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Subtleties in Film Music

A cautious approach from a composer's perspective

Det självständiga, konstnärliga arbetet finns dokumenterat på DVD:
Excerpts from the films: "Francis" and "The Pink Cloud Syndrome"

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INTRODUCTION

The making of the rejected film score to *The Exorcist* culminated with director William Friedkin dramatically throwing the recordings of the music onto the ground saying, “That’s where that music belongs”.¹

Friedkin wanted a score that contributed but did not dominate the film. He wanted the music to be subtle and small with restraint. For Friedkin the film was about the “mystery of faith”, hence the music should not tell the audience what to feel, nor should it provide answers. Unfortunately, confusion between the composer and Friedkin led to the opposite kind of score, which according to him was, “too loud”, “noisy” and “scary”. Other original scores have faced the same faith and were entirely rejected based on similar accounts. *Crossfire Trail* and *Troy* offer further examples of films in which the composers were replaced for having written scores that were considered inappropriate and *over the top*, even though this was not intentional.^{2 3}

Considering the reason for these rejections, focus could be drawn to the importance of subtle communication in the music and its effects in film. Compared to music in other contexts e.g. concert music not composed specifically for film, there are components that need to be cautiously considered in music composed for film. Original film music, also known as a ‘film score’ is composed foremost to support the film, hence filmic building blocks found in the *story*, the *sound* and the *visuals* must be taken in consideration. The film score needs to be able to work together with all of the building blocks in all situations without overpowering or attracting all attention when it is not supposed to. On the other hand, excessive restraint in the film score designed to attain subtle effects may put the film’s overall impression at risk by being perceived as dull or vague by the audience.

Brian Morell examines the concept of subtlety in film music in the book *How Film Music Communicates*. Thoughts concerning the benefits and effects as well as analyses of different film scores containing subtle elements are examined. Brian Morell states that subtlety in the music “needn’t always mean ‘quiet and closed-

¹ George Park, ‘The Devil’s music’, *Film Score Monthly*, February 1999, p. 29.

² David Shire, interviewed by Justin Boggan, 2009.

³ Gabriel Yared: “*The Score of Troy — A Mystery Unveiled*”, The ScreamOnline ed. S.Vail (accessed 10 September 2015).

off' but that the composers in each case have scored the films using a degree of restraint and sensitivity".⁴ Further, film music that does not state what is obvious but instead engages subtle shifts and manipulations, or sometimes incompleteness in the music may leave room for the audience for interpretation. Morell's ideas have been an influence to my own approach as a film music composer as well as an inspiration for this report. Focusing on the intended functions of subtlety in my own compositional work aims to give the reader an insight to a specific topic in a film production, from a film composer's point of view, as well as extend my own compositional techniques through analysis and reflections.

⁴ Brian Morell, *How Film Music Communicates – Vol II*, 2013, p. 52.

THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report is limited to implementation, analysis and reflections of various subtleties in the co-composed music for two student films, produced at Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts between 2014 and 2015. The film score for the film *The Pink Cloud Syndrome* was co-composed by Linus Andersson and me, and the other film score for the film *Francis* was co-composed by Rickard Age and me. The two films were selected to present a variety of artistic choices and approaches for both similar and different cases in the films. Many of the ideas derive from meetings within the two film teams and from the collaboration between the composers. Within the compositional collaboration, artistic responsibility for different music cues was delegated. Focus will be addressed to those cues directed mostly to me due to the ambition to provide as much explicit insight as possible.

What is considered as subtle in film scores may be highly subjective and I have not conducted any academic studies to support a definition. The existence of subtle elements can also be found in a lot of different forms and situations, which makes it a wide topic, difficult to pin down to a precise definition. However, the examples in this report will be based on music that was intentionally composed to include subtle elements that attempt to communicate with an audience on a subconscious level. The focus here will be on subtleties in the form of small manipulations and incompleteness of elements in the film scores. The amount of subtleties and the effect of having subtleties in certain contexts are fully dependent on the story and the narrative itself. Therefore, the style and genre of the films together with the director's vision will dictate the cause and guidance to this approach. In the case with *The Exorcist*, this consideration was clearly overlooked in the communication between the director and the composer. According to director Friedkin, the film was never intended to be a horror genre film.⁵ However, the rejected music was composed as a film score for a horror movie, and was thus not subtle within context of what the film was supposed to be. Film composers do need a different approach to the composing process in comparison with other composers in other genres. Brian Morell states: "The only real choice film composers have is how precisely to interpret someone else's idea."⁶ Further, he means that film music can never exclusively derive from the film composer's ego in order to support the film

⁵ William Friedkin, interviewed by Allison Hope Weiner, 2013, Media Mayham ep 101.

