Improvising the Deluge. Live film scoring and improvisational practices

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Although unscripted acting is a well-established method within the world of film production, a broad use of improvisation as score-making technique is on the other hand quite uncommon. The same goes towards the use of film as moving improvisational score within improvisational practices; questioning whether musicians are reluctant to engage in audiovisual ambiguity based on the same arguments as the film industry.

Keywords: improvisation, live scoring, film music, audiovisual perception.

Improvisando el Diluvio: composición de bandas sonoras en vivo y prácticas de improvisación

A pesar de que la representación sin guión previo es un método consolidado en el mundo de la producción cinematográfica, el uso generalizado de la improvisación como método de creación de una partitura es, por otro lado, poco común. Lo mismo le ocurre al uso de la película cinematográfica como partitura de una improvisación en movimiento dentro de las prácticas improvisatorias; cuestionando si los músicos son reticentes a participar en una ambigüedad audiovisual basada en los mismos argumentos que la industria del cine.

Palabras clave: improvisación, bandas sonoras en vivo, música de películas, percepción audiovisual.

Uholdea inprobisatuz: zuzenean soinu-bandak konposatzea eta inprobisazioa praktikak

Zinema ekoizpenean aurretiko gidoirik gabeko emankizuna errotutako metodoa bada ere, inprobisazioa partitura sortzeko modu bezala ez dago berriz oso zabaldua. Gauza bera gertatzen da inprobisazio praktiken barruan filma mugimenduan dagoen inprobisazio baten partitura bezala erabiltzeari dagokionez, eztabaidan jartzen delarik musikariek ikus entzunezko anbiguetatean parte hartzea saihesten ote duten zine industriak erabiltzen dituen argumentu berdinetan oinarrituz.

Gako-hitzak: inprobisazioa, zuzeneko banda soinuak, filmen musika, ikus entzunezko pertzepzioa.

musikene

Opening

During Leonardo da Vinci's last years he obsessed with capturing the surging forces of a deluge through sketches upon sketches of maelstroms; waves and rocks. His vivid sketches are captivating renditions of violence in perpetual motion, captured on canvas with chalk and pen, sufficiently nature-like to bring even sound to life; the roar of the water, the smashing of the rocks. By focusing closely, the deluge materializes in front of us (sound and movement), aided by the interaction between clever composition and our perceptual imagination. About four hundred years later, pioneering filmmakers conjured up similar illusions of imaginary sound. This is sound made up of perceptual effects (illusions), where filmmakers set intense spectacles in motion; spectacles which task it was to construct elements of sounding dialogue and foley through the individual imagination. If we for now disregard the hyperactive organ hammering away in the early 20th Century cinema hall, films otherwise avoided silent obscurity through perceptual intervention. Our brains, in other words, utilize the sum of lived sound-experiences to add drama, cultural and social narrative, context, and ultimately, sufficient lifelike entertainment to the screen in front of us (see e.g. Kassabian, 2001). Returning to the deluge, the master of the montage and subjective readings (and a man who referred to Freud as one of his gods), Sergei Eisenstein, picked up on da Vinci's use of the essential components:

> In Leonardo's notes for The Deluge, all its various elements — those that are purely plastic (the visual element), those indicating human behaviour (the dramatic element), and the noise of crashing and crying (the sound element) — all equally fuse into a single, unifying, definite image of a deluge (1947, p. 61).

The justification for writing about this for an improvising musician like myself, is partly to have side as an outlet for a mild lifetime obsession with films, but also based on a fascination for the effect perpetuated by the likes of da Vinci's deluge. Initially, the following project was conceived as research into improvisational architecture in musical performance, where the discourse of the two audiovisual stimuli, film and live music, were scrutinized as an improvisational aid to develop new artistic directions for musicians. In that context, the film functions as a score, providing musical cues, inspiration and narrative to an improvised performance. Film as improvisational score is still part of the following argumentation, but the emphasis changed and got more complex when I started discovering the intricacy of audiovisual perception, and realized long reaching benefits to — not just the improvising musician — but to a (necessary) contemporisation process of the film score as well. It is a win-win situation as I see it, where from an improvisational point of view,

