THE FILM SENSE

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This means that *we do not obey some 'all-pervading law' of absolute 'meanings' and correspondences between colours and sounds—and absolute relations between these and specific emotions, but it does mean that we ourselves decide which colours and sounds will best serve the given assignment or emotion as we need them.*

Of course, the 'generally accepted' interpretation may serve as an impetus, and an effective one at that, in the construction of the colour-imagery of the drama.

But the law laid down here will not legalize any absolute correspondence 'in general', but will demand that consistency in a definite tone-colour key, running through the whole work, must be given by an imagery structure in strict harmony with the work's theme and idea.

CHAPTER IV

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. . . If, to a composition which is already interesting through the choice of subject, you add a disposition of lines which augments the impression, if you add chiaroscuro which seizes the imagination, and colour adapted to the characters, you have solved a more difficult problem—you have entered a realm of superior ideas, doing what the musician does when, to a single theme, he adds the resources of harmony and its combinations.

EUGÈNE DELACROIX[1]

I always took the score and read it carefully during the performance, so that, in time, I got to know the sound—the voice, as it were—of each instrument and the part it filled. . . . Listening so closely, I also found out for myself the intangible bond between each instrument and true musical expression.

HECTOR BERLIOZ[2]

A song by Shakespeare or Verlaine, which seems so free and living and as remote from any conscious purpose as rain that falls in a garden or the lights of evening, is discovered to be the rhythmic speech of an emotion otherwise incommunicable, at least so fitly.

JAMES JOYCE[3]

I n Part II we discussed the new question posed by audio-visual combinations—that of solving a wholly new compositional problem. The solution to this compositional problem lies in finding *a key to the measured matching* of a strip of music and a strip of picture; such measured matching as would enable us to unite both strips 'vertically' or *simultaneously*: matching each continuing musical phrase with *each phrase* of the continuing parallel picture strips—our shots. This will be conditioned by our adherence to the letter of that law allowing us to *combine* 'horizontally' or *continuously*: shot after shot in the silent film—phrase after phrase of a developing theme in music. We have brought to this question an analysis

of existing theories on general correlations of aural and visual phenomena. We have also examined the question of correlating visual and aural phenomena with specific emotions.

With these problems in mind we discussed the question of correlating music and colour. And we concluded that the question of 'absolute' sound-colour equivalents—even if found in nature—cannot play a decisive role in creative work, except in an occasional 'supplementary' way.

The decisive role is played by the *image structure* of the work, not so much by *employing* generally accepted correlations, but by *establishing* in our images of a *specific creative work* whatever correlations (of sound and picture, sound and colour, etc.) are dictated by the *idea and theme of the particular work.*

We turn now from all the preceding *general premises* to *concrete methods* of constructing relations between music and picture. These methods will not vary basically no matter how varying the circumstances: it makes no difference whether the composer writes music for the 'general idea' of a sequence, or for a rough or final cutting of the sequence; or, if procedure has been organized in an opposite direction, with the director building the visual cutting to music that has already been written and recorded on sound-track.

I should like to point out that in *Alexander Nevsky* literally all these possible approaches were employed. There are sequences in which the shots were cut to a previously recorded music-track. There are sequences for which the entire piece of music was written to a final cutting of the picture. There are sequences that contain both approaches. There are even sequences that furnish material for the anecdotists. One such example occurs in the battle scene where pipes and drums are played for the victorious Russian soldiers. I couldn't find a way to explain to Prokofiev what precise effect should be 'seen' in his music for this joyful moment. Seeing that we were getting nowhere, I ordered some 'prop' instruments constructed, shot these being played (without sound) *visually*, and projected the results for Prokofiev—who almost immediately handed me an exact 'musical equivalent' to that visual

image of pipers and drummers which I had shown him.

With similar means were produced the sounds of the great horns blown from the German lines. In the same way, but inversely, completed sections of the score sometimes suggested plastic visual solutions, which neither he nor I had foreseen in advance. Often these fitted so perfectly into the unified 'inner sounding' of the sequence that now they seem 'conceived that way in advance'. Such was the case with the scene of Vaska and Gavrilo Olexich embracing before leaving for their posts, as well as a great part of the sequence of knights galloping to the attack—both of which sequences had effects that we were totally unprepared for.

