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Filling The Gaps: Playing The Semiotic Network In The Extemporization Of Scores For Improvisational Theater

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FILLING THE GAPS:
PLAYING THE SEMIOTIC NETWORK IN THE EXTEMPORIZATION OF SCORES FOR IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER

by

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DEDICATION

For Margaret

out tunes at the piano or played them on the stereo, and even got into the spirit of saying, "semiotics," (much to her own chagrin) when she heard something significant on TV or in a movie. She is truly the best partner and friend that I could have.

PREFACE

After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I would never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.— — And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation.[1] — Ludwig Wittgenstein

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1   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), vii.

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INTRODUCTION

> Discourse about compositional processes and perception is … discontinuous.... [We] need a "gapology," a science of lacunae, an analysis of the empty spots.[1]
> — Jean-Jacques Nattiez

> [Whenever] the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins.[2] — Wolfgang Iser

> [The] amount of music for religious uses, for dancing and hunting, for singing words, for accompanying stories in opera, cantata, or oratorio vastly outweighs the remainder. Most Western music has been written "about something.[3]
> — Jacques Barzun

> [The] fact that we deal with signs in all our activities as human beings suggests the indispensability of semiotics to our understanding of the world. To be human is to do semiotics.[4] — Kofi Agawu

Music plays as much a role in how we read, or are read by, others, as does dress, dialect, body-language, or tone-of-voice. It functions as a <u>signifier</u> which can fill the gaps of information which might otherwise exist in a narrative, situational, or personal assessment. In fact, the ability to fill those gaps is at the heart of music's multimedia function.

An awareness of these gaps, a willingness to fill them, the ability to form musical connections to, and between, characters, places, or moments, and the ability to bolster, shade, or contradict on-stage action or dialogue through the use of <u>musical signifiers</u> is

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1   Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 193.
2   Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 169. Quoted in Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 18.
3   Jacques Barzun, "The Meaning of Meaning in Music: Berlioz Once More," *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (January, 1980): 6. Article Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/742134 (accessed February 21, 2012).
4   Kofi Agawu, "The Challenge of Semiotics," in *Rethinking Music*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 159.

the responsibility of a Musical Director (hereafter, MD) for Improvised Theater. Co-critical is an actor's ability to perceive, interpret, react to, and integrate said signifiers. Finally, the <u>mutual interpretation</u> of such gestures by actor and MD lies at the heart of performing Improvised Theater for both the actor <u>and</u> the musician. In the words of Fred Kaz, it is a matter of, "Follow the Follower."[5]

What Can Music "Tell" Us

One can scarcely escape Music in this present age, even if one doesn't "listen to music." Radio and television commercials, movies, television programs, even our cellphones and our computers contain and produce musical sounds. Two people starting two different computers, one a Mac and the other a PC, are greeted by musical sounds unique to the operating system of each computer. In this instance, musical iconography works hand-in-metaphorical-hand with the visual iconography of a company or brand logo to help establish and reinforce brand identity. These musical icons each form a type of leitmotiv for their respective products/brands.[6]

Though removed from a dramatic situation (a shareholder's disagreement notwithstanding), Apple and Microsoft's musical icons serve as a type of heraldic-fanfare for a computer-user's impending computing experience. One might infer that Apple's startup sound of a single, root-position F-sharp major chord is reflective of its product's

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5　　Fred Kaz, in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 115.
6　　Arnold Whittall, "Leitmotif," In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*,
http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16360 (accessed June 4, 2012).
　　A theme, or other coherent musical idea, clearly defined so as to retain its identity if modified on subsequent appearances, whose purpose is to represent or *symbolize a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force[,] or any other ingredient* in a dramatic work. A leitmotif may be musically unaltered on its return, or altered in rhythm, intervallic structure, harmony, orchestration or accompaniment, and may also be combined with other leitmotifs in order to suggest a new dramatic situation. Emphasis mine.

ubiquitous (and touted) stability. One might also infer that Microsoft's startup sound (depending on Windows XP, Vista, or 7) of a melodically embellished, openly-voiced suspended-chord, indicates the <u>beginning</u> of a computing experience, presented in unresolved harmonies as a contrast to the finality of Apple's opening gesture. (Taken a step further, in the 2008 animated film *Wall-E* the eponymous protagonist (a robot) goes through a reboot sequence which is punctuated by the aforementioned F-sharp major chord; Apple's icon. Apple was co-founded by Steve Jobs, who also co-founded Pixar, the company which produced *Wall-E*.)

None of the preceding is intended to sell the reader on the merits of one given computer platform over the other. Rather, it is intended to draw the reader's attention to the fact that musical branding exists even at the most basic level of our day-to-day existence; and, as is evidenced by the *Wall-E*-example, transferred/transferable across multiple domains. Every time we turn on our Mac or PC, our sense of brand identity is reinforced with each tolling of the proverbial digital bell.

This sense of identity can be transposed to multiple levels of our lives which are steps removed from the commercial realm. For example, we can experience a level of national identity when exposed to our (perhaps, even, someone else's) national anthem. Furthermore, we can experience a level of religious (or, a-religious) identity when exposed to the music used in the profession of our (or, again, someone else's) faith; a hymn, a chant, or a call to prayer. Additionally, we experience a level of personal identity when exposed to music which we associate with loved ones, or with memories of moments in our lives (a wedding song, lullaby, etc.), and, perhaps, experience a sense of

otherness when exposed to music which is culturally adjacent to our own. All of these examples add up to what I refer to as a musical identity. That is, the collection of music, whether specific or general, with which we identify, or to which we relate; positively or negatively.[7] At some level, we are aware of, and recognize our own musical identity, whether actively or not.

Similarly, we are aware of, and recognize others' musical identity. As Bethany Bryson notes, "Individuals use cultural taste to reinforce symbolic boundaries between themselves and categories of people they dislike."[8] Individual A recognizes Individual B's musical identity, vice versa, and, in turn, Individuals A and B recognize Individual C, D, E's, etc. musical identity. We may share some elements of musical identity with some individuals, and other elements of musical identity with other individuals, though, "Racism significantly increases dislike for genres [associated with low-income demographics]; rap, reggae, blues, rhythm and blues, gospel, and Latin music."[9]

Generally speaking, musical preference is not much different than hair color, eye color, or the clothes we wear (all of which can be altered or changed). These style elements can serve as signifiers of belonging to one group or another, to carrying one set of convictions over another, or being of a certain income/educational background, etc.. In the same way we dress ourselves for different occasions (work, wedding, funeral, recreation, etc.) our choice of music reinforces not only our self-image (brand identity)

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7   Samuel D. Gosling and Peter J. Rentfrow, "The Do Re Mi's of Everyday Life: The Structure and Personality Correlates of Music Preferences," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 6 (June 2003): 1236-1256.

     Barbara Lewis and Charles P. Schmidt, "Listener's Response to Music as a Function of Personality Type," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 39, no.4 (Winter 1991): 311-321.

8   Bethany Bryson, "'Anything But Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 5 (October 1996): 885.

9   Ibid., 892.

but also our choice of projected self-image (projected brand identity).[10] This auditory raiment establishes and reinforces our individual _and_ collective brand identities, both to ourselves and to others.

If the reader can believe that a musical identity informs a personal brand identity, then the reader can also believe that musical identity can infer/confer information reciprocally between auditors; absent of any other indicators.[11] That is, one can infer a sense of demeanor, education, regionality or nationality, and/or religious inclination, based on musical identity alone.[12]

Surely, there is room for refinement in the inference, yet, as a generalization, factors such as genre, tempo, harmony, etc. can go a long way to tell us about someone who is a relative stranger. (Even discovering the musical tastes of someone with whom we are relatively familiar colors our perception and interpretation of them. Don't believe me? Imagine someone you know who is generally quiet and reserved; now imagine that they are passionately fond of death-metal. I'll wait. . . . See what I mean?)[13]

The application of this branding has transcended stage, screen, airwaves, and, more recently, the ethereal filaments of the World-Wide Web. Individuals use sonic branding as to tool to recall people or events from their lives, to 'set the mood' (for exercise, studying, or romance)[14], or to inform and reinforce their sense-of-self, as an

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10   Tia DeNora, "Music as a Technology of the Self," _Poetics_ 27 (1999): 31-56.

11   Annabel J. Cohen, "Associationism and Musical Soundtracks," _Empirical Studies of the Arts_ 82, no. 2 (1990): 163-178.

12   One's inference need not be accurate or polite. One need only make an inference based on musical associationism.

13   At this point, it should be noted that the Author's intention is not to promote or advocate disunity, or a hierarchy of musical tastes. Rather, it is the Author's intention that the Reader be aware of their own personal musical preferences, likes, and dislikes.

14   David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North, "Musical Preferences during and after Relaxation and Exercise," _The American Journal of Psychology_ 113, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 43-67.

     David J. Hargreaves, Jon J. Hargreaves, and Adrian C. North, "Uses of Music in Everyday Life,"

individual or as a member of a larger social organism.

This sonic branding through music has performed a crucial roll in film-scoring for more than a century. Before that it played a role in opera and melodrama, and more recently, TV and commercial scoring.[15] The material and roles of the its application are myriad and variegated, sometimes setting a sense of time and/or place for a scene, other times providing an emotionally reinforcing underscore, and, at other times, punctuating, or commenting on, a scenic event; sometimes two or more of these functions in tandem.[16]

Origins of Study

This study finds its origins in the Author's decade-long career as the Musical Director (MD) for The Second City, Detroit; an improvisational, sketch-comedy theater known for social and political satire. Though a theater which specializes in sketch-comedy may seem a less-than-likely forum for exploring musical semiotics, the nature of the work (improvisation) actually proves a fine living-laboratory for exploring the ideas mentioned above.

As participants in an improvisation, the actors, MD, and audience, are involved in a co-creative act, a willing suspension of disbelief and active engagement in the task-at-hand are imperative. As the improvisations are (relatively speaking) unprepared, **there are no scripts and there are no scores**. The participants, however, must <u>act</u> as if there are. And in a sense, there are.

These scripts and scores come in the form of dialogue, posture, gesture, dialect,

Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal 22, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 41-77.

15   James Wierzbicki, *A History of Film Music* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 13. Note: Wierzbicki does <u>not</u> connect the idea of 'sonic branding' with the subject of Opera, TV-, or commercial-scoring. This is the Author's extension of the idea of leitmotif into a relatively comparable domain.

16   For example: A sad scene in a film set in the 1920s might be scored with stride piano (reflecting era), in slow tempo, and a minor key (reflecting mood).

plot (as it manifests), gait, tone-of-voice, and anything that can be read as significant. (A server dropping a tray full of drinks may become a car accident "outside"; an audience member's cell-phone rings and an actor answers it.) <u>Anything can happen</u>; and, often, it does. All it takes is a <u>suggestion</u>, and the game begins.

Ludwig Wittgenstein and 'Language-Games'

> An important part of the training will consist in the teacher's pointing to the objects, directing the child's attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word.... This ostensive teaching of words can be said to establish an association between the word and the thing. But what does this mean? Well, it may mean various things; but one very likely thinks first of all that a picture of the object comes before the child's mind when it hears the word.... I can imagine such a use of words (of series of sounds). (<u>Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination</u>.).... In instruction in the language, the following process will occur: the learner *names* the objects; that is, he utters the word when the teacher points.... I will call these games 'language-games'.— Ludwig Wittgenstein[17]

Wittgenstein's *language-games* present the concept of language as an acquired process, and the above quote illustrates a guideline for one of the core mechanics fundamental to the discussion of the role of the MD in theatrical improvisation: learning by association. I would like to propose, at the outset, that Wittgenstein's statement, "Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination," for our purposes ought to read, "Striking a chord on the keyboard is like uttering a word in the imagination." (Is the opening gesture of Beethoven's '*Pathetique*' considerably less pathetic, if the struck-chord is major?)

A teacher points to a sad person and plays music in a minor key.

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17 Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* 4-5. Underscore mine.

A teacher points to an image of a friar and plays Gregorian chant.

A teacher shows us a a scene of Persia and plays a Hijaz-scale.

A teacher shows us a motorcycle and plays Rock 'n' Roll.

Our teacher is Television. Our teacher is The Movies.

A student, if asked to play 'sadness', a friar, Persia, or a motorcycle might play music in a minor key, Gregorian chant, a Hijaz-scale, or Rock 'n' Roll, respectively and would demonstrably have learned the game; or, at least, part of it.

But what is a sad person without the conditions that made them sad; what is a friar without a monastery; what is Persia without trade-caravans or bazaars; what is a motorcycle without a biker? Could we expect our student to play music in a minor key when prompted with a "Lost Dog" sign; to play Gregorian chant when prompted with a monastery; to play a Hijaz-scale when prompted with a bazaar or trade-caravan; to play Rock 'n' Roll when prompted with a biker? We might, if we examine Wittgenstein's concept of *family resemblances*.

Family resemblances, for Wittgenstein, are:

[A] complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing: Sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.... [F]or the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. — And I shall say: 'games' form a family.[18]

Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? — Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" — but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. — For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! — Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious

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18   Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* 32.

relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ballgames, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. — Are they all 'amusing'? Compare chess with noughts and crosses [tic-tac-toe]. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck; and at the difference between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared! And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear.[19]

The two above quotes serve as resources to examine <u>two</u> facets of improvisational theater with the focus on 'motorcycle' from an earlier example.

First, we might consider 'family' in Wittgenstein's sense to be analogous to <u>community</u> or <u>subculture,</u> and following Wittgenstein's example of 'games' we need not have every criteria present, in order to make associations. Since motorcycles are often associated with bikers (depending on the type of motorcycle; a Harley certainly conjures an image of a different rider than, say, a racing-bike might), and bikers are often associated with leather-jackets, boots, rough behavior, Hell's Angels, and the like, we might associate a motorcycle with any or all of the aforementioned dress, behavior, etc.. (Though, I'm sure there are plenty of bikers who wear chinos and loafers, and are mild-mannered, TV and movies have shown me otherwise.) Additionally, if our "motorcycle = Rock 'n' Roll" -language-game obtains, then so might it also for any of the family resemblances.

Second, we might consider Rock 'n' Roll as its own family, with members as diverse as: Led Zeppelin, Chuck Berry, Steppenwolf, Tool, AC/DC, Metallica, Van

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19   Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* 31-32.

Halen, fill-in-the-blank. Each of these family members has their own distinct sound, yet falls within the family of Rock 'n' Roll. Wittgenstein's "eye colour" is Rock 'n' Roll's guitar, or power-chords. Their gaits aren't homogenous, across the board, but certain family-members do "move" in a similar fashion as one another. Yet, some members of the Rock 'n' Roll family <u>don't</u> fit. (At the risk of offending the reader's musical tastes, I'll let them supply their own examples.)

Similar constellations of 'families' could be constituted for 'sadness', 'Persia', and 'friar', and any other suggestion. This shuttling back-and-forth between the 'sign' (motorcycle) and 'interpretant' (Rock 'n' Roll), and its continual reassessment is at the heart of extemporizing musical soundtracks. This is not to say that once an MD hears "motorcycle" that the scoring will be continuous, uninterrupted guitar-riffs. Rather, it is to say that uninterrupted guitar-riffs are a <u>possibility</u>, and subject to change. After all, our biker might become sensitive (because of a broken-down motorcycle) and call for an adagio espressivo (from the family of 'sadness'). (Would this be a mixed-family?) This change, however, would be signified in the script of the onstage action. Put plainly, the possibilities of <u>signification</u> and <u>interpretation</u> are virtually limitless. At any moment during a scene, a new sign-system may develop, and it is the players' responsibility to <u>adapt</u> and continue playing the game. Wittgenstein's language-games and family resemblances afford them that flexibility which is required to adapt.[20]

> How do you know that that fish that's got those long fins is gonna end up leading
> to something that walks out of the water? You can't know that. Because, not only
> did, in a sense, that become a land animal, but that fish also had offspring that

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20   Wittgenstein's language-games are not employed or followed by improvisors in any literal or direct sense. Rather, language-games are the best available description of the reality which the participants experience during an improvisation.

didn't do that. Okay?[21] — Fred Kaz

Aim and Organization

This paper is intended to provide a survey of the methods, materials, and philosophies utilized in contemplating Improvisation as both a process and a product. It is both descriptive and prescriptive; historical and theoretical.

Chapter One presents an overview of the history of semiotics, with a focus on some key figures whose work has laid the ground for our exploration; it examines their philosophies, methods, and goals. It is by no means exhaustive; it is not intended to be. Rather, it is intended to provide a sampling of key concepts which help establish the background necessary for understanding sign-systems.

Chapter Two offers an exploration of the concept of multimedia and the role of that concept in communication. It examines associationism and its vital role in understanding and explaining multimedia, and, furthermore, it combines multimedia-theory and associationism as tools used to explore the historical origins of film scoring.

Chapter Three explores the history of early film scoring, with a particular focus on the prevailing aesthetics and philosophies of then-contemporaneous film scoring. Additionally, it explores some of the components involved in understanding contemporary film scoring, with a focus on some of its historical connections to the music theory of the Baroque and Enlightenment eras.

Chapter Four is a necessarily brief, but thorough, history of theatrical improvisation. It traces the roots of improvisation to the fourteenth-century, Italian *commedia dell'arte*, and offers a bridge through pantomime and melodrama which leads,

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21   Fred Kaz in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 121.

indirectly, to twentieth-century American improvisation. It examines some of the core aesthetic principles involved in contemporary improvisation and ties them to their historical precedents.

Chapter Five offers some conclusions and insights regarding improvisation, music, and the intersection of the two. Additionally, it offers some suggestions for further study.

The Appendix is comprised of transcripts of interviews between the Author and Improvisational Musical Directors whose careers constitute over a century's-worth of collective experience in the profession. Its contents highlight some of the discoveries (and frustrations) faced by both the Author and the interviewees, both in the practice and in the discussion of the practice. Some of it is sacred, some is profane, but all of it is worth reading.

Musical Directors for Improvisational Theater are but a small component of a larger creative-network. We are expected to play the "right" music at a moment's notice and to fill the silences with sound. There is no handbook or lesson that can prepare you for reading the score of human interaction, other than the score of everyday life. But it is not one-way communication; just as the actors tell the musician what to play, through posture, gesture, and dialogue, so too must the musician tell the actor what to play, through melody, harmony, and rhythm.

To play effectively, you must jump in head-first and play as if you know what you're doing. You must take risks and be bold, but you must also be open to suggestion.

You must read the signs, play with suggestions, and fill the gaps.

CHAPTER ONE: MUSICAL SEMIOTICS

> Semiotics [Semiology] (from Gk. Sēmeion: 'Sign'): 1. the science of signs developed independently by Ferdinand Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914).[1] 2. the general theory of how communication takes place.   This requires 'signs'... (which might include a musical score), and understood by means of a 'code'.[2]

<u>Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, and
The Signifier and The Signified</u>

Regarding Saussure, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* states,

> Saussure... instigated a systematic approach to the study of language, based on the observation of binary contrasts as constitutive of the 'meaning' of units at any level of generality. The signifying unit, or signifier, does not bear any intrinsic relationship to the object or idea that forms its 'signified' content. This content is purely arbitrary and is determined by the relationship of the term to others, in binary pairs. 'Bit' and 'Bat' for example, are distinguished by the binary contrast of their vowels. Saussure's manner of analyzing language as a relatively stable system of such contrast, existing synchronically, contrasts with the 'diachronic' or historically-based approach to word meaning found in traditional philology. His further distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' is based on the assumption that a synchronic system (*langue*) is internalized by speakers and reflected in their individual utterances (*parole*).[3]

Saussure's definition of sign, quoted from his *Cours de linguistique générale* reads,

> [The] linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, the impression it makes in our senses: the sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it 'material,' it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of association, the *concept*, which is generally more abstract....   I call the combination of a concept and a sound-image a *sign*, but in current usage the term generally designates only a sound-image, a word, for example (*arbor*, etc.). One tends to forget that *arbor* is called a sign only because it carries the concept 'tree,' with the result that the idea of the sensory part implies the idea of the whole. Ambiguity would disappear if

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1   Naomi Cumming, "Semiotics," In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed March 23, 2012, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/49388.
2   Robert Samuels, "Semiotics," in *The Oxford Companion to Music. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed March 23, 2012, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6079.
3   Cumming, Semiotics.

the three notions involved were designated by three names, each suggesting and opposing the others. I propose to retain the word *sign* to designate the whole, and to replace *concept* and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* and *signifier*; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from one another and from the whole of which they are parts.[4]

A *sign*, in the Saussurian sense, then, is the <u>union</u> of the *signified* (the content) and the *signifier* (the expression). (See Figure 1.1.) The <u>idea</u> of "dog" (the content) is made up of the *phonemes* "d-aw-g" , and serves as a signifier in English, yet the same <u>idea</u> can be represented by the signifier "h-oo-nd" in German (the expressions).
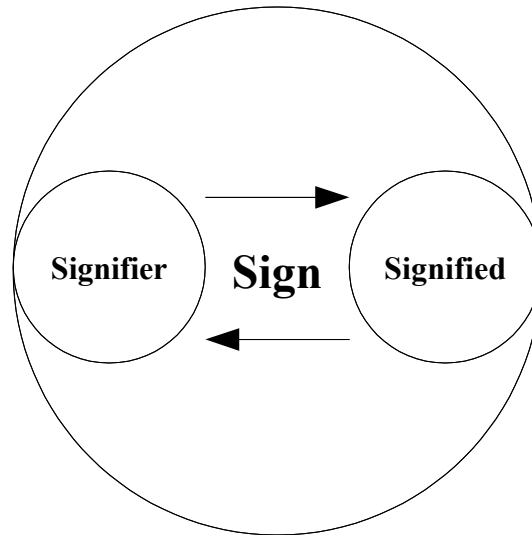
Figure 1.1: Saussure's *Sign*

According to Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Saussure "sets himself up as the precursor to phonology, and, by extension, of *structuralism* itself." Further, Nattiez views Saussure's contribution as valuable because of Saussure's separation of, "the synchronic from the diachronic (i.e., there is a *system* of language that is explicable independently of language's history), *langue* from *parole* (this system is embodied not on the level of

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4   Ferdinand Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1922). Critical edition by Rudolph Engler (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1978). Cited in Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3-4.

individuals but in a <u>linguistic collectivity</u>), external from internal elements of language (the system exists only as a relationships between internal elements)."[5]

Charles Sanders Peirce, in contrast to Saussure, did not limit his conception of signs to language. Again, according to *The Oxford Dictionary of Music,*

> Signs are not limited, in Peirce's thought, to elements of a language, but may include anything that 'stands to somebody for something'.... He characterizes signs as having a three-part structure: sign (*representamen*) , *object*, and *interpretant*. The 'sign' is an item observed as having a capacity to represent. Its 'object' is the idea conveyed by the sign, which may or may not be a concrete thing. The 'interpretant' (in its simplest form) is that by virtue of which the sign and object are linked. An interpretant may be a conventional code, arbitrarily formed, to give a kind of meaning consistent to that observed by Saussure. An organized system is not, however, necessary to Peirce's notion of sign. To account for non-conventional signification, he allows that the interpretant may also be grounded on apparent 'likeness' or a causal relationship between the sign and its object. The triad of terms most commonly taken up from Peirce's semiotics reflects these possibilities. The 'icon' signifies by likeness, the 'index' by causal connection and the 'symbol' by stipulated convention. Broader factors relevant to the understanding of a sign may include not only 'interpretants' of how its relationship to an object is grounded but also a <u>network</u> of further signs. 'Cat' is a 'symbol', with a purely stipulative relationship to its object, a kind of animal. If 'mammal' is invoked in defining it, another symbol has become an interpretant, and may activate an ongoing chain of interpretants. This is the process... constituting 'infinite semiosis'.[6]

Peirce's tripartite conception of the sign is different from Saussure's in several ways. First, Peirce's concept of sign is analogous to Saussure's signifier; that is, the word "sign", for Peirce, only designates *sound-image*. Second, the sign refers to something other than itself, for each individual. Third, the thing to which the sign refers, the *interpretant*, is also a sign. Fourth, the process of referring effected by the sign is infinite. (See figure 1.2)[7] Finally, the *object* of the sign is a <u>virtual object</u>[8]; that is, "it does not

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5   Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 5. Emphasis mine.
6   Cumming, Semiotics. Emphasis mine.
7   Graphic representation of Peirce's triangle as proposed by Gilles-Gaston Granger in *Essai d'une philosophie du style* (Paris: Colin, 1968), 114. Cited in Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 6.
8   Keith Allen and E. K. Brown, "Virtual Object," in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Semantics*

exist except within and through the infinite multiplicity of interpretants, by means of which the person *using* the sign seeks to *allude to* the object."[9] These will be important points in what follows.
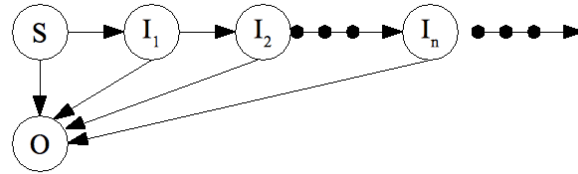
Figure 1.2: The Peircian Triangle

The Semiology of Art: An Initial Application of Peircian Semiology

But what of semiosis in a domain other than language, perhaps art?[10] First, one must consider whether the art is representational or presentational. Representational art employs the three categories of 'likeness' articulated by Peirce: iconic, symbolic, and indexic. Iconic art signifies by representing likeness or imitation; this includes portraits of fictional or real subjects (but <u>not</u> photographs, as we shall see), schematic diagrams, or maps. Symbolic art signifies through convention or consensus, are arbitrary, and bear no relation to <u>what</u> they signify; for example, red and green lights mean stop and go, symbolically, yet their meaning could be reversed through changes in social convention. (Though, one wouldn't want to be on the road when that happened!) Words are the ultimate example of a symbol; "cat" and "gato" are completely arbitrary arrangements of

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(Boston: Elsevier, 2004), 1044. "Virtual objects have been thought up by a thinking individual. And, because thinking includes not only the strictly disciplined forms of imagining states of affairs normally found in hypotheses produced in science of by the police, but also all kinds of fantasizing, dreaming, and artistic imagination.... They lack actual existence, although it may turn out that what has been thought up, perhaps as part of a hypothesis, actually exists — in which case we say that they are *matched* by real-world objects."

9   Nattiez, *Music and Discourse,* 7.

10   Much of the following section drawn from Melvin L. Alexenberg, "A Semiotic Taxonomy of Contemporary Art Forms," *Studies in Art Education* 17, no. 3 (1973): 7.

letters and bear no likeness to a four-legged creature that purrs, yet their meanings <u>within</u> an English-, or Spanish-speaking culture are conventional. Indexic art signifies by indicating what was and what is; fingerprints or footprints (whether in the sand on a beach, or in the surface-texture of a clay pot), brush-strokes or drips in/on a painting, and photographs are all indexical.[11]

Presentational art employs three categories, as well: identic, prioric, or dialogic. Identic art signifies by presenting what is, for example: a building or a sound recording. Prioric art signifies by what <u>can</u> be, for example: blueprints in architecture, scores in music and dances, scripts in theatre. Finally, dialogic art gains its meaning, "through dialogue and interaction in a dynamic process of becoming... in the immediacy of the present," and include interactive-art such as video-games, op-art paintings, or even <u>the act of creating art itself</u>.[12] States Alexenberg, "An individual work of art can gain meaning through any single mode or any combination of modes of signification."[13]

This potential multiplicity of significations and interpretations, singularly (as explored in this chapter) or in tandem with one another (as explored in the following chapter), provides pathways of meaning whose routes are nearly limitless.

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11   Alexenber, "Taxonomy," 8-9. Alexenberg argues that photographs, though they would seem <u>iconic</u>, are actually <u>indexic</u> because they are the result of of light leaving a physical imprint on a chemical film. He argues the same for X-rays, electrocardiograms, spectrograms, seismograms, and voice prints, though obviously through various electro-mechanical means for the latter examples. However, he extends his argument of indexicality to the domains of cinema and video. While this is true of <u>documentary</u> videos/films, the Author holds that <u>fictional</u> works of photography/cinema/video, whether digitally produced or not, are <u>iconic</u>. For a more complete examination see: Lev Manovich, "Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image," in *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 293-308 and Peter Wollen, "The Semiology of the Cinema," in *Signs and Meaning in Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 116-154.

12   Alexenberg, "Taxonomy," 10-12. Emphasis mine. Also, video games were not as ubiquitous in Alexenberg's era; this is the Author's addition.

13   *Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 7.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Jean Molino:
Disciplining the Discourse of Semiology

Nothing guarantees a direct correspondence between the effect produced by a work of art and the intentions of its creator. Every symbolic object presumes an exchange in which producer and consumer, sender and receiver are not interchangeable and have different perspectives on this object which they hardly conceive in the same way.[14]
— Jean Molino

The *essence* of a musical work is at once its genesis, its organization, and the way it is perceived. For this reason, musicology, musical analysis, and even approaches to musical interpretation that are less specialized or "scientific," require a theory that deals with the practical, methodological, and epistemological results of this holistic vision of music. I shall call this general theory *musical semiology*. Stated thus, musical semiology may well seem ambitious. True, each of the three points of view defined above springs from particular (and often limited) biases of the various specialists. The music historian is scarcely concerned with perception. Work done by a theorist of achronic bent, or an experimentalist inclined toward perceptive mechanisms, may seem questionable when no appeal to history is made. My deep conviction, however, is that the problems and contradictions endemic to discourse about music, and particularly to the various types of music analysis, stem from the fact that its practitioners rarely bear in mind the coexistence of the three levels. I therefore consider it crucial to encompass through a large-scale synthesis all the results of this tri-partitional conception of semiology as applied to 'thinking about music.'[15]
— Jean-Jacques Nattiez

Much in the manner that Saussure and Peirce serve as conceptual complements to one another, a discussion of the musical semiology of Jean-Jacques Nattiez would be lacking without at least some mention of the work of Jean Molino, on whose work

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14 Jean Molino, "Fait musical et sémiologie de la musique," *Musicque en jeu* 17 (1975): 47. Translated by and cited in David Lidov, *Is Language a Music?: Writings on Musical Form and Signification* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 86
15 Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, x.

Nattiez draws.

Working from the writings of Peirce and Molino, Nattiez conceived an idea of musical analysis which operates on a similarly tripartite system, with a difference. Nattiez proposed that Peirce's "infinite chain" of interpretants was far too *linear* in its conceit because, a new series of signs occurs to each reader according to their personal experience and, instead, proposed, "a *spatial* image in which interpretants appear to be caught in a <u>web</u> of multiple interactions,"[16] which Nattiez calls a symbolic form. (See Figure 1.3)[17]
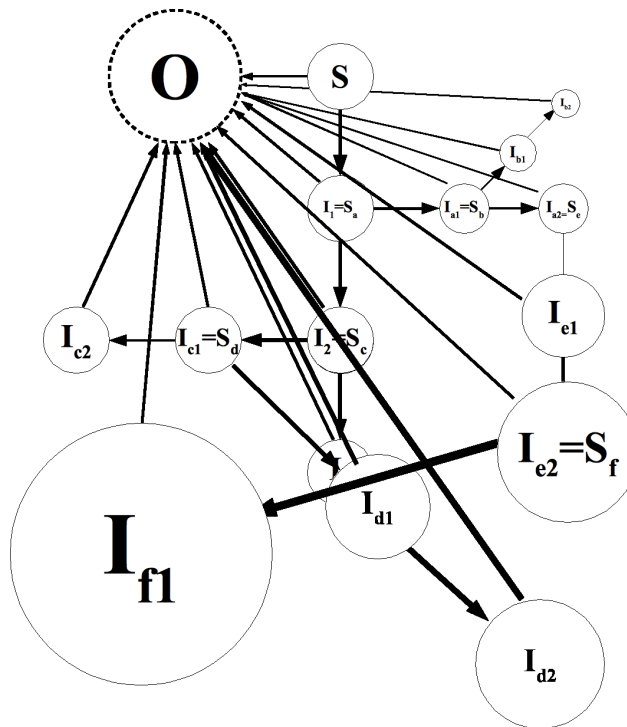
Figure 1.3: The Semiotic Web

A result of Nattiez's "large scale synthesis" of musicology, music theory, and music cognition, symbolic form is a virtual object and, " a sign, or a collection of signs,

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16   Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 7. Emphasis mine.
17   Author's depiction of "The Semiotic Web" proposed by Nattiez, rendered in the spirit of Granger's proposal of Peirce's "infinite chain" of interpretants.

to which an infinite complex of interpretants is linked."[18]

Though Jean Molino didn't develop his semiotic theories specifically for music, their adoption by Nattiez has nevertheless proven a valuable contribution to musical discourse and the manner in which we discuss music and musical <u>fact</u>, but not, however, musical <u>meaning</u>. For Molino, the classic model of communication (Figure 1.4) doesn't address the interpretant's role in the <u>construction</u> of meaning, and Molino proposes an alternate representation (Figure 1.5) which does.[19]

"Producer" ⎯⎯⎯⎯▶ Message ⎯⎯⎯⎯▶ Receiver

Figure 1.4: The "Classic" Model of Communication

Poietic Process   Esthesic Process

"Producer" ⎯⎯⎯▶ Trace ◀⎯⎯⎯ Receiver

Figure 1.5: The "Molino" Model of Communication

Molino and Nattiez are certainly not alone when they stress the role of the listener. *Reader-response criticism* is, as Wolfgang Iser states,

> a dynamic *interaction* between text and reader. We may take as a starting-point the fact that the linguistic signs and structures of the text exhaust their function in triggering developing acts of comprehension.... Thus the author and reader are to share the game of the imagination, and, indeed, the work will not work if the text sets out to be more than a set of governing rules. The reader's enjoyment begins when he himself becomes productive.[20]

Molino uses a literary parlor game to illustrate the process of the <u>construction</u> of meaning. The game takes the form: A is to B as X is to Y, with the letters replaced by

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18   Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 8.
19   Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 16-17.
20   Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 107-108. Quoted in Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 18.

terms picked at random. For example:

> ***The toothbrush is to God as Verdi is to the Italians***
> ***Schenkerians are to musicology as flowerpots are to the city of London.***
> ***Ravel's "Boléro" is to frogs as safety valves are to confectioners.[21]***

Three things become apparent through the exercise, and illustrate what is a core concept to the semiologies of both Nattiez and Pierce: the <u>interplay</u> of three dimensions (levels) of discourse in music analysis. First, from the producer's standpoint, because the choice of terms is theoretically random, the statements might make no sense. This illustrates the *poetic dimension*, and includes the creator's deliberation(s) (or, in this case, <u>lack</u> of deliberation) on what must be done to produce the object, the operations upon external materials, and the production of the work.   Second, it is possible to <u>construct</u> meaning or meanings to the statements without guaranteeing <u>agreement</u> between the producer and receiver (poietic and esthesic level).   The *esthesic dimension* includes the "receiver's" construction of meaning.   Third, it is possible to <u>analyze</u> the statements to observe the <u>formula</u> A:B::X:Y (neutral level).   The *trace* (neutral level) is the "material reality of the work."[22]   (See Figure 1.6)[23]

Each of these dimensions, "is a potential site of analysis, together with the complete symbolical process as a phenomenon of communication."[24]   For both Nattiez and Molino, the analysis of the neutral level must be as objective as possible, with no preconceived notions regarding its content or structure.   However, "the neutral-level

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21   Jean Molino, "Les maximes de La Rochefoucauld," Conférence à la Faculté de musique de l'Universitié de Montréal (March 12, 1975). Cited in Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 10.
22   Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 15.
23   Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Fondements d'une semiologie de la musique* (Paris: 10/18, 1975), p.60. Cited in Craig Ayrey, Jean Molino, and J.A. Underwood, "Musical Fact and the Semiology of Music," *Music Analysis* 9, no. 2 (July 1990): 108.
24   Ayrey, et al., "Musical Fact," 106.

analysis is provisional, since it depends on the criteria underlying the analytical procedure.   Thus a neutral-level analysis can be 'overturned' by the introduction of different analytical criteria or new (poietic or esthesic) data, in order to avoid hardening the concept of structure into a concrete theory."[25]
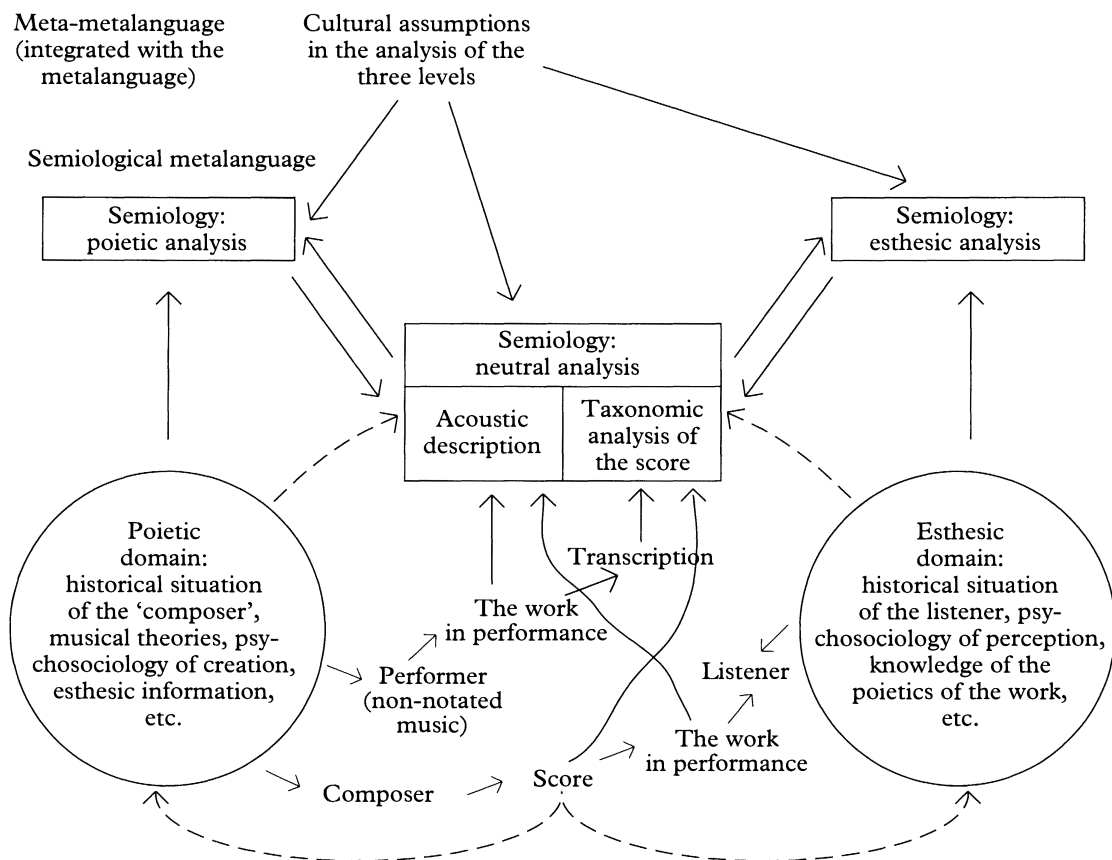
Figure 1.6: Nattiez's Poietic-Neutral-Esthesic Tripartition based on Molino

An example of Nattiez's application of this analytic technique can be found in his nearly-one-hundred-page analysis of Edgard Varèse's *Density 21.5*.[26]   On the neutral level, Nattiez's approach is governed by the practice of *segmentation*; that is, a "bottom-up" approach in which the musical materials are broken up (segmented) along

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25   Ayrey, et al., "Musical Fact," 107.
26   Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Anna Barry, "Varese's 'Density 21.5': A Study in Semiological Analysis," *Music Analysis* 1, no. 3 (October 1982): 243-340. Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/854178 (accessed September 20, 2011).

paradigmatic axes based on both melodic <u>and</u> rhythmic analyses, which further subdivide under the headings *Rhythmic types, Intervalic sequences, and Melodic Patterns.* This segmentation is stratified and placed into a *hierarchal structure* governed only by the criteria chosen by Nattiez <u>prior to the analysis</u>. Nattiez's co-mingling of poietic- or esthesic- levels of analysis are based on Varèse's own statements of his compositional intent, established theories of listener-response, specifically in the domain of frustrated expectations (such as those of Leonard B. Meyer), contrast between "active" and "stagnant" zones, <u>and</u> a comparative analysis of four different performances of the work by four different performers and analysis of the same work by another theorist, respectively.