I started realising the potential of aiding the film score out of the idiomatic clutch of the romantic influence, saving directors from crude use of pop music (Bobby Hatfield's smooth voice "...I've hungered for your touch" in the now satirical pottery session in *Ghost* (Zucker, 1990) comes to mind), and overall, crush the tendency to use the score to over-clarify that which is already clear (the audience know very well that Demi is "hungering" for his touch...)[1]. Especially Hollywood has perfected the utilization of pastiche and clichés in order to contextualise the cultural narrative, unilaterally hammer through the plot, and generally use sound as the means to a visual end... This is the ethos of this article in any case, and if you want to read on, as Hitchcock once said, "I promise you nothing but entertainment, a vacation from all your problems — as it was for me..." (1959). Although Hitchcock was notoriously misleading, I doubt Eisenstein would approve of the thought of such a 'vacation', highlighting the opposing duality at the root of our discourse: vacation (entertainment?) versus work (enlightenment?) and how to sound the Eisensteinian deluge?

Making the case for obtrusiveness

In the film *Being There* (Ashby, 1979), Peter Seller's character Chance ('de Gardener') leaves the house of 'the old man' for the first time in his life only to find himself in the middle of a Washingtonian black ghetto, strolling past gangs of black youths to a funk version (complete with Fender Rhodes) of *Introduction* to Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra.* The musical narrative is abundantly clear: in addition to referring to the Sellers-Kubrick link from *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), the scene sets Chance on an evolutionary Kubrickesque 'Odyssey' within the sphere of Black popular culture. The scene illustrates the 'old world' (tradition) introduced to 'the new world' (modernity), and the underscore clearly reiterates the idea of the merging of the two perspectives. Although *Being There* is highly satirical, the music underpins the Hollywood philosophy of the Wagnerian classical narrative intermixed with an ever-evolving *internal* filmic signification of music. Kassabian proclaims, "classical Hollywood film music must be thought of as a semiotic system" (2001, p. 11). Such a system is shaped by the constant playing and replaying of familiar music, where the Hollywood aesthetics conforms

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1. "Unchained Melody" was of course originally written as a theme tune to the 1955 Hal Bartlett film *Unchained*. With over 500 cover-versions since that, the tune was well placed within the Western cultural psyche for Hollywood to exploit this. For more on this, see Kassabian (2001) and Gorbman (1987).

to the Althusserian model of ideology masked as common sense[2]. Eisenstein here poignantly comments how Hollywood wish for reality "to be an element of parody, as if Hollywood clichés were factual elements" (Bergan, 2016, p. 173). In other words, Hollywood is eager to dictate determinist ideology (fictional or real) to achieve as much of an unambiguous filmic narrative as possible (clichés become 'reality'). For such a semiotic system to maintain its unambiguous character, it has to embrace a strong sense of aesthetic conservatism and tradition. Kalinak poignantly comments; "the classical score retains a structural basis which is very much in evidence in contemporary Hollywood films" (1992, p. 203), and, Donnelly writes of Danny Elfman's score to Tim Burton's *Batman Returns* (1992), that it "has a [...] large-scale orchestral score using a language derived from classical cinema" (1998, p. 149). In other words, we sense the ghost of Wagner still looming within movie aesthetics. The Althusserian state of affairs in modern cinema is confirmed by Davison, reminding us of the more "experimental Hollywood films" of the "late 1960s and early 1970s" and how contemporary cinema has regressed to a classical scoring method "which works hard to encourage the audience to surrender to the film and fully engage with the emotional worlds and actions depicted on screen" (2004, p. 3).

Similar to the operatic leitmotif, the prevailing notion in contemporary cinema is that film scores should merely aid the cinematic narrative. Thomas Newman even claims that the music "is secondary", continuing, the score is "there to help, it's not there to be listened to" — adding with a sigh, "unfortunately" (in Schelle, 1999, p. 267). Adorno & Eisler, here bluntly proclaim how the industry encourages a philosophy of "unobtrusiveness" through "the use of banal music", and that the avant-garde "has opened up an inexhaustible reservoir of new resources and possibilities that is still practically untouched" (2005, pp. 10-18). Although a number of opposite examples have appeared in recent years (e.g. the excellent drums-only segments by Antonio Sánchez in *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* (Iñárritu, 2014), at least from a music point of view, there seems to be an obvious case of 'lost opportunities' here. In fact, with a slight twist to Adorno and Eisler, the question is whether the use of improvised music within the film score can introduce a sense of 'obtrusiveness' to the filmic experience? The idea for this paper therefore, is based on my experience playing improvised music to silent films, and specifically a project ongoing for over a

