Danijela Kulezić-Wilson

MUSICAL AND FILM TIME

Abstract: The comparative analysis of linear, non-linear and multiple temporal dimensions in music and film reveals that the understanding and utilisation of time in these two arts reflect not only the aesthetic inclinations of its creators and their subjective experiences of temporality but also their philosophical views and, sometimes, spiritual beliefs. Viewed in the context of contemporary theories about Time, particularly Shallis' interpretation of different temporalities as symbolic of various levels of reality and J. T. Fraser's concept of time as a hierarchical nest of different temporalities or *Umwelts*, the results of this comparison lead to the conclusion that the time in which music and film unfold belongs to a separate, artificial *Umwelt* of its own – *art-temporality*.

Key words: musical time, film time, art-temporality, time as a symbol.

Even though time can be considered as the fundamental common denominator for all human experience, including art, the perennial division of arts into temporal and spatial for a long time unfairly sidestepped the theoretical and philosophical temporal issues in the latter and kept the scope of investigation in this area limited to music. Due to the emergence of novel views and approaches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, including the lasting heritage of *Gesamtkunstwerk* theory and practice, the growing interest in synaesthetic experience and, last but not least, the appearance of film as a new artistic medium that integrated certain aspects of all arts, the question of time not only started to be recognised by all artistic disciplines but also grew into one of the major topics of twentieth century art.

In this essay my interest will be particularly focused on music and film, the former being the 'original' temporal art *par excellence* and the latter most representative of the conceptual changes that the arts have undergone in temporal terms over the last hundred years. By examining temporal aspects of both arts and by emphasising their analogies I intend to show that the treatment of time in both music and film acts as a litmus test in defining the aesthetic inclinations and philosophical viewpoints of their creators. By positioning this investigation in the context of contemporary theories about Time, I will also illustrate how temporal forms of music and film reflect the evolution of our experience of time in both art and life.

As the experience of theorising time has proved many times before, the main challenge in pursuing a comparative temporal analysis between two arts is to create a conceptual framework which can integrate but not

confuse different categories and concepts of time. This study will confirm that it is practically impossible to limit the discussion about temporality in the arts to a single concept of time, not least because both clock time and metaphysical time figure as equally relevant categories, but also because of the dichotomy of time established early on by Greek philosophers, which describes time as either a *succession / change / becoming* or a *duration / permanence / being*. This dual nature of time, which can also be manifested through the distinction between time *conceived* and time *perceived* (or the *idea of time* and *lived time)*, certainly reflects one of the crucial philosophical / aesthetic issues around which the practices of music and film revolve. Before addressing these issues in a comparative analysis of musical and film time, the following section will focus on the symbolic nature of time as a way of constructing a conceptual framework for the investigation of time that can integrate its different concepts and manifestations.

Time as a symbol

Whether the nature of time has been explored through experiential and emotional dimensions (St. Augustine), the intellectual dimensions of being in time (Descartes, Henri Bergson), the relationship between time and consciousness (Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre), or even if the question itself has been denied any significance (Ludwig Wittgenstein), the impression left is that the only certainty about time is its complex and versatile character, having many different facets of which some appear to be exclusive of others. Aside from any scientific concepts, the direct experience of time is also subject to personal, social, intellectual and cultural interpretations that influence our perspective of it. People in the West tend to be more precise about measuring time than some less technically-oriented cultures, while the study of temporal perspectives within one culture can provide insights into differences between social classes,[1] differing philosophical orientations[2] or reveal diverse approaches to art.[3]

It seems that the only way to comprehend the different theories of time is to accept the argument of J. T. Fraser that time is not bound by

---

[1]   Lawrence Le Shan, quoted in Robert E. Ornstein, *On the Experience of Time* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969), 23; Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies*, 1988), 424.

[2]   Adolf Grünbaum, *Philosophical Problems of Space and Time*, 2nd enlarged edition (Dordrecht, Holland / Boston U.S.A: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1973).

[3]   Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

the 'law of contradiction' according to which a proposition and its nega-tion cannot be simultaneously true.[4] Fraser believes that time has evolved throughout the history of the universe and proposes a hierarchical distin-ction of six different temporalities that have developed in parallel with the evolution of man and the complexification of nature. According to him, these temporalities are aspects of different *Umwelts*,[5] which in the lower levels are more concerned with the concept of an unchangeable, eternal temporality of *being*, while the upper levels introduce the concept of *becoming*. Presenting them from the lowest to the highest levels, Fra-ser distinguishes the following temporalities: *atemporality* of electro-magnetic radiation, *prototemporality* of elementary particles, *eotemporality*, or the time of 'the physicist's *t*', *biotemporality*, or the biological time of all living organisms, *nootemporality*, or the noetic time of the human mind and *sociotemporality,* the Umwelt of cultures and civilisations. Together they form a 'nested hierarchy of increasing richness of content… Each new temporality subsumes that or those beneath it; each permits the functioning of a qualitatively new creative freedom'.[6]

When people speak about time they usually mean nootemporality. It is the time of mind and society which, before the introduction of the mechanical clock, was perceived as the interplay of constantly recurring events: the rising of the sun, the tides, the seasons, etc. Circadian, lunar

---

[4]   J. T. Fraser, *Time, the Familiar Stranger* (Redmond, Washington: The Microsoft Press, 1987) and J.T. Fraser (ed.), *The Voices of Time: A Cooperative Survey of Man's Views of Time as Expressed by the Scientists and by the Humanists*, 2nd edi-tion (The University of Massachusetts Press, 1981).

