

The Moving Image of Music (Before and After Film)¹

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I have an odd, slightly ‘back-to-front’ suggestion to make here: that specific techniques of 20th-century cinematic narrative were pre-empted in 19th-century concert and operatic music. With this I might once have appeared to stoke the critical fire of someone like the German Marxist critic and philosopher Theodor Adorno. He saw the use of music in the cinema as an example of debasement: the debasement of what he called ‘autonomous art’ by ‘the barbarism of the culture industry.’² A different approach to that once notorious version of the high/low divide was recently suggested in a *New York Times International* report of Gustavo Dudamel’s pending appointment as conductor of the New York Philharmonic:

Gifted and energetic, Dudamel, 42, is the rare classical artist to break into the mainstream ... He is the music director of the venerable Paris Opera – and inspired the wild-haired maestro of the Amazon series ‘Mozart in the Jungle’. He can shuttle between a Mahler Symphony and a *Star Wars* soundtrack, between a John Adams premiere and a Super Bowl halftime show.³

Admittedly, the following more eager than satirical suggestion that his hiring promised ‘full houses and the devotion of donors’ would have had Adorno nodding sagely, but that unashamed relocation of where and what the ‘mainstream’ might be amuses me and even encourages me to propose a more value-free historical relationship between the implicitly tolerated-but-boring ‘classical’ with the lively mass-media dominated ‘mainstream’ of early 21st-century cultural life in the West. Where Adorno’s critical project would have traced the problematic literalism of cinematic ‘leitmotifs’

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- ¹ The final section of this Keynote Lecture [presented at the Music for Stage and Screen: Celebrating the SMI at 20 Symposium in Wexford on Saturday 11 March 2023] deliberately revisited and resituated parts of my much longer contribution to the *Oxford Handbook of Music and the Middlebrow*, ed. Kate Guthrie and Christopher Chowrimootoo (this had appeared in late 2022 but is currently still available only in E-form). The intention was to signal and advertise that longer essay, with its rather different focus and aims, entitled ‘Tchaikovsky in Hollywood. Do We Listen?’. The present text is a slightly revised version of that originally delivered in Wexford.
 - ² Theodor Adorno & Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films*, with New Introduction by Graham McCann (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 3 & liii.
 - ³ *The New York Times International* (9 February 2023), 2.

back to their already commodified implication in Wagner, my own more subversive critical project would lead me to apply retrospectively film-critical approaches to Wagner's pioneering technique of 'underscoring' stage action. The aim might be to re-read its character and function in a way that clarifies its proto-cinematic qualities without the opprobrium of an Adornian spin.

In a longer article I might have wanted to examine closely and listen to a stretch of Wagnerian underscoring to a scene in *The Valkyrie* (1856). But it is worth describing what happens when sung verbal utterance there gives way to a minute or two of 'pantomime': where characters move wordlessly about on stage accompanied only by music that plays an intricate narrative role. We are in Hunding's dwelling built around a great tree whose trunk rises up through it. Initially home-alone, his wife Sieglinde has discovered an unknown, battle-weary and weaponless young man collapsed on her hearth-rug. Fearfulness gives way to sympathy (she offers him a drink) and then to warmer attraction – she does not know that he is her long-lost brother. The underscore to their recitative-like exchanges has quietly been generating themes and motifs that will be significantly recalled after Hunding's return. He is a domineering warrior-type who tells Siegmund that he can spend the night by their fire but join him in a fight to the death the next day. No weapon? Shame ... The passage that interests me begins after Hunding has rudely told Sieglinde to prepare his evening drink and then to go and wait for him in the bedroom. The underscore now takes over in what a film composer would call an extended musical 'cue' – and as in many Hollywood movies, this one ends with the intervention of a 'diegetic'/real-world sound: not the usual ringing of a doorbell or the telephone but the slamming shut of a bolt (required in the stage directions) on the bedroom door when Hunding retires, leaving Siegmund alone to contemplate his fate.

