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More Beautiful Areas: Performativity and Presence in the Integrated Soundtrack

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Abstract: *In 2019, I presented a paper at a conference in NUI Maynooth, Ireland that used Kevin Donnelly's notion of the soundtrack as spectre as the starting point for discussing performativity and presence in the films of Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev. During the discussion that followed, Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, who was in attendance, raised several observations concerning the relevance of Donnelly's concept to her own research exploring the integrated soundtrack. This paper essentially seeks to continue that conversation. By revisiting several examples explored in Kulezic-Wilson's chapter on "Soundtrack's Liminal Spaces" in* Sound Design Is the New Score*, alongside others including Nick Cave's score for* The Proposition *(John Hillcoat, 2005) and* Birdman *(Alejandro Iñárritu, 2014), I explore to what extent Donnelly's analogy can be expanded to consider instances in film where the foregrounding of tactile musical gestures and spatial placement within the audio mix results in a distinctly performative, quasi-physical sensibility that challenges the "insubstantial" status of Donnelly's spectral presence. Drawing on a broad framework of theoretical concepts including Miguel Mera's discussion of the haptic score and Paul Sanden's network of liveness, this paper aims to provide a complimentary perspective to an important aspect of Danijela Kulezic-Wilson's significant contribution to the study of film sound and music.*



Figure 1: Nina, saved. *You Were Never Really Here*, dir. Lynne Ramsey. StudioCanal, 2017. Screenshot.

In her chapter of *Sound Design Is the New Score* on "Soundtrack's Liminal Spaces" (27–54), Danijela Kulezic-Wilson discusses a moment towards the end of Lynne Ramsey's *You Were Never Really Here* (2017) where score and diegetic sound converge to disorientate the audience. As the film's protagonist, Joe (Joaquin Phoenix), steadily walks through the house of paedophile Governor Williams (Alessandro Nivola), whose body he has just discovered in a first-floor bedroom, a faint, sparse tapping sound seems to attract his attention, causing Joe to halt and peer over the stairwell banister as if trying to determine its source. The noise ceases and Joe descends to the ground floor where another sound, a short, heavy, rattling

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"thunk" seems to make him pause and turn towards the camera. As he progresses along the ground floor, the "thunk" gradually increases in frequency forming a steady pulse and the faint tapping returns, before giving way to a sustained texture of steady col legno taps which confirm the noise(s) to be part of Jonny Greenwood's diegetic string score. Bowed scrapes and pitched glissandi are added creating a dissonant mass of instrumental effects that mark the eventual reveal that thirteen-year-old kidnappee, Nina (Ekaterina Samsanov), is the Governor's killer.

The scene is one of several filmic examples that Kulezic-Wilson cites where the "musicalization of sounds" (27) or, in this instance, an overtly sonic approach to scoring (36), notably the use of what Miguel Mera terms "haptic music" ("Materializing"), serves to blur the conventional lines between sound design and score "to the point that differentiation between the two is often impossible" (Kulezic-Wilson 54). The resulting "aesthetic of sonic integration" (54) is conceived as a liminal space where sound and music merge, affirmed in the chapter's title and the David Lynch quote with which it opens: "The borderline between sound effects and music is the most *beautiful* area" (Chris Rodley qtd. in Kulezic-Wilson 27).

The "particularly intense and even uncanny effect" (38) achieved in the Ramsey example holds further significance, at least for the purposes of this article, in that it prompts comparisons with another concept that resonates with Kulezic-Wilson's liminal space, that of Kevin Donnelly's notion of the soundtrack as spectre (20–1). From the subtlety of its initial announcement to its retreat via the most salient of musical gestures (the aforementioned "thunk"), Greenwood's score exemplifies Donnelly's description of the way film music can "burst through" from the "other side" (9) to "possess the film and its audience […] like a demonic presence" (20), even if its potential encroachment into the scene's diegesis does seem to stretch a basic premise of Donnelly's analogy: that the score "posits no time or space within the illusory world on screen" (Steve Wurtzler qtd. in Donnelly 20). Indeed, I would argue that the potency of the possession here, particularly the way the "musical sensibility" that Kulezic-Wilson identifies as underpinning much soundtrack integration is so forcefully emphasised, is such that the sequence begins to acquire the status of something quintessentially performative as much as cinematic (27).

What this article proposes is an alternative, complimentary perspective on Kulezic-Wilson's liminal space that considers the inherent performativity behind the sensuousness characterising many examples of sonic integration. If Kulezic-Wilson's concept is predominantly concerned with interrogating material interactions, then what is addressed here are the potential embodied connotations of that material in terms of musical affect. In particular, the article will focus on scored examples that rather unusually draw attention to the bodies behind the music we hear: the musicians. Firstly, examples where material hapticity is instigated by the projection of performative event or, more specifically, the live performance event are explored. The later examples meanwhile represent instances where the evoked presence of bodies/musicians acquires a more substantial spectral presence. In doing so, I hope to propose an expanded take on Donnelly's analogy to, somewhat paradoxically, consider how the revelation of event and source becomes fundamental to the score's ability to "possess".