David Lidov notes, "The central fact in Molino's exposition is music's actual diversity: historical, functional, material, and cultural... One type of definition — [poietic, esthesic, or neutral] — cannot be reduced to another...."[27] Yet, Lidov also describes Nattiez's approach to analysis as, "a torturous tedium, the epitome in musicology of occupational hazards."[28] This objective and disciplined, yet flexible, approach allows for multiple analyses of the same object. But, analysis to what end? What of emotion or meaning? For these answers, one might turn to Leonard Meyer.

<u>Leonard B. Meyer:</u>
<u>The Semiotician Who Wasn't</u>

> Often music arouses affect through the mediation of conscious connotation or unconscious image processes. [Interpretants?] A sight, a sound, or a fragrance evokes half-forgotten thoughts of persons, places, and experiences; stirs up drams "mixing memory with desire"; or awakens

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27   Lidov, *Language*, 86.
28   Ibid., 100.

conscious connotations of referential things. These imaginings, whether conscious or unconscious, are the stimuli to which the affective response is really made. In short, music may give rise to images and trains of thought which, because of their relation to the inner life of the particular individual, may eventually culminate in affect.... Thus many affective experiences attributed directly to musical stimuli may in point of fact be the products of unconscious image processes. Because neither we nor the subject himself can know anything about such unconscious image processes any discussion of such an experience is clearly impossible.[29]

— Leonard B. Meyer

Though Leonard Meyer disavows any endeavor, "to deal with the general logical philosophical status of music — to decide whether music is a language or whether musical stimuli are signs or symbols,"[30] his work, at its heart, <u>is</u> semiological or rather, perhaps, "proto-semiotic"[31]; it is, however, of a slightly different cast than that of Nattiez or Molino, a difference of degree rather than type.

Though the above quote shows a preference for the esthesic dimension of music, which is more receiver-oriented, Meyer also embraces the poietic dimension in the work of *music criticism*, which,

attempts to understand and explain the choices made by a composer in a particular work. In order to do so, the critic must be aware of the options available to the composer at each point in the composition, and he must be able to estimate (in a general way) what the probable consequences of alternative decisions would be. The critic must have not only a viable theoretical framework, but equally important a sensitive feeling for the style.[32]

Meyer also alludes to the aforementioned interplay between *dimensions* of

29   Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 256-257.
30   Lidov, *Language*, 89.
31   Melissa E. Korte, "Leonard B. Meyer: On the Threshold of Musical Semiotics," *Semiotica* 142, (January 2006): 447.
32   Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 18.

analysis:

> Because its reasons are often *ad hoc* and its explanations eclectic, criticism may at times seem somewhat improvisatory. But this does not mean that is arbitrary or illogical. Different sorts of arguments from a variety of sources may be employed, but they must be applied *objectively*: rules and techniques, though not systematized, reasons must be consistent with one another. Criticism must obviously be musically persuasive, but this is not enough. For what finally convinces is aural cogency combined with logical coherence. Because it must be scrupulous in reasoning, but flexible in strategy, criticism might well be call the *delicate discipline*.[33]

However, Meyer also values the roles of both the theoretic (poietic) and the historic (esthesic), stating,

> [There] is a significant difference between the concern of the critic or theorist who attempts to use present-day knowledge about man to explain the art of music, and the concern of the historian of theory or of criticism who seeks to account for the sequences of theories and critical viewpoints about music. The distinction, analogous to that between a scientist and a historian of science, has not always been recognized by musicologists. For them theory in particular has meant explaining what past treatises have said about music—usually music close to the time the treatise was written. Such studies are undoubtedly important; but they are essentially historical, not theoretical.[34]

Meyer's prescription of an objective criticism (analysis), which acknowledges both the poietic and the esthesic, rings of Nattiez/Molino yet still allows for some thread of intent on the part of the producer. Indeed, he is more willing than Nattiez or Molino to grant the producer something of an upper hand in the aesthetic transaction between producer and receiver; something far less objective, something (gasp!) magical:

> Our belief in the creative power of the great artist has about it an aura of primitive magic. His work of art is a kind of talisman, a fetish, through which we become identified with and participate in his magic power. Our willingness to become involved in aesthetic experience is partly a function of the relationship we feel with the artist's creative force.[35]

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33   Meyer, *Explaining Music*, 18.
34   Ibid., 22.
35   Leonard B. Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 62.

Meyer's writings deal with emotion and meaning in music (which is probably why he titled his first book *Emotion and Meaning in Music*) and focus on an expectation/fulfillment (tension/release) process as <u>the</u> mechanism through which an individual listener is moved.   David Lidov, while appreciative of the conceptual trail blazed by Meyer into the communicative domain of music, is critical of Meyer's theory which, in his estimation, "fails to distinguish the meaning of one piece from another. He talks about the meaning of 'music,' not 'pieces'."[36] Lidov's criticism is fair, yet it is also is reminiscent of Molino's 'A:B::X:Y-game'.

<div align="center"><u>Episode</u></div>

One might imagine statements of:

<div align="center">

***Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 3* (A) *is to Mozart's Piano Sonata K 545* (B)**
<u>***as***</u>
***Hindemith's Piano Sonata No. 3* (X) *is to Berg's Piano Sonata No. 1* (Y)**

</div>

Viewed from this perspective, the reader might say, "In the example, both A and B are in C-major while X and Y are 'in' B-major-ish and B-minor-ish, respectively."   Or, "The Beethoven is a four-movement work compared to the three-movement form of Mozart, while the Hindemith is a four-movement work and the Berg is a single-movement work."   Or, "The Beethoven and Mozart are written in the Viennese Classical-Style, while the Hindemith and Berg are more clearly differentiated from one another in their formal and harmonic constitutions."

Already, we can sense a difficulty in framing a comparison/contrast between the X and Y factors of the equation.   The compositional vocabularies (poietic dimensions) of Hindemith and Berg are far more differentiated from one another than those of Beethoven

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36   Lidov, *Language*, 88.

and Mozart.[37]   One might choose to employ the Nattiez/Molino tripartition of poietic-neutral-esthesic to situate each piece in terms of the composer's intentions-score analysis-historical framework, and such a framing would, undoubtedly, prove fruitful.   Yet, the situation becomes slightly more complicated (and interesting) if we reconfigure our game to read:

Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 2 No. 3 (A) is to Berg's Piano Sonata No. 1 (Y)
<u>as</u>
Mozart's Piano Sonata K 545 (B) is to Hindemith's Piano Sonata No. 3 (X)

Now, the reader is confronted with comparisons of a clearly-tonal works contrasted to atonal or quasi-tonal works, respectively.   Again, the Nattiez/Molino tripartition of poietic-neutral-esthesic (or any single dimension therein) could be employed to yield a fruitful analysis, yet this analysis would render different results than our first; an analysis based on similar procedures but different criteria.

This process of term-exchange (language-game), like the chain of signification, could go on indefinitely; with a final comparison of A:X::B:Y, one could simply substitute a different composition for one of the terms and begin the process anew. But what of Lidov's admonition to, "distinguish the meaning of one piece from another."? What of the <u>emotional</u> content?

Less a matter of <u>what</u> a piece means and more a matter of <u>how</u> a piece means, this is best accomplished through the poeitic dimension and a return to Peircian semiotics.

<u>Thomas Turino:</u>
<u>A Second Glance at Peircian Semiology</u>

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37   This is not to reduce the relative merits of Beethoven or Mozart, Hindemith or Berg. Rather, it is used to illustrate a relative <u>homogeneity</u> of style which obtains between the former; sacrificing the large-scale tonal plans and modulatory idiosyncrasies of either for the similarities shared by both, and emphasizing the <u>heterogeneity</u> of Hindemith and Berg.

> Music resembles language in the sense that it is a temporal sequence of articulated sounds which are more than just sounds. They say something, often something human. The better the music, the more forcefully they say it. The succession of sounds is like logic: it can be right or wrong. But what has been said cannot be detached from the music. Music creates no semiotic system.[38] — Theodor Adorno

> It seems to me that the challenge for the next generation is to develop a theory of music in relation to what is usually called 'emotion' — <u>our inadequate gloss for that mammoth realm of human experience that falls outside language-based thinking and communication</u>. Such a theory is necessary if we are to move beyond mere description of the central roles music and dance play in collective events ranging from spirit possession ceremonies, mass nationalist rallies, and weddings, to the teen dances taking place on a Friday night.[39] — Thomas Turino

Quotes such as the two above illustrate both the challenges and opportunities faced by semiotics (and semiologists), and contain allusions to two brands of semiosis: the structuralist (found in the neutral level, immanent in the "work") and the semantic (referential); the latter which may be subdivided into introversive and extroversive semiosis, respectively.

Adorno's statement, "Music creates no semiotic system," is accurate, indeed. But music does not write itself. (Poeisis).[40] Nor does it listen to itself. (Esthesis). It simply exists. (Trace). Music is unable to declaim, interrogate, postulate, or "join subject and predicate."[41] "Music has no past tense... It cannot narrate, cannot speak [of] what *took place* in time past... [but] can evoke the past by means of citations or stylistic

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38   Theodor Adorno, "Music and Language: A Fragment," in *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1992), 1. Cited in Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.
39   Thomas Turino, "Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircian Semiotic Theory for Music," *Ehtnomusicology* 43, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1999): 221. Emphasis mine.
40   Apologies to Emily Howell.
41   Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 128.

borrowings."[42]　　Music <u>can</u> communicate, but, remembering Molino, it is up to the receiver to create meaning; this is the domain of semantic (referential) semiosis.

Turino's statement addresses music's ability to "evoke" through a multi-leveled process of Peircian signification; one differentiated from that type found in 'The Semiology of Art'. It is intended to serve as a foil to the über-objective approach of Nattiez, by employing a more liberal conception of the the poietic, esthesic, and, to a limited extent, neutral dimensions.[43]　　That Turino's article was printed in *Ethnomusicology* is not insignificant; by providing a de-centered approach to music which downplays the prominent role of Western so-called Classical Music, Turino liberates the analyst and, by extension, <u>analysis</u> by providing a more flexible framework of musical understanding; a liberation which provides greater currency to Saussure's concept of *langue* and its function <u>within</u> a society.

Central to Turino's semiology is the concept of *semantic snowballing*,[44] which might be thought of as a different version of Nattiez's *Semiotic Web*. (As well it should as they were both inspired by Peirce.)[45] Just as music includes components of, "pitch, scale type, timbre, rhythmic motion, tempo, melodic shape... all sounding simultaneously,"[46] so does Turino's concept of significatory structure allow for the interplay of individual, and collections of, elements.

Figure 1.7[47], at is heart, looks very similar to the Peircian Triangle presented in

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42　　Carolyn Abbate quoted in Ibid..
43　　Note: It is the <u>Author's</u> intention to employ Turino's writing as a foil against Nattiez; <u>not</u> Turino's.
44　　Turino, "Signs," 235.
45　　It is worth noting that Nattiez, *Music* was originally published in 1987 and that Turino, "Signs," was originally presented in 1989.
46　　Turino, "Signs," 236.
47　　Modified presentation of the Granger's Peircian Triangle incorporating elements of Turino's embedded trichotomies presented in Turino, "Signs," 226.

Figure 1.2; there is an Object, a Sign, an infinite chain of Interpretants, and the Sign and

the Interpretants all point back to the Object. Yet there are a number of significant
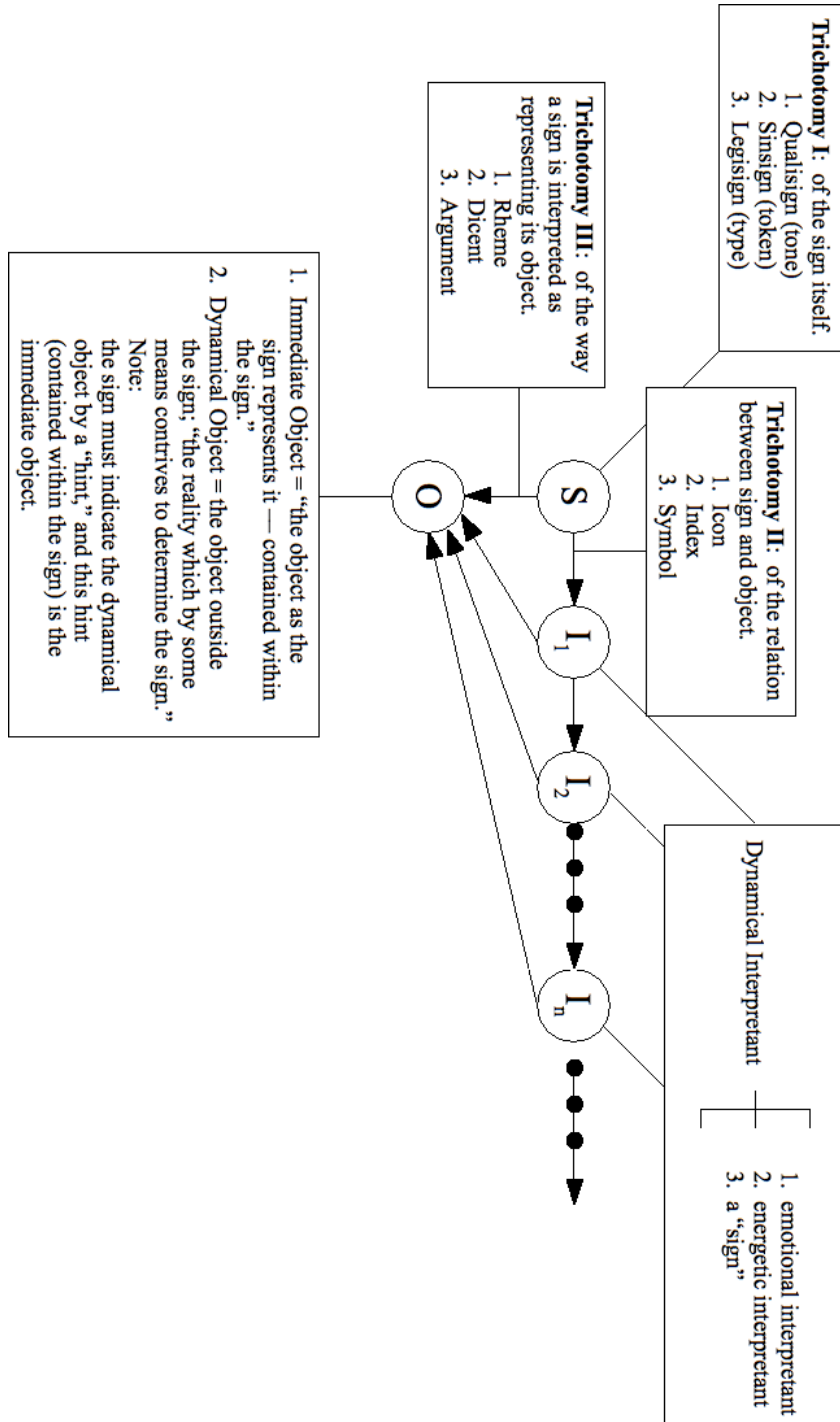
Figure 1.7: Peircian Triangle with Embedded Tripartitions

additions as well. First is the addition of three trichotomies which subdivide the Sign (Trichotomy I), the Sign/Interpretant-nexus (Trichotomy II), and the Sign/Object-nexus (Trichotomy III), and are likewise subdivided, internally, into three types. Second is the subdivision of the Interpretant into three types. Third is the division of the Object into two types. We shall take each of these additions and their subdivisions in turn, beginning with the Object.

Recall that Nattiez's description of the Object, following Molino, was as a virtual object. Turino's description of the object, following Peirce, is that the object can be a virtual object and/or an actual object. This dichotomy is represented by the concepts of *dynamical object* and *immediate object*. A dynamical object would be an <u>actual tree</u> represented by the word *tree*, whereas an immediate object would be the <u>idea</u> of a tree, and corresponds with Saussure's "signified."[48]

The Interpretant, for Turino, is subdivided into types: the *emotional (sense, feeling, sentiment) interpretant*, the *energetic interpretant*, and the *sign interpretant*. The emotional interpretant is fairly self-explanatory and includes feelings or moods brought forth by the sign. The energetic interpretant is a kinesthetic response to a sign and may include foot tapping or an accelerated heartbeat due to a brisk tempo or a loud sound, respectively. The sign interpretant is a linguistic-based concept, i.e., words that relate to the object. Turino notes, "[For] Peirce, the concept of *meaning*, a long-debated problem in regard to musical meaning, is pragmatically simplified by defining it as the actual effect of a sign, that is, the direct feeling, physical reaction, or language-based concept

48   Turino, "Signs," 250.

inspired in the perceiver by a musical sign."[49]

The Sign (Trichotomy I), as described by Turino, following Peirce, comes in three varieties, the *qualisign* (tone), the *sinsign* (token), and the *legisign* (type), each of which operates on a distinct level. The *qualisign* includes the quality of a musical sound and a melodic- or harmonic-relation; the *sinsign* is the actual instance of a sign; the *legisign* is the sign as a general type; i.e., 'The Star Spangled Banner' as a piece apart from any performance of it. For Turino, "the <u>social meaning</u> of a given instance of a sign is also informed by its belonging to general <u>nested classes</u> of phenomena (legisigns),"[50] which are linguistically mediated, i.e., dependent on <u>actual language</u> to explain their relationship. Thus, the performance of 'The Star Spangled Banner' (sinsign) at a baseball game could be nested within a larger category (legisign) such as 'American nationalistic music,' 'traditional opening-hymn to a secular activity,' or 'misappropriated drinking-song.' Similarly, the sinsign 'Happy Birthday' might function within the legisign of 'song to commemorate the passage of another year in one's life,' 'songs which, due to strict copyright rules, aren't used in movies,' or 'secular hymn which precedes cake-eating.'

Trichotomy II contains Turino's application of the terms *icon*, *index*, and *symbol* as classifications of the manner in which a sign is interpreted. Recall from 'The Semiology of Art,' the use of *iconic*, *symbolic*, and *indexic* as sub-categories of representational art. Turino's terms are similar to Alexenberg's, yet reflect a more musicological application.[51]

Icons include literal musical quotation or even the vaguest trace of it; motivic

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49   Turino, "Signs," 224. Nattiez/Molino, recall, faced a similar problem, but reacted differently.
50   Ibid., 225. Emphases mine.
51   Turino's bibliography contains no reference to Alexenberg.

unity and most aspects of musical form operate iconically, as do, "common musical devices such as rising melodic line, accelerando, and crescendo... because they sound like so many human voices we have heard rising in pitch, speed, and volume when the speaker becomes excited."[52]

Indices (plural of Index) refer to signs which are related to their respective objects, "through co-occurrence in actual experience,"[53] and can include a V^7-1 progression (as an index for musical closure), a TV show's theme-song (as an index for the program), or 'The Star Spangled Banner' (as an index for sporting events, America, or imperialism) and derive their power, "from the fact that the sign-object relations are based in co-occurrences within one's own life experience."[54] One might, in turn, take the protagonist from the aforementioned TV show as being indexed <u>by</u> the same song, through chained signification, or semantic snowballing. Similarly, one might take the second movement (poco adagio) of Haydn's *String Quartet Op. 76, no. 3* as an index for Germany (owing to its use in 'Das Lied der Deutschen'), Haydn, or 'classical music.'

Symbols are referential mediations and must be explained indexically, like legisigns, through language. For example, a lullaby in one culture may not be recognized as such by a non-native. Its meaning must be explained through language to an outsider before it can mean, "something you sing to lull a baby to sleep." Even after that explanation the lullaby will continue to function as a symbol. It must become part of lived experience before it can become an icon or index.

Trichotomy III is subdivided into three new terms, *rheme, dicent,* and *argument*,

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52   Turino, "Signs," 227.
53   Ibid.
54   Ibid. Though the two previous quotes are similar, they are included separately to emphasize the <u>personal</u> nature of the latter from the <u>general</u> nature of the former.

each of which, "involves the way a given sign is interpreted as representing its object."[55] A *rheme* represents, "its object as a qualitative possibility."[56] Nouns are rhemes (they are not the things themselves, they merely evoke the idea of the thing), as are paintings of imaginary people or scenes; they represent, or refer, to a subject which <u>could</u> exist.

A *dicent* is, "a sign which is understood to represent its object in respect to actual existence."[57] Dicents can serve as dicent-indices in the field of kinesics, i.e., "body language." A person's attitude (object) is represented by their facial expression, posture, gestures, or tone-of-voice (sign) through a dicent-index.

An *argument*, like the legisign and symbol, is mediated by language and involves, "both symbolic propositions as well as the language-based premises upon which the propositions can be interpreted and assessed."[58]

Examples from within each of the three trichotomies can be identified individually, however, in music (and in language) they operate covalently. Turino identifies ten different covalences, however, for our purposes, we shall examine only a few.

"A sudden, very loud sound in music might function as a *rhematic-iconic-legisign* with objects like 'thunder' or 'explosion.'"[59] The rhematic aspect is that this is a <u>possible</u> object rather than a specific instance of thunder or explosion, the iconic aspect is that the sign and object are related in the mind through resemblance, and the legisignatic aspect obtains a because, "a loud musical sound is a general type of icon for such objects."[60]

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55   Turino, "Signs," 229.
56   Ibid.
57   Ibid.
58   Ibid., 230.
59   Ibid.
60   Ibid.

Dicent-indexical-legisigns include vocal quality when singing, the manner of articulation in bowing plucking a string, or in blowing a wind-instrument. The dicential aspect is the attitude which produced the sound (imagine someone pounding the keyboard versus caressing a string), the indexical aspect tells something of the music's (performer's?) mood based on the actions of striking or caressing being associated with experience (an outburst of anger versus an act of comforting or wooing), and the legisignatic aspect is that either instance is reference to a general class of <u>feeling</u> (anger or tenderness).

Turino's concepts borrow heavily from Peirce,[61] especially when it comes to ordering the trichotomies, and are based on Peirce's notion of *Firstness*, *Secondness*, and *Thirdness*. Qualisigns, icons, rhemes, and Trichotomy I all pertain to the level of Firstness; they deal with, "oneness, quality, and possibility."[62] Sinsign, index, dicent, and Trichotomy II all pertain to Secondness and deal with, "the realm of actual existing relations and reality connections."[63] Legisigns, symbols, arguments, and Trichotomy III all pertain to Thirdness and are, "highly mediated [through language], general signs appropriate for abstraction."[64] Emotional-, energetic-, and sign-interpretants each fall under a category of Firstness, Secondness, or Thirdness, respectively.

For Peirce (and thus, Turino) there is a stacked, or "embedded" (to use Turino's term), quality of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness which operates across the domain of the trichotomies; the three trichotomies themselves form a sort of meta-trichotomy which follows an embedded [Trichotomy I: Trichotomy II: Trichotomy III]-pattern; i.e.,

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61   As the Author's borrows heavily from Turino.
62   Turino, "Signs," 231.
63   Ibid., 231-232.
64   Ibid., 232.

[Sign-Type: Manner of Reference: Relation to Object]. The three most pertinent for Turino are: rhematic-iconic-legisigns, rhematic-indexical-legisigns, and dicent-indexical-legisigns, which Turino refers to as "compromise types,"[65] because they combine levels of Firstness, Secondness, and/or Thirdness.

A notion which is key to Turino's theory of music's ability to create emotional effect, which occurs among Firsts and Seconds, centers around, "the instances in which semiotic chaining is *halted* before reaching the level of Thirdness (symbol, argument, linguistic-based interpretants),"[66] and is where Turino's theory diverges from that of Peirce, whose interest generally focussed on higher-level signs.[67] Prolongation of lower-level emotional and energetic interpretants in the context of a ceremony, dance, or concert is, for Turino, a key component of the semiotic richness of music. Turino's purpose for halting semiotic-chaining at a lower level is to examine the differing potentials of differing signs.

These signs do not, however, occur in isolation. To quote Turino,

Any musical unit is comprised of a number of components including: pitch, scale type, timbre, rhythmic motion, tempo, melodic shape, meter, dynamics, harmony (where applicable), specific melodies, quotes, genres — all sounding simultaneously. Any of these parameters can and often do function as discrete icons, indices, rhemes, and dicent signs which may be meaningfully combined to produce a macrolevel sign, although the significance of certain components may be foregrounded in the musical context. *This multi-componential aspect of music can not be overemphasized as a basis of music's affective and semiotic potential.*[68]

Turino crafts a fluid and flexible network for framing the analysis of music musical materials, and provides ample room for multiple levels of signification. His

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65   Turino, "Signs," 232.
66   Ibid.
67   Ibid., 233.
68   Ibid., 236-237.

analysis of Jimi Hendrix's performance of of 'The Star Spangled Banner' at Woodstock, which employs *creative indexing*,[69] demonstrates that the, "use of the loud electric guitar with feedback and distortion [an indexical legisign of the rock counter-culture and all that it, in turn, signified the late 1960s] for the performance of the anthem [indexically associated with nationalistic contexts], creates a new meaning specifically within the broader social context of the time."[70] Additionally, observes Turino, Hendrix's quote of 'Taps' functions as an icon for the dead soldiers of the Vietnam war, and his use of iconic sounds such as, "planes, sirens, and destruction," serve as "text painting," at the point in the song which contains the unsung (but known) lyric, "bombs bursting in air."[71]

Turino's conclusions, discovered through surveys, reflect that different listeners focussed on different semiotic elements in their interpretations of the song; some recalled protesting the war, some recalled losing loved-ones to drugs (also an icon of the 1960s), others recalled World Series, and others <u>felt</u> deeply offended, "because of the juxtaposition of [guitar] distortion and the national anthem."[72]

Turino proposes, however, that *modernist cultural reformism* also employs the multi-componential nature of musical semiotics to a designated end in the example of Robert Mugabe's plans to unify Zimbabwe. In 1963, Zimbabwe's Minister of Culture created a new musical genre called the *gallop*, that incorporated, "indigenous rhythms and musical features into the context of a 'modern' electric guitar band," and was, "intended to serve as an icon for the new locally unique, yet 'modern' nation."[73]

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69   Turino, "Signs," 242.
70   Ibid.
71   Ibid.
72   Ibid., 242-243.
73   Ibid., 245-246.

Invoking Meyer, Turino concludes that the "semiotic ambiguity," of music and the struggle between the esthesic and poietic poles in musical understanding has as much to do with listeners' training in musical understanding as it does with their *enculturation*, and that feeling, experience, and reality, what Charles Seeger termed the, "untalkables" of music,[74] are just as involved in that understanding as the more linguistically based modes of analysis. These "untalkables" have been the topic of musical discourse for hundreds, if not thousands, of years from Plato and Aristotle, through the present day. (Hence, the writing of <u>this</u> thesis.)

As we have seen, even through our rather limited number of examples, myriad approaches have been developed to deal with the musical object. One approach, like that of Nattiez, is extremely regimented and focusses on the interplay between levels of analysis (poietic, neutral, and esthesic) to yield a discourse-of-sorts between those levels. Another approach, like that of Meyer, allows for a more personal connection to music through a similar framework, with a focus on expectation fulfillment. (One might even call Meyer's version of non-semiotic-semiosis a warmer, more affable version of the one offered by Nattiez.)

Yet another approach, like that of Turino, allows for multiple interpretations of the same object at different levels by multiple individuals (or multiple interpretations of a single object by a single individual), and is willing to allow greater currency to the emotional aspect which music has historically conjured, conferred, or conveyed through the phenomenon of compound signification found in "semantic snowballing,"

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74   Charles Seeger, *Studies in Musicology, 1935-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). Quoted in Turino, "Signs," 249-250.

This compound signification and its employment in multimedia will be the focus of our next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: MUSIC AND MULTIMEDIA

> The mass media and advertising redundantly create indexical signs, signifying [conjuring up] common experience and identity, beyond smallscale, face to face groups.... Nonetheless, the meanings attached to indices are not general or fixed. Unlike the meanings of symbols, which can be confirmed by consulting a dictionary or a math book, indices are fluid, multileveled, and highly context-dependent.... In spite of their rather unpredictable consequences, indices are frequently harnessed for the construction of social identities-in advertising, in mass political rallies and propaganda, and in ritual and ceremonies-because of their emotion-producing potentials and as pre-existing signs of identity.[1] — Thomas Turino

Multimedia is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) as: "Using more than one medium of communication, artistic expression, etc.; (Computing) designating or relating to applications which incorporate a number of media, such as text, audio, video, and animation, esp. interactively."[2]

At the outset, I would like to define *multimedia* as: the simultaneous presentation of more than one form of media; text (spoken or written), music or audio components, visual (static or moving images, choreography, any type of bodily movement) or any other sensory input (smells, tactile sensations, etc.) qualify as media and may be employed in any combination whatsoever. This includes the familiar forms, e.g., TV shows, films, and video-games, as well as presentations which include audio/video. In addition, it includes plays, ballets, operas, music which employs lyrics, masses or other religious ceremonies, gallery-exhibitions in which "art" and music are presented simultaneously (even if, perhaps especially if, their co-occurrences are are unregulated).

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1   Turino, "Signs," 236.
2   *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "multimedia." http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123564? redirectedFrom=multimedia (accessed April 07, 2013).

This list is, no doubt, incomplete, and the reader is free to imagine and include any other instance they choose. (You may even choose to view a meal as a multimedia experience which combines olfactory, visual, and gustatory senses.)

Unlike the *OED* definition and similar definitions of multimedia, which typically include electronic resources as a component of the message, our definition proves useful for directing the reader's awareness to the fact that nearly <u>all</u> of our human experiences can be potentially considered as multimedia experiences. For example, listening to a recording in a classroom while watching an animated playback of the score projected on a screen would fall under the umbrella of a typical multimedia (in the traditional, *OED* sense) experience. However, listening to the same recording and reading along with a desktop score would likely not be considered so; it would simply be considered "reading along." This is, however, more a difference of degree than kind.

This expanded definition of multimedia is similar to one presented by Marshall McLuhan, who stated, "the medium is the message," a medium (pl. media) is, "any extension of ourselves... [and] the content of any medium is always another medium," and, "The content of a movie is a novel or a play or an opera. The effect of the movie form is not related to its program content. The 'content' of writing of print is speech, but the reader is almost entirely unaware either of print or of speech."[3] For McLuhan, nearly <u>all</u> media is multimedia. W.T.J Mitchell adds to McLuhan's assessment by asserting that media may be "nested," inside other media.[4] (Recall Turino's use of the nesting of signs within Trichotomy I.)

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3   Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 1-8.

4   W.T.J. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? : The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 216.

While McLuhan addresses media-in-general as a tool of control and domination in society (he is particularly wary of television), his concepts in tandem with the concept of nesting articulated by Mitchell and Turino serve as a particularly valuable launching-point for a discussion of music and multimedia. Based on McLuhan and Mitchell, we may consider dramatic, theatrical performance, commercials, television programming, and movies, as *nested arrays of media*; very similar, in concept, to Nattiez's 'Semiotic Web.' Each element should be consider as a co-interpretant and co-sign of another element.

While the context of a dramatic, theatrical performance may not, at first, seem like a multimedia experience, a brief overview of the materials involved may be of benefit, with a focus on the simultaneous employment of multiple texts. (This is also a significant component to the understanding the extemporization of scores in Improvised Theater.) These texts include the script, blocking (staging), and articulation. The script as a text is fairly obvious; it contains words to be spoken by actors. Blocking (similar to stage-direction; a difference of degree rather than kind) refers to the deployment of the actors on a stage. Though not necessarily considered a textual element (Shakespeare includes no blocking or stage-direction, merely entrances and exits), blocking serves a crucial role in the interpretation of a script by both an actor and an audience. Articulation is the way in which a line is spoken (or, articulated). There is another text, however, that is taken for granted: the physicalization or embodiment of a character in a performance. (After all, scripts don't perform themselves.) We shall examine this, first, and then return to our present discussion.

<u>Embodied Text: Physicalization of Mood (Character)</u>

That there is a non-verbal component to communication should come as no surprise to the reader. However, following the line of reasoning articulated thus far (the more-inclusive definition of multimedia), it is valuable for the reader to be aware of the myriad signs which they interpret during a social engagement (passive or active). The following section deals with specifically non-verbal behaviors, and draws from a variety of sources across a variety of fields: Information Management Systems (Human Resources), Non-Verbal Behavior Studies, and Computer Engineering.

A 1977 study by Jenkins and Johnson identified hand movements, facial expression, eye-contact, proxemics, posture, body rhythms, and speech as components of the Human Communication Subsystem.[5]   (These are the *dicent-indices* discussed by Turino.)

Hand movements include *emblems* (gang signs, obscene gestures, signals sent from catcher to pitcher, a conductor's hand movements), *illustrators* (which accompany verbal communication and include signs to accent a particular word or phrase (*batons*), movements which sketch the path or direction of thought (*ideographs*), pointing to an object, place, or event (*dietetic movement*), or movements which depict a spatial relationship (*spatial movements*), movements which depict the rhythm or spacing of an event (*rhythmic movements*), movements which depict a bodily-action, or some non-human physical action (*kinetographs*), movements which draw a picture in the air of the shape of the referent (*pictographs*), and emblems used to illustrate a verbal statement,

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5   Milton A. Jenkins and Randall D. Johnson, "What the Information Analyst Should Know about Body Language," *MIS Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (September 1977): 33-47. Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/248711 (accessed May 3, 2012). Unless otherwise noted, the bulk of this section is drawn from this article.

either repeating or substituting for a word or phrase (*emblematic movements*),and *adaptors* (mustache tweeking, head scratching, eye rubbing, picking or squeezing a part of the body, covering one's eyes (*self-adaptors*); manipulating an object such as a pencil, cigarette lighter (*object-adaptors*); a person is generally more aware of object-adaptor than self-adaptor behavior).

Facial expression includes universally recognized signifiers such smiling, frowning, forehead wrinkling etc., and cross-cultural research indicates emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, disgust, surprise, happiness, and interest are easily communicated through facial expression.

Eye-contact varies between introverts and extroverts, men and women, and dominant and submissive personalities (it can also signify dominance or submissiveness), and serves a regulatory function in conversation (indicating interest, attention, engagement, and comprehension).

Proxemics, in essence, is how people deal with the space around them, and how they deal with *microspace*; space on the interpersonal level. *Intimate distance* (less than 18" between individuals), *personal distance* (1½' to 4' between individuals), *social distance* (4'-12' between individuals), and *public distance* (more than 12' between individuals) denote qualities such as social status (rank), relationship-type, dominance, submission, or acquiescence. The greater distance, the greater status difference. For example, a person of lower social rank (a graduate student) will knock at a door and maintain a public or social distance and wait until invited by a person of higher social rank (a professor) to breach the boundary of social or personal distance. Sitting at the

head of a table or farthest from the door are other proxemic indicators of high social rank.

Posture exhibits three dimensions found in interpersonal relationships: *inclusiveness* (non-inclusiveness), *body orientation* (*via-a-vis* o r *parallel*), and *congruence* (non-congruence). Generally, feelings of trust and intimacy engender a more open posture (inclusiveness) while suspicion or discomfort are indicated by folded arms and turned-away body (non-inclusiveness). Vis-a-vis posture (face to face) signifies an engagement in another party's reactions, while parallel posture (side by side) indicates less engagement, or a more casual relationship. Congruence (similar body positioning within a group) signifies agreement and harmony with and within a group dynamic, while non-congruence signifies discord. A 2004 study conducted by Mark Coulson measured subjects' responses to six, static body postures corresponding to six emotions (anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise) concluded that, all emotions, with the exception of fear, were easily identified.[6]

Body rhythms [social rhythms] include how much a person speaks, speaking order (speaking in or out of turn), and a "conversational equilibrium" which serve to promote *synchrony*; the speaker and listener agree, and their bodies move to the same rhythm (facilitated by head-nodding, and "mm-hmm"s). In 1987, Montepare, Goldstein, and Clausen conducted a study which determined that observers were able to discern, at better than chance levels, a person's mood ('happiness', 'anger', 'sadness', or 'pride') by their gait. 'Angry' gaits were found to be more heavy-footed, and 'sad' gaits were found

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6   Mark Coulson, "Attributing Emotion to Static Body Postures: Recognition Accuracy, Confusions, and Viewpoint Dependence," *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 117-139. DOI: 10.1023/B:JONB.0000023655.25550.be (accessed May 11, 2012). Coulson concluded that the emotion of fear is difficult to discern in a static posture, likely due to the absence of typical co-signifiers such as darting eyes, and other 'fight or flight' indicators.

to have less arm swing.[7] (This is a more literal example of body rhythm.)