Before that, as Sieglinde had moved about, doing her husband's bidding, the accompanying music quietly alluded primarily to her, giving us access to what she is thinking about as she laces Hunding's bedtime drink with a sleeping potion. The music recalls her earlier attention to the exhausted Siegmund and the more extended theme that had marked the meeting of their eyes and the awakening of erotic attraction. Only the well-known 'sword' motif emerges in the motivic weave from somewhere else, as she looks significantly at a spot on the tree trunk as if to draw his attention to it. She knows that a sword is buried there, but the motif's full significance could be recognized only by us if we recall having heard it at the end of the first opera of the cycle, when Wotan, leader of the Gods and guardian of moral law, was 'seized by a great idea'. He needed one to help him out of the fix of being about to enter a new fortress built with stolen gold. In the 'silent' but musical scene I have been describing, this motif adds (if still in her inner voice) to the musical insistence on Sieglinde's subject-position a kind of meta-subjectivity, as with a cinematic voice-over that suddenly suggests to us, the

viewers, that the scene we are watching is part of a larger drama of which its on-stage protagonists are only dimly aware, if at all.

Wagner does much more in his rich, often quasi-symphonic underscoring than construct and contrast subject-positions in music. He also extended greatly the size of the Beethovenian orchestra, facilitating its right and ability to depict landscape, to construct and pace dramatic narratives of subjects within landscapes and to depict the subjective negotiation of memory and emotion in extended musical corollaries to the Shakespearean soliloquy. But in using the term 'symphonic' I open up a rusty can of supposedly dead worms – relating of course to the once derided concept of 'programme-music' in the dominant discourse about music's, and indeed symphonies', true nature and value. That discourse had literally pre-programmed the critical disparagement originally attending the linkage of music to film, in some supposedly subservient and thus subordinate role.

After Wagner, perhaps even after Berlioz, programme music was never really quite what the term mockingly implied: 'depicting' things and events that were supposedly 'extra-musical' by means of crude techniques like 'Mickey Mousing', associative connection or quotation-like reference to socially functional music (dances, military signals and marches, real-world sounds of bells etc.); to these might be added the static, timbral generation of 'atmospheric' effects (as with low pedals, or tremolando strings). By suggesting that the 'programme-music' derided by Hanslick and the aesthetic purists was really *not* what it was mocked for being, I intend to suggest, as with the Wagner example, that it was that and much *more*. This is something that Gustav Mahler understood, and on one occasion (in 1893) allowed himself to write illuminatingly about, when asked by a youthful correspondent why it was that modern composers of the post-Wagner era needed such a big orchestra. Already before Beethoven, he said,

... the composer began to relate ever deeper and more complex aspects of his emotional life to the area of his creativeness – until with Beethoven the *new era* of music began: from now on the *fundamentals* are no longer mood – that is to say mere happiness or sadness etc. – but also the transition from one to the other – conflicts – physical nature and its effects on us – humour and poetic ideas ...

We moderns need such a great apparatus in order to express our ideas ... First, because we are compelled, in order to protect ourselves from false interpretation, to distribute the various colours of the rainbow over various palettes; second, because our eye is learning to distinguish more and

more colours in the rainbow ... in order to be heard by many in our over-large concert halls & opera-houses we also have to make a loud noise.⁴

This fascinating statement was a rare example of a symphonic composer of Mahler's era 'opening up' about such matters. The rarity, of course, is linked to the point I made earlier about needing to understand the context in which statements *about* 'context', and even just about music, are and were made. Cultural politics impinged upon Mahler in many ways. As a prominent conductor-composer, he was aware that a significant part of his audience was imbued with snobbishly purist aesthetic ideas about music's image as properly 'pure' or 'ineffable'. This ideological construct required neither expertise nor sympathy or genuine attention of any kind from 'social' concert-goers. It could also protect composers from needing to reveal their private indulgence in subtly meaningful discourse. No matter how ambiguously it was signalled, the suspicion of 'programmaticism' could, for example, arm anti-Semites (in Mahler's case) with a ready weapon to use against his and other related kinds of 'modern music' as being variously, and by its very nature, second-rate or second-hand. In this way, his kind of modernism concealed in public the full significance of its highly public communicative nature, addressing and being consumed by an ever-growing audience in those 'over-large' concert-halls. Public denials of meaningful intent, of 'programmaticism', absolved composers of the need to explain the ever more complex nature of such meaning, of such 'programmes', while suffering the inevitable opprobrium of success in their communication. Their audiences might similarly want to conceal their readiness to 'read' such meaning *and* their acquired expertise in doing so (*is this what 'pandering to the masses' meant? they might nervously have wondered*). Mahler had penned a long and fascinatingly detailed programme to his Second Symphony for a pending performance in Dresden, December 1901. He sent it to his sister Justine, to be shared with Alma. He well knew that his young wife-to-be had absorbed the fashionable high-cultural attitude to such things, and wrote apologetically to *her* shortly after:

Today is the performance of my Second Symphony [in Dresden] ... didn't Justi explain that my programme was written for a shallow, oafish person (you know who I mean), and that it deals only with the extraneous, purely superficial aspects of the work – as in the final analysis does any

⁴ Knud Martner (ed.), *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Eithne Wilkins & Ernst Kaiser with Bill Hopkins (London: Faber & Faber, 1979), 148–9.

programme for a musical work of art. All the more so in the case of this one, which is a rounded, unified whole and is no easier to explain than the world itself.⁵

Nail the colours of organic unity and ineffability to your mast and you might sail on, allowing the full subversive significance of what you were doing to sink out of sight beneath the waves of intellectually respectable high-culture accounts of the new music of the twentieth century.

These would increasingly come to be dominated by the official ‘in-your-face’ modernists’ innovatory, audience-rejecting strategies for maintaining other kinds of ‘purity’ and moral worth. And I am not minded simply to decry those. But let me turn back here to the way in which attention to proto-cinematic narrative techniques (with pre-prepared highbrow disapproval) might illuminate the complexity of what was already going on in a work like Mahler’s *First Symphony*. Its various ‘programmes’ and movement titles came and went, from performance to performance. Their shape-shifting tendency to appear and disappear is useful evidence of the cultural, contextual constraints that I have already outlined. These were responsible for the glorious confusion of the work’s first performance in Budapest, in 1889, as a ‘Symphonic Poem in Two Parts’ – but with five symphonic-looking ‘movements’: three in the first part, two in the second, the fourth being the only one to bear a quasi-programmatic characterization: ‘A la pompes funèbres’. The Finale was then listed as ‘*attaca*, 5. *Molto appassionato*’, but apart from such conventional Italian tempo designations and the heading ‘Scherzo’ for the third movement (the second in the four-movement version), no actual programme was supplied. Paradoxically its absence was even lamented by some of the less conservative Budapest critics. They were not content simply to rule the work beyond the pale for appearing to be ‘programmatic’ in the first place: they wanted more, to support and convince them that what they might have been seeing in their mind’s eye was relevant to Mahler’s intention.

The work was, and remains, an extraordinarily innovative take on the post-Berliozian five-movement dramatic symphony. We could call it a ‘symphonic novel’, taking its bearings from both Beethoven and Wagner (not to mention Berlioz, Liszt and Tchaikovsky). Its more-or-less conventionally-modelled initial movements are, as in Beethoven’s Ninth, referred back to in the primary drama of conflict and resolution that is fully confronted in the Finale. Narrative progression is implied by the previous movements’ evidently ‘leading to’ its opening ‘despairing outcry,’ as from the work’s focalized subject, or ‘hero’. Here will be enacted before our inner gaze the postponed,

⁵ Henry-Louis de La Grange & Günther Weiss (eds); *Gustav Mahler Letters to His Wife*, rev. and trans. Antony Beaumont (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), 76.

real-time drama of conflict and triumphant resolution. Mahler had good reason to title it 'Dall' inferno al paradiso' in one of his later programmes.⁶ Proto-cinematic narrative techniques are strikingly mobilized in ways that retrospectively clarify their employment in earlier movements. A key moment is the great 'flashback' – and I use the cinematic term deliberately – after the first triumphal 'breakthrough' to the heroic march. We suddenly revisit the symphony's initiating 'Naturlaut' ('sound of nature' – this term from the score).⁷ The strings' pedal A in harmonics over seven octaves had originally created an 'establishing shot' – a spacious dawn landscape *in and against which* distant off-stage brass signals and on-stage bird-calls had signified the presence of both humans and animals on its margins before the appearance of any focalized expressive subject. As in a psychoanalytic process of confronting a repressed memory, the intensely expressive lamentation of the Finale's implied lyrical 'second subject' is latterly heard within the flashback (from bar 443), or rather imaginatively 'seen' *in* the symphony's initially invoked landscape (where it did not appear), in which the subject of Mahler's own originating song (from which the first movement is derived) had in fact 'walked out in the morning' to confront the emotional devastation brought on by a painfully broken love-affair.⁸ A grand heroic march is the Finale's goal, but Mahler will allow it fully to triumph over, and indeed harness the powers of Nature to achieve cadential mastery only after the cinematic flashback to the repressed originating event. This is approached by what I am happy to regard as a deftly managed 'cross-fade'.