Music and Musicians

While instrumental music, particularly orchestral music, largely remains the default for our preconceived notions of film music's soundworld (Brophy 9), the source of that music, the musicians themselves, and their role and place within the cinematic experience has tended to

be somewhat overlooked within film scoring discourses. This is perhaps unsurprising given the extent to which cinema has taken care to ensure the physical presence of performers is negated within its modes of presentation. In the silent era—arguably the one cinematic period where the role of the musician has received attention—this was largely visual: live musicians accompanying filmic presentations were effectively obscured in darkness or hidden from view in the orchestral pit so as not to distract from the images onscreen and thus emphasise the programmatic nature of the music performed. The advent of the recorded soundtrack effectively perpetuated this scenario, not least by adopting an approach to audio production that has served a comparable prioritisation of functionality for the film score, predominantly via increasing audio fidelity. Indeed, if Claudia Gorbman's first principle of the classical soundtrack is that the "technical apparatus of nondiegetic music must not be visible", then, it would seem, it must remain largely inaudible too (73). As Mera notes, the "effortless clarity and perfect evenness" ("Materializing" 157) to which recordings of film music tend to aspire often depends on smoothing over what Michel Chion terms "materializing sound indices", i.e. the features of sounds that confirm their physical origins (qtd. in Mera "Materializing" 157), essentially fulfilling "mediatized music's potential for eliminating all traces of bodies" (Sanden 39). This ideal arguably receives its full realisation with the widespread use of the "hyperorchestra" (Cassanelles) across the film industry today, a combination of virtual instruments, sonic processing and live instrumental samples that are largely indistinguishable from one another.

If the privileging of precision can largely be considered an inherent feature of the Western art music traditions from which film music is derived (Chion 114; Mera, "Materializing" 156), then it is across broader musical discourses where topics concerning the role of the body in musical performance have arguably received the most scrutiny, particular among those interrogating the relationship between live performance and recorded music. One common standpoint is that recordings offer an inferior experience to that of live concerts partly because they "invariably disrupt the audience's capacity for full engagement with the actions producing the sounds" (Gracyk 143), thus denying the audience what Carolyn Abatte terms "the drastic": the "physicality" and even "peril" inherent in the live performance of a musical work heard and seen in the flesh (510). Paul Sanden reinforces this argument noting that our understanding of what constitutes live performance (I would suggest both the collective term and, to an extent, the separate words "live" and "performance") is often based upon "common observations about the corporeal grounding of live performance in the actions of performers' bodies" and its "spontaneous and unexpected nature" (5). He goes on to construct a useful framework for clarifying the various manifestations of the often-ambiguous concept of "liveness" in a range of live and recorded scenarios, identifying several categories within what he terms a "*network of liveness*" (12). Of particular relevance to this discussion is the category of "*Corporeal Liveness*: Music is *live* when it demonstrates a perceptible connection to an acoustic body" (11). While instances of corporeal liveness are predominantly tied to the audience being able to see the musical performers (40), Sanden discusses examples of recorded music where a sense of corporeal liveness is present, notably those of pianist Glenn Gould. Here, the sound of Gould singing, his body and instrument, captured via close miking, affords the listener a *performance* as opposed to merely an *interpretation* of the musical work in question:

> we hear the tactility of [his] instrument: the creaking of his chair as he sways, the percussive nature of hammers hitting strings, the redampening of strings as he lifts his foot off the sustain pedal, and the very precise nuances of articulation that are lost in recordings with a more typically reverberant sound. (55)

This is not to say that such manifestations of the body in music need necessarily be confined to the sonic by-products that emanate from the interaction of musician and instrument. Jerrold Levinson suggests that part of music's expressivity lies with the fact that musical gestures themselves are inherently attached to the physical movements that produce them: "we rightly hear gesture in musical succession with full awareness of the source of what is heard" (398); and again, "[t]he insouciance of [an upward] keyboard glissando, for example 'derives from our imaginative grasp of the flicking or sweeping gestures behind—or perhaps better, embodied in—the tonal movement itself'" (399). This idea is developed more fully by Arnie Cox in his discussion of embodied cognition, which considers the various conceptual metaphors and embodied schemas that frame how we respond to and understand the music we listen to in terms of "mimetic behaviours" grounded in cognitive processes that he defines as "mimetic motor imagery"; put simply, what is it like to do/be that?, or, in a musical context, what does it feel like to make (those) sounds? (Cox 12, 46). Again, it is the "immediacy" of live performance that affords the most enhanced form of *mimetic engagement*:

> We can understand this enhancement in connection with what is at stake: […] we do not know exactly what will happen, and whatever does happen is more ephemeral than in a recorded performance. Both of these increase attention and the mimetic participation that comes with attention. (51)

Despite the "visual avenue of imitation" offered by observing the source of the sounds we hear (51),[1] Cox acknowledges that mimetic behaviours may equally underpin our affective response to the listening of recorded music (195). It is not inconceivable to suggest, therefore, that the same could apply within filmic contexts, where narrative and stylistic factors may help tease out this gestural relationship further. For example, when we hear the oscillating melody of John Williams's solo violin theme during the closing moments of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), do we not, on some level, imagine a lone fiddler—the movement of their bow and fingers and their impassioned vibrato—as they play their lament?

If we view the process of *how* we experience Sanden's network of liveness as relying on Cox's mimetic behaviours, then the following examples confirm as much. In each instance, overtly gestural (in the Levinson sense) musical materials are presented at particular moments via an intimate recording space that foregrounds the tactility of the music establishing a corporeal liveness that evokes the sense of a performing body behind the music we are hearing. The way the gestures are heard as well as the gestures themselves combine to elicit not just an envisaged presence but, to paraphrase Mera, one that is "felt" ("Materializing").

Intimacy and Immediacy

David Michôd's *The Rover* (2014) and the aforementioned *You Were Never Really Here* both receive considerable attention from Kulezic-Wilson as examples of films whose "musical material […] treads the line between score and design" (39). Both feature nondiegetic scores that emphasise sonic hapticity (a shared use of dissonant drones, percussive instrumental effects and abrupt bursts of noise-based material) which, combined with an often visceral approach to sound design and a melancholic, occasionally disturbing use of pop/rock songs in each case, creates an unsettling atmosphere that captures each respective film's narrative and aesthetic: the decaying landscape of *The Rover*'s postapocalyptic setting and the dark tone and subject matter (paedophilia/child abuse) of *You Were Never Really Here*, including the tormented mindset of its protagonist, Joe.

Nevertheless, there are instances in each film where the score's otherwise foreboding quality gives way to brief moments of respite, even comparative brightness. In *You Were Never Really Here*, this occurs at around the halfway point of the film, when Joe rescues Nina from the brothel. After a violent escape, the two get into Joe's car, Joe switches on the engine and, as they move off, a pitched pinging sound is heard which soon reveals itself to be that of lightly plucked string instruments. In a way, this moment provides a subtle hint to the uncanniness that occurs later in the film. For one thing, the cue sounds strangely reminiscent of the plucked string figures that the audience has just heard in the arrangement of a diegetic song, Joyce Heath's "I Wouldn't Dream of It", playing offscreen inside the brothel. Furthermore, for a brief moment, it seems as if the source of the sound is the car itself (the common warning of a car being in reverse); only when the gesture drops an octave does it become recognisable as a nondiegetic musical motif.

This music here represents a departure from the often abrasive or heavily produced nondiegetic cues heard in the film up to this point. The string plucks are soft, even delicate and the pitches harmonically consonant. Furthermore, the music is presented in a closer, warmer acoustic space that foregrounds the tactility of the plucking gesture. The imprecision of the plucked riffs and the musical ideas that are introduced as the cue develops—a slightly staggered, layered bowed melody (again harmonically consonant) punctuated by a reverberant hand clap that sounds entirely untreated and unbalanced—suggest that we are almost listening to physical musicians performing a live take rather than a produced cue. The immediacy of the music, its impromptu development and, in particular, the hand clapping, prompt an embodied response that Cox terms mimetic participation. While we may stop short of actually joining in with the music, we can certainly imagine how it would feel to join in—little instrumental or musical proficiency would be required and to do so would be pleasurable: "mimetic participation results in a sense of belonging and shared achievement" (14). The effect is playful and even celebratory, providing a tender accompaniment to the image of Nina's face staring dreamily out of the passenger side window on which the action largely settles (Fig. 1), while framing the previously disturbing sound of her internalised whispering (counting backwards to herself to block out the trauma of her real-world experiences) in a more hopeful context. While the visual aesthetic remains fairly austere (dark lighting, rain and slightly blurred imagery) the sense of corporeal liveness established in the music helps elevate the mood. To paraphrase Donnelly, it is as though the music emerges from its liminal space not so much to "possess" but gently embrace the characters' situation (20).