A 2009 study, conducted at the National University of Singapore, outlined a method for combining emotional indicators, such as facial expression, posture, and gestural-frequency, in a computer-generated 3D environment, which showed promise in eliminating some of the uncertainties encountered by Coulson. The gestural-frequency component, similar to that outlined by Montepare et al., showed that higher-frequency actions (hand-clapping, rapid jumping, or head-nodding) correlated with positive emotions, while lower-frequency actions (or lack or action) correlated with negative emotions. When facial expression, posture, and gestural-frequency elements were combined, subjects were able to identify fear with a greater degree of accuracy than in Coulson's study, and were able to identify happiness, anger, sadness, surprise, fear, and disgust at rates well above random.[8]

The final component addressed by Jenkins and Johnson (and strangely enough the only <u>verbal</u> component of a non-verbal communication study), speech, is best addressed through the writings of Joshua Steele (1700-1791), who developed, "the first practical, empirically-based system for recording, analyzing, and executing English speech sounds... [as] the result of a desire to record the speech of actors."[9]

Speech can be broken down into two categories of sound; segmentals and suprasegmentals. Segmentals include phonemes (recall Saussure), morphemes (linguistic

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7   Joann M. Montepare, Sabra B. Goldstein, and Annmarie Clausen, "The Identification of Emotions from Gait Information," *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 11, 33-42.

8   Alexander Nareyek and Shawna C.G. Tan, "Integrating Facial, Gesture, and Posture Emotion for a 3D Virtual Agent," in *Proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Computer Games: AI, Animation, Mobile, Interactive Multimedia, Educational & Serious Games*: 23-31.

9   Jamie Kassler, "Representing Speech through Musical Notation," *The Journal of Musicological Research* 24, nos. 3-4 (2005): 229.

units such as prefixes and suffixes), words, and sentences. Suprasegmentals include
voice-pitch, length, and stress. Steele concluded that, "speech, like music, had two
'branches' commonly called 'sound and measure,' more familiarly 'tune and time,' or in
Steele's preferred usage, 'melody and rhythmus.'"[10] Regarding the melody of speech,
Steele wrote, "That the sound or *melody of speech is not monotonous*, or confined like the
sound of a drum, to exhibit no other changes than those of *loud* or *soft*."[11] Steele's
"melodic" treatment of speech was based on a quarter-tone-divided chromatic-scale and
employed a "glide" system of pitch-notation, due to the the "continuous" or "gliding"
nature of the human voice during speech.[12] Steele's treatment of the rhythmic dimension
of speech was quite similar to the treatment of rhythm in music, employing "quantity,
pause, and emphasis," much as a composer would employ note-duration, rest, and
accent.[13] Though some of Steele's ideas were adopted during the late-Eighteenth and
early-Nineteenth centuries, "mechanical and electrical aids were increasingly available to
record and analyze both music and speech."[14]

Though Jenkins, Johnson, and the others provide convincing observations and
conclusions, all acknowledge a that there are variables to perception of any one of the the
aforementioned clues: gender, education, cultural background, etc.. Indeed, Jenkins and
Johnson address the problems involved when interpreting conflicting messages; the
words, "express appreciation and commitment, but the tone of voice, facial expression,

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10   Kassler, "Speech," 230.
11   Joshua Steele, *An Essay Towards Establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech to be Expressed
and Perpetuated by Peculiar Symbol* (London: J. Almon, 1775), 17. Cited in Kassler, "Speech," 232.
12   Ibid., 230.
13   Ibid., 233.
14   Ibid., 238.

posture, or gesticulations may be indicating reservation."[15]   In fact one study indicated, "that the actual decoding of communication relies 7% on verbal behavior, 38% on tone of voice, and 55% on facial expression."[16] (What is the percentage of body language?) This is not to discount their contributions, however. As a general guideline, these non-verbal characteristics of human behavior still retain strong currency.

More Media: Combining Multiple Texts

Consider Figure 2.1:
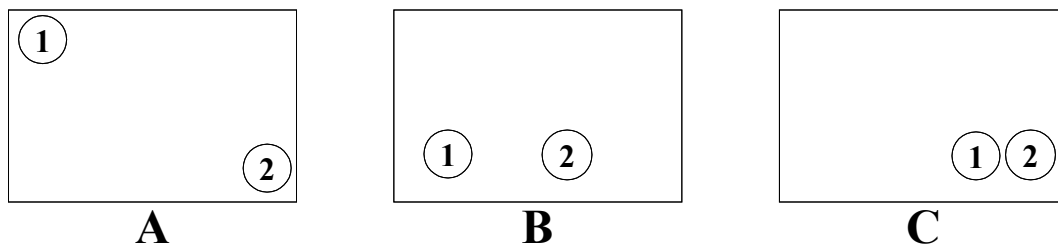
Figure 2.1: Various Blocking Configurations

In a hypothetical script, Actor 1 delivers the line, "I don't want to be here," to Actor 2. In Figure 2.1A, Actor 1 is upstage and quite distant (social distance) from Actor 2, who is downstage.   In Figure 2.1B, Actors 1 and 2 are closer to one another and downstage, yet comfortably distant (personal distance). In Figure 2.1C, Actors 1 and 2 are so close to each other as to be nearly touching (intimate distance).   In each of the Figures, A, B, and C, the physical proximity can serve to add <u>context</u> to the line delivered by Actor 1.   (Recall the role of <u>experience</u> and <u>social meaning</u> in Turino's semiotics. Note, also, that this example excludes the consideration of Actor 1 or 2 moving during, or after, the line, which would further add contextual dimension to the line.)   Finally,

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15   Jenkins and Johnson, "Information," 45.

16   Albert Mehrabian and M. Wiener, "Decoding of Inconsistent Communication," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 6 (1967): 109-144. Cited in Jenkins and Johnson, "Information," 45.

consider two possible scenarios in which Actor 1 either shouts or whispers the line (melody and rhythmus). The choice of one form of expression over the other dramatically (pun intended) changes the meaning of the line and adds *subtext*[17] to the scenic situation.

This example, of a single line delivered from one actor to another, is a prime example of *semantic snowballing* discussed by Turino. The meaning of the text is supplemented by the proximity of the actors to one another, and is, in turn, supplemented by the potentially-"musical" articulation of the spoken text. It should be clear that even in the seemingly-singular medium of dramatic, theatrical performance, there are in fact, at least three streams of information; the textual message, the proxemic message, and the articulatory message. I will refer to this nesting or snowballing of multiple "texts" as: *cosemy*.[18]

Cosemy, as illustrated, should be considered as: the operation of of two or more texts simultaneously. Its adjective form is *cosemic*. Thus, in the previous example, a cosemic relationship obtains between the textual, proxemic, and articulatory domains. In this light, one might consider the relationships between the poietic, esthesic, and neutral levels of Nattiez's brand of analysis as cosemic relationships; that is, the three levels each function independently and cooperatively, simultaneously.[19] Similarly, one might

17 Subtext: an underlying and often distinct theme in a conversation, piece of writing, etc. Also in later use: *spec.* the subjective reality drawn on by a performer and derlying his or her interpretation of a role. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "subtext." http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/193161?redirectedFrom=subtext (accessed April 10, 2013).
18 The term 'cosemy' is related to 'polysemy': the fact of having several meanings; the possession of multiple meanings, senses, or connotation. The Author has chosen to craft and employ cosemy in order to highlight the co-operative and co-existent relationship which obtains between mediums in multimedia. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "polysemy." http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/147370?redirectedFrom=polysemy (accessed April 08, 2013).
19 The author has chosen to employ the term 'cosemic' in lieu of the 'intertextual': denoting literary criticism which considers a text in the light of its relation to other texts. This choice is made in order to

consider the relationships between melody, harmony, text, and character in Schubert's

Der Erlkönig as cosemic relationships which can be studied independently and in

tandem.[20] This tandem relationship is the subject of our present study.

Annabel J. Cohen: Musical Associationism

> Associationism can account for origins of meanings which otherwise might be thought innate.... Typically, the musical soundtrack is not literally part of the drama, yet the music enhances the sense of reality of the film.... This is the paradox: music makes the film more real but the very presence of the music contradicts reality.[21]
> — Annabel J. Cohen

For Annabel Cohen, musical soundtracks operate based on *associationism*: the

notion that, "one idea commonly accompanied by another can independently evoke the

other in its absence."[22] Central to Cohen's theory are the four features of associationism.*[23]*

First, "associationism is sensationalistic; it identifies the basic components of

mental experience with sensory experience [which includes emotions]."[24] Second,

"associationism is mechanistic... the effects of combining dimensions of music [rhythms

and harmonies] or of combining music and film can be predicted."[25] Third,

associationism is reductionist; "the events to be explained decompose into the basic stock

highlight the use of <u>different</u> forms of media or expression denoted by 'cosemic' as opposed to similar, literary forms of media denoted by 'intertextual'. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "intertextual." http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/240985?redirectedFrom=intertextual (accessed April 08, 2013).
20   Though not presented as <u>cosemy</u>, a fine example may be found in: Deborah Stein, "Schubert's 'Erlkönig:' Motivic Parallelism and Motivic Transformation," *19th-Century Music* 13, no. 2 (Autumn, 1989): 145-158.
21   Annabel J. Cohen, "Understanding Musical Soundtracks," *Empirical Studies of the Arts* 82, no. 2 (1990): 113, 118. URL: http://www.upei.ca/~musicog/research/docs/understandingmussoundtracks.pdf.
22   Cohen, "Understanding," 113.
23   J.R. Anderson and G.H. Bower, *Human associative memory* (Washington: Winston, 1973), 9-12. Cited in Annabel J. Cohen, "Associationism and Musical Soundtrack Phenomena," *Contemporary Music Review* 9, nos. 1-2 (1993): 164-165.
24   Cohen, "Associationism," 164.
25   Ibid.

of simpler units;"[26] music can be analyzed, just as film can. Finally, "associationism is connectionist[;] ideas, sense data, memory nodes, or mental elements are associated together in the mind through simultaneous or contiguous experience."[27] The leitmotiv, for Cohen, is the most easily comprehended associative device and when altered, "can add information about the emotional state of a character and in this way, music serves a narrative role providing material not otherwise in the film."[28]

"The associationist perspective," for Cohen, "draws attention to the semantics rather than the structural functions of film soundtrack... and within the elements of the same medium and between patterns of elements of [music and film]."[29] The immediately affective properties of music are more important, rather than large-scale considerations such as tonal-plan. Additionally, Cohen (citing Martindale and Moore) argues that the more *prototypicality* a musical accompaniment exhibits, the more effective it is as a complement to a film.[30]

Based on the connectionist model, musical meaning in the context of a film does not depend on the content of the film, asserts Cohen. Rather, music carries its own denotive meanings apart from its use in film; *Auld Lang Syne*, as an example, evokes the image of a New Year's Eve party.[31] It is Pavlovian: Event A (bell) accompanies Event B (piece of cheese) leads to Event C (salivation). Similarly, if Event A in a film is accompanied by Music B, then when Music B is presented by itself, the audience expects

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26 Cohen, "Associationism," 165.
27 Ibid.
28 Cohen, "Understanding," 113.
29 Cohen, "Understanding," 116.
30 C. Martindale and K. Moore, "Relationship of Musical Preference to Collative, Ecological, and Psychophysical Variables," *Music Perception* 6 (1989): 431-455. Cited in Cohen, "Understanding," 120.
31 Cohen, "Associationism," 166.

Event A.

In experiments conducted by Cohen, subjects exposed to 'Happy' and 'Sad' music while watching an animated film of bouncing balls judged the mood of balls as 'Happy' or 'Sad' according to the music played. The 'Happy' and 'Sad' sounds consisted of broken major and minor triads, respectively, with variables in registral-placement (low, middle, and high), and varied in tempo, and the ball's bounce varied in tempo and height. Generally, faster and higher sounds, as well as major modality, elicited positive (happy) responses. Subjects who perceived incongruent pairings of music and bounce were less able to discern a specific emotion because the expected associations conflicted with one another and were less prototypical.[32]

Associationism and the Ballet-Pantomime

> Music united with poetry makes such a strong impression on the soul, that the melodies, even when they are deprived of the charm of the words, still keep their meaning. They are only recollections, but this memorative expression acts in a very powerful manner.... [T]unes, or fragments of tunes, can recall to the imagination a flash of slyness, a witty thought, a maxim, a compliment, an oath, an invocation, an expression of admiration, of desire, of joy, of sadness, etc., which includes the word joined to the melody.[33]
> — François Henri J. Blaze (Castil-Blaze)

In Parisian ballet-pantomime (*ballet d'action*: [a] stage work in which a dramatic story is conveyed through gesture, dance, and instrumental music)[34] of the 1830s and 1840s, much of the on-stage action was accompanied by borrowed music; music by

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32   Cohen, "Associationism," 168-174.
33   Castil-Blaze, *Dictionnaire*, vol I, 4-6. Cited in Marian Smith, "Borrowings and Original Music: A Dilema for the Ballet-Pantomime Composer," *Dance research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 6, no. 2 (Autumn 1988): 9.
34   M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet. "Ballet d'action." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed April 12, 2013. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O900410.

Beethoven, Mozart, Rossini, Bach, and Meyerbeer, among others, in genres ranging from piano sonatas, string quartet- and symphony-movements, and operas, whose function served to <u>associate</u> ideas from the borrowed material with the newly presented ballet-pantomime. Since "mime scenes alone were not always enough to convey the convoluted plots popular in ballets as the Opéra," critics were quite frustrated with the slowly unfolding and unclear action of danced texts; quoth one reviewer, "We don't expect music [of a ballet score]... an orchestra is the translation, the commentary of the text..."[35]

As ballet music was, "meant to serve the ballet, and not compete with it for the audience's attention," borrowing served a composer's goal of reserving their creative energies for something that wouldn't be, "of secondary importance."[36] However, according to Marian Smith, "Music from well-known operas, which carried with it a familiar dramatic context, invested ballet scores with special explanatory power."[37] Storm music from Rossini's *La Cenerentola* was used in a thunderstorm scene in *La Fille mal gardeé* (1828) (as a *symbolic-iconic-legisign*), and Paganini's *Le Streghe* ('The Witches') was quoted *La Sylphide* (1832) during a scene containing witches (as a *rhematic-iconic-legisgn*).[38]

The device which most closely resembles the associationist philosophy outlined by Cohen was the employment of the *air parlant* (also known as *proverbe musicale, carillon, chant instrumentale* or *timbre*), a "...popular air, or fragment thereof, which recalled to mind the words joined to the melody."[39] The *air parlant* was considered an

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35   *La Moniteur universel*, September 21, 1827. Cited in Marian Smith, "Borrowings": 8.
36   Smith, "Borrowings," 4.
37   Ibid.
38   Ibid., 4-6.
39   Léon and Marie Escudier, *Dictionnaire de musique théorique et historique* (5th ed., 1872), 395. Cited in Smith, "Borrowings," 9.

effective tool for the conveyance of ideas, even more than original themes. As one review notes, "A known air strikes the imagination of all hearers; it is for this reason that a new theme doesn't cause the same sensation as a known air, which everyone recognizes across the arpeggios, the drums and bugles, the flourishes of the pianist of flautist."[40] It is worth noting that Hector Berlioz employed a sort-of _reverse air parlant_ in his _Roméo et Juliette: Symphonie dramatique_ (1839); first, opening with an instrumental-fugue which represents the warring Capulets and Montagues, and later re-employing the same fugue (now set with texts) during a scene near the end of the symphony in which the two families are fighting again.[41]

Even after the public grew tired of musical borrowings, composers of original ballet-music took advantage of the audience's ingrained habit of, "[listening] for well-known melodies to help them understand the action of the ballet," by borrowing a device found in some of the day's popular operas: recurring melodies which, when used in ballets, were introduced at important plot-points and repeated at significant dramatic moments.[42]

From Pantomime to Melodrama

Pantomime, for our purposes, is to be taken as somewhat divorced from its role in ballet-pantomime (ballet d'action). The history pantomime reaches back to Ancient Rome (ca. 22 BCE), when its topics included comedy, tragedy, and satire, with themes drawn from mythology, history, and tragic drama, and expressed through the mediums of

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40   _Le Journal des débats_, September 28, 1822. Cited in Smith, "Borrowings," 12.
41   John Edwartowski, "A Symphony by Any Other Name: Narrative, Dramatic, and Formal Elements in Berlioz's '_Roméo et Juliette,'_ n.p..
42   Smith, "Borrowings," 16.

music, chorus, "steps, posture, and especially of gesture."[43]

Renewed interest in ancient dramatic forms during the Renaissance led to the births of variegated forms of pantomime across mainland Europe and in England, during the sixteenth- through nineteenth centuries, many based on Italian *commedia dell'arte* characters. (Commedia dell'arte and its derivations are to be discussed more thoroughly in a subsequent chapter.) These pantomimes, depending on the decade and fashion, included dances, dramatic scenes which alternated between 'serious'- and grotesque'- varieties, songs (recitatives and arias), and, most importantly, <u>continuous music</u> (called 'Comic Tunes') during 'grotesque' (comic) scenes. Over time, pantomime gradually lost its improvisatory characteristics and came to be dominated by vocal, rather than instrumental, music, and the form lost favor in the mid- to late- 1800s as it was gradually supplanted by (but, whose elements were incorporated into) *opera, operetta,* and *melodrama*[44] Our discussion will continue with the latter, with a focus on the musical material contained therein, and on a different side of the Atlantic Ocean.

From Melodrama to The Movies

> Adding songs, even to nonmusical plays, was a well-known practice evidenced in published sheet music, playbills, and programs.... This 'action music,' generally wordless and often <u>woven organically into the dramatic continuum</u>, made the musical presence in early American theatre still stronger. Action music often escapes the notice of historians. It is not usually published as sheet music, not described in libretti or announced in playbills, and not often mentioned in reviews. Yet it has been practice by generations of theater musicians, and, as such, is <u>often</u>

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43   Peter Branscombe and Clive Chapman, "Pantomime," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed April 12, 2013. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20834.

44   Ibid.. This description is necessarily brief and omits many details. The essence, however, is sound.

formulaic and traditional, relying on known and accepted
standards, hence maintaining a greater degree of stylistic
continuity than other sorts of theater music which are often
intentionally innovative. Because action music is often
supplied by local composers, it is also one of the first areas
where Americans began to contribute newly composed
music for the theater.[45] — Anne Dhu Shapiro

As has been stated, the boundaries between pantomime and melodrama are not
sharply delineated. Therefore, it is, perhaps, helpful to take one glance backward before
stepping forward.

American pantomime, like its European cousin, was based on commedia dell'arte,
and many of the performances of American pantomime were primarily English imports
(though this changed in post-revolutionary America).[46] These imports, however, were a
particularly American brand of pantomime; stripped of their serious scenes and focussed
on the 'grotesque' (comic) component of pantomime, they were, thus, accompanied by
music.[47]

Much of this music was of the 'Comic Tune'- variety was simple; closed, binary
forms, consisting of a bass-line and melody.[48] This simple music was flexible, however,
and often served multiple roles. For example, it could serve as a "vamp until ready"-
piece of music (See Figure 2.2)[49], an entr'acte entertainment, as an accompaniment to on-
stage action, or as "hurry music" (See Figure 2.3)[50], which usually accompanied a chase

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45   Anne Dhu Shapiro, "Action Music in American Pantomime and Melodrama, 1730-1913,"
American Music 2, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 49. Emphasis mine.
46   Shapiro, "Action Music," 50-56.
47   Ibid., 50-51.
48   Many of the descriptions are based on writings found in English journals and newspapers of the
time. Shapiro, "Action Music," 51-52.
49   Comic Tune from *The Touchstone*, Charles Dibdin, containing prompts and additions. Cited in
Shapiro, "Action Music," 51.
50   *The Comic Tunes in the Entertainment of Perseus and Andromeda* (London: J. Walsh, ca. 1740).
Cited in Shapiro, "Action Music," 52.

scene.[51] As in continental Europe and in England, pantomime gradually lost its favor in America, and was supplanted by *melodrama*.
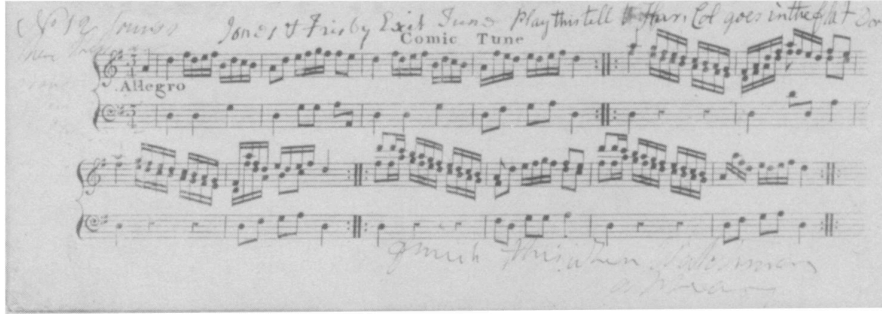
Figure 2.2: A Comic Tune from the pantomime *The Touchstone*; with annotations

**Figure 2.3: "Hurry" from *The Comic Tunes*
in the Entertainment of Perseus and
Andromeda***

The particular brand of melodrama to be explored in this section is of a variety which comes from the popular theater of Britain, and employs, "the use of short passages of music in alternation with or accompanying the spoken word,"[52] or, "mixed drama of

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51   Shapiro, "Action Music," 52-54.
52   Shapiro, "Action Music," 54.

words and ten bars of music."[53] One, William Collins' *An Ode on the Passions* (1812), contained music composed by Victor Pelissier. (See Figure 2.4)[54]

Figure 2.4: Pelissier's score for *An Ode on the Passions* (1812)

Another, written by Thomas Holcroft, entitled *A Tale of Mystery*, and performed in New York (in the Park Theatre) and Philadelphia (in the Walnut Street Theatre), with music by Dr. Busby, was first performed in 1802. The script, which includes stage-direction, also includes descriptions of the music or, rather, the mood it was meant to convey; "music to express discontent and alarm," "music to express chattering contention," or "hurry music."[55] (The score is no longer extant.)

Though the term "melodrama" came to have a different use later in the nineteenth century, the use of melodrama as a musical technique continued; cues for music were printed as part of the stage direction in published playbooks, and written into promptbooks.[56] (See Figure 2.5)[57]

53   Charles Durang, "History of the Philadelphia Stage, 1748-1855," three series in the *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch,* May 1854 to July 1860, Series 2, Chapter 27. Cited in Shapiro, "Action Music," 58.
54   Victor Pelissier, *Columbian Melodies* (Philadelphia: G. Willig, 1812),45-48, and William Collins, *The Passions: An Ode for Music* (Oxford?: n.p., 1750). Cited in Shapiro, "Action Music," 57.
55   Ibid., 57.
56   Ibid., 59.
57   Cue sheet for Charles Fletcher's version of Dumas's *Count of Monte Cristo* (entitled simply *Monte Cristo*). Cited in Shapiro, "Action Music," 62.
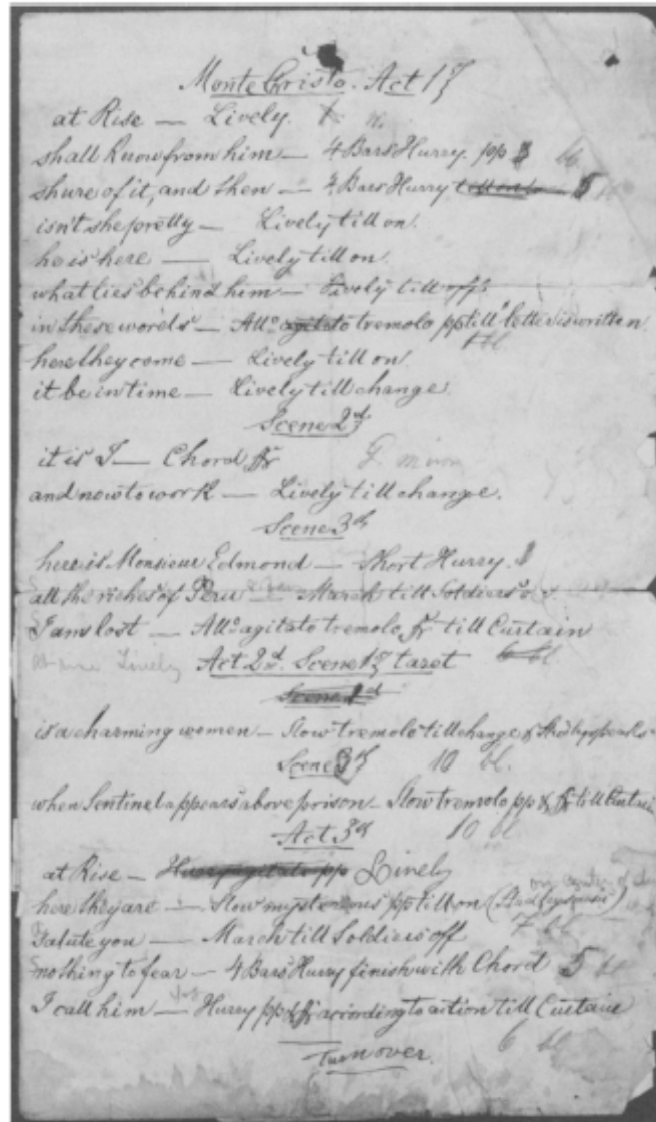
Figure 2.5: Manuscript Music-Cue Sheet for *Monte Cristo*

As can be seen in Figure 2.5 there are cues for "lively", "hurry", "chord",

"agitato", and "march" covering entrances, light changes, and curtains. An example of

the "4 Bars Hurry" following the cue line, "shall know from him," can be seen in Figure

2.6[58] This music was intended to evoke a mood of "agitated terror," and , of particular interest, this same music was reused at points in the drama where the desired emotion was agitation.[59]   "That hurry music can refer now to merely emotional agitation rather than physical action," says Shapiro, "is indicative of the greater emphasis on affect in Victorian melodrama."[60]

Figure 2.6: *Monte Cristo*, Act 1, Scene 1, "Hurry Music"

The presentation of a mood and the expectation that the audience will remember that acoustic cue is reminiscent of the *air parlant* and recurring melodies of pantomime. Notes Shapiro, "It may well be that the published cue sheets for early silent film hold some of the best evidence for what sort of music was used for late nineteenth-century melodrama... traceable in the common titles by which they were known (such as 'hurry music,' 'fight music,' etc.), traceable in the functions they served, and... in the overall sound of certain passages."[61]

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58   Anonymous score from Charles Fletcher's version of Dumas's *Count of Monte Cristo* (entitled simply *Monte Cristo*). Cited in Shapiro, "Action Music," 65.
59   Shapiro, "Action Music," 65.
60   Ibid.. Emphasis mine.
61   Ibid., 68-69.

CHAPTER THREE: MUSIC AND MOVIES

Framing the Picture

> Although the union of music and action was a procedure of which there are traces in old China and Siam and even in the religious functions of our own American Indians, that union did not really create anything of permanent value or lasting impression until the 'Opera' proper made its appearance....   [The first crude attempts] at an operatic performance, to the greatest dramatic Composer of all ages Richard Wagner, is a transitory period which we may neglect because it was Richard Wagner who established the fundamental principles of the music drama of today and it is his work which typifies to the greatest extent and in the minutest detail the accompanying of action with music. His method of investing each one of his characters with a certain motive, called 'Leit Motiv' and applying this motive at every appearance of the character, but in different shadings to suit the surrounding conditions, is the one which can best be applied to scoring pictures.[1]
> — Erno Rapée

> American composers... have their works performed and the important part of this arrangement is that while symphony orchestras will perform a new work once or twice a year, the same work on the program of the movie theater will be heard by 24 to 28 different audiences in one week. What this means in figures [dollars?] is hard to state, though I would like to quote as a record the attendance at the largest movie theater in New York City having exceeded 80,000 in one week.[2] — Erno Rapée

The two above quotes illustrate two important facets related to the study of music and multimedia.   The first quote (which actually contains a not-too-subtle additional message of racism and cultural bias) proffers an indebtedness to the perceived legacy of Wagner. The second quote illustrates or, at least, alludes to, *cultural saturation*. Before

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1   Erno Rapée, *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures*, (New York: Belwin, 1925; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1970), 7-8.
2   Ibid., 25.

proceeding, we will briefly address each, in turn.

Rapée's paean in the name of Wagner, though not without merit, is valuable because it serves as a type of intellectual bridge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, by extension, to the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries as well. If we take Rapée's assessment at face value, and combine it with Smith's description of the function of the air parlant and recurring music in the pantomime-ballet, and Shapiro's description of an audience's conditioned expectations for music's role and its function (in the forms of "hurry-" and "fight-" music) in providing emotional support in melodrama, we have an outline for the role of music in the accompaniment of motion pictures.

Stated differently: The audience, having been taught <u>how</u> to listen to music presented as accompaniment to dramatic action in the forms of pantomime-ballet, melodrama, and opera, now knew that music could allude to either a character, emotion, or idea concurrently and supplementarily, through association.

Rapée's statement regarding American composers, for our purposes, is less about the composers than it is about the audience, and more about the size of the audience than the quality of the audience. Even if Rapée's figures are a two-fold exaggeration and don't take repeated admission for the same people viewing the entertainment multiple times into consideration, this still accounts for at least one million viewers of cinematic entertainment.[3] This volume undoubtedly helped to enculturate the audience with the myriad conventions of cinematic-scoring. These conventions were heterogeneous, however, and depended on the form of the cinematic program.

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3   Author's speculation, based on a conservative estimate: (80,000/2) viewers per week times 52 weeks. And this would be in a <u>single theater</u> in New York City alone. Nationally, the numbers would be much higher. To the point, in a nation of one-hundred million inhabitants, if only ten percent took in cinematic entertainment once, then that would still be ten-million viewers nationally.

The Cinematic Program: Fits and Starts

> Right from the start, we have been told again and again,
> music was integral to the filmic experience. The most often
> cited reasons for the allegedly necessary presence of music
> during showings of even the most primitive commercial
> films are the acoustical need to mask noise generated by the
> projector, the psychological need to lend 'warmth' to images
> that might otherwise be interpreted as 'disembodied' or
> 'ghostly,' and the theatrical need — stemming from
> precedents in high-brow opera as well as low-brow
> melodrama — to embellish action and expressions of
> emotion with affectively appropriate instrumental
> accompaniment.... [T]he evidence shows that film music of
> the sort that we know from televised versions of silent
> movies did not emerge fully formed, like Athena from the
> head of Zeus, at the very first exhibitions. Indeed, evidence
> shows that this 'typical' music for silent films resulted only
> after a period of evolution that was as quirky as it was
> contentious.[4] — James Wierzbicki

According to Wierzbicki, "much of the music used in conjunction with [early]
film exhibitions [ca. 1895 - ca. 1905]... do not represent 'film music' as the term is
commonly understood today,"[5] i.e., fulfilling a co-narrative, or supplemental, role. Yet,
some of it did; in forms known today as *diegetic* (source music; which denotes sound that
supposedly emanates from within the film, or exists in the world of the film) and *extra-
diegetic* (background music: which denotes sound that exists "apart from, or outside, the
fictional world of the filmic narrative").[6]

By Wierzbicki's account, *The Charge of the Seventh Cuirassiers*, displays images
of a French-cavalry charge accompanied by the sound of horses hooves, a bugle call, and
strains of 'Marseillaise,' presumably, "from an off-screen military band," and is

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4   James Eugene Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 13.
5   Ibid., 28.
6   Ibid., 23.

representative of diegetic music.[7] Similarly, music playing on a car stereo in a film is also diegetic.

Extra-diegetic music, "music deemed appropriate because of its mimetic or symbolic value," for Wierzbicki is reminiscent of the descriptions outlined by Turino, Smith, and Shapiro: "Mimetic music, usually in some rhythmic way, mimes or imitates action [Turino's *rhematic-iconic-legisign*]; symbolic music, because of listeners' familiarity with its cultural usage or lyric content, makes quick reference to non-musical situations [Shapiro's 'functional musical types' or Smith's air parlant]."[8] As examples, Wierzbicki cites the use of the song 'I Want You, McKinley; Yes, I Do,' accompanying a film entitled *McKinley at Home*, an organ playing "religious music" accompanying the film *Höritz Passion Play*, and an orchestra playing 'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,' as film of a wrecked ship was projected.[9]

These examples are the exception rather than the rule, however. Most film of the time was "showing"-film, rather than "telling"-film.[10] In fact, most of the film of the first decade (1895-1906) was like that of the Lumière brother's Paris premier of 1895, which consisted of a twenty minute program containing ten scenes which <u>showed</u>, "workers departing a Lumière factory, a baby being fed, a gardener squirted in the face by his own hose, a boy learning to ride a bicycle, a group of men playing cards, a pair of women apparently fighting, and a locomotive arriving at a railway station,"[11] accompanied by a

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7	Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 22.
8	Ibid.
9	Ibid., 23.
10	John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 10. Cited in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 27.
11	Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 17-18.

pianist who, "*is said* to have improvised accompaniment."[12]

By 1908, however, 96 percent of all American films told stories.[13] The next twenty-some years saw turbulence in the industry, however, as various manufactures and production companies fought for control of the newly emerging "Moving Picture"-market, and shorter features for the Nickelodeon gradually gave way to the Feature Film.[14]

Music, too, saw its own set of changes, as film scoring developed its own aesthetic, and ASCAP was formed in 1914. A general unanimity developed amongst trade journals which started appearing in 1910, and expressed calls for uninterrupted accompaniment, "thematic unity and musical continuity, for extreme discretion in the use of musical gestures that highlight on-screen details, for the avoidance of anything that might interrupt the flow of the filmic narrative," offering advice, from time to time, on which bits of music or music types might be applied to specific films.[15]

The Maturity of the (Silent) Cinematic Program: Feature Films and Continuous Music

> The moving picture drama (or photoplay) is simply a play in pantomime, and the accompanying music is essentially the same as that of a play given on the stage. There is this, distinction, however. In the drama proper, music is only introduced at intervals to heighten the effect of certain scenes, while in the pantomime it is continuous, or nearly so.[16] — Clarence E. Sinn

The years 1905 through 1915 were dominated by The Nickelodeon: a store-front

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12   David Burnand, "Reasons Why Film Music Is Held in Low Regard: A British Perspective," *Brio* 39, no.1 (Spring-Summer 2002): 26-32. Cited in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 18.
13   Belton, *American Cinema*, 10. Cited in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 27.
14   Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 30-68.
15   Ibid., 36.
16   Clarence E. Sinn, "Music for the Pictures," *Moving Picture World*, December 20, 1913, 1396. Cited in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 35-36.

theater whose price was reflected in its name, whose hour-long programs consisted of a variety of films ranging from three to ten minutes in length, and whose attendance was near two-hundred thousand customer daily.[17] Its low cost meant that it was accessible to rich and poor, and it stories which, "were largely conveyed through <u>action and pantomime</u> meant that [it] was accessible to immigrants."[18]

The advent of the Feature Film is generally considered the 1915 the release of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, with music composed by J.C. Breil, "that could only be performed by a large, well-rehearsed orchestra."[19] Though the length of Nickelodeon- and Feature-Films differed and, as Breil's score for *Birth of a Nation* indicates, were sometimes specifically scored, a common practice shared between the two was the use of *cue sheets*.

Take, for example, the cue sheet from *How the Landlord Collected His Rents*, a film three and a half minutes in length (See Figure 3.1)[20], compared to a cue sheet from the ten minute film, *Why Girls Leave Home* (See Figure 3.2)[21] or, compared to another cue sheet from the ten minute film *The Ordeal* (based on Victor Hugo's *Les misérables*) (See Figure 3.3)[22]

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17   Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 29-31.
18   Ibid., 32. Emphasis mine.
19   Ibid., 48.
20   "Incidental Music for Edison Pictures," *Edison Kinetogram*, September 15, 1909, 12-13. Reproduced in Charles Merrell Berg, *An Investigation of the Motives and Realization of Music to Accompany the American Silent Film, 1896-1927* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 103. Cited in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 36.
21   Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 36-37.
22   "Incidental Music for Edison Pictures," *Edison Kinetogram*, September 15, 1909, 12-13. Reproduced in Charles Merrell Berg, *An Investigation of the Motives and Realization of Music to Accompany the American Silent Film, 1896-1927* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 103. Cited in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 37.

Scene   1 – March, brisk.
          2 – Irish jig.
          3 – Begin with andante, finish with allegro
          4 – Popular air.
          5 – "   "
          6 – Andante with lively at finish.
          7 – March (same as No. 1).
          8 – Plaintive
          9 – Andante (use March of No. 1).

**Figure 3.1: Cue Sheet for *How the Landlord
Collected His Rents***

At opening, Popular air.
Till second scene, Pizzicato.
Till view of orchestra seats, Regular overture.
Till view of stage is shown, Waltz time.
Note – Knock at door till girl starts to leave home, Home Sweet Home.
Till audience applauds, Lively music.
Till Act 2, snow scene, Plaintive.
Till audience applauds, Lively music.
Till Act 3, bridge scene, Pizzicato.
Till gallery applauds, Lively music.
Till Act 4, heroine's home, Plaintive music.
Till hero bursts through window, Lively, work to climax.
Till next set, girl's return home, Waltz movement.

Figure 3.2: Cue Sheet for *Why Girls Leave Home*

Note that in these three examples, (all from the September 15, 1909 issues of the

Edison Kinetogram) the cues are only identified by tempo, mood, or genre (note, also, the

"hurry" in Figure 3.3), with the exception of a single titled-composition in Figure 3.2.

Additionally, Figure 3.2 contains cues which are driven by audience applause.