These examples are cited to confirm the statement that the 'method' we are proposing here has been tested 'backwards and forwards' to check all its possible variations and nuances.

What then is this method of building audio-visual correspondences?

One answer, a naïve one, to this problem would be to find equivalents to the *purely representational elements in music.*

Such an answer would be not only naïve, but childish and senseless as well, inevitably leading to the confusions of Shershavin in Pavlenko's novel *Red Planes Fly East:*

Out of his wallet he pulled an exercise-book in a peeling oil-cloth binding, inscribed *Music....*

'What is it?' she asked.

'My impressions of music. At one time I tried to reduce everything I heard to a system, to understand the logic of music before I understood the music itself. I took a fancy to a certain old man, a movie pianist, a former colonel of the Guards. What do instruments sound like? "That's courage,' said the old man. "Why courage?" I asked. He shrugged his shoulders. "C major, B flat major, F flat major are firm, resolute, noble tones," he explained. I made a habit of seeing him before the film began and treated him to my ration cigarettes—since I didn't smoke—and asked how music was to be understood....

'I continued visiting him at the theatre, and on candy-wrappers he wrote down the names of the works he played and their emo-

tional effect. Open the note-book and we'll laugh together.'...
She read:
, "Song of Maidens" from Rubinstein's *Demon*: sadness.
'Schumann's *Fantasiestuecke*, No. 2: inspiration.
'Barcarolle from Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*: love.
'Overture to Chaikovsky's *Pique Dame*: sickness.'
She closed the book.
'I can't read any more,' she said. 'I'm ashamed of you.'
He flushed, but did not yield.
'And, you know, I wrote and wrote, I listened and made notes,' compared, collated. One day the old man was playing something great, inspired, joyous, encouraging, and I guessed at once what it connoted: it meant rapture. He finished the piece and threw me a note. It appeared that he had been playing Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*, a theme of terror and horror. And I realized three things: first, that my colonel didn't understand a thing about music, second that he was as stupid as a cork, and third that only by smithing does one become a smith.'[4]

Besides such patently absurd definitions as these, any definitions that even touch this approach of a *narrowly representational comprehension of music* inevitably lead to visualizations of a most platitudinous character—if for any reason visualizations should be required:

'Love': a couple embracing.
'Illness': an old woman with a warning pad on her stomach.

If we also add to the pictures evoked by the 'Barcarolle' a series of Venetian scenes, and to the *Pique Dame* Overture various St. Petersburg vistas—what then? The 'illustration' of the lovers and the 'illustration' of the old woman are blotted out.

But take from these Venetian 'scenes' only the *approaching* *and receding* movements of the water combined with the reflected *scampering and retreating play of light* over the surface of the canals, and you immediately remove yourself, by at least one degree, from the series of 'illustration' fragments, and you are closer to finding a response to the *sensed inner movement of* a barcarolle.

The number of 'personal' images arising from this inner movement is unlimited.
And they will all reflect this inner movement, for all will be based upon the same sensation. This even includes the ingenious embodiment of the Offenbach 'Barcarolle' in the hands of Walt Disney* where the visual solution is a peacock whose tail shimmers 'musically', and who looks into the pool to find there the identical contours of its opalescent tail feathers, shimmering upside down.

All the approachings, recedings, ripples, reflections and opalescence that came to mind as a suitable essence to be drawn from the Venetian scenes have been preserved by Disney in the same relation to the music's movement: the spreading tail and its reflection approach each other and recede according to the nearness of the flourished tail to the pool—the tail feathers are themselves waving and shimmering—and so on.
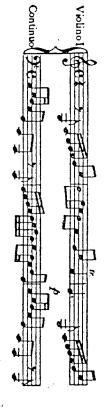
What is important here is that this imagery in no way contradicts the 'love theme' of the 'Barcarolle'. Only here there is a substitution for 'pictured' lovers by a characteristic trait of lovers—an ever-changing opalescence of approaches and retreats from one another. Instead of a literal picture, this trait afforded a *compositional foundation*, both for Disney's style of drawing in this sequence and for the movement of the music.