A similarly redemptive moment occurs in *The Rover*. Having been arrested by the army, Eric (Guy Pearce) is unexpectedly rescued by Rey (Robert Pattinson), the man whom he has effectively taken hostage in order to retrieve his stolen car. As the two men make their escape (Fig. 2), we hear a solo saxophone performing a soft, two-beat, pitched drone decorated with grace notes.[2] The music, Colin Stetson's "Groundswell", is one of several pre-existing pieces featured in the film, however, unlike the use of Scelsi's "Ko-Tha" for double bass, which Kulezic-Wilson discusses at great length (40–2), the solo instrumental sonority is not intricately integrated with the scene's sound design but functions as a stand-alone entity. Like the Ramsey example, the cue is conspicuously different from much of the film's soundtrack; while the saxophone sonority features elsewhere in *The Rover*, it is largely within an ensemble setting and in the form of sustained growls or jarring multiphonics that align with the score's often coarse quality. Once again, the music is placed within a warm, reverberant acoustic, in close proximity to the listener, although here the effect is more pronounced. Despite the soft delicacy of the performance, the comparatively high volume of the cue fills the audio space all but drowning out the diegetic sound while accentuating Stetson's physical actions to the extent

that the material is dominated by breath/air sounds, and the clicking/tapping of fingers manipulating the instrument's key mechanism as much as the pitches themselves. The spatial proximity of the saxophone sonority here plays on the intimacy that Cox attributes to the (locational) taboo of "permitting someone else to be so close" (193). This, in turn, prompts an embodied response that he describes as mimetic exertion; while there is little sense of strain, the physical effort required to sound the music we are hearing is foregrounded: "Because a greater sense of effort tends to motivate a greater sense of purpose […] musical experiences that involve a greater sense of effort are more fraught, and the affective rewards for listeners can be correspondingly more intense" (179). Like the Ramsey example, the music's uneven quality, particularly the way Stetson manipulates the drone to oscillate between the overtones of the harmonic series, captures the immediacy of a live take, exemplifying an important characteristic of Chion's "materializing sound indices" (m.s.i.s):

> [They] frequently consist of *unevennesses* in the course of the sound that denote a resistance, a breach, or hitch in the movement of the mechanical process producing the sound […] For the sound of a musical instrument, m.s.i.s would include the attack of a note […] friction, breaths […] They return the sound to the sender […] accentuating the work of the sound's emitter and its faults instead of allowing us to forget the emitter in favour of the sound […] itself. (115–16)

The end result is a calm, buckled fanfare, the dextrous fluidity of which seems to lift the action beyond the violent images and barren landscape on screen, framing the men's getaway as a peaceful flight (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: Eric and Rey escape. *The Rover*, dir. David Michôd. Roadshow Films, 2017. Screenshot.

At their most fundamental, the music in these two scenes is representative of the tendency towards "smallness" identified by Royal S. Brown several decades ago as an emerging trend in film scoring (Nagari 62). Music that shuns the grandeur and/or polish of conventional Hollywood scoring in favour of minimal—particularly solo—forces, often placed within an intimate acoustic can be found across a range of films where an air of poignancy is required, e.g. Gustavo Santaolalla's solo guitar-based score for Alejandro Iñárritu's *Biutiful* (2010). At the same time, these cues both feature within largely haptic scores, the functionality of which tends to rely on harnessing sonic densities and instrumental "dirtiness" (Mera, "Materializing") to prompt an embodied response in the listener (our opening "thunk").

Gestures may "powerfully recall the human motor actions that produce them, revealing the tactile physicality of their source" ("Materializing" 158); however, that source largely takes the form of a collective body or abstract origin. The use of an arguably more conventional harmonic palette in the two examples described, articulated via an overtly tactile instrumental vernacular and more modest instrumental forces, enables each cue to maintain their soundtrack's "felt" functionality, albeit less viscerally: we feel the physical presence behind the music more than we feel the music itself.

There is also a spatial factor worth considering. As Mera notes, one consequence of 3-Dimensional sound is that "music begins to function with a similar kind of directional freedom that has been typical of sound design" ("3-D" 103). To do so, however, it must relinquish its "spatially fixed characteristics […] typically associated with the perception of real musicians playing real instruments […] because the sound of the instrument automatically conjures mental perceptions of human performers in traditional static performance spaces" (103). Thus, the sound-oriented nature of haptic scores and the material integration of the hyperorchestra lend themselves well to spatial diffusion in a way that the two examples above do not. We might therefore consider their close position in the audio mix as constituting a comparable type of spatial freedom. Since their identifiable instrumental character prevents any directional diffusion, they instead offer a kind of audio wormhole into the liminal space of the soundtrack enabling the audience to experience it as more tangible and more defined. To apply Sanden's network of liveness, the corporeal liveness established in the tactility of musical gestures is reinforced by the aforementioned uneven quality of the music which, itself, evokes the "*Liveness of Spontaneity*: Music is *live* when it demonstrates the spontaneity and unpredictability of human performance" (11). This affords the listener an aural insight into an evoked sense of physical space and time concerning the performed music we hear: "*Temporal Liveness*" and "*Spatial Liveness*" (11). In short, corporeal liveness is established by both the intimate and the immediate.