In reading these cue sheets, one might imagine a flow of narrative, based on the

aforementioned tempos, moods, and genres; not necessarily the characters, nor the

1 – An andante.
2 – An allegro changing to plaintive at end.
3 – Plaintive.
4 – Adagio or march changing at end to allegro strongly marked.
5 – Andante to plaintive, Changing to march movement at end.
6 – Lively, changing to plaintive at Fantine's arrest.
7 – March with accents to accompany scene finishing with andante.
8 – Andante
9 – Allegro, to march at arrest.
10 – March, changing to andante at end.
11 – Slow march, p.p.
12 – Andante p.p. hurry at action of putting passport, etc., in fire.
13 – March p., changing to f.f. at the entrance of Jean Valjean, the
        Mayor
14 – Andante to Javert's entrance, then a hurry till the Mayor tears off
        the piece of iron from the bed. Adagio to end.

Figure 3.3: Cue Sheet from *The Ordeal*

objects of desire or conflict, but the type of narrative which develops when one listens to

music with their eyes closed.

Wierzbicki notes that the accompanist, "might well have improvised the entire

content of these passages..., though, he or she would have based at least some of the

improvisations on stock musical gestures from the repertoire of the still-popular

melodrama."[23] On what (which) criteria would the accompanist base their decisions,

whether improvised or not? This question shall be the focus of the following section;

arriving at an answer to the former (improvisation) by examining the latter (preparation).

Making Decisions from Moment to Moment: Did You do Your Homework?

> More rapacious in its appetite and supposedly more
> sophisticated in its tastes, the movie audience ca. 1915
> remained psychologically dependent upon familiar film-
> music tropes but would accept them only if they were
> presented in fresh guises and varied from week to week.
> While it was all but impossible to add to the number of

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23   Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 37. Emphasis mine.

> classical compositions that for the average American might immediately "signify" a filmic situation, it was fairly easy — for musicians well-versed in the repertoire — to come up with a virtually endless supply of public-domain pieces whose emotive content was at least in some ways similar to that of the familiar musical symbols. As for the tried-and-true clichés of melodrama, it was simply a matter of distilling their expressive essences and packaging them anew.[24] — James Wierzbicki

As an exercise in theory, I would like to examine the "March"-portions of one of the preceding cue sheets, specifically from Figure 3.1, mindful of only two factors: tempo and tonality. Additionally, I would like to examine these factors in the context of Turino's sign-structure, the multimedia theory of McLuhan, Jenkins and Johnson's 'Human Language Subsystem', Montepare et al.'s 'gait-study', Nareyek and Tan's 'posture-and-gesture-study', Steele's 'melody and rhythmus', Smith's discussion of *air parlant* and 'recurring music', Shapiro's discussion of 'audience expectation', and Cohen's 'associationism' and 'bouncing ball' studies. Rather than arriving at a definitive decisions regarding the choice of accompaniment, I would like to frame the process in the form of a series of questions which might be addressed by a hypothetical accompanist.

We must keep in mind, though, that we know nothing about the story except its general musical content (indicated in the cue sheet) and its title:

> Is this a friendly landlord or an unfriendly landlord; does he stroll or stomp; is his brow furrowed or is he smiling; does he successfully collect his rents or is he continually frustrated?

Scenes 1, 7, and 9 each use the 'March' motif (recurring music), yet Scene 9 indicates the 'March' should be played 'Andante', as opposed to in the 'brisk'-manner found in Scenes 1 and 7. Has this shift in tempo resulted from a lack of success in

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24   Wierzbick, *Film Music*, 50. Underscore mine.

collecting rents in Scenes 1-8? What of the tonality? I submit that if the landlord strolls briskly and smiles, he is a friendly landlord; if he stomps briskly and furrows his brow, he is unfriendly (body-language, gait, and audience expectation).   Based on Cohen's 'bouncing ball' studies, I can imply (or, associate) a major tonality with the friendly (happy) landlord, or a minor tonality with the unfriendly (sad/sour) landlord.

So, does the landlord begin as a major tonality (dutifully engaged in task of collecting rents in Scenes 1-8) only to find himself plodding away, 'andante', (in a minor key?) with the spring removed from his step (Scene 9)? Do the 'Irish jig', 'andante to allegro', and 'popular airs' in Scene 1-6 signify the landlord interrupting a celebration, hearing a plea such as,"it's my dear child's birthday and we've spent the rent-money so he could have a cake and presents", getting drawn into the party and then leaving unpaid, but still determined to collect his next rent? (Is there a posture which signifies such a plea?) Is the 'plaintive'-marking in Scene 8 a "signifier" that the tenant is pleading for leniency?

Or, does the landlord begin in a minor key (a veritable Scrooge), stomping from flat-to-flat, facing a similar frustration (uncollected rent) at the end? If the piece begins and ends in a major key, does it signify that, though unsuccessful in collecting his rents, the landlord still finds something-worthwhile in his daily activities; has he learned that money isn't everything? If the piece begins in a minor key and ends in a major key, does it signify the transformation of a formerly miserly man through the same aforementioned 'something-worthwhile'? Is there some combination of these hypothetical narratives at play? Is the landlord a sucker? Do his tenants take advantage of him; are they the "bad

guys"? Is there a melody that accompanies the 'March' figure; what is its *rhythmus*?

None of these hypothetical questions, of course, can be answered without viewing the film, though many of the questions surrounding the narrative can be answered with just a single viewing. In fact, the common practice of the era was to send a copy of a film a week or so in advance, so our hypothetical accompanist would have ample opportunity to answer these questions and select music appropriate to whichever narrative was presented in the film.

Our more-prepared accompanist would likely have, at their disposal, a library of available music from which to choose, published in both orchestral and piano formats, by Cameo Music Service Corporation, the Synchronized Scenario Music Company, and Belwin Inc., the most notable, who not only published orchestral and piano formats, but also crafted cue sheets to accompany specific films, and facilitated distribution of music published by others whose music was included as part of the Belwin catalogue of complied cue sheets.[25]

Two compendia compiled by Belwin, *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures*[26] and *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists: A Rapid Reference Collection of Selected Pieces, Adapted to 52 Moods and Situations*,[27] have proven invaluable to our present study. As an in-depth exploration of either of these two tomes could likely fill one paper, I'll summarize as best I can. The former contains titles of over one thousand pieces (available from Belwin or one of its partners) subdivided under dozens of

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25   Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 65.
26   Rapée, *Encyclopedia*.
27   Erno Rapée, *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists and Organists: A Rapid Reference Collection of Selected Pieces, Adapted to 52 Moods and Situations* (New York: Belwin, 1924; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1970).

categories ranging from national music (German, Hungarian, Spanish, Chinese/Japanese, Abyssinian, etc.), to moods (mysterioso, dramatic, happy, emotional, agitato, sinister, etc.), to situations (robbery, gambling, nautical, mountain-climbing, etc.), to characters (tramp, cowboy, hobo, toreador, etc.). The latter contains similar subdivisions, but is a collection of piano music (as implied by the title) rather than a catalogue. Additionally, the former is also a bit of an aesthetic primer; offering advice to the would-be accompanist regarding which types of music would best serve a film.[28]

But what if the accompanist missed rehearsal, what if a film was included in the program but not on the running-order, what if the theater-owner promoted a film before they received a copy and then dashed, madly, copy in hand to the projection-booth only minutes before the screening? The accompanist would have to improvise a soundtrack using a score composed only of the signs contained within the narrative.

These signs might include signs drawn from the Human Language Subsystem (posture, gait, gestures, facial expressions), costumes (our landlord, perhaps dressed in overalls, may require a different type of march than someone dressed in a military uniform), locale (the landlord's property could be in New York, Paris, Moscow, Buenos Aires, Johannesburg, or Barcelona), or even a different era (imagine a landlord collecting rents in Ancient Rome as opposed to then-contemporary (1915) New York). Each of these signs could carry an independent chain of interpretants which, in turn, would act as signs and carry their own chains of interpretants.

Every scene, every situation, character, action, emotion, every nationality,

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28   Rapée, *Motion Picture Moods*. Rapée's suggestions range from telling the accompanist to play Spanish music for a picture set in Spain (p. 8), to telling the accompanist to play "Comic" music for films of, "fat women taking reducing exercises." (p. 10)

emergency, wind storm, rain storm and brain storm, every dancer, vamp, cowboy, thief, and gigolo, eskimos and zulus, emperors and streetwalkers, of the five-cent to twenty-five-cent audience had to be expressed in music, and soon we realized that Belwin's catalogue of so-called Dramatic and Incidental Music was quite insufficient to furnish the simply colossal amounts of music needed by an ever-expanding audience.[29]

Indians were <u>signified</u> by eighth-note drumming of open fifths in the bass. Chinese ambience was created by high treble grace notes associated with discords and triplets. Death scenes were <u>represented</u> by a minor-key melody played in the left hand. War scenes could be evoked by bugle and cannon imitations. The gait of a cowboy's horse was figured by alternation between quarter and eight notes in a 6/8 major key. A mysterious atmosphere could be summoned [evoked] by broken pizzicato, syncopated selections know as 'burglar' or 'sneaky' music, whereas hurry music employed eighth- or sixteenth-note runs of touching notes (chromatic or not) against a regular beats of quarter notes in the bass. Immanent danger could be <u>signified</u> by a dissonant *tremolo* in either or both hand[s].[30]

Taken in total, we can see that, by the middle of the 'silent'-film era accompanists were musically and aesthetically well-enfranchised, yet still required more music. The long, slow road from commedia dell'arte through ballet-pantomime, opera, and melodrama had gradually been paved with bricks of air parlant, recurring themes, a nurtured audience expectation of musical function, situation music, and a notion of narrative supported by (if not tied to) music. With the advent of talking-pictures and recorded sound, represented by *The Jazz Singer* (1927), theater-musicians found themselves in professional peril.[31] The conventions of film-scoring, having developed alongside film-making, were (relatively) firmly entrenched conventions; though audience reaction to the mixture of music with talking-pictures had, at first, experienced its own 'fits and starts'.[32] After an initial period of growing-pains, music and the films gradually

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29   Max Winkler, *A Penney from Heaven* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), 235-236. Quoted in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 66.
30   Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 240. Quoted in Wierzbick, *Film Music*, 54. Underscores mine.
31   Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 113.
32   Ibid., 96-125.

achieved an equilibrium of sorts.

Said a 1932 *Los Angeles Times* article,

'Underscoring,' or interpolating musical backgrounds in talking pictures,... is being perfected, is gradually bringing to the screen music as it was used with the good silent pictures....   Musical phrases chosen for their fitness to the dramatic theme they are to illustrate are 'scored' into pictures very softly, as no to interfere with dialogue, but to furnish psychological background.[33]

Off Topic: Topics

From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of *characteristic figures*, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as *topics* — subjects for musical discourse. Topics appear as fully worked-out pieces, i.e., *types*, or as figures and progressions within a piece, i.e., *styles*. The distinction between types and styles is flexible; minuets and marches represent complete types of compositions, but they also furnish styles for other pieces.[34] — Leonard Ratner

While an excerpt related to eighteenth-century music may seem out of place, its presence here is intended to form a line of discourse which reaches from the early-twentieth century through to our present age. Of less concern is how the topics function in Classical music, than how the topics function as a theoretical construct. It is most important that we recognize their value as generalizations, and allow them retain their "flexible" quality.

A brief inventory of Ratner's topics includes dance types (such as *minuet, sarabande, bourée, polonaise, contredanse, gavotte, gigue, siciliano,* and *march*; each

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33   Fred., "Road Show Pictures to Date," *Variety*, December 29, 1926: 14. Citied in Wierzbicki, *Film Music*, 126.
34   Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 8. Underscore mine.

with its own characteristic rhythm and affective associations) and styles (such as *military and hunt music, the singing style, the brilliant style, the French overture, Turkish music, Sturm und Drang, Empfindsamkeit* (all "subsumed under the general rubric *galant,* or *free, style*), the *strict-,* or *learned-style,* and *fantasia*).[35]"Baroque music," notes Ratner, "tended to develop one idea, affection, or topic throughout a piece, to maintain unity through consistency... [while] mixtures and contrasts became increasingly frequent until, in classic music, they were the rule."[36] Further, Ratner notes that, "important objectives in 18th century musical expression [were] to touch the feelings through appropriate choice of figure and to stir the imagination through topical references. The <u>theater</u> was the principal source for these expressive aspects, with its projection of feeling through word and gesture, and its imagery of storytelling."[37]

Although David Lidov argues that, "Ratner's concept of topic belongs to our time, not the eighteenth century, and that it is a broadly applicable frame for investigating musical semantics, workable if the research is thorough, for any style of music,"[38] I wish to focus on the latter half of his statement and proceed to examine the "any style of music"-aspect of topics.

Kofi Agawu's *Music as Discourse* presents a list of sixty-one topics found in eighteenth-century music; compared to the dozen-and-a-half listed by Ratner.[39] Janice Dickensheets traces the persistence of some eighteenth-century topics into the nineteenth century, and then identifies new topics which are found in the music of Chopin, Schubert,

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35   Ratner, *Classical Music*, 8-25.
36   Ibid., 26.
37   Ibid., 30. Underscore mine.
38   Lidov, *Language*, 7.
39   Kofi Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (New York: Oxford, 2009).

Berlioz, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, and others. (See Figure 3.4)[40]

1. archaizing styles	9. demonic style	*Kriegslied*, and
2. aria style	10. fairy music	*Winterlied*)
3. bardic style	11. folk style	17. pastoral style
4. bolero	12. gypsy music	18. singing style
5. Biedermeier style	13. heroic style	19. Spanish style
6. Chinoiserie	14. Indianist style	20. style hongrois
7. chivalric style	15. Italian style	21. stile appasionata
8. declamatory	16. lied style or song	22. tempest style
style (recitative	style (including	23. virtuosic style
style)	lullaby,	24. waltz (*Ländler*)

Figure 3.4: Dickensheets' 19th-Century Topics

Danuta Mirka divides topics into three groups: Group A contains eighteenth-century dances, Group B contains topics associated with various ethnicities, and Group C includes a diverse collection of styles. (See Figure 3.5)[41]

And, though he refers to them as 'feels', instead of 'topics,' a list constructed by Philip Tagg offers a what might be considered as a pan-cultural list of topics. (See Figure 3.6)[42]

Group A	12. Czech music	*Group C*	33. barrel organ
	13. Polish music		34. lullaby
1. menuet	14. Hungarian music	21. Gregorian chant	35. children's song
2. gavotte	15. Gypsy music	22. chorale	36. fanfare
3. bourrée	16. Russian music	23. Russian orthodox	37. military march
4. gigue	17. Spanish music	Church style	38. funeral march
5. pavane	18. Latin-American	24. learned style	39. pastoral style
6. passepied	music (Brazilian	25. chaconne	40. elegy
7. tarantella	Argentinian,	26. recitativo	41. machine music
8. tango	Mexican,)	27. singing style	
9. waltz	19. "Oriental" music	28. barcarole	
	(Chinese,	29. Negro spirituals	
Group B	Japanese,	30. jazz	
	Indian)	31. cafe music	
11. Jewish Music	20. North American	32. circus music	
	country music		

Figure 3.5: Danuta Mirka's Subdivided Topics

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40   Janice Dickensheets, "Nineteenth-Century Topical Analysis: A Lexicon of Romantic *Topoi*," *Pendragon Review* 2(1) (2003): 5-19. Cited in Agawu, *Music*, 46.
41   Danuta Mirka, n.p.. Cited in Agawu, *Music*, 48-49.
42   Philip Tagg, *Music's Meanings: a modern musicology for non-musos* (New York & Huddersfield: The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2012), 176.

rock'n' roll kick-ass	ethereal sublimity	erotic tango
rural loneliness	urban loneliness	muso jazz cleverness
street-philosophising PI	gospel ecstatic	brave new machine world
yuppie yoghurt lifestyle	cheerful children	sex, aerobics style
headbanging thrash	romantic sensuality	bitter-sweet innocence
noble suffering	slavery, drudgery	wide-screen Western
Italian Western	medieval meditation	hippy meditation
psychedelia	evil East Asians	nice East Asians
savage Indians	noble Native Americans	slapstick comedy
pomp and circumstance	sixties sound	acid house body immersion
cybernetic dystopia	death by frostbite	twinkling happy Christmas
football singalong	music hall pub song	Methodist hymn
pastoral idyll	the throbbing tropics	inexorable violence
horror	mystery	grace and sophistication
Dracula's drooling	depravity and	scorching sun,
organ	decadence	blistering heat
wide and open	smoky dive	Arabic sound
West African drums	distant bagpipe	Barry Manilow ballad
Abba Aphex sound	laid-back rock ballad	seventies disco
1930s German cabaret	Aboriginals	inconsolably unjust tragedy
pagan ritual	religious wonder	Celtic mists
lullaby	the march of death	existential *Angst*

Figure 3.6: Philip Tagg's 'Feels'

The preceding examples cover a broad range; Baroque-, Classical-, and Romantic-eras, popular and 'World' music. Collectively, though, they are not very dissimilar to any of the myriad 'topics' found in the *Encyclopedia of Music for Pictures*. Indeed, one could imagine Tagg's, Mirka's, Dickensheets', or our own topic-types as headings in a book on film-scoring, regardless of any author's intent surrounding their uses.

Could we assemble yet another list of topics for, say, a hypothetical movie about a time-traveller? *Gregorian chant, parallel organum, modalism, chanson de geste, ground-bass, madrigal, galliard, invention, chorale, toccata, diatonicism, galant, chromaticism, waltz, impressionist, 12-tone, cluster, pan-diatonicism,* and *minimalism* would certainly help us establish a relatively firm footing in one historical period or another.

Particularly valuable to the present discussion is the work of Philip Tagg, whose

ethnomusicological approach to scoring is reminiscent of Turino's approach to semiotics.

Philip Tagg: Multicultural Multimedia

> We are repeatedly exposed, within the music culture to which we belong, to the simultaneous occurrence of certain types of musical sound with certain types of action, attitude, behaviour , emotional state, environment, gesture, movement, personality, people, pictures, words, social functions, etc.. from those recurrent patterns of interconnection we construct a vast array of categories combining several of the constituent elements just mentioned into overriding and integral musogenic concepts.[43] — Philip Tagg

Tagg's approach to musicology, much like Turino's, is tripartite; ethno-, socio-, and semio- are, for him, three elements of musical signification. His books, *Ten Little Title Tunes[44]* and *Music's Meanings: a modern musicology for non-musos*, are as much vehicles for social and political commentary as they are enterprises in the analysis of music. This is not to diminish the analytical nature of Tagg's work; to the contrary, the over sixteen-hundred combined pages of both books (not to mention the dozens of articles presented through hyperlinks) present exhaustive research. However, we shall examine those components of Tagg's work which focus on the 'semio-' component and which deal with music on a <u>linguistic</u> level, beginning with a term borrowed and adapted from Charles Seeger: *museme*.

Seeger defined *museme* as: "[a] unit of three components — three tone beats — [which] can constitute two progressions and meet the requirements for a complete independent unit of music-logical form or mood in both direction and extension.... It can

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43   Tagg, *Meanings*, 61.
44   Bob Clarida and Philip Tagg, *Ten Little Title Tunes: Towards a musicology of the mass media* (New York & Montreal: The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press*,* 2003.

be regarded as... a musical morpheme or museme."[45]   Tagg borrowed and adapted Seeger's definition, and presented it as: a minimal unit of musical meaning.[46]   Tagg's definition is different from Seeger's definition in three ways.   First, it allows for a museme to be composed of more than three notes (Tagg's interpretation of Seeger's 'tone beats').   Second, it allows musemes to be used, "to 'horizontally' identify meaningful units of rhythmic and melodic structuration," which function on a single "layer."[47]   Third, it allows musemes to function, "in single-strand units of musical meaning — *museme strings* —, as evidenced in musical motifs, phrases, ostinato patterns or riffs, etc.."[48] *Chord-shuttles[49]* (alternation between two chords), *Chord-progressions* (a sequence of anywhere from three to eight chords), or some of the 'loops' found in *GarageBand* are examples of musemes.

For Tagg, a museme carries its own characteristics and qualities; harmonic/melodic and/or rhythmic.   Timbre, tone, texture, articulation, rhythmic figuration (one might consider them the "non-verbal" (body-language) elements of musical communication), and mode (Tagg's concept of mode includes major/minor-modes, church-modes, "ethnic"-modes such as "Gypsy", Hijaz, and Maquam, whole-tone scales, octatonic scales, pentatonic scales (including the five "traditional" Western-(anhemitonic) and "traditional" Japanese), and blues/rock hybrid scales.) work to form a <u>single</u> museme.   Within each scale-type there is a selection of available chord types, based on the deployment of tones, semi-tones, and sesqui-semi-tones, forming what

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45   Charles Seeger, "On the moods of a musical logic," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 13 (1960): 76. Quoted in Tagg, *Meanings*, 232.
46   Tagg, *TLTT*, 94.
47   Tagg, *Meanings*, 232.
48   Ibid.
49   Ibid., 584.

Jackendoff and Lerdahl refer to as "pitch space."[50]

Hierarchies within this pitch space lead to chord-distributions such as: [I-ii-iii-IV-V-iv-viiº-(I)]/ [(0,2,4,5,7,9,e,(0))], a diatonic, major (ionian) scale); [i-iiº-bIII-iv-v-bVI-bVII-(i)]/(0,2,3,5,7,8,t,(0)), a diationic, "natural"-minor (aeolian) scale); or, [I-bII-iiiº-iv-vº-VI+-vii-(I)]/(0,1,,4,5,7,8,t,(0)), a Hijaz, or "Gypsy", scale) in heptatonic pitchspace; and [I-bII-bIII-iv-vº-bVI-bVII-(I)]/(0,1,3,4,5,7,8,t,(0)), an eight-tone "Spanish" scale); or, [I(i)-biiº-bIII(biii)-iiiº-#IV(#iv)/bV(bv)-vº-VI(vi)-bviiº-(I)]/(0,1,3,4,6,7,9,t,0)); octatonic Collecion I (Model A)) in octatonic pitch space. These few examples might serve as "cultural"-signifiers, which define perceived pitch space; a [I-bII] chord-shuttle might signify "Gypsy"- or "Spanish"-music more strongly than it would signify "Classical"-music of common-practice construction (the 'Neapolitan-sixth' notwithstanding). Additionally, a [bVII-IV-I] (IV-I-V) found in the diatonic (mixolydian) scale [(I-ii-iiiº-IV-v-vi-bVII-(I)]/(0,2,4,5,7,9,t(0)) might signify "Rock 'n' Roll" more than "Rachmaninoff".

However, notes Walter Everett, "[T]here is no single sort of tonal behavior common to all rock music, but rather a spectrum of approaches to scales...an array of six tonal systems ranging from the traditional major mode through modal (including minor-pentatonic) practices having increasing structural value, to chromatic relations with little basis in any deeper diatony."[51] This tonal-quality of a museme takes no account of those qualities which may act as rhythmic-"cultural"-signifiers (including drone and "characteristic" rhythms). But, for our purposes, it serves to illustrate the complexities

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50   Ray Jackendoff and Fred Lerdahl, "The capacity for music: What is it, and what's special about it," *Cognition* 100 (2006): 45-59. Jackendoff and Lerdahl use segmentation of pitch space as tool for melodic and harmonic analysis of the music of The Beatles.
51   Walter Everett, "Making Sense of Rock's Tonal Systems," *Music Theory Online* 10, no. 4 (Winter 2004). URL: http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.w_everett.html (last accessed October 3, 2012).

and evocative power of pitch space.[52]

Tagg refers to two or more musemes presented simultaneously as a *museme stack,*[53] which is, in turn, an element of the *extended present*: a duration roughly equivalent to no more than that of a musical phrase (exhalation), or to a few footsteps, or a short gestural pattern, or a few heartbeats; i.e. a duration experienced as a single unit (*Gestalt*) in present time, as 'now' rather than as an extended sequence of musical ideas.[54] The guitar, bass, and drum tracks of a Pop-song (played together) constitute a museme stack, as do an Alberti bass plus a melody.

Tagg's concept of 'museme stacking' is quite reminiscent of Turino, McLuhan, and Mitchell's concepts of "nesting." Yet, this nesting brings with it a potential problem, particularly if we recall the linguistic analogy made by Seeger, relating a museme (musical component) to a morpheme (linguistic component). As Agawu states, "Music exists in two independent planes, the plane of succession ('melody') and the plane of simultaneity ('harmony'). Language lacks the plane of simultaneity."[55] Following Steele's terminology, and his work in the verbal domain of communication, how does the melody (or chord progression) meet the rhythmus? How does the museme <u>step</u>? What is the museme's <u>gait</u>?

A similar problem was faced by Johann Mattheson, who discussed the rhythmus of a melody (museme?) in terms of *tone-feet*.[56] Though Mattheson listed only twenty-six

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52 Tagg's frustration with "The Man" and institutional musicology and pedagogy is a pervasive through-line in his writing.
53 Tagg, *Meanings*, 584.
54 Ibid., 588.
55 Agawu, *Music*, 25.
56 Ernest Charles Harriss and Johann Mattheson, *Johann Mattheson's Der vollkommene Capellmeister: A Revised Translation with Critical Commentary*, trans. Ernest Charles Harriss (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981): 344-362. To be clear: Mattheson does <u>not</u> use the term museme.

tone feet, subdivided amongst two-, three-, and four-syllable types, and further subdivided into various long-short, short-long groupings, with names like *Spondee, Iamb, Anapaest, Molossus, Epitritus,* and *Ditrochaeus,* he calculated upward of sixty-two sextillion combinations of 'shorts' and 'longs'.[57] Posits Mattheson, "Now if someone would calculate the degrees of various longs and shorts in each rhythm, together with the types of meters, he would be quite astounded to find himself, as it were, admiring infinity in a mirror, and asking: Who can grasp or calculate it?"[58]

Tagg certainly can't. It is, in a sense, the same multiplicity of possibilities that frustrated Mattheson, which frustrates Tagg. Instead of *Spondee, Iamb, Anapaest, etc.,* let us substitute *Viennese waltz, the slip jug, the reel, the country shuffle, bossa nova, hard rock,* and *swing*. Mattheson's *tone-feet* become Tagg's *groove*: [a] sense of gross-motoric movement produced by one or more simultaneously sounded rhythm patterns lasting, as single units, no longer than the extended present.[59] Of particular note is Tagg's suggestion that grooves

> might suggest continual or repeated movements like tiptoe-ing through the tulips, or marching to war, or trudging to a place of execution, or twirling around as an elegant couple waltzing in an imperial ballroom, or chopping the air with robotic arms, or singing your baby to sleep, or gyrating like a belly dancer, or hauling a heavy load, or swimming against the tide, or grinding and thrusting your pelvis, or floating on your back in a swimming pool, or shuffling your feet fast and forwards, or spinning round with others in an eightsome reel, or galloping hell for leather, or taking a leisurely stroll, etc. *ad infinitum*.[60]

Additionally, Harriss notes an error in Mattheson's arithmetic; yet, even if the final number is only in the millions, that's quite a number of possibilities.

57   Harriss and Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 362.

58   Ibid., 363. Authors note: The preceding takes no account of voice-leading concerns, or any melodic dimension whatsoever. Its purpose is to illustrate the multitude of rhythmic possibilities.

59   Ibid., 590.

60   Tagg, *Meanings*, 297-298.

And these are possibilities for only one museme-groove; stacked museme-grooves would lead to yet another case of "admiring infinity in a mirror." But, this shouldn't be an exercise in futility. There should be something we can draw from an infinite source of possibilities. Notes David Lidov,

> 'Theory' and 'possibility' are related. A theory is a specific representation of abstract possibility. The theoretical concept of a C major chord represents the unlimited possibility of its realizations. Similarly, in linguistics a grammar defines a universe of possible utterances. Theory as an aesthetic sign represents possibility as an aesthetic topic. There is also a slightly more difficult inverse relationship. Where we can downgrade the actual to the status of a mere example of the possible, the actual *as one possibility* represents theory.... A very different manifestation of the idea of the possible arises with the incorporation of chance and aleatoric elements in music.[61]

This sense of the possible lies at the heart of improvisation.

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61   Lidov, *Language*, 197-201.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEATRICAL IMPROVISATION

For some people, "improvisation" suggests no more than making do — the need only to cope somehow with blocked drains or with mending motor-cars with bootlaces on Blubberhouse Moor....   There is a further aspect of improvising we meet in day to day living: we are continually having to adjust to whatever happens around us. The more unexpected the happening, the more spontaneous and frank the response is likely to be.... Through situations in which we have to improvise, we can be made to draw on our own resources, to think out basic principles. We are not able to fall back on other people telling us, *nor can we find instructions precise enough to cover every set of circumstances*. Some people talk about it confidently and approvingly. Others speak of it more diffidently and even with suspicion. On the one side, it is seen as a vital... means of exploring... and on the other it still has not developed much beyond its charade and party-game links.[1]
— John Hodgson and Ernest Richards

Everyone can act. Everyone can improvise. Anyone who wishes to can *play* in the theatre and learn to become 'stageworthy'.[2] — Viola Spolin

No actor could be sure what the others would say or do and thus had to concentrate upon the unfolding action. As a result, performances must have created the impression of spontaneity.[3] — Oscar G. Brockett

I often <u>do</u> wonder if it's the closest we have to live-theatre-reality-TV.   Any kind of Improv; it can be musical, it can be straight, whenever you say, "Improv." Improv is the most edge-of-your-seat, live performance that we can give an audience.[4] — Jerome Kurtenbach

Going to see an Improv Show and going to see a Football

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1   John Hodgson and Ernest Richards, *Improvisation* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1974), 1-2. Emphasis mine.
2   Viola Spolin, Carol Sills, and Paul Sills, *Improvisation for the Theater: A Handbook for Teaching and Directing Techniques* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969): 3. Italics mine. (Hereafter, cited as Spolin.)
3   Oscar G. Brockett, *History of the Theatre* 6th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991): 148.
4   Jerome Kurtenbach in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 145.

Game are the same thing. There's a set of rules, but no one knows how it's going to end, no one's gonna know whether it's gonna be a good game or a bad game, or a good show or a bad show.[5] — Josh Funk

History and Elements

Although none of the theories about its origin can be confirmed or refuted, Italian *commedia dell'arte* can be dated as far back as 1568, though several theories of its origin place the date much further in the past. Theories of its origin range from, "[T]he Atellan farce of Rome as preserved by wandering mimes during the Middle Ages," to, "[T]roupes of Byzantine mimes who supposedly fled to the West when Constantinople fell in 1453," and, "that it evolved out of improvisations on the comedies of Plautus and Terence." Still others trace its origins to Italian farce of the early sixteenth century. Regardless of its origins, it was popular throughout Europe (specifically, in its native Italy, as well as in London and Paris) by 1600 and remained so until the late eighteenth century.[6]

What can be stated with a great degree of certainty, however, is that the two fundamental characteristics of commedia dell'arte were the use of <u>improvisation</u> and <u>stock characters</u>. Actors improvised dialogue and action to a plot outline (scenario), which usually dealt with everyday people, situations, and environments. These scenarios were refined over time as they passed from troupe to troupe, and a collection of fifty was published by Flaminio Scala (*fl.* 1600-1621) in 1611. Though a majority of the scripts were comic, a few were serious, and many were melodramatic.[7] A commedia troupe typically had several scenarios in its repertoire and travelled from town to town

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5   Josh Funk in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 145.
6   Brockett, *Theatre,* 147.
7   Ibid., 148. Emphasis mine.

performing its shows.   The actors, in an effort to connect with a particular audience, would insert topical references of local-flavor into their realizations of these scenarios.[8]

The stock character types used in commedia can be divided into two general categories: the straight and the exaggerated; the exaggerated can be further divided into two categories: masters and servants.   The exaggerated characters wore masks with exaggerated features, while the straight characters wore no masks but, rather, dressed in fashionable clothes.   Additionally, many roles had postures or mannerisms associated with them; i.e., Pantalone was hunched over and moved like an old man.

The straight roles were those of the young lovers (*innamorato* and *innamorata*) who were typically depicted as witty, handsome, and well-educated, though occasionally they might be characterized as naïve, even not too bright.

The most frequently occurring master characters were: *Capitano*, a braggart who boasted of his prowess in love and battle, though his amorous advances were unwelcome and he was afraid of his own shadow; *Pantalone*, a middle-aged or elderly merchant, who spoke in a Venetian dialect [perhaps because of Venice's historical role as a center of commerce?], and chased young women; and *Dottore*, an erudite, sometimes friend/sometimes rival of Pantalone, who was usually a Doctor of Law or Medicine, and who spoke in a Bolognese dialect interspersed with Latin words and phrases to show off his learning [perhaps because of Bologna's historical role as a center of learning?].[9]

The servants, or *zanni*, were the most widely varied commedia type. Though the characters were mostly male, there were some female characters (maids, known as

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8   Jeffrey Sweet, *Something Wonderful Right Away: An Oral History of The Second City & The Compass Players* (New York: Proscenium Publishers Inc.), xv-xvi.
9   Brockett, *Theatre*, 150.

fantesca, who served the innamorata), who functioned to keep the plot moving and served to help or thwart their masters. The most popular zanni were: *Arlecchino* (Harlequin), a mixture of cunning and stupidity who was at the center of any intrigue, and wore a suit bearing the pattern now associated with Harlequin; and *Pulcinello*, an ancestor of the English puppet character, Punch, was a character whose function and social-status varied but whose ancestry [and dialect?] was always Neapolitan, and whose characteristics were a mixture of foolishness and shrewdness, villainy and love, wit and dullness.[10]

Commedia troupes averaged ten to twelve members: seven or eight men and three or four women, each of whom always played the same characters; thus, there was one Capitano, Dottore, Pantalone, etc. per troupe. They were self-governed and self-directed, travelled from town to town petitioning for rights to perform, and were equally comfortable performing in those environments which contained elaborate staging (which they utilized) as well as those which didn't. "Adaptability was one key to their success."[11]

Adaptability, too, was a hallmark of commedia dell'arte's style. In France, commedia was an influence upon Molière's farces, and it was so popular that an Italian troupe which had made Paris its home since 1661 received exemption from the 1680 monopoly for spoken French performances held by Comédie Française. Additionally, commedia-dervied characters made regular appearances in *opéras comiques*.[12] In England, commedia, which had been popular since the early seventeenth century, watch as its elements and characters were adopted and utilized in pantomime, farce, and topical

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10   Brockett, *Theatre*, 150-151.
11   Ibid.
12   Ibid., 210-229

satire. The pantomimes of John Rich (1692-1761) alternated serious scenes based on classical mythology with mute, comic episodes featuring commedia characters, and during which music accompanied much of the action.[13] Though opéras comiques and pantomimes were not improvised, the endurance of the stock characters from commedia within the fabric of European theater points to the establishment of an accepted collection of <u>narrative archetypes</u>. An audience <u>knew</u> (or, rather, was told) by the mask, clothing, posture, behavior, or dialect(s) employed, <u>which</u> of the characters was portrayed. These non-verbal characteristics were <u>stereotypes</u> that assisted and reinforced the audience's comprehension of the on-stage action.

It's the Chicago Way

> The Compass was an improvisational theatre, the first of its kind in the nation, unrewarded in its lifetime and barely chronicled in its posterity. It began in a storefront theatre on a main drag of a great university campus in Chicago, in the childhood of the Atomic Age.... The task they set themselves was to report on their times, seven or eight times every week, with no set script and no fixed lines. They improvised much of their stage material by playing off the shouted concerns of their audience.... The intentions of The Compass Players in practicing this hair-raising exercise were serious. They did not plan to be funny or to change the course of comedy with their improvisations. But this is what happened.[14] —Janet Coleman

> Compass, if carried to its logical conclusion, is a sort of 'do it yourself' movement. I'd like to see neighborhoods all over the city form groups like this. It's a search for a community.[15] — Paul Sills

On its surface, it may appear that a sixteenth century, Italian art-form has little to

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13   Brockett, *Theatre*, 286.

14   Janet Coleman, *The Compass: The Improvisational Theatre that Revolutionized American Comedy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), xi.

15   Paul Sills, quoted in Sweet, *Something Wonderful*, xxv-xxvi.

do with with a twentieth century American art-form; and, on its surface, that is a valid observation. It is true that American improvisational theater, in the form to be discussed, doesn't employ stock characters or scenarios in the same manner of its Italian counterpart; not explicitly, at least. However, the two art-forms, separated by centuries, a language, and an ocean, display far more similarities than differences.

American improvisational theater, like America itself, is the product of a confluence of cultural currents. Producer David Shepherd's idea was to create a contemporary, popular version of the commedia which dealt, in comic terms, with present-day society. "The work was to be relevant to the concerns of the 'proletariat,' reflect their problems, help give them a sense of class identity, and arouse them to the inequities of the system."[16] Shepherd took his idea to his friend Paul Sills, a young director who had been working with a group of actors from the University of Chicago, utilizing techniques developed by his mother, Viola Spolin. "Spolin's rationale was that if you put someone onstage... and tell him to 'act,' he will feel inhibited and self-conscious, but if you transform the situation into a game, the actor, in concentrating his energies on playing the game, will lose his self-consciousness and perform naturally and spontaneously."[17] Shepherd and Sills, as well as some of the actors, wrote scenarios and breathed life into them using Spolin's techniques. The Compass Players made their debut on July 5, 1955 with a Production call *The Game of Hurt*, based on a scenario by Sills.

Each week, the actors would rehearse and present a new scenario bookended by a "Living Newspaper" (in which the actors would improvise scenes based on articles in the

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16   Sweet, *Something Wonderful*, xxi.
17   Ibid., xvii.

day's newspaper) and free-improvisation based on suggestions from the audience (this free-improvisation is known, contemporarily as a "Set").[18] The Compass closed its doors in 1958, but the techniques employed there found new employment at The Second City (1959 – Present).[19]

> The game is a natural group form providing the involvement and personal freedom necessary for experiencing. Games develop personal techniques and skills necessary for the game itself, through playing. Skills are developed at the very moment a personis having all the fun and excitement playing a game has to offer— this is the exact time his is truly open to receive them.[20]
> — Viola Spolin

> What all representations have in common is a role in *make-believe*.... I take seriously the association with children's games — with playing house and school, cops and robbers, with fantasies built around dolls, teddy bears, and toy trucks.[21] — Kendall L. Walton

Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theater* was written and developed between 1945 and its publication in 1964. Inspired by her work with Neva L. Boyd, a sociologist at Northwestern University and pioneer in the field of creative group play[22], Spolin's work with the WPA (Works Progress Administration) Recreational Project in Chicago, influenced by the work of Constantin Stanislavsky, and developed through observation of its principles in action at the Compass Theater, and, later, at the Second City, it is the go-to text for anyone wishing to study improvisational theater.[23]

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18   Ibid., xxiv.
19   Spolin, *Improvisation*, 21.
20   Ibid., 4-5.
21   Kendall L. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 4.
22   Spolin, *Improvisation*, 4-5. "At the heart of Boyd's work was an awareness of the constructive potential of play. Boyd led inner-city and immigrants' children in traditional games to help them adjust to the society in which they lived."
23   Ibid., vii-xi.

