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Danijela Kulezic-Wilson: Legacy for Film Music and Sound Studies

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Danijela Kulezic-Wilson (1966–2021)

Danijela Kulezic-Wilson was a leading musicologist based at University College Cork, Ireland. She passed away in 2021. Laura Rascaroli, the Editor-in-Chief of *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* suggested this Dossier dedicated to Kulezic-Wilson's writing and legacy for film, music, and sound scholarship. Rascaroli asked me if I would be interested in guest editing this *Alphaville* Dossier as Kulezic-Wilson and I had worked together as co-editors on an anthology, *The Palgrave Handbook of Sound Design and Music: Integrated Soundtracks*, published in 2016. I agreed to do this as Kulezic-Wilson had been an important collaborator and friend.

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Kulezic-Wilson and I had known each other since 2004 when we met at a postgraduate research seminar at the University of Ulster, where Kulezic-Wilson was enrolled as a PhD candidate, and I was about to start my PhD studies. We found we shared an overlapping interest in music and sound. Over the years, we regularly met up and discussed these topics at research events, alongside social catch ups. When in 2013 I was asked by Kevin Donnelly to edit an anthology on sound design for his Palgrave series, I asked him if instead I could collaborate with Kulezic-Wilson on a book that focussed on the integration of music and sound design. We started to work on a small volume titled *The Integrated Soundtrack*, but this was soon expanded at Palgrave's request, and it became a much larger volume.

In the introduction to that book, we developed our ideas around what an "integrated soundtrack" is and could be. We came from different backgrounds, mine in sound design, hers in musicology, and as a consequence we conceptualised the term "integrated soundtrack" slightly differently. Kulezic-Wilson's writings focussed mainly on auteurs working in arthouse cinema. Her approach orientated around one key creative person bringing together an "integrated soundtrack", this was often the director. My approach was based on collaborative filmmaking practices, drawing from my experiences working in the film industry, and my research into film sound archives. However, our different approach to the "integrated soundtrack" was a real strength to the volume. We invited a range of scholars and practitioners in film music and film sound to contribute and asked them to consider what an "integrated soundtrack" meant to them in their work. The "integrated soundtrack" was worked out through the contributions of each author to the volume as well as through our interventions to the book. Kulezic-Wilson went on to write a final monograph entitled *Sound Design Is the New Score: Theories, Aesthetics, and Erotics of the Integrated Soundtrack*, published in 2020. She again used the term "integrated soundtrack" and applied it to new writings and previously published articles and chapters redrafted for her monograph, developing out and on from her earlier ideas. This monograph has been very well received, as was her first book, *The Musicality of Narrative Film* (2015).

For this *Alphaville* Dossier, I invited scholars to contribute on how Kulezic-Wilson's writings in books, articles, and chapters have shaped their thinking. I asked them to "respond to, build on, and engage with the many pioneering ideas" she put forward. In this Dossier there are nine contributions—six traditional essays and three audiovisual essays. Kulezic-Wilson's writings have been the launch point for each of these contributions and it is significant to see the teasing through of her ideas and concepts. Many of the contributors knew Kulezic-Wilson personally, some were close friends, one was a student of hers, and some only knew her through her writing. At times the essays in this Dossier touch on or are based upon the personal connections the authors had with her. What is significant to see across these contributions is the range of ideas addressed, from discussions on the integrated soundtrack, reticent cinema, film musicality, liminality, corporeality, haptics, and aesthetics.

Oswald Iten's audiovisual essay "The Musicality of Traumatic Memories" opens this Dossier of *Alphaville* with an investigation of musicalised patterns in Lynne Ramsay's *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (2011). Iten uses Kulezic-Wilson's writing across much of her output to address many components of the soundtrack to highlight how the musicalised use of sound and music offers a way to understand fragmented traumatic memory. Iten uses innovative animations with Ramsay's audiovisual material to underline and highlight where we should place our attention. Iten is using Kulezic-Wilson's writings to expand her ideas on cinema but in doing so he creates an extended argument both for Kulezic-Wilson's approach to film analysis and for the use of videographic criticism in the analysis of film sound and music.

Adam Melvin also opens his article, "More Beautiful Areas: Performativity and Presence in the Integrated Soundtrack", considering Lynne Ramsay's output, this time, with another film, *You Were Never Really Here* (2017). Melvin starts with Kulezic-Wilson's approach to Ramsay's film to examine the liminal spaces of the soundtrack and the musicalisation of sounds, to focus on performativity, spatiality, haptics, and corporeality within the soundtrack. Melvin goes on to discuss *The Rover* (David Michôd, 2014), *The Proposition* (John Hillcoat, 2005), and *Loveless* (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 2017), to investigate liveness as a concept in live and recorded musical performance and unpick the sensuousness of film form. With a focus on aesthetics within arthouse films, Melvin continues a conversation in dialogue with Kulezic-Wilson's key concerns.

Catherine Grant's audiovisual essay "Drill Team: On *Beau Travail* and *The Fits*" offers a rhythmic dialogue between the two aforementioned films discussed by Kulezic-Wilson in *Sound Design*. Grant incorporates text from this 2020 monograph and Kulezic-Wilson's earlier, *Musicality*, to bookend this piece whilst restricting the edit to full screen and split screen footage of *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, 1999) and *The Fits* (Anna Rose Holmer, 2015). The audiovisual essay finds moments of parallel and divergence, whilst illustrating the musicality inherent in both films and in the work of videographic criticism. In the accompanying written statement, "On *Drill Team*, and the musicality of Videographic Criticism", Grant argues, "*Drill Team* was also a conscious experiment in videographic musicality in the service of scholarly film criticism." For me, the affect of this work is a foregrounding of the musicality of the body, the body on film, and the film body within these works, and it successfully and succinctly addresses Kulezic-Wilson's writing on both films.

