He is sucking and chewing on my neck, pulling my body into his, and over the curve of his shoulder, sunlight is burning through a window emptied of glass. The frame still contains a rusted screen that reduces shapes and colors into tiny dots like a film directed by Seurat... In loving him, I saw a cigarette between the fingers of a hand, smoke blowing backwards into the room, and sputtering planes diving low through the clouds. In loving him, I saw men encouraging each other to lay down their arms. In loving him, I saw moving films of stone buildings; I saw a hand in prison dragging snow in from the sill. In loving him, I saw great houses being erected that would soon slide into the waiting and stirring seas. I saw him freeing me from the silences of the interior life.

David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*¹

I saw St. Paul’s spinning around me; I was again inside it and saw it now weirdly transformed into a pandemonium; the scene was that of Martin’s famous painting. Instead of the Archbishop in his pulpit, I saw Satan on his throne; instead of the thousands of worshippers and children grouped around him, hosts of demons and damned souls darted their fiery glances from the bosoms of a visible darkness, and the iron amphitheatre in which these millions sat vibrated as one mass in a terrible fashion, emitting hideous harmonies.

Hector Berlioz, *Evenings with the Orchestra*²

I. INTRODUCTION

The first quote above, from Wojnarowicz’s “memoir” of the disintegration of the corporal relations between his own body and the world around him,³ may seem a strange place from which to enter an exploration of synchronization and musicality in cinema. But in his evocation of romance in an abandoned structure, in its frank and careless lining out of image, body, and an end to silence, I find a point of entry into the discordant relations between music and film. In Wojnarowicz’s prose, two bodies render sound in the burning light of the frame with the figure of synchronization all about: two bodies synchronize in physical love; sound synchronizes with light; desire synchronizes with recognition and knowing.

I also place for myself a reminder that to obscure the noise of those operations by which sound track and visual track hold each other together is to forego the end of a silence interior to that bodily self from which Wojnarowicz speaks; to not find a pandemonium there regained is to waste the body at precisely that place where corporality might otherwise become heard. Wojnarowicz’s words speak the sound of passionate self-knowing, a knowing wrought at great cost from a world become cinematic. Nearly silenced but ultimately becoming a polyphonic presence that shouts down the fatal epistemic assault upon him, Wojnarowicz remade the noisy cinematic images that would impose a listening silence into a dissonant, dissenting poetics that could tell of his experience.

I’m concerned with musicality in film, then, but equally with silence and image in their relation to corporality and action. I propose to chart a course, by necessity a preliminary one, through the dissonance of visual track and sound track. I’ll do so by finding the effects of musicality in the expression, or

< John Martin’s *Satan Presiding at the Infernal Council*
affirmation, of the body represented and the body receiving, in the orders of looking and the orders of hearing, and the mutually engendering narrative, allusion, and mimesis of music and film. I expect to find, at any point along the way, that the anchors which bind the sound track to the visual track, the body to place, and interpretation to representation to desire, can be ordered as actions of synchronization.

In the ordering of word to page, note to time, object in space to frame, synchronization sets things happening in the world: synchronization within a medium prepares material for the press of time. Across materials, synchronization works as a plural figure, a repetitious operation and a set of expressive strategies. Events indexed to another ensure ongoing parallelism, a tool for establishing perspective on subjects found at the point where agency lies in the illusions of object as effect and subject as cause. Or, without strict indexing, materials reflect in time across media: color, tone, rhythm, and counterpoint in sound, visual, text, body. These qualities too are ordinated, then coordinated, in sync.

Synchronization as an ordering of contemporaneous materials, then, evinces in a heterogeneous distillation the temporal after-effects of the body’s experience. Finally, synchronization is not simply an indexing of events, it is also a proactive and retroactive accounting, by an audience, of possible temporalization. Synchronization orders and enables extreme polyphony: a sensible pandemonium of the body’s experience of sense. It enables the “sound film,” and the human computer interface.

In order to take one account of synchronization, I will consider sound in the cinema. If in thinking spatially we can understand that synchronization is a moment in time, in thinking aurally we might understand that synchronization can describe a dissonance linking two parallel but incompatible signifying temporalities. How sound and visual have become incompatible is a mystery lost in the origin of staging, of storytelling, of listening. Sync by an always moving body of aural and visual material is an effective talisman against the ineffability of the trace. I will concentrate here on the effects of musical-visual linkage in the sync film.

II. SUPPLEMENT OR SYNC?

I saw him freeing me from the silences of the interior life.

To account for the hearing of music seems part of our problem. That is, the need to account for hearing is a tendency which must be questioned. Why do we believe music in the film must be explained, accounted for? There is a fundamental bias, it seems, toward assuming that visuals and even language narrate well, but need sound and music as cover, as accent and emphasis, as connecting material, as spectacular rupture of narrative progression, as technological improvement, as vocalization, as the extra surprise inside the box, as justification as art. Cinema is visual but sound is an added technology. Add sound to fix the film, and music, especially, will help where the prescription of sound is imprecise. Music cannot narrate well, but voices will take up the slack.

