Functions of music in storytelling

1. establish locale
   - region or country

from “Brick lane”
Functions of music in storytelling

2. symbolic (Jennifer Van Sijll, Cinematic Storytelling)

- Shawshank Redemption
- **Mozart: The Marriage of Figaro** / "Duettino - Sull'aria"
- Andy befriends Red
- Will Red follow Andy away from institutionalization to hope
- Red's doubtful Andy can stay the course
- Mid point of the film
Symbolic use of Music
Shawshank Redemption
Symbolic use of Music

Shawshank Redemption

- rebellion
- strength
- beauty in midst of ugliness
- the grand gesture
- the impossible
- redemption
- hope
- change
- not this particular piece, but music itself
Functions of music in Storytelling

3. depict identity or personality
   - suggest gentle or violent person, or evil
Functions of music in storytelling

4. Lyrics as Narrator (Jennifer Van Sijll, Cinematic Storytelling)
   - voice of a character
   - reveal thoughts
   - voice of narrator
   - thematic information
   - presented poetically
Lyrics as Narrator
Apocalypse Now
this is The End by the Doors

• This is the end, beautiful friend
• This is the end, my only friend, the end
• Of our elaborate plans, the end
• Of everything that stands, the end
• No safety or surprise, the end
• I’ll never look into your eyes..........again
• Can you picture what will be
• So limitless and free
• Desperately in need....of some......stranger’s hand
• In a desperate land
• Lost in a romance, wilderness of pain
• And all the children are insane
• All the children are insane
• Waiting for the summer rain, yeah
this is The End by the Doors

- 60’s band, Vietnam Era
  - historical anchor
  - nihilistic lyrics
  - critical view of the war--the underbelly
  - inverted sense of right and wrong
  - this is the End---at the beginning
  - we see Martin Sheen upside down
  - Not “literally” about the war
  - cost prohibitive......................
Functions of Music

5. emphasize or intensify action
   - crescendo or repetition
   - rising tension
   - This is the End--instrumental
Functions of music

6. Provide counterpoint--classical music and bombs--from *Platoon*
Counterpoint

♦ Power of juxtaposition
♦ combine seemingly unrelated parts
  ♦ effect more powerful because of difference
♦ Music is:
  ♦ Adagio: Samuel Barber
  ♦ originally for string quartet
  ♦ reworked for string orchestra
Functions of music in storytelling

* 7. Unifying transition--overlap, lead in, segue

* 8. Evoke--atmosphere, feeling, mood
Functions of music in storytelling
Apocalypse Now by Francis Ford Coppola

◆ “Orange” synthesized by Carmine and Francis Coppola
  ◆ serves as transition music
◆ Ride of the Valkyries from Die Walkure by Richard Wagner
  ◆ set the tone for the assault
  ◆ was played in attacks by German tanks in WWII
  ◆ Wagner was a proponent of the German super-race
Sound Effects

Van Sijll

More than just the sounds of a scene
- layers of meaning
- can reveal
- can suggest
- can hide/disguise
- can establish
- can be tied to specific event or character
Diegetic and non-Diegetic Sound

Van Sijll

• Diegetic
  • organic to the scene
  • realistic
  • can be altered for effect
  • can be contextual or narrative

• non-Diegetic
  • not logically heard in the scene
  • added for narrative effect
Diegetic and non-Diegetic Sound from Platoon
Diegetic Sound from Platoon scene

- water dripping
- jungle sounds
  - insects
  - owl
- slapping bugs
- snoring
- movement sounds
- explosion/guns
- provide context
non-Diegetic Sound from *Platoon* scene

- **Music**
  - dissonant
  - builds to crescendo
  - pitch is high--lower notes added
  - timbre is “scratchy”
- **Heartbeat**--builds to crescendo
- **Builds Tension**--
- **Leads to release**
- **Narrative role**
Diegetic Sound from ET

(Van Sijll) elicit emotional response
identify characters (antagonist)
Diegetic Sound from ET

identify characters (antagonist)
elicit emotional response

- identify characters (antagonist)
  - sound tag
  - keys displayed prominently
  - we know (hear) where they are

- elicit emotional response
  - metallic sounds are perceived negatively
  - we see no faces..........sound is identifier
Diegetic Sound from ET
identify characters (antagonist)
elicit emotional response
from ET shooting script

24. THE CREATURE’S POV car door opens, man steps out, seen only from waist down, dark pants, heavy boots, and a huge ring of KEYS hanging from his belt. The KEYS make a tremendous racket, displacing all other sounds of the night.
Diegetic Sound from ET

identify characters (antagonist)
elicit emotional response
from ET shooting script

26. WIDER: MORE CARS ..........More cars converge on the scene. We SEE bright headlights and HEAR slamming doors and muffled voices. Then we HEAR the creature break a branch......THE SOUND OF KEYS
Diegetic Sound from ET
identify characters (antagonist)
elicit emotional response
from ET shooting script

◆27 EXT. RAVINE--NIGHT-LONG
SHOT......we see shadows of men jumping
the ravine. THE CREATURE hides in the
near end of the ravine. KEYS is the last to
jump. The SOUND of KEYS is hideous
Diegetic Sound from ET

identify characters (antagonist)
elicit emotional response

• we code the sound of keys
  • the threat of the antagonists
• the sound also draws us in
  • like the creature, we listen to determine distance
• the key sound raises tension
  • volume
  • timbre
IV. Silence

- A famous director said after using silence after a very dramatic scene: "Silence was the most awesome sound we could get".
- If we expect sound, silence very powerful.
- Absence of sound creates expectation.
- Absence of sound is eerie, unnatural.
Silence--not necessarily silent
by Matthew Wright; from Aspect Ratio, a Cinema Blog

- “the silence around the solo instrument”
- Gary Rydstrom
  - sound for *Terminator 2: Judgment Day, Jurassic Park, Saving Private Ryan*
  - believes that effective sound design begins with **contrasts:**
- But it’s also about how frequencies work together. There’s a trick to making a gunshot big using multiple layers of elements. You take the high snap of a pistol and add to it the low boom of a cannon and the midrange of a canyon echo. You orchestrate it. On an über scale then, we do that to the whole soundtrack, making sounds work together.
- Silence can be thought of as a type of sound. It’s like when somebody years ago figured out that zero was a number. And silence is just as valid as an amazing sound.
Use of Silence and contrasts from MI-1
MI-1 Contrasts
Gary Rydstrom
sound designer

- mix of near and absolute silence
- CIA -- get computer files
- vault sound and heat sensitive
- very quiet with sonic reprieves
- total silence as knife falls
  - heightens tension
  - emphasizes the choreography
- When sound returns.....more powerful

- Brian De Palma ultimately said, “No, take it all out.” And for the most part, that scene plays with nothing on the track. I went to see it with an audience and it had the desired effect: It made everyone lean in, pay closer attention, get nervous. Tension comes from the silence of that scene.