The final example in this section offers a useful comparison with the previous two in that the sense of corporeality is not confined to salient scored outliers but embedded across the entirety of the soundtrack. While the musical material is still of the type that returns "the sound to the sender" (Chion 115), its more fragmentary nature prompts a mimetic engagement (Cox) that draws less on the immediacy of musical performance as an "event" and more on activating/reactivating a sense of corporeal liveness (Sanden) via patterns of recurrence.

Set in late nineteenth-century Australia, John Hillcoat's *The Proposition* (2005) tells the story of Irish immigrant Charlie Burns (Guy Pearce), who, having been arrested along with his younger brother Mikey (Richard Wilson), is offered the chance to save Mikey from execution and ensure their freedom on the condition that he finds and murders his older brother, Arthur (Danny Huston), a violent, psychopathic outlaw. The soundtrack, which features music by long-time collaborators Warren Ellis and Nick Cave (the film's writer), involves slightly more delineated roles for music and sound. Hillcoat's thick, visceral depiction of the Australian outback—bloody and violent imagery, bodily decay and even the mention of acrid smells—is reinforced by the almost omnipresent diegetic sound of insects (flies and crickets), the cawing of crows and the sound of wind and dust. Meanwhile, the film's scored cues offer a more ethereal, reflective soundworld centred around ambient drones; invasive bursts of haptic scoring are reserved for specific moments of dramatic tension associated with physical violence and death, such as when Charlie visits the scene of the Hopkins's murder.

In many ways, the soundtrack for *The Proposition* functions rather like the "virtual repository" that Donnelly describes in relation to his sonic spectre (21), deploying a range of cues centred around a handful of core materials that underpin the haunted quality that Catriona Elder identifies as characterising the contested landscape of the outback that the film depicts, specifically the spiritual presence of its indigenous people, now murdered or displaced: "the land seems to be weeping and disgorging its long buried voices and bones" (Adrian Martin qtd. in Elder 172). The most prominent of these is the presence of disembodied voices. At various points throughout the film whispered verse, gentle singing aligned to nondiegetic instrumental figures and the soft moan-like humming of short melodies, all presented within a close, intimate acoustic, evoke a quasi-physical presence that haunts the action on screen. Meanwhile, the instrumental material, which centres around the sound of Warren Ellis's bowed and plucked fiddle, incorporates a similar tactility and unevenness as the two previous films that, while comparably corporeal, seems equally aligned to the raw grittiness of the film's setting.

Elsewhere, it is the soundtrack's more blended, mediatised cues that arguably offer its most striking moments. One in particular occurs as we watch Charlie camp out for the night. Here, a sustained drone accompanies an electronically manipulated (reversed), repeated electric bass pattern that emphasises the metallic wiping sound of fingers against amplified strings as much as its pitched material;[3] the bass figure is later joined by a voice humming a melody. The m.s.i.s (Chion) of the "wipe" serves as a conduit for several of the soundtrack's ideas. Its dirty tactility merges the comparably raw acoustic instrumental material with instances of electric bass and guitar elsewhere in the film, creating cohesion between these soundworlds. This, in turn, bridges the stylistic gap of incorporating a synthetic scored approach in what is essentially a period film. If the parameter of texture is often responsible for our perception of musical "depth" (Cox 110), then it is the timbral hapticity of the "wipe" rather than spatial proximity that gives it its salience. Indeed, there is a performative tension within the cue that is somewhat strange and ultimately arresting. If the busyness of the "wipes" convey more of a sense of Cox's mimetic exertion than the soundtrack's more untreated cues, its mediatised state dislocates the corporeal lineage behind those exertions; it is *more* disembodied: "Musical sounds, when not explicitly tethered to their physical sources, are like the sounds of ghosts, spirits, Gods" (196). Thus, the cue/sonic spectre is simultaneously more performative while less corporeal, the end result of which is darker, more oneiric and more disruptive.

Performativity and Presence

The spectral presence evoked in the soundtrack for *The Proposition* provides a neat segue to the final two examples in this article, both of which harness the immediacy of in-the-moment live performance to evoke a perpetual presence that is more heavily integrated within the narrative context of each film. Before exploring how this is achieved, a term central to the discussion thus far needs probing in more detail: performativity.