To suggest, or imply, that audiences – or some audiences – were in a position to respond imaginatively and with some degree of comprehension to such techniques of musical narration is to propose a critical re-examination of the experience of a symphony-concert as an event in which high-status social manners may have concealed supposedly lower-brow popular responses of some complexity. Mahler's judicious regard in public for prevailing critical manners evidently made him nervous about displaying sympathy with low-brow, 'merely' popular operetta themes or the music of Tchaikovsky. I would nevertheless love to have heard Mahler conduct Tchaikovsky's

⁶ In Hamburg in 1893, it was given separately titled movements and the overall title 'Titan'; the Finale was headed 'Dall' Inferno al Paradiso'. At the actual Hamburg performance the last movement was headed: "'Dall' Inferno" (Allegro furioso) folgt, als der plötzliche Ausbruch der Verzweiflung eines im Tiefsten verwunderten Herzens ["'Dall' Inferno" (Allegro furioso) follows, as the sudden despairing outcry of a deeply wounded heart]. Eventually all titles were removed, along with the second movement (Blumine). A facsimile of the Hamburg programme appeared as Plates 46 & 47 in the original first volume of Henry-Louis de La Grange's *Mahler* (London: Viktor Gollancz, 1974); the Titan programme appears in Plate 47.

⁷ See Mahler, Symphony no.1, Finale, Reh. No. 38.

⁸ The symphony's first movement is based on the second of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*: 'Ging heut' morgens übers Feld' ['This morning I walked across the fields'].

Sixth 'Pathétique' Symphony, which he did on a number of occasions, for all that his periodic disparagement of the composer evinced sensitivity to the snobbish attitude more widely held towards popular 'programmaticism'. I wonder if he might not secretly have sympathized with the way its composer had privately announced the inception of that very symphony to its dedicatee, his nephew Bob Davydov. With playful deliberateness Tchaikovsky had threatened to challenge, and in three languages, the parroted idealism of symphony-concert audiences of the more traditional kind. The new symphony was, he said

a programme symphony, but with such a programme as shall remain a riddle for everybody – let them try to guess, but the symphony will be thus named: Programme Symphony (No.6), Symphonie à Programme (N[uméro] 6), Programm-Symphonie (N[ummer].6). The programme itself is nothing if not shot through with subjectivity, and frequently during my travels, as I composed it in my head, I wept a great deal.⁹

I turn here to Tchaikovsky not simply because his music was mobilized for use in the early cinema. Long before the advent of 'sound film', his name was to be found in pre-prepared lists of possible musical extracts to be used by silent film accompanists. He also figured in the fascinating change of heart of the late musicologist and educationalist Christopher Small. I refuse to let his name sink beneath the ever advancing and retreating tides of musicological work. For many years I used to frighten serious music students with his 1987 essay 'Performance as ritual: sketch for an enquiry into the true nature of a symphony concert.'¹⁰ His aim there was to understand how it functioned as 'a celebration, undertaken not fully aware[sic], of the shared mythology and values of a certain group within our deeply fragmented society'.¹¹ Citing critical theorists like Raymond Williams, along with other sociologists and anthropologists, Small's challenging analysis of the bourgeois symphony concert pointed to its class-segregated halls, its frozen repertoire, and its musicians required to be uncreative slaves of a dominating conductor. It led him to propose the free-jazz event as an example of something far more culturally valuable and literally *re-creative*.

A decade later he had overcome his anger to the extent that he could confront his own early investment, not so much in the sterile bourgeois music of dead white males

⁹ Philip Ross Bullock, *Pyotr Tchaikovsky* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2016), 172.

¹⁰ Christopher Small, 'Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the True Nature of a Symphony Concert', in Avron Levine White (ed.), *Lost in Music: Culture, Style and the Musical Event* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 6–32.