⁶ Morell, *How Film Music Communicates – Vol I*, 2013, p. 165.

as the film and story always come first. Considering this, it is crucial to be aware that the actions taken in the examples of the subtle elements within this report are all related to the specific film projects and not to film music in general.

The effects of the subtle elements will also be looked at in relation to the overall functions of the film scores. Putting the topic in a wider perspective will aim to determine whether the approach to implementing subtle elements is motivated or arbitrary.

‘Subtleties in film music’ in this report refers to specific separate musical elements composed with the intention to be subtle in relation to the films and therefore the music as an entire unit does not necessarily have to be perceived as subtle. It is not an exclusive music genre associated with subtlety that is being covered and observed.

In order to narrow down the scope of the limitations and concerns described above, the aim of this report will be focused on providing answers to the following two questions:

1. What subtle elements can be found in the film scores addressed in this report?
2. What filmic building blocks of the components of the film productions mentioned in this report, such as the story, the sound and the visuals dictate the implementation of the subtleties in the film scores?

METHOD

This report is based on an independent project consisting of two parallel parts, a practical and a reflective, which progressed simultaneously. The practical part includes composing and producing film scores for two films produced at Stockholm Academy of Dramatic arts. The reflective part consists of studies, analyses and data gathered for this report.

All the different ideas and thoughts in the film scores related to subtleties have been documented during and after the film scores were composed as the writing process of this report progressed in parallel with the more practically oriented film projects. These documentations have been organized into different sections based on the elements of any sound that includes, according to neuroscientist Daniel J. Levitin *loudness, pitch, contour, duration, tempo, timbre, spatial location and reverberation*.⁷ These elements can be further organized into higher-level concepts such as *meter, key, melody and harmony*. With some modification in relation to the topic of this report, the following elements were chosen by me to organize the focus of various subtleties into:

- Musical Time
- Melody
- Harmony
- Pitch location
- Orchestration

By outlining this report in this fashion, the different musical elements can be observed largely independently from each other even though they are heavily connected.

Enclosed to this report are related film clips and in some cases the notated scores. Specific scenes derive from cues related specifically to the main topic of this report, although some basic functions of the film score in general will also briefly be looked at to give some perspective. The music cues can be found on a separate DVD.

⁷ Daniel J. Levitin, *This is your brain on music: the science of a human obsession*, Dutton, New York, N.Y., 2006, p. 14.

THE FILM PROJECTS

In order to follow the coming sections of this report, a brief overview of the films will be presented along with some insight of the visions and decisions discussed within the film teams regarding the functions of the film scores.

Francis

Francis is a short drama film directed by Ahmed Abdullahi. The film is about African guest workers recruited to plant trees in the Swedish forest. They got to work under worse conditions than expected including an unworthy wage. In desperation, Francis (Suleiman Rimi), one of the African guest workers, starts to bend the rules and secretly make the situation better by putting himself at a higher position as a foreman with a better wage, betraying himself and the friends around him as a consequence.

The preproduction started in the spring of 2014 with a postproduction time frame between August 2014 and February 2015. Drafts of the script were provided early on to Rickard Age and me who co-composed the film score. Cut versions got updated and provided on a regular basis during the editing process of the film. This caused a lot of time spent on discussions within the team regarding the spotting and function of the film score before the actual composing process took place.

Occasional meetings with the director assured we had the same vision with the film and the film score throughout the production. Central ideas were to bring some tension into the drama and engage an atmospheric textural film score for some of the subtle ability to merge smoothly with the sound effects, causing an ambiguous perception on what is or is not music in the film. An overall aim was to keep the tension all the way through the film and only let the music release at the most apparent climax of the film. Other ideas consisted of capturing the environment of the set in the forest and enhancing the perception of the hard labour carried out by the workers. To engage a clear and straightforward communication with the team and to avoid musical terms that might lead to confusion by non-musicians, we agreed on using temporary music. Put together by the team to refer to as an approach to communicate our ideas and visions. The temporary music had an ambient textural character with a restraint of melodies and rarely any obvious

chord progressions. The idea of trying to implement subtleties in the film score was decided already in the beginning of the project.