At its most fundamental, performativity is defined by Nicholas Cook as "the idea of music as performance", where "meaning emerges from any and all dimensions of the performative event" (6, 8). Although often used as an umbrella term within musical discourses (Abbate 507) closer interrogations offered by Margaret Kartomi and Jane Davidson reveal a more specific reading of performativity that defines the various manifestations of the term within "the describable and analysable aspects of a performer's or group's competence or accomplishment while performing" (Kartomi 190), as opposed to the live presentation of an event (a *performance*); even within mediatised performances, these features "can still be

analysed in terms of the performers' imagined audience" (190). While this may encompass, amongst other things, interactivity, acoustic or entrainment, arguably one of the most significant factors is that of the performer's *persona* (190; Davidson 180).

Antonio Sánchez's largely improvised, solo drumkit soundtrack for Iñárritu's *Birdman* (2014) is one example where the more active, substantial status acquired by the evoked physical presence of a performing musician becomes akin to a performative persona. As Henrique Rocha de Souza Lima argues, the continual presence of the drumkit throughout *Birdman* exemplifies Chion's notion of the *acousmêtre*, an acousmatic entity that occupies a liminal space within the film's diegesis (Chion 128–31; Lima 148) acquiring the effective status of a character in its own right, something the director himself confirms (Carlson 230). On a stylistic level, the drumkit represents the audio equivalent of the one-shot approach that characterises the film's camera work; just as the camera follows the characters on the fly, the drums respond to momentum shifts as the drama unfolds onscreen effectively replicating the live accompaniments to silent film referred to earlier. The liveness of spontaneity inherent in Sánchez's improvisatory material is complimented by further "livenesses" established with the very first sound we hear in the film: against the Regency ident that introduces the film's titles, we actually hear Sánchez's voice asking a question in Spanish, as he tunes his drums and warms up (Carlson 232). This rare and pronounced instance of corporeal liveness is emphasised by the sound of the drums themselves:

> There is a rawness, a presence to the recording quality that is often absent in smooth and clean high-definition recordings […] Sánchez adjusted his conventional percussion setup, utilizing such techniques as putting tape on his drumheads, detuning them, and stacking his cymbals to make them sound more broken-in and well-used—ultimately giving the recordings a dirtier, grittier overall sound. (Carlson 232)

The combination of these timbral qualities and low ceiling of the audio mix establish the sense of a real-time performance within a physical audio space. However, there is a further immediacy that is tied to the film's diegetic present. While the raw, boxy acoustic was intended to reflect the tight, dark spaces of the Broadway theatre within which much of the film is set (232), there are moments—the opening sequence within Riggan's (Michael Keaton) dressing room, for instance—where the drumkit seems to be playing somewhere offscreen, within the theatre itself. In many ways, the drumkit reflects the contested space of Riggan's mindset, which is torn between the serious stage actor/director that he strives to be in the present and the commercial superhero character that defined his earlier career. Whereas occasional instances of sourced symphonic music in *Birdman* are largely tied to the fictional world of the Raymond Carver play that Riggan is directing or where Birdman finally appears in situ (Lima 146–7), and which Riggan appears to be able to control (at one point he utters the command, "stop the music" and the scored cue promptly obeys), the drumkit independently fluctuates between diegetic existences. At times it adopts an observational position. Elsewhere, it seems a more active participant, responding to and even elevating the level of "disturbance" at moments of conflict between characters (Lima 144; Carlson 231). There are even occasions where it materialises into a physical musician performing onscreen (a busker Riggan passes on the street and who later appears in the theatre's kitchen). Like Chion's *acousmêtre*, "[it] seems to be able to be anywhere [it] wishes" (130).

An equally performative persona is evoked within the score of Andrey Zvyagintsev's *Loveless* (2017), although here that presence is ensured not through a single instrumental vehicle but via multiple audiovisual cues. Uncompromising to the point of being brutal,

Loveless offers a stark portrayal of divorcing couple Zhenya (Maryana Spivak) and Boris (Aleksey Rozin) whose toxic sparring is interrupted when their twelve-year-old son, Alyosha (Matvey Novikov), suddenly disappears, seemingly without a trace. In many ways, the film revisits the "presence of […] otherness" that Julia Vassilieva identifies as a central feature of Zyagintsev's modern day take on the biblical book of Job, *Leviathan* (2014). *Leviathan*'s use of heavyweight, orchestral music and depiction of vast landscapes—natural and built—evoke a sense of "non-human otherness" (Vassilieva) whose scale, and sociohistorical/cultural connotations, serve to dwarf and frame the "little people" status of the lead characters, providing a constant reminder of greater forces beyond their control, the most obvious being the ubiquitous influence of the present-day Russian premier.