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2. This refers to a sound ideology shaped by former filmic objects, where sound/music in commercial, contemporary films merely reinforces- and is reinforced by past films, with little perceptual 'freedom'. This adheres to Althusser's arguments that we merely reproduce subjects within social structures, in which, in our context, Hollywood can be seen as a representative of the "Ideological State Apparatus" (see Philips, 2005). In opposition to an emphasis on subjective perception, as Wayne puts it, "mainstream films usually offer a certain immediacy in the readings and identifications on offer" (2005, p. 11).

period of five years, performing music to Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) as a member of the Anglo-Norwegian group *Metropolis* (and I will refer to this experience on and off throughout)[3]. I started improvising to films in my College years as a mean of musical exploration, driven by the obsession of finding new and experimental impact factors, which could steer my improvisational ideas and choices. As I got more experienced playing to silent films, other perspectives (besides my musical exploration) became clear; filmmakers could do with increased musical obtrusiveness (to avoid blandness), and audiences need (deserve) less 'spoon fed' levels of entertainment on screen. From American free jazz to British improvised music, collective improvisation and abstract noise making, improvisers are good at being obtrusive, and I thought we could contribute with relevant expertise. Starting with filmic blandness, Brecht points towards the badly composed opera, where "the process of fusion" between words, music and production "extends to the spectator, who gets thrown into the melting pot too and becomes a passive (suffering) part of the total work of art". Brecht advocates that the elements "*must become more independent of one another*", revealing his distaste for — the operatic equivalent of — synchronized foley, where this fused "illusion is sacrificed to free discussion" (1978, pp. 33-42, his italics). From Brecht to Eisenstein and Kubrick, there is a case for how music as an independent entity may shift our experience of audiovisual expressions (film or stage) from unobtrusive blandness to individual reading and experience. In the words of Barthes, we need not to "destroy the narrative but to subvert it" (Barthes & Heath, 1977, p. 64), and music in this light becomes an obtrusive, subversive factor, which shifts the experience from commercial blandness to ambiguity and individual readings.

Unifying image

The process above works as follows: Through perception, film and music in cooperation have the ability to establish a unique communication process, where this merged artefact signifies an audiovisual phenomenon genuinely based on individual experience; and, referring back to Eisenstein, only through individual perception do we gain access to the process where sound and images "all equally fuse into a single, unifying, definite image". Sound — within our discourse of audiovisual perception — must therefore refer to both music (in the culturally 'conventional' sense), as well as sound effects (in the filmic sense of the term) if we are to expand our percep-

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3. *Metropolis*: Petter Frost Fadnes; alto sax, Matthew Bourne; pn, Colin Sutton; bs, Nick Katuszonek; dr.

tion to "unifying, definite" audiovisual "image". As Eisenstein alluded to with regards to da Vinci's deluge, the phenomenon of audiovisual synchronisation is a merger of elements, where the "definite image" is unavailable as an objectified outcome, but clearly available for the individual member of the audience. Within the discourse of improvised music, visual images may constitute a structural element with profound impact, as the music is formed within architecture that turns flexible in composition through the hypothesis of its audience. During the course of such a performance, Eisenstein claims all "activity has been directed" towards understanding "an intricate polyphony, and a perception of the pieces (of both music and picture) *as a whole*" (1947, p. 73, his italics). In particular, a silent film forms a 'musical notation' capable of engaging in a process whereby the perception of the film alters through music, and, furthermore, where the film may catalyse music inaccessible through regular notation and common musical architecture.

Through improvising to *Battleship Potemkin*, the goal was to show how the two different artefacts *in symbiosis* establish a more evolved artistic idea — unattainable when experienced separately. In the context of improvisational architecture, improvising to a silent film forms a framework of (potential) visual representation of music different from the conventional musical outcome of for example the written score. For me, as the improvising musician, this is a (mostly) non-synchronized option of coexistence with the film. This approach to sound-composition what Eisenstein himself favoured when technology finally allowed him (as the only way to continue his montage-philosophy into the sound age). Together with Alexandrov & Pudovkin he wrote a manifesto on sound film, avidly introducing sound to its montage possibilities:

> The first experiments in sound must aim at a sharp discord with the visual images... Sound treated as a new element of montage... cannot fail to provide new and enormously powerful means of expressing and resolving the most complex problems... (in Bergan, 1997, p. 206).