The Pink Cloud Syndrome

The Pink Cloud Syndrome is a Swedish drama feature film directed by Alexis Almström. We follow the story about the two young adults Greipr (Albin Grenholm), a former alcoholic, and Leia (Hedda Stiernstedt), a depressed single mother. The two of them meet while struggling to recover from their own individual problems. They start trying to attain a better life but keep on getting reminded of their dark past.

The production time frame for this film was scheduled simultaneously as *Francis* but from May 2014 until May 2015. Three more months were added to the postproduction for this longer feature film. The postproduction process was different from *Francis* due to its longer format. From the editor, reels instead of the whole film were provided to the composers Linus Andersson and me, so parts of the film could be scored before it was locked. Since the time frame for the film was relatively tight it was necessary and preferable to use this workflow. A lot of preparation was done before the first cut version was provided. Meetings within the film team, exploring reference music, watching reference films and writing sketches became necessary to find a specific musical sound for the film early in the process. A general function was to enhance the hopeful and positive moments with music as the story itself derives from arguable complex and heavy topics. The film score would relate to the destiny of the characters in the story through sacred and divine-like elements. Regarding the spotting, a plan was to let the film score be prominent during montage sequences and more or less avoid music during scenes containing dialogue.

The two films, *Francis* and *The Pink Cloud Syndrome*, suggest similar practices of 'realism' in terms of style and genre. All scenes were shot on location and simple camera movements were often used together with other *Cinéma vérité* techniques which gave the films a sense of documentary-style. Both films are based on several real events, which is a reason to make these films seem 'truthful'. Considering the documentary style of the films and their topics, the music might need to be approached differently than other fiction films in a way that Brian Morell explains:

“For documentaries with emotive or difficult subject matter, subtle movements often work the best.”⁸

⁸ Morell, *How Film Music Communicates – Vol II*, 2013, p. 22.

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTIONS

Musical time

In the process of syncing music to certain hit points in the films, musical time such as rhythm, meter and tempo has to be carefully taken in consideration. For functional and narrative reasons these attributes were used to provide pulse, movement and continuity to match or contrast the scenes in the films of this report.

Typically, the subtleties would be found in the shifts and manipulations of these elements. Scenes containing sudden dramatic shifts were approached cautiously, for instance by avoiding a music cue that follows every move of the visuals strictly on the beat (as in ‘mickey mousing’), encouraging continuity in the film score and making transitions being perceived as smooth in the scene. A closer look at a scene from *The Pink Cloud Syndrome* demonstrates this approach (DVD, video clip 1). Several different emotions emerge; one after the other. The scene starts with Lea’s daughter, Anna, getting reminded of her mother’s suicide attempt. The scene leads over to Lea who comes to her senses, realizing the best for Anna is to be brought back to the foster home parents instead of staying with Lea for now. Thus, the score was meant to carefully follow the emotional shifts in order to adapt to the narrative. The tempo and meter is basically the same throughout the cue but was thoroughly selected to not accidentally sync on hard points. The rhythm changes and shifts between being defined by the rhythmic movement and being more undefined and occasionally replaced by a pedal point. Pedal points would function as almost unnoticeable musical glue between the emotional shifts in the scene to blur the dramatic shifts, and the cut transitions. Another observation of the tempo can be made towards the end of the scene. The scene progresses towards a slight feeling of relief and that everything might turn out to be fine for the characters in the film. However, from another perspective several things might still be perceived as a bit sad and tragic. The chord progression from the main theme in the film is presented with its major positive energy, but it is composed at a slower tempo compared to other cues in the film. The result of a slower tempo may make the mood of the cue a bit more dull and undefined compared to its original form.⁹ In addition, this music cue was recorded live with sampled and processed lap steel instruments with the click track turned off. The intention was to make the moment

⁹ Levitin, *This is your brain on music*, p. 60.

breathe naturally with subtle imperfections in the tempo of the performances. This seemed to be a generally effective approach in more than just this cue when specific sync points in a scene were considered trivial.

