

# **Music, moving image, semiotics and the democratic right to know**

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## **Recognition and embarrassment**

Over the last ten years the first lesson in my course on Music and the Moving Image has begun with an well-trying commutation trick. I have attempted to focus attention, as tangibly as possible, on music's ability to bring about radical changes in our interpretation of the images it accompanies. This old trick consists of playing the same thirty-second sequence three times in succession, first with no music, to establish the visual sequence of events, then with the music written expressly for the sequence, and finally with music of contrasting character. It is worth describing this procedure in a little detail in order to concretise music's power in influencing our interpretation of concurrent events. That power is both manifest and elusive, and it is necessary to identify this contradiction if we wish to address the question of manipulation in relation to music and the moving image.<sup>1</sup>

The musical commutation trick I play uses the title sequences from the original series of the British TV soap *Emmerdale Farm* (Hatch 1972).<sup>2</sup> This footage consists almost entirely of one single, slow, smooth helicopter pan, shot from a few hundred feet in the air looking right and diagonally downwards. This visually *legato* pan takes the viewer from right to left over rolling green hills, over irregularly and 'organically' shaped fields bordered with stone walls (Yorkshire Dales in northern England); it continues, all in the same take, over a small village nestling in the valley, its houses built in grey stone, its churchyard flanked by large, round leafy trees (not winter). In the mid distance of the same helicopter sweep, a small car moves slowly, also left to right, past the village green. A final soft fade, the only edit in the thirty-second sequence, points the viewer towards a grey-stone farmhouse and farmyard set against a green hillside.

The original music for these sequences, Tony Hatch's *Emmerdale Farm* theme (1972), belongs unquestionably to the same basic European tradition of pastoral music as do 'Dawn' from Grieg's *Per Gynt*, or the idyllic herding section in Rossini's *William Tell* overture, or the pastoral symphony in Händel's *Messiah*. Like those pieces, the *Emmerdale Farm* signature is in 6/8 time and performed at a leisurely pace ( $\downarrow = 72$ ). The title music's *legato e cantabile* oboe tune, which moves mainly in quavers, and whose individual phrases span an octave, is, with the exception of short suspensions that are

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1. This article deals only with aspects of music and the moving image specific to mainstream Western mass culture. There is no room here to approach the topic from a neurological or transcultural viewpoint, however important those aspects may be.
  2. The series was first produced by Yorkshire TV in 1972. The soap is now called just *Emmerdale* (without the 'Farm'). Its concern is much less with farming life than with the domestic and financial machinations of ex-urbanites in 4x4s. Even the signature tune has been synthesised, abbreviated and de-pastoralised.

immediately resolved, accompanied by piano arpeggios reminiscent of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*.<sup>3</sup> The circle-of-fifths progressions heard in the piano part are padded out by a full string orchestra playing held chords.<sup>4</sup> The pastoral sphere of connotation was recognised from the music on other occasions when it was played without visual accompaniment to respondents unable to identify the piece. Asked to write down the most likely scenario for this music, almost all of them provided one of the following associations: country(side), British, romantic, melancholy, nostalgia.<sup>5</sup>

The music of contrasting character which replaces the pastoral music in the third viewing of the same visual sequences is a ten-second phrase, repeated three times and consisting of a quiet, high, held dissonance played by violins which is punctuated by low brass stabs playing a chromatic line with irregular note values in no discernible meter. Such high, held dissonances have been used countless times for effects of extreme mental tension, as in extracts from music for *In Cold Blood* (Jones 1968), *Eyes Cold from Fear* (Morricone 1971), *Love is the Devil* (Sakamoto 1998);<sup>6</sup> similarly articulated chromatic bass lines are used to create a mood of (usually male) physical violence, be it consistent and unstoppable, as with Darth Vader in *Star Wars* (Williams 1977), or erratic and unpredictable as in the underscore from *The Assassination* (Morricone 1972), or a combination of both as in the title theme for *The Untouchables* (Morricone 1987).<sup>7</sup> In fact, the track we used as contrasting underscore was Trevor Duncan's *Transcenics 2*, a library music piece described by its producers as 'ominous, agitated' and included on a tension and horror music album containing such other titles as 'Knife Chase', 'Blood Run', 'Urge To Kill', 'The Hate Drug', 'Two Neuroses', 'Two Psychoses' and 'Psychotic Transients'.<sup>8</sup>

Students subjected to this commutation trick for the first time generally exhibit a combination of instant recognition and bemused embarrassment. Indeed, instantly recognisable to anyone belonging to our culture is the fact that the two different music scores create two completely different narratives from the same visual sequence. Narrative one is that of a pastoral idyll. It draws our visual and affective attention to smooth movement over rolling hills past a pretty stone village in the valley. Nature tamed by humans comes across as a source of relaxation and most viewers/listeners seem to interpret the lack of people on screen as a positive sign of rest and recreation — 'far from the madding crowd'. Even the car being driven at a leisurely pace past the village green to the idyllic farmhouse cross-faded into the hill at the end of the footage comes across as a pleasant and relaxed activity.

Narrative two is that of a horror story. This time the slow pace of the helicopter sweep, the absence of movement from people, animals or other fore-

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3. The Beethoven piece is in C# minor, the *Emmerdale Farm* theme in D minor. The latter starts with the right hand in the same register as the 'Moonlight Sonata'.
  4. A complete transcription of this theme introduces chapter 6 of Tagg & Clarida (2001).
  5. Other common associations were: calm, family, walking, grass, woods, gliding, neutral, hopeful, secure, harmonious, panoramic views, sunrise, morning, entering. For more details, see Chapter 6 of Tagg & Clarida (2001).
  6. Title music from *In Cold Blood* (Q Jones 1968) and from *Gli occhi freddi della paura* (Morricone 1971); 'Fall' from *Love is the Devil* (Sakamoto 1998).
  7. 'Imperial Attack' from *Star Wars* (J Williams 1977), 'Tradimento pubblico' from *L'Attentato* (US title *The French Conspiracy*, Morricone 1972), title music from *The Untouchables* (Morricone 1987).
  8. All tracks by Trevor Duncan and recorded on *Recorded Music for Film, Radio & TV*, Boosey & Hawkes SBH 2986.

ground figures all come across as threatening, not as a sign of pleasant rural relaxation. Typical comments from seminar discussion about this emptiness in the second narrative are 'perhaps a plague has struck or maybe there's been radioactive fallout or an invasion by aliens'. The only sign of human life is the slowly moving car whose driver we do not see and whose pace now seems more funereal than leisurely. One student thought that it would most likely be Jack Nicholson, a diabolical grin on his face, driving that old car with unnerving sang-froid towards the farmhouse whose cellar another student assumed to be concealing 'a stack of dismembered bodies'. 'The farmhouse looked nice before', said someone else; 'now it looks really grim'. 'All the colours seem darker', remarked yet another seminar participant.<sup>9</sup>

Most people in our culture are as competent as the students just mentioned at decoding the sounds of the music they hear accompanying moving images: they clearly recognise difference of narrative in the same visual sequences on the sole basis of musical difference. Now, finding out that you share values and interpretations of cultural phenomena in common with others is usually a process which brings a sense of relief, which reinforces a sense of community, and which provides a sense of socio-cultural security. Indeed, belonging to any definable population — a fan club, a trade union, a political party, a nation etc. — relies on such realisation of shared values and meanings in comparison to others who share *other* sets of values, interests and experience. However, as recurrently observed in the seminars at which I have presented the *Emmerdale Farm* commutation trick, recognising that you share the same musical ability as your peers to react in a culturally competent fashion seems to cause embarrassment as well as relief. Why should this type of realisation differ from other situations in which individuals belonging to the same basic culture discover shared values and meanings?

One plausible reason for this embarrassment is that the type of cultural ability exhibited in interpreting the two music tracks to the same visuals is something we share with practically anyone living in a world much of whose cultural fare is provided by moving images with their concomitant sound and music. The point is that while extreme metal fans or political party members, for example, may be acutely aware of their shared values because they are constantly reminded of their difference to those of other known groups of people, it is almost impossible to imagine that other members of contemporary Western mass culture would not interpret the two music tracks for *Emmerdale Farm* in more or less the same way as ourselves.<sup>10</sup> As one postgraduate put it, 'the differences are so obvious, so you never think about them'. In short, first-time recognition of this particular type of cultural competence begs previously unasked questions of cultural specificity and relativity, for example: Which cultures do *not* pattern musical notions of ru-

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9. Since such comments occur almost every time I run this commutation trick, I have not felt it necessary to log details of who felled the cited comments on which particular occasion.