Miller Marks continues, that Eisenstein was "disturbed by the prospect of an excessively literal use of sound - its use, in other words, merely to confirm things already visible on screen" (1997, p. 12). Eisenstein wanted his audience to experience through their individual imagination, rather than creating a 'masterful' artefact that encourages a singular (overstated) interpretation: in other words, he sought an *actively alert* audience. Barthes quotes the filmmaker regarding "the possibilities of audio-visual Montage" that "the basic centre of gravity ... is transferred to *inside* the fragment, into the elements included in the image itself". In other words, Eisenstein claims that through the audiovisual artefact "the accentuation" is moved to "*within the fragment*"

(his italics), where sound provide the images themselves (not the meaning between them) with obtuse meaning. In fact, through Barthes' words Eisenstein "said that a film is not simply to be seen and heard but to be scrutinized and listened to attentively" (Barthes & Heath, 1977, pp. 52-68).

Moving out of sync

John Zorn seconds this thought in his list of 254 sound effects titled "Treatment for a Film in Fifteen Scenes", listing the last ten sound effects as:

> 245. MIXING DOUGH OR BATTER
> 246. SMOKEY JAZZ CLUB
> 247. POOL OF BLOOD ON THE FLOOR
> 248. THE TRACKS OF A CAR IN FLASHLIGHT
> 249. HANDS TAKING PULSE
> 250. FIRE BUCKET
> 251. SHADOW OF RUNNING MAN
> 252. TAKING TICKETS AT A THEATRE
> 253. SWEEPING BROOM
> 254. CYCLONE FENCE

Zorn, ending on the note that all "foley and sound effects should be out of sync, never corresponding to its related image" (2000, p. 66). The sound effects are obscure to the extent that they exist through the individual imagination, rather than through a sense of obvious signification (turning to the *imagined* sound settings of a SMOKEY JAZZ CLUB). In conjunction with music, this aural image of a jazz club — *informed by all the jazz clubs we have ever been in*[4] — is amplified by a particular musical moment we believe corresponds to our impression of what a jazz club *should* sound like. In other words, within a musical context the sound of a saxophone, a swinging ride cymbal and the clonking of glasses might elevate our memories of being in a jazz club — as such the mind may be reverberating between aural reality and analogous aural memories. As explained by philosopher Eugene Minkowski: "it is as though a well-spring existed in a sealed vase": the *vase* being the subjective mind, the well-spring the grand total of all our empirical memories (Bachelard, 1994, pp. xvi-xvii).

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4. This refers to not only to the potential memory of actually having been in a jazz club, but also the cliché impression we might have of a jazz club (as brilliantly illustrated by *The Fast Show* (BBC) with its jazz club presenter Louis Balfour ("Nice!").

In this light Zorn is looking for a collage of sounds accompanying the film's images, introducing *choice* into the audiovisual experience of the perceiving subject. These sounds are presented in a non-synchronized manner in order not to disturb the individual idea of what sums up the aural interpretation of POOL OF BLOOD ON THE FLOOR; demanding the audience to seek their own interpretation of what sound should accompany a particular image on screen.[5] By calling for such unstable sound effects also introduces improvisational practices into the film-score. Here, as we know no universally signified sound of HANDS TAKING PULSE, the musicians are forced to present an interpretation of such a scenario, which may or may not be accepted by the individual audience member as a true rendition of their impression of the sound. Within the *Potemkin* project we utilized this technique of performing a collage of sound effects and music, where each individual audience member synchronizes image and sound through their own perceptual understanding of the audiovisual phenomenon before them. Going back to the work of Eisenstein, Barthes was intrigued by this third meaning (in addition to informative and symbolic narratives) so prevalent in his films. Barthes conjures up the term "obtuse meaning", where the rounded edges of Eisenstein's narrative projects a "signifier without a signified" (Barthes & Heath, 1977, pp. 52-68). Barthes continues, "[my] reading remains suspended between the image and its description, between definition and approximation", and where "obtuse meaning, is discontinuing, indifferent to the story and to the obvious meaning (as signification of the story)". Eisenstein puts it poetically in Barthes' text:

> Art begins the moment the creaking of a boot on the sound-track occurs against a different visual shot and thus gives rise to corresponding associations.