Music cues that were generally textural, with an overall static character, did require some movement and development to follow the progression of the film. In order to not lose the cohesion in the film score throughout the film, these implementations of movements and developments were carefully approached. For instance, in *Francis*, there is an intense scene with Francis getting confronted by Nisse (Francis' boss) for having scammed him and the company (DVD, video clip 2). This is towards the end of the film hence the development in the cue is supposed to progress towards a climax, and give a sense of discomfort and tense pressure from underneath to enhance Francis' point of view. To keep the initial arrangement of the film score, although add some movement, the articulation *portato* in the strings was used.

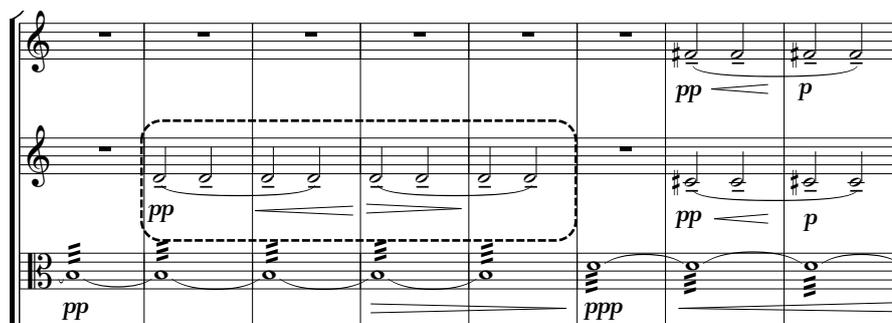


Figure 1. *Portato in the violins, Francis.*

The strings are still playing textural sustained pedal points, but with subtle pulsating accents giving it some pulse forward. Within the same cue a gentle electronic sub-bass sound was programmed to provide an irregular rhythm that would enhance the feeling of unease.

The human brain has an astonishing accuracy to memorize and store tempo¹⁰ and as humans are natural pattern seekers,¹¹ only subtle changes in tempo and meter might be enough to direct the drama a bit by changing someone's expectation. Melody is the next element that will be looked at in this report, another element in the music that is one of the primary ways to control someone's expectations.¹²

¹⁰ Levitin, *This is your brain on music*, p. 61.

¹¹ Philip Ball, *The music instinct: how music works and why we can't do without it*, Vintage, London, 2011, p. 409.

¹² Levitin, *This is your brain on music*, p. 118.

Melody

Most of the melodic material in *Francis* and *The Pink Cloud Syndrome* was composed in the form of a short melodic fragment called motif. In the book *On the Track*, Fred Karlin states that motifs are particularly valuable for today's film composers working with films that don't really allow long-lined melodies.¹³ This was true for the two films in the case of not putting too much attention to the film score unless montage sequences were shot that allowed more space for music. Melodic material was an important element to arrange; especially since melodies in music are largely what we memorize and notice when listening to music.¹⁴ This made the melodic material useful as an anchor throughout the films, being something that the audience could connect and hold on to. On the contrary, because of the capability to attain a lot of attention, the film score might have tended to unseemly dragging too much focus away from the other elements of the films at inappropriate moments, or reveal too much of the story.

Melodic material can by its own establish a sense for the whole harmony in a piece of music on a horizontal plane, without support of other voices.¹⁵ Melodic material might also derive exclusively from harmony itself, which was the case with the main motif that was used in *Francis*. Early in the postproduction, the idea of using texture instead of melody-based themes was engaged. Despite this preference, some extent of subtle melodic material was certainly desirable to develop and implement. This material would constitute some sort of anchor for the audience by being repeated throughout several cues and was also used to add continuity in the film score. To avoid disruption of the initial idea regarding the extensive use of texture in the film score, the melodic material was implemented by blurring it with the central harmony of the texture. This resulted in a motif consisting of just two notes alternating at an interval of a minor third (DVD, video clip 3). It may seem arguably basic, but in interaction with the other elements in the music, the motif was meant to recall some sort of integrity with a motivated function in the film.

¹³ Fred Karlin & Rayburn Wright, *On the track: a guide to contemporary film scoring*, 2. ed., Routledge, New York, 2004, p.197.