The practices and principles outlined in *Improvisation* contain and describe tools of inference and conference which can be used by actors in the process of discovery and narration. These tools are presented in the form of <u>games</u> which help actors ("players", in Spolin's terms) develop the skills used to cooperatively create scenic improvisations through observation, gesture, and discovery. Though nary a single scenario nor stock character is presented in the text, the following included definitions allude to *commedia* through such concepts as:

> Skeleton Play: A set form from which improvisation is used; a scenario; a way of building an improvised play; a series of beats/scenes which must be filled in by the players; a situation or series of situations.

and

> Character: People; human beings; real people; the physical expression of a person; speaks for himself.[24]

Subtitled *A Handbook for Teaching and Directing Techniques*, the purpose of *Improvisation for the Theater* is to equip teachers and directors with methods and approaches for presenting, conducting, and supervising the aforementioned games; though it is the theory supporting them, the collection of games itself, and their foci, that are the subject of our present discussion.

The foundation of Spolin's theory embraces <u>intuition</u> and <u>spontaneity</u>, and she directs her text toward fostering those skills, guided by "Seven Aspects of Spontaneity," which include: Games, Approval/Disapproval, Group Expression, Audience, Theater Techniques, Carrying the Learning Process Into Daily Life, and Physicalization.[25] We shall briefly go through the aspects, one-by-one.

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24   Ibid., 392, 379.
25   Ibid., 4-17.

Game: "Any game worth playing is highly social and has a problem that needs solving within it... whether it be to reach a goal or to flip a chip into a glass. There must be group agreement on the rules of the game and group interaction moving towards the objective if the game is to be played."[26] The Rules of the Games (acting exercises) foster self-discipline and allow students to have fun while utilizing "ingenuity and inventiveness" in the process of solving a problem or accomplishing an objective by serving as a Point of Concentration. Says Neva L. Boyd,

> Playing a game is psychologically different in degree but not in kind from dramatic acting. The ability to create a situation imaginatively and to play a role in it is a tremendous experience, a sort of vacation from one's everyday self and the routine of everyday living. We observe that this psychological freedom creates a condition in which *strain* and *conflict* are dissolved and potentialities are released in the spontaneous effort to meet the demands of the situation.[27]

Approval/Disapproval: The liberation from approval and disapproval is a key component to successfully playing a Game. That is, by releasing themselves from responsibility to anyone or anything other than the Rules of the Game, actors are free to deal with the problems within the subject matter.

Group Expression: An actor, free from Approval/Disapproval, is an agent in a healthy group working interdependently to solve a problem. Differences and similarities between members are not only embraced, but accepted. Competitiveness is frowned upon, however, "Natural competition, on the other hand, is an organic part of every group activity and gives both tension and release in such a way as to keep the player intact while playing."[28]

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26   Spolin, *Improvisation*, 5.
27   Neva L. Boyd, *Play, a Unique Discipline*, quoted in Spolin, *Improvisation*, 5.
28   Spolin, *Improvisation*, 10-11.

Audience: "The audience is the most revered member of the theater. Without and audience there is no theater."[29] The audience should be as free to experience as the actors.

Theater Techniques: "The actuality of the communication is far more important than the method used. Methods alter to meet the needs of time and place."[30] An actor should be free trust that techniques will come from experience.

Carrying the Learning Process Into Daily Life: Techniques learned in the theater world can and should be applied to the experiences of everyday life. In order to foster recognition, direct and fresh contact with the outside world, and experience. This experiencing, is the homework of the student. "The world provides the material for the theater, and artistic growth develops hand in hand with one's recognition of it and himself within it."[31]

Physicalization: Non-verbal communication. Showing instead of telling. The use of physical traits (hunched shoulders, firm aggressive step, expanded chest, belligerent chin, petulant mouth, wide-open eyes) to convey information.[32]

The collection of games and the approach to its use are governed by the "Seven Aspects of Spontaneity" and have specific Points of Concentration (POC) designed to allow the player (actor) to focus on and develop singular and, later, multiple skills simultaneously. While some exercises are for individuals, and others are for couples or groups, they can be subdivided into general categories of Orientation (General)-, Who-, What-, and Where-exercises (games).

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29   Ibid., 12.
30   Ibid., 14.
31   Spolin, *Improvisation*, 14-15.
32   Ibid, 15-17, 259-261.

The Games

Orientation-games are, "the first step in creating reality set before the student-actor...," and serve as a springboard and anchor to all other exercises.[33] Their purposes are to familiarize the student with observation, physicalization, and/or penetration in the creation, exploration, and/or recall of environments and situations. Orientation-games include: Mirror Exercises #s 1-3 (Observation and Physicalization), It's Heavier When It's Full (Physicalization), What Do I Do for a A Living? (Physicalization plus recalled Observation), and Play Ball (Physicalization), and provide fundamentals which serve subsequent exercises.[34]

Who-exercises include: How old am I? (Recalled Observation and Physicalization), What do I do for a Living? (Recalled Observation and Physicalization), Character Agility (A-E) (Physicalization) , and Gibberish [Exercises, including one with Foreign-Language-Rhythms] (Vocalization), and ask the player to <u>physicalize</u> aspects of a character; posture, gait, mannerisms, vocal-inflection and -cadence. Used in tandem with the Orientation-game of "It's Heavier When It's Full", for example, the reader might imagine a character whose posture is S-shaped (How Old am I?), whose gait is belabored (Mannerisms/Physicalization; It's Heavier When It's Full should inform the player of the muscle strain associated with lifting a heavy object, or of the physical challenges associated with tired or sore muscles), and whose vocal-cadence and dialect suggest Japanese, and who appears to be using a rake.[35] Is the reader envisioning an old,

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33   Ibid., 49.

34   Ibid., 49-87.

35   This is a hypothetical situation conjured by the Author. Additionally, though Spolin encourages the adoption of dialect-cadences (Foreign-Language Rhythms as she calls them) she does not explicitly offer any direct examples of those Rhythms. It is also worth noting that Spolin's exercises only apply those Rhythms to gibberish.

Japanese farmer, who shuffles his feet?

Where-exercises include: The Where Game (Physicalization of a Recalled Environment such as a library, cafe, or laboratory), What's Beyond? (Physicalization of activities performed in a room from which or to which a character is going; i.e., wiping one's hands with an imaginary towel and removing an imaginary apron while entering from the "kitchen", taking off one's coat while coming in from "outside"), Finding Objects in the Immediate Environment (Physicalization of specific Objects located within a specific Environment; i.e., putting on the aforementioned imaginary apron and using the imaginary towel, looking in a "drawer" for a "knife", "using" the knife, etc.), and What Time is It? (Physicalization and Recalled Observation; am I moving quietly, am I groggy, do I yawn and stretch, is it night?).

Used in concert, the skills developed by these games equip the player to improvise scenically by <u>showing</u> their scene-partners (and The Audience) different elements of Who, What, and Where. In turn, their skills of observation <u>enable them to be shown</u> those same elements.

Yes, and...

> 'Yes, & ...' is the most important rule in improvisation.... By following this simple rule, two players can build a scene before they know it. The 'Yes, & …' rule simply means that whenever two [or more] actors are on stage, they agree with each other to the Nth degree.   If one asks the other a question, the other must respond positively, and then provide additional information, no matter how small: 'Yes, you're doing it right, and I also think we should...' Answering 'No' leads nowhere in a scene.[36]

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36   Del Close, Charna Halpern, and Kim "Howard" Johnson, *Truth in Comedy: The Manual for Improvisation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Meriwether Publishing Ltd., 1994), 46.

Much like Boyd's difference "in degree but not in kind," is the idea of "Yes, and..." within the concept of "Group-Yes." Though the example given is generated by a group of improvisors, the unfolding reality illustrated could very well be generated by a pair of improvisors:

— Let's explore the forest!
— *Yes! And...*
— Let's go to the deepest part of the forest!
— *Yes! And...*
— Let's discover an old castle surrounded by thorny bushes!
— *Yes! And...*
— Let's make our way through the thorns!
— *Yes! And...*
— Let's explore the castle!
— *Yes! And...*
— Let's find a sleeping princess!
— *Yes! And...*[37]

Though the preceding example violates Spolin's call for physicalization, by telling rather than showing, it is nevertheless useful for illustrating the creation of a stage reality through agreement and addition. The scene began with nothing but an *offer* and finished with a group of adventurers (Who) finding a sleeping princess (What) in a castle surrounded by thorns located deep within a forest (Where).

"Yes, or..." could have derailed the scene from the outset by sowing the seeds of disagreement or uncertainty; "Yes, <u>or</u> let's go to the desert!" Where are we, in a forest <u>or</u> a desert?!? In this case the "Yes" functions as a "Maybe".

Similarly, "Yes, but..." could weaken the initial offer by offering unnecessary complications which do not <u>forward the scene</u>; "Yes, <u>but</u> let's stop at the store to get some snacks!" We may have started out headed for the forest, <u>but</u> now we're in a convenience

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37   Keith Johnstone, *Impro for Storytellers* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 34-36.

store!

Acceptance and augmentation do not have to overtly employ "Yes, and...",
however. Take, for example, the following exchange taken from a workshop in which the
two players were told that their Where was a deserted highway:

> Tom: I have a theory why we haven't seen people for days. I think there
> was a nuclear exchange, and somehow we were the only one who
> weren't killed.
>
> Roger: I'll buy that. Even the last town we walked through was deserted.
>
> Tom: Well, I guess we have to start over. We need a president.
>
> Roger: Okay.
>
> Tom: I nominate myself.
>
> Roger: I second that.
>
> Tom: Does that mean I'm president?
>
> Roger: No, it just means you've been nominated. We have to have an
> election.
>
> *(They vote, and Roger counts the secret ballots.)*
>
> Roger: You lost. I don't know how, either, because I voted for you.
>
> Tom: Then I declare a dictatorship. But, I appoint you attorney general.
>
> Roger: Great! Then I get to prosecute someone. *(Looks around.)* Well,
> since you're the only one here, I guess I'll prosecute you for the
> state of the world.
>
> Tom: Okay.
>
> Roger: I find you guilty.
>
> Tom: But you haven't proven anything yet.
>
> Roger: This is a dictatorship! There's no due process of law.
>
> Tom: I'm defecting.[38]

The players "Yes, and..."-ed their given Where by standing far apart from one

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[38]   Close, et al., *Manual*,102-103.

another on stage. Tom offered Roger a Who by suggesting that the two of them were the last two people on Earth. Roger accepted and augmented Tom's offer by suggesting that in addition to the immediate space that the two occupied being deserted, so to was a town through which they had passed; though this offer, Roger expanded the Where. At this point, the Who and the Where are established, leaving only the What to be exposed. Tom suggested that society needed rebuilding and proposed the need for a president (What). Roger agreed through an, "Okay," but did not overtly augment. In this case, the "and..."-component of "Yes, and..." took the form of an implied "and I'm ready to follow your idea." Tom later performed a similar "Yes, and..." when he accepted Roger's offer to prosecute him.

In addition to the exchange of information facilitated by "Yes, and..." and its variants in the preceding scene, there is another problem (or two) of communication contained in an exchange near the middle. We shall examine each, in turn.

First, there is a general prohibition in improvisation of asking questions rather than making statements; "He who gives information is a gift-giver; he who asks questions is a thief."[39] For example, if a player asks, "What's that?," "that" is whatever the scene-partner says it is.   So, near the beginning when Tom asks, "Does that mean I'm president?," and Roger replies, "No. That just means you've been nominated. We have to have an election," it creates an apparent problem. However, Tom's question functions as a statement of, "I'm not sure how to behave. Tell me."

Second, though Roger says, "No. That just means that you've been nominated.", his negative response functions as a positive acknowledgement and acceptance of Tom's

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39   Close, et al., *Manual*, 57.

uncertainty ("Yes") and his continuance of, "We have to have an election," functions as an addition to the game of solving or establishing the What ("And").

Finally, there is the matter of Tom's "But" in, "But you haven't proven anything yet," during the offer of his conviction. Here, the statement implies, "Yes, I've been convicted and I appeal on the grounds that I've been convicted without being tried."

The preceding scene and its analysis serves to illustrate a number of concepts previously discussed. The game of the scene shifted between discovering and establishing elements of Who, What, and Where while simultaneously observing and maintaining those elements already established. The Where remained consistent and even expanded when given context in a larger world, by exercising Spolin's concept of Beyond, a space more global than the immediate stage space.[40] The Who of the scene was established rather quickly, yet developed later with the discovery of a heightened What. The What of the scene unfolded over its duration, beginning with the desire to reestablish society and ending with a coup d' état. In addition, the emergence of a dictatorial regime and its eventual overthrow is a scenario provided time and again by, if not a literal script, then, the script of History.

Finding the "Game of the Scene"

> People are natural game players. Some of the games are obvious, like *Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit,* and baseball. Dr. Eric Berne's book *Games People Play* deals with more subtle, psychological, interpersonal games that people play to get what they want out of a specific relationship. Likewise, improvisers initiate game moves to indicate the types of games being played in the scene. The game provides the structure needed to solve the problem of the

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40   Spolin, *Improvisation*, 102-103.

scene.[41]

Find your game, and you've found your scene.[42]

Finding the "Game of the Scene" (or, simply, the Game) is easier than defining it. Not to be confused with Spolin's exercise-games, the Game comes in many forms. Games are discovered within scenes. Some simple games include: one-upsmanship, talking about something without actually talking about it, missed/misread cues, trying to achieve/obtain the forbidden (or trying to forbid), trying to fit a bunch of players into a tiny space, or obscuring the truth.

The Game is an emergent element of the scene which arises from <u>patterns</u> in stage-action, dialogue, or relationships. "The patterns become part of the scenic game. When the players recognize the patterns in a scene, they'll set each other up for game moves to forward that scene."[43] A game must be recognized. "Most of the time, a scenic game is recognized within the first three lines of a scene. When it's missed, it's usually because the players haven't been paying attention."[44]

Contemporary Improvisation

Theatrical improvisation has changed a great deal since its inception, even at The Second City. The scenario has, for the most part, gone the way of the dodo. In its absence, however, remains an approach to improvisation that is still firmly rooted in the principles espoused by Spolin and bound by the principles of "Yes, and...". A fulfillment of Sills' wish to have "groups like this all over [Chicago]," has been realized, likely to a

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41   Close, et al., *Manual*, 58. Additionally, Hodgson and Richards, *Improvisation*, 4, cites Monopoly. Further, they refer to Monopoly as a "category" of improvisation know as "simulation".
42   Ibid., 87.
43   Ibid..
44   Ibid., 59.

far greater degree than the wisher's wildest dreams. Most metropolitan areas have at least

one or two "Improv" theaters and at least of handful of troupes performing a variety of

material. Some troupes perform short-form shows based on games. Yet others perform

more complex long-form shows.   There are even improv-troupes such as *Baby Wants*

Candy and *Opening Night* (whose casts are constantly changing) which perform entirely

improvised musicals. A discussion of all these forms is well beyond the scope of this

paper.

Five Hundred Years and Running

As we've seen on our nearly-five-hundred-year trip from Renaissance Italy to

mid-twentieth-century Chicago, the form of theatrical improvisation may have changed

but its tools have remained relatively unchanged.

Gone are the stock characters of Pantalone, Dottore, Arlecchino; replaced, instead,

by The Banker (or CEO), The Senator (or Judge), and The Country Bumpkin (or

Stoner).[45] Gone are <u>constructed</u> scenarios; replaced, instead, by <u>discovered</u> scenes.[46]

What remains, however, is far more valuable: The tools. The security of working

as part of an always-affirming environment. The ability to wear someone else's skin by

<u>acting</u> like them.   The ability to discover, support, and cooperatively create something

from nothing.

> Because you never get, 'An empty, white room with nothing
> in it,' as a suggestion.[47]
> — Nancy Hayden September 3, 1998

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45   Author's suggestions, though John Hodgson and Ernest Richards, in *Improvisation,* 78-80 offer
several collections of stock characters from different eras which The Medieval Period, The Elizabethan
Period, The Restoration Period, The Victorian theater or early cinema, and The Present-day.
46   Given the glut improv-troupes, it is impossible to say whether or not any of them <u>don't</u> use
scenarios. In fact, some short-form games employ mini-scenarios; i.e., 'Nightmare' or 'Fairy Tale'.
47   Quote written on backstage wall of Second City (Detroit/Downtown) [1993-2004].

CHAPTER FIVE: FILLING THE GAPS

> Like musicians, troupes of comic actors were employed by courts to enliven a variety of festivals, weddings, and evening entertainments. Especially popular was the form of improvised comedy — *commedia all'improviso* — better known since the second half of the eighteenth century as *commedia dell'arte*.... Understanding the way in which the actors of commedia dell'arte fashioned scintillating and seemingly spontaneous theatre from presentations of stock characters performing stock "business" can serve as a model for understanding how galant composers made music. The multi-act play becomes a multimovement sonata or multipart opera. The stock characters become stock moods or "affections."   And the stock comic business — the memorized speeches, dialogues, and well-practiced physical comedy — find analogues in the repertory of stock musical phrases or passages: musical schemata.[1]
> — Robert O. Gjerdingen

Gjerdingen's 'musical schemata' are presented in the form of a collection of prototypical bass and treble voice-leading models with names such as: *Romanesca, Prinner, Fonte, Monte, Ponte, Fonte, Meyer* (after Leonard B. Meyer who identified the changing-note archetype)*, Fenaroli, Do-Re-Mi, Sol-Fa-Mi,* and *Indugio*. Each of the characteristic voice-leading models (Schema) are found throughout music of the eighteenth century, in various distributions and combinations; each, due to voice-leading considerations, more suitable for combination with some more than others.

Figure 5.1[2] presents a schematic diagram of Haydn's Hoboken XVI, No. 27, mvt. 3, (1774-76), a Theme and Variations, in A-B-A'-(rounded binary)-form, while Figure 5.2[3] shows Gjerdingen's voice-leading models, and Figure 5.3[4] shows the Theme portion

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1   Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8-9.
2   Gjerdingen, *Galant*, 129-130.
3   Ibid., 459; 455; 456; 458, respectively.
4   Joseph Haydn, *Sämtliche Klaviersonaten*, ed. Georg Feder, vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1978), in Gjerdingen, *Galant*, 133.

of the Theme and Variations with annotations by Gjerdingen outlining each schema as it appears.

1ˢᵗ Half	Meyer	G
	Prinner, modulating	G → D
	Cadence	D
2ⁿᵈ Half	Fonte	Am → G
	Monte	C → D → Em
	Half cadence	G
	Meyer	G
	Prinner	G
	Cadence	G

Figure 5.1: Schematic Diagram of Haydn's Hoboken XVI, No. 27, mvt. 3, (1774-76)
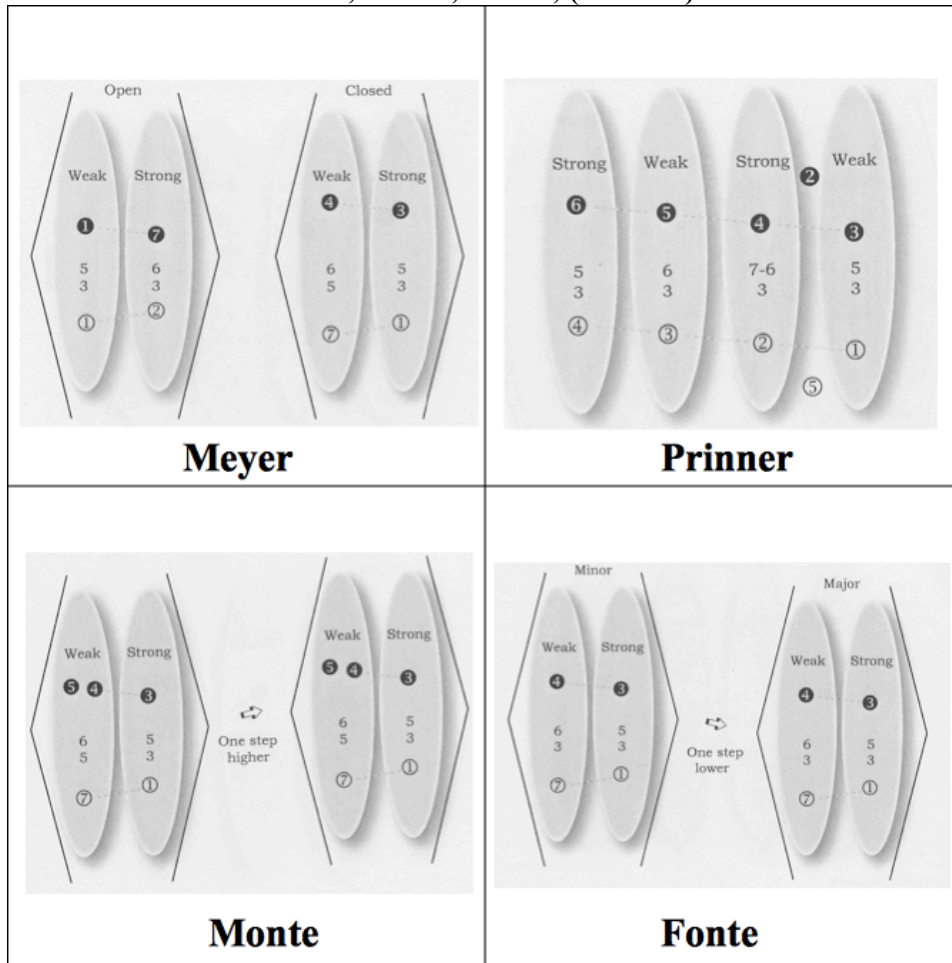
Figure 5.2: Gjerdingen's Voice-Leading Schema

Figure 5.3: Gjerdingen's analytically annotated score of Hob. XVI, no.27, mvmt. 3

Taken in total, Figure 5.1 functions much as a cue sheet or scenario, if we view each "half" as an "act". Recalling Philip Tagg's musemes and museme stacks, we might refer to each schema in Figure 5.2 as a museme (horizontally disposed) and the treble and bass components as individual elements of a museme stack. Figure 5.3 is the end result of combining musemes and a cue-sheet.

Though Haydn's arrangement of these musemes constitutes a museme string, the lack of successively repeated musemes prevents the possibility of a groove. Each section does, however, form a *harmonic matrix*: a medium term chord progression.[5] Additionally, each movement (an each museme within it) displays its own rhythmus (following Steele). We cannot say for certain what each variation means, but we can see how they mean.

These schema are found not only in compositions of the Galant era, but also in instructional basses known as *partimento*, which resembles a bass part given to eighteenth-century accompanists, with the exception that the bass included <u>no figures</u>; students were taught to recognize characteristic voice-leading implications in a single line and to supply the remaining harmony through inferrence, governed by The Rule of the Octave.[6]

These partimenti were kept in collections (sometimes published) called *zibaldone*.[7] Somewhat "between School and Art", partimenti were passed from masters (such as such as Leonardo Leo, Francesco Durante, and Nicola Porpora) to students through a combination of oral-tradition and the aforementioned zibaldone, at institutions such as Santa Maria di Loreto, I Poveri di Gesù Cristo, and Sant 'Onofrio a Capuana.[8]

Haydn, who studied with Porpora after the master's retirement, later said, "I sat down, began to improvise, sad or happy according to my mood, serious or trifling. Once

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5   Tagg, *Meanings*, 342.
6   Gjerdingen, *Galant*, 25.
7   Ibid., 10.
8   Giorgio Sanguinetti, *The Art of Partimento* (New York: 2012), 31-36. Note: Haydn later studied with Porpora, but there is little direct evidence of Haydn learning partimento. For an entertaining speculation, read: John Edwartowski*, I sat down, began to improvise...": Rediscovering the Lost Art of Partimento through the Music of Franz Joseph Haydn*, n.p.

I had seized upon an idea, my whole endeavor was to develop and sustain it in keeping with the rules of art."[9] There is little direct evidence that Haydn received direct training in partimento from Porpora, yet the circumstantial evidence is quite intriguing.

> For patrons of Galant music, making informed judgements about compositions and their performances required familiarity with the important schemata of the style. For the composers, making works worthy of praise required being able to produce exemplars of every schema correct in every detail. The more passive knowledge of patrons could be gleaned from frequent listening to the typical phrases of galant music.... From seeing only one feature of a particular schema — any one of its characteristic parts — the student learned to complete the entire pattern, and in doing so committed every aspect of the schema to memory. The result was fluency in the style and the ability to 'speak' this courtly language.[10]

Finding the Place where Theatrical and Musical Improvisation Meet

> [M]usical expressiveness is not confined to "emotion characteristics in appearances," i.e., musical gestures which are experienced as resembling gestures or behaviors characteristic of a person in a particular emotional state, such as vocal expressions of sadness or anger (sighing, wailing, shouting, etc.) and behaviors expressive of joy (skipping lightly), or sadness (moving heavily and slowly as in a funeral procession).... [S]ometimes music can appropriately be heard as containing a "persona," a fictional or virtual agent whose emotions are expressed in the music, and that this persona can be experienced as expressing more complex emotions, such as hopefulness or resignation, as well as blends of emotion, and emotions that develop and change over time. A complex piece of music may have a composed expressive trajectory or musical "plot," which dramatizes a psychological journey by a persona. — Jenefer Robinson and Robert S. Hatten[11]

9　　　Georg August Griesinger, Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn, ed. Karl-Heinz Köhler (Leipzig: Reclam, 1875), 78. English translation in Vernon Gotwals, *Haydn: Two Contemporary Portraits* (Madison: University of Wisoncon Press, 1968), 60. Cited in John Edwartowski, "'I sat down, began to improvise...": Rediscovering the Lost Art of Partimento through the Music of Franz Joseph Haydn," n.p.

10　　　Gjerdingen, *Galant*, 25.

11　　　Jenefer Robinson and Robert S. Hatten, "Emotions in Music," *Music Theory Spectrum* 34 (2012): 71.

Though the above quote deals with emotion in a large-scale piece of music, its contents serve the purpose of addressing the intersection of musical and theatrical improvisation quite well. We see allusions to gait ("skipping lightly" / "moving heavily and slowly"), and associationism ("gestures or behaviors characteristic of a person in a particular emotional state"). And though Robinson and Hatten convincingly argue for the recognition of emotion in large-scale pieces of music, it is the mechanism through which they make their argument that is of greatest value to our present discussion; the mechanism of the *mirror neuron*:

> There is now good evidence to suggest," write Robinson and Hatten, "that when subjects watch another person performing an action, e.g., with the hand, foot, or mouth, a motor representation of that action is 'internally generated in the observer's premotor cortex.' Something similar can happen when we watch someone else being touched.... There is also auditory mirroring: neurons in the premotor cortex of monkeys discharge not only when they perform a certain action but also when they hear a sound related [associated] to that action.... Such 'emotional contagion' can occur subliminally; it is an automatic way in which we can grasp other people's emotional states simply by mirroring them.[12]

The case for the role of the mirror neuron in improvisation theatre is made by Mark Levenson:

> [T]he empathy process; I don't know how much you've studied this, but it's how we, how the parent, trains the infant. I mean, that's what makes us unique from most, a lot, of other animals, is the ability to have empathy. And it's just simply a mirroring process.... It's meet the person where they're at. So, meet the actor where they're at. So, if they're doing this subtle bit and I lay on this big, dramatic score, I'm gonna look like an idiot and it's gonna wreck the scene.... It's mirror-neurons. Do you know about those?... Oh my God! Mirror neurons. I mean, that's the root of empathy. And they've just discovered them in the last ten years. We have these neurons that mirror other people. Which is how I can know if you're laughing, you're sending out these [signals] that I'm reading as laughter.[13]

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12   Robinson and Hatten, "Emotion," 86.
13   Mark Levenson in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 198-203. Mark is a trained therapist who studied mirror neurons as part of his training.

This empathy process, recognized by Robinson, Hatten, and Levenson represents something of a single, fine thread which stretches all the way back to the beginning of our discussion. Remembering semiotics, these gestures/situations/emotional-contagions are <u>signs</u> which we recognize and interpret. We, playing the language-game and drawing from a pool of family resemblances, offer a musical mirror. The actor, through auditory mirroring, associates the musical gesture with their action/situation/scenic-context/emotion, and, in a phrase, recognizes themselves in a musical mirror. This shared gesture between actor and musician represents a "Yes, and..." and allows the scene to continue to move forward.

The stock musical gestures, made of chord-shuttles/progressions (musemes, containing qualisigns (intervals and melody), icons (quotations of melodies-past, whether new or old; mottos; a change in the tone-of-voice; melody; dialect), indices (like a prolonged dominant suspending forward harmonic-(scenic-)progression), rhematic-iconic-legisigns / rhythmic-figures (which <u>resemble</u> an onstage action (gait, twitch, shiver)), and dicent-indexical-legisigns (which reflect a general class of <u>feeling</u>), operate at the level of Firstness and Secondness, without time for comment or contemplation, tumbling headlong, entwined within the supportive embrace of the scenic context, to create a multimedia spectacle of semantic snowballing.

<u>In Their Own Words: Improvising Musical Directors on Improvisation</u>

As a part of the research for this project, I travelled to Los Angeles to interview some Improvising Musical Directors about Improvisation. The interviews were largely conversational and followed their own flows, and though I arrived planning to ask a

series of fixed questions, the responses often provoked new and unintended lines of questioning; in a sense, they were improvised.

The format of these interviews were three solo-interviews (Kaz, Hall, and Levenson) and one group interview conducted as a roundtable (Funk, Jackson, Kurtenbach, Passarella), and though semi-abridged transcripts of the interviews are provided in the Appendix, I have chosen to present some of their responses here, as a prelude to the conclusion.

<u>Frez Kaz</u>

We're gonna talk now. This ain't in two syllables. You can forget everything you learned, if you learned it well enough, and merely, from the right-brain, from the stomach, from the balls, whatever you wanna call it, respond or even lead. Because, Viola Spolin, genius of all geniuses said it best: "Follow the follower." That can mean nothing to a person, unless that's all there really in any group work. So we're talking, "How do you respond? What makes you do what it is?" "Why, sometimes, Fred, when you see someone do something that suddenly is mysterious, with the diminished-chords, or the rumbling [octaves] in the low-register? And, at other times, when they're not doing it, and you seen an opportunity for them to do it, and you slightly suggest it in the music and you move the scene forward.... I didn't choose what I did for thirty years; it happened to me. And, all of a sudden I see, 'cause I'm Jazz, I'm Jazz; I've got an album out, and I'm Jazz. I'm a "world-class Jazz musician," some are saying....

And, here, I walk in, nineteen-fifty-nine... what you see is: They're Jazz too! They're getting a skeletal-structure from a suggestion and from the way they've been communicating with each other. The skeletal-structure is now submerged; leaving the conscious open to be in the character, in the circumstance, in the suggestion, on the stage. But you have to also have the talent that drove you to learn your chops. So that's why not everybody could do it even with the same amount of work....

And, so, <u>in the theatre</u>, if we're saying that we're the middle-man between the House, the Lights, and the Actors; but <u>so is every one of those factors</u>. 'Cause the House is a part of the Actor. The House responds to the Lights, the Actor responds to my music, to your music; to the House, to the Lights, to the Moment, to <u>where they got laid last night</u>, and what they ate for breakfast.[14]

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14   Fred Kaz in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 115-134.

Josh Funk

The first and foremost thing, for me, when providing music for theatre, or film, or TV is emotion.... It's all emotions... and delving into human emotions... because I think that's the role that music plays in theatre and TV and films, is to be an emotional, sort of, manipulator. And so, when we're improvising, I just follow the actors and follow the emotions, and follow...Say there are conflicting emotions in a scene, and one is joyous and the other is pissed-off, you know, you then have to make a decision as to which character is the scene about....

Who's the hero? Whose journey is it? Because that's whose story I need to tell. And so, if I choose to play the pissed-off music, then the scene is about the pissed-off guy. If I decide to play the joyous music, then the scene is about the joyous guy. But that, because I'm also a director, and that has everything to do with directing as well, when you're directing improvisors you have to identify who the audience is going to identify with. And with music improv, you just have to do it in the moment, and be making, basically, HUGE directorial decisions with the keyboard.[15]

Marc Evan Jackson

The.. risk of failing... whatever risk... or the only problem in Improv, or whatever... there are no problems in Improv. Like, if something goes up in the air, and we don't know if it came down, whoever decides first whether it came down, or how well or how poorly that it came down, wins. And then we're all on board.... Like, that is not a failure, in my mind. Whether you've lead the improvisors on stage to surprise, or to fear, or to ordinary, or whether they lead you, there's no failure. The only failure is not being willing, is not making a choice....

The same rules apply to stepping off the back line, as to putting your fingers to the keyboard; if you don't play because you're fearful, you've failed. If you play something that may not fit because you're like, "I play *Also spracht Zarathustra* fucking really well," and so you play it for that wrong motivation. It's like coming into somebody else's scene because you're like, "I have this hilarious gay voice that I do. This is gonna kill." Then, you've failed....

Gellman and Rico told me, when I took the job, that I was a character in every scene. The piano, you know, was meant to add to every scene, and I know I played in almost every scene, and when I didn't, that was saying something.[16]

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15   Josh Funk in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 135-166.
16   Marc Evan Jackson in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 135-166.

Jerome Kurtenbach

As an improvisor, I come at it from a long story-arc... I try latch onto, or try to tap into any storytelling element that's going to enhance the Scene, no matter what that is.   Even if it's a bad improvisor....   What's the Scene about? Either if it's a gesture that they've created in the moment, or if it's a scene that.. I mean, I've been in scenes where you're trapped and they don't know where they are on stage either, but I'm keyed into what they've been giving me emotionally. So, I'll either set the tone, keep the tone, or create a new tone based off of something that happened that's momentous; whether it's, "My dog died,"after they've been talking, talking, talking, and then someone says something that shifts everything....

So, the impetus to play has always been driven by a story-element. Whether it's an emotional, story-driven element; and especially when you're doing speedy-improv, where you can either latch onto a state of being there on-stage.... And the same can be said, if they're creating all of these emotional journeys, if you don't realize where they've been, you have to know how to come in and either shift that emotion, for a reason, (that it's a plot-driven device, rather than, "I just wanna be a musician and do something different....")

Or, if you know that (especially in, depending on the format of your Improv) knowing that the Audience has to go on a musical journey; which is the same, to me, as a storytelling device. So that you know if you have one style of musical material with the Actors, that the next thing that they hear may need to be in little bit different style to move the musical-story forward as well. So, it's just always kind of an unfolding story, in and of itself.[17]

Scott Passarella

It comes from the Reality and the Genuine-ness of it.... And it's really just a question, of whether or not you're capturing genuine moments or not.   And, that's ... true of Sport. No ones faking anything in Sport, or very rarely. And I feel like that same thing applies to Improv. And, it's like, that Moment when you get someone to be in a real, genuine, place is when they <u>can</u> be funny.   The Audience <u>can</u> recognize, like, "Oh, this is better than me just sitting here watching. Like, I'm <u>engaged</u> now." Like, emotionally. And I think that's a <u>huge</u> thing....

I feel that there's different levels of things you can do with Major, for the same purpose. For my personal preference, the difference between playing da-Da-na-na [hums Waltz riff] and having someone come out and talking over that is <u>huge</u>, as opposed to they talk, you play a little happy music, there's pauses in

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17   Jerome Kurtenbach in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 135-166.

there. It's kind of a level of <u>intensity</u>, almost, that you can do. I mean, you can be playing in the same Scale, and just be doing a little less, volume-wise, spacing it out rhythmically.   Same thing: the difference between minor key continuously played is Danger, minor key every now and again is tension, minor key very quietly is just <u>sad</u> instead of dangerous. There's different levels of that, I think.[18]

<u>Laura Hall</u>

So that analytical ability has certainly been useful for me.   But the other things that, I think, were <u>really</u> informative for me were playing in <u>wedding-bands</u> and doing piano-bar <u>because</u> with wedding-bands you're playing <u>a lot of different things</u> and piano-bar too when you have to be quick on your feet, and you develop your <u>ear</u>….So, those <u>two</u> gigs, which sort-of ask you to be a little all-over-the-map were really useful to me....

And, then, the other thing is that <u>I did a fair amount of Theatre</u>. And, so, that really helped me with my sense of knowing how to underscore, and understanding the <u>rhythm of a scene</u>, and transitions between scenes, and that kind of stuff. So, just from having done Theatre and Musical Theatre, getting the sense... because, in some ways, I feel like it's less important <u>exactly what you play</u> then the, sort of, <u>rhythm</u> of what you play, or the <u>ins and outs</u> of what you play. You know?...

And obviously you're trying to think about chord-progressions that are typical. You know, and it <u>is</u> that thing... this is... and <u>you</u> know this, but this is the thing that people don't always get, that <u>really</u> you're playing in a very cliché way. But you <u>have to</u>. Because if you want people to: A. Instantly recognize it as Country, and B. The singer to <u>intuitively</u> be able to sing along, you want a pretty cliché kind of chord-progression. So, in a way, I think of it as a sort of <u>distilling</u> process.[19]

<u>Mark Levenson</u>

An it's such a wonderful combination, because the music tells you, "There's something fucked up going on here."   You know if you have a happy scene with a couple coming together and you have a high dissonant string at the top, it tells you, "Danger!"   Just think of a D-E-flat-E cluster an octave or two above middle-C, probably two octaves above, just soft, and just creating this harmonic-overlay of tension. So that tells an audience that there's danger. I'm not sure why <u>those</u> sounds represent <u>danger</u>....

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18   Scott Passarella in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 135-166.
19   Laura Hall in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 167-186..