Bach, for example, built his music on this same foundation, eternally searching for those *movement* means that gave expression to the fundamental movement characterizing his theme. In his work on Bach, Albert Schweitzer provides innumerable musical quotations to evidence this, including the curious circumstance to be found in the Christmas cantata No. 121:[5]

How far he will venture to go in music is shewn in the Christmas cantata *Christum wir sollen loben schon* (no. 121). The text of the aria 'Johannis freudenvolles Springen erkannte dich mein Jesu schon' refers to the passage from the Gospel of St. Luke, 'And it came to

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* *Birds of a Feather* (a Silly Symphony, 1931).

pass that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in the womb.' Bach's music is simply a long series of violent convulsions:

A similar but less willing search was confessed by a quite different type of composer, Giuseppe Verdi, in a letter to Léon Escudier:

To-day I have sent off to Ricordi the last act of *Macbeth* finished and complete. . . .

When you hear it you will observe that I have written a *fugue* for the battle! ! ! A *fugue*? I, who detest everything that smacks of the schools and who have not done such a thing for nearly thirty years! ! ! But I'll tell you that in this instance that musical form is to the point. The repetition of subject and counter-subject, the jar of dissonances, the clashing sounds express a battle well enough. . . .'

Musical and visual imagery are actually not commensurable through narrowly 'representational' elements. If one speaks of genuine and profound relations and proportions between the music and the picture, it can only be in reference to the relations between the *fundamental movements* of the music and the picture, i.e., compositional and structural elements, since the relations between the 'pictures', and the 'pictures' produced by the musical images, are usually so individual in perception and so lacking in concreteness that they cannot be fitted into any strictly methodological 'regulations'. The Bach example is eloquent proof of this.

We can speak only of what is actually 'commensurable', i.e., the movement lying at the base of both the structural law of the given piece of music and the structural law of the given pictorial representation.

Here an understanding of the structural laws of the pro-

cess and rhythm underlying the stabilization and development of both provides the only firm foundation for establishing a unity between the two.

This is not only because this understanding of regulated movement is 'materialized' in equal measure through the particular specifics of any art, but is mainly because such a structural law is generally the first step towards the embodiment of a theme through an image or form of the creative work, regardless of the material in which the theme is cast. This remains clear as long as we deal with theory. But what happens to this in practice?

Practice reveals this principle with even greater simplicity and clarity.

Practice is built somewhat along the following lines:

We all speak of particular pieces of music as 'transparent', or as 'dynamic', or as having a 'definite pattern', or as having 'indistinct outlines'.

We do this because most of us, while hearing music, visualize some sort of plastic images, vague or clear, concrete or abstract, but somehow peculiarly related and corresponding to our own *perceptions* of the given music.

In the more rare circumstance of an abstract rather than a concrete or a dynamic visualization, someone's recollection of Gounod is significant. While listening to a Bach concert, Gounod suddenly and thoughtfully remarked, 'I find something octagonal in this music. . . .'

This observation is less surprising when we remember that Gounod's father was 'a painter of distinguished merit' and his mother 'a musician and poetess as well'.[7] Both streams of impressions were so vivid throughout his childhood that he recorded in his memoirs his equally attractive opportunities for working in the plastic arts as well as in music.

But in a final analysis such 'geometrism' may not be so exceptional.

Tolstoy, for example, made Natasha's imagination picture a much more intricate complex—a complete image of a man

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—by means of such a geometrical figure: Natasha describes Pierre Bezukhov to her mother as a 'blue quadrant'.[8]

Dickens, another great realist, occasionally shows the images of his characters by exactly this 'geometrical means', and it is quite likely that in such cases it is only through such means that the full depth of the character may be revealed. Look at Mr. Gradgrind on the opening page of *Hard Times* —a man of paragraphs, figures and facts, facts, facts:

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. . . . The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was—all helped the emphasis.