That is, film is film, and sound and music are an accompanying soundtrack. The notion of soundtrack as supplementary material works to deny, among other things, the possibility of musicality in the image. It also works to deny the history of the synchronization film in realms where we might find not exactly precursors of projected visual movement or the capture of visual perspective but rather preparations and rehearsals for cinematic musicality, before or beyond the nickelodeon, the dramatic theatre, the arcade, the phenakistoscope, the magic lantern: for example, in the concert hall, the phonograph, and the radio. Stilling the external movements of the body often occurs simultaneously with listening, so listening becomes at times an exceedingly natural movement in stillness. There is no need to presume that we sit in silence exclusively in readiness to experience visuality. Rather, we might ask how the spaces around us have become prepared to configure our bodies in this stillness.

And yet the formulation of the soundtrack as supplement has become a critical presumption in the
works of theorists as diverse as Kaja Silverman, Royal S. Brown, or Lawrence Kramer. This presumption happens because of a positioning of technology at the site of production and in the network of delivery such that the bodies at the various points of reception (in all of the stages of creation and delivery) are obscured. It would be easy, then, to suggest that synchronization is a technic of ordering in the logic of the supplement in a cinematic écriture. Again, I am reminded of Wojnarowicz: in the cinematic after-image, silence is ended by love of images of sound and voice. Close to the Knives is a “memoir of disintegration,” and what is disintegrating is the body. All of these formulations leave out what becomes simply a crucial effect of the supplementary logic: the body. All of these formulations assume music can’t narrate as well as language or visual imagery. Isn’t it possible that music might narrate as well, but do so differently? More importantly, perhaps listening has different implications for the bodies present as well as represented than seeing. Synchronization is not a mechanism in an apparatus reproducing fetishized representations or organizing traces in a system of écriture, but is rather a corporal ordering of technologies of movement for the body’s reconstruction of worlds it can move within. Synchronization is a primary and multiple articulation produced by bodies whose newness goes unnoticed and unnamed, for the time being. Instead of arguing for a history of écriture beyond cinema in order to explain movies, I will outline a possible prehistory of cinema in a musical imagining of synchronization in the places where bodies meet, hear and see.

III. A prehistory in Pandemonium

I saw moving films of stone buildings . . . I saw great houses being erected that would soon slide into the waiting and stirring seas.

I saw St. Paul’s spinning around me; I was again inside it and saw it now weirdly transformed into a pandemonium; the scene was that of Martin’s famous painting.

A possible musical prehistory of the cinema might take up with the Romantics, for example, Berlioz. Why start with Berlioz, instead of Wagner? Isn’t it after all Wagner who builds the opera house at Bayreuth with sunken orchestra pit, separated by a shell resulting in a listening that finds the music “distant,” even remote from the stage action? Wouldn’t that be a precursor of the soundtrack? Alternatively, why not start even earlier than Berlioz? Instead of performing an inconclusive attempt at a complete cultural history of posture and stillness, listening and viewing, and public space, I point to Berlioz not because of his dreamy romantic musical programs, but because of his revealing nightmare imagining Satanic pandemonium replacing heavenly harmonies in St. Paul’s Cathedral.

The event that led to Berlioz’s grand delusion was a charity concert given by a choir of 6,500 children. But it is more the specter of dissonance than the spectacle of harmony that overpowers Berlioz: a paradise of song becomes a paradise lost. He sees a musical nightmare which places in the grandeur of St. Paul’s Cathedral John Martin’s panoramic spectacle of Satan atop his thrown in Pandemonium, the capital of Hell in John Milton’s epic. Is it strange that harmony should become noise in the nightmare of a Romantic composer who “repeatedly shows a response to visual stimuli and a sense of the kinship between music and visual image or place”?[10] Beyond his appreciation of music and visuality, Berlioz’s nightmare comprehended the spiritualization of the musical space, and the ambivalence there entailed for an audience already present and social in the music hall, yet ready to be industrially transformed into masses of listeners with lustful appetites.

Martin’s panoramas were associated with Berlioz’s music by others as well. One critic wrote in 1844 of Berlioz’s Fantastic Symphony:

His magical moments bring before us Babylon, the hanging gardens of Semiramis, the marvels of Nineveh, the bold architecture of Mizranim such as we see in the pictures of the Englishman Martin. Indeed if one looks
for an analogy in painting there is in fact a precise resemblance, an elective affinity between Berlioz and the eccentric Englishman; the same bold conception of all that is stupendous and excessive and the same conceptions of infinity. In the one, striking effects of light and shade, in the other, a fiery sense of orchestration.11

By “bringing before us” marvelous experience, music narrates in a mode similar to panoramic painting here; neither narrates a story in the common sense, but rather performs Romantic reportage of the spectacle of lost worlds. Each medium, symphony and panorama, grants a position in those lost worlds to the viewer or listener. Depending on who you want to believe and the constraints you are willing to accept, music can or cannot represent, can or cannot bring forth imagery, can or cannot narrate, can or cannot allude. For this critic, Berlioz and Martin were narrating the same wonders. Interestingly, orchestration and lighting effects perform analogously as far as the critic is concerned. One can conceive not only that the painting and the symphony speak of similar things, but that each may make use of certain techniques belonging to its one medium in ways that are consistent enough in each to be comparable across mediums.

But what of Berlioz’s nightmare vision of St. Paul’s? Berlioz saw children, but dreamed demons. He heard harmony, but dreamed pandemonium. What is going on at the scene of the musical performance? Perhaps the heaven’s choirs of angels were replaced by the listening hordes of social hell preventing the audition of Berlioz’s musical body, or by infernally incompetent musicians inviting the wagging tongues of nagging critics that might keep him from ascending to the heights, and rewards, of celebrity.