A well of sound

Specifically comprehending the role of the audience is difficult, but nevertheless important, as the audience forms part of the artistic process when attending a film/concert with improvised music (see e.g. Benson, 2003; Brown, Goldblatt, & Gracyk, 2018; Burland & Windsor, 2014). This is why: Firstly, only the audience is in a position to perceive the two phenomena (film and music) as one merged audiovisual

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5. An interesting example is the Zorn album *The Big Gundown - John Zorn plays the music of Ennio Morricone* (1986), which presents a collage of familiar references from 'spaghetti westerns' through music and sound effects, sketching out the contours of a story line which is then completed by the audience (based on all the western films they have ever seen).

expression (the improvisers are too involved in their own performance to reach the same balance). Secondly, the audience will have an impact on the film score with their presence in an improvisational situation, where audience reaction and attentiveness will affect the musical outcome. The process can be paralleled to a continuous test screening with a twist: the audience is here empowered with real-time critique (impact) of the audiovisual spectacle, where their reaction projects onto the improvising musicians. Walter Benjamin alludes to the fact that audiences should indeed be in a "heightened presence of mind" in order to "cushion" the audiovisual "shock" played out before them (1968, p. 232). Benjamin believes the "constant, sudden change" of images demands an active mind. Perhaps performing live music to film produces a super-tentative audience, ready to process even the most unattainable score. Benjamin, does however, give out warning: film is reception "in a state of distraction", with the audiovisual performance inhabiting great power, and the public as the mere "absent-minded" (ibid pp. 231-234) examiner. We have the audience in the 'palm of our hands' it seems — albeit governed by their level of *distraction*.

By using Zorn's technique of sonorities open to visual interpretation, as well as playing music which often is unobvious (within Hollywood aesthetics) to the agenda of either a particular scene or the movie as a whole, the viewer is forced to make sense of the immediate chaos which is visually and aurally presented. This collaboration depends on the audience's memory to be successful. The individual viewer is ideally able to fill up a well of sound and visual memories from what is being presented, synchronizing sound and images through personal choice. This way the reverberation process includes not just past memories, but also memories of sounds and images within the audiovisual experience unfolding before an audience, where this well of impressions provides a 'dictionary' of ideas called upon to provide a combined audiovisual logic. I choose to use the term *acousmatic* as a description of the well of sounds accompanying such a process. Windsor defines the acousmatic as "all music which is presented for which we are unable to see the sources of the constituent sounds" (2000, p. 7). The film, and not the musical source, is the prime visual focus in a live musical interaction with cinematic images (I choose to ignore the contradictive unveiling of the illusion that the images presented are the (highly) visual source of "the constituent sounds"). Thus, in sticking with the expression acousmatic, the way in which the viewer interprets the images and sounds presented can be termed *individual cinematic/acousmatic synchronization*:
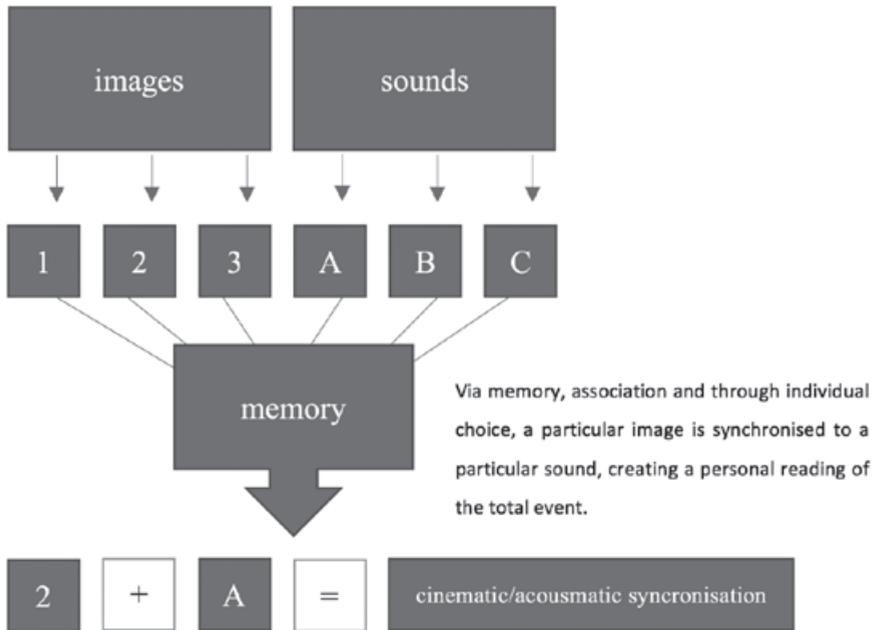
Illustration 1