¹¹ Small, 'Performance as Ritual', 6

as in particular works he had experienced in a manner that his subsequent education had led him to reject:

When I first encountered these symphonic works as a boy ... knowing nothing of sonata form, I enjoyed them as narratives, dramatic sequences of musical events ... But when, in my early twenties, I started formal musical studies and learned the conventional terminology of musical form, I learned to forget about drama and concentrate on structure. It took me many years to regain that earlier feeling for narrative progression, which I am certain is the truer meaning that is conveyed when a symphony is performed.¹²

This passage from his 1998 book *Musicking. The Meanings of Performing and Listening* comes close to the central thrust of my argument here, although it does not encompass the more specifically filmic nature of symphonic musical narratives. The fluid technology of their composition nevertheless closely matches the literary construction of a 'stream of consciousness' in which inner prospects and imagined landscapes can cross-fade into each other and expressive manners can be juxtaposed sharply as in sequences of cinematic montage. Small does, however, reveal something of the process by which such listening, such an understanding of musical meaning could be defensively internalized as private truth in contrast to the highbrow public ban on such subjective interpretation in favour of modern technical analysis. That would, of course, typically find such music *wanting* and thus aid its consignment to a kind of cultural underground, in both wider historical and more locally subjective terms. Once again we see the antipathy to 'programmaticism' – however inadequately theorized or understood – confirming the image of such symphonic music as 'merely' popular or second-rate. Adorno and subsequently Carl Dahlhaus were both adept at formulating a specially Germanic denigration of Russian symphonists like Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff as technically incompetent; Dahlhaus even suggested accusingly that almost 'no nineteenth-century composer is safe from the menace of vulgarization'.¹³ It might be added that Adorno's love for and grasp of Mahler's music points tangentially to the success of that composer's politic management of his own public position about 'programmaticism' while practising it on the highest level of subtlety and complexity.

What Christopher Small *does* do is to point us in the direction of how one might understand the hidden process whereby music was really not demeaned by renouncing

¹² Christopher Small, *Musicking. The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 165–6.

¹³ Carl Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, trans. William Austin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 99.

its fake 'purity' and 'absolute' ineffability as it moved logically from the concert hall into the cinema. Visualised narrative dramas might thus potentially be interpreted as explaining or 'realizing' the music they could more pompously be considered to have subordinated to their own supposedly crass and literal requirements.

In a later chapter of *Musicking* Christopher Small in fact demonstrated more vulnerably and more directly what he meant by enjoying symphonies as narratives, and precisely in relation to Tchaikovsky's Sixth. Here he interprets the closing section of its first movement:

The struggle subsides incoherently into throbbing chords, out of which emerge those fragments of melody which comprised the prelude, now transformed into a powerful melody, the very representation of desire, naked shuddering desire of an intensity that even Richard Wagner never managed to portray. The desire is fulfilled by the return of the great melody, strong now, and passionate and without its playful tag, serene and sensuously beautiful and followed by a peaceful coda, which might even sound like a brief lullaby for the tortured spirit, that ends the movement.¹⁴

In a sense, the physical migration to America of German and Austrian Jewish musicians fleeing the Nazis in the 1930s symbolically smoothed the passage of the late- or post-romantic symphonic style of musical narrative into Hollywood movies. With its theatrical, operatic and concert-hall lineage, it *might* have seemed too culturally highbrow as well as historically irrelevant to the mass-culture industry, but its émigré practitioners, whatever their training, were often already also engaged, like our own Gustavo Dudamel, in more relevantly 'popular' worlds of entertainment, be it of early 20th-century operetta in the case of Max Steiner and Erich Wolfgang Korngold, or of jazz and more obviously mass-cultural popular music in the case of Franz Waxman.

Almost without thinking about it, certainly not 'theorizing' what they were doing, they found themselves fitting in to the high-tension, fast-turnover world of film-music composition by utilizing what for them was already a kind of vernacular for underscoring dramatic and precisely *melodramatic* narratives. The relatively crude, *potpourri* style of silent-film accompaniment needed to give way to the less fragmented, so-called 'symphonic' scoring that did more than simply assist the audience in recognizing characters, locations or political-ideological allusions to national identity and pride. We have already encountered the style's invention of the relevant narrative techniques in Wagner's music dramas – to which we might add the popular 'veristic'

¹⁴ Small, *Musicking*, 178.