Michael Forsyth’s history of buildings in Buildings for Music is useful in understanding the social nature of early concert halls, for it includes, in addition to his discussion of the development of the concert hall from ordinary salons (and not-so-ordinary royal salons), seating plans and photographs showing the listeners and their view of their surroundings. The claim that I will not argue here but simply put forth is that seating arrangements for listening are generated under far more relaxed constraints than those for viewing. This claim should not be controversial. In your home you may listen to your radio or television from another room; you sit in front of your television to “see what’s on.” What this difference in configuration ranges for listening and viewing implies, however, is that in the days before the concert hall was integrated with the dramatic theatre in the form of the opera hall, in order to combine audio reception with visual perspective for sitting bodies, concert halls provided seating arrangements so that listeners could watch each other or view their surroundings. And close at hand were people overhearing, people bumping and scratching, people gossiping, ridiculing, laughing, chattering.

Musical movement was composed for certain spaces in many privileged moments, in order to match a given composition and orchestration to specific architectural characteristics. Listeners were surrounded by views of other listeners, as indicators of the effects of the music being played, the fashions of the times, and the interpersonal dramas being played out. They were also surrounded by monumental interiors, or walls painted with panoramas or clouds. The fine hall might be a media environment for flying to music, then, in the imaginary movement of program music. Or the hall might be a media environment for sensing the bodies of others. Dancing in a grand salon would then combine both. As Forsyth suggests, borrowing from Richard Benz, the music of the Classical and Romantic ages quite possibly came to contain “the means for the construction of spiritual spaces, in which present-day mankind finds the security that it once found in the earlier arts of room-building.”12 Causing listeners to move and to sense, music can replace architecture as the representor par excellence of spiritual space, as Berlioz substitutes Pandemonium for St. Paul’s Cathedral. The bodies present in St. Paul’s heavenly expanses begin to appear monstrous, as innovation in musical program can begin to produce Pandemonium. The listening becomes confused: it is a hearing of the drama of music, and a hearing of the drama of the world beyond music.

The Hanover Square Rooms are an interesting example of an early musical environment. A small hall in the Classical period (1750-1820), it contained walls with thin wood which ensured extreme acoustic intimacy.13 The concert hall was 79 by 32 feet, approximately the size of a live-work loft in Manhattan or
our common cineplex theatre.\textsuperscript{14} However, on at least one occasion (a benefit concert for Haydn), 1,500 people were supposed to have entered the room. The Hanover Square Rooms were privately built and maintained, as was the custom for all music halls not located in royal surroundings. The orchestra played at one end of the hall. Down one long side of the hall, several rows of listeners were oriented towards the opposite long side, where in their view across the aisle sat listeners who were oriented towards the orchestra in rows facing forward towards the front of the hall. Imagine a cineplex where you are watching seated sideways towards one of the side walls, where you see others seated facing the screen, and you can imagine the kinds of transformation that have had to happen in order to synchronize the time of music with the time of drama in an operatic or cinematic form in the body of the listener.

Other halls were no exception. Music-going for the most part was still an elite activity, and while it no longer occurred only in royal courts, being seen in these halls and seeing others was a matter of social importance. Halls took on decoration in the form of painted walls depicting scenes or skies, until the grand opera halls brought in the excessive visual environment that was carried on into the cinema palaces built in the roaring twenties.\textsuperscript{15} It wasn’t until Wagner insisted that the lights were to be lowered during the musical spectacle that opera had become that the listeners were hidden from each other’s views. (Sensitive Italians had designed box seating, as at La Scala, in order to minimize being seen but to maximize seeing. The French were less modest.) Torch-lit or gas-lit halls illuminated background panoramas and the public spectacle which enhanced the musical experience itself. Fire was a constant danger, and architects learned to build in a supply of water to their designs. Forsyth notes that musical attractions in “pleasure gardens” allowed still a wider dissemination of the musical experience to the less privileged classes. These were combined with other attractions too, like watery garden spas and, on occasion, fireworks.\textsuperscript{16}

IV. CONSONANCE AND ROMANTIC MANIPULATION

sunlight is burning . . . I saw a cigarette between the fingers of a hand

hosts of demons and damned souls darted their fiery glances from the bosoms of a visible darkness, and the iron amphitheatre in which these millions sat vibrated as one mass in a terrible fashion, emitting hideous harmonies.