[5]   According to the biological origin of the world, *Umwelt* represents the 'self-world' or a 'circumscribed portion of the environment' for a given species, while in Fraser's interpretation the meaning is extended to represent 'self-worlds' and temporalities of matter, animal and man.

[6]   Fraser defines *nootemporality* as the temporal reality of the mature human mind char-acterized by a clear distinction among future, past and present. *Biotemporality* is the temporal reality of living organisms including man, as far as his biological functions are concerned. *Eotemporality* is the temporal reality of the astronomical universe of massive matter. It is a continuous but nondirected, nonflowing time to which our ideas of present, future or past cannot be applied. The time of the world of elemen-tary particles is called *prototemporality*. It is an undirected, nonflowing as well as fragmented (noncontinuous) time for which precise locations of instants have no meaning. The world of electromagnetic radiation is termed *atemporal* for none of our ordinary notions associated with time apply to its state of energy. It is the most primitive level of the universe, that of radiative chaos. Physics divides its concerns along the distinctive temporalities of the physical world. Special relativity theory ad-dresses the atemporal world of light, quantum theory focuses on the prototemporal universe of particle-waves, general relativity theory deals with eotemporal cosmos and thermodynamics encompasses them all, at least as far as the discoveries of phys-ics about time go (*The Voices of Time*, 106–112; 358; 367–368).

and annual rhythms of nature are built into all living organisms through organic evolution, forming part of our biotemporality. However, the cyclical experience of time with its returning rhythmic patterns connected with the organic world was eventually suppressed by a linear perception of time more typical of the Judeo-Christian tradition and its view of the world with a beginning, a sequence of specific and unique events, life and death.[7] Additionally, the introduction of the mechanical clock helped to create a perception of time disassociated from human events, an independent world of mathematically measurable sequences. As Michael Shallis notices, 'no wonder there is confusion about whether time is merely a matter of consciousness, of whether time exists only in the mind' since objective time, clock time, 'exists because the mind invented clocks' and redefined our reality.[8]

Shallis argues that all paradoxes of time could be resolved if we were able to look at clock time or any other time or temporal reality we experience or just know about scientifically, as symbolic aspects of reality, which has a symbolic nature itself.[9] If we think about time as symbolic and different temporalities as symbols of different levels or experiences of reality, it would also make sense to envision a time in which temporal arts unfold as yet another temporal reality. his idea complies with Susanne Langer's interpretation of experiential time in music as an 'illusion' or a 'virtual time, in which its sonorous forms move in relation to each other – always and only to each other, for nothing else exists there'.[10] The interpretation of the temporality of art forms as symbolic seems even more appropriate with regard to film, considering the complex interaction of film's experiential time and time represented. Film occupies a certain period of (experiential) time in order to tell its story which occupies a different, 'symbolic' temporal reality, while the sequences of events are composed in such a way as to resemble our experience of linear temporality and reality itself. However, even that 'symbolic temporality' – symbolic of reality – is an illusion in itself, since none of the events shown on the screen took place in the order they are presented. Additionally, both film and music time are constituted from time passed but are relived over and over again in the present and, while reproduced, can constitute the present of the spectator's experience.

---

[7]   As Marshall McLuhan showed, the linear conception of time can also be connected with language, because the word and the sentence are linear in form, analytical, consequential, progressive. In preliterate society, where time was viewed cyclically, language too was more 'organic' (Michael Shallis, *On Time*, Harmondsworth, England: Pinguin Books, 1982, 15).

[8]   Ibid., 198.

[9]   Ibid.

[10]   Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 109.

The next section will show that comparisons between musical and film time can be drawn on many levels, some of them abstract, some of them based on temporal aspects of their artistic forms.

Time in music and film

Of all five senses it is the sense of hearing that is inevitably associated with our sense of time and few phenomena can tell us more about time and temporality than music. Music is considered to be the temporal art *par excellence* because its form comes to life in time. As a form in becoming, music incorporates time, shapes it and gives it structure by making it audible, while itself being simultaneously dissolved in time. Through the creative act of composing/performing time is transformed into the flesh of the musical body, the 'dough' which is shaped and brought to life through sound.

Film, on the other hand, usually demands more than audible time to become alive. It needs a 'solid cluster of living facts' embossed in time, as Tarkovsky would say, but it is still *time*, 'printed in its factual forms and manifestations', that is the substance of cinema, so that film-making becomes 'sculpting in time'.[11]

The completed form of a film or a piece of music determines a certain limited period of time and it can be argued that the duration of that form is the form itself.[12] However, if we try to ascribe an absolute value to time contained in a film track or a musical performance, we face an almost impossible task. Even though our 'measurement' is limited to one particular referential system – a completed piece of music or film – its temporal value keeps 'spilling' over the frames of the work. To start with, the duration of a musical work can vary in different performances. To try to choose a score with fixed relationships between its horizontal elements as our referential system would be inappropriate because it is the musical work in performance that occupies the amount of time we are trying to measure. And even in the case of a performance fixed on a recording one can argue, as Edward T. Cone did, that a musical work needs the frame of silence 'to separate it from its external environment – to mark off musical time from the ordinary before and after it'.[13]

---

[11]   Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (London, The Bodley Head, 1986), 57–80.