melodramas of Puccini and the Italians – and Mahler’s symphonies. Two exemplary moments from a key example of one of its cinematic productions might demonstrate rather precisely how, at best, Hollywood could rationalize its adoption of the techniques of musical narrative by occasionally thematizing an awareness of the historical character and significance of the movement of music – and, yes, perhaps of the *image* of music – from the supposedly elite world of the bourgeois concert-hall, once mocked by Christopher Small, into the private space of the bourgeois home, and further into the subjective world not only of stylish actors and actresses, but also of members of the wider public who are often characterized as merely ‘consuming’ such movies as escapist ‘entertainment’. This could be fruitful for the students of so-called ‘middlebrow’ culture, who sometimes overlook their own implicitly highbrow reservations about such socio-cultural behaviour, acknowledgement of which could greatly complicate the story they tell.

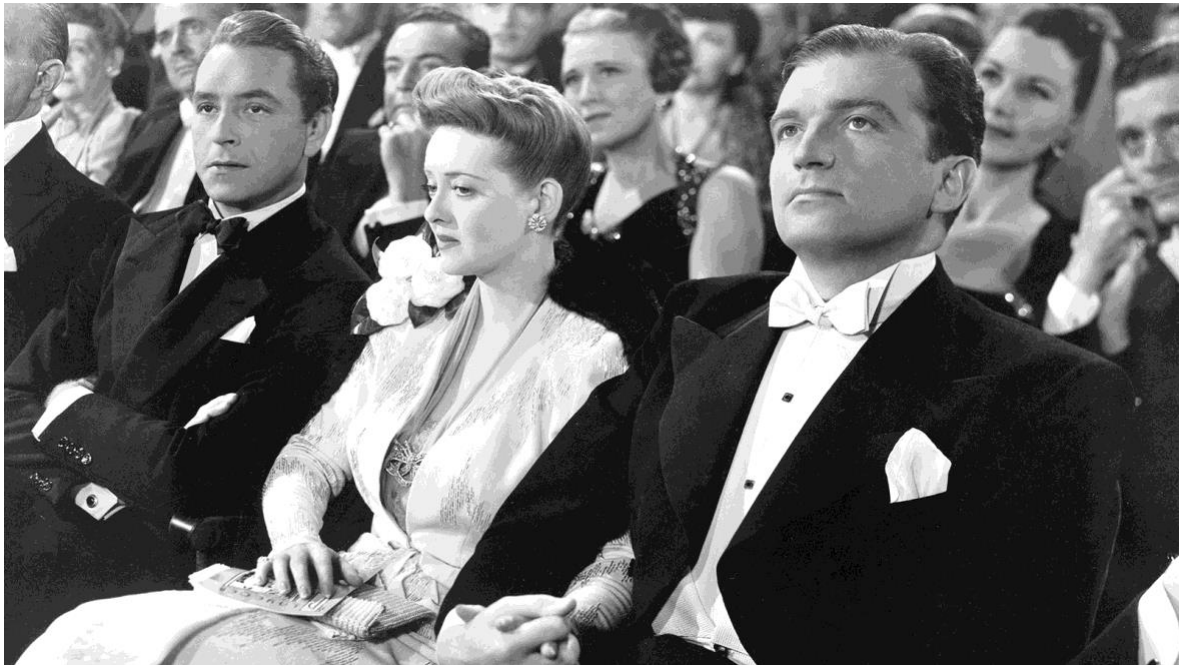


Figure 1: Bette Davis, as Charlotte Vale, sitting between Jerry (Paul Henreid, on her right) and her fiancé Elliot Livingstone (John Loder) at the symphony concert in *Now, Voyager*, [Irving Rapper, Warner, 1942]

Here, then, a still image of the audience at a posh symphony-concert from a film that was often written off as a ‘woman’s picture’. It was typically deemed to be dealing in self-indulgent and melodramatic sentimentality – before feminists and film-scholars, and the odd musicologist, found themselves both startled and moved by it. The 1942