The visual spectacle of listening publics gathering in the Hanover Square Rooms of the Classical Age leads us, now at the end of our possible prehistory, to the passed torch of the Romantic spectacle. Fast forward, still in Romantic mode, but now into known film history, and we find the \textit{Hangover Square Concerto} of Bernard Herrmann. Herrmann wrote this concerto for Fox’s film adaptation of the novel \textit{Hangover Square} by director John Brahm in 1945. This film specifically calls up the two transformations that allow the optimum configuration of an audience for the combined reception of the audio and visual

\section*{Spectator}
work. One development was the conforming of the seating to an arc within which perspective on the stage (later, screen) can be established. In the final moments of the film, as we finally hear the concerto performed in its entirety, the orchestra is seated in a half-circle behind and around the pianist and conductor, while the audience is seated in another half-circle in front. There is no warranted guarantee of a centrally framed visual perspective on the performance taking place; the optimization of the musical space for a synchronization with dramatic space has not yet occurred in the music room pictured in the film (camera positioning remedies the spatial discrepancy for viewers of the film). The second development is the isolation of the performance, musical or dramatic, as a visual spectacle. The lights are lit, in fact they are blazing, in a synchronized coloring wherein the blazing concerto occurs among brightly flaming candles and gas lamps. The spectators can still see each other; the listeners are not eliminated from the performance. Thus, a listening situation from the Classical Age is reconstituted for the filmic performance of a Romantic concerto, which recalls the instrumental fervor of a Liszt or a Paganini. The concert hall is rendered as a site where spirits can take over, a location that centers around the demonic passion of a mad musician.

Royal S. Brown rightly points out that in film, diegetic music can become non-diegetic music, and that directors often play on the notion of the “invisible” music of the soundtrack by introducing a cue which seems to indicate the mood of a character, but then having the character, for example in Woody Allen’s Bananas (1971), open a closet door to find the harp which is playing the cue. Finding the non-diegetic music that expresses feeling or mood hidden in the closet is funny: not because it suggests that since the music is not motivated by the scene, it shouldn’t be heard, but because it suggests that we have placed musicality in the closet, with all that that implies. Perhaps this joke is not so funny anymore.

Brown also points out that in Hangover Square, the concerto in the final scene works within and outside of the diegesis to function both as source music and emotional cue. What he doesn’t mention is that the film’s story is so musicalized through synchronization as to be controlled by the music itself. Hangover Square is an example of a film that recapitulates the position of listener as viewer, and is entirely built around the passing from visually developed, romantic love story, to musically excessive, thrill-kill shocker. The passage from love to murder is through sync: usually, a strange chord heard on some falling violins, or in the clang of a number of pipes falling in a construction site, is heard by the hero pianist (and seen by us from his point of view), and he falls into a fit of schizophrenic amnesia and proceeds to murder. The first murder takes place in the opening moments of the film: we hear crashing chords, look through a window, and see George Bone, the pianist, in the shop/home of another man. We never learn who this second man is or why George is there that early morning. As he screams for George to stop, George sets him on fire. George then groggily wanders home to find his loving fiancée waiting anxiously.

The film specifically sets all of these dynamics up to intertwine sexuality, sync, and music, and it sets them up on purpose. In Patrick Hamilton’s novel of 1941, George Bone is an alcoholic nobody who
falls in and out of amnesiac moods that resemble silent film, not sync film. And it is a noise, the “click” of a camera, not a musical chord, that brings him in and out of these moods. There is a hint of homosociality in his finding again a beloved old friend from school, but there is no implication of George’s finding strange men by night. George exists on handouts from his aunt, cannot hold a job, and worships a no-good actress. He certainly cannot play an instrument. The murders that occur at the end of the story, not the beginning and middle, as in the film. Neither George nor the story is musical. Further, the novel’s Netta is a Nazi-sympathizing actress, who is attracted to Hitler because she finds uniforms sexually appealing and the criminal mentality a turn-on. Her lover is a British Nazi who bashes leftists and runs over pedestrians in his automobile. Netta sleeps casually with athletic but dim-witted roughnecks who welcome Chamberlain’s indulgence of Hitler’s continental aggressions. After Germany invades Poland, George finally has to kill Netta... not because she admires Hitler, but because she spurned George. This pulp fiction is an allegory of middle-headed England fighting the right enemy but too late and for the wrong reasons.

Brahm’s film, in stark contrast, sets up George as a passionate pianist with a hidden sexuality that is activated when certain, dissonant chords straight out of his concerto occur in the world around him. The Netta of the film is a siren, a singer of pop songs who is using him to compose hit songs for her. In the audiovisual medium, George becomes a psychosexual pianist-murderer who kills first an unknown male partner, then kills the woman who has been tearing him away from classical music and making him write pop songs. The film has become a strange, spectacular meditation on sexual and musical frustration that sacrifices first an unknown man, then a singer to a musician’s passionate flames. Finally, George sacrifices himself.

Synchronization is important not only to expose harmonium as pandemonium in the film, but also as a way of providing musical emphasis of visual effects which are motivated by the action, but are clearly spectacular. Just as the story is directed away from what may be a crime of homosexual passion towards a crime of heterosexual passion by musical sound effects derived from the dissonant chords of the concerto, musical cues are synchronized to images of burning flame throughout the film leading to the final reconstitution of the concerto resolving its tensions in traditional harmonies. Midway, at the Guy Fawkes Day bonfire where George disposes of Netta’s body, revelers swing burning clubs that ignite the wood as musical effects emphasize each contact between torch and bonfire. The effect is that of an audiovisual drum being beaten in an overheated rite of musical sacrifice.