¹⁴ Levitin, *This is your brain on music* p. 60.

¹⁵ Morell, *How Film Music Communicates – Vol I*, 2013, p. 137.

The musical score for Figure 2 consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Viola, Cello, Bass, Bowed guitars, and Pads. The Viola part begins with a sharp sign and a *pp* dynamic marking. The Cello part has a *pp* marking. The Bass part has a *7(omit3) B* chord marking. The Bowed guitars and Pads parts have a *7(omit3) B* chord marking and a hatched texture. The score is divided into measures 5 through 8. The second system includes staves for Viola, Cello, Bass, Bowed guitars, and Pads. The Viola part has a *pp* marking. The Cello part has a *pp* marking. The Bass part has a *molto sul tasto* marking. The Bowed guitars and Pads parts have a hatched texture. The score is divided into measures 9 through 14.

Figure 2. Theme in the violas, *Francis*.

Melodic material used to outline harmony was particularly in the form of ostinatos. Much of the mood, deriving from the harmonic content, carried out by ostinatos, could be presented in a smaller open format compared to an entire full harmonic vertical arrangement. Several music cues in *The Pink Cloud Syndrome* functioned partly as being fillers when there were breaks in the drama, thus this approach seemed to work well for creating movement through such scenes, in addition, repeated ostinatos prevented any unwanted development in the music cue that was not motivated for the scene (DVD, video clip 4). To make this melodic material less obvious, it was often blurred with other elements in the film score such as textural harmonic soundscapes. These could either belong to the same harmonic scale or a different one, creating polytonality to add some extra ambiguity.

Figure 3 Ostinato in the choir, *The Pink Cloud Syndrome*.

Melody might have been the most challenging musical element to approach with subtlety since, by nature, melodies have the tendency to represent a lot of the music and, as mentioned earlier, evoking a lot of attention. To create a subtle textural soundscape that communicates through different ways, melodies have sometimes been avoided. Commonly, the approach to the thematic material has been to primarily use harmony instead of melodies, which will be discussed in the next section.

Harmony

Great attention and conciseness regarding the harmony was essential to create a global mood with the film scores throughout *Francis* and *The Pink Cloud Syndrome*, along with small adjustments and adaptations depending on the dramatic situation. The general character of the harmony was crucial to explore in the beginning of the composition process for realizing a suitable mood of the film score supporting the films, and so it became a central aspect in the early music sketches.

As harmony had such a strong and significant role for setting the mood, possibility rose to give the audience an engaging experience by occasionally make the harmony subtle and sometimes questionable. Brian Morell states this as a general concern in film music: “Film music which requires more interpretation or imagination from the listener can sometimes benefit the way the film is perceived.”¹⁶ To achieve a harmonically ambiguous cue, open for interpretation, incomplete chords were frequently used, omitting one or more of the characterizing chord notes. In *Francis* several cues were built on one such chord. As an example, the opening scene in *Francis* uses this chord throughout the whole cue (video clip 3). The chord is basically a dominant 7th chord with the 3rd omitted, hence giving no clear definition of whether it is a major or minor home key.

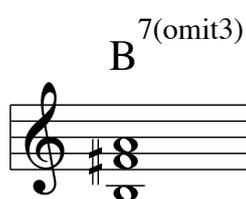


Figure 4, *Francis*.

Although several ideas in the rest of the film derive from this cue, it was especially important to use a subtle approach to harmony in the first cue of the film where not too much in the story was supposed to be revealed beforehand. The mild dissonance though, consisting of the minor seventh interval in the dominant chord, helped to bring some tension and instability to the drama. Further, if this chord is analysed by being built on the 5th degree of the key scale, it will have a strong desire to resolve the tension,¹⁷ which on purpose never happens in the cue and thereby promoting instability. Apart from having an ambiguous character by being incomplete, the chord’s harmonic functions could also be further analysed in a subtle relation to the story and background of the film. By breaking down the notes in the harmony it shows that a majority of notes belongs to the blues scale developed in African/American communities which could partly draw associations to the history of black slaves as told in the Martin Scorsese documentary *Feel Like Going Home*. The documentary opens with Corey Harris saying, “Blues is the one thing they can never take away from black people.”¹⁸ With a subtle touch of blues references in the film score it is supposed to hint a connection between the African workers in *Francis* who struggles with hard work under bad conditions in modern time and the history of African/Americans during the slavery.