In contrast, *Loveless* adopts a more introverted audiovisual language to evoke a more ambiguous spectral presence. The score by Evgueni and Sacha Galperine is rather more diverse than those of Zyagintsev's previous films, encompassing solo piano and orchestral cues as well as ambient, electronic textures, yet all based on a single gesture that we hear as the film begins: the evenly repeated hammering of a high-pitched E-minor piano chord and syncopated lower dominant pitch. While the choice of material was intended to reflect the film's single narrative focus of finding the missing boy (Ebbinghaus),[4] for some, the echoes of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* will be apparent; certainly, its narrative themes of abduction, mysterious forces at work and the sacrifice of a young innocent resonate with the plot of *Loveless*. However, it is the way the piano is performed here that is perhaps most intriguing. Although the chords are played loudly, because the practice pedal is down, the piano sonority is muffled. As a result, we hear the heavy exertion of the pianist's hands against the keys and the resonance of the instrument as much as we do the music. Meanwhile, because the single syncopated pitch is left unpedalled, its "clean" timbre jumps out against the dampened chords creating a sense of spatial depth. As the pedal is slowly lifted, the music begins to increase in volume and intensity to the point of violent aggression before it suddenly drops, lurching backwards within the audio space. The two gestures swap roles and the cycle begins again, only this time an orchestral texture gradually creeps up on the piano sonority, enveloping it.



Figure 3: The search. *Loveless*, dir. Andrey Zvyagintsev. Sony, 2017. Screenshot.

Returning to the Levinson and Cox analogies, the musical gestures here are entirely bound up with the physical movements required to produce them. Indeed, such is the strain of

the exertion that it is hard to hear the cue without picturing those movements. Furthermore, it is this same exertion that is responsible for mapping the near and far of the cue's trajectory, the inner timbral battle of which creates an unusually pronounced sense of the embodied *looming* that Cox attributes to audio crescendos (98); depth is established by space and texture as well as volume. The straightjacketed ferocity that results presents a particularly arresting means of capturing the relentless spite and bitter tension of Zhenya and Boris's relationship as well as the stifling oppressive impact it is having on their son. Meanwhile, the way the cue emerges and retreats evokes a bogeyman-like persona that provides an equally physical, arguably more ominous presence than the post-Soviet political "other" of *Leviathan*, reflecting the mystery surrounding Alyosha's disappearance.

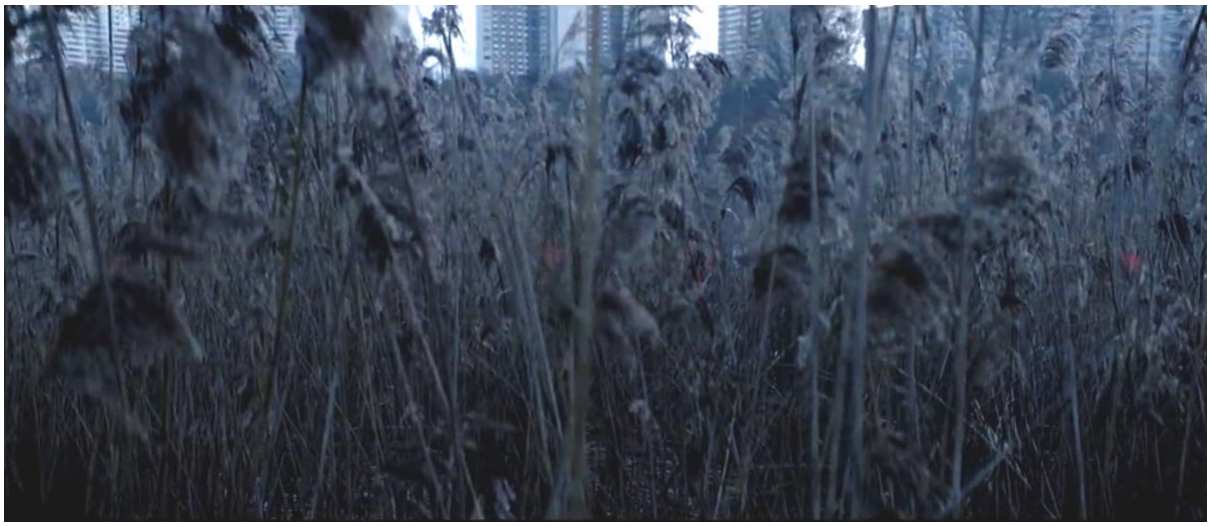


Figure 4: The tall grass. *Loveless*, dir. Andrey Zvyagintsev. Sony, 2017. Screenshot.