The use of diegetic or nondiegetic as alternative terminology here becomes inaccurate, as it alludes to merely signified visual sources, while acousmatic on the other hand lacks a signifier and is open to individual interpretation of source. The acousmatic may for example bring out emotional responses, based on a particular moment in the past where a *similar* sound was present (forms of subjective association). Although this is not disregarding the use of diegetic/nondiegetic sound tracks, diegetic does not seem to take subjective perception into consideration. Kassabian utters concern along these lines, saying the "distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic music [...] obscures music's role in producing the diegesis itself", and "it suggests that film music can be categorized within a dichotomous schema — grossly reduced as either "in" (diegetic) or "out" (nondiegetic)". Calling this "insufficient", she continues, "it cannot comfortably describe music that seems to fall 'in between' these categories, much less account for its different character" (2001, pp. 42-43). Surely it is the music "in between" — with its innate ability to communicate subjective narratives — which is the most intriguing for the audience? With relation to the *Potemkin* project we frequently play with the use of signified music (a clean sounding saxophone for example), but it is often with our use of acousmatic sound material that we get the most interesting audience responses, where the use of (initially) un-signified

sounds demand greater participation of individual perception, association and imagi-nation. Acousmatic may also refer to signified sources, but where the visual source is unavailable. Although one can argue that nondiegetic sound is acousmatic (with no visual, even obvious source), nondiegetic refers more to the utilisation of sound in the classical film score, where 'obvious' mood music, voice-over, or sound effects are used to clarify the narrative. Acousmatic embraces the deconstructive qualities of electro-acoustic music, which most often attempts to avoid 'objectified' interpretation.

Choices, choices...

To avoid total chaos, the post-classical process of improvising a score with such an immense pool of possibilities (utilizing everything from cliché leitmotivs to acous-matic sounds) works by the musicians taking clear choices in relating to what is being projected on screen. An example of this would be film composer Ennio Mor-ricone, who in spaghetti westerns such as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), often, in a synchronized manner, ridicules the super macho concoction of gun fight-ers and villains (Mickey Mousing the machismo movements of Clint Eastwood with whistles and bells). Morricone here chooses to see the ridiculous in the situation by emphasizing the cliché of the Wild West. For the film improviser (as well as the film composer) a series of options is immediately clear in their relationship to the movie:

1. Follow the film's *agenda* (1.1 synchronized to events, 1.2 non-synchronized to events).
2. Express the opposite of the film's agenda (through such as parody, minimal-ism, sentimentality etc.).
3. Do a combination of the above.

The obvious flaw to this model — in terms of improvised music — is that the film is a fixed artistic expression, which does not evolve with my improvisation, and as such the musicians may succumb to merely following the film as 'passive' spectators. However, with the involvement of a third party — namely the audience — a two-way communication between the music and the film reveals itself. The original intention of a scene, be it dramatic effects or a romantic mood, can be changed by the force of the music. For example, a scene with fast dramatic movement, intent on creating suspense, may, for some individual viewers, be subverted by musical parody. On the other hand, the musical parody can also emphasise the apparent tragedy by making fun of the violence or grievance on screen (Kubrick makes extensive use of this in *A Clockwork Orange* for example (1971)).