[12]   Dragutin Gostuški, *Vreme umetnosti* (Beograd: Muzikološki institut – Prosveta, 1968), 163.

[13]   Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 16.

With film things are even more complicated concerning the parallel existence of what we call plot time, story time and screen time. According to the distinction that Bordwell and Thompson suggest, the plot explicitly presents certain story events, while the story goes beyond the plot in suggesting some events that we never witness.[14] The actual presentation of the plot on the screen usually involves some manipulation of time as well, and the given result is called screen duration or projection time.

In the same way that plot time and story time may overlap for most of the screen time, so can plot time and screen time overlap, but not necessarily. Plot duration mostly corresponds to the time of diegesis – the total world of the story action – although it might include some non-diegetic images and sounds that are not part of the story but may affect our understanding of it.[15]

Ultimately the temporal 'bodies' of both film and music form resist measurement in absolute values thus adding another aspect of elusiveness to their main characteristics.

Another similarity between film and musical time can be found in the less obvious aspects of their temporal content, which even spatial arts contain: the imprint of the *creative time* spent during their creation and the *interpretative* (*contemplative*) *time* of their consumption. The distinction of these two temporal aspects can actually modify our perception of spatial arts as fixed and unchanging and the form of temporal arts as subject to change.

While creative time is an obviously irreversible aspect of most art forms,[16] interpretative time is considered to be reversible in the visual arts. For Dragutin Gostuški reversibility is factual because of the possibility of changing position while looking at a piece of art.[17] Or, as Edward T. Cone puts it, the silent viewing of a spatial work is a kind of multiple performance or a multiplicity of partial performances during which we can choose and change if necessary our own pace and position

---

[14]   David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art, An Introduction*, 4th edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993), 71.

[15]   Ralph Stephenson and Guy Phelps give the example of 'expressive montage' which connects the pictures of a crowd of commuters and a flock of sheep in Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931), or women gossiping and hens cackling in Fritz Lang's *Fury* (1936). *The Cinema as Art*, 2nd revised edition (London: Penguin Books, 1989), 139.

[16]   Obviously, this statement is applicable to both spatial and temporal art forms except in cases of musical *open form* or musical and theatrical works which include improvisation.

[17]   Gostuški, *Vreme umetnosti,* 279.

of perception.[18] For a piece of music or film though, there is only one single and complete performance at a time to choose as a valid insight into its form and composition. This statement sounds paradoxical, having in mind that our modern technical devices allow numerous reproductions of all recorded musical pieces or video and DVD reproductions of films. What Cone has in mind, however, are the ideal conditions of live performance (or film projection, for that matter), during which 'a composition must proceed inexorably in time; we cannot go back to explain'.[19] For the full appreciation of a completed music or film form no repetitions or hesitations are allowed while the work is being performed so that in both film and music the interpretative time is equal to the time of the work unfolding.

Within the confines of each singular form film is able to do what seemingly no other art is capable of: to manipulate the order and dimensions of its own temporal reality. The use of slow-motion, accelerated-motion, flash-back, montage sequences and other similar devices give film the opportunity to explore and interfere with what is conceived as the only unchangeable, irreversible aspect of our lives. Even though the manipulation and multiplication of temporal dimensions might not be that obvious in music as in film, certain non-Western musical traditions and much of Western twentieth-century music display these very aspects in their production. Philip V. Bohlman compares stretto technique in fugue with sampling and mixing in hip-hop music in terms of their 'juxtaposing and scrambling moments of time'. He also gives the example of interlocking cycles of Javanese music that 'layer time upon time unit, creating not a single representation of music in time, but a web of voices moving into and out of time'.[20] It could even be argued that some basic formal devices of tonal music, such as repetition or reprise, represent potential tools for manipulating temporal dimensions.

Repetition and reprise have been used throughout the history of music to establish the most primitive as well as the most accomplished proportional forms of Western music's heritage. Indispensable in music practices of every origin, repetition can also be seen as a device that intrinsically defies the linear understanding of musical temporality. If employed as a *reminiscence,* repetition can acquire the meaning of a structural (César Franck's cyclical form for instance) or even narrative 'flash-back' (the programme music of Romanticism, Wagner's operas, etc.).

---

[18]   Cone, *Musical Form*, 33.

[19]   Ibid., 34.

[20]   Philip V. Bohlman, 'Ontologies of Music' in Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (eds.), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 29.

