arises from such kind of formal construction. We allude, here, to the alienating effect that is inevitably produced by the repetition of musical material previously heard against the progression of the narrative. The repetition of large formal units is an evident sign of a type of construction that not only remains, for long stretches, unaffected by the film narration but also in some instances even undermines its internal logic. That which, from a strictly musical point of view, constitutes a vital structural principle (the repetition of a motif, theme, or formal section) conversely acts on the film's dramaturgy as an absurd paradox. As Adorno and Eisler wrote some years later in *Composing for the Films* (Adorno, Eisler 1994), the tempo of cinema requires concentration and a prose-like style: the cinematic narration, in its essence of a snapshot of the *Lebenswelt*, is incompatible with the abstraction of a musical discourse consisting of repetitions, progressions, musical rhymes, and phrase symmetry.

With the above examples in mind, we cannot but observe how, in the first act of *Nosferatu*, the repetition of the first thematic section (*Idylle*) in the third episode sounds forced when compared to the narrative progression. At that point, indeed, the central scene has already marked a sharp change in the atmosphere and put the story in motion. Conversely, the literal reprise of the oboe theme seems to be motivated by the only purpose of carrying the three-part form to the end, completely disregarding the dramatic content of the scene, where Hutter's wife has the premonition of the tragedy hanging over them (see Fig. 5). The unmotivated return of previous musical episodes along with their initial moods appears not only paradoxical from a dramaturgical point of view but ultimately causes a veritable short circuit in the narrative logic of the film.

The paradox of the repetition is the price Erdmann's theory of a filmic rhythm has to pay for its music-centered approach to the cinematic music and for its idea of film music composition as an operatic genre. In this claim, Erdmann's theory reveals itself as equal and opposite to those film theories that reflect merely on filmic rhythm, leaving music itself in silence. The incompatibility between these two positions – *musica mundana* and *musica instrumentalis*, as we metaphorically redefined them – is the most radical evidence of a missed encounter, an impossible communication between two opposite cultural elites: visual artists and composers. Both of them, as Sergio Miceli has pointed out, insist on deciphering cinema as the logical and total *fulfilment* of an internal development of either one or to other artistic language (Miceli 2010: 72). For the first group, cinema is *Malerei mit Zeit*; for composers, it is a *Film-Musik-Kunstwerk* in a Wagnerian sense. Both positions seem not to grasp, except perhaps minimally, the syncretic and authentically plurimedial nature of cinema.

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor Wiesengrund & Eisler, Hanns (1994). *Composing for the Films.* London-New York, Continuum (first published in 1947).

Balázs, Béla (2001). *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films.* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp (first published in 1924).

Balázs, Béla (2001). *Der Geist des Films.* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp (first published in 1930).

Dahlhaus, Carl (1975). Rhythmus im Großen. In: *Melos*, I, pp. 439–441.

Eisenstein, Sergei (1987). Nonindifferent Nature. In: *Nonindifferent Nature*, ed. H. Marshall, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 216–396.

Erdmann, Hans (1924a). Zur Kritik der musikalischen Film-Illustration. In: *Reichsfilmblatt*, No. 42, p. 45.

Erdmann, Hans (1924b). Zur Methodik der musikalischen Film-Illustration. In: *Reichsfilmblatt*, No. 38, p. 43.

Erdmann, Hans (1927). *Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Musik.* Edited by H. Erdmann, G. Becce and L. Brav, Berlin-Leipzig, Schlesinger.

Erdmann, Hans (1928). Auf der Suche nach einer Filmschrift. In: *Die Filmtechnik*, XXV, pp. 478–481.

Finocchiaro, Francesco (2014). Sergei Eisenstein and the Music of Landscape: The Mists of 'Potemkin' between Metaphor and Illustration. In: *The Sounds of Silent Films. New Perspectives on History, Theory and Practice.* Edited by C. Tieber and A. K. Windisch. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 172–191.

Giani, Maurizio (2001). La doppia verità nell'estetica di Hanslick. In: *Annali della Schola Salernitana,* pp. 199–221.

Goehr, Lydia (2008). *Elective Affinities. Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory.* New York, Columbia University Press.

Hanslick, Eduard (1986). *On the Musically Beautiful.* Ed. by G. Payzant, Indianapolis, Hackett (first published in 1854).

Harms, Rudolf (2009). *Philosophie des Films.* Hamburg, Meiner (first published in 1926).