When The Brothers Quay reflected on their cooperation with Karlheinz Stockhausen in the BBC commissioned short-film *In Absentia (*2001*)*, they said that his musical view on the main character "encapsulated […] her universe", adding that Stockhausen's music was "a sort of psychic landscape". Through his music, Stockhausen had expanded and altered even the filmmakers view on their work. Monaco contradicts this, and seems to disregard imagination as part of the viewing process: "We watch a play as we will; we see a film only as the filmmaker wants us to see it" (1981, p. 33). We readily assume that reading a novel puts a certain demand on the reader, as does watching a play; in terms of imagining more beyond what is being visually presented. Also, we agree that mainstream Hollywood cinema has a tendency to over-clarify the plot of their movies, to the point where the audience is pushed towards being passive viewers; e.g. as instructed by *A Guide to Contemporary Film Scoring*: *"*The score must do what the audience expects it to do at all the right places" (Karlin, 1990, p. 127). On the other hand, watching a two-dimensional space projected on screen, however visually and aurally 'spelt out', still demands a level of imagination; which in turn opens up for individual interpretations of the filmic plot. In fact, we need the audience to view film and music as one merged artefact for the audio-visual expression to make sense; as paralleled by artist Antony Gormley regarding his exhibition of iron human sculptures, named *Critical Mass*: "The degree to which the work displays its inertia is the degree to which the audience is invited to interact with it" (G. Benjamin, 1998). The same could be said regarding our discourse: film and music are in a state of inertia without the audience interacting with what they see and hear. Interacting, in the sense of actively making sense of the two different artefacts presented as one. What's more, against Monaco's claim, the audience is still physically in *the real world*; represented by the cinema hall, unable to become more a part of the screen than our imagination permits. This is a process described by Nick Browne as "prohibition":

> The prohibition is the initial premise of a narrative system for the representation of fictional space and the means of introducing the spectator imaginatively into it. The prohibition effects this construction and engagement by creating an obliquity between our angle of viewing and that of the characters which works to make differences of angle and scale readable as representations of different points of view (1996, p. 348).

In other words, in watching a film we are still readers; watching from the outside. We are unable to participate physically in what we see, but still very able to engage imaginatively. Therefore, the interplay of the imagination in matching sound with images must also be recognized. Although, in modern mainstream cinema, most sound

effects are synchronized to the film, the music often dictates only an overall mood of a particular event. Indeed, music is often consciously used to make what we see less real in order for things not to be too disturbing or perhaps, too trivial. Conversely, film-makers will leave out the music for a longer period of time to make the images more 'real'. An example here being Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia* (1999), where the music is abandoned for a whole hour of the film, making the story eerily realistic up until the point where we are let back into the wonderful world of fiction with the cast of characters joining together in a melancholy pop song (and what's more 'fairy-tale' than a musical?). Terence Blanchard said regarding *Jungle Fever* (Lee, 1991), where Spike Lee insisted on a hymn during the scene of an anguished mother distraught over her lost son, that it "works, but it's a little distracting for me because it kind of takes you out of it" (Schelle, 1999, p. 70). Kalinak claims that the film score from as far back as the silent film era "safeguarded the absorption of the spectator into the fic-tive world" (1992, p. 54). During the *Odessa Steps Massacre* we tended to juxtaposition extreme noise with silence, where the silence tended to get the strongest reactions from the audience — in effect morphing the scene into real-world CCTV-voyeurism. Hollywood on the other hand, thrive on escapism, and film music provides parts of the escapist illusion. As Brecht wrote regarding opera, the "more unreal and unclear the music can make the reality [...] the more pleasurable the whole process becomes: the pleasure grows in proportion to the degree of unreality" (Brecht & John, 1964, p. 36).

When Kubrick used works from Johan Strauss, Richard Strauss and György Ligeti to form the soundtrack of his film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (2001), he chose inde-pendent pieces of music; not commissioned specifically for the motion picture. From my point of view, the different images and sounds have to represent an independent meaning for the outcome of the entire cinematic/acousmatic experience to work. If the music we perform to *Battleship Potemkin* is not independently valid, the film ends up calling all the shots. Subsequently, the experience of the viewer is diminished, as it takes away the choice of matching aural and visual impressions. Roland Barthes states about the relations in music, that "each listener executes what he hears", and, "[h]ence there is a site of the musical text where every distinction between com-poser, interpreter, and auditor is abolished (1985, p. 303). The distinction between music, film and viewer can also be "abolished" if these three elements work on equal terms. Furthermore, we can see the amplification of this process by the bringing together of a silent film, improvised music and an audience. Here, as the different elements of the performance are clearer, so are the individual tasks:

(1) Images provided by the film;
(2) sound by the musicians;
(3) and, sole perceiver of film and music as one is the individual viewer.

Also, because these elements are vulnerable to mutual influence, a unique communication process is unveiled in the creation of truly multimedia art - multimedia not the least because of its dependence on audience participation for success, the audience combining the visual and aural stimuli into one single work of art.

Fine

Dogme95, Rule no. 2: *The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa (music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot)*

(Kelly, 2011, p. 8).