Gostuški also interprets the technique of inversion in contrapuntal music of all periods as the manifestation of the desire to overcome the limitation of music's linear time-direction, the expression of the permanent longing for reversing the temporal arrow and bringing back what is gone.[21] The most extreme example of this intention is presented in the technique of retrograde motion that produces symmetry in the musical flow. This kind of symmetry can be understood as the rotation of the space-time axis by 180 degrees, which allows the reversibility of time through music.[22]

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss though, music does not even need contrapuntal techniques to exercise its ability to manipulate the arrow of time, since music itself is 'an instrument for the obliteration of time':

> Below the level of sounds and rhythms, music acts upon a primitive terrain, which is the psychological time of the listener; this time is irreversible and therefore irredeemably diachronic, yet music transmutes the segment devoted to listening to it into a synchronic totality, enclosed within itself. Because of the internal organization of the musical work, the act of listening to it immobilizes passing time.[23]

Generally, time is perceived as an elusive or even incomprehensible entity that becomes more 'real' and palpable when structured by a work of art. The fact that philosophers such as Edmund Husserl[24] and Henri Bergson[25] have thought about music as 'time made audible' relates to time being considered as becoming 'human' when organized after the manner of a narrative. Ricoeur argues that problems of time, which philosophy itself cannot resolve, namely the dichotomy between treatments of time centred on 'the time of the cosmos' and those centred on 'the time of the soul', can find a kind of poetic resolution in narrative.[26] Genevieve Lloyd's summarization of Ricoeur's argument about narrative in literature can easily be applied to film:

> In virtue of its form, narrative brings together fragments of temporal experience, allowing them to be grasped in a unity. Narrative

---

[21] Gostuški, *Vreme umetnosti*, 280.

[22] Berislav Popović, *Muzicka forma ili smisao u muzici* (Beograd: Clio / Kulturni centar Beograda, 1998), 283.

[23] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 16.

[24] Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-consciousness*, trans. J. S. Churchill (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1964).

[25] Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity: Bergson and the Einsteinian Universe*, trans. Leon Jacobson, 2nd edition (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 1999).

[26] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, 2 vols. (The University of Chicago Press, 1984), vol. 1.

gets it all together, as it were, transforming the inchoate sense of form in our experience of temporal fragments into poetic universals through which we come to understand our experience of the particular. [27]

Ricoeur's comments about the 'humanization' of time through a narrative relate mostly to narrational styles in literature that are essentially linear – however complex or interwoven their temporal dimensions can be – and the same can be said for film. Musical time, at least in the West, has also been generally perceived as being linear, although the substantial influences of Eastern art and philosophy on our culture during the last century have left their traces in different musical styles, from Debussy to techno music, introducing changes in both the comprehension and the perception of musical temporalities. As the next section argues, the inclination towards emphasising linear or non-linear aspects of temporality in art is usually a symptom of deeper philosophical or in some cases even spiritual beliefs.

Linear and non-linear time in music and film

According to Jonathan D. Kramer[28], the generic duality of linear and non-linear time in music corresponds roughly to the philosophical distinction between becoming and being. As the idea of becoming is found most prominently in the linear logic of Western philosophy and science, so is linear temporality typical of Western tonal music. The functions of different pitches in tonal music are determined by their relationship to the tonic, which is endowed with ultimate stability. The linearity of tonal music is characterised by a move towards a point of great tension that is usually remote from the tonic, followed by a return to and confirmation of the basic tonality. Western music can also be defined as essentially dialectical since its 'development follows from the presence of a conflict between opposites and finally leads to a situation of synthesis, in which conflicts are entirely or partially resolved'.[29]

The very use of the term 'dialectical' in regard to an art form brings together the worlds of Eisenstein's films edited with the intention of creating a conflict on all levels of the audio-visual narrative that will be resolved by the emergence of a new meaning, and classical forms of Western music based on the same principle. Eisenstein believed that his dia-

---

[27]   Genevieve Lloyd, *Being in Time: Selves and Narrators in Philosophy and Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 11–12.

[28]   Kramer, *The Time of Music*…

[29]   Wim Mertens, *American Minimal Music: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*, trans. J. Hautekiet (London: Kahn & Averill / White Plains, NY: Pro/Am Music Resources, 1983/1994), 17.

lectical style was 'fully analogous to human, psychological expression'[30] but more than that, it was analogous to human understanding of time and life, at least in Judeo-Christian philosophy based on the principles of linear temporality, duality and dialectics. At the same time, the goal-directed listening of dialectical music founded on traditional harmonic functional schemes of tension and relaxation that lead to a directed finale or synthesis can be compared to the narrative mode of classical cinema in which a fabula is constructed along similar principles of causality that push its characters towards set goals.