George’s performance of the concerto at the climax of the film leads only to soaring conflagration. George is never punished, he never understands why he did what he did, he just burns up, as any romantic, criminally insane pianist should. As he collapses from strain during the performance, the concerto hits a high dissonant chord that is timed exactly at the right moment to become an extradietic cue making George strangely wounded and pathetic at the same time as it continues as source music. The cult figure of the concerto soloist is offered as the star of the film.19

The music makes its point in this film by breaking into dissonance when modes shift or when emphasis is needed. Still, this is dissonance within traditional tonality, not the dissonance of a modern composer such as Ives or Schoenberg. And the synchronization here is still of “real” visual element (pipes, fire) with musical cue. The fire, the metallic pipes, the clattering violins, the fluttering piccolos that scream as Netta’s body burns at the top of the bonfire... all of these carefully indexed moments of synchronized cue and frame have the music, even while managing to direct the flow of the story, punctuating what is primarily a visual narrative that ends in a resolution of tension as the murderer’s body burns before the eyes of the safely removed audience. Such is the logic of the musical supplement. Musical passion can run the show, but finally must be extinguished in fire. Even having become explicitly necessary, the soundtrack is still preoccupied with functioning as source music and accentuating the visual. As far as the supplementary soundtrack is concerned, as the psychologist from Scotland Yard tells George’s fiancée while George goes down in flames with his piano, “It’s better this way.”

Bernard Herrmann thought so. A musical score for a film had to be as transparent as camera
movement, otherwise it was likely to be intrusive and lose its effects. So even when the body of his musical score is constructed before the film is photographed, even when it is used to set the tone, pacing, and mood of the montage, and is used as the rationale for the demise of the hero, the music only contributes to a story that is primarily communicated in visual and vocal terms. That’s Hangover Square, and that’s melodrama, says Herrmann. This kind of synchronization I’ll call “consonant sync.”

Consonant synchronization works when music is considered subservient to a story told visually and designed for the manipulation of the body of those who experience the film. Sound and visual work together in all sync films, but where music serves to accentuate visual effects, there is “agreement” of the music with the visual and the difference between the two is minimized. Music may break out as narrative driver or spectacle, but the visuals are never overpowered by it. Indeed, the agreement of the music with the visuals is only enhanced as the music makes itself known as a simultaneous stream that co-occurs.

Consonant synchronization sets up the spectator’s body to be manipulated, as the film relies highly upon musical narrative, mimesis, and allusion to transparently set up, comment upon, and move the body into emotional positions that the visual narrative will clarify, continue, and explain. Here, synchronization functions as a lever between sound and visual that can be seen in moments of illustrative indexing that bind the film in packages of icono-mimetic stress moments constructed in two or more media. Agreement of the sound track with the aims of the visual track in order to manipulate the viewer is accomplished through this “consonant sync” operating in the logic of supplement.

The musical flames in Hangover Square, precursors to Herrmann’s violin shrieks in Psycho (1960), and other instances of consonant synchronization keep musical devils constrained: in sync, if you will. The appearance of the Other is sidetracked along with the soundtrack. Subjectivity is shattered in Hangover Square, but only to rise intact from musical shards in the form of the reconstructed concerto that turns the pianist to ashes at the climax. Films which rely on manipulating their audiences through consonant sync aren’t necessarily bad or wrong, although they may reproduce the violent effects, symbolic and otherwise, of dominant discourses. As a general form, these films are a particular kind of entertainment where musical material is almost never autonomous. Consonant synchronization is enabled by the body of the spectator being configured both for the order of musicality, as well as that of visuality. And that is to say that there are other forms of synchronization possible informed by different notions of parallelism between musicality and visuality.

V. DISSONANCE IN CONFINEMENT AND MEDIATION

I saw men encouraging each other to lay down their arms. In loving him, I saw moving films of stone buildings; I saw a hand in prison dragging snow in from the sill.

I was again inside it and saw it now weirdly transformed into a pandemonium.

If the Romantic tradition is often identified as a primary model for the classical Hollywood film score, it is not the only tradition of musical composition and performance that has helped define the cinematic work, even in the “classical” age. The notion of the soundtrack as supplement has been assumed, intentionally or not, by many creators and critics, but it has been contested as well. Contestation has come in several forms: for example, the synaesthetics of the visual music animators and of Eisenstein’s theories of musical montage, but also from the practitioners of pantonal dissonance. The Romantic tradition was transformed into a new system of pantonality in the hands of serial theorist and composer, Arnold Schoenberg. Tools for musical avant-gardists in a time when industrial and computational methods challenged Romantic style and sentiment, Schoenberg’s methods aimed at a transformation of the aims of musical expression from the nineteenth-century “melody” to a musical idea expressing the totality of a musical work. Political upheaval brought Hanns Eisler to composition: returning from the defeated German army after World War I, Eisler became a student of Schoenberg’s during the master’s years in
Vienna. Eisler mastered the serial method and then himself went on to challenge Schoenberg’s methods as being overly formal. Eisler began to compose pantonal music that would draw from all kinds of popular music, from marches to folk songs.

