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Introduction

Music composed, arranged, produced and mastered by Frida Feline Nilsen
Violin performed by Gabriel Demko

The topic Leitmotif was chosen as a subject to investigate so that the author could gain a deeper understanding of the effect it has on the viewer in terms of recognition of specific characters, places and actions, within live action entertainment media such as feature film and television.

From a questionnaire conducted on fifty-eight film- and Tv-show enthusiasts, it is clear that the use of musical themes is certainly having an effect when it comes to the audience's recognition of certain elements within a narrative work. According to the data collected from the various email interviews (listed in the result section of the dissertation), the purpose of a leitmotif is to represent specific characters, places, ideas or actions in a story. This study also shows that participants share the same view of what a leitmotif is and what its main function in a film or television-show is.

To put this knowledge into something more concrete, a decision was made to compose and produce two separate leitmotifs, each one representing a different mood, place, theme or character. In addition to this a first-timer's video guide to leitmotifs was made to meet the needs of those who incline more toward a fundamental visual clarification, rather than starting the learning process by reading on the subject. The reason Frida chose this as her practical project was because she wanted to convey the importance of leitmotifs in live action entertainment media, and also demonstrate how this technique is capable of making certain moments more memorable. Frida wanted to show how the use of a leitmotif quickly gives viewers information about what is going on in the narrative, and to demonstrate how it matches the activity and mood of a scene.

One scene was selected from the author's favourite Tv-show *Lost* (*S.1, E.23*), and the other excerpt was selected from a short film/music video (which has not been released yet) by the Norwegian hip-hop band Stavanger Lowdown. The reason why Frida had access to material from a video that has not been released yet is because she is close friends with the members of the band. She was allowed to use material from their video on condition that the content was not uploaded publicly before the video was released.

After a lot of investigation, a scene from *Lost* was found with minimal dialogue where Rousseau guides a group of people into the "Dark Territory" to an old shipwreck called the *Black Rock*, located in the middle of the jungle, as they were in the need of dynamite. According to Frida, this particular scene reflects mystique, confusion, adventure and a feeling of tension. The aim for this chosen excerpt was to compose a short leitmotif which represented the given moods by utilising musical elements such as dissonance, dynamics and evolving harmonies that resonates in an unpleasant way.

Black Rock Leitmotif

The goal for this particular excerpt was to compose a leitmotif that reflects the overall mood of the location where the scene takes place. The people who have not seen *Lost* before might not understand what is actually happening in this specific scene, but the fact that they get introduced to an old shipwreck in the middle of the jungle, automatically gives the viewer a hint about the character's thoughts and the underlying emotions/energy of the place. In order to strengthen the director's intentional feelings for this scene, Frida composed a repeating violin melody that begins low in volume and slowly increases as the scene progresses. The note G from a Cello instrument is then presented after five bars to reinforce the feeling of tension and potential danger. Nothing mirrors the tension like a melodic cue revealing to the viewer that something frightening is about to happen. Then a second violin harmony is slowly introduced to the music, to help the audience understand that the characters are witnessing something they might perceive as shocking and inexplicable.

When the camera angle moves from the group of people to the shipwreck, glissando (pitch bend) were applied to the violin performance to evoke a completely different mood within the scene. This pitch bend also represent the sensation of astonishment that the characters clearly show in facial expression in this particular scene. The leitmotif then evolves towards its climax, and this is the part where dissonance and odd harmonies play simultaneously to represent the finding of the old shipwreck. Continuous strokes from Taiko drums (triggered in Kontakt library) replicates the sound of cannons being shot from a distant location. The combination of musical techniques such as staccato, legato and glissando helps to mirror the scene sonically and thus creates a chaotic soundscape filled with increasing tension and mystery.

Life & Death Leitmotif

To Frida, this is a strong scene that expresses the feeling of hovering between life and death. The shells on the seabed gives the viewer an illusion that the character is floating in the universe, preferably a space between the third "dimension" we live in and the fifth "dimension" that deals with being fully present in our own consciousness. This interpretation of the strong, evocative imagery of the scene was so appealing and inspiring, that Frida immediately decided to create a leitmotif associated with the character. Her goal was to compose a musical theme that represented the soul of the character. Frida wanted to convey the process in which the soul determines whether it is ready to leave the physical three-dimensional body and forever lay among the shells that surround him deeply on the seabed, or come back to the three dimensional "Earth plane".

Life and Death opens with two strokes of a heavily filtered kick drum, which is supposed to replicate the sound of the character's heartbeat. The low sub-bass note that is introduced simultaneously with the heartbeats indicates that time is still when his awareness floats somewhere between physical reality and higher dimensions. At 04 seconds, a simple and memorable melody comes into the arrangement associated with the character. The melody consists of only four notes, but it has the potential to be developed into a full piece of music. This leitmotif also has the potential to vary in instrumentation, harmonies, dynamics and rhythm depending on the location, action and mood of the narrative in which the character find himself in. It can for example be presented tenderly by changing the notes to a higher tessitura, but also angrily or sadly. This would of course completely change the entire vibe of the leitmotif.

Life & Death gives the audience an understanding to what the character is experiencing, thinking and feeling. The leitmotif involves the viewer in the drama by sonically revealing information about the character. The utilisation of really messed up notes indicates an unsettling atmosphere and perfectly complements the terror of not being fully conscious in his physical body. Its presence gives the audience a sense, either subconsciously or consciously, that the character is experiencing an out of body experience.

Appendix A

Lost excerpt:

It was not easy to find a scene to compose to in *Lost* with no dialogue involved. The scenes that were most captivating already had music and dialogue simultaneously, and this made it difficult to compose to, because when Eq-ing out the frequencies of the original music it would also ruin the natural timbre of the characters voices. Frida therefore eventually ended up with muting the dialogue (which took place in the scene) because it had Giacchino's music layered underneath, and this was interfering with the leitmotif she composed and produced. It would have been nice to use the dialogue in the scene together with Frida's leitmotif and the original sound design as this would create a much more realistic experience of the narrative.

Appendix B

Frida's video guide to leitmotifs and her original compositions of the leitmotifs can be found on a USB stick attached to this document in a physical format.

Name of the leitmotifs:

- *Black Rock*
- *Life & Death*

Name of the video guide:

- *A first timer's video guide to leitmotifs*

Appendix C

See the document named "Work Diary Log" for evidence and photos of the production and composition progress of the leitmotifs.