Non-linearity, on the other hand, embodies a different cultural and philosophical concept of being, which is in music emphasised through the ideas of temporal continuum and harmonic stasis. The exposure to music and philosophy of different, particularly Eastern cultures, in combination with the development of recording technology, brought a strong influence of non-linearity to Western music. The emergence of minimalism and repetitive music in America during the 1960s and then in Europe in the 1970s can be seen as partly a result of that influence and partly as an extreme reaction to the complexity of integral serialism. Nevertheless, it certainly represented the most serious challenge to all concepts of time favoured by Western music to that date. While the word 'repetitive' refers to the main structural principle of this music and the word 'minimalism' refers to restrictions in the use of initial material and transformational techniques performed on it, the minimalist style certainly did not put any limitations on the duration of pieces, often unfolding in lengthy sheets of time and inducing meditative or trance-like experiences, producing the effect which Jonathan D. Kramer calls 'vertical temporality'.[31]

It would be difficult to find in film an exact counterpart to vertical temporality in music. In spite of the diversity of narrational modes and editing styles, which include all sorts of temporal manipulations, the majority of films are based on our assumption that two successive shots are unfolding 'horizontally', succeeding each other in terms of diegetic film time too, unless implied differently by cross-cutting techniques, flash-backs, and so on. However, what constitutes the 'arthouse' opposition to goal-oriented, dialectical mainstream narrative is a non-dialectical, or *contemplative* approach to film, marked by a restricted use of the manipulative techniques of editing. Similar to the non-dialectical approach to music being influenced by Eastern philosophy and culture so is

---

[30] Quoted in David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1997), 14.

[31] Kramer, *The Time of Music*.

the contemplative approach to film in some cases (Wim Wenders, Jim Jarmusch) partly influenced by the same philosophy through the work of Asian directors such as Yasujiro Ozu. In some other cases (Tarkovsky, Robert Bresson), this style has been rather an expression of the European aesthetic of the shot and the spiritual view of temporality that informed it.

The most famous advocate of this approach was André Bazin, whose main theoretical and aesthetical concerns are founded on the belief that film image is able to convey the presence of the divine existing in the real world.[32] Bazin advocates synchrony of screen time and story time, believing that long takes with deep focus, uninterrupted by editing, through their mise-en-scène could provide not only the most telling insight into the style of the directors who shot them, but also an insight into life itself. Unsurprisingly then, Bazin opposed the practice of using editing for the manipulation of film's temporal and narrative content, because its techniques deny the viewer's opportunity 'to see into the wholeness and continuity of time and space'.[33]

A strikingly similar aesthetic and philosophical view about film and film time was articulated by director Andrei Tarkovsky, even though he never mentions Bazin's name in his book *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*. Tarkovsky, like Kant, believes that time is a mental category, a construction of mind, 'the flame in which there lives the salamander of the human soul'.[34] For Tarkovsky time is also a spiritual category:

> The time in which a person lives gives him the opportunity of knowing himself as a moral being, engaged in the search for the truth…And life is no more than the period allotted to him, and in which he may, indeed must, fashion his spirit in accordance with his own understanding of the aim of human existence […] The human conscience is dependent upon time for its existence.[35]

Precisely this spiritual dimension of time and its meaning for human existence was the biggest concern for Tarkovsky when writing and shooting his films. As Bazin believes in a deep gaze into space, so Tarkovsky believes that by purely observing life and recording the passing of

---

[32]   Sylvia Harvey, 'What is Cinema? The Sensuous, the Abstract and the Political' in Christopher Williams (ed.), *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future* (London: University of Westminster Press, 1996), 230.

[33]   Robert P. Kolker, 'The Film Text and Film Form' in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 16.

[34]   Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, 57.

[35]   Ibid., 58.

time, the hidden mysteries and meaning of life can be revealed. Awareness of the spiritual dimension of time influenced Tarkovsky's view of time as the 'raw material' of film. For him the authenticity of a cinematic image is confirmed only if one can feel the 'pressure of time' running through the shot, 'something significant, truthful going on beyond the events on the screen'.[36]

The choice between manipulating different aspects of film time by editing or allowing time to run through long takes thus forms the basic distinction between aesthetically opposing approaches to the film medium. Essentially, this very distinction lies at the root of what Robert P. Kolker calls the 'bedrock of film theory', 'the controversy over the structure and importance of the shot and the cut, of the shot versus the cut'[37], although the word 'time' is not emphasised either by Kolker or anyone else addressing this 'controversy'.

From a safe historical distance one can nowadays argue that both the aesthetics of the shot and the cut are unnecessarily limited in the extremity of their choices, at least theoretically, because in practice things are rarely so clean-cut. Obviously, the pressure of time in film cannot be confined to frames of one shot as it inevitably affects adjoining shots, thus sucking the process of montage into its powerful flow, which contemporary representatives of the aesthetic of the shot are more ready to admit now than Bazin or Tarkovsky would have been. Analogously, the sequence of edited images, however rapidly cut, inevitably creates another temporal dimension which encompasses those images. This dimension might not be as susceptible to contemplation as time in long shots, but its jagged, disjointed pieces speak maybe even more accurately about the nature of contemporary time and reality.

After comparing the 'philosophy of the shot' articulated by Bazin and Tarkovsky with the dominant practice of popular cinema, which is heavily reliant on rapid editing and the overall manipulation not only of time and narrative but also of emotional responses, it seems reasonable to claim that in essence this distinction represents more than just the matter of an aesthetic or even ideological choice. For both Bazin and Tarkovsky their aesthetic choice lies in the hope of achieving understanding through contemplation or an 'aesthetic way of knowing' as Schopenhauer would call it. Their aesthetics demands the 'presence' of the spectator in the time and space of the film image the same way Eastern philosophy demands our presence in 'nowness', or non-linear music ensures our prolonged experience of it. As repetitive/minimalist music

---

[36]   Ibid., 117.