Jessica Shine similarly picks up this focus on the body in her article "'He Has Music in Him': Musical Moments and Corporeality in *Joker* (2019)". Like Grant, Shine turns to Kulezic-Wilson's writing on *Beau Travail* and *The Fits* to think through the use of sound, music, and the body, but this time in relation to Todd Philip's *Joker*. Shine investigates fandom and spectatorship in *Joker*, to problematise the relationship between Arthur's body in dance and his physical enactment of onscreen violence. The representation of violence and physical movement cuts across all three of these films and what Shine argues is present in *Joker* is a decoupling of empathy for dance from the affective presentation of violence through Arthur's metamorphosis onscreen.

Robynn J. Stilwell's article "'Remembrance': Reticence, the Sensual, the Erotic, and the Music for *The Irishman*" also speaks to affect, focussing on Robbie Robertson's music for Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman* (2019). Stilwell gives an overview of Robertson's musical career, and particularly his collaborations with Scorsese. Stilwell draws from Kulezic-Wilson's writings on erotics and the physical and affective components of film music to discuss a change in attitudes in musicology over recent decades. She develops out the idea of reticence in cinema focussing on the sparseness of Robertson and Scorsese's work together and draws attention to the theme of "remembrance" in *The Irishman*, which is a fitting topic for this article that is inspired by Kulezic-Wilson's writing.

James Wierzbicki also engages with the idea of reticent cinema in his article "Music in 'Reticent' Cinema". This article challenges the prevalence of extra-diegetic music in narrative cinema, and makes the case for a more ambiguous, open-ended cinema that probes at human consciousness. Wierzbicki's article provocatively discusses the limits of post-classical Hollywood cinema, and like Kulezic-Wilson, draws attention to the merits of many auteurs who push at the boundaries of narrative cinema through their use of music. Drawing from film,

musicology, and literary studies, Wierzbicki highlights "perturbatory" films as a means to challenge film endings which require an audience to engage in repeated reflection.

Challenging a definitive ending is also central to Elsie Walker's article, "Remembering My Friend and Rehearing Two Films". Walker outlines her scholarly and personal friendship with Kulezic-Wilson and inserts herself and their discussions of film into the core of the article, especially the conversations they had towards the end of Kulezic-Wilson's life. This Dossier makes use of traditional desktop writing methods coupled with the more recently established presentation of scholarly work in the form of the audiovisual essay. Practice based research is becoming more accepted within academia, however, it is perhaps the boldness of Walker's approach here that allows for quite a personal take on the peer-reviewed scholarly article. Walker uses both traditional academic writing and personally composed poetry to work through her grief. Walker discusses *Soul* (Pete Docter and Kemp Powers, 2020) and *Nomadland* (Chloé Zhao, 2020), two films Kulezic-Wilson discussed with Walker about her approaching death. Walker draws inspiration from Sarah Penwarden's work on grief therapy and found poetry to compose two poems about Kulezic-Wilson. Discussing Kulezic-Wilson's writing on repeated viewing and the understanding of what unfolds through these audioviewing acts, Walker produces a work that reaches for the spiritual and transcendental interests Kulezic-Wilson has often discussed in relation to auteur cinema.

Veering away from auteur cinema to a more situated cinema, John O'Flynn incorporates ideas developed on the "integrated soundtrack" in relation to Troubles films set in post ceasefire Northern Ireland in his article "Blurring the Line? Music, Sound and 'Sonic Gaze' in Post-Ceasefire Troubles-Themed Film". He expands upon Kulezic-Wilson's ideas in *Sound Design* and T Storm Heter's concept of the "sonic gaze" to highlight artistic breakthroughs in the compositions of David Holmes in conjunction with sound design, often in collaboration with the sound designer Paul Davies. The types of integrated soundtracks presented by O'Flynn in this article refuse an authorial sonic gaze and instead suggest a more complicated perspective on the Troubles and the post–Good Friday Agreement peace process in Northern Ireland.

Randolph Jordan's audiovisual essay, "Composing Perception: Hildegard Westerkamp Meets Gus Van Sant", also challenges perceptions on auteurship by using Westerkamp's soundscape "Doors of Perception" (1989) to consider Gus Van Sant's cinema anew. Jordan in his written accompaniment outlines his and Kulezic-Wilson's shared interest in Van Sant, a filmmaker they both came to write about and discuss multiple times. Jordan's innovative audiovisual essay uses "Doors of Perception" to listen to Van Sant's films *Elephant* (2003) and *Last Days* (2005) differently. Van Sant used Westerkamp's soundscape in both films to create altered perceptions for specific moments for his characters. However, Van Sant was not working in collaboration with Westerkamp, he used (with permission) Westerkamp's sound work in conjunction with sound designed specifically for each film. What Jordan does by using the totality of "Doors of Perception" is weave through Van Sant's oeuvre a sonically consistent approach that highlights Van Sant's interest in both music concrète and soundwalking. Jordan achieves a difficult feat here, making connections and drawing us closer to an auteurial approach whilst also respecting and foregrounding Westerkamp's soundscape. Jordan also incorporates texts written by Kulezic-Wilson to underpin his argument, thus allowing for a dialogue to continue between Kulezic-Wilson and Jordan on Van Sant's film.

All of the contributions in this Dossier build on from Kulezic-Wilson's writing to develop case studies that speak to particular areas of cinema, music, sound theory, history, and/or reception. The methods adopted are varied, indicating the applicability of Kulezic-Wilson's

writing to a range of subjects, themes and areas of exploration. The intent with this Dossier is to extend Kulezic-Wilson's writing and also introduce scholars unfamiliar with the breadth of her writing to the depth and range of material available for film sound and music analysis.

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