'In this life, we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!'

Another illustration of our normal visualization of music is the ability of each of us, naturally with individual variations and to a greater or lesser degree of expressiveness, to 'depict' with the movement of our hands that movement sensed by us in some nuance of music.

The same is true of poetry where rhythm and metre are sensed by the poet primarily as images of movement. How the poet feels about this identification between metre and movement has been keenly expressed by Pushkin in his ironic sixth stanza of *The Cottage in Kolomna*:

> Pentameters demand caesural rest
> After the second foot, I do agree.
> If not, you oscillate 'twixt ditch and crest.
> Reclining on a sofa though I may be,
> I feel as though a driver with a jog on
> Were jolting me o'er cornfields in a wagon.[9]

And it is Pushkin who provides some of the best examples

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of translating the movement of a phenomenon into verse. For example, the splashing of a wave. The Russian language lacks a word that adequately and tersely describes the whole action of a wave, rising in a curve and splashing as it falls. The German language is more fortunate: it has a compound word—*wellenschlag*—that conveys this dynamic picture with absolute accuracy. Somewhere Dumas *père* bewails the fact that the French language compels its authors to write: 'the sound of water striking against the surface', while an English author has at his disposal the single rich word, 'splash'.

However, I doubt if any nation's literature contains a more brilliant *translation of the dynamics of splashing waves into the movement of poetry* than the flood passage of Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman*. Following the well-known couplet,

> Behold Petropol floating lie
> Like Triton in the deep, waist-high!

the flood surges in:

> A siege! the wicked waves, attacking
> Climb thief-like through the windows; backing,
> The boats stern-foremost smite the glass;
> Trays with their soaking wrappage pass;
> And timbers, roofs, and huts all shattered,
> The wares of thrifty traders scattered,
> And the pale beggar's chattels small,
> Bridges swept off beneath the squall,
> Coffins from sodden graveyards—all
> Swim in the streets![10]*

From the material presented above we can formulate a simple, practical approach to a method of audio-visual combinations.

We must know how to grasp the movement of a given piece of music, locating its path (its line or form) as our foundation for the plastic composition that is to correspond to the music.

* Elsewhere I have described the exact 'reconstruction' in these lines of the splashing, the rolling and breaking of a wave, in terms that would lose their point entirely with any English translation.

There are already instances of this approach, building a plastic composition upon firmly determined musical lines, in the case of ballet choreography, where there is a full correspondence between the movement of the score and of the *mise-en-scène*.

However, when we have before us a number of shots of equal 'independence',* at least in so far as their original flexibility was concerned, but differing in composition, we must, keeping the music before us, select and arrange only those shots that prove their correspondence to the music according to the above conditions.

A composer must proceed in the same way when he takes up a previously cut film sequence: he is obliged to analyse the visual movement both through its overall montage construction and the compositional line carried from individual shot to shot—even the compositions *within* the shots. He will have to base his musical imagery composition on these elements.

The movement which lies at the base of a work of art is not abstract or isolated from the theme, but is the generalized plastic embodiment of that image through which the theme is expressed.

'Striving upwards', 'expanding', 'broken', 'well-knit', 'limping', 'smoothly developing', 'patchy', 'zig-zagging'—are terms used to define this movement in the more abstract and generalized instances. We will see in our example how such a line can contain not only dynamic characteristics but also a whole complex of fundamental elements and meanings peculiar to *that* theme and *that* image. Sometimes the primary embodiment of the future image will be found in *intonation*. But this won't affect the basic conditions—for intonation is the *movement of the voice* flowing fom the same *movement of*

* 'Independent' only in the sense that *thematically* they can be arranged in any sequence. The twelve shots of the 'waiting sequence' developed below, were precisely of this sort. In their purely *thematic and narrative-informational* nature they might have been arranged in any order. Their final arrangement was determined by purely interpretive and emotional requirements of construction.

emotion which must serve as a fundamental factor in outlining the whole image.