There is a common knowledge of musical phrases. And I think if you take the actual idea and flavor of music away from them and create them as these invisible, yet tangible, objects; that 'doo-dee-doo-dee-doooooo' (sings *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*), to anyone that's experienced it, knows that that goes to a showdown. Or, the 'Jaws' music. That's the standard "Danger!" I don't know that everyone is going to go to 'sharks', but they're going to go to 'danger', if they've ever experienced it....

So, literally, if any character, if any actor shows like there's going to be any tension... if there's any tension created through dialogue, or through action... and, I suppose, to break that down: if one character, not actor, if one character negates another character's reality...Whenever I sense an obstacle come up, that's actually perfect, my hands, literally now, [fidgets with hands on table] will tend to react; and they usually react fairly minimally... if we're trying to keep some sense of reality. And I usually do that, and by doing that, that usually let's the actor know, intuitively, I think, that I've picked up on what they've done and it sort of gives them permission to keep going because they know they've been heard.[20]

Conclusion

As we have seen, improvisation, both in the musical and the theatrical domains, requires someone to be something of a répétiteur, though the script and score presented to the improvisor are not scribbled on a piece of parchment or pinned to a backstage wall. Rather, the script and score consist of signs, not in the form of words or note-heads, but in the signs which we read in our everyday lives; tone of voice, posture, gesture, body-language, social-context, and acquired musical knowledge. It has a language in the form of chords, scales, postures, dialects. It shows rather than tells. It is not a fixed process with guaranteed outcomes. It is like Wittgenstein's games; meant to be played.

Prospects for the Future

The Extemporization of Scores for Improvisational Theatre represents a unique opportunity to create, compose, and perform simultaneously. Additionally it provides the context of a living laboratory for performance-practice, theory-instruction, and cognitive

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20   Mark Levenson in an interview with the Author. See Appendix, 187-215.

studies; perhaps, like the partimento of old, or the case of the "unprepared" silent-film accompanist, whose job is not to think, but to act.

Through research of this topic I have discovered many areas which I believe could use further exploration: What can ethnomusicology and musicology learn from one another? What is the History of Topic Theory; i.e., Did Ratner look at any cue-sheets? Why do Spanish-, Gypsy- (Roma-), Jewish-, and Arab-Scales contain similar segmental qualities and melodic characteristics? (Does it have anything to do with the geographic distribution of Moorish culture?) How is the unique experience of semiotics in practice fundamentally distinct from the semiotics of theory and the way we define knowledge, meaning, or identity; i.e., How does knowing a sign mechanically ("under the fingers", so to speak) differ from recognizing a sign in the conscious mind? How does the "aura of primitive magic" identified by Meyer function during improvisation, when the players are simultaneously creators _and_ receivers, observers _and_ participants?   What are the differences between the roles of the Improvising Musical Director in short-form, long-form, and musical-improvisation?

Though the preceding paper has given us a general outline of the history, tools, methods, aesthetics, and approaches of Musical Improvisation, much work remains to be done. Many questions remain to be answered.

It is my hope that this paper has proven educational, thought-provoking, interesting, and fun. Further, it is my belief that if it hasn't provided all of the answers, then it has, at least, provided a framework for filling the gaps.

APPENDIX

<u>Interviews</u>

Semi-Abridged Fred Kaz Interview
Saturday, June 16, 2012
Aboard the *Cadenza*, Long Beach, California

<u>**Bio**</u>

FRED KAZ spent over two decades as the Musical Director for the Second City Chicago, from the early-1960s through the mid-1980s. He co-wrote dozens of revues and worked with scores of actors.

Fred Kaz: So, again, when it comes to improvisation, I mean, <u>in any form</u>, which almost everything is, it's like we were talking about the beginning of all motion, the great explosion or whatever anybody wants to call it, to theorize to call it... When the motion began, there cannot be any predicting unless you're a dyed-in-the-wool Creationist, so the rest is improv. That's all that <u>evolution</u> is, but a <u>skeletal-structure</u>. The cell in one case. Maybe harmonics in Jazz. And, of course, <u>rhythm</u> up to a certain time in its development. And, so, <u>in the theatre</u>, if we're saying that we're the middle-man between the House, the Lights, and the Actors; but <u>so is every one of those factors</u>. 'Cause the House is a part of the Actor. The House responds to the Lights, the Actor responds to my music, to your music; to the House, to the Lights, to the Moment, to <u>where they got laid last night</u>, and what they ate for breakfast.

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John Edwartowski: How do you respond to a scene?

F: We're gonna talk now. This ain't in two syllables. You can <u>forget</u> everything you learned, if you learned it <u>well enough</u>, an merely, from the right-brain, from the stomach, from the balls, whatever you wanna call it, respond or even lead. Because, Viola Spolin, genius of all geniuses said it best: "Follow the follower." That can mean <u>nothing</u> to a person, unless that's all there really in <u>any</u> group work. So we're talking, "How do you respond? What makes you do what it is?" "<u>Why</u>, sometimes, Fred, when you see someone do something that suddenly is <u>mysterious</u>, with the diminished-chords, or the rumbling [octaves] in the low-register? And, <u>at other times</u>, when they're <u>not</u> doing it, and you seen an opportunity for them to do it, and you slightly <u>suggest</u> it in the music and you <u>move the scene forward</u>. Why is that?" Well, when I was four years old [trails off; wry grin]. Do you want me to go on? So, that's how it happened, beginning with that. And then when you <u>live</u> your instrument; when you <u>really</u> only feel alive through the instrument. You <u>didn't</u> wanna do <u>fucking scales</u>! You <u>didn't</u> wanna do <u>Hanon</u>; not <u>Czerny</u>; not <u>even Bach</u>! You weren't even old enough to realize that this was <u>Jesus Christ</u>

through Music. Okay, but Mama made you, or your teacher made you, or some girl you wanted to lay, or whatever; play with under a saxophone band.   But then, all of that comes and comes and comes, and you don't choose. I didn't choose what I did for thirty years; it happened to me. And, all of a sudden I see, 'cause I'm Jazz, I'm Jazz; I've got an album out, and I'm Jazz. I'm a "world-class Jazz musician," some are saying. And, here, I walk in, nineteen-fifty-nine; well, a little bit later, especially; and earlier, especially, 'cause before Second City there was The Compass; there was the South-side campus. What you see is: They're Jazz too! They're getting a skeletal-structure from a suggestion and from the way they've been communicating with each other. The skeletal-structure is now submerged; leaving the conscious open to be in the character, in the circumstance, in the suggestion, on the stage. But you have to also have the talent that drove you to learn your chops. So that's why not everybody could do it even with the same amount of work. But, again, you're talking about rhythm, thank God my folks didn't have none [(laughs)].

J: Recovering Catholic?

F: I come from a long line of non-practicing Jews. Look. If anything were going to turn me to any religion, which it's not, it would have been Bach's 'B-minor Mass'. And I'd have been faithful, which is to say, "Don't talk to me, Logic. Here's the music that proves God is what they say."   But, I had too many earlier experiences. Then, when I got, blessedly, to the 'B-minor Mass', and the rest of the perfection of tonal music, which we're all involved with, to some extent; then, I could hear it. I could re-hear it. I could continuously discover, even in one recording of it. Continuously. If you save just one piece of Western-music, you can reconstruct it from [the 'B-minor Mass']....   I'd didn't really take to Bach, though, until almost thirty years of age. And, by then, I was a wailing Jazz pianist. And, Bill Matthew... you don't know the name.

J: [No.]

F: Oh, child.

J: This is why I'm here.

F: Okay. Now his name is Alahoudin(Sp?) Matthieu; William Alahoudin Matthieu, was the first Music Director at Second City for a couple of years. He wrote me into it. He wanted to go out to the West, and he had heard my album on Atlantic and he said, "This is the man." Which I wasn't. But, after a while I was. Boy, if you're into any of the History of Second City, and you don't know about William Alahoudin Matthew, he's one of the great theorists and composers living today, in my estimation. And he was in his teens, and he was doing arrangements for the Stan Kenton Orchestra.

J: So, he called you in and said, "I've got this gig for you."?

F: No. No. How I got the gig? When it was getting together in [Second City founder]

Paul Sills' mind... You know that name?

J: Yes.

F: And Bernie Sollins, of course, and Howard Alk, and those people; especially Paul Sills, 'cause this is Viola's [Spolin] next [of kin]. And I think I had both of my boys already; they were infants, and we were eating Corn Flakes several times a week; there wuddn't no money; there <u>were</u> no gigs, really;he came up, and I had <u>just gotten a Saturday and Sunday gig at the airport</u>, where, if I smiled a lot, and oogled the old ladies, I could makes tips at the piano-bar. But, Paul came to me, who had been, apparently, attending some of the jam-sessions in Old Town that we had on Webster Street where our only rule was, "You can play anything you want, <u>if you don't miss anything anyone else is playing</u>." <u>That</u> was so like Viola's instruction of, "Yes, and..." Her big thing was, "Yes, and..." <u>That's the attitude</u>. You don't deny, but you <u>add</u> without overlooking. So, now all of us cats are wailing in jam-sessions in various places and we would lift the building so high the <u>postman didn't know where to put the damn the mail</u>. So, he attended one or two of those, and now we come back to where I was, with the two little babies, not making a living, and came to this apartment and, in effect, he said, "We wanna do what you guys do, only on stage, with acting." And that's <u>really</u> what it turns out it was. I don't know if it still is. I'm not gonna <u>even ask</u>. I don't even wanna know if it ain't. And I've been told both ways. <u>But</u>, and Viola had already been at Hull House developing this concept for the sake of the children-who-couldn't-face-themselves, you know?

J: Yeah.

F: Oh, good! Thanks for that.... So, he says, "Come do it with us." And I said, "Well, I just got a weekend gig, and I'm probably gonna be able to make close to sixty, seventy dollars a weekend from this." [He says], "Well, we don't have any money, yet." I said, "Paul, I can't do it now. I'm looking to maybe some hamburger, here." You know. But, I can't understand why, because Bill Mattieu had already played with them. And, <u>I'm not sure of the details</u> but, anyhow, he became the man. And then <u>I</u> went to the opening, and I <u>went</u> to some shows, and I hung out afterwards, me and Bill fooled around at the ol' upright. And then he wrote some stuff for me to do, 'cause they opened another room next door, for a while called *Playwrights at Second City*, which, ultimately, became the <u>new</u> Second City, 'cause we were in an old laundry, at first.... So, I watched it and, like I say, this is <u>Jazz</u> up there on the stage and following the rule of eternity, to some extent. Again, you need a skeletal-structure or else it's chaos. See, I had someone like Viola, and Paul, and they just as soon scream at you for not following one of the <u>few</u>, basic rules; but, more often they'd scream at you for following something you didn't have to follow. So, you could free up like that. So, you ask me one question and I've been rattling and rattling.

J: No! This is it! I mean, there's so much that goes into [improvised scoring], right? On

any given day you can go in and say, "You know what? I'm gonna score their feet." Right?

F: [(Laughs!)]

J: You can say, "This guy is heavy-set, and he always shifts his weight, so I'm gonna score <u>him</u>, and the way he moves his feet. Or, this girl is a nervous bundle of energy and she can't sit still, so I'm gonna score <u>her feet</u>." Right? But, it's <u>this</u>. We can <u>pick</u> anything, which is why it's hard to nail [our craft] down. Right? You can talk about the <u>approach</u>, right?

F: And, frequently, it's like that. Especially in the first chapter of any accompanying pianist's life, it's like that. It's choosing from nothing. After a while, and this is what <u>most</u> of my life in that position is about, was, no, it just came. I'm just glued to them. I don't <u>know</u> what's happening down <u>here</u>. [Moves hands as if playing the piano.] It was <u>that much</u> right-brain/heart/stomach-control. And, it <u>works</u>. Sometimes I lay out. Sometimes, if they're starting to <u>bore</u> me I'll go [sings first few bars of *Für Elise*], 'cause I'm saying, "Here's some boring shit from <u>this</u> end."

J: Yes!

F: <u>That</u> would <u>put them straight</u>. And then they'd do something silly. And <u>that's</u> okay for a break. "Okay, now we're starting something." Or, <u>worse than that</u>, they would be red-faced, afterward, in the Green Room, which is how we would make up the improvisational-set, which is how we got the next show together, right? Because, what happens, if they're doing something and it's <u>not</u> really moving, and the audience is going [adopts confused look]. And, so I'd light a cigarette, get up, and walk outside. And then they'd say, "Oh, how are we gonna get out of this? He controls the lights." [(Laughs.)] But, I would do that, <u>sometimes</u>, when someone, and some of the <u>great talents</u>, had learned this early, but <u>both</u> Belushi(s) [brothers John and Jim Belushi] had to learn, "You don't go out there with a preconception, and you <u>don't</u> go out there with a character that's got a short life." You know? So<u>, in a sense</u>, we are also the <u>rabbis</u>, the <u>priests</u>, the mediators, the <u>teachers</u>; we're the <u>counselors</u>; and <u>the spankers</u>.

J: Yes! Because they can play in their world, but we validate...

F: <u>I've</u> got their house. If <u>they</u> don't have 'em, I've got 'em.

J: Right?!... Were there, <u>is</u> there a character or a <u>type</u> of character that you like playing? Did you play <u>styles</u>? And, I know that's part of the <u>game</u> system, "Hey, we're gonna make a song up. What <u>style</u> do you want to hear?" Right? There's some of that. And somebody might say, "Oooooh, it's 1967 and Sergio Mendez and Brazil '66 are popular, so let's hear a Bossa-Nova." [I think] that people were a little more musically-educated, then, so, maybe, "Let's hear a March, or a Rhumba, or a Foxtrot."

F: Maybe.

J: So, improvising songs, that's <u>one</u> thing.

F: To me, that's a parlor-trick game. And it's good. For <u>me</u>, and I learned a lot about who I could, just, in the middle of a scene that was going nowhere, or if it was a little ridiculous, then that fits as a Musical, then <u>I'll just do an arpeggio</u>! But I know who I <u>can't</u> do that with, and that comes from the 'Make-a-Song' exercise. So, what that feeds is my most important, to me, function, which is, not in a musical piece, but the scoring, or the <u>stimulation of the direction</u>.

J: So, we're at a fork in the road. And, things aren't going...

F: We're in the middle of a scene, I take it?

J: Yes, and you can do a 'Make-a-Song', and you can start the vamp in that style. <u>Or</u>, and maybe I'm projecting my...

F: It's okay. Do it.

J: A woman walks differently if you play her as a Samba, than if you play her as a March>

F: Yeah...

J: Did you ever...

F: That kind of imposition of control?

J: Yeah. And if not <u>control</u>, "Hey, when she walks out, she moves like <u>this</u>. When <u>he</u> walks out, he moves like <u>this</u>." Did you ever reinforce character <u>through</u> style?

F: Only <u>if</u> I saw that the character that they were inhabiting was <u>going that way</u>. I would never play an <u>actor</u>, because <u>that</u> defeats his purpose up there. It's <u>likelier</u> with <u>some</u>, that it would <u>come to that</u>. But, <u>no</u>, I won't bring them on and lock them into a style, or even change to lock them <u>out</u> of a style. I <u>might have done it from time to time</u>. There <u>have been times</u> when I've put the spotlight on the sound, but as <u>rarely as possible</u>. Here's one thing I used to say when I was teaching some <u>others</u> how to try and do what we do, "If you're noticed, you have probably failed."

J: I agree with that, one-hundred-percent.

F: "If what you are adding to is noticed, you have contributed well." And that's the rule.

And that's why... Okay, before anything, when you're playing like you're scoring movies, as a kid, you know that this is one thing [plays two-handed fully-diminished-seventh-chord tremolos, rising chromatically]. You know that this is a parody [plays agitato, chase-music], or augmentation [augmented-chord arpeggios]. These are tricks. And they'll come in, but probably only when the characters themselves are portraying an over-the-top characters. Not when there's action to be moved forward. Not when the laughs should come out of the natural game. Jokes were practically verböten, in my time.

J: They still are, in theory.

F: Good. They're going for the shit-jokes anyhow. And you know the black-key [overlapping, pentatonic, sweeping glissandi] so you've got a harp at your disposal. Then, if you know them enough, like I do, like you probably do, to where you don't have to think about 'em, you can respond in kind. Just like I do when there's a certain wave, and the vessel's out. I mean, you can't predict which way... I mean, there's confused water out there, and you come around a certain point... A sailor is an improvisor who ain't. But, like, think about it. I've got a friend three-boats-down, four-boats down, who has sailed, single-handed, over the Atlantic [sic] to Hawaii and places like that. Old boat, single-handedly. Sure, you prepare with as much as you can, but you don't know what's gonna happen until you're already moving. [Plays some Chicago-style piano-Blues] I didn't know what I was gonna do, but I knew there was gonna be some Blues, probably twelve bars, although I didn't get past 'em, it might have been sixteen. So, it's what we do.

J: How would you use, let's say Blues? Would you break the phrase...

F: That's left-brain. I don't do that. There's guys that do, but I don't do that. I suppose there's some licks in my hands that are used more than once. In fact, there's no question about it.

J: So we've got our idioms from silent film. We've got our 'Surprise', we've got our 'Dream', we've got assorted stuff.

F: Crayons. Yes.

J: Now, when you're watching a scene, and you're participating in it, to a point, and then something develops in the scene: You know what's going on in both actors' worlds, right? Is there part of you that makes the decision that one actor should... like, do you augment somebody's...

F: Some-times.

J: And, by doing that, you open a door for...
F: At times. Yes. At times, I would no sooner do that because there's something

happening that I don't quite get yet, and these guys are <u>into something</u>. I wanna <u>see;</u> and <u>not</u> affect. Thats, <u>also</u>, <u>some</u> times. If we're opening a scene, and the laughs came down on a certain dynamic, I might play the <u>light</u> up in a certain way and just fade <u>until I see what's happening</u>. And that may, at times, correctly, <u>or not</u>, affect what comes afterwards. But, as for playing, you know, it's, again, some <u>times</u>. How do you know? How do you know that <u>that</u> fish that's got those <u>long</u> fins is gonna end up <u>leading</u> to something that walks out of the water? You <u>can't</u> know that. Because, not only did, in a sense, that became a land-animal, but hat fish also had offspring that <u>didn't</u> do that. <u>Okay</u>?

F: So we're on the same page, yeah?

J: Yes! And this is the thing in this process: What <u>we</u> do is something that doesn't sit still. So, how do you talk about something that doesn't sit still?

F: You talk <u>forever</u>. [(Laughs!)] You have to talk forever. But, what you do is, you say wh<u>at you just said</u>: This is something that by its very nature is not only <u>subject</u> to change, but it's part of all change. I'm sorry man. Here's what one of the great and horrible things about being almost-eighty is: Opinion i<u>s</u> <u>so</u> hard to maintain, let alone come by, because you see, have seen, a whole lot of exceptions to <u>every</u> rule. And to the point where the <u>basic rule</u>, and it's been said a million or more times, is: Change.... Same thing, different names. Change. Evolution. Improv.

J: Adaptability.

F: All that is is what we call: Time. And it's merely motion. I've got one teeny, little life. It's the <u>only one that matters</u>. But, look, I don't even <u>appear</u> on the whole cosmos. But, I don't think <u>anything else</u>, interests me as much as <u>me</u>.(?)

J: This is the thing: You could have done the same job that you did for [Second City]. You could have walked into a silent-film theatre...

F: I <u>did</u> it. Now, here's a name you won't know: Winn Strockey (sp?). Wonderful old folk-singer slash actor. Long gone. Now, in the early days of Second City, he did some work.   In fact, the <u>piece</u> that Billy [William Matthieu] wrote for the 'Playwrights at Second City', he wrote a Musical; a modern take-off on *The Threepenny Opera* called *Big Deal*, and it was about Chicago politics. And Winn Strockey played Alderman Something-or-Other. Oh, by the way, Alan Alda was <u>that</u> version of Mack Heath; and he and I were great friends. So, Billy wrote this score with my hands and technique in mind for the piano-part, and they did it. And Winn Strockey, just going back to the silent movies, Winn Strockey was very active in the Chicago Historical Society...and they were beginning to do some of the classic, old, silent flicks They'd show 'em on a Sunday afternoon in their great theatre, and they wanted somebody to be the piano-player. And, at that time... Am I using all of your tape?
J: No. I've got thirty-one hours.

F: Oh! That's more than I've got. [(Laughs!)] Right, Lord? And they wanted me to play the sheet of the printed music, at the time, that they sent <u>with</u> the film, for the piano-player at any given place...

J: Yeah!

F: And I said, because Matthieu had not yet gotten me, which he later did, so involved in advancing, to become literate... I had not paid attention to <u>any</u> of my lessons as long as I could improvise, and I could read very slowly, and write ineffectively, he, ultimately, got me to <u>become</u> literate; he was a wonderful influence on my life. So, at this time, I said, "Hey, I'll do this gig for the silent flicks, " like *The Great Train Robbery*, "on <u>one</u> condition: I wanna improvise 'em. You show me the movies, either a day early or a couple of hours early. Let me see them. Let me just <u>look at 'em</u> once in the control room, and then let me improvise 'em."…. I just wanted to see 'em once, and then I played them like they were my kids. Buster Keaton. What's-his-name, the sheik, Valentino. So, I did a few Sundays that way. I just improvised.

J: So, how do you make the choices?

F: See, now you're asking that same question. I don't know. Maybe that's the best answer. [Laughs!)]

J: I know that's the wrong question. That's just the question that...

F: No! That's the <u>right</u> question! It just <u>ain't</u> got an answer! What you do is: You, first of all, you know your axe to the point where, if you wanna play something, you're gonna end up playing what you <u>can play</u>. I mean, here we are, again, at that same question. But, you don't, I don't do <u>much at all</u> without having been suggested something.... What your paper is gonna be doing is what? Talkin' about improvisation? Or <u>our role</u> in stage improvisation? What is it? Is it <u>that</u> specific?

J: It's this... And, really, I don't know what it's going to be until I have all of my...

F: Good! All right!

J: It's this: I know as surely as there is breath in my body, that [we] can play something that makes somebody <u>act</u> or <u>feel</u> a certain way.

F: [Simultaneously]...a certain way. Yes! I assume that's true, but you'll be one that I've really met, besides me... And you may feel that way too.

J: This is why I'm talking to <u>you</u> about this. Let me tell you the research that I'm <u>not</u> doing: I'm <u>not</u> gonna do an exhaustive survey on Jazz and Jazz improvisation, and

improvising over changes. Somebody's <u>done that</u>. I <u>get</u> that. I <u>get</u> that that's valuable.... That means <u>nothing</u> to me.... <u>This</u> is <u>such</u> a unique situation...

F: [Simultaneously] ...situation...

J: It's the best gig any musician can have....

F: It's <u>never</u> the same....[I had] thirty years on the gig. It's like thirty years breathing oxygen. Who pays attention to that? In fact, every breath is a little different. And if it ain't, you gotta change. Because if it starts out like this: [Plays bouncy C-minor with treble clusters], and you're not satisifeyou go [Bangs on V and slowly walks down to diminished-seventh-chord].

J: Yes! And if that didn't get you out of it, you can maybe go back to the first thing...

F: Or maybe go [plays augmented upward arpeggios], right?

J: So...

F: So you see two guys in a conversation, and they're not getting no place. I had never seen that. I just thought of something: My imagination always wants to go places.

J: Please.

F: So they're talking and they're not getting no place, and they're trying to talk about something, and then all of a sudden, and it stops. And you see them and their eyes meet and you go like this: [Love-theme from Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*], you've got a new, funny place to go. So, you know what I'm talking about. I'm so glad to meet you, John.

J: I'm glad you've taken me in.... So you <u>know</u>. And it's <u>true</u>. There's no data on what you do. Now, maybe somebody puts a Super-8 or 16mm...

F: Yeah. There's some stuff. And then we <u>composed</u>. Anything that we composed, that was fun. And they were generally Act-closers, were they not?

J: Yes they were. Or,...

F: Or transitional.... There's so many functions where we are, no pun intended, <u>instrumental</u>....

J: During the shows, was playing an <u>era</u> part of your...

F: Sure.

J: And you had a... I'll make it about me, and then ask if it's true for you.

F: That's fine.

J: If I got 'Renaissance' or 'Shakespeare', I would play modal, churchy stuff. Is that part of your...

F: I would probably have gone something like: [Harpsichord-patch, Prinner progression, ornamented melody].

J: Okay. And the choice of instrument...

F: Well, that I didn't have.

J: No. But...

F: But, right now, if I got it, I'm gonna use it. But what I took a great deal of pride in was to suggest other instruments on the pianoforte.

J: Yes!

F: That, to me, makes me an accomplished pianist. If I can do the Wagnerian thing: [plays modal, horn-fifth figure, in middle-register], that's horns, isn't it?

J: Yes, it is.

F: Alright. [plays detache, gigue melody in the in the upper register] That's pipes.

J: Yes. Yes.

F: [Sweeps across black keys, harp-like, as earlier]

J: There's your harp.

F: So, again, sometimes you're gonna do that; and it's tricks. If the trick fits the situation with the label 'trick' on it, okay. If it can be done subtly and add to some of the colors projected on the stage, so much the better.... But it's not set in stone. You gotta whole lot of resources. You keep a whole lotta paints and crayons and brushes, so that your palette, you can make whatever mixtures on your palette....

J: How often was there a stereotypical bad guy on stage? Do you have a Soviet, a Russian?
F: Oh, yeah. Sure you do.

J: A Spanish?

F: <u>Yeah</u>. We used to... One of the things we would do in the set, in fact, I think we even did it in a show one time, Timmy Kazurinsky played Deng Xiaoping taking questions, and Bruce Jarchow was the interpreter; 'cause there you've got fourths and parallel-fourths, and stuff.

J: And you would...

F: [Plays Chinese riff] Oh, <u>sure, of course</u>!.... Yeah, of course you have nationalistic things like: [single note trumpet rhythm, followed by rhythmically active arpeggiation, bugle-like, followed by tremolo, i-bII-bIII-bII-i-a-la-guitar] Right?

J: Yes!

F: <u>Yeah</u>! Any time you want, right? You can go [i-iv rhythmically-etched march]. You can go right from <u>themes</u> to just the <u>style</u>. The nice things was: you never really had to worry much about copyrights.

J: Yes! And, because it happens so quickly, because it's so ephemeral [snaps fingers rapidly, four times], you're <u>not</u> being asked to <u>recreate</u> this style exactly, you're being asked to suggest...

F: [Simultaneously] ...to suggest it. Yes.

J: Okay. <u>I</u> have a theory that's, sort of, come during practice, and I wonder if this is a shared thing. <u>I believe</u> that when you score (and let's just say nationalism because this is something that I've got some traction on, in my [readings]) that when you score Russian or Spanish, what you're doing, depending on how you play it and what's going on on the stage, you can either score Russia, the <u>place</u>, you can score Russian as in, "This man is <u>a</u> Russian man," Do you know what I mean?

F: <u>Sure</u>!

J: So that it's something, if you want it to be the <u>base</u> of everything...

F: It would be <u>highly unlikely</u> for it to pursue through the piece. To be the suggestive thing, and then to play the <u>character's</u> reactions to each other. <u>That</u> was why I was in love with Viola and Beethoven.

J: So your approach was: You <u>set the table</u> with..

F: Sometimes that. <u>Or</u>, sometimes it wasn't set and it comes out in the middle of the

piece. Or maybe I'll make a joke because he's saying something socialistic <u>without and accent</u>, and I'll put that... I mean, <u>I don't know</u>. But it's <u>in your crayon box</u>. When it's there, when you've got your chops, and you experience, and you've been to enough movies or watched enough television and you're into your, again, if the <u>chops</u> are such that you <u>think</u> through the keyboard, if that's your instrument, it all becomes how sensitive you are to what's going up there. You are <u>just</u> another <u>player on the stage</u>. That is what we, at our best, in that position,have been. We have been an <u>equal member</u> of the drama.

J: The seventh cast-member. The first audience-member.

F: <u>All of the above</u>.

J: So now: Movies and Television. How much of what you saw on the screen and what you heard while you were watching the screen <u>came</u> to the piano? And, how would you use it?

F: The best thing I can tell you is, I wanna read you <u>one</u> page. 'Cause what I have done... You see, a few years ago, I was in the habit of saying to my poor wife (you know, 'cause I started to feel real old for a while), I would say something, or I would remember something, I'd say to my poor wife, "When I'm gone, tell them I said <u>this</u>. Remind them about <u>that</u>." And she says, "You've got to lay this stuff down. Don't lay that on me. Sure you forget stuff. It's because you gotta get it outta there. <u>Write it down</u>." So I started writing. I have a short attention-span most of the time. So, thinking that, I wanted to honor those that, like me, have a short attention-span. I started writing one page. My limit was two rule: Each story could be no more than one hand-written page. And they all started with the word "Once". And I ended up, over several years, writing over a hundred little stories. And there's one regarding what you just asked me, about the influence of the movies. If you don't mind, I'd like to take a minute and read it to you.

J: I would be honored.

F: And it has to do with The Second City and the influence there, of the movies in my childhood. This was one of the best I ever made....

"Once, as a child in a family where the entertainment was motion-pictures, Saturday night for adults, Sunday matinee with serials, cartoons, and double-features for kids, I noted the crucial part that movie-music played. My earliest daydreams included scoring for flicks. The yearning behind that dream was accommodated even more by reality. For, although I did score a couple of flicks, and they're not note-worthy, the opportunity to have my musical instincts and pianistic abilities become part of the drama occurred six nights a week. For decades. Not once or twice a year. Not subject to the concerns, opinions, and whims of producers, directors, writers, editors, contractors, and recording engineers. At Second City, we wrote, directed, acted, and performed together.

We learned, grew, failed, and succeeded together. The undulating cast changes over the years are blurred, but not the momentous, individual talents involved in the process. And, always, there was the certainty that this, this improvisational morality, this Jazz, was the way. It was the mutual creation, if in miniature, of a very inclusive art-form. Okay, so we didn't dance so good. Viola Spolin codified and clarified issues of social and theatrical awareness and balance. When applied on the Second City stage, good things happened. Often. I thank every Second Citizen; Past, Present, and Future. I had a really good time."

J: A-men.

F: Want it?

J: Got it.

F: Well, that's how that worked. That was your question....

J: We have a shared vocabulary. If you and I have seen the same movie, and you draw from that in a score, I recognize that.

F: To some extent. We're very different and very alike....

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J: When I get the suggestion of 'Science Fiction' and I start scoring it with *Star Wars* [music], the scene stops being, just, generic science fiction and becomes <u>about</u> *Star Wars*.

F: That's right.

J: So, how do you tackle that...

F: It would depend on the set-up. How do we bring the lights up? Where do we take you? Who's in it? What are they wearing? Okay? And, I got one little thing that I took <u>directly</u>, that I use when something happens that doesn't seem to make sense; it's <u>strange</u>. It just takes a half-second and it can still add color to thoughts. [Plays *Twilight Zone* ostinato].

J: Twilight Zone!

F: Yeah! And how long did that take? All it is is like a jerk in the head. But it <u>says</u> 'Fantasy'.

J: Because everybody in the audience know...
F: [Simultaneously] ...<u>knows it</u>! That's what you're talking about is the things that

everybody knows. But <u>that</u>, as opposes to a specific story-music, can say, "Whoa, this is strange." And then it's <u>still</u> up to them as actors. And that was <u>always</u> what I wanted. I very rarely... sometimes I overplayed, but is was usually a few too may beers, or if I was tired, or if they just <u>weren't</u> up to it. No good reason. No <u>good</u> reason.

J: <u>That's</u> the kind of stuff...

F: Okay, so those are <u>given to us</u>. Those are <u>given to</u> us by others. Right? They become everyone's toolbox. Somebody invented the pliers.

J: That's the thing. So, let's call that 'Fantasy', or 'Mystery', or 'Suspense.' Now, we've got <u>other</u> genres. One of the, I'm pretty certain it's yours, it's the... George Wendt was in the scene, and it's 'Cowboys'...

F: 'Cowboys'! The song? It's [Sings opening lick to 'Happy Trails'], forever. We wrote that together, one night; the four of us. We, I <u>wrote</u> it, but the idea... God, that's such a funny thing.

J: So, that ['Happy Trails'] is the 'Cowboy'-riff. That's the <u>idea</u> of 'Cowboy'. Right?

F: Yeah. And the whole song was about 'boring', so it was just <u>forever</u> that same riff.

J: So, had you used that riff in the Past, during improvisations? Did you use it in the Future, to signify the Old West? Did you...

F: No. I don't think so. But, it's <u>so</u> fuckin' basic.

J: It's the prototypical...

F: It's the comp; you know who's coming on the screen and they're <u>gonna be riding a fuckin' horse</u>.

J: Right!

F: That's it! And so I start that in the dark and the lights come up and these three totally different gaits...

J: Mm-<u>hmmm</u>...

F: You've seen the piece.

J: Yeah, yeah!

F: Aw, man. Beautiful. And Timmy [Kazurinsky] got this beautiful brainstorm with the

hair-dryer [worn like a pistol]. It was a great lot of fun. But, yeah, that [riff], I'm <u>sure</u> that I <u>inherited</u> that, but it came right out when they gave me the idea of what they wanted to do.

J: Absolutely.

F: And then we did the harmonies and the melodies. And, again, no one can could that I infringed on any copyright. And, yet, you <u>know</u> you've heard that melody; you <u>know</u> you've heard it before. [Sings chromatically-descending melody spanning a minor-third.] Well, it's <u>really</u> not that different from 'Tumbling Tumbleweeds' is it?

J: [Sings opening line.] Yes! [In recognition of similarity]

F: But, it's different enough. And I didn't know. <u>Now</u>, I'm thinking that it could be <u>easily</u> compared to that. But, so that's what your brain does when you don't have to <u>think</u> about it; all you have to think, now, is how to construct the piece.

J: This is <u>awesome</u>, because now this is starting to open up the territory.... Nobody owns the ii-V-I; it's just something that's there...

F: Or the plagal cadence.

J: Right! The plagal...

F: Church.

J: … tells you something. Right! So there's this <u>huge</u> collection of gestures out there, that nobody <u>owns</u>; that <u>everybody</u> recognizes. Right?

F: Yeah.

J: And, my <u>thesis</u> is that you and I <u>feed</u> off what these are; that's what I <u>believe</u>. Right? We just say, "What's in the pool of common-knowledge?" Right? And <u>that's</u> what comes [out]. So, that, when you see a swanky dame walk onto the stage, she sashays, and you play her a certain way.

F: Oh, yeah.

J: When you see a pompous prick walk on, you know how he plays. Am I making sense?

F: I know what you're saying.

J: And, this is the <u>assumption</u> that I'm making, and it, kind of, sounds, with the <u>cowboy</u>,

if that's a riff that you pick up and say, "That's a cowboy riff, " and there's the 'tumbleweed'-riff, which we've heard echoes of in countless Westerns because, whether it's being done on stride-piano, in the old saloons...

F: That old saloon stride-piano, I had something, really something, that I built that I always used. In fact, if you would see a scene in an old Western saloon, (this happened frequently enough) and then you'd see someone approaching it from the outside and they're gonna do the 'swingin'-door' thing... So initially, (and the very first time we improvised one of those, I did it by instinct), I played it softly. And, then, when he went to the door, it suddenly go louder. And everyone just when, "Whoa," like that. It was a beautiful thing.

J: So, you made... I'm gonna blow this up a bit... You did the same job that a sound-editor would do in a film by turning the pot up, but you anticipated that he was gonna go through a door. So, you spontaneously composed him turning the fader up by making the choice to play...

F: That's right. I did what that guy had to do with knobs; I did it by recognizing the nature of the scene. But, you had to have the instinct, in front, to do it; 'cause if you started loud, you couldn't get soft and then get louder. So, I was blessed with that insight. You don't know, always, where those things come from, brother. You know....

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F: Have you (and I'm gonna get back for a minute, if I may, to the job that we're talkin' about we have done as the pit in a theatre)... Have you, at times, (and I know you must've, as it's happened to me a lot) you could see something that, "Oh, really, this kind of music would work." And then you say, "Wait a minute. I'm not gonna do anything. I'm gonna see how this develops without any coaching." And you stop yourself and lay out.

J: Now, [this is] not one of my better moments: I've gotten pissed-off at my cast and been like...

F: "I'm not playing."

J: ..."...because I gave you this when you were asking for it, I gave you this when you were asking for it, and I gave you this when you were asking for it, and you didn't do shit with any of them.

F: So, now I'm withholding my love. Right. I understand that. I'm talking about the other end.

J: Not one of my better moments.

F: I'm talking about the other way; like a good <u>father</u>. Are you a father?

J: I am not. I'm the father of two puppies.

F: Okay. Well, here's what you do with a <u>human child</u>. If you're a father, and he's going out in the street and he falls down, and you notice it. And, you're <u>ready</u> to jump out from behind this building; you're <u>ready to jump</u>, if he <u>can't get up, himself</u>. And, <u>that's</u>... Well, Mama's gonna run.   Papa's gonna <u>wait</u> and see if he <u>should</u> run or whether this is a growth spurt for the child. And, so, that's what <u>I'm</u> talkin' about, is, layin' out to see if handle it themselves. And it's not a withholding of love, it's that <u>other thing</u>. So, that happens. And the <u>more</u> that happens, the better I felt about <u>my</u> position. After all, after a while I <u>became</u> older than most of my actors.

J: You and me, both.

F: Okay. So, that <u>kind</u> of paternal care can be very important to a developing talent.

J: I was <u>directed</u> to do that, one night, and I did... It was a scene on a nuclear sub. So, I had to play this driving, kind of marshall music...

F: Did you have a real piano, or only electronic.

J: I had a real piano.

F: Oh, I love pluckin' the strings.

J: I will play a real piano until I can't play anymore.

F: Right on.

J: However, I kept [an electronic keyboard], like you do, on top.

F: Yeah.

J: But, I scored the arcs; the hills and valleys of the <u>entire</u> scene. It was a <u>War</u> soundtrack. It was a driving war soundtrack through the whole thing. It buoyed the whole scene. I had episodes and there was the, "Here's the general [sound], we're gonna <u>beat</u> our way through <u>this</u>, and now here's a more nuanced moment with a more lyrical, airy thing here. Now I'm ..."