10. Indeed, in the same reception test as mentioned above (see footnote 5, p. 2), no respondents associated to any of the following connotative categories: urban, indoors, pushing/pulling/carrying, chasing, parades, clubs, males, disturbance, danger, action, crime, darkness, encumbrance, games, sport, departure, subcultures, high speed, riding, driving, dancing, conflictive, coercive, marching, the future, joy, festivity, military, offensive, The USA, detectives, enmity, aggression, the sea, lots of people. Similarly, the following connotative categories received at least 17 times fewer associations than the norm for all ten tunes in the same test battery: cars, dynamism, vehicles, young people. Moreover, responses from a control group of Latin Americans differed very little from those of the Scandinavians who constituted the majority of respondents in the reception test (see Tagg & Clarida, 2001).

rality, leisure, fear and horror as we do? What values are mediated musically in relation to which phenomena in our own Western, globalised mass-media culture? *How* are they mediated? Do we really agree with those values? If unasked, let alone unanswered, these questions are bound to provoke unease and embarrassment rather than a sense of security and familiarity. Put tersely, it is patently obvious that identifying and questioning the apparently obvious can be quite unsettling.

Another plausible reason for the embarrassment usually emerges in discussion following the commutation trick. It relates to the fact that, in our culture at least, most people’s everyday expertise in understanding different messages from different sorts of music, as with the *Emmerdale Farm* example, is not matched by commensurate competence in terms of understanding how and why such musical communication actually works. This incongruence between high ability in musical response and low ability in understanding the mechanisms underpinning such response is particularly embarrassing when highlighted in the context of education or research. The problem here is that our tradition of knowledge tends to differentiate so radically between ‘understanding mechanisms’ and ‘responding emotionally’ as distinct modes of experience that they are shunted into separate institutions of learning. This notional and institutional division of musical competences lies at the heart of problems relating to musical manipulation.

### ***Music as knowledge, knowledge about music and musical manipulation***

**Table 1 Music knowledge types**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Seats of learning</b>
<b>1. Music as knowledge (knowledge <i>in</i> music)</b>		
1a. Music-making competence	creating, originating, producing, composing, arranging, performing, etc.	conservatories, colleges of music
1b. Musical interpretative competence	recalling, recognising, distinguishing between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions	-
<b>2. Metamusical knowledge (knowledge <i>about</i> music)</b>		
2a. Metamusical discourse	‘music theory’, identification and naming elements and patterns of musical structure	departments of music(ology), academies of music
2b. Interpretative metamusical discourse	explaining how musical practices relate to culture and society, including approaches from semiotics, acoustics, business studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies.	social science departments, literature and media studies, ‘popular music studies’

As shown in table 1, by *music as knowledge* is meant knowledge *in* rather than *about* music, i.e. knowledge that relates directly to musical discourse and that is both intrinsically musical and culturally specific. This type of musical knowledge can be divided into two sub-types: [1a] ‘music-making competence’, i.e. the various abilities involved in creating, producing, composing, arranging or performing music; and [1b] ‘interpretative competence’, i.e. the ability to recall, recognise and distinguish between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions. Neither type of musical knowledge just mentioned relies on any

explicit verbal denotation and they are both more usually referred to as skills or competences rather than as 'knowledge'.<sup>11</sup>

*Knowledge about music*, on the other hand, is by definition metamusical and always entails explicit verbal denotation. However, like 'music as knowledge' (type 1), 'knowledge about music' (type 2) is both culturally specific and can also be divided into two categories. Knowledge type 2a, 'musical metadiscourse', is often referred to as 'music theory' and entails the ability to identify and name elements and patterns of musical structure, while type 2b, 'interpretative metadiscourse', involves explaining how musical practices relate to the culture and society that produces them and which they affect. This fourth aspect of musical knowledge (type 2b or 'interpretative metadiscourse') covers everything from music semiotics to acoustics, from business studies to psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies etc., and has until now been predominant in popular music studies.<sup>12</sup>

The institutional underpinning of division between these four types of musical knowledge is strong. For example, in tertiary education, the first ([1a], 'music-making knowledge'), is generally taught in special colleges (i.e. in pop and jazz conservatories, performing art schools, etc.), the third ([2a], 'music theory') in departments of music or musicology and, to some extent, in pop-jazz conservatories, and the fourth [2b] in practically any humanities or social science department, but less so in conventional musicology and even less in performing arts colleges.

Observant readers will notice that knowledge type 1b is missing from the list just presented. The omission is intentional because the ability to distinguish, without recourse to words, between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions, i.e. the widespread and popular form of musical competence so clearly evidenced in the *Emmerdale Farm* example, is generally absent from institutions of learning.

Of course, assuming everyone to be an expert in area 1b, it is neither surprising nor injurious that there are specialists in areas 1a, 2a and 2c. The only problem is that while music today is received, heard and used by most people as one integral unit, often in the same experiential package as words, images, patterns of social behaviour, etc., its teaching is subject to the institutional divisions just mentioned. Such parcelling of music studies may once have had a valid purpose, but today it obstructs us from understanding, for example, how we react to the music in an advert or a film, or to a pop song, to a classical concert, to background music in pubs, shops or restaurants, or to the underscore in a party political broadcast, or to a chat

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11. Knowledge type 1a depends of course on competence in knowledge type 1b but not vice versa.

The fact that our culture refers to these immanently musical types of knowledge in terms of 'skill' or 'competence' further underlines the same sort of epistemological split that makes the expression 'carnal knowledge' (as in 'Adam knew Eve') seem rather archaic.

12. Indeed, as IASPM founder member Franco Fabbri put it in 1995, referring to the general intellectual direction taken by the association internationally, 'music and musicians seem to have become some kind of troublesome appendage to popular music studies. Where is music and where are the musicians? Can researchers learn something from them, or are musicians some kind of unnecessary appendix of popular music studies?'. I received similar comments from Chris Cutler, Reebee Garofalo, Charles Hamm and Gerard Kempers, other intellectually competent musicians who were once actively involved in IASPM but who became disenchanted with what they saw as a hierarchy of politically cool but epistemologically restrictive ideas, discourses and approaches. It is ironic that this article has to enter an extra realm of abstraction (a 'meta-meta-discourse, so to speak) in order to criticise the hegemony of interpretative metadiscourse in popular music studies! For further details about this problem, see Tagg (1998a).

show signature, or to quiz show music and so on.<sup>13</sup> There is in other words a clear sense in which our society's conceptual and institutional division of musical competences deprives its citizens of access to aspects of knowledge which could allow them to understand, and by extension control, how, and to what extent, music communicates values and attitudes that they are expected to assume in relation to the people, actions, locations, cultures and other phenomena which the music accompanies. Such knowledge is in other words a matter of power.

The popular meaning of 'manipulation' also implies a relation of power:

**'manipulate:** to manage (a person, situation, etc.) to one's own advantage, esp. unfairly or unscrupulously' (*Oxford Concise Dictionary*, 1995).

There is an obvious ethical aspect to this sense of the word: *manipulation* involves undue and unjust coercion, a power relation in which the stronger party manipulates the weaker. Of course, this does not mean that when composers or musicians try, consciously or unconsciously, to influence our state of mind that they exert undue or unjust coercion on us. On the contrary, music is *supposed* to influence our feelings, our state of mind, our actions, without our having to think about or analyse what is happening to us. No, the type of manipulation we are dealing with is embedded in the power relations of the culture to which we belong: the weight and inertia of hegemonic convention and belief systems represent the stronger party, while those of us who need to discover and formulate alternative values more appropriate to the changing nature of the society we live in can be seen as representing the weaker party in the power relation. In other words, the manipulation under discussion cannot be personalised: it is endemic in the system, and the fact that individual manipulators can rarely be held to account for intentionally undue and unjust coercion makes the power relation all the more insidious and manipulative.<sup>14</sup>

Now, since ignorance constitutes a particular form of human weakness, it could be argued that the *unwanted and unnoticed* modification of our behaviour as listeners (our *manipulation*) is more likely to occur if we remain *unaware*, not just of the mere fact *that* we respond competently to music on an everyday basis but also of *how* that competence is used to influence our evaluation of phenomena associated with the music, as in the *Emmerdale Farm* example. In other words, the embarrassment caused by conflict between familiarity of musical response and unfamiliarity of reflecting on that response raises the question of manipulation. It is as if the students exposed to the commutation trick feel cheated, as if caught with their epistemological pants down. At the same time we know that music by its very nature affects listeners at non-verbal, non-analytical levels of cognition in terms of gesture, movement, emotion, mood, attitude etc. It would therefore be absurd to think of musical communication as intrinsically manipulative in the sense of managing listener behaviour unfairly or unscrupulously. It is only the *potential* for unfair influence through music which increases if listeners are un-

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13. See final year student projects in Music and the Moving Image at the IPM (University of Liverpool) from Spring 2000, particularly the work by Alison Beck on party political election broadcast music, by Anna Cumbers on signature themes to chat shows, and by Jonathan Shave on the music to *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

14. These observations apply not least to the realm of music, as will be seen in subsequent sections about music for Native Americans in Hollywood productions, and about 'male' and 'female' music for the moving image.

aware of music's semiotic mechanisms.