[37]   Kolker, *The Film Text*, 15.

aims to keep us suspended in vertical temporality, so Bazin and Tark-ovsky want us to stay with the image until we become aware of 'something significant, truthful going on beyond the events on the screen'.

Montage cinema, on the other hand, takes us on a previously planned journey and makes us see only what the film-maker wants us to see. Although that was a good enough reason for Bazin to reject its aesthetics, the contemporary use of editing makes for an even stronger argument against its manipulative techniques. Montage, the way Eisenstein used it, at least expected the viewer to invest a certain intellectual effort in interpreting its messages.[38] Besides, there is no doubt that, even without Eisenstein's ideological and aesthetic concepts, editing in general represents one of the essential and potentially most creative tools in cinema. However, the treatment of time and narrative in the average Hollywood product, and the conventions of today's either 'invisible' editing practice or showy rapid editing that 'does not leave time for the audience to reflect – or get bored',[39] not only take us along the narrow path of carefully predicted responses and thoughts but can also be seen as a perfectly pleasant distraction from seeing potentially more important things on the screen. At the same time, it is obvious that the very 'fatality of cinema: being in time and being distracted'[40] represents its most alluring power. It can be said that editing which 'takes us for a ride' encourages the spectator to do exactly what all of us do when we want to avoid 'looking inside' – it not only keeps us from thinking and feeling more deeply about whatever we watch but also gives us a break from ourselves and life itself. It impresses us, amuses and entertains, it manipulates our emotions and at the same time keeps us away from things that, as both Bazin and Tarkovsky believed, we can see only by *really* looking at them.

What springs to mind here is that according to the Kantian approach the act of contemplation in art is not only the crucial attribute of aesthetic

---

[38] Eisenstein's techniques of 'montage of attractions', 'intellectual montage' and 'vertical montage' were all based on the belief that only through the conflict or synthesis of two different shots can the envisioned new meaning emerge, the meaning that allows the film-maker to create significant aesthetic, ideological or even historical statements. The main aim of the classical Hollywood style and its continuity editing, though, is to make the form 'invisible', so that the viewer becomes immersed in the story and can easily identify with its participants.

[39] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 165.

[40] 'The instant is what comes, and at the same time what distracts; in a basic contradiction, it is both what makes time pass over us by manifesting our being-for-death, and that which distances us from the thought of death, from care' (Jacques Aumont, 'Mortal Beauty' in Michael Temple and James S. Williams (eds.), *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985–2000* (Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 102.

judgement, but also the proof of that art's worthiness to be judged as such. At the same time, it cannot be denied that even a contemplative approach to art also carries an aspect of escapism. What Schopenhauer calls the 'aesthetic way of knowing' relies on the hope that the contemplation of beauty would secure temporary removal from 'all our affliction'.

Finally, in order to avoid the disadvantage of generalisation – to paraphrase Kramer – it should be made clear that the general notion we have about the 'non-contemplative' nature of contemporary montage cinema is not justified in every instance since there are examples where editing is used thoughtfully, creatively and *musically*, aiming more for the 'space between' opposing aesthetic approaches, the space concerned with rhythm and rhythmic patterns which, besides provoking expected visceral and emotional responses, by their position and function in narrative structure contribute to our deeper understanding of film.

However, in between these concepts of goal-oriented linearity and the contemplative stasis of vertical time exists a whole universe of multi-directed, non-directed, non-linear, multi-layered and other temporalities in music and film, reminding us of the ever-perplexing, elusive nature of time.

Multiple temporalities

Although the linear temporality of tonal music and the macro or vertical temporality of repetitive music exemplify the most obvious extremes of aesthetic concepts in contemporary music, Jonathan Kramer argues that between these two poles one can distinguish other types of musical temporality, because 'most music exhibits some kind of mix of temporalities'.[41] He identifies and discusses in detail temporal types such as the non-directed linear time of atonal music, moment time and multiply-directed time, which he associates with Fraser's temporal levels.[42]

Kramer also argues that the time-sense in much twentieth-century music, as well as in contemporary arts in general, reflects the temporality of inner thought processes:

> The temporality of the mind is seemingly irrational. But time in our daily lives is fundamentally ordered, by schedules, clocks, and causal relationships […] The conflict between the predominant linearity

---

[41]   Kramer, *The Time of Music*, 58.

