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Premise

Audiovisual Analysis, *non troppo*

Allegro non troppo was not made by musicians or musicologists. No one was hired to play its soundtrack, which mostly consisted of prerecorded tracks (except for the interstitial and end titles “ballet” music by Franco Godi); no music consultant provided advice to the director and the animators. Nothing like the rearrangement and repurposing of the music to animation seen in *Fantasia* was ever done. Bozzetto and his crew, instead, approached the repertoire as creative but respectful listeners. They tried to figure out by ear only what were the features that would have been fitter to underscore a screen action, on the basis of their competence in filmmaking and what they believed were the expectations of an audience in respect to the relationship between music and moving image. They looked for the musical episodes that would have worked as synchronic accompaniments of movements, rhythmic reinforcements of visual dynamics, onomatopoeias, and emotional commentaries; then, they created animation to bring out the audiovisual potential they saw in that music.

This strategy posits that Bozzetto and the production team acted as an audience to the music of *Allegro non troppo*. Not any audience, though, but an active one: the record of their reactions to the listening experience are the episodes of the film. Nichetti as the enchained animator, in the live-action sequences, is a parodical embodiment of such creative listening role, as he has to draw animation while inspired on the spot by the music played by the orchestra. It is not clear how his drawings could ever be enjoyed as finished animations by the conductor, the orchestra, and the host. However, according to their reactions, it is evident that all the characters are poetically enabled to see Nichetti’s work; sometimes the animation even interacts with them.

It could be said, then, that *Allegro non troppo* is particularly strong in the representation of its narratee. In literary theory, this is a stand-in for the

audience situated within the narrative world. It is the concept of the receiver, as embedded in a text: it could be explicitly incarnated in a character, or it could just stay implicit: in a film, it identifies “not the real viewer, nor the ‘implied viewer’, but a pickup agent at the other end of the narrator’s communiqué,”¹ as David Bordwell explained. Seymour Chatman evidenced that a text can invoke a narratee in different degrees,² from being totally oblivious of it to making it a key player in the story. *Allegro non troppo* seems to firmly reside in the second half of this spectrum.

However, what audience are Nichetti, Garay, Micheli, and the other actors representing? Are they a film version of the production team as the listening entity that visually interpreted the music? Or are they a projection of the cinema audience itself? In a strict sense, Nichetti would symbolize the film crew, being an animator; Micheli, the host, reacts instead both to music and images, just like the audience in the theater. In this regard, Garay would thus not identify with anyone, being in a role with no correspondence in reality: someone who performs the music and watches the images that result from it. Bozzetto has surely never thought out this metaphor in detail, as his priority was the setup of a funny variant of the scenes framing the *Fantasia* shorts and a context for slapstick gags, in contrast with the flair of the musical animated shorts. Moreover, if the roles of the live-action characters really hide a metaphor within them, that might more likely be that of a cheap TV cast, making fun of many popular Italian shows from the 1970s (see Chapter 4). Anyhow, multiple narratees converge in them and reinforce this narrative function, whose strong presence foregrounds that the whole audiovisual setting of *Allegro non troppo* is audience-oriented: the animated shorts are the result of a peculiar listening activity by a restricted creative audience, which is in turn offering to a larger theatrical audience an audiovisual listening guide to a concert program.

If *Allegro non troppo* must be analyzed and explained, an audiovisual point of view needs to be also taken into account. For this purpose, it might be better to use a methodology that takes into account the audience and its perspective. A particularly profitable one, in this respect, seems to be the film/music analytic method recently advanced by Emilio Audissino in the book *Film/Music Analysis. A Film Studies Approach* (2017). Audissino’s intent was that of superseding past models of audiovisual analysis that appeared too “separatist”³ (strictly separating music analysis from film theory), too focused on communication models (fixated on discerning “who is the sender of the musical message”),⁴ or relying too much on a

¹David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 129.

²Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 254.

³Emilio Audissino, *Film/Music: A Film Studies Approach* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 54.

⁴Ibid.