¹⁶ Morell, *How Film Music Communicates – Vol I*, 2013 p.116.

¹⁷ Levitin, *This is your brain on music*, p. 275.

¹⁸ *The Blues, Feel Like Coming Home*, DVD, PBS, 2003.

Polychords and/or pedal points were introduced to blur harmony in cues that already had more of a complete harmony in the initial chord progression of a theme. Looking at an early scene in *The Pink Cloud Syndrome* (DVD, video clip 5), Lea is back from the rehab hospital preparing her house in order to be able to have her daughter Anna back from the foster care home. The music cue is supposed to feel somewhat steady with some movement, but without carrying any definite obvious mood. To achieve that, the music cue begins on a lap steel guitar holding a pedal point that gets blended into a sustained triad that sustains all the way simultaneously as other more active chords are being played against it. The chords are all from the same scale making it relatively consonant and steady but still blurs some of the perception. A variation of this cue is found later in the film as Lea has decided to unjustly and secretly take Anna back from the foster care home (DVD, video clip 6). Lea manages to get the address to where Anna is located and goes to the neighbourhood. From Leas point of view the moment seems somehow positive and hopeful but since the scene is more of a turning point than a climax where the audience might have a different expectation, the music's harmonic mood needed to be restrained in order to not direct too much into any positive ending. The music cue starts with the same pedal point note as the previous cue, but develops differently as the general mood was meant to be more undefined and unstable compared to the previous mentioned cue. By omitting thirds in the chords as well as destabilizing the predicted tonal centre, using notes outside of the key's scale the theme got some development.

♩ = 100

Alto
Mmm *pp*

Alto II
Mmm *pp*

Tenor
pp
Mmm

Viola
pp
Mmm

Ebow/guitar
Am^{omit3}

Lapsteel
ppp

Figure 5, video clip 6, intro, *The Pink Cloud Syndrome*.

Figure 6, video clip 6, *The Pink Cloud Syndrome* (continued).

The image displays two systems of musical notation. Each system contains five staves. The top staff of each system is a vocal line with lyrics 'Ooh...'. The second staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'Ooh...'. The third staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'Ooh...'. The fourth staff is a piano accompaniment with a complex, rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a simpler bass line in the left hand. The bottom system includes a dynamic marking 'pp' (pianissimo) for the piano accompaniment. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

As mentioned, a common approach turned out to be omitting notes in the harmony to achieve ambiguity, but another consideration would be how to arrange the harmony according to pitch in order to achieve the same result and also keep all the characterizing chord notes in the film score.

Pitch location

When arranging for the instruments and sounds in the film score, with regards to pitch, two considerations were taken: The first consideration was the use of the instrument's tessitura (the natural range of a voice)¹⁹ in order to get the preferable sound of the film score in general. The next consideration deals with how the film score would blend and mix seamlessly with the sound effects and the dialogue in the film. If the film score is carelessly put in a range that contains the same frequencies as the other sounds in the film there might be a conflict causing the

¹⁹ Joe Staines & Duncan Clark (red.), *The rough guide to classical music*, 4., rev. & expanded ed., Rough Guides, London, 2005, p. 651.

music to mask the other sounds and overpowering the film. In this case, the volume level of the music might have to be put down drastically in the final mix.

The general approach when writing the film score during dialogue without making obvious volume level drops in the mix was to simply stay away from the octave range where the voice could be found. An example is found in *Francis* (DVD, video clip 7) the specific instruments carrying bass frequencies in the film score were intended to subtly fade away to naturally give room for the voices' frequencies found in the same range. Later those instruments returned as soon as the dialogue was over. Another approach was to avoid just the specific spoken words in the dialogue by only dropping the most conflicting notes, as in *The Pink Cloud Syndrome* (DVD, video clip 1). Using the full range of the instrument felt more justified for the scene compared to having a bigger gap in the frequency range during the entire dialogue part of the scene.