[42]   Kramer compares musical vertical time with the "timelessness of atemporality", moment time in music with prototemporality, multiply-directed time with eotemporality, non-directed linear time with biotemporality and musical linear temporality with nootemporality (395–396)

of external life and the essential discontinuity of internal life is not pe-
culiar to the twentieth century. Thought was surely as nonlinear in
1800 as it is today. But now art (followed at a respectable interval by
popular entertainment) has moved from a logic that reflects the goal-
oriented linearity of external life to an irrationality that reflects our
shadowy, jumbled, totally personal interior lives.[43]

At this point it is important to emphasise the influence that film and
its montage techniques has had on artists taking a new approach towards
temporality. It was the multiplicity of temporal dimensions in film and
their manipulations through montage that offered an alternative to con-
ventional time sequencing in art forms and have liberated the Western
artistic mind from the confines of linear perception. Moreover, film has
continued to explore the complexity of multiple temporalities in a narra-
tive art form and during the late 1980s and '90s an interest in a new style
of formal organisation emerged in American independent and world cin-
ema which enhanced the effect of temporal manipulation produced
through editing by employing parallel narrative structures developed
around several storylines rather than a single, linear narrative. Jim Jar-
musch's *Mystery Train* (1989), Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993),
Wong Kar-Wai's *Chungking Express* (1994), Tarantino's *Jackie Brown*
(1997), Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* (1998) and Doug Liman's *Go*
(1999) are just some of the films that pursue the idea of repeating an ac-
tion from different perspectives, creating a 'staggered, stuttered'[44]
temporality. Another option of using circular narratives (*Pulp Fiction*
/1994/, *Amores Perros* /2000/) or presenting the narrative backwards
(*Memento* /2000/, *Irreversible* /2002/) can be interpreted not only as a
challenge to the linear chronology of narrative or a means of visualis-
ing/recapturing the past through memory but also as a tool for examining
the temporal aspects of our lives, the roots of our actions and the idea of
predestination. A similar existential quest motivated the creation of dis-
ruptive, non-linear temporality and narrative in *21 Grams* (Alejandro
Gonzales Iñárritu, 2003). The apparently random arrangement of the
montage segments in this film, inspired by the work of William Faulkner
and Julio Cortázar, emphasizes the cyclical nature of our experiences and
at the same time brings to mind the procedures of musical *open form.*

These films are only the most recent examples of a general tendency
in contemporary arts to reshape time-space relationships in accordance
with global changes in the world that also reshape our perspective of it as

---

[43]   Ibid., 45.

[44]   Murray Smith, 'Parallel Lines' in Jim Hillier (ed.), *American Independent Cinema: A
       Sight and Sound Reader* (London: BFI, 2001), 159.

well as our sense of identity. The subject of temporality was also explored in European cinema in the 1950s and '60s in films such as Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (1958), which interchanges past and present, and *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) in which repetitions and variations obliterate the sense of linear temporality. Around that time Pierre Boulez, inspired by aleatoric works of John Cage, wrote his *Third Piano Sonata* (1957), which contains several parenthetical structures that may be played or omitted, promoting the concept of *open form* as the ultimate denial of one-dimensional musical temporality. A few years later Stockhausen presented his *Zyklus* (1959) in a spiral-bound score with the suggestion that musical motion can start at any point in the circle and proceed until it returns to the starting point. His *Momente* (1961– 1972) explores the idea of 'temporal mobility' by including 'brief references to what may be the past in one performance but the future in another'[45]. Kramer also cites Harrison Birtwistle's opera *The Mask of Orpheus* (1970–1983) as one of more recent examples of using the potential of multiply-directed time. As the composer himself explained:

> I'm concerned with…going over and over the same event from different angles, so that a multidimensional musical object is created which contains a number of contradictions as well as a number of perspectives. I don't create linear music. I move in circles. The events I create move as the planets move in the solar system. They rotate at various speeds. Some move through bigger orbits than others and take longer to return.[46]

Kramer interprets all the temporal categories of twentieth-century music, such as multiply-directed time, moment time or vertical time, as all essentially 'subjective time structures' created by contemporary composers, as opposed to 'rational time structures' typical of music of the past. According to him, the discontinuity and multilayerdness of temporality in art is proof that art 'has moved from a logic that reflects the goal-oriented linearity of external life to an irrationality that reflects our shadowy, jumbled, totally personal interior lives'.[47] The perfect example to illustrate this statement is David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001), which presents its story through a narrative loop punctuated with episodes seemingly unrelated to it. Its non-linear form makes most sense if interpreted as a stream-of-consciousness type of narration which mixes reality, fantasy and dreams, as well as different temporalities, originating from the emotionally and mentally disturbed main character Diane /

---

[45] Kramer, *The Time of Music,* 167.

[46] Ibid., 49.

[47] Ibid., 45.

Betty, who also turns out to be dead. As Chris Rodley says, in *Mulholland Drive* 'Lynch has made the very notion of "dream" versus "reality" an irrelevant opposition. As a result the borderline between these two states has been reduced to a badly guarded checkpoint where no one seems to be stamping passports'.[48]

On the other hand, it can be argued that reshaping time-space relationships in the representational arts, or the multilayered temporality of contemporary music, reflect the world around us and the way we see it. Stuart Hall[49] presents this tendency as typical of our age marked by de-centred personal, cultural and national identities and time-space compression, interpreting it as a direct consequence of globalisation. In his study of the changes that cultural and national identities undergo through the influence of globalisation he argues that certain types of time-space representations in art correspond to different senses of cultural and social identities. Thus it sounds logical when he states that male subjects represented in eighteenth-century paintings as surveying their property have 'a very different sense of cultural identity from the subject who sees "himself / herself" mirrored in the fragmented, fractured "faces" which look out from the broken planes and surfaces of one of Picasso's cubist canvasses'.[50]

Our society is much different than at the time of Beethoven or Da Vinci. We are exposed to a multitude of lifestyles, environments and are even able to change our 'temporality' by travelling across continents and different time zones. A linear understanding of time might still be at the base of our perception of reality, but that linearity is multilayered, punctured by travel and other experiences and affected by the process of globalisation. Moreover, as Kramer notices, the use of technology in art also 'provides us with the means to negate ordinary time, to transcend time, to make contact with our own subjective temporalities'.[51] Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that the treatment and presentation of time in both music and film reflect not only the artist's aesthetic inclinations but also his (or her) sense of self and indeed, life itself.