F: So, one night the director says...

J: One night the director says, "John, I don't want you to play 'Submarine'." It was a

Friday night, so two shows, and he goes, "I don't want to score 'Submarine'." And I said, "Okay," because when I got hired the Stage Manager told me two things: The answer to, "Can you do that?" is always, "Yes. I can do that." And, if you can't do something, figure out how to do it. Do what you're told. "Yes," to everything, and figure it out. Best. Advice. Ever. And, so, Ron say, "John, don't play." "Okay!" It was the <u>hardest</u> thing. It was <u>the</u> hardest thing. Now, it was also the <u>best</u> thing, one of the best things that ever happened. I <u>suffered</u> because I watched my cast; because the scene <u>didn't have legs</u>. <u>It didn't have legs</u>. It wasn't a great scene to begin with, but it was <u>tolerable</u>, when <u>I played</u>. It was <u>tolerable</u> to the audience because the <u>emotion and the drama that wasn't written into the scene</u> was...

F: Was given to them Yeah. So what happened after that?

J: He told me to play during the second show.

F: He wanted to see it. How did <u>they</u> do, during the second show? I betcha they did better than ever.

J: They did! And I was playing... And Ron did me one of the greatest favors ever. I <u>couldn't save 'em</u> [during the first show]. You know?

F: But the also appreciated more than they ever did before, during the second show.

J: They did!

F: Oh, I've done that. Jimmy'll tell you that. Jimmy Belushi remembers a couple of times when I left him there and he sweated himself because he had broken some of my <u>personal rules</u>. They used to call me The Captain, and he knew it was my boat. And, there was two things I didn't want: I didn't want them to throw in swear-words just for the effect. Which, you know, that's a common problem. And, the other was, he'd be in character but then I'd see Jimmy-the-actor look out into the crowd to see the audience response and that, for me, took him out of character. I said, "Don't do that again." And, he did it in the next piece and I walked away and he was standing there on stage. And I told the light-man, "Don't take the lights out." [(Laughs!!)]

J: Because, at some point, you have to realize that the work is bigger than you. Right?

F: Oh, absolutely.

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F: I love it when old things still work in a new way. I love when simple things accomplish complicated ends.

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F: [In a] Jewish family, once you've got food on the table and the rent looks like it'll probably be paid, you get a piano and you give culture to your children. So, my two brothers were having piano lessons with Ms. Gibbs. And Ms. Gibbs would come and they'd have a week to try to prepare the lesson. And things were getting' tough; Dad was not making money, and the next time Ms. Gibbs comes over, my brothers, one is six years older than me and the other is eight years older, they weren't really gifted and their lesson that week was the G-major Minuet of Beethoven. Well, they couldn't get it. Anyhow, their money was short, in fact, so short that Ms. Gibbs came over that, I guess, Saturday, and I'm, I guess, three-and-a-half-years-old, and they take her in the kitchen, make coffee after the lesson, and they say, "Well, Ms. Gibbs, I know it's no great loss, but this is the last lesson; we can't afford to pay you anymore. Everything's gone cold." Well, I remember that afternoon, going up, reaching up to the piano, and picking out the melody to the [Beethoven]; and I heard a dish fall, in the kitchen. Anyhow, long story short, Ms. Gibbs offered to give me lessons for free. And that's how I got started with some kind of instruction. Of course, I fell in love with her; she spoke Italian and gave me little gold stars if I, which I rarely did, was practice. But I could pick it up....

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F: I must thank Second City for something that I haven't expressed a lot, but I've always know: I, as a Jazz pianist, before I lost my chops, especially... I can go from the lowest note to the highest note; it always makes absolute sense; I'm, fucking, All-of-Music; I am God. What a great ego. I can express, especially with my right hand, (which is why I think the good Lord took these away) [Fred is missing two fingers on his left hand]; I think I had to concentrate on making the left hand special, after that.

J: What happened?

F: An accident at a factory while I was working my way through college. Okay. But what Second City gave me first of all, it was fun there, like Jazz music. But, then what became evident to me was: to feel successful at that job (like I said, "If you notice me, I'm probably not doing my job." was to be able to work for the exultation of others, was m y job.   And what it taught me was a wonderful feeling that I had not experienced before. That this man, this woman, their talent, can be applauded and appreciated, well-reviewed, paid, all of that wonderful stuff; partly because I am subjugating my ego and allowing my talent to serve. To serve! You and I, my friend, have had this wonderful experience of being in the service of others. And, there's just no other way to put that joy. That is a supreme and blessed joy.

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F: When you're doing it, you're lost.   You better just be lost.   It's like that actor's supposed to be lost. Like [John] Coltrane was in the middle of chorus when he changed

his mind. You must be <u>lost</u>.

J: When <u>you're doing it</u>, if you're doing it right, <u>you're</u> not doing it.

F: You're <u>lost</u>. You're in it. That's right. <u>That</u> was something that Viola spoke of, even though it <u>seemed</u> to go against itself; to say, "Here's a <u>way</u>, and, yet, don't use a <u>way</u>." I mean, she had these <u>marvelous</u> contradictions that weren't really contradictions. "Follow the follower." She was the,... I <u>think</u> I've met some geniuses; there's no <u>doubt</u> with her. There. Was. No. Doubt. Ever.... Genius....

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F: It's been a wonderful world for each of us in a different way. And this is a nice thing that you're doing with this paper. I mean, you have to pose certain questions that you know in advance can't <u>truly, and ultimately</u> be answered, but the conversation is <u>so</u> valuable....

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F: See, okay, when I wrote music, songs, all those years ago for [Second City's] Mainstage, it was for <u>certain people</u>. I knew their range, I knew their capacity, I knew their ear, I knew <u>how</u> to teach them. If it was a harmony, I taught them <u>their</u> part before anyone else was in the room, and <u>that's</u> the main, <u>that's</u> the melody. And then the others come in and he sticks to the melody, and that's just harmony. In other words, each <u>individual</u> was written for. <u>Now</u>, comes the time when Second City's getting so big that there are Touring Companies (this is a long time ago) and now Best of [the Second City; touring shows made of previously written-and-performed archival-material], or hand-me-down. Let's say there <u>weren't</u> even a million typos in the script they were handed, it was <u>somebody else</u> that created it <u>on their feet</u>, through improvisation and all of the wonderful, holy <u>thing</u>: improvisation. And, there were some other pianists that didn't get it either. So, between the script and the pianist, and it was written for somebody else, <u>this</u> was the opposite of what you've been talkin' about; and it broke my heart, but it <u>had</u> to be done. And I would <u>refuse</u> to play for Touring Companies because I couldn't take their <u>heartache</u> with having been handed something. They <u>came to Second City</u>, first of all, to be able to create; thinking on their feet. Otherwise, why would they come there? Because that led to some <u>renowned</u> TV personality? Is that too late? It started to feel, sometimes, like I had been there too long, once *Saturday Night Live* came to be; and folks were drawn there <u>not</u> because it was a place of freedom and talent, but because it was a <u>stepping-stone</u>. I saw that happen. But, that's when I began to be a <u>bit</u> jaded. And then, ultimately, I was just <u>out of place</u>.... I <u>wish</u> that you had been there in the early days, and I'm <u>glad</u> that you're asking about 'em.

Semi-Abridged Transcript of June 19, 2012
Music Director's Roundtable
Second City Hollywood

Bios

JOSHUA FUNK received his B.F.A. in Musical Theatre from the University of Michigan and, shortly thereafter, became as resident member of The Second City Detroit, writing and performing in half a dozen shows. For the next few years, he toured nationally with the band "Park" and recored, shot a feature-length film, and co-wrote a top grossing and critically acclaimed musical, "Garage," at the Planet Ant Theatre.

Josh then relocated back to his hometown of Chicago and became a resident director for The Second City. He received two Joseph Jefferson Awards; Best Director for "Holy War Batman," and Best Production for "Pant On Fire." As a performer with The Second City touring company and the musical improv group "Baby Wants Candy," Joshua toured the world performing improv and sketch comedy from Bosnia to Edinburgh to Singapore.

Joshua founded The Second City Network on YouTube and reached over 55 million world wide views in a little over 2 years. His directing credits include: "Competition in the Workplace", "Undocumented Worker" featuring Ithamar Enriquez and Nyima Funk, finalist in the NBC Short Cuts Film Festival, and "Sassy Gay Friend" featuring Brian Gallivan, which was listed in the "Best Videos of the Decade" by The Huffington Post.

Joshua now resides in Los Angeles with his wife Nyima, daughter Ziza, and son Moze. As an actor, his film and television credits include "Key & Peele", "Reno 911!", "Short Circuitz", Wild n' Out", "3lbs.", Steven Soderbergh's "The Informant", and dozens of commercials. He performs regularly in Hollywood with the improv groups "The 313" and "Opening Night" [the improvised musical]. As an improv director/writer, some of his film & television credits include MTV's "Wild n' Out", Katt Williams' "American Hustle", the BET Hip Hop Awards, and multiple pilots for both FOX and CBS. He is currently the Artistic Director for The Second City Hollywood Training Center, and the Musical Director for Comedy Central's "Key & Peele."

MARC EVAN JACKSON, hailing from Amherst, New York, is an enormously interesting person. After graduating with a degree in Philosophy from Calvin College and a couple years sailing aboard schooners in Maine, Marc worked as an on-air host for National Public Radio affiliate stations in Michigan before joining the Second City's resident company in Detroit. Marc voiced the title character in the 2011 Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Award-winning "Brick Novax's Diary". He also plays "Sparks Nevada, Marshal on Mars" in the monthly old-time radio show "The Thrilling Adventure Hour" at Largo at the Coronet in Hollywood. Film and television credits include Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen, Toy's House, Broken Lizard's The Slammin'

Salmon, Funny or Die Presents on HBO, Psych, Last Comic Standing, Reno 911!, 2 Broke Girls, and Arrested Development.   An actor, improviser, musician, writer and voiceover talent, Marc lives in Los Angeles with his (current) wife Beth, a cat veterinarian.

SCOTT PASSARELLA is an improviser and musician from Los Angeles with over 15 years of improv experience and 8 years as a teacher/improv coach. He has performed piano accompaniment at many great venues in town, including the UCB Theater, The Improv Comedy Lab, Comedy Central Stage, The Second City, and of course ComedySportz LA. When not playing piano, you can find him onstage Fridays and Saturdays at ComedySportz, and in independent shows with his musical improv groups String Theory and Big Pippin'. Scott has composed songs for Second City revues, The Story Pirates children's theater, The Spanglers variety show, and Quick 'n Funny Musicals at UCB. He is currently working on a pilot soundtrack, a podcast theme song, teaching adults musical improv, teaching pre-school children regular improv, teaching piano lessons, and still finding enough time to spend with his wonderful girlfriend.

JEROME KURTENBACH is an avid composer, conductor, accompanist, arranger, director, screenwriter, producer and musician. As a film composer and conductor he has recently scored the feature length film THE IMPENETRABLE CHALICE, and the shorts TOUCH and MYEONGWOL, along with short films for BANANA REPUBLIC.COM and CRUNCH GYM online. He also wrote, directed, produced, and scored four short films under his production company GREENLAKE ENTERTAINMENT. His score for the full length feature FOR THE COMMON MAN along with over thirty other short films showcases his unique combination of sounds and styles. He has premiered over forty works for the concert stage, including three orchestral pieces, two song cycles, and various other ensembles.

As a musician, Kurtenbach's extensive skill in piano and organ, as well as several other instruments, brings expansive knowledge to his compositions. He co-wrote and produced the album RATTLE MY CAGE available on iTunes with an eclectic array of styles and genres. He is the featured pianist on three other iTunes albums for artists Johnathan Baker, Sonya Bender and Joe Settineri. He serves as Musical Director (MD) for THE APPLE SISTER'S VARIETY SHOW, performing at the Coronet Theater, UCB, Groundlings in Los Angeles, and in Las Vegas. He is also an MD for The Second City Hollywood, playing for the Improv Troupe ALL SKATE and the REALLY AWESOME IMPROV SHOW. He served as MD and Arranger for the World Premiere of the New Musical TOWN WITHOUT PITY, I WANT MY 80'S MUSICAL and TOTS IN TINSELTOWN. He also served as MD for the premiere and run of ONE WAY TICKET TO HELL in Los Angeles.

Kurtenbach earned both his Bachelor & Master of Music Degrees in Composition at

Oklahoma City University studying under national award-winning composer Dr. Edward Knight. He holds a professional certificate from USC in their film scoring program. He studied under industry leaders including James Newton Howard, John Frizzell, Christopher Young and John Ehrlich, recording at Warner Bros. and Capitol Records.

Most currently Kurtenbach continues to write for the screen and stage. He serves as business manager and a director of Q6 Studios, Inc. He is currently developing GREENLAKE STUDIOS, offering private instruction in piano, composition, song writing, and vocal coaching. Developing two feature length screenplays and producing several vocal albums of original material and beyond keeps him on the front of diversity and creativity. He serves on faculty, as piano coordinator, a music director (Seussical, Pippin, and Rent) and arranger for the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Los Angeles. Kurtenbach is a member of ASCAP.

[John] Edwartowski: Thanks for sitting down with me. We're just gonna riff... and talk back-and-forth, and the idea is [what are]: Your thoughts, your approaches on musical improvisation. What inspires you? If you want to talk about what inspires you in life, that's great. How do you read the action onstage? Are there gestures that actors make that make you score a certain way? And, a gesture can be a physical gesture, it can be a vocal gesture, it can be an accent, it can be the way that they walk, it can be the way that they drag their feet, it can be the way that they stand.... Imagine every stage you've seen and every situation that you've seen. Where does that come from, and what do you read when you score a scene?

Josh Funk: The first and foremost thing, for me, when providing music for theatre, or film, or TV is emotion.... It's all emotions... and delving into human emotions... because I think that's the role that music plays in theatre and TV and films, is to be an emotional, sort of, manipulator. And so, when we're improvising, I just follow the actors and follow the emotions, and follow...Say there are conflicting emotions in a scene, and one is joyous and the other is pissed-off, you know, you then have to make a decision as to which character is the scene about. Who's the hero? Whose journey is it? Because that's whose story I need to tell. And so, if I choose to play the pissed-off music, then the scene is about the pissed-off guy. If I decide to play the joyous music, then the scene is about the joyous guy. But that, because I'm also a director, and that has everything to do with directing as well, when you're directing improvisors you have to identify who the audience is going to identify with. And with music improv, you just have to do it in the moment, and be making, basically, HUGE directorial decisions with the keyboard.

Scott Pasarella (in reaction to Funk): Yeah, you basically told the Actor, "You're important," or "This is what you're feeling now," and there's no going back from that.... I find that if a scene has started, in Improv, and we haven't played anything, the moment I would choose to play music is when a character is affected or changed. The moment when all of a sudden things have turned for people, that's when I feel that you can latch on and start leading the emotion down a path. Or there's the opposite... when you are

doing the music from the beginning and you just have to make a decision as to what you're going to follow through that.

F: I think sometimes that... musicians, there's always that sort of struggle when you're playing piano for Improv; How much do you want to push that scene? Or how much do you want to be about <u>your</u> agenda? In my personal opinion, there is room for it, but it's gotta to be done delicately and, I think, it's gotta be done very rarely, where the Music Director is pushing the Scene. Like, for example, if you have two improvisors on stage, the scene's going nowhere, there's no conflict, there's no tension, there's no nothing, and then you're sitting behind the piano going, "I'm gonna try and force an emotion into these two emotionless characters".... I think it comes out of necessity. But, I think in a perfect world, where you have really good improvisors, then you're not trying to push or lead anyone, you're just trying to play with them. And I think it's the same thing with Improv. When I'm on stage with an amateur improvisor, I have to tell them how they're feeling, because they don't know how to take care of themselves in a scene. But in a perfect world, when I'm improvising with, like, 'The 313', I'm not pushing anyone anywhere, because we're all pros, and we all know how to play, and we all know the rules.

P: I think it's kind of a question of the actor <u>knowing</u> that they've said or done something important, or emotional, or big. A lot of times they can say something that can be a huge offer but they don't latch on to their own idea and [they] keep rolling through it. If you don't take that moment to tell them, "No, wait!   That was important," then it can disappear entirely.

F: Which is <u>so</u> much more than Music. It's directing. It's writing. It's deciding how the scene is going to move forward....

E: And it's cueing them to tell them that it's something important.

F: It's telling them what to do without telling them what to do. It's getting them to <u>feel</u> what to do. In an Improvisor's head, especially a non-musical Improvisor's head, they're not listening to the piano <u>at all</u>. In fact, a lot of amateur improvisors... have blinders on for the entire scene... so they can't tell you what the piano-player played, they couldn't tell you what the other person did in the scene because they're so locked in on what they're doing that you're almost like, "Come on. Feel this emotion." Which is the same thing you're doing with the audience, and especially when you're scoring for TV and Film. You're just thinking about the audience and thinking about their emotional state, and, "How do I get the audience to <u>feel</u> love? How do I get them to feel innocence? How do I get them to feel frustration or tension?"

E: Do you think that they're more concerned with [following the rules]... so that only [a small percentage] of their brain function is...

F: I don't think it's their conscious... It's all unconscious. That's what's weird about

music. It's that you can play music for animals and they react to it. There's no higher reasoning happening. It's just base, id, animal function.

Jerome Kurtenbach: As an improvisor, I come at it from a long story-arc... I try latch onto, or try to tap into any storytelling element that's going to enhance the Scene, no matter <u>what</u> that is. Even if it's a bad improvisor.... What's the Scene about? Either if it's a gesture that they've created in the moment, or if it's a scene that.. I mean, I've been in scenes where you're trapped and they don't know where they are on stage either, but I'm keyed into what<u> they've </u>been giving <u>me</u> emotionally. So, I'll either <u>set</u> the tone, <u>keep</u> the tone, or create a <u>new</u> tone based off of something that happened that's momentous; whether it's, "My dog died,"after they've been talking, talking, talking, and then someone says something that shifts everything. But I always think, for me, I don't think as a musician, I think as a storyteller, because that's the way I am as a composer. Everything I've written is a story in and of itself. No matter what the instruments are, who's playing-singing-writing, any of that stuff. It's all storytelling to me. So, the impetus <u>to play</u> has always been driven by a story-element. Whether it's an emotional, story-driven element; and especially when you're doing speedy-improv, where you can either latch onto a state of being there on-stage.... If you're doing an Improvised Musical, you instantly know that the Opening Number is going to have to <u>capture</u> the Audience's attention; no matter what the improvisors do. And the same can be said, if they're creating all of these emotional journeys, if you don't realize where they've been, you have to know how to come in and either <u>shift</u> that emotion, for a reason, (that it's a plot-driven device, rather than, "I just wanna be a musician and do something different.") <u>Or</u>, if you know that (especially in, depending on the format of your Improv) knowing that the Audience has to go on a musical journey; which is the same, to me, as a storytelling device. So that you know if you have one style of musical material with the Actors, that the next thing that they hear <u>may</u> need to be in little bit different style to move the musical-story forward as well. So, it's just always kind of an unfolding story, in an of itself.

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(Narrative Music)- Long-term Story-Arc [Theme]- Choosing a Theme

E: [During an improvisation, do you make a mental note of themes which you associate with characters?]

P: I don't think we get to employ that tactic as much. (To Funk)You were talking about, "How do I make people feel Love?", and one of the biggest tricks in the world is 'Introduce a Little Theme when see the Character', 'When They Fall in Love, Reintroduce the Theme', 'When They Get Lost Play Do a Sad-Version of the Theme', 'When They Come Back Togethter, BIG SWEEPING VERSION OF THE THEME' and everybody's like, "Oh! My God! I feel amazing right now!" And it's just a question of being familiar with that character <u>and</u> the music that's pretty much melded with him. (To Jerome) And, like you said, telling that story, even if you're doing a short musical, you start it like it's

going to be an hour-long journey, even if it's cut off after seven minutes, you were riding that the whole time.

J: I think it's tricky in Improv, at least in my encounters, to have any semblance of true leitmotifs within a musical piece. So from a pure music standpoint, you don't always get to get into that territory of really fleshing-out melodic material without knowing what the performer onstage is going to latch onto, without also distracting the performer and the audience, because if they're non-musicians who are trying to sing as well, but are great improvisors, I try to give them as much leverage and room so it's more creating a mood and a style. And then, if they create a leitmotif, try to remember it, and latch onto it, try to musically quote it later on, if there's even time or room for it. Because, in the Audience's mind, at least what I've been witnessing a lot, is that they're so focussed on what the hell's happening that I don't even know that they even pay attention to what the singer's done melodically or thematically. They just get a kind of general, "This is a <u>fun</u> song." What we know as the style-cards that we can say about any piece of Art that you watch. This is 'dark music song' or this is the 'sad part of the show' or this is the 'big reveal of the show'. That's what <u>they</u> see. So to get really intricate with thematic material is, to me, tricky; when you're doing Improv. Unless you're doing the same show over and over again.

F: The only way you can really get into it is when you're doing long-form-musical-improv, when you have forty-five minutes to actually...

J: ...Even thirty minutes is tricky, because the artist may not even remember on stage, what you did earlier. He might not even know that you've quoted something from twenty minutes ago.

F: The closest I've gotten is 'Opening Night' the improvised musical, and then a couple of 'Baby Wants Candy' where we had really cohesive groups for an extended period of time, and we got to know each other's patterns and habits, and archetypes. We could say, "When this person comes out on stage with that Character, we know what the deal is. You know? So, now, let's have fun with it." And I think that that's when it gets to be in the zone of what we're talking about right now.

P: Just latching onto that: It's hard enough for people improvising songs to remember a chorus, sometimes. And a lot of that has to just do with how memorable is that little musical hook? You might have a leitmotif that is great and it may not get remembered or there might be just a very simple thing that gets stuck in <u>everyone's</u> head, and that may come back three or four times. It kind of just a question of, "How lucky were we with getting something catchy out of this show?" Because, I feel that sometimes that's, a lot of the times, the only way things really come back; when it's just been super, hammered home.

F: There's two things. There's also a whole other realm of music improv that is totally

different. Which is like, 'The Really Awesome Improv Show' or short-form improv like on the Boats. Where you're not... You're no longer scoring Characters. You're no longer scoring Emotions. You're scoring THE SHOW, an you're pumping energy, and it's more about, like, when people are playing 'Debate', there's no Character, there's no Emotion. It's a <u>game</u>. And, it's like a parlor game. And you're literally going, "This game goes for ten minutes. I need to inject some energy into this, and some, like, bounciness, to make it seem...

P: You're playing the Crowd.

F: You're playing the Crowd more than you're playing the Show. And you're also creating those motifs in your transition music; throughout the show. So that they can go, "This show was <u>not</u>, did <u>not</u> tell a story. This show did <u>not</u> have characters that came back. This had no real, deep scene-work. It was just Games. It was very light and fluffy. But, yet, there was, still, some sort of musical satisfaction to it; from the Beginning, to the Middle, to the End. And it did tell some sort of musical story, even there was no other Story to be seen.

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Expanding thoughts on Leitmotifs

E: What about the idea that leitmotiv can be a texture or a gesture that is not necessarily...

P: So, I think I get what your saying. It can be just a vibe and a feeling, not necessarily a melody.

E: Yes.

F: So that a leitmotif can be 'Jazz'. Every time this guy walks in the door we hear Jazz. It's not just a line that comes back every time; it's just a style of music that comes back and represents a character.

E: In a very general way, yes. What's wonky about it is you can fit it into a million categories. You can say it's a style-card that we've pulled out. Or, you can say there's a schema; that there are certain kinds of people that listen to Jazz and certain kinds of people that don't listen to jazz. And, you have a character that is a blue-collar guy who is an Old-Milwaukee-drinkin' racist who loves Miles Davis or Oscar Peterson... It's so incongruous that...

F: No. That's interesting. I've never thought of it that way. [To Jerome] You seem to have a very [strong] opinion of this.

J: I think the [semantic] properties of leitmotif are specific. I don't think that making it a broad... If we're going to get into talking about film-scoring, that's the issue, that's the prime issue of where music is headed in general, in directing the Audience into how to feel. It's become a wash of, just, styles, and textures, and tones, and moods. And now we've trained listeners, and this includes the live listeners that, "If you hear a theme, something's wrong." And it's becoming worse. Because, now, if you hear a Theme you think you're being taken out of a piece of Art.... That's because for over fifteen years we've been inundated with Scores and Music that have been nothing but moods. And so the Audience gets washed into a Mood, and the only person or persons left are from the Golden Age of Film Scoring.... Even James Newton Howard will still write thematic material, and even Hans Zimmer writes thematic material when it's a Comedy or a Drama. But anything that's Action or that's 'bombarded-with-scenery', forget anything but texture and moods. But what is so fascinating about listening to a John Williams is if you listen to all his action-sequences, you can hear Themes all over the place; leitmotifs. And they're so intricate, and woven so delicately that that is, to me, is the higher version of the Art.

F: And they stick with you for your life.

J: It does.

F: Twenty years later, I know the 'Star Wars' theme, I know Darth Vader's music.

J: I don't know the new Batman Theme. It's just "Wahh, Wahh, Wahhh."

F: And 'Prometheus' is 'Mwreeeeooooo, Mwreeeeooooo, Mwreeeeeooooo'

P: I saw 'X-Men: First Class' two nights ago, and I can't remember the Theme. It was just (in a gravelly voice) GUITAR!

J: For the last three of four years I've been watching films with composers I like and I can't remember their Themes, 'cause they're just no longer being used. Because whoever is deciding is that, "Well, Themes are bad." It's mostly directors and producers who are, like, "I don't want to hear this Theme. Oh my God, that's too distracting." I mean, when did Themes become distracting? Because, to me, I love the idea that the Music is still a Character within a piece of Art. And we can either be a texture, a tone, a color, a thematic symbol. You know, if it's a Bad Guy you have a Dark Theme. Or you can just have a tone for that person. And, then, for the Love Theme you can have an actual Theme. But a Theme, in and of itself, has a definition: A varied set of pitches that occur over time. That's a Theme, as is a Leitmotif, which is a German version of Theme. And so, therefore, it makes no sense, to me, that you can call any style a Theme, or any Mood or Color a Theme, even in live theatre. To me, it's like, "Let's stay within styles." I think it's really perfect when you're watching 'Really Awesome Improv'.... and you do 'Musical Freeze', I instantly know that I have to do six or seven different styles instantly. So that

the audience doesn't feel like we're hearing six or seven of the same songs. But I've also clued the actors in so we can all be in symbiotic relationship where we all know we have to go on some sort of journey with 'Musical Freeze' no matter what your poses are, because the Audience <u>will</u>, after a point, step out of it for a minute and go,"No, wait. That sounds like the song before." If you're so similar with, like, an 'Oom-pah, Oom-pah-pah' and you do another 'Oom-pah' right away, unless you're doing a <u>comic joke</u>, which I've done twice and it worked perfectly.

F: Which, then, you're asking them to step out of it, <u>because that's the joke</u>.

J: Right. And the Audience laughed, right away because the actors were like, "Oh, we're in the same song but a different pose." So, where's it gonna go? It's also an element of storytelling. You know, just like you see in film where somebody does something and then they do it again; it's a repeated gesture.

P: If I can latch onto what you've said about the getting rid of leitmotifs; I also find that those same movies that <u>don't</u> have those really memorable musical themes also don't have characters that you're super involved with or that are super specific. It <u>tends to be</u>, "This guy's AWESOME! He holds a gun, and he's kind of a badass." You know very little about him; he's got a family, probably, and is just this kind of vague, archetype of a character, just like in the same way, where there is this <u>huge</u> difference between going "ba-ba-ba-Bah-BAH!" [Star Wars] and "ba-Bah-BAH-ba-ba" [reduced Star Wars]. Just that little extra change in notes give you that subtlety. And, whenever I'm doing musical-improv with people I'm like, "Look, we're not just singing a <u>sad</u> song, we're singing a <u>bittersweet</u> song because you're getting over this pain, or, you miss him, but you're happy for the times you had." And I think that nuance comes a lot from the subtle choice of those little lines; the way you can <u>play</u> with them.

F: I've been having a little of this experience because I've been writing all the music for the 'Key and Peele Show' on Comedy Central. I did all last season, I'm doing the second season now. And, their protocol for <u>scoring</u> is they only hire me to write scoring if they can't already find a royalty-free version already in their library. And I think that that's going on in a <u>lot</u> of Hollywood.... It's saving money. And they're going, "Well, rather than hire a composer and build a Theme, I've got a sound-library of ten-thousand, royalty-free songs that I can pick from that set moods and tones," and it's putting people like us out of business, because they don't need to hire people like us, anymore.

E: Do you think that that's because the Audience is not as musically literate?

F: Sure. We've cut all of the funding in our Arts programs.

J: It systematically happened. It systematically happened on Broadway, in Film, on TV. It's systematically been happening.

F: And in more than just Music. In TV, in general, shows have become the lowest-common-denominator. Just get people on-camera to fight with each other, that's it.

J: So what happens when is, you hear something.... People crave to still go the the live Orchestra. You know, Beethoven, Brahms, all the classics. There's something genuine about (to Funk) (you mentioned this earlier)... Music being this weird, universal thing that speaks to living things. Even plants. They say there's a theory that Music playing around plants will help them. But, the point is, it's not going to go away; the Higher Art. But what's happened is, because the lowest-common-denominator... And what's even more apparent when you listen to Broadway shows, and I play so many different new scores, and look at brand new scores, and I'm like, "This is a piece of shit! Nobody spent any time actually getting the craft of writing this material, and doing the Story justice; much less, being a smart composer about it." So, you just throw together a score, based on a somewhat quasi-good story, and hope it's going to be successful. Like 'Rock of Ages' isn't probably doing well in the films because I don't think the story's strong enough. It doesn't matter what music you're playing. And the demographics are people from the '80s. What Kid is gonna wanna go listen to some '80s songs, that their Moms and Pops, and now, sometimes the Grandmas listen to? So it never actually gets to the Art of what's there.

F: It's the problem, and this I've learned since I moved out hear to Los Angeles, because I think when I started up in Detroit, and when I moved to Chicago, and even when I spent some time in Manhattan, New York, it was more about the Creative, and it was more about the Artist, and not about the Business. And then I moved out here and it should be called Business-show, you know? Because it's not about the Creativity, it's not about the Process, it's not about the Artist, it's about Business. And it's about the Machine, and it's about the Bottom-Line. And that's why a lot of crap comes out of Hollywood, and a lot of crap is on TV, and a lot of crap is in the Music Industry. There's Capitol Records, there's Warner Brothers, there's NBC Universal. Everyone's here. And even this building [Second City Hollywood], people that make the decisions, and decide who gets hired and who gets fired, and what do we do, all they want to know is, "How much money did that person make on the last project they worked on?" Not, "Did it have a Theme?" They don't give a shit about that stuff. You know? And I was delusional when I came out here thinking that there are these all-powerful, wise people running major, multi-million dollar operations. They're not! I mean, one time I went to see Larry Joe [Campbell; television actor and friend] do a preview of 'According to Jim' at ABC, and everyone was nervous because the Execs from NBC [sic. ABC]were gonna to be there. Even Jim Belushi was nervous because the Execs from NBC [sic. ABC] we're gonna be there. And they finally show up. There's these three, like, twenty-four year old girls in the corner, like, laughing around the Craft Services table, and Larry goes, "There they are. That's them." And I'm like, "That's them? Those are the Execs? That's who everyone's afraid of? That's who's hiring and firing people? That's who's making decisions?" There's no, like, Oz hiding behind a green curtain here. There's fucking, just, Idiots, running Idiots, running Idiots. And then the creative people are all just all on the bottom just, like, barely just trying to book the next gig. It's a crazy town.

J: It <u>is</u> crazy. And the thing is it just makes it harder and harder and harder tap into, "Is the Audience gonna care? And what are they going to care about?" Is it Themes?..... It's kind of like watching musical-improv.   Are they coming because there's going to be singing, story, funny; what are the elements they're going to latch onto?

E: Or is the 'edge-of-the-seat' nature of the Beast?

J: Yeah. And I often <u>do</u> wonder if it's the closest we have to live-theatre-reality-TV. Any kind of Improv; it can be musical, it can be straight, whenever you say, "Improv." Improv is the most edge-of-your-seat, live performance that we can give an audience.

F: And then the next level is Sports. Going to see an Improv Show and going to see a Football Game are the same thing.   There's a set of rules, but no one knows how it's going to end, no one gonna know whether it's gonna be a good game or a bad game, or a good show or a bad show.

J: It's the same with Jazz. You can go to a Jazz concert and you know you're gonna hear... I get bored with it because I know what's going on and I can already <u>predict</u> what happening. When I'm sitting there and I know there's gonna be a trumpet-player for, like, seventeen, twenty, thirty thousand measures. And then there's going to be a saxophone player for the same amount of time, and then you're going to see a drummer-player do this really crazy drum "bi-doo-ba-doo-ba-dah-ba-dah" And there's people that just love that stuff. They don't <u>quite</u> know what's gonna happen, and so they <u>are</u> on the edge of their seats hoping for something <u>amazing</u>. And, usually, they're appeased. Because that's why they love the genre. And the same for Us, when we're sitting there listening to an Improv show.   We're hoping to see something funny and/or, just even if someone falls apart on stage, that element of almost 'The Carol Burnett Show', where if you see someone slip, that actually makes the Audience excited. It's so <u>real</u>.

P: Yeah. It comes from the Reality and the Genuine-ness of it. I'll say even on regular TV, there have been reality-shows where you can watch it and go, like, "Oh. That's neat! I'll get into that cute [?] person."   And then you watch other people and you're like, (sarcastically)"Yeah. Uh-huh. Sure. I believe you. Whatever. Continue with the Story." And it's really just a question of whether or not you're capturing genuine moments or not. And, that's (to Funk) it's like you said, it's true of Sport.   No ones faking anything in Sport, or very rarely. And I feel like that same thing applies to Improv. And, it's like, that Moment when you get someone to be in a real, genuine, place is when they <u>can</u> be funny. The Audience <u>can</u> recognize, like, "Oh, this is better than me just sitting here watching. Like, I'm <u>engaged</u> now." Like, emotionally. And I think that's a <u>huge</u> thing. And, again, <u>emotion</u> is what it's all about.   You know, I'm just trying to wrap it around; like in Improv....

E: We, collectively, are fighting several things. We're fighting the business-model....

F: If you wanna make a living at it. If you just wanna have a regular job, and make music... I mean, that's the beauty of YouTube. There's actually an opportunity for Artists to do what they want, except make a living.

E: This is one of the interesting things: We're two-hundred, two-hundred-fifty years post the patronage system. Kings don't hire us, anymore....   That doesn't exist, anymore, to a good degree. So, in a way the democratizing of the creative arts, sort of, decentralized all of that money. Right? And now... everybody else spends with their.

F: Right.

E: Now we work at the behest of the unwashed masses. So the folks that we perform for are often [giving the suggestion of], "Dildo. Proctologist. Gynecologist." It's that guy. That's who we're doing shows for. Unless we're doing shows for other improvisors; in which case our craft can at least shine while simultaneously being judged to its very core. But I say this as an entrance into... [to Pasarella] You mentioned earlier that "ba-ba-ba-Bah-BAH!" [Star Wars] is different from "ba-Bah-BAH-ba-ba" [reduced Star Wars], and [to Jerome] you kind of tagged on it... How do we, as [Musical] Directors, differentiate between, and let's draw a line down the middle and say that there's just Happy and Sad... and let's explore Sad because Sad more colorful and, maybe, easier to talk about. There's Depression and there's Melancholy, but then I would lump Anger in with Sadness, because it's a negative emotion.

F: Sure.

E: How do you, how do we differentiate (and I'm going to assume that is all in a minor key...)

P: Well, I feel that there's different levels of things you can do with Major, for the same purpose. For my personal preference, the difference between playing da-Da-na-na [hums Waltz riff] and having someone come out and talking over that is huge, as opposed to they talk, you play a little happy music, there's pauses in there. It's kind of a level of intensity, almost, that you can do. I mean, you can be playing in the same Scale, and just be doing a little less, volume-wise, spacing it out rhythmically. Same thing: the difference between minor key continuously played is Danger, minor key every now and again is tension, minor key very quietly is just sad instead of dangerous. There's different levels of that, I think.

F: And I think that we're just talking about the Western Ear. I mean, you go into Indian culture, Chinese culture, there is no Major/Minor but they can still play sad, jealous, guilty, and all of these negative emotions, but with a whole other spectrum of notes.

E: I'm, kind of focussing on the Western culture because, I think, for a lot of what we draw on it's experience and we're Westerners.   The idea of Chinese and Indian is

something that we'll shift. From where I sit, and then compare and contrast as you will, Anger is generally something that boils; it's not instantaneous....   There's a delay or a decay to Anger....   Whereas Melancholy or Sadness is something that ebbs and flows. Each of those has a different <u>breath</u> and a different <u>pulse</u>.

P: The human voice is a <u>huge</u> instrument. Just talking over that kind of rhythm, if you hear someone angry and they're kind of talking and they LET IT A LITtle bit louder, and they keep muttering for a bit more, and that's very much the same way you'd score it. Whereas when someone's melancholy it's, "uUGhh, I feel so sad." It's lyrically <u>in their voice</u>. It's like you said about the flute: It sounds more human.

F: Which is probably where Music originated from;   from human articulation, and sounds that humans make when they cry, or when they wail, or when they laugh; that's where music comes from. I just went to Phoenix, and they have a <u>KICK ASS</u> museum. It's the best museum I've ever been to. It's 'The Museum of Musical Instruments', and it just opened, like, a year ago. And, it has every continent, and every country on every continent, and the indigenous instruments from that continent. You go around with headphones, and you watch, and you listen. And you have a flat-screen TV, and you have the instrument, and you watch videos of people playing it and listening to it. You can't touch the instruments, but it's so cool to see how styles of music originated from cultures. It has everything to do with what that culture was feeling, and the <u>emotions</u>. I mean, you look at some of those Eastern-Bloc countries and the Music just <u>sounds</u> oppressive. It <u>sounds</u> like I don't want to live there.   And you go to these other countries in the Southwest Pacific, where it's this beautiful Paradise island, and the sounds that they make are just <u>totally different</u>. And they could have, easily, rigged-up the same instruments.... In using indigenous objects like wood,... strings, or a tube. Or a skin, stretched. One of those three kind of things, and that's your instrument. But the <u>styles</u> are what was most fascinating to me.