As we have seen, the audio-visual stimuli (if successful) does not separate for the individual member of the audience. Although the soundtracks to Dogme films often seem rather crude, they highlight the importance of sound and images as a naturally merged phenomenon, where the score is never an 'add-on' merely to clarify the narrative. Likewise, by improvising to a film, I get to become part of the filmmaking process — a storyteller — opening up new narrative possibilities, where the sound is indeed never "produced apart from the images or vice versa". I started this paper by calling for more sophistication within the film scoring process, arguing that improvised music might pose as possible solution. Indeed, in improvised music, there is a difference between being inspired by an idiomatic structure and being 'trapped' by it. Using film lingo, improvisers might *spot* a structure and create mental hooks of how to manoeuvre certain structural problems or limitations manifested as chords, melodic lines or idiomatic and stylistic norms. The classical approach to film scoring however seems to have 'trapped' the contemporary composer, unable to adapt to the world of post-classical contemporary cinema. Whether or not this is through compositional inadequacies or through the strict limitations set down by the commercial industry is hard to say (— probably a combination of the two), but what is clear is that most mainstream contemporary films include often embarrassingly romantic scores in conjunction with increasingly experimental cinematography. The improvisational technique presented in this article is merely a suggestion of an approach; and indeed, there are examples of scores created from improvising musicians: Miles Davis in Louis Malle, *Ascenseur pour l'echafaud (1958) and Howard Shore's score for Cronenberg's Naked Lunch (1991), where Ornette Coleman is improvising with The London Philharmonic, still stand as refreshing attempts at experimentalism in the music scor-*

ing process.[6] Elmer Bernstein utilized improvisational techniques in the score of Coppola's *The Rainmaker* (1997), revealing that he "composed the basic structure for it, and the solo instruments improvised wildly over that structure" (in Schelle, 1999, p. 54). Based on this, musical improvisation is clearly not unknown to the film industry; however, the lack of cinematic examples also highlights how improvisational techniques are not widely utilized. This is perhaps surprising, as musical improvisation may empower the score with a stronger sense of subjective narrative, and thus enrich the filmic experience for the individual perceiver. With the use of a live audience (either in a recording situation or as an audiovisual screening concept), blurring the use of 'sound' and 'music' (*individual cinematic/ acousmatic synchronization*), and importantly, by introducing a sense of spontaneity into a medium which is otherwise *highly* stylised, improvised music may reintroduce the excitement of the silent film era to the movie-going audience. Without otherwise regressing cinema's artistic development back to 'black and whites', we could thus rediscover the 'organic' trinity that used to exist between film, music and audience. As pointed out previously, the film score *should* entice an audiovisual montage capable of projecting a profound subjective narrative; the experience *should* truly 'speak' with phenomenological reverberation to the individual audience member, and, overstated film scores *should* exist merely as a bad memory (a short blip in cinematic history). I realise of course that this is wildly over-ambitious — projection from a musician eager for a slightly more level playing field within the filmic experience. Eisenstein wrote regarding Disney that his "most interesting — most valuable — contribution has been his skill at superimposing the 'drawing' of a melody on top of a graphic drawing" (in Bergan, 1997, p. 198). Utilizing the power of the musical narrative, Eisenstein admired Disney for being able to "weave" musical "gesture into the outline of his figures". When *Metropolis* superimposed live music onto *Battleship Potemkin*, there was a clear feeling amongst the musicians that we did indeed *affect* the audiovisual narrative by presenting a musical 'drawing' to our audience. Thus, the utilization of improvisational techniques can empower the score with 'obtuse' meaning and autonomous artistic value — parallel to Barthes' claim that still photos of *Potemkin* inhabited powerful fragments of autonomous meaning. James writes that Charlie Chaplin "once commented that if the public didn't like his picture they should be able to close their eyes and enjoy the music!" (2000, p. 71). As much as

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6. I*nterestingly, director Conrad Rooks dismissed Coleman's mostly improvised score to Chappaqua (1967) as too "beautiful", worried it would do "harm to the picture instead of serving it" (see* Jean-Louis Ginibre in sleeve-notes for "Chappaqua Suite")

Battleship Potemkin can work *silently* with complete autonomy and artistic value, so should its music function (speak) with equal meaning. So, for the last time I am quoting the great Eisenstein: "our films are faced with the task of presenting not only a narrative that is *logically connected*, but one that contains a *maximum of emotion and stimulating power*" (1947, p. 14, his italics).

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