It is, for example, worth remembering that Hollywood Westerns, both films and TV series, used a lot of crude 'savage Injun music' stereotypes to underscore the appearance of Native Americans on screen, at least until the release of *A Man Called Horse* in 1970.<sup>15</sup> It is also worth noting that music for male crime-busting heroes changes radically from the anguished minor-key jazz themes for the equally anguished 1940s *film noir* detective, via James Bond to the brash pop figures of 1970s police dramas. This musical change relates just as closely to change in mainstream notions of the white male in US society as the change from 'savage Injun music' to the music of Native Americans themselves marks a change in white mainstream US ideology vis-à-vis other peoples and cultures.<sup>16</sup> In other words, music may be just as important as words or pictures in communicating how we should value, despise, admire, fear, love or hate other people or ourselves, other cultures or our own. The only difference is that while education may help us, if we are lucky, to reflect upon and criticise messages that come to us through visual and verbal media, we are not trained to reflect upon or criticise musically mediated ideology. We are in this sense more open to manipulation through music than through most other channels of mediating meaning.

However, the risk of manipulation can, as we shall see, be reduced through educational reform, particularly in the areas of music and of media studies. One goal would be to incorporate musical knowledge number 2 (or 1b), i.e. the sort of knowledge evidenced in the *Emmerdale Farm* commutation trick, into our education system, another to integrate that type of competence with the other three aspects of musical knowledge mentioned earlier. However, these educational goals will not be attainable without the establishment of viable teaching methods for this new area. Such methods can in

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15. Examples of 'savage injun' music are legion. Here follow references to three typical underscore extracts: [1] Richard Hageman's music for the appearance of Apache warriors on the ridge in *Stagecoach* (1939); [2] Paul Sawtell's music for scenes in both *Valley of the Sun* (1943) and *Arrowhead* (1953) where the cavalry officer picks up the dead chief's body and dumps it in front of the tribe; [3] Bruce Broughton's underscore for shots of the Blackfoot on the rim of a canyon, as viewed by white patriarchal hero Zeb Macahan and friends in an episode entitled 'The Enemy' from the TV blockbuster series *How the West was Won* (NBC/MGM 1976). My notes on that episode, recorded off-air from Sweden's TV1 in 1980, read: 'White baddies aggravate savagely portrayed Native Americans. Lots of battles in desert-type country, dubious cavalry, settlers, happy ending at fort, etc.' None of these observations imply that Hageman, Sawtell or Broughton had any intention of manipulating the audience into adopting racist attitudes towards Native Americans: they merely composed 'Indian music' as was Hollywood's custom at the time. Of course, these composers unwittingly helped prolong a musically racist view of Native Americans, but it is all too easy to criticise their practice on this count without considering the benefit of fifty years' historical hindsight.

Leonard Rosenmann wrote the score for *A Man Called Horse* (1970) in which music accompanying the appearance of Native Americans is provided by members of the Rosebud Sioux nation. It should be noted that the release of this film occurred in a political climate of protest against the Vietnam war and of rising awareness about Native American rights, culminating in the incident at Wounded Knee in 1973.

16. See Tagg (1998b) which traces a line from the minor-key jazz of Ellington (1940) and Gershwin (1935) via *Harlem Nocturne* (Hagen 1940), via *A Streetcar Named Desire* (North 1951) and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (Bernstein 1955), through the 'James Bond Theme' (Norman 1962) to the demise of bebop cool in *The Pink Panther* (1964) and a Philadelphia Cream Cheese advert (Horowitz 1989). Its replacement by brasher, less tortured, more rock/pop-oriented detective music is the subject of a vast research project which would need to cover TV work from the early seventies until the present day, i.e. from *Kojak* (Goldenberg 1973) via *The Rockford Files* (Post 1974), *Baretta* (Grusin 1975) and *Starsky & Hutch* (Scott 1975), through *Magnum P.I.* and *Hill Street Blues* (Post 1980) to *The X-Files* (Snow 1996) and *NYPD Blue* (Post 1993).

their turn only be developed if they are based on the kind of wide-ranging information and well-founded argumentation that comes from serious research. In what follows next it is argued that music for film and TV represents a useful and important field of study for such research.

## **Researching film and TV music**

There are three main reasons for advocating the serious study of film and TV music. The first is democratic or demographic, the second and third are both methodological.

The first and most obvious reason for advocating the serious study of television music is that a lot of people hear a lot of it. In fact, as recent work has shown, music is present during over one third of all standard terrestrial TV programming between six o'clock and midnight an average evening in the UK.<sup>17</sup> Bearing in mind [1] that programming for the particular evening chosen for the study included two complete football matches; [2] that satellite TV, not included in the study, features both movie and music video channels; [3] that the average UK household leaves the television on for two hours every day, then we are liable to hear around one hour of music every day from that source alone.

The second reason for choosing music and the moving image as a serious object of study is methodological. It relates to, and can help overcome, conventional European musicology's problems with the notion of music as more than just *tönend bewegte Formen*.<sup>18</sup>

I have previously argued that European musicology evolved in the nineteenth century as an intellectual strategy to propagate a basically anti-intellectual view of music. One of its main aesthetic spin-offs was the establishment of a sliding scale of excellence ranging from the musically 'trivial' and socially utilitarian (low) to the musically 'great' and (allegedly) socially transcendent (high).<sup>19</sup> One problem with music studies in Europe for many years was that only the latter (the high-brow) was generally considered worthy of inclusion in higher education, while most of the music heard most of the time by most of the people in most of the world, was excluded. Another problem with the notion of 'absolute' music was of course, as sev-

17. See final year student project by Gemma Maull, IPM, University of Liverpool, 1999.

18. Lit. = 'sounding forms in motion'. See also Benestad (1976: 300-311, 452) on Hanslick ('tönend bewegte Formen sind einzig und allein Inhalt und Gegenstand der Musik' from *Vom musikalisch-schönen*), not to mention Schönberg (1951) and serial music ('The work of Art has its own existence' p.347) or Stravinsky and neoclassicism (Benestad 1976: 349-358). [Stravinsky's objection to the idea of music expressing anything relates inversely to his notion that 'music is the only area in which humans can realise the present' which, in its turn, assumes that present is separable from past.] Here we are referring also to the type of 'normative' structural analysis criticised by Bengtsson (1973: 226-228) and as exemplified by Schenker and Reti. Reti's structuralism almost takes on purist proportions in his 'anti-programmatic' analysis of Schumann's *Kinderszenen* in *The Thematic Process in Music* (1961:31-55). This 'normative-generalising' musical analysis had a famous UK advocate in Stewart Macpherson and his *Form in Music* (ca 1900), London: J Williams.

Sometimes the impression is given that there was no opposition to the Hanslickian view. Kretzschmar (1911, quoted by Kneif, 1975:65) criticised 'die Unhaltbarkeit der Behauptung Hanslicks' and claimed that 'die Instrumentalmusik verlangt ununterbrochen die Fähigkeit, hinter den Zeichen und Formen, Ideen zu sehen'. He even branded the notion of 'absolute' music as a health hazard, at least according to Kneif (citing Kretzschmar, 1911:170): 'Die auffassung wonach die reine Instrumentalmusik keine Inhalt aufweise, erscheint Kretzschmar als kulturfeindlich'... 'Es würde nach ihm empfehlen "die selbständige Instrumentalmusik als eine Volksgefahr zu behandeln".'

eral scholars of the European classical tradition have noted (e.g. Rosen 1976, Ford 1991), that instrumental music in the European classical tradition was clearly rooted in a sense of affect that had taken hundreds of years to evolve in conjunction with, not in spite of, dramatic or verbal narrative.