Eisler began composing for films early on; he wrote the musical accompaniment to Walter Ruttman’s Opus III (1927) before the sync film had been standardized in Germany. The book which Eisler wrote with Theodor Adorno in 1947, Composing for the Films, has recently been reprinted and is still cited as a reference on the nature of and motivations for film music. Eisler militated against film music being the supplement of the visual track. Brown cites Eisler’s score for Nuit et brouillard (Night and Fog) (1955) as a “perfect example of a nonnarrativizing, nonmythifying film score”:

Eisler’s score does not even attempt to join with the visuals and the voice-over narration to create a closed off universe of consummated effect. Instead, the composer wrote a score of chamber-like proportions—a solo flute and clarinet back the post-title sequence, for instance—that moves parallel to the filmic and verbal texts. Occasionally dramatic, occasionally sad, once or twice ironic . . . , Eisler’s often rather pastoral music communicates on a musical level what Nuit et brouillard often communicates in its visuals . . . the brutal irony of the indifferent ordinariness that can mask unspeakable horrors.²⁶

But isn’t irony a “consummated effect”? Brown is trying to put his finger on what makes the style of synchronization distinct in Night and Fog, but greatly oversimplifies. This score is de-mythifying, not nonmythifying, and sync here happens between music, visual, and voice-over to produce plural effects from irony to sweetness to confusion to terror. The score is subtly synchronized for a type of effect that Eisler already had perfected in earlier scores; he’s invoking in this film what I will call “dissonant sync.” Unlike consonant sync, dissonant sync combines musicality and visuality for effects such as the mediation²⁷ both camp survivors and their families and friends experienced in viewing Night and Fog, as images of the literal pandemonium of the death camps are posed against an auditory reflection on their impossible meanings.

To clarify, let’s take a look in some detail at an earlier and lesser known film scored by Eisler, A Child Went Forth (1941), directed by Joseph Losey.²⁸ The material that Eisler produced for this film was composed using Schoenberg’s serial method, and yet, Eisler attempted to score the material so that the method of pantonal music was not perceived as an exclusive aesthetic ideology opposing previous compositional methods. Rather, Eisler showed the strength of the method: that Schoenberg’s pantonality can be applied so that it is inclusive of material using previous forms of tonality, and need not deny previous systems. Eisler applied the method to avoid the Romantic cliches the composer associated with the Hollywood score.

Eisler plundered surprising musical territory for the material he wrote. This film treats, like Night and Fog, the confinement of moving bodies in restricted spaces, but under very different circumstances: its subject is a day at a summer camp for children. Eisler composed complex yet engaging music depicting children’s moods, emotions, and activities working from nursery songs for A Child Went Forth.²⁹ The variety of moments in the film synchronized for effect work in ways not so different from the kinds of

Death camp pandemonium in Night and Fog
moments actively heightening dramatic effect in, say, *Hangover Square* or *Psycho*. Yet Eisler also achieves a mediating effect, and the result is to encourage us to think about the way we expect children to behave. Losey’s intimate yet hands-off direction and Eisler’s score together make this “educational” film operate somewhere between consonant and dissonant sync.30

The film opens with a violin narrating a theme suggesting hunting or hide-and-go-seek, with flutes answering. On screen, we see children arriving at a summer camp. A narrator cites Walt Whitman and then sets up the message of the film: “‘There was a child went forth everyday, and the first object looked upon, that object he became.’ . . . How children play, how they stretch those muscles and minds of theirs is of crucial importance.” Violins play a tentatively rising, questioning theme with this introduction, and then drop with a musical “splash” as children jump in a pool of water. By starting with a theme suggesting hunting or hiding, the music asks us to consider what the message of the film might be. Search like a child, we hear the music say, and you will find it for yourself. The treasure found? A synchronized splash in visuals and music.

In just these first few moments, modes of dissonant and consonant sync follow in succession asking a question, and then splashing out the answer. Themes of autonomy, independence, self-confidence, and respect for nature follow. The music accompanies the action in a pleasing yet contradictory sort of way as we see the children play, fight, build, and swim. The narrator suggests that children in wartime be treated as adults, with similar problems and feelings. As we see one child hit a friend, and the friend immediately hit back, we reflect, led on by the dry, witty, attentive music, that while the narration asks us to consider the children as humans, another message seems to be that adults often act as children. The first of those messages is found in the voice-over narration; but the second is found in the synchronization of the music and the visuals.

The musical problem was to save the picture from the usual saccharine sentimental and humorous romanticism of magazine stories about children. The effect of the music could be neither stirring nor funny. Its range of feeling had to include elements that usually are not associated with children: genuine seriousness, such as children often show in their play; sadness, nervousness, even hysteria; but all this conceived loosely, thinly as though inconsequentially. Above all, the music should not tap the children on the shoulder, as it were, and make them the object of adults’ jokes or ingratiate itself by adopting a spurious baby talk.

The form of the suite seemed most natural—in other words, not an elaborate form of leitmotifs, but a sequence of small, distinct, clearly differentiated pieces, each complete in itself with an unmistakable beginning and ending.31

We follow the ensemble of children through a day of summer activities. But rather than composing around leitmotifs to signal character, character reaction, and environmental moods, Eislers moves rather from one distinct section of a suite to the next, as the children romp through their day. There is never a finale, a musical wrap-up that sums up themes that have earlier been musically introduced; musical comments are more discretely subjective in any one instant and yet more aleatory overall. Synchronization here renders both subjective reactions and environmental events with equal weight, and the combined audiovisual effect communicates an impression of children who must learn in order to grow up, but who live in a world which expects them to do precisely that. Does ours? Can we? We watch their careful eyes and ears as we hear a woman tell them a story about another group of children playing with farm animals on a long hot summer day. The woman tells these children a story about other kids, but she is also telling their story, just as the film itself tells us both the story of the children we see and a story about ourselves. We understand, through the mediating effect of dissonant sync, that these are two different stories of two different groups of bodies, but that they are intimately related through the actions we take. Will we translate understanding into action?