J: I wanted to back up and touch on Emotions , and the spectrum of Sadness. I actually do think it's all akin to the spectrum of colors; that you can, sometimes, have red, and you can, sometimes, orange-red, and, sometimes, have purple-red, and they can all be played at any time. And, so, I think that anger <u>can</u> be symbolized by something that's rumbling, or something that's building, or festering, but I also think that it can also be exemplified by an <u>outburst</u> of Anger.

E: Absolutely.

J: So it <u>can</u> be an outburst, <u>as well as</u>, a rumbling, sustaining, sizzling emotion. But then Anger can also lead to Hatred, and just like.. Yoda.   [!]   It literally <u>can</u> blossom into something <u>bigger</u> than itself.

P: And I think that <u>choice</u> comes back to something Josh [Funk] was saying: Do I play his explosion of Anger, or do I play the Rage that's underneath him? Am I playing him as

a villain or am I playing him as a hero?

F: That's where the Art comes in.

J: The funny thing is: I have a friend who I work with over there at AMDA, an he is from England, and one of the key phrases that he tells all actors is, "If there is ever going to be Music, in Film, on TV, on Stage with you, 'Music never lies about the true emotion. Whether it's live, synthetic, or whatever; The Musical Thing taps into some Human Ear, and that Ear will tell them what they're feeling. Period.".... It's like a lie-detector test. If you're going "dadada da- - da- -dadada da- - da- -" [single low pitch] in the background, and they're, like, "Hey, what's up today?", you know there's something else going on.

P: Yeah!

J: It's telling the truth of what's happening for the listener to see, and, well, either something's going to happen, or one of those characters is really pissed; and not talking about it.

P: (To Jerome) Yeah, you're right, the evil music is the only way you know what you play.

It's providing subtext.

P: Yeah.

J: No matter what we do as Artists, musically, it's always going to be subtext. Which is why tone-poems were created; that you can create this world without ever talking.

F: (To Jerome) With the exception of your example: When the Music is the Joke itself, an you're revealing it. But that's an exception. And, for the most part, it is subtext; it's telling the truth.
J: And what's fascinating (to Funk) when you were talking about musical instruments from the different corners of the World; I just came back from Hawaii, and one of the most fascinating things, to me, was if you are... I've never been to an island that secluded, before where it was just in the middle of Nowhere. I mean, it's the most remote island on the Planet.... So I was thinking, "If I was a musician living out here, what would I be inspired by; without TV, or Radio, or Technology?" And you say to yourself... There were so many sounds of animals, creatures, you know, if an explosion happens from a volcano; what does that sound like?

E: The Surf.

J: Yeah, what's the Surf? The difference between day and nighttime sounds. You know, walking; the different sounds you make when walking on different terrain...

P: If I could just piggy-back on that, just the kind of instrument you have to use from where you live; you need a big-ass horn if you're in the Alps trying to get across huge-ass mountains.

J: A conch shell. You could hear the conch shells. I was at a retreat, for three days, and every day lunch was called by a conch shell, and it resounded for two miles.

P: Wow.

J: So they called it three times, in three different directions, and you could hear it no matter where you were in the retreat. And it was a conch shell this big [about 8" across].

F: That's awesome.

J: Yeah. And I was fascinated because, wait a minute, I played horn in college. I was like, "That reminds me of the horn." The actual sound of this giant instrument with tons of tubing, that I could just grab this shell, and make one pitch, or a moderate version of [multiple pitches]

P: What's fascinating about this is what you were saying: The horns are like Royalty. It's big. It's important. You wanna get everyone's attention, you blow a horn. So we have this importance mentally locked into the horn, from a very young age.

J: It's like the Flute. The flute exemplifies, I think to your point (to the Author), people probably started playing, even those little pan flutes, because it either sounds like wind or a creature. Because it does sound mimic a lot of natural sounds, whether it's a bird, or a cricket, or a frog, as I found out. These indigenous [sic] frogs that were brought from Mexico, or whatever, that make this really specific sound. And they were talking back and forth all night to each other. It's just these two pitches, over and over and over and over again.... And it's just this one frog. One.. species of frog connecting to all the other frogs.... It sounds like a cacophony of instruments, but it's just this one instrument, by itself. And then you hear crickets behind it, and the Wind, the Ocean, whatever, moving around. So, I think, that's where the impetus for why they created the music that they did. And, to what emotion? If you're on an island, I mean, you're either lonely or you're ecstatic because you're in this beautiful place. Because it's stunning. Beautiful. Or you feel oppressed because you can't leave. You're completely trapped. So there's this mix of emotions in places. African music exemplifies the same thing. I think a lot of African music is very simple, but also very celebratory; because they're using rocks and wood.

E: This speaks to, also: That, we as Westerners, in a very specific way, we've divorced Music from Life.
F: So, what does that mean?

E: That, say in Africa, they don't have a word for 'song' because Song is tied to Ritual....

So they don't talk about Songs.... It's just, "This is the thing I do when I was my clothes." This, kind of, comes back to... European...advent of the Church.... Before music was written down, and separated from Life, that Music was more a part of the cloth of society, rather than a vestige of it, or a...

F: So, you're saying, basically, the moment it went from, "We do this with each other as a part of a Ritual," to, "We're going a Concert to see someone do this on a stage, just for the purpose of seeing them do it on a stage."

E: Yes!

F: That was the dividing line between Western and Eastern, or basically, Us..

E: Us and Them

F: Yeah. It was <u>very</u> interesting, watching at this 'Musical Instrument Museum', seeing, like, all the other countries and... then as soon as you get to <u>Europe</u>, it's when things get organized, sheet music comes out, the instruments get more elaborate, the orchestrations get more deliberate, where everyone else it's more like a Jam. (Laughing) You know, for the longest time it was just a bunch of Hippies, with bongos and strings.

P: I think it's the difference between <u>Folk</u> music from wherever in those areas, and Pop music that we have today. Which is not... we don't gather around and sing this song, but it kind of <u>becomes</u> our identity. Like, if you get a bunch of fourteen-year-old girls together, they can sing 'Call Me, Maybe' and they're all into it.

J: Right. But you also have venues where people will go <u>to</u> hear those songs they love. Whether they're dancing; whether they're in a Club or a Bar; whether conversing and shouting loudly at each other, but they hear the music that they hear on the radio, and feel connected because everyone knows the song.

P: Yeah. And I would argue that it hasn't been separated from Life. In fact, Music has taken such a <u>larger</u> portion of our life that it itself stands as its own Thing, and we can hear, like, twenty different versions of a pop song without it having to be related to...

E: But it's gone from being part of the fabric of to being a sort of cocoon.

P: Elaborate.

F: I get it.

E: Let's say you're having a shitty day. I'm going to listen to a song that <u>either</u> reinforces this shitty day, but it makes me feel, you know..

F: Not alone.

E: Yeah.... I bet that on your phone's you guys probably have different songs for the different people who call you, right?

J: I haven't gone that far, but I get it.

P: My girlfriend does.

E: We can't turn on the TV, I mean, <u>anything</u> we look at on the TV tells us how to feel about it, musically. Right?.... And it's a different kind of communication than, "Hey, the four of us need to move these chairs, but to pass the time and not make it seem like work, we're going to vocalize, and we're gonna..

P: I see what you're saying. As far as Music being anywhere and everywhere and having no particular pertinence to your own life, it speaks to...

E: It's atomized our sense of who we... it used to be communal, but now it's <u>so</u> personal.

P: Yeah. I think any time you give people the option to hear music without having to make it themselves, that's when that starts happening.

J: Well, I think there's <u>two</u> things that happened: We started making music for Music's sake. That's the first impetus in Western music. When we said, "I'm just going to write a piece of music to <u>write</u> a piece of music. I'm not necessarily <u>inspired</u> to write that piece of music, but I want to write a piece of music."

P: I saw the positive reaction to That Guy's song. I would like to have that.

E: <u>Or</u> because my Boss told me to write a piece of music.

J: No. There's a reason behind it. See? That's not <u>just</u> because I need to write it for Music's sake. Because someone <u>told</u> you to write it. That's different than..

E: I need to express myself.

J: Yes, and because the expression is just <u>that</u>, and no one needs to hear it. I'm okay with just setting it on a shelf. And the same thing when you listen to a piece in an orchestra-hall, and you have <u>no</u> idea why the composer wrote it, you don't know what's going on, and then everyone makes their own Thing out of it. But then, I think, what's happened now is that enabling the entire society, across the globe, to be able to cherry-pick <u>exactly</u> what they listen to; any time, whenever, however, in whatever, room, space, earphone they want to; everybody can create their own environment and make it <u>so</u> personal, and <u>so</u> specific that it <u>creates</u> a barrier, rather than puts [claps/clasps hands together] people

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together. <u>Unless</u>, you know that you're going to, just for an example, you're going to go drink some beer, and about forty, fifty, sixty other people, depending on the size of the Bar are going to be drinking some beer, and you know you're going to hear music. So that music is going to be <u>infused</u> with that culture of drinking beer, or a Dance-Hall.... Or you're gonna go to the Mall. <u>There's always music going on in a Mall. Pe-ri-od</u>. When a store goes silent (I used to work at a store for eight years) and the music was turned off, the energy and vibe of the <u>entire space</u> was changed.   And the <u>community</u> knew something was off. But when you turn the music back on... and you also dictate what the community feels if the music's too loud. You know, the whole example of Abercrombie & Fitch, and you walk in and it's like, "Oh my God! It's so smelly and dark and loud." Three things instantly hit you. You don't know what song is playing, because it's so damn loud. But the same can be said if it was silent. You walk into a store and you're shopping and it's completely silent.

E: Well, from a psychological perspective, because the music is so loud, you devote more processing power to tuning out that music, it makes you..

F: Aggressively buy shit? I'll TAKE THAT AND THAT AND THAT!!! [(Laughs!)]

J: Get me outta here, now!

E: Yes! It's the same reason they play Heavy-Metal at loud decibels when they send troops into combat.   Because it's so loud, our animal-brain says, "Whenever I hear something this loud and this close: It's a sabre-toothed tiger qnd I'm about to die. Or it's thunder, and I'm afraid for my life." So, you <u>pump</u> that music and it's <u>THIS</u> loud, so the defense mechanism is: <u>buy</u>, move through the store, go deeper into the store to find a quiet place. Nobody thinks to leave because they just walked in the store. Right? And who's going to be so shallow as to walk out of a store because the music's too loud?

F: You're not cool.

E: Loud music will short-circuit someone's better judgement and they'll stop thinking. It's auditory trauma.

J: What it does, I think, tune into, and speaks to is, especially when we're talking about <u>live, in-the-moment performance</u>, I think it always, kind of, correlates to, "Do you want that Audience to <u>feel</u> those things instantly?".... Or is it something that <u>slowly</u> builds into it.   Rarely do I get the chance, when performing live, to just <u>blast</u> the Audience with music. Because I don't know if the actors are wanting a blast moment from the orchestra pit, or whatever you want to call it. Even if we had a little band that was improv-ing with the ensemble on stage.... It think, again, it goes back to that spectrum that we're used to using in the Western World, and use them wisely. (To Funk) As you said, to me, if you're a smart musician improv-ing you're not paying attention to whether the music you're playing is good or bad. Is the storytelling being done well?

F: I've noticed, speaking of the sine-wave of emotions... the emotions of Surprise or Shock, things that just hit you [slaps hands together] like a brick-wall, any time in Improv where I try to emulate that brick-wall, it just always falls flat. It never really, like, "GUN-GAHN!" and then it goes back to Silent, that doesn't really do it for me. So, I always try to say to the actors, it's not about the musician punctuating this reaction moment, this surprise or this shock. It's YOU. You've gotta do it. If the actor is doing it well, you don't need to do much at all to do those slam-in-your-face emotional moments. In fact, you may need to do only one key, if the actor's really doing it. But, in a lot of movies, where you have a lot of really subtle acting and there's barely nothing going on on the actor's face, I think you can... I don't know if any of you have seen those experimental videos where they just have a human face staring in a camera with different music playing underneath it..

P: Yeah.

E: I'm citing one of those.

F: But it's interesting to see. It's so cool. But in the same turn, on film you can get in there tight and the actor doesn't have to do anything. But then, it's gotta be all music, but then it's gotta be more than just the piano, there's gotta be more to it. I mean, I guess it could be just a piano if the pianist is really good and it's really written well.

J: But I think the irony is too, just watching a film like 'War Horse'...

F: Marc Evan Jackson? [Marc Evan Jackson arrives for the Roundtable.]

 it's the same thing where the camera can be zoomed right into a horse's eye, and you're getting something. The Audience is getting something.

E: But on stage you can't do that.

F: Right. You can't tell them where to look. You can't tell them who to focus on

J: No. I think you're totally right. It can be any variation of instruments or one instrument. And as long as you know how to capture the emotion without distracting, it can really blossom into something.

F: And if a a director stays on someone's face for a while and they don't do any anything, you know there's intent behind it because, why would the camera be hanging on this person's face so long. So then you as the Audience start reading into it. You go, "What must they be feeling?" Because the director couldn't possibly let the camera hang on somebody who's got nothing going through their head. So, automatically, it puts you in a state of trying to figure it out; which I think is a great technique that directors can use, where they make the Audience do the work. Those are the movies where you spend the

whole time going, "What's he thinking? What's he <u>thinking</u>?"

E: It's that single, high clarinet in Beethoven's Fifth.... It's stopping time, and making someone so totally conscious of what's happening. It's unease.

P: And I think it's the opposite of "dun-dun-dun". You play music, you play music, something happens, and everything stops. And all of a sudden you have that moment of, "I don't know what's going to happen. There's tension and I don't even fully know what direction to go."

J: The only problem is that, in Improv... the moment stops and you don't know if was meant to stop, either. That's the only danger, I feel, in Improv, is that sometimes we can, sometimes, never catch the moment. Just like a surprise. It's hard to have that subtle of <u>refined</u> pause on stage where that Audience doesn't feel like, "The actors have <u>no idea</u> what's going on."

F: An there's that split-second decision of, "Who registers their surprise first; the piano player or the actor?"

J: Or the moment?

F: Or the moment.

J: And the piano comes in... and plays something subtle, but then they may have wanted to transition into some surprise. And you just don't know in live theatre what that moment might be.

P: That's the trouble with Music Direction in general.

E: It's <u>their</u> job to go with the <u>subtle</u>, though.

J: It's true. If they're ready, in a perfect world.

E: In a perfect world, to go with your thing. If you're both, if the musician and the actor are both <u>here</u>, and they're both reading each other, and one person moves, it's the other person's job to follow them.

J: It can be. Yeah.

E: Now, we all no that's not the way it always works. Because the musicians are there to support the actor. That's the unwritten rule.

J: Unless you've worked together for a long time and then you can piggy-back off of one another.

F: I think if you could have a spectrum of <u>bad</u> improvisors to the <u>best</u> improvisors, there would also be a correlation between the <u>amount</u> of music played and the <u>lack</u> of music played.

Marc Evan Jackson: An <u>inverse</u> proportion.

F: An inverse proportion, right. And I think that the worse the improvisor the more the Music Director is ya-da-da-dop-dadadada-da-dop.   I mean, if you ever watch Michael Pollock do a Level 5 show, it's like his fingers don't leave the keys. He's scoring <u>every</u> line. But it's because the actors are doing <u>nothing</u>. But if you go see a Mainstage show in Chicago where the actors are at the top of their game, and Ruby goes out to the lobby for a smoke for ten minutes between scenes..

J: I gotta split. This was wonderful. This was great.

E: (to Jerome) If you feel inspired and anything comes to mind and you want to say..

J: I could do this for hours.

P: This is awesome.

E: (continuing) If you want to want to say, "You know what, Man? Fuck you! Because leitmotifs aren't this..."   No, seriously.   If anything comes to mind, I would certainly appreciate anything you're willing to share. What you've done has been great. This is exactly the kind of space and culture I wanted to pick up on. I hoped for it.

F: I <u>hoped</u> for it.

P: This is awesome because I don't think the three of us [F,J,P] have ever sat down for this long and talked about it either....   You know, I've got all of this <u>ethos</u> stuff on <u>why</u> this stuff works.

E: I've got [a lot of that] stuff, too. But, because, now I'm in a <u>room</u> of people that have had similar, you know, <u>not identical</u>, contradictory, complimentary [experiences], <u>now I've got a set of data</u>.

P: Yeah.

E: And this is what <u>this</u> is.
P: Right!

E: It's <u>data</u>. I could sit down and write a thesis and say, "This is what it is."

P: Yeah.

E: There's a whole side of it that... It's about being <u>scholarly</u>. I'm just hack musician.

M: <u>Shut up</u>, John.

E: I'm not fishing. I fish at the beach.

P: Well, so far he hasn't played me anything good today.

E: We all rise to whatever our abilities dictate. Our skill-set will, sort of, dictate the approach that we take. And, based on our experience we all have different ways that we go at it. But, it's not <u>scholarly</u> to just say, "I <u>feel</u> this way."

P: Yeah.

E: It's not any less valid, but when I have to defend this against <u>doctors</u>, and they say, "Tell me about this..."

P: I feel like the real challenge for me is... most of your answers are going to be, because music is about emotion. And how do you quantify, again, that line between Anger and, you know, Melancholy?

E: I don't remember if it was you or Jerome that made the, "Anger morphing into resentment..."

P: Yeah!

E: What's the difference? If anger is just a straight, vampy c-minor, is resentment c-minor and a-flat-minor?

P: I feel like a lot of it is about <u>timing</u>, and it's such a huge comedy thing. But it's the difference between, if I'm angry now, I'll tell you now. Whereas, if I'm resentful, I'll wait a beat, walk away, and then, instead of doing it to your face. Do you know what I mean?.... It's the same tone, but if you wait a half-second to put it in there.. And that's another huge thing that would be difficult to quantify, is comedic timing. But the question of, you know, someone saying, "I'm having a great day," and immediately playing some happy music behind it, <u>or</u> waiting five beats , it adds this <u>huge</u> change of affect.

E: Because immediately is "Yes, I am." Five seconds later it's, "Am I?"

P: Yes! Exactly. And, again, I think Josh [Funk] said it best when he said, "It's <u>directing</u> much more than it is <u>scoring</u>," because you're <u>telling</u> them. You're telling them what's

happening or the motivation. I could do this all day.

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M: And now it's just <u>us</u>. Just me.. this Sennheiser mic, and a Marantz Professional Solid-State Recorder PMD 660. I prefer the 670. But.. Just.. Us.

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M: Just based on what I've already heard, there are things that I do not agree with.

E: Please, just start. Just jump in.

M: The.. risk of failing... whatever risk... or the only problem in Improv, or whatever... there are no problems in Improv. Like, if something goes up in the air, and we don't know if it came down, whoever decides first whether it came down, or how well or how poorly that it came down, <u>wins</u>. And then we're all on board <u>or</u> obviously, I'm <u>certain</u> that you've talked about the Music <u>countering</u> what's going on.

E: <u>We</u> haven't.

M: Really?

E: No. It was this: Maybe we talked about <u>two</u> things.

M: Oh, gosh. This is going to be a long paper.... Like, that is not a failure, in my mind. Whether you've lead the improvisors on stage to surprise, or to fear, or to ordinary, or whether they lead <u>you</u>, there's no failure. The only failure is not being willing, is <u>not</u> making a choice.

E: Yes!

M: If <u>you</u> don't play because you're afraid to fuck it up for them on stage, then you've failed.

E: Right! The only failure is the failure to act.

M: The same rules apply to stepping off the back line, as to putting your fingers to the keyboard; if you don't play because you're fearful, you've failed. If you play something that may not fit because you're like, "I play *Also spracht Zarathustra* fucking <u>really</u> well," and so you play it for that wrong motivation. It's like coming into somebody else's scene because you're like, "I have this hilarious gay voice that I do. This is gonna kill." Then, you've failed.

E: It's like,"Oh, you guys are talking about beans. I'm gonna come and do some kind of fart-joke because beans and farts go together.

M: Yeah. I mean, that's a failure. And also, it was told to me, when I first took over the Mainstage job from Joe LaTessa in 1997, both [Director, Michael] Gellman and [Producer] Rico [Bruce Wade] told me that I was a Character in every scene. You know? And I think on the spectrum of Musical Directors I've probably played more notes than other people. Like, I think, there weren't many scenes that I let just live. I let that be the spice. But that's probably born of inexperience at the time. I was not, and remain to this day not a good Musical Director.

E: Quantum Leap stands to counter every statement, like that, that you would make.

M: Tell me what that is.

E: Quantum Leap: Margaret and Keegan in a Book Store, and he wrote those 'Books through Time'.

M: Oh, gosh. Did I write that?

E: Right there. That, in and of itself is a microcosm of what any Music Director needs to do.

M: (to Funk) Do you remember the scene 'Quantum Leap'? Margaret and Keegan in a book store?

F: Yeah.

M: I vaguely do. I gotta watch some of these tapes. I gotta get my VCR out of storage.

F: My VCR (laughs)

E: Yep. Oh, here we are in Venice, so it's a harpsichord and something modal. Great! Oh, here we are in the future: Synthesizer.

M: I'm sure they're the hackiest stereotypes. And I guarantee every bit of it's in C.

E: Oh yeah. Because you played a piece by Bach, and the Venetian musical culture of that time probably pre-dates Bach by three-hundred years.   So, from a musicological standpoint, what you did was totally bullshit.
M: Yeah. And this began by me saying, "I was not then, nor am I now, a good Musical Director." (laughs)

E: But, your Audience wasn't full of a thousand Musicologists.

M: No.

E: And even among Musicologists who specialize in the same Era, their careers depend on them disagreeing with one another until they retire. Because, who else would care what they're arguing about other than their opponent.

F & M: Right.

M: I was saying to John that I was here for five minutes, overhearing the tail-end of the conversation, and there were already things that I didn't agree with. Like, Jerome was it? Saying "The problem with Improv" and what happens if you're not there, or whatever. I don't see that as a failure at all. As I said to John, if you <u>don't</u> play in that instance because you're fearful of fucking it up, then you've failed. If you're worried about that the guys on stage aren't going to agree or aren't going to like what you did, then you've failed. Or if you stick in some 'go to' bit that you're like, "I play the 'Jaws' Theme really well," then you've failed. That's the same as leaving the back line and going, "Oh, this is a chance for my hilarious black voice," in somebody else's scene, then I think you've failed. But also the... Gellman and Rico told me, when I took the job, that I was a character in every scene. The piano, you know, was meant to add to every scene, and I <u>know</u> I played in almost every scene, and when I <u>didn't</u>, that was saying something. I don't know. I completely agree with your inverse proportions. I think, especially in the field of Improv... I mean, I just played, like, a thumping octaves in the bass when Level 1s are out there and you just wanna go, like, "GO!" "Bum-Bum-Bum-Bum-BUM-Bum-Bum-Bum" I mean, show some energy. There's something pressing. "Oh, there's a knock at the door. Oh, it's nobody." And then improvisors that are better, and scripted scenes need less and less, I suppose.

E: What's the difference between scoring Short-Form and scoring Long-Form? Do you take a different approach?

F: I think Short-Form musical directing is a lot of bells and whistles, and a lot of gimmicks, and a lot of the piano being self-aware. And I think that, the best Music Director <u>I've</u> ever worked with..

E: What do you mean self-aware?

F: I mean "I know I'm playing during this scene. You know I'm playing during this scene. And I'm not trying to be..

M: Invisible.

F: Invisible. I think the best Music Director I've ever worked with for Short-Form is T.J. Schanoff in Chicago. And it's because he can do every fucking pop riff, ever, in a second. And so the Audience... it's just another element of Game for the Audience to just

dig into. And it's like, he just..

M: It's almost like needle-drop?

F: He's needle-dropping as he's playing and doing little comments on the scene, and it's infusing more Game into the Game, and it's infusing more energy. It's a whole 'nother way to get laughs. And if the purpose of Short-Form is to be like, <u>Laughs</u>.

M: Punching.

F: It's to get as many fucking laughs as I can possibly get. Then, it's a different ballgame. Whereas, if it's Long-Form, or if it's scenic then it's more scoring. That's more like trying to be invisible. And it's two different skill-sets, really.

M: I don't have a lot of experience scoring Long-Form as a dedicated person in the Pit, or whatever, but I would guess that those who do it well, I would guess Michael Pollock and people like that would look for thematic stuff that they might establish and bring back later. I know I've seen, out here, things like the Improvised Movie and things like along those lines, and I <u>know</u> that some of those M.D.s build in Overtures, and Act One stuff that goes into fugue stuff later, and get's canoned later. I don't do that.

E: I aspire to do that.

M: You could <u>totally</u> do that. Do you still MD?

E: Once in a blue moon. I score my dogs. Roscoe's in 6/8, Daisy's in 2/4.

M: That's great.

E: They're sort of hemiola when they run.

M: That's funny. I like that.

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M: What was the leitmotif debate?

E: It's a melody that you associate with a character or situation.

F: John was trying to say there is another type of leitmotif that was more of a feel or genre or a mood.

E: Like an instrumental leitmotif as opposed to a melodic theme leitmotif.

F: But I <u>do</u> agree with Jerome where, it's really a question of semantics.

E: It is. It <u>absolutely</u> is.

F: Okay, so let's define it. Leitmotif is a melodic line. A style is a style. But it can still serve the same purpose of latching onto a character. So, in a certain movie, every time you see this character there's Jazz music, then it's <u>not</u> a leitmotif. It's Jazz. Jazz identifies who this character is. There is no melody. And like I said, <u>I</u> think that's an element of Hollywood trying to save money, by just using stock-music and not hiring composers to write leitmotifs. You know, but to say, like, "No. We'll just get some bongo tracks from our library every time this guy comes in the room."

E: The articles I've read on this nuance it far better than I.

M: Oh, I'm sure.

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Quartet of Trombones

F: So you're opening it to more than just a melodic-line, but also to chord-changes.

E: Yes.

F: And for that matter, you can also say a specific rhythm. So you play it with a drum, and then bring it back with a clarinet next time, and you bring it back with a trumpet next time.

M: Are there <u>heavy-motifs?</u>

E: There are <u>Boo-motifs.</u>

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M: Inasmuch as I sometimes think of musical direction as, like, trying to offer these improvisors in jeans and pastel t-shirts on stage, in a white room filled with nothing... Inasmuch as we're trying to offer as much reality once we get the suggestion, or whatever, to that world, you might play that flamenco riff if you're in Spain, or whatever, to get them <u>started</u>; almost like the beginning of an old-school sitcom, like when they walk through the door.

E: [Sings *Seinfeld* bass-riff.]

M: Right. And it's like, "This is just establishing." So, you're just trying to add some

paint to the flats, and, say, make the sun feel a bit hotter, or whatever. But then I think you, maybe I, would proceed in that motif in that style, moving forward. But you're not just going to play front-to-back, on repeat, that song over and over. So, maybe, that's an establishment thing, I think. It's an expositional thing, in my mind, that you may not touch again.

J: I also think, like, you could use for creating Spain or creating a Spanish character in a Russian scene, that walks in, you could use the same instrument, the same chord-progression, or whatever, but I think that's where feel comes in.... It always gets weird when you try and break it down and get scientific and make it theoretical.... It's like, "What's the difference between playing a Spanish character and playing a Spanish location?" It's, I don't know. It's in my fingers, it's in my heart, that's the Art of it.

M: And it started two minutes ago, so you better be playing.

F: Yeah.

M: There's no time to go [hold on], where we're huddling and doing this in two hours.

E: Would it be fair to say, [to Jackson] your "establishment"-clause notwithstanding, that when you play Spain, it is Spain throughout [the scene]; whereas when you play the Spaniard it is...?

F: No, you would play Spain to set up the scene and then you'd abandon it, 'cause then it's gotta be about the characters. The scene is not about Spain; the scene takes place in Spain. But if the scene is about the Spaniard, even if it's about the Spaniard, the fact that he's Spanish is not what the scene's about. Unless it is what the scene's about, and then that's another thing.

M: And then I don't want to watch that scene.

E: Those are my cultural stereotypes coming through.

F: No. I think it's the same thing, like, the great musicians would scoff at you, like if you were to say to Miles Davis, "How do you play sadness?" [He'd say,] "Fuck you honkey. How do I play sadness? I am sad. And I pick up the trumpet and start playing, and that's what comes out." You know? That's Art. That's music. And I think that's where, and you've been engulfed in music, in a masters program, talking about music theory. So you're taking something that is an art-form and trying to break it down scientifically; scientifically, scientifically, scientifically, scientifically. And you're, obviously, going to run into dead-ends where, "At this point there is no defining it." But you can't. You have to keep defining it, don't you?

E: Spain has been my nemesis in this [project].... Because, Spain has been my nemesis,

it has showed me a couple of things. Spanish, say flamenco, is just idiomatic [sings riff]. Think 'El Camino' [song by Ween]. <u>That music</u>, and this is why it's my nemesis, that <u>tonal palette</u>, that scale is the "Scale of Spain." And it's also [similar to] the scale of Israel, and the Muslim world, who brought that music to Spain, when it was taken by the Moors. But, then, that scale is also present in the music of the Roma people, or the Gypsies, in [Eastern Europe]. So the nut [of] this is, "How do you differentiate Spanish music from [Middle-Eastern] music?" Then it comes down to a matter of rhythm and riff. There's going to be a way that you play this same vocabulary that connotes Spain, than connotes the Middle East.

M: Yes. So, you've gone <u>way more specific</u> than the improv stage in this example.....

F: This is how I think of the topic that you're on. We used to have a class here [at The Second City Hollywood] that I inherited when I became Musical Director that I <u>got rid of immediately</u>, because I saw the insanity behind it; and it was "Styles and Genres". And it was seven, eight classes where you were supposed to talk to the class and educate them on <u>every</u> style of playwright, <u>every</u> style of movie director, <u>every</u> style of author. You know? <u>All of the styles that you can think of</u>. So that, "Improvise a scene in the style of the Renaissance. Improvise a scene in the style of Jack Kerouac. Improvise a scene in the style of Whatever." And it's like, okay, as a teacher I start to go, "Alright. Let me wrap my head around what this curriculum is gonna be like for the term." And, all of a sudden, I've got a list of <u>a thousand references</u>.... And, what is this class, Cliff Notes? Am I gonna tell you what is Tennessee Williams? And, you can either watch a whole bunch of Tennessee Williams plays or <u>read</u> a whole bunch of Tennessee Williams, or I can tell you in a minute or so, "Well, talk with a Southern accent. There's a big-daddy character and some sort of alcohol-swigging woman that's been scorned." And then I was like, "This is stupid! Because it's giving people false information and false inspiration." And so, that's when I realized that, when we're improvising on stage, and especially when we're <u>musically improvising</u> on stage, and we have to, all of a sudden, say, "Hey, we're at a Quinceañera but a <u>rabbi</u> just showed up." Like, I haven't studied this. I haven't though ahead of time what I'd do in this situation. I just, as an improvisor, have to, <u>and this is the key</u>, "<u>Don't invent. Remember.</u>" You know? And that's what we <u>do</u> as artists. We <u>don't</u>, we <u>shouldn't</u> be <u>inventing</u> and saying, "Well, let me <u>invent</u> what Yiddish would be like at a Quinceañera." But let me just <u>remember</u>, all of a sudden, my body should be feeling, like, all of the Quinceañera things I've seen; like the parties I've driven past, or the things I've seen on T, and in movies. Now I'm also being overwhelmed by the ideas of a rabbi, and of Yiddish-music, and klezmer-music, and all of this, and then all of a sudden [gesticulates as if playing piano], you know, it starts to manifest itself in my fingers and sometimes it <u>sucks</u> and sometimes it's <u>brilliant</u>, but it's like, when you get into that realm of improv where you're dealing with styles and genres, to have a plan for everything is going to be futile, because you'll <u>always</u> be stumped. And if you can't <u>give into</u> the idea of 'let me just <u>remember</u> what that feels like' in <u>one-and-a-half seconds</u>, and start playing, then you can't <u>play</u> improv piano for comedy.

M: And I think that the same, was it from *Something Wonderful Right Away* or was it *Impro*, about the quote that went something like not being responsible for something that emanates from your subconscious? Whatever you play <u>has to work</u>. That's <u>all</u> that's there.

F: And that's why what makes a good improvisor is somebody that has a wealth of knowledge and experience. So when we first got into the [Second City] Touring Company we had [Director] John Holdsen going, "Alright, I need you to read <u>three</u> books this week; I need you to see <u>ten</u> movies; I need you to read the New York Times." I mean, you're not going to give me ten or fifteen years of knowledge and experience in he next six months, but he's gonna try his damnedest to... set me on a path to go, "Life is a journey of exposing yourself to as much shit as possible so you can be good at this art-form."

E: If nothing else, he fostered an awareness that there was something more than just showing up to rehearsal and running your lines.

F: But I'm a much better improvisor in my thirties than I was in my twenties because I've got all that extra time to experience shit. And, like, <u>four trips to Asia</u>, and now I can pull from <u>all</u> that experience; dozens of trips to Europe; Germany, and Ireland, and England, and France, and <u>Spain</u>, and all of these countries...

M: We know what Europe is, Josh.

F: Yeah. [(Laughs!!!)] But, that's shit you just couldn't do at twenty, twenty-one.

M: Sure. Reference-level is huge.

F: Well, thanks for boiling it down. "Reference-level is huge."

M: Reference-level.

F: You need a reference-level. Next.

E: Read shit. Learn.

F: Age. Wisdom. Next.

E: Genre. Not 'improvising a musical'-genre, [but] picking genre as a representative of a character. Illiterate country person...

F: [Happy Trails bass-line]. Although it changes. I already see myself getting too, that's the other thing, you get too old and your references start to get old. And you can't relate to the younger generation. Their idea of redneck hillbilly is a totally different type of

music. They're not thinking, like, *The Andy Griffith Show* like I am. You know? [(Laughs)] Or, *Gomer Pyle*. They're thinking, like, NASCAR [sings chunky, guitar riff], you know, heavy metal.

M: I've got the flag. AMERICA!

E: What would the pompous guy's music be?

M: *Masterpiece Theatre*. In my mind, Classical. Piano, perhaps harpsichord, if you've got a nice orchestra patch.

E: [To Funk] Same for you?

F: Yeah. For the most part, or some insane and weird Jazz. It depends on what <u>type</u> of pompous. [Adopts erudite, East coast, intellectual accent.] "I only listen to Ornette Coleman's early works." It's exactly like <u>you</u> said, "You have to think about the type of person that <u>listens</u> to that music." So, then, my mind would go, "What would pompous people listen to?" And that's what would score them.

E: Is that an effective strategy for scoring?

F: That's <u>one</u> way.

M: It <u>better have been</u>.

E: I know it's certainly not the <u>only</u> way to...

F: Yeah. I mean, you watch movies that are period-pieces and they play musical instruments that hadn't been invented yet and you go, "There's <u>no fucking way</u> that this guy could be listening to this music." You go see a movie about cavemen and there's orchestrations; they hadn't invented the <u>wheel</u> yet. So you can't say that [that's] what that character would have listened to. I also think that, there was that phenomena for a while... I think *A Knight's Tale* was the first one, where it was a period-piece/movie but it used Pop songs in it. And then *Moulin Rouge* came out, and then a bunch of these period-pieces where they're playing 'Roxanne' [by The Police], and 'We Will Rock You' [by Queen].

E: Do you have stock chord-progressions that you associate with different situations.

F: Oh, <u>yeah</u>.

M: Yeah, sure. Like pimpy, funky, sex-music. Sure, a lot of go-tos.

F: I'm not a good enough musician to be able to <u>not</u> have shit in my back pocket. I think,

even the same thing when improvising on stage with comedy, I'm pretty darn good but I still have a bag of tricks that I go to. It's not just a <u>pure</u>, blank slate anymore.

M: Which, I don't think, is failure. I think that that's natural.

F: Yeah. I think that's just the way it is. You can't just be pure [improv]. That's impossible. You have to be influenced by something.

Semi-Abridged Interview with Laura Hall
June 20, 2012
The Republic of Pie
Hollywood, California

Bio

LAURA HALL is best known as the improvisational pianist on the hit TV show, WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?. She was also on the DREW CAREY SHOW live episodes, and has toured the country doing live performances with DREW CAREY AND THE IMPROV ALLSTARS.

Laura got her improv start in Chicago at THE SECOND CITY. She toured for several years, and later musically directed and wrote music for the Jeff Award winning E.T.C. Revue, CHANNEL THIS! Laura has also sat in and played with tons of improv groups in Chicago and L.A., including The Groundlings, Improv Olympic, ComedySportz, Theatresports, The Improv Institute, Opening Night: The Improvised Musical!, and Totally Looped.

Laura and her husband, Rick Hall, travel around the country leading musical improv workshops and hosting IMPROV KARAOKE JAM NIGHTS. They especially like helping people who are scared out of their minds about doing song improv to find out it's really fun and something they can do successfully. The workshops and shows feature music from her two cd set, IMPROV KARAOKE, which are fully produced, karaoke style tracks along with demos and tutorials, to use for song improv. It's perfect for improv classes, live performances, and workshops.

Laura has composed several original musicals, using improv as a writing tool, with THE ANNOYANCE THEATER and THEATER-A-GO-GO, including UP WITH PUBERTY, and PATTY, PATTY, BANG! BANG! which won an L.A. Weekly award for Best New Musical.

Laura has written music for several indie films, including the score for SLICE OF PIE, a written by and starring her husband. She also scored an award winning documentary about the holocaust, SWIMMING IN AUSCHWITZ, and the romantic comedies, ANATOMY OF A BREAKUP and LOOK AT ME.

Laura's band, THE SWEET POTATOES, plays original, acoustic, Americana style music with a fresh twist. They have a new CD out, cleverly titled THE SWEET POTATOES. Her partner in the band is Kelly Macleod, and her husband, Rick, can also been seen in their shows playing bass, harmonica and singing harmonies.

John Edwartowski: How do you create mood?   How do you create meaning for the characters? Do you score the scene? Do you score the