Film and TV have continued a long-standing tradition of what Austrian film composer Hans Jelinek (1968) termed 'invisible music', i.e. multi-modal or multi-media situations where the non-verbal sound does not necessarily constitute the primary focus of the presentation and where musical performance is rarely a visual issue. In the historical context of institutionalised music education and research it is unfortunately often still necessary to emphasise that 'invisible' music has always been much more common than its 'visible' counterpart, to explain that over 99% of music heard comes out of loudspeakers or headphones and that most of that music is not primarily envisaged as performed on stage.<sup>20</sup>

In the early twentieth century, feature film music developed largely from European classical music's vocabulary of cultural connotations and sense of dramatic narrative. Silent film music collections in the USA and elsewhere were produced by conservatory trained musicians with an intimate knowledge of the European classical repertoire (Rapée 1924, Becce & Erdmann 1927).<sup>21</sup> Many prewar sound film scores by such figures as Korngold and Steiner<sup>22</sup> made extensive use of the expressive vocabulary of nineteenth-century opera, ballet and tone poems, and when music was required almost instantly to provide the appropriate mood for newsreels and animated film, library music collections could rely on an existing set of codes which had already been used for several generations in various audiovisual contexts (film, opera, ballet, etc.).<sup>23</sup>

Library music's main customers today are in advertising, broadcasting and low-budget programme production, not least for TV. The logistics of audiovisual production in capitalism (particularly true if low-budget) tend to demand that appropriate music be easily accessible as well as efficient in communicating the intended mood and connotations. Such considerations favour the tendency to use well-established musical 'signifiers' so that the mainstream audience's recognition will be instantaneous and homogeneous

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19. A more detailed account of this process appears in Chapter 1 of *Ten Little Title Tunes* (Tagg & Clarida 2001). Put crudely, the idea was much the same as that in Pharaonic Egypt or Imperial China, i.e. that 'good' music, by which was meant music identified with the ruling classes, could be regarded as capable of transcending music's existence in the real world of social and cultural inequality. The 'good' music for this continent was the instrumental music of aristocratic and haut-bourgeois Central Europe, a set of practices which were subsequently canonised as number one on the aesthetic top ten of practically every conservatory and musicology department in the Western world. For representative statements of romantic musical metaphysics, see Wackenroder (1799), Laménais (1840) and other texts cited in both Dahlhaus (1989) and LeHuray & Day (1988). See also extracts from Hegel's *Aesthetics* as cited by Zoltai (1970: 217-266).
  20. House and early techno music's tendency to draw attention away from musicians and vocalists as foreground figures represents a particularly interesting example of music's 'invisibility' in that the pop music industry, previously used to thinking of marketing 'acts' were slow to find new ways of gaining control of mass-market mediation for those types of music (see Tagg 1994).
  21. An overwhelmingly 'classical'-/romantic' repertoire, of course: see Anderson (1988: xxiv-xxxii); Berg (1976: 101-170); Miceli (1982: 40-73); Pauli (1980:104-112); Schmidt (1982: 14-35); Thiel (1981: 121-137).
  22. For example, the scores to *The Sea Hawk* (Korngold 1940) or to *Gone with the Wind* (Steiner 1939). Work by more recent Hollywood composers like John Williams and James Horner has reverted to the idiom of early twentieth-century symphonic poems, for example in *Star Wars* (Williams 1977), or *Star Trek II – The Wrath of Khan* (Horner 1982, as analysed in 3rd year student project by Alex Costello, IPM, University of Liverpool, February 2000).

when it comes to the musical representation of, for example, male, female, love, threat, urgency, crime and mystery, fin-de siècle Paris, imperial Japan, warp speed travel, Celtic mists, eighteenth-century high society in Europe, opening, rising, closing, ending, bridging etc. Although neither such categories nor the vast majority of musical traits assumed to act as operative 'signifiers' for those categories remain constant from one cultural context to another, there is nevertheless sufficient practical coherence within one general cultural context to study the mechanisms of signification in film and TV music in some detail (Tagg 1982, 1989b, 1993). In short, since film and TV music by definition accompanies images, actions and words, it is impossible to dissociate from whichever particular dramatic purpose it is supposed to serve. This means that musical structure cannot be explained without reference to communicative function. Such symbiosis between musical structure and communication is a prerequisite for any discussion of musical manipulation.<sup>24</sup>

The third methodological reason for studying the everyday use of music for the moving image relates to the demographic considerations mentioned earlier; for not only is film and TV music heard a lot by a lot of people, not only is it virtually difficult to dissociate from the general type of visual and verbal narrative it accompanies: in its popular, everyday areas of use it also represents a well-established set of semiotic functions. Now, if we accept that it makes more sense to base general observations about the mediation of meaning on what appears to be common practice, i.e. on the 'rule' within one culture rather than on its exceptions,<sup>25</sup> then music for film and, in particular, TV can be regarded as constituting an important part of that rule.

### **Researching the everyday semiotics of music for film and TV**

In earlier publications (Tagg 1981, 2000a, 2000b) I have demonstrated various models intended to facilitate the semiotic analysis of music in the modern media. However, despite copious amounts of musical and paramusical evidence, neither the title theme to the 1970s TV series *Kojak* (\*Goldenberg 1973, Tagg 2000b) nor *Fernando* (\*Abba 1975, Tagg 2000a) were ever subjected to any analysis of listener responses: interpretations of musical 'meaning' were based solely on hermeneutic-semiotic method. In order to

23. Library music, along with most music for US/UK film and TV, was of course subsequently influenced by other styles (jazz, rock, avant-garde, folk and 'world' music etc.) which were gradually grafted on to a basically European classical core style.

By 'Library music' or 'mood music' is meant those productions, consisting of several hundred phonograms and an extensive catalogue, in which recorded music is classified under headings for use in such audiovisual situations as advertising and low-budget film, TV or video. Mood classifications have been assorted from the following productions: *Boosey and Hawkes Recorded Music for Film, Radio and Television* (London), *Bruton Music* (London), *CAM* (Creazioni artistiche e musicale, Rome), *The Conroy Recorded Music Library* (London), *The De Wolfe Recorded Music Catalogue* (London), *KPM Music Recorded Library* (London), *Éditions Montparnasse* (Paris), *Selected Sounds Recorded Music Library* (Hamburg), *The Southern Library of Recorded Music* (New York) and *The Major Mood Music Library* (Thomas J Valentino, Inc., New York). For more detail about library music, see *Library Music Interviews*: [www.tagg.org/articles/intvws80v1.pdf](http://www.tagg.org/articles/intvws80v1.pdf) (04/01/01).

24. It could be argued that this tenet ('no discussion of musical structure without reference to musical communication') might be salutarily applied to any music either canonised or parading as 'absolute'.

25. No-one in their right mind would suggest basing a general semiotics of modern colloquial English on Shakespeare sonnets, or on the works of T S Eliot. However, several early music semiotics came up with the equivalent, basing quite broad theories of musical signification on works from the European art music classical canon or avant-garde (e.g. Ruwet 1972, Nattiez 1976).

confront this method problem head-on I conducted a series of listening tests during the early 1980s.

Ten title themes for film or television, each lasting between thirty and sixty seconds, were selected as test pieces<sup>26</sup> and played to persons attending a lesson or lecture for which I was responsible.<sup>27</sup> Respondents were told they would hear some<sup>28</sup> pieces of music that had been used in film or on television; they were asked to write down what they thought might be happening on the screen along with each tune.<sup>29</sup> The results were collected in and reduced to single concepts. Each concept from each respondent for each tune was interpreted as a 'visual-verbal association' or 'VVA'. Thus, for the person who saw the first tune in connection with a girl in a white dress running in slow motion through a meadow in nice summer weather as part of a shampoo advert, the separate VVAs were 'girl', 'white', 'dress', 'run', 'slow motion', 'through', 'meadow', 'summer', 'nice weather', 'shampoo' and 'advert'.