Another consideration regarding pitch was to use subtle low-pitched instruments or sounds, all the way down to the sub-bass register. The purpose of these was to create another dimension or element with sounds in the film score with an undefined pitch. In *Francis* a sine wave sound has been programmed to give the impression of a very low heartbeat-like pulse to enhance tension (DVD video clip 2). With its rumbling effect, most effectively perceived in cinema theatres equipped with subwoofer, it is supposed to subconsciously affect the audience's entire body physically rather than just the auditory nerves. Processed sounds were highly common to use in both films, and also became a big part of the orchestration.

Orchestration

Much of the orchestration was sketched out before the actual scoring process for the films had commenced. The idea was to experiment and find a unique musical character defined by the sound of the orchestration at an early stage. With exclusively created and manipulated sampled instruments for the films combined with third party sampled instruments as well as live musicians and occasionally digital synths, a wide palette of different nuances could be used and arranged in advance to the films.

One aspect that needed to be cautiously considered though, regarding the orchestration, was to not present any alienated or distant sounds of instruments that

might provoke disturbance because of its unfamiliar or unexpected character for the audience. The idea was to bring the audience into the world of the film with the sounds. The instruments were meant to have some kind of subtle familiarity but still not directly identified to keep it unique. In order to achieve this, acoustic instruments were recorded and treated afterwards in various non-traditional ways. Different bows originally intended for classical string orchestra instruments could, for instance, be used on guitars as in the case of *Francis* (DVD, video clip 3). Using a double bass bow on guitars attained a unique sound of roughness in the film score to reference the hard work and mood in the film. Other examples are sounds created by using Ebows, pitch/time stretch tools, filters and so forth. Although a traditional string orchestra was also recorded, the musicians mainly played extended bowing techniques (e.g. bow towards the bridge or neck) to disorient the ear just a bit by making the film score less ordinary.

By having a film score with a unique sound in the orchestration, another ability to work with thematic material was available. A specific sound of an instrument could be given the same recognizable dramatic function as a motif or a harmony based theme would have but in a more subtle way. For example in *The Pink Cloud Syndrome*, reversed electric guitars are used to state a dreamy mood for two flashback scenes (DVD, video clip 1 and video clip 4). What was mostly considered to connect the sets of the scenes was that specific sound, which was also not used anywhere else in the film.

In attempts to subtly blend diegetic and non-diegetic music in the same cue, the orchestration was an efficient element to focus on for making the transitions fluent and unnoticeable. In one scene, taking place at a loud nightclub, the music from the diegetic club evolves into fragments of the theme of the film but the electronic orchestration remains the same (DVD, video clip 8). The idea was to slightly open up for and smoothly lead into the next part of the scene without an obvious transition where the theme in its more ordinary form was taking place.

CONCLUSION

This report was set out to present an insight to subtleties in film music, which undoubtedly has given me the awareness of the existence in the films covered in this report; *Francis* and *The Pink Cloud Syndrome*. The method of this report has shown that for both films studied, subtleties have been found in every musical element at different points in the films. It has been shown that all of the examples have been established with a connection to other building blocks in the film productions. Consequently, none of the subtleties found in the music cues were composed exquisitely for the music itself, hence implementing subtleties could be considered one way to make sure the music always stays true to the films.

As a next step, it would be valuable to have a director's perspective of the topic. Observing the same films might provide a different selection of examples that the director considers as subtleties in film music. As the case with *The Exorcist* has stressed, the composer and director might have very different point of views regarding the same film. Further, it might be necessary to observe additional films by other composers applying the method used in this report in order to contextualize the topic. As every film is different an extended amount of examples regarding subtleties in the music may be useful for any composer to take into account when working with film. As the well-known film/TV composer and orchestrator Herb Spencer once said; "if you want to be successful, you have to know about thousand devices."²⁰

How the subtleties found in the music of this report were implemented was a result of artistic choices naturally delegated to the composer of the film. However, it should be pointed out that equally important were the concerns of *why* and *when* it was motivated to be implemented. Those were decisions deriving from collaboration within the film team. In the end it is a film that will be the final outcome, built on knowledge and experience of the building blocks of film production in general and through good and clear communication within the film team. However, the use of music in film cannot be underestimated as it is one of the important building blocks in film production that can control someone's perception of a film.

²⁰ Peter Alexander, *How much orchestration can you really teach?* 2009, (accessed 11 November 2015).

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