The film ends with a quietly sinister march as the narrator suggests that perhaps the methods used
at this camp would be appropriate for children whose parents have been killed in war, or for children whose mothers have been called away to work in defense industries. But if the question is how should we care for children, it suggests, perhaps, the example this camp sets is a model for all times, in peace and at war. The music invites serious reflection without rushing the listener to a conclusion. Still, the long summer day, the cool water, the farm animals, the playful, curious music all seem brighter, more generous, than the ways we know: perhaps there is a better way to raise children. The film ends as a final citation of Whitman wraps up the narration.

The use of dissonant synchronization invites mediation or negotiation between an already plural sound track and an already plural visual track, and our experience of their combination. The effect of dissonant sync, like that of consonant sync, rests on the configuration of moving bodies confined in space in order to make interpretive actions on the representation of the body. Eisler’s musical agitation utilizes both types of synchronization in A Child Went Forth.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

For any time-based multimedia work, the central questions which we must ask about the way it achieves its effects become: how are the relationships between parallel media constructed and interpreted in time, and what does the body of the receiving person imply in terms of the movements that the work requires on the part of the user? If we consider the postures and configurations of the body of the receiver, this question is the same whether for an interactive work for a film, or for a concert or an installation using time-based materials. Clearly, there is no simple answer to these questions, but I believe a particularly interesting set of answers rests with the notion of synchronization. By synchronization I mean the sum total of the representational and corporeal effects of parallel media being interpreted and interacted with in time.

Two possibilities that are well established are what I am calling consonant synchronization and dissonant synchronization. While I have addressed the former primarily in terms of narrative cinema and the latter in terms of documentary, it would be a mistake to say that there is any necessary correlation. Two effects, however, can be associated with these modes of synchronization in terms of how they move the spectator. Consonant synchronization works to emphasize onomatopoeic effects that are useful in terms of delivering thrill, excitement, visceral response. In other words, this is how we manipulate. Dissonant synchronization works to invoke reflection or negotiation between the spectators, their experiences, and the persons and experiences depicted in the work. In other words, this is how we mediate. A sync film of any type, documentary or entertainment, probably contains some of both. And certainly, we will identify other modes as we deepen our studies of music, architecture, and recording and presentation technologies.

If the concert hall holds discoveries that will enlighten our understanding of how multimedia works perform their effects, we can expect the theatre of sound effects, the radio, the pleasure gardens, and other historical activities that we usually overlook will also contribute. All of these forms will contribute to our understanding of interactive experiences as inherently musical as much as they might be visual. In fact, we will come to understand the way that music can not only narrate, but incite, allude, represent, and mime, as well. The soundtrack cannot be adequately framed for multimedia work as merely a necessary supplement. Musicality, with visuality, is part of the way our bodies interpret, create, and move through the worlds we live in. Recognizing the work of synchronization in configuring these worlds may be a pandemonium regained.

3 Wojnarowicz writes of his upbringing as a gay man in an America which demonizes homosexuals as it abuses their bodies through homophobic assaults, both sexual and otherwise.

4 For example, Kaja Silverman finds the fetishized projection of woman supported by the synchronized movement of lips "producing" words which do not belong to the body no more than the body seen accurately represents woman. Both are products of subject formation in a Lacanian scheme of castration and lack. Silverman concentrates on "voice" however, and reduces the sound in the sound film to voice. I will make the opposite mistake for the time being: I will generalize voice into the sound track as a whole as a musicality. This does not write gender out of the equation, but rather, broadens the implications to better include orientation and identity in desire. Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror* (Bloomington: Indiana Univeristy Press, 1986).

5 Bernard Herrmann's cranky explanation: "But in the melodram the Greeks encountered a problem that has remained with us from that day to this: whenever people get on the stage and start to talk, and some instrument in the pit begins to play, you can't hear what the people are saying. This has been one of the great recurring problems in theatre, and we shall see how it was solved." In the chapter, "Bernard Herrmann, Composer," in Evan William Cameron's *Sound and the Cinema: The Coming of Sound to American Film* (Pleasantville, NY: Redgrave, 1980) 119.

6 By "sync film" I mean what we ordinarily refer to as the sound film. I offer the term "sync film" to emphasize that it is the warranting of synchronization, and not sound, that is offered by this technology.

7 In this regard, see Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

8 Silverman is a starting point in reading the critical positioning of sound as necessary extra. But she follows in a long and well-established tradition of the sound track as complement. See also music critic Royal S. Brown, who offers wonderful analyses of film music as music but also sees the sound track as a tendency rather than an originary element: "The degree to which there is a tendency to deny aesthetic status to the styles of the ‘everyday’ is the degree to which the cinema also needed something to deiconify its temporal and spatial images in order to justify its existence as an art form. Music is one, but not the only, way in which this was accomplished." Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 19. The clearest formulation of soundtrack, and therefore, music, as supplement is to be found in Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Kramer follows Derrida's purposefully ambiguous formulation of "supplement" as an addition taken on by a whole, where by doing so, "a whole puts its wholeness into question" (111). Writing is thus an addition to speech which produces a logic of the supplement. Kramer follows Derrida's reading of Plato's *pharmakon* but applies it to music, which at face does not seem inapt. In Derrida's formulation, writing is deceptive and blights the immediacy of speech, but it "cures" speech as well, and enables the philosophy which Plato writes. Kramer denies music any inherent "narrativity" but rather suggests the music is the supplement of narrative. "Emotionally suggestive and technically arcane, music adds itself to the closed circle . . . of an acknowledged story . . . The narrative circle breaks; the music becomes the primary term and the story its mere accompaniment. Why bother to follow all that stuff Wotan is saying to Erda when we can just listen to the doom-laden procession of the leitmotifs?" (112). Kramer's comments recall Martin Rubin's formulation of the "Berkeleysque spectacle" which ruptures narrative to provide a musical astonishment, while Kramer recapitulates Herrmann's seat-of-the-pants explanation of the confusing pandemonium of music and speech cited above.