“top-down, theory-driven approach,”⁵ too abstract and complicated to be practical. A typical example of a highly detailed analytical model for audiovisual analysis would be that of Sergio Miceli, as described in his 2009 book *Musica per film*. However, while his system of audiovisual functions and minute subcategories is a strong descriptive tool, it has a low grade of adaptability: the detailed schematization offers little room for exceptions. For example, it is quite difficult to use Miceli’s system to describe the incessant engagement and disengagement of the music from the film diegesis that often occurs in some silent film scenes.⁶ Moreover, even though Miceli’s descriptive method has the merit to equally address the specific features of film and of music, it does not consider the audience reception in order to verify how the audiovisual functions influence spectatorship. To bridge the gap between the different methods and bring the analysis of music in film closer to cinema studies, Audissino chose instead a neoformalist approach, as defined in the writings by David Bordwell and, more prominently, by Kristin Thompson.⁷ It draws its conceptual framework from the literary theories of Russian Formalism, mainly defined by the works of Yury Tynjanov, Viktor Šklovskij, and Boris Ėjchenbaum; they were centered on the refusal of the form/content split (“subject matter and abstract ideas all enter into the total system of the artwork”),⁸ and the emphasis on the act of perception of the artwork by the audience: “the viewer’s activity and how the formal qualities of the film interact with her/him is the central concern. To account for the viewer’s activity, Constructivism and Cognitivism replace Psychoanalysis. ... Cognitivism sees the viewer as an active constructor of the film’s form and meaning, applying rational procedures.”⁹ In respect to film music analysis, this approach points toward the individuation and discussion of music–image relations that create audiovisual wholes with a recognizable meaning that orientate the reaction of the audience by playing with their expectations. Such expectations, in Audissino’s words (which refer to music but are easily applicable to any artistic experience), “are formulated from our previous knowledge and experience of the ... conventions of a given style and period, and also on innate structures of our sensory and cognitive systems.”¹⁰ The innate structures that respond to the audiovisual wholes are explained by Audissino in terms of Gestalt qualities. Gestalt means,

⁵Ibid., 53.

⁶See Bellano, “Silent Strategies: Audiovisual Functions of the Music for Silent Cinema,” *Kieler Beiträge zur Filmmusikforschung*, 9, 2013, <http://www.filmmusik.uni-kiel.de/KB9/KB9-Bellano.pdf> (accessed October 22, 2020).

⁷David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 10th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012).

⁸Ibid., 58.

⁹Audissino, *Film/Music*, 72.

¹⁰Ibid., 96.

approximately, “configuration”: the word defines a school of thought in psychology, established in early twentieth century by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka. A Gestalt is a perceptual configuration that is dynamically understood as a meaningful whole by our cognitive system. In music, a melody is a Gestalt, as it remains recognizable even when it starts from a different note (being transposed to a different tonality); from a visual point of view, the perceived separation between a bright figure and its background in a two-dimensional art piece is another result of a Gestalt activity. In film music, a good example of a Gestalt is that of audiovisual synchronization:¹¹ a sound and a visual event get entangled in a cause–effect relationship they do not necessarily have, thanks to a temporal coincidence.

It could be argued that Bozzetto’s deciphering of the narrative potential in the musical program of *Allegro non troppo* was an unaware search for Gestalt audiovisual qualities. In pieces that had not been conceived for animation, he looked for musical features that could play with the expectations of the audience and take new meanings when arranged together with synchronic movements, narrative moods, and features of the film language like the camerawork, the editing, and the lighting. The film/music neoformalist approach by Audissino seems thus an appropriate way to analyze the final audiovisual result while being respectful of the creative process of the author, so heavily informed by a cognitive labor from the point of view of a listener, which is to say the audience of a music composition.

The audiovisual commentaries of the next chapters will be based on the film/music approach. As such, they will use a terminology introduced by Audissino, which explains the effects of the audiovisual configurations on the cognitive expectations of the audience in terms of *motivations* and *functions*.