Obviously, there are many analogies when it comes to the treatment of time, its perception and structuring in forms of music and film. But

---

[48] Chris Rodley (ed.), *Lynch on Lynch*, revised edition (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 267.

[49] Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity' in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and its Futures* (Cambridge/Oxford: Polity Press, Open University Press, 1992).

[50] Ibid., 301.

[51] Kramer, The Time of Music, 71.

beyond the obvious similarities – or differences – concerning the artistic employment of time and its shaping in art forms, music and film share even more similarities in regard to the nature of their temporality and the symbolic content embedded in it. The time captured by art forms can be seen as a metaphor of time in general and as a reflection of our contemporary sense of temporality. It is linear and at the same time cyclical, both in its ability to use repetition as a formal device and in the fact that it can be performed again and again. It also displays discontinuity and multilayerdness, mirroring the shift of our focus from the reliability of absolute time to multidimensional subjective temporality. Both film and music forms embody some of what Michael Shallis calls the supernatural aspect of time, the aspect that 'arises from its symbolic nature, pointing in the direction of a multi-levelled reality'.[52] Both arts follow the track of linearity either in film narrative or in the succession of notes, but at the same time draw their content freely from other dimensions, which is more obviously displayed in film but has its counterpart in music too. Artistic forms allow and can easily make use of time-slips, déja vu or precognition, both literally and formally. Shallis also says that 'time seems to be a bridge linking the material and spiritual', acting as a pointer to the symbolic nature of reality, a 'reality greater than the one we have drawn around ourselves',[53] which is an idea strikingly similar to those Tarkovsky articulated in his writings about film time.

I believe that, after observing some characteristics of time in music and film, my earlier remark about the time of arts representing yet another or, as Langer suggests, a 'virtual' temporal reality that can be joined to other existing temporalities, makes more sense now. This proposition does not clash with Fraser's concept of a hierarchical nest of temporal levels either, but instead of associating different temporal aspects of art with different *Umwelts*, as Kramer did in regard to music, I believe that the temporality of arts should be viewed as a separate artificial *Umwelt* that shares some features of nootemporality and sociotemporality, being the product of both. The time in which music and film forms unfold, which might be called *art-temporality*, should be seen as a temporal dimension which has its own laws imposed by the art forms themselves. At the same time, as is the case with other temporal dimensions, this one as well can be seen as a symbolic manifestation of the 'real' universe, or a certain aspect of it: it is a dimension we visit by our own accord and although our involvement in it depends on the skills and imagination of its creator, the ultimate choice of its content is our own.

---

[52]   Shallis, *On Time*, 177.

[53]   Ibid., 198.

Данијела Кулезић-Вилсон

МУЗИЧКО И ФИЛМСКО ВРЕМЕ
(Резиме)

Док су питања о природи, пореклу, доживљају и сврси времена вековима интригирала научнике и филозофе, резултирајући разноврсним али и често контрадикторним одговорима и објашњењима, проблем разумевања и третмана времена у уметности почео је да добија на значају тек током прошлог столећа, разоткривајући древну поделу уметности на временске и просторне као суштински неосновану и застарелу.

Сврха избора музике и филма као главних објеката анализе уметничког времена у овој студији јесте да доведе у упоредну везу и нагласи сличности између једне од најстаријих уметности, која је од почетка сматрана за временску уметност *par excellence*, и релативно новог медија који садржи неке од особина свих уметности, и који је најрепрезентативнији пример концептуалних промена у третману времена у савременој уметности. Аналогије између музике и филма провучене су кроз анализу њихове употребе линеарног и нелинеарног времена, као и многоструких временских димензија, потврђујући да третман времена у савременој уметности одсликава не само естетичка усмерења аутора и њихов субјективни доживљај времена, већ такође открива њихова филозофска, а понекад и духовна уверења.

Упоредна анализа темпоралних особина музике и филма у овој студији положена је у контекст савремених теорија о времену, позивајући се пре свега на Шалисову (M. Shallis) интерпретацију различитих темпоралности као симбола различитих слојева и доживљаја реалности, као и Фрејзерову (J. T. Fraser) концепцију времена као хијерархијске коегзистенције шест различитих врста темпоралности или *Umwelt*-а. Ипак, супротно мишљењу Џонатана Крејмера (Jonathan D. Kramer), који пореди различите темпоралне димензије музике с појединачним *Umwelt*-има, ова студија тумачи време музике и филма као специфични, засебни *Umwelt уметничког времена*.