Miceli, Sergio (2010). *Musica e cinema nella cultura del Novecento.* Roma, Bulzoni.

Payzant, Geoffrey (1989). Eduard Hanslick and Bernhard Gutt. In: *The Music Review*, L, pp. 124–133.

Stindt, Georg Otto (1924). *Das Lichtspiel als Kunstform.* Bremerhaven, Atlantis.

Cinematographic sources

Murnau, Friedrich Wilhelm (2007). *Nosferatu. Eine Symphonie des Graues.* Edition Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin, Eureka.

Ruttmann, Walter (2010). *Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt & Melodie der Welt.* Edition Filmmuseum München in collaboration with Bundesarchiv Berlin and ZDF/ARTE Mainz.

„Im Anfang war der Rhythmus". Estetinės abstrakcijos XX a. 3-iojo dešimtmečio kino muzikoje

Santrauka

Nebyliojo kino eroje muzikai teko išskirtinė vieta – būtent šiam gerokai brandesniam ir kilmingesniam „garsų menui" priskiriamas „dešimtosios mūzos" vaidmuo. Muzikos ir kino giminingumas sistemiškai analizuojamas Georgo Otto Stindto ir Bélos Balázso teoriniuose darbuose, kurie ritmo dimensiją įvardijo kaip šių dviejų meno formų *trait d'union* (bendrą ypatybę). Stindto ir Balázso nuomonė, kad montažas padeda sukurti vizualų ritmą, suponuoja prielaidą diskusijoms apie „vidinį filmo muzikalumą".

Veikale *Allgemeines Handbuch der Film-Musik* (1927) kino kūrinių vidinės ritmikos idėją plėtojęs Hansas Erdmannas priėjo prie išvadų, kurios padarė didelį poveikį tiek kino muzikos teorijai, tiek praktikai. Pasak Erdmanno, filmo ritmas gali būti dvejopas. Elementariu lygmeniu filmo ritmas asocijuojamas su judėjimu scenose, kur yra muzikaliai stilizuojamas pagal šokio, maršo ar mašinų judėjimo principus. Tokiais atvejais vizualiajai sferai būdingas tam tikras plastinis ritmas gali būti akustiškai papildomas (dažnai ir yra papildomas) derančiu muzikiniu akompanimentu. Muzika atliepia kertinius naratyvo įvykius ir pasižymi glaudžiu ryšiu su vizualiais aspektais.

Vis dėlto meninė sąveika tarp muzikos ir vaizdo negali apsiriboti tokiu deskriptyviu iliustravimu. Ši elementari sinchronizacija Erdmanno yra vadinama smulkaus plano ritmu. Iš tikrųjų, sceninių įvykių eiga turi tam tikrą jausminę liniją, kurios bendra plėtotė Erdmanno įvardijama stambaus masto ritmo sąvoka (aliuzija į Eduardo Hanslicko teoriją). Muzika kinui neturėtų apsiriboti vien smulkaus plano ritmu, padiktuotu išorinių įvykių ir pantomimos, bet kurti ir stambaus masto ritmą, pabrėžiantį pasakojamų įvykių dramaturgiją.

Erdmannas veikale *Allgemeines Handbuch...* šį struktūrinį ritmą, žymintį kaitą tarp įtampos ir atsipalaidavimo, tarp kulminacinių dramos taškų ir lyrinių išraiškų, pavadino *Eurhythmie*. Šis metaforinis praplėtimas iš esmės perinterpretuoja ritmo sąvoką. Euritmija iš tiesų peržengia ritmo, kaip akcentų sekos, fenomeno sampratos ribas. Ji siejasi su filmo artikuliacija ir jo laiko dramaturgine konstrukcija, atspindinčia naratyvinę kreivę. Euritmija žymi tradicinę stambiąją formą (pavyzdžiui, trijų dalių forma A-B-A), kuri remiasi gerai išplėtota įtampos ir atoslūgio kaita, estetiniais sąryšio principais, tinkamų proporcijų balansu tarp organiškos visumos dalių.

Hanso Erdmanno kino ritmo teorija ir reikšmingas jos indėlis į kino muzikos kūrybą aptariamas tipinių filmo takelių pavyzdžių, paimtų iš Friedricho Wilhelmo Murnau *Nosferatu* (1922) ir Fritzo Lango *Metropolis* (1927), analizės kontekste.