It should be noted that this test procedure is one of free induction, meaning that respondents had to actively imagine pictures which they then had to put into words. There is consequently a far greater spread of response for each piece than would have been the case if multiple choice method had been used. It also means that each answer has greater cultural and symbolic significance since each response was actively created with the music as sole stimulus and not with the aid of ready made alternatives. Despite the use of free induction, Poisson analysis of the results showed extensive clustering of responses, this suggesting that there was significant consistency of response and a very low degree of random spread over the various tunes. To this extent the results can be considered as reliable indicators of differences in mood and scenario between the ten pieces, as expressed by the respondents in the form of VVAs (verbal-visual associations) to solely musical stimuli in the test situation.<sup>30</sup> Since the results and statistics of these reception tests are voluminous, I shall concentrate here on a few general aspects of

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26. Criteria for selection of test pieces were quite random. A few of them happened to be pieces on an anthology of TV tunes I had acquired in 1978 and had already used in analysis classes. Others were chosen for crosschecking purposes. For example: how well could people distinguish between a romantic and tragic love story, between homely and lonely pastorelle idylls, between detective and bitter-sweet minor triads with added ninths? Methodological criteria are mentioned later on in this article.

27. At state schools, sixth form colleges, music schools, weekend courses and in adult education between autumn 1979 and spring 1984. 88% of these respondents were Swedish, 2% Norwegian and 10% Latin American. About 30% were pupils or students with a special interest in music — the 'unmusical' populace constituting the remaining 70% — and most respondents were below the age of thirty. On some occasions only three pieces were played, more frequently the first four and in a few instances all ten. This means that over six hundred people responded to the first three tunes, over four hundred to the first four and only one hundred and five to the last one. For this reason, all statistics quoted below are scaled down to comparable percentages.

28. 'Some' — the number of pieces played depended on the time available for the test situation. See previous paragraph in main body of text.

29. I also added: 'There won't be time to think, nor to write much, so just jot down the words, pictures, moods or impressions that come into your head'. For an account of the complete test procedure, its results and for a thorough analyses of the music and its relation to responses, see Tagg & Clarida (2001).

30. Of course, the test situations were not entirely unsatisfactory. Sitting in a classroom or lecture hall is not the same as lounging in front of the TV. However, since respondents had so little time to think or indulge in any time-consuming reflective activities — the examples were short and came in rapid succession — and since only 7% of answers to all tunes were blanks, it is probable that the answers chiefly constitute immediate respondent associations to the musical stimuli, associations learned unconsciously (yet cognitively) as a result of many hours audiovisual training in the presence of music and moving pictures.

the material and on certain musical and visual-verbal stereotypes of particular anthropological interest.

### **Classification of visual-verbal associations (VVAs)**

Now, free induction produces a wide spread of individual responses which impedes the use of directly quantitative statistical method. Therefore, if the results of the reception test are to be presented in a meaningful way, they must be grouped together in larger semantic fields than those represented by each VVA. Thus, even some of the most common VVAs, such as *love* and *romantic* (only 4% each of the total sum of responses given to all ten tunes), are bracketed together into the same general category of Love/Kindness. However, since *love* is a broader concept than *romantic love* and would therefore warrant a wider range of different musics than the latter, *love* and *romantic love* were put into two separate subcategories, both contained under the more general Love/Kindness section.<sup>31</sup>

There is no room here to present the extensive listing of VVA categories,<sup>32</sup> let alone the taxonomic rationale behind its construction. However, three aspects of response classification criteria are relevant to the question of musical meaning and, by extension, to that of musical manipulation.

The first of these criteria consists of widely accepted systematisations of the functions of film music, more specifically those codified by Lissa (1965: 115-256).<sup>33</sup> Particularly important symbolic categories influencing our<sup>34</sup> VVA classification are, freely translated, what she calls Emphasising movement, Styling real sounds, Representing location, Representing time (of day, in history), Expressing psychological experiences (of actors) and Providing empathy (for the audience).<sup>35</sup> The second major influence on our system of response categories comes from classifications of musical moods made by

31. The sort of classification distinguishing, say, *love*, *in love* or *requited love* from *lots of love*, *romance* or *very romantic* (different music for those two areas of experience) gives rise to two separate low-level categories housed under the slightly more general heading Love/Kindness, a less musicogenic category that also includes such subcategories as Sensual/Seductive and Gentle/Tender, both musically distinguishable from each other as well as from the Love/Romantic categories. The more general category Love/Kindness sorts in its turn under the even less musical high-level heading Culturally Positive which also includes Tranquillity/Security, Joy/Festivity, Beauty/Attraction, etc., all of which contain their more musically determinable subcategories. Finally, the more abstract category Culturally Positive is in its turn part of the highly unmusical overriding heading General Attributive Affects which also includes the Culturally Ambivalent, Culturally Negative and Culturally Neutral. The other top level headings are Test Statistics and Time Positions, Beings (human, mythical, animal), Props/Objects and (social) Gatherings, Location/Scene/Setting, Explicit Space-time Relations/Movement/Actions, Media Immanent VVAs and, finally, Evaluative VVAs.

32. 798 low-level categories, 212 above that, 46 high-level categories and 7 top-level ones were used to classify the 8552 responses collected (2472 unique). This taxonomy classifying the 2472 unique responses occupies 25 pages on its own and the actual response results and statistics account for another 150.

33. For discussion of other film music function classifications, see, for example, Julien (1987: 28-41), Gorbman (1987), Karlin & Wright (1990).

34. The 'we' of that 'our' are Robert Clarida (New York), who, as visiting Fullbright scholar, worked with me on this project, and the author of this article.

35. *Unterstreichung von Bewegungen; Stilisierung realer Geräusche; Representation der dargestellten Raums; Representation der dargestellten Zeit; Ausdrucksmittel psychischer Erlebnisse; Grundlage der Entföhlung* (terms translated into German from the Polish original). Judging from Lissa's commentary to these functions, the English captions seem reasonable, even though 'empathy' is *Einfühlung* rather than *Entföhlung*, because the 'unfolding' of a particular mood or feeling (*Entföhlung*) by music to the audience is no more than an inverse dialectic complement to the audience's process of empathisation (by music) with particular aspects of paramusical film narrative.

compilers of library music or of anthologies of music for the silent film.<sup>36</sup> We are referring here in particular to such synoptic classifications as Animals, Bright, Bucolic, Children, Comedy, Danger, Disaster, Eerie, Exotic, Fashion, Foreign, Futuristic, Grandiose, Happy, Heavy Industry, Humour, Impressive, Light Action, Melancholy, Mysterious, National, Nature, Open Air, Panoramic, Pastoral, Period, Prestigious, Religious, Romance, Sad, Scenic, Sea, Serious, Solitude, Space (cosmos), Sport, Suspense, Tenderness, Tension, Tragic, Travel, Water and Western rather than to episodic functions like Openings and Closes or to generic classifications like Classical, Rock or Jazz.

The third response classification procedure relies on musical common sense acquired as members of this culture and on some skill in hermeneutics. We had to ask ourselves whether a particular VVA would, according to our experience as musicians, musicologists, composers and listeners,<sup>37</sup> warrant different music to that corresponding to any of the categories we had listed up to that point. For example, we had to split up cities and towns, putting 'big city' and 'small town' into separate categories because they are different in terms of musical symbolisation, although both verbally categorisable as 'urban'.<sup>38</sup> Particularly striking was, however, the clear musical and paramusical profiles cut by the cultural categories Male and Female.

### **Male and female**

During the process of category classification sketched above, it became clear that our respondents had seen/heard more male and less female figures in connection with four tunes, more female and less male in connection with four others. For purposes of brevity I will refer to the four title tunes in response to which people associated to far more male than female figures as 'the male tunes', to the four others as 'the female tunes'.<sup>39</sup> The first two columns of figures in table 2, show, as percentages, occurrences of words or phrases denoting male and female humans in relation to all responses for each of the eight tunes. The third column sums columns one and two to show what percentage of all responses to each tune were categorisable as either male or female. The last two columns of table 2 show, as percentages of the sum in column three, the proportion of male to female associations provided by respondents for each tune. Some of the basic musical differences between the male and female tunes are then summarised in table 3.

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36. For more on library music, see footnote 23, p.10. The silent film mood classifications stem mainly from Rapée (1924).

37. 'We' are Robert Clarida (New York), classically trained guitarist and composer with considerable practical experience from the worlds of jazz, rock and disco, and the author, classically trained organist, erstwhile jazz, blues and rock musician, with some experience as a composer of choral works, one musical, several rock numbers and a few TV signatures.