It is precisely this fact that makes it so easy to describe an intonation with a gesture as well as a movement of the music itself. From the base of the music's movement all these manifestations spring with equal force—the intonation of the voice, the gesture, and the movement of the man who makes the music. Elsewhere we will consider this point in more detail.

Here we want to emphasize that *pure line*, that is, the specifically 'graphic' outline of a composition, is only *one of the many* means of visualizing the character of a movement.

This 'line'—the path of the movement—under differing conditions and in differing works of plastic art—can be drawn in other ways besides purely linear ones.

For example, movement can be drawn with the same success by means of changing nuances within the light- or the colour-imagery structure, or by the successive unfolding of volumes and distances.

In Rembrandt the 'movement line' is described by the shifting densities of his chiaroscuro.

Delacroix found this line through that path followed by the spectator's eye in moving from form to form, as the forms are distributed throughout the volume of the painting. He has recorded in his *Journal* his admiration for Leonardo's use of 'le système antique du dessin par boules',[11] a method which his contemporaries tell us Delacroix himself used all his life.

In a remarkably close echo of Delacroix's thoughts on line and form, Balzac's Frenhofer (in *Le Chef-d'œuvre Inconnu*) says that the human body is not made up of lines and, strictly speaking, 'Il n'y a pas de lignes dans la nature ou tout est plein'. In opposition to such a view, we can call upon that 'contour' enthusiast—William Blake, whose pathetic plea,

O dear Mother outline, of knowledge most sage . . .[12]

can be found among his bitter polemics against Sir Joshua Reynolds, and against Sir Joshua's insufficient regard for the firmness of outline.

It should be clear that our argument is not over the *fact of movement* in the work of art, but over the *means* by which that movement is *embodied*, which is what characterizes and distinguishes the work of different painters.

In the work of Dürer, such movement is often expressed by the *alternation of mathematically precise formulae through the proportions* within his figures.

This is not very remote from the expression of other painters, Michelangelo in particular, whose rhythm flows dynamically through the undulating and swelling muscles of his figures, serving thus to voice not only the movement and position of these figures, but primarily to voice the whole flight of the artist's emotions.*

Piranesi reveals no less emotional a flight with his particular line—a line built from the movements and variations of '*counter-volumes*'—the broken arcs and vaults of his *Carceri*, with their intertwined lines of movement woven with the lines of his endless stairs—breaking the accumulated *spatial fugue* with a *linear fugue*.

Van Gogh similarly expresses the movement of his line with thick running slashes of colour, as though in a desperate effort to weld the flight of his line with a flying explosion of colour. In his own way he was carrying out a law of Cézanne's which he could not have known—a law carried out in an entirely different aspect by Cézanne himself:

Le dessin et la couleur ne sont point distincts . . .[18]

Moreover, any 'communicator' realizes the existence of such a 'line'. A practitioner in any medium of communication has to build his line, if not from plastic elements, then certainly from 'dramatic' and thematic elements.

In this we must bear in mind that in cinema, the selection of 'correspondences' between picture and music must not be

* We can recall what Gogol said of him: 'For Michelangelo, the body served only as a revelation of the strength of the soul, of its suffering, of its cry aloud, of its invincible nature—and for him mere plastics were discarded, and man's contour assumed gigantic proportions in its function as a symbol; the result is not m.n, but man's passions.'[18]

satisfied with any one of these 'lines', or even with a harmony of several employed together. Aside from these general formal elements the same law has to determine the selection of *the right people, the right faces, the right objects, the right actions, and the right sequences*, out of all the equally possible selections within the circumstances of a given situation.

Back in the days of the silent film, we spoke of the 'orchestration' of *typage* faces* in repeated instances (for example, in producing the mounting 'line' of grief by means of intensified close-ups in the sequence of 'mourning for Vakulinchuk' in *Potemkin*).

Similarly, in sound-films there arise such moments as that mentioned above: the *farewell embrace* between Vaska and Gavrilo Olexich in *Alexander Nevsky*. This could occur only at one *precise* point in the musical score, in the same way that the close-up shots of the German knights' helmets could not be used before the point where they were finally employed in the attack sequence, for only at that point does the music change its character from one that can be expressed in long shots and medium shots of the attack to one that demands rhythmic visual beats, close-ups of galloping and the like.