9 By "possible prehistory" I mean the narrating of a history which may not be provable, or likely, or even possible. To posit a "possible prehistory" of any moment is to be cognizant of the limitations implicit in a knowledge of history where not all signs or systems remain to leave a trace, and to attempt an alternative that will be productive in the examination of a moment that is discursively overdetermined in every aspect. It is a detour around technological teleologies, and implies that imagination can more than make up for destruction. A "possible prehistory" is, quite simply, a useful fantasy, a thought experiment in critical theory.

10 Forsyth 131-132.

11 Lockspeiser 26.


13 Forsyth 17.

14 Total square footage equal to 2,525 square feet. Forsyth 39.

15 For a wonderful experience of the operatic architectural influence in a cinema, visit the Castro Theatre in San Francisco. The pit organist still rises up between the audience and the big screen before the show, working the Mighty Wurlitzer to introduce films which no longer need his exertions except as a historical reminder of earlier forms of synchronization.

16 Forsyth 48-49.

17 Brown 67.

We might find interesting examples of star discourse in the concert hall that inform those of the musical cinema if we examined the romantic virtuosos of piano and violin of the nineteenth century whose personalities and stage presences were noted to mesh with and exceed the drama of the works performed on stage, as Bernard Herrmann's music works from within and without the diogenesis to make the pianist the unstable star of Hangover Square.

Consider this quote from Herrmann speaking on the composer Rathaus's film music: "[Rathaus] treated for the first time the music of a film as an integral emotional part of the whole, not as a decoration. Because the film [The Brothers Karamazov] deals with one of the Karamazov's falling in love with a prominent harlot and visiting her in her establishment wherein a gypsy orchestra plays, the music of the picture begins with a gypsy orchestra simply playing Russian gypsy music. But as the picture progresses and the brother becomes more and more involved with the harlot, the music stops being ornamental and becomes an emotional mirror of him. It becomes more and more tragic and more and more hysterical. It reaches its greatest moment . . . when the brother hysterically drives a troika through a raging blizzard accompanied musically by a great batter of percussion instruments. Remember: this was done way back in the early 1930s!" Herrmann goes on railing: "I don't know why, today, a film has to cost 4 million dollars to push a record costing 70 cents, but it does! . . . Music for film should be no more noticed than the camerawork." Quoted in Cameron 119. Hangover Square seems a more fully integrated version on these contradictory themes.

See Brown for a discussion of "iconicity" and musical synchronization in film. I am referring to his usage here.

Katherine Kalinak, Settling the Score (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1992) 100.

I follow the use of the term "pantonal" to describe what are often referred to as "atonal" theories of musical composition first formulated by Arnold Schoenberg and later developed by Berg, Boulez, and many others.

Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey, eds., Constructive Dissonance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 149.

The most complete filmography on Eisler seems to be from his entry in Film Dope 14 (March 1978) 25-27. This reference does not include Ruttman's Opus III as part of Eisler's film work because it never was fabricated on a soundtrack. Since that reasoning merely reifies our technological biases (sound in the cinema started with sound-on-film, etc.), I include Opus III in Eisler's film oeuvre. In addition, the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner in 1947 reports that Eisler scored Mr. Pickwick's Christmas, which Film Dope does not mention. Finally, there is the film version of Galileo made in the 1970s by Losey which includes scraps of Eisler's original music for the stage version of the play composed in the late 1940s.

Brown 31.


In discussing this film, I will rely on terms that anyone with a general awareness of music listening might use, and on Eisler's published descriptions. The film is also known by the name of The Children's Camp, which is the title by which Eisler refers to it in his documentation of the Film Music Project which is described in Composing for the Films. The half-hour A Child Went Forth was the first work scored for the project, which was completed in 1942. Records show that the score for this film, the film itself, and the other materials produced as part of the Film Music Project should all be archived at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. MOMA does not know where the materials are. It is my feeling that if they still exist, they must be with the Hanns Eisler Estate in what is now unified Germany.


The film is a plea to treat children "as humans," as we see children playing in gender equality, with animals that they learn to be kind to, and buildings that they construct for themselves. While the politics involved clearly were left of center for the time, Losey sold this "educational" film, at a profit, as a guide for evacuating children in wartime situations, to the U.S. State Department. See Edith De Rham, Joseph Losey (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1991) 47.

Eisler and Adorno 141. Here Eisler is describing the music for The Children's Camp, which I believe, and which Film Dope confirms, was circulated under the name A Child Went Forth.

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