38. This type of distinction tallies with library music catalogue classification of such pieces. For example, the Boosey and Hawkes catalogue put the small town pieces *Elm City USA*, *Fillmore Junction Before 1885* and *Market Day in Martinique* into their Pastoral/Scenic Grandeur section, whereas *Metropolis*, *Oxford Circus* and *Rio Rhythm* are classified as Industrial. Conversely, we had to put *Suspicion* and *Jealousy* into the same subcategory because we could identify no musically distinctive characteristics between the two, although their verbal meanings show important differences of nuance and content. This problem of musically determined VVA classification demands further discussion, since it has direct bearing on what film and TV music can and cannot communicate. That discussion might, hopefully, make a small methodological contribution to the cultural anthropology of our society. For more on this issue, see the section 'Towns, suspicion and jealousy: verbal and musical concepts' in Tagg (1989b).

**Table 2 'Male' and 'female' responses**

Tune	male	female	total	male%	female%
<b>'Male' tunes</b>					
The Virginian	36.9	0.7	38.0	98.2	1.8
Sportsnight	16.3	1.6	18.0	90.9	9.1
Owed to 'g'	22.1	1.4	23.0	94.1	5.9
Miami Vice	11.4	1.0	12.0	70.0	30.0
<b>'Female' tunes</b>					
<i>Dream of Olwen</i>	0.5	12.7	13.0	3.7	96.3
<i>Romeo &amp; Juliet</i>	4.8	17.2	22.0	21.9	78.1
<i>Emmerdale Farm</i>	—	4.1	4.1	—	100
<i>Sayonara</i>	4.1	13.1	17.0	23.8	76.2

**Table 3 Some musical characteristics of 'male' and 'female' tunes in test**

musical characteristic	male tunes	female tunes
average tempo	109 bpm	83 bpm
surface rate <sup>1</sup>	c. 400	c. 180
phrase length	short	long
phrasing	staccato	legato
repeated notes	common	none
volume change	none	some
bass line	active and angular	quite static
offbeats and syncopation	common	rare
melodic instrumentation	electric guitar, guitar synth, trumpet, xylophone <sup>2</sup>	strings, flute, mandolin, oboe, piano
accompanimental instrumentation	guitar riffs + strum, brass stabs, sequenced synth, percussion	strings, piano, woodwind, no brass, no percussion
tonal idiom	rock, (diluted) jazz common	classical, romantic common

39. For details about the reception test procedure, tunes and results, see Tagg & Clarida (2001). The sources of the eight recordings are: [1] *The Dream of Olwen* (Charles Williams), composed for the British film *Before I Die* (1944); extract from cover version by Geoff Love and his Orchestra on *Big Concerto Movie Themes*, Music for Pleasure MFP 4261 (1972). [2] *The Virginian* (Percy Faith), for the NBC television series of the same name (ran 1962-69); test extract from cover version by 101 Strings (plus oboe, guitar and percussion) on *Golden Hour of Favourite TV Themes*, Golden Hour GH 845 (1976). [3] *Romeo and Juliet* (Nino Rota), theme for the Zeffirelli film version (UK, 1968); extract from cover version by The Tony Hatch Orchestra on *Hit the Road to Themeland*, Pye NSPL 41029 (1974). [4] *Sportsnight* (Tony Hatch); extract from version used for homonymous BBC TV series; source as n° 3. [5] *Emmerdale Farm* (Tony Hatch); extended version of thirty-second theme for the Yorkshire Television soap of the same name (started in 1972); source as n° 3. [6] *Sayonara* (Alex North); extract from original title music to the 1958 Warner Brothers film; source *Fifty Years of Film Music*, Warner Brothers 3XX 2736 (1973). [7] *Owed to 'g'* (Bolin / Deep Purple), instrumental rock number, to my knowledge unused in film or TV contexts but presumed to be suitable for urban thriller featuring young criminals; from Deep Purple album *Come Taste The Band*, Warner Brothers PR 2895 (1975); in January 2008 I learned from David Dean (London) that it was in fact used as outro music for the BBCTV spy series *Quiller* (1975). [8] *Miami Vice* (Jan Hammer); title theme for TVM series of same name; recorded directly to videocassette during Swedish TV première (no lead 'guitar' (synth) track for the first episodes); also with lead 'guitar' in mix on album *Miami Vice*, MCA 252 493-1 (1985). Two other tunes were included in the test battery but these exhibited much less clear profiles of gender-specific response than the eight just mentioned.

1. By 'surface rate' is meant the general speed of the quickest notes, i.e. the 'diddy-diddy' factor rather than 'boom-thwack' rate of tone beats (=pulse or tempo).
2. Some of *The Virginian's* Fender guitar tune is doubled by oboe and the major key section is led by lively unison strings.

**Table 4 Polarities of gender hypothesised from characteristics listed in Table 2**

male	female	male	female	male	female
fast	slow	sudden	gradual	active	passive
dynamic	static	upwards	downwards	outwards	inwards
hard	soft	jagged	smooth	sharp	rounded
urban	rural	modern	old times	strong	weak

**Table 5 VVAs to 'male' and 'female' tunes in order of response frequency.**

† = exclusive to 'male' tunes, \* = exclusive to 'female' tunes)

male tunes (1)	male tunes (2)	female tunes (1)	female tunes (2)
cars	bustling†	love*	19th century
chase	crowds	sad*	ending
city	rebellious†	couple	destiny*
young people	threat†	countryside	coast*
action	video†	grass	evening
Western†	sports†	parting*	neutral
fast†	smoke	melancholy*	flowers*
detective†	slums	loneliness	against will... *
riding	about to...	summer	Russian*
USA†	motorways	syrupe	dark*
horses	thriller†	scene	fog
cowboys	comedy†	calm	remembering
excitement	business†	pastoral	small town
tough†	performance†	tragic*	kissing*
modern	disturbing†	sea	always has been*
rock music†	shooting†	sunrise*	two people
stress	disaster†	walking	sitting*
traffic†	robbery†	British	sailing
cruel	space†	beautiful	white*
cigarettes	the future†	emotion	rivers*
social rejects†	living it up†	family	springtime*
driving	war	crying*	gliding
hard†	planning†	old times	lakes
spies	alcohol	after something*	ecstatic
introduction	ladies	sun	secluded* spot*
concrete†	'hot stuff'	meeting	park*
desert	bad	nostalgia	France*
streets	machines	sentimental*	waves*
aeroplanes	chromium	green*	wind
villains	pulse	boats	harmonious*
night	skyscraper	death*	upper class*
heroes	to and fro	caressing*	outdoors

The basic structural differences between recordings of the eight pieces listed is striking and suggests that men and women, as represented by the music in question, can be interpreted according to the characteristics enumerated in table 4. In order to see whether the music really presented such a stereotypical view of gender, it seemed wise to check what other associations our respondents had made to the eight tunes and to see whether those other responses created any patterns refuting or confirming the somewhat sexist hypotheses of table 3. Table 5 summarises some of those other responses. In fact, our respondents provided us with some rather drastic statistics:

- women are twice as likely as men to be associated with the outdoors;
- women are 7 times more likely than men to be related to seasons or the weather;
- women are 12 times more rural than men;
- women are 13 times more likely than men to be associated with quiet and calm;
- women are 25% more likely than men to be associated with love;
- women are never asocial and never carry weapons;
- women may often be sad, melancholic or nostalgic;
- men are 8 times more urban than women;
- men are 9 times more likely to be indoors than women;
- men are 20 times more likely than women to be associated with cars;
- men are 35 times more likely to be in clubs and bars than women;
- men are 33% more likely than women to be in meetings, parades, etc.;
- men are 50% stronger than women;
- men are never seen or heard in isolated or secluded spots;
- men can be asocial and carry weapons: women do not;
- men are never sad.