Alongside this, we cannot deny the fact that the most *striking* and immediate impression will be gained, of course, from *a congruence of the movement of the music with the movement of the visual contour*—with the graphic composition of the frame; for this contour or this outline, or this line is the most vivid 'emphasizer' of the very idea of the movement.

But let us turn to the object of our analysis and try, through one fragment from the beginning of Reel 7 of *Alexander Nevsky*, to demonstrate how and why a certain series of shots in a certain order and of a certain length was related in a specific way, rather than any other way, with a certain piece of the musical score.

* *Typage*, as a term and as a method, might be defined as 'type-casting' (of non-actors), elevated by Eisenstein to the level of a conscious creative instrument, just as *montage*, a simple term for a physical process of film editing, has been transformed to a broader term and a deeper process by the Russian film-makers.—Editor.

We will try to discover here that 'secret' of those sequential *vertical correspondences* which, step by step, relate the music to the shots *through an identical motion* that lies at the base of the musical as well as the pictorial movement.

Of particular interest in this case is the fact that the music was composed to a completely finished editing of the pictorial element. The visual movement of the theme was fully grasped by the composer to the same degree that the completed musical movement was caught by the director in the subsequent scene of the attack, where the shots were matched to the previously recorded music-track.

However, it is an exactly identical method of binding organically *through movement* that is used in either case. Therefore, methodologically, it is absolutely immaterial from which element the process of determining audio-visual combinations begins.

The audio-visual aspect of *Alexander Nevsky* achieves its most complete fusion in the sequence of the 'Battle on the Ice' —particularly in the 'attack of the knights' and the 'punishment of the knights'. This aspect becomes a decisive factor also, because of all the sequences of *Alexander Nevsky*, the attack seemed the most impressive and memorable to critics and spectators. The method used in it of audio-visual correspondence is that used for any sequence in the film. So for our analysis we will choose a fragment which can be somewhat satisfactorily reproduced on a printed page—some fragment where a whole complex is resolved by almost *motionless* frames, in which a minimum would be lost by showing its shots on a page rather than on a screen. It is such a fragment that we have chosen for analysis.

These are the twelve shots of that 'dawn of anxious waiting' which precedes the beginning of the attack and battle, and which follows a night full of trouble and anxiety, on the eve of the 'Battle on the Ice'. The thematic content of these twelve frames has a simple unity: Alexander on Raven Rock and the Russian troops at the foot of the Rock on the shore

of the frozen Lake Chudskoye, peering into the distance from which the enemy is to appear.

A diagram inserted in the back of this book shows four divisions. The first two describe the succession of shot-frames and musical measures which together express the situation. XII musical measures and 17 measures. (This particular disposition of the pictures and the measures will be clarified in the process of analysis; this disposition is connected with the chief inner components of music and picture.)

Let us imagine these XII shots and these 17 measures of music—not as we see them in the diagram, but as we experienced them from the screen. What part of this audio-visual continuity exerted the greatest pull on our attention?

The strongest impression seems to come from Shot III followed by Shot IV. We must keep in mind that such an impression does not come from the photographed shots alone, but is an *audio-visual impression* which is created by the combination of these two shots together with the corresponding music—which is what one experiences in the auditorium. These two shots, III and IV, correspond to these measures of music—5, 6 and 7, 8.

That this is the most immediate and most impressive audio-visual group can be checked by playing the four measures on the piano 'to the accompaniment' of the reproduced corresponding two shots. This impression was confirmed in the appraisal of this excerpt during the students' screening at the State Institute of Cinematography.

Take these four measures and try to describe in the air with your hand that line of movement suggested by the movement of the music.

The first chord can be visualized as a 'starting platform'. The following five quarter-notes, proceeding in a scale upwards, would find a natural gesture-visualization in a *tensely rising line*. Therefore, instead of describing this passage with a simple climbing line, we will tend slightly to arch our corresponding gesture—*ab*:

The next chord (at the beginning of measure 7), preceded