As the film progresses, the piano sonority shifts towards "cold", sparse, high-register figures that capture the film's autumn/winter setting. As a result, it is the more mediatised scored cues that sustain the sense of a sinister presence. A notable example occurs after Alyosha has gone missing. As the search party conducts a systematic sweep of the parklands near the couple's home, a sustained, klaxon-like drone is heard. While the drone plays on the common cinematic trope of building tension (Donnelly 90), its industrial-sounding timbre provides a greater sense of foreboding, echoing the depersonalising, nonhuman effect that Marcus Boon notes regarding the use of machine-like drones in the world of pop and electronica (66). Moreover, although the drone is confirmed to be part of the nondiegetic score by the end of the scene, we are initially unclear as to whether or not it is part of the diegetic soundscape. It only enters after the camera has shifted from an elegant panoramic shot of the search party, another grand vista (Fig. 3), to a brief, low-level tracking position amongst the tall grass (Fig. 4). Although the distance of the sound never feels aligned to this viewpoint, there nonetheless is a sense of "the other" about this combination of image and sound. Is this someone lurking in the grass? Do they know where Alyosha is? Is it even Alyosha himself? As the scene progresses the drone seems to adopt an observational presence yet one that remains at close proximity to onscreen events. When the camera rests on Boris, the drone seems to actively respond, becoming more dissonant. It then seems to accompany the regulated rhythmic calls of the team member shouting Alyosha's name the uncanny effect of which, while not entirely musical, establishes a mantra-like performativity.

Like the drumkit in *Birdman*, the drone seems to exist in a state of flux, oscillating between potential diegetic contexts each of which seem to affirm a spectral "other". This is reinforced later in the film when the party conducts a further search of the parkland. Once again, we hear a drone-like sound—less imposing than the first—only this time it is heard underneath the easily identifiable noise of a distant aircraft; there are no sudden changes of camera position. As the camera tracks to the right, the sound's source is revealed to be the glacial movements of a huge radar dish (Fig. 5), recalling Zvyagintzev's more typical visual depictions of otherness (Vassilieva).



Figure 5: The radar dish. *Loveless*, dir. Andrey Zvyagintsev. Sony, 2017. Screenshot.

Conclusion

In many ways, these final examples mirror the dynamic achieved in the opening Ramsey example (although here it is the score that responds to the diegesis/characters rather than the reverse). Nonetheless, they return the discussion to an essential functionality shared by each: that of evoking intensity and/or uncanniness. By projecting a physical presence—suggested by the narrative and aesthetic context of musical material and/or embodied in the material itself— these examples are representative of scoring approaches that offer a further string to the metaphorical bow of the soundtrack's expressive palette. At their most fundamental, they may be considered as more broadly representative of the "strong current towards disruption" (Kulezic-Wilson 151) inherent within integrated approaches to soundtracking and, in particular, sonic hapticity. While the tactility, even muscularity of musical gestures may be exploited to extend the potential of haptic scores' ability to "simultaneously feel as much as we hear" (Mera, "Materializing" 172), they often prompt us to feel in a different way. Rather than permeate or invade the body (160), these cues beckon and allure, evoking and amplifying the state of audience/performer compresence (Gracyk 148) associated with performative "liveness" by placing the body and ear in a position close enough to feel and hear not just the music but the liminal space it occupies.

There are of course limits to applying some of the theoretical concepts appropriated from the study of musical performance (live and recorded) in this enquiry to a cinematic context. The visual foil of the images onscreen will always impact any evocations prompted by our listening experience but then, in many respects, that is precisely what these various

examples play upon. Given the recession of the melodic-oriented score (Kulezic-Wilson 152), the performativity demonstrated in the examples discussed here can be viewed as a means with which scoring may re-engage with the instrumental musical heritage of film music within an aesthetic frame that aligns to more haptic scoring approaches and, arguably, the more immersive audiovisual technologies of the current era. Nonetheless, by interrogating these examples in terms of their performativity, it is hoped they may help illuminate some of the functionality behind the material interactions that define Kulezic-Wilson's liminal space. In doing so, they affirm not only the ongoing relevance of Donnelly's conceptual analogy to the study of film music, but also a central argument at the heart of Danijela Kulezic-Wilson's work: "to shift the focus of attention from phenomenologically based enquiry to examining the sensuousness of the film form itself […] and the role of sound in nurturing the sensuousness of the aesthetic experience" (154).

Notes

[1] Gracyk concludes that Levinson's argument implies a dependence on seeing the performers in question (146).

[2] The saxophone drone can be interpreted as a twist on the common musical trope of the didgeridoo depicting rural Australia.

[3] Sanden discusses the intimate quality of a similar sound in a Sondre Lerche track in his chapter exploring Glenn Gould's recordings (62–4).

[4] This seems somewhat strange given how lacking in focus—to the point of apathy—both parents are in finding their son, at least initially.

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