Warner Bros. film *Now, Voyager* was, after all, based on a popular 1941 novel by the well-known woman novelist Olive Higgins Prouty. The film even begins generically as a medicalized melodrama of a woman crushed by a powerful mother (whose youngest, implicitly unwanted daughter she is). Mrs Vale heedlessly exacerbates her reclusive daughter's behaviour, her lack of attention to her thick eyebrows, dowdy dresses and self-deprecating shyness as she submits to her characterization as the spinsterish 'poor Aunt Charlotte'. Thanks to the intervention of friends and a spell in a psychiatric institution, she 'finds herself', embraces posh frocks and the wider world, and falls in love with a handsome married man on a cruise. His own marriage is implicitly loveless, but there are children and his sense of moral responsibility to his wife and family will not permit him to follow his heart, for all that he loves Charlotte Vale, who will of course remain passionately devoted to him. And hers is the primary subject position throughout – maintained not least by Max Steiner's underscore, with its inherited Wagnerian manners. It is Charlotte's refusal to compromise, in spite of becoming pragmatically but briefly engaged to a decent enough widower of the right sort of age and class, that has both fascinated and troubled feminist critics, particularly when she latterly becomes a sort of foster-mother to Jerry's own youngest daughter (her birth no more intended than Charlotte's own, we assume). And what did one do in 1942, after that final embrace with Jerry, with her famous closing line? In both book and film Charlotte ventures: 'O Jerry. Don't let's ask for the moon. We have the stars!'

To demonstrate what I mean about this film's thematicization of music's potential to move from the polite concert-hall into the private subjective world of its listeners, I turn to the crucial concert that Charlotte has been invited to attend, following a cocktail party and dinner with some well-heeled friends. She is with her fiancé, Elliot Livingstone. And that the accent should be on the 'stone' becomes very clear during their taxi-ride to the event. It dawns on Charlotte that he is not going to give her what she needs. He has two sons by his now deceased wife. When Charlotte assures him that she will love them as if they were her own, and as much as any other child she and Elliot might subsequently have together, this appears to shock him, almost as if he had not thought of their marriage as being in any way sexual. Our access to Charlotte's reaction is via the standard device of subjective 'voice-over'. We see her gazing out of the taxi window but *hear* her sadly pondering how comparatively little she has to mark her affair with Jerry. Worse still, Jerry chances to be at the pre-concert party, where they snatch a brief word before finding themselves seated together in the hall: Charlotte with Jerry on her right and Elliot (whom we see ineffectually taking her hand) on her left. That not one of them really appears to be listening to (yes...) Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony might illustrate Christopher Small's 1987 analysis of the ritualized symphony concert. But note what happens after the concert, during which Jerry has asked to call on her later. We cut to Charlotte, at this point alone, returning from the

concert to the darkened ground floor of the rather grand Boston house in which her ailing mother is presumably asleep upstairs.

The key point is that the music follows her – continuing no longer in the diegetic ‘real world’ of the concert hall but now in the cinematic underscore: that rich ‘overheard’ space where we have already encountered her own subjective voice. Is she allowing it to play on in her mind, symbolizing the passion with which she now awaits Jerry’s visit? ... But he doesn’t come, instead phoning from the station to reveal that someone has told him all he needs to know about her pending marriage to Elliot. She rushes off to catch him at the station, where she assures him of her continuing love – and they embrace. All as good as will be.

And so to the next morning. She has summoned Elliot to tell him that she is breaking off their engagement. She tries to explain by nervously telling him a story, from a ‘novel’ she has been reading (it is of course her own story) – the story of a different sort of relationship to theirs. She ends by putting it to Elliot that he cannot give her the kind of passionate, physical commitment that she wants and needs. Preparing for his arrival, she had earlier turned on a large radio or gramophone to supply some background music. Is it by chance that the same Tchaikovsky symphony now leads us to suspect that we might have misunderstood her apparent lack of attention at the concert? As if to press the point home, the Tchaikovsky will again accompany her, following her prosaically formal farewell to Elliot, as she mounts the stairs to tell her mother that the marriage is off. And now we hear again her inner subjective voice, speaking non-diegetically with and over the Tchaikovsky that now accompanies it, for us if not for her (‘You fool, oh you fool – now you’ll never have a home of your own, or a man of your own, or a child of your own’). But the implication is that she might well have been listening to that music just as Christopher Small interpreted it in 1998.

Steiner’s own music will shortly return to confront the melodramatic scene in which Charlotte’s mother suffers a fatal heart-attack after hearing her daughter’s decision, but he and director Irving Rapper had apparently made a careful calculation about how to demonstrate their indebtedness to Tchaikovsky and to ‘classical music’, thus, perhaps simultaneously *re-* but in fact no less decisively *de-*classified.

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