It should be noted that these figures result from what a few hundred respondents imagined seeing when listening to eight short pieces of title music. Of course, the stereotypical character of the tunes is bound to tie in with the respondents' previous experience of equally stereotypical visual narrative accompanying such music. However, it should also be remembered that any such narrative and its archetypal personalities, props, scenarios and patterns of action were elicited by *instrumental music alone* and that it would be highly unlikely for a similar test based on a comparable series of, say, photographs, paintings or short poems to produce the same results.<sup>40</sup> Why? Because tall grass, rolling hills, shampoo, a light breeze, sea swell in the sunshine, long hair, Austria, flowing dresses, slow motion takes, cornfields, couples caressing, billowing sails etc. (all recurrent associations to *The Dream of Olwen*) are *verbally and visually incongruent* entities: hills just do not resemble hair, nor shampoo a cornfield, nor Austria the sea. However, all those verbally and visually incongruent associations are highly congruent in terms of emotion, touch, gesture etc. and music is famed for its ability to arrange such aspects of our experience. Thus *The Dream of Olwen* elicited a set of associations which the respondents heard, either directly or indirectly, as representing emotional, tactile and corporeal qualities of slow,

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40. The construction of such association tests, based on a verbal or visual starting point, ought indeed to be a task for future research. The unlikelihood of such tests producing the same results can be attributed to certain axioms about the specificity of musical communication, for example the indexical quality of most musical signs (Karbušický 1983) and to the relative rarity of sonic anaphores in most musical discourse (Tagg 1992).

smooth and pleasantly wavy motion in culturally specific sonic terms.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the results from the whole experiment suggest that music arranges our experience into socially constructed categories that hang together musically, not visually or verbally, even though there may be the occasional synaesthetic overlap.<sup>42</sup>

If these short observations on the specificity of music as a symbolic system are of any use and if the thin slice of research dealing with musically mediated notions of male and female are not worth less than the paper they are written on, then it might be wise to accord the analysis of musical 'texts' a little more space in general education. For, even though there has been no room here to provide more than a small taster of the empirical materials and theoretical issues involved, it should be clear that music — even without words or accompanying visuals — is capable of creating and communicating semantic fields of considerable ideological potential.<sup>43</sup> If this is true, and if, as suggested earlier, we are as listeners unable to understand the basic mechanisms by which music manages to influence our attitudes towards such phenomena as male, female, nature, Native Americans, etc., then we can also be manipulated by music in connection with moving images. The question is how to combat manipulation in this field without depriving music of its intrinsic ability to influence our thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour in its intrinsically direct, non-analytical manner.

### ***Combating manipulation through education***

It is possible to identify four main interrelated areas of education and research that can help combat media manipulation through music: the epistemology of music, semiotic music analysis, musical creativity and ideological critique.

#### ***Epistemology of music***

The *Emmerdale Farm* example gave proof of a clear epistemological gap: listeners understood the music by responding in a culturally competent fashion to the different music tracks set to the same visual sequences while exhibiting embarrassment at their inability to grasp the mechanisms underpinning that competence. A similar kind of epistemological contradiction emanates from the reception test results discussed above: while respondents formed clear ideas about the difference between the cultural spheres of male and female merely by listening to particular pieces of instrumental music, the ideology of gender is rarely discussed in its musically mediated guise.<sup>44</sup> The capacity to understand music as a cultural influence on our feelings, attitudes and behaviour obviously demands that music be studied as such, i.e.

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41. Obviously, the 'Austria' occurrences are specific to outdoor scenarios in *The Sound of Music* and the shampoo is clearly that advertised in the Timotei shampoo spot showing a young woman with long blonde hair in a long, flowing white dress walking slow motion through a 'sea' of long grass. Indeed, advertisers frequently think in musicogenic terms of gesturality and tactility.

42. See, for example, such synaesthetic verbal metaphors as 'a sea of grass', 'loud colours', 'waves of passion'. Anaphones, especially of those of the sonic type, are the only main category of musical signs to significantly overlap with words and picture (see Tagg, 1992).

43. For instance, instead of accounting for 'male' and 'female' in title music, we could have discussed musical categorisation of other broadly connotative concepts, some of which — like 'Hero', 'Nature', 'Time' or 'Death' (Tagg, 1979: 123-126; 1982; 1984; 1989b; 2000b: 185-200) — might even be anthropologically basic enough to qualify as archetypes, in the Jungian sense of the word (Jung, 1964: 56, ff; Henderson, 1964: 101-119).

that it be reintegrated into our understanding of culture as a whole.

This conference has provided ample evidence that our understanding of music as a means of influencing (and manipulating) our fellow humans can be radically improved when existing disciplinary boundaries are radically transgressed. At the same time the necessity of this conference provides an eloquent indictment of the institutional 'normality' in which most of us work, a normality in which there is little or no dialogue between natural and social scientists, where there are often endemic misunderstandings between social scientists interested in music and musicians or musicologists interested in society, not to mention the mistrust with which musicians often view musicologists or the mutual disdain which seems to exist between the music industry and higher education in music. In this epistemological context of combating manipulation I can do no more than highlight two interrelated questions calling for particularly urgent attention: the defalsification of our own music history and the anthropological relativisation of our own music culture(s).

By the defalsification of European music I mean combating such phenomena as its misrepresentation as an ethereal and suprasocial phenomenon. In one of the most rigorous musicological studies of recent years, Martinez (1997), drawing on Blacking (1976), Merriam (1964), Seeger (1977) and others, proposes a holistic approach which, while allowing discussion of intramusical structure and signification, refutes the 'autonomous' music aesthetic which still holds sway in many conservatories and departments of musicology. Such musical 'absolutism' can still sometimes be found in the company of a kind of cultural reductionism according to which other music cultures are regarded as essentially more rhythmical, more corporeal and more tightly linked to ritual and social functions than our own. Of course, such reductionism is historically false and can easily degenerate into various types of racism.<sup>45</sup> By the relativisation of our own music culture I mean therefore the ability to see ourselves, as well as others, anthropologically, and to lay bare the underlying social and ritual functions of our music beneath the veneer of illusions like 'autonomous music' or 'pure entertainment'.<sup>46</sup>

### ***The semiotic analysis of music***

Studies of film and TV music's relative coherence of signification within Western culture have been a useful starting point in the development of a widely applicable semiotics of music.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, over the past ten years, I have found two methodological procedures, developed from earlier research, to be of particular use in classes explicitly aimed at creating aware-

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44. The amount of literature about gender and music which relates gender primarily to musical structuration is tiny compared to that discussing gender in relation to the music's lyrics, stage presentation, social position of musicians, etc. Work by McClary (1991) and Ford (1991) constitute notable exceptions to this tendency.

45. For a critique of the mechanistic inversion of this aesthetic, see 'Open Letter about "Black Music", "Afro-American Music" and "European Music"' (Tagg 1989). It should, for example, also be remembered that a good music teacher should, according to J.S. Bach pupil Johann Philipp Kirnberger, 'always keep his pupils on various types of dance music so they become rooted in the automatic aspect of the beat' ('Tanzstück'. In *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*. Leipzig, 1771; cited in Klingfors (1991: 347).

46. See P Tagg 'An Anthropology of Stereotypes in TV Music' (1989)

47. See P Tagg 'Musicology and the Semiotics of Popular Music' (1987), accessible from online list via <[www.tagg.org/texts.html](http://www.tagg.org/texts.html)>. See also *Kojak - 50 Seconds of TV Music*, 2nd ed., (Tagg 2000a), as well as *Ten Little Title Tunes* (Tagg & Clarida 2001).

ness among students of both music and other subjects of music's specificity as a means of communication.<sup>48</sup> One such trick is called *interobjective comparison*, a procedure involving the use of other music and of musical commutation, not of words or images, as primary step in relating the music under analysis to anything outside itself.<sup>49</sup> The other trick employs a simple *sign typology* of music developed not from linguistic or from general cultural theory but from consistent relationships, observed in extensive empirical research, between musical structure and paramusical phenomena.<sup>50</sup>

Depending on the grain of analysis, these simple and well-tried analytical procedures allow for varying degrees of awareness into the mechanisms underpinning musical communication in the modern mass media. Such insight can in its turn make all the difference for listeners between manipulation and affect, for example between, on the one hand, just feeling, thanks to some discordant music, that the Native Americans shown on screen are savage villains and, on the other, knowing that what the music has told you to feel about them may not be what you really feel or think. Such insights allow you to reject other musically mediated ideological stereotypes, for example those described in the reception test summary; they allow you to object when heroic music tells you to side up with a macho slob, when those romantic strings ask you to get involve in a claustrophobic on-screen relationship, etc., etc. This kind of insight can also be useful when *making* music too: it makes it much easier to identify whether you want to go with the standard use of musical structures or to opt for something different, either in terms of musical structure or with regard to how music relates to the images, words or actions it accompanies.

### **Music-making**

The third area of activity in which we can combat musical manipulation is that identified by Swedish poet Göran Sonnevi:

Musiken  
kan inte bortförklaras.  
Det går inte ens att säga emot,  
annat än  
med helt ny musik.<sup>51</sup>

One way of interpreting this aphorism is that the risk of musical manipulation will be least when everyone has equal power over the means of musical expression and production, the same potential to exert musical influence, the same right to 'talk back' at music by making music yourself, so to speak. Now, it would hardly be realistic to envisage an immanent return to live communal music-making, and inadvisable to advocate the introduction of compulsory violin or classical singing lessons. It is however, hardly unreasonable to consider recent developments in media technology and in some popular music cultures as indicative of a democratic potential in music making. Indeed, sampling, digital sound formats such as MP3, 'composer jukebox' sites

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48. For more information about these courses, visit [www.tagg.org/courses.html](http://www.tagg.org/courses.html) and click on one of the following: 'Music and the Moving Image 1', 'Popular Music Analysis', 'Introduction to the Semiotics of Music'.

49. This method is well illustrated in the *Kojak* analysis (Tagg 2000a) and in *Fernando the Flute*, (Tagg 2000b).

50. See 'Towards a Sign Typology of Music' (Tagg 1992).

51. = Music cannot be explained away. It cannot even be contradicted, except by totally new music. This poem appeared in 1975, but I have no bibliographical details for it.

on the internet, web distribution, etc. all seem to bode well for the spread rather than demise of musical activity in industrialised society.<sup>52</sup> The ability to make music need no longer be the sole preserve of traditionally trained musicians: it could now in effect be open to all. And yet educational provision of music-making skills has been slow to realise this potential, being still largely restricted to those considered musically talented in conventional terms, with far fewer institutions using the new technologies to provide music-making education for all.<sup>53</sup>

Although some traditionally schooled musicians may regard sampling and prerecorded archetypal soundbytes as a disingenuous means of making music, such phenomena are no more than modern technology's variants of the compositional building block. Just as Mozart or Beethoven relied on existing musical idioms and forms to create their own music, just as Charlie Parker relied on established harmonic formulae to construct his improvisations, just as Frank Zappa relied on pop stereotypes to create his innovative musical and social critiques, and just as Morricone is often able to juxtapose everyday sounds against orchestral texture and both of these against moving images in a highly original fashion, there is similarly no need to believe that anyone using samples or other prerecorded soundbytes as compositional building blocks is automatically innovative or derivative. After all, it is not the novelty of building materials that constitutes innovation but how the building blocks are organised into patterns of simultaneity, sequence, repetition and variation, i.e. what is constructed or *composed*.

As audiovisual digital technology becomes increasingly affordable, and as the music business (in its traditional sense) becomes an increasingly peripheral part of the global entertainment industry, music will become increasingly treated as just one of several ingredients in film, TV, games, etc.<sup>54</sup> It is therefore important that particular educational attention be devoted to both the production and analysis of music for moving images.

### ***Ideological critique***

This article has attempted to illustrate ways in which manipulation may occur when music accompanies moving images. In so doing, it has been nec-

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52. Of course this democratic potential is quite restricted from a global viewpoint: not only do less than 10% of UK households currently own a computer hooked up to the internet; the vast majority of people in the developing world are unlikely to be able to use a computer at all. Moreover, as state and corporate control of the internet increases, the potential for spreading cultural alternatives may well be subject to censorship, as has already occurred when the US government (under Clinton) outlawed the spread of 'subversive' information, forcing an ISP (=Internet Service Provider) to shut down a site devoted to information about the popular Zapatista movement and its struggle for land reform in Chapas (southern Mexico). In fact, the internet's democratic potential cannot be assured unless the actual hardware (telecommunications, satellites, etc.) are under popular control.

53. Traditional rock band musicianship also requires specific motoric skills for performance on specific instruments. Even singing with a rock or pop ensemble demands specific skills of projection and of microphone technique. Although the roles of composer and performer are less distinct here than in classical music making, there is nevertheless a sense in which performance, with all its concomitant motoric skills, is at the forefront of the music-making process. With skills in MIDI, sampling, synthesiser use, and multi-track home recording, however, the role of performer is virtually non-existent, that of the composer paramount. However, the public 'face' of the music as performance, the 'act' (to use the music business term) of much current popular music produced in this way (e.g. techno) is *not* the composer; instead it is the DJ who intervenes as a sort of performer, presenting the music to its fans in its social context.

54. For example, by the mid 1990s turnover in the games industry had far outstripped that of the international music business.

essary to question the self-evident — ‘how come our interpretative skills are so obvious but the mechanisms behind those skills so elusive?’; ‘why are those skills not institutionalised as knowledge in the same way as familiarity with verbal forms of expression?’ etc. Questioning the apparently obvious entails by definition some ideological critique since asking ‘why are things this way?’ implies that a different state of affairs may be preferable. Proposing changes in music research and education constitutes a more obvious form of ideological critique: if nothing was wrong, no change would be necessary. Indeed, the whole concept of manipulation and the formulation of means to avert its risks involves, as stated earlier, an ethical dimension that includes the notion of unjust coercion and the abuse of power.

The most obvious sources of manipulation in today’s industrialised world are corporate advertising, branding, marketing, etc. (Klein 2000), but manipulation by advertisement, including its music, is just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface lies a culture of fear in which the mysteries of ‘free’ competition, ‘free’ enterprise, the something-for-nothing syndrome<sup>55</sup> and the American dream all serve to manoeuvre many of us into the belief that it is our own fault and that there is something wrong with us as individuals if we do not amass wealth at the expense of others.<sup>56</sup> Now that capitalism has ruled the world unchallenged by any other geopolitical system for over a decade, it has become more difficult to visualise alternatives to this seemingly monolithic culture of greed and fear, some conservative politicians even claiming that society and social classes no longer exist,<sup>57</sup> despite the fact that the gap between rich and poor in the industrialised world, not to mention that separating us from the majority of the world’s population in the developing countries, has increased alarmingly over the same decade.

Under such circumstances it is all the more essential to actively seek out alternatives with which to challenge the clearly unjust world system in which we live. More than ever before, critical thinking needs to play a central role in education and it is in that context that the kind of music teaching reforms sketched above can play a small but important part. Indeed, twenty years of teaching Music and the Moving Image as well as the semiotic analysis of music have demonstrated that there is broad interest among young people in general (not just among music students) in understanding how they are affected by music, both duly and unduly (the latter constituting manipulation). This interest, combined with considerable everyday experience of music and moving image, acquired ever since TV and the video player were first used to baby-sit them, has produced a remarkable competence in distinguishing nuances of connotation brought about by nuances of structural dif-

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55. The something-for-nothing syndrome can be illustrated by the omnipresence in advertising of words or expressions like ‘win’, ‘save’, ‘ $n+1$  for the price of  $n$ ’, ‘free with every  $x$  you buy’, ‘ $y\%$  off’, ‘free  $z\%$  extra’, ‘reduced’, ‘sale’, ‘everything must go’, ‘bargain’. Of course these consumerist illusions are founded on the fallacies of share holding and finance capitalism, i.e. that money, the abstraction of human labour, can increase in value without any investment of anyone’s labour or without causing harm to anyone. The National Lottery is perhaps the most recognisable symptom of the condition: paying something to get nothing but fantasising about getting lots.

56. According to Prof. Jan Ling, visiting Liverpool in March 2000, the Stockholm daily *Svenska Dagbladet* featured, some time in February or March 2000, an article in which some Swedish management theory guru declared altruism to be a danger to free society (presumably because altruism by definition precludes greed as motivation for action).

57. See Mrs. Thatcher’s frequently quoted speech and John Major’s notion of 1990s Britain as a classless society.

ference in the music they hear and of the context in which that music is heard.

In my day-to-day work I try to provide these young people with some sort of anti-manipulative first-aid kit which will, I hope, at least allow them to understand the basic mechanisms of communicating moods and connotations through music. Together with greater knowledge of musical manipulation from the business side, with the democratic potential of new technologies, with a truly anthropological approach to our own culture (not just to other cultures), with a re-evaluation and defalsification of our own continent's music history, with new insights into matters audio-neurological and bioacoustic, etc., etc., I would hold that the aims and methods mentioned in this paper can be useful in attempts to diminish the risks of musical manipulation. I also hope that they can empower young people to make their own choices about which emotional messages, musical or not, they want to create, accept or reject. Like it or not, it is they, not we, who will be bombarded by media messages in the unjust and manipulative future that we seem to have prepared for them.

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