The motivations are four:¹² *realistic*, *compositional*, *transtextual*, and *artistic*.¹³ The *realistic* one appears when music is used to make a scene believable in respect to our knowledge of comparable situations in the real world; for example, the sound of loud pop music is expected in a scene set in a disco. The *compositional* motivation helps instead holding together the narrative structure of the film: the leitmotiv, or the recurring theme associated with an important character or situation, is a typical instance of this. The motivation is *transtextual* when it harks back to film genre conventions, like abrupt orchestral “stingers” in horror movies; it can also be played for laughs, when the genre reference is inconsistent with the tone of the film (as the Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* shower theme playing when the “terrible”

¹¹Ibid., 104.

¹²Audissino argues that a fifth motivation, an “economical” one, might come into play in the case of musical elements whose presence is dictated by marketing strategies only, like songs by best-selling performers and the like. Audissino, *Film/Music*, 127.

¹³Ibid., 125.

girl Darla makes her screen debut in *Finding Nemo*, Andrew Stanton, 2003). The *artistic* motivation, instead, relies solely on the sensibility of the author and seeks an innovative aesthetic effect.

As for the functions, they are subdivided into three sets, pertaining to the area of activity in film-viewing: *perception*, *emotion*, and *cognition*. The *emotive* function is aimed at creating sustained moods in the film scenes, and in general at creating the distinct tone of a whole picture. As such, it can be subdivided into a *macro-emotive* and *micro-emotive* function: the former refers to the whole emotional scaffolding of the film, while the latter operates within a single scene. The *perceptive* function is instead mostly evidenced by temporal patterns. It becomes a *spatial perceptive function* when it pinpoints, by analogy, some meaningful visual pattern—like a trajectory—by means of similar qualities: for example, a descending scale could connect with a character falling down. A *temporal perceptive function* has instead more to do with rhythm: for example, a recognizable musical feature (a downbeat, an accent, or a distinguishable melodic pattern) could happen in synchrony with a visual event (the steps of a character or a dramatic cut in the editing) to merge with it and become its apparent consequence.

Finally, *cognitive* functions facilitate the understanding of the film meaning. There are two subcategories: first of all, the *denotative cognitive function* points to relationships between narrative elements, clarifying or stressing their connections. It is the kind of function that foreshadows developments, or that communicates something that happens off-screen; however, there are many possible instances of it, based on the general purpose of creating structural narrative links in the film. For example, a denotative cognitive function is at work in the scene from *C'era una volta il West* (*Once Upon a Time in the West*, Sergio Leone, 1968) when the reason behind Harmonica's resolution to kill Frank is revealed: in the past, Frank had stuffed a harmonica in the boy's mouth while he was tied and supporting on his shoulders his older brother, who had a noose around his neck, strung from an arch. This cruel game ended with the death of Harmonica's brother; right before that, with the instrument stuck in his mouth, the boy involuntarily panted three obsessive notes through it, over and over. Those three notes are the main motif in the theme Ennio Morricone assigned to Harmonica through the whole film; by showing the reason of their obsessiveness, the scene gives consistency in hindsight to the leitmotiv choice and to the otherwise gratuitous association between the character and that specific musical instrument.

A *connotative cognitive function* appears instead when there is no self-evident connection between the music and the scene, and the cause of their simultaneous occurrence needs a work of interpretation. This particular function does not appear in *Allegro non troppo*, because of the premises of Bozzetto's interpretative activity. His goal was to align a musical material that was not made for cinema with animations that, in turn, were made to

feel convincingly connected with it: they were supposed to illustrate the music, and not to clash with it, in order to achieve the utopia of the “see the music and hear the picture” motto, which implies a total cohesion between music and images, pointing toward a synesthetic experience.

The episode commentaries of the next chapters will be not only about audiovisual analyses, though. There will also be historical information about the compositions, as well as observations on the artistic and directorial choices. The purpose of each commentary might thus not seem distant from that of “program notes” to a concert; while this is surely an intended parallel, given the nature of *Allegro non troppo*, the “program notes” commentaries will also build upon the information of Part One, in order to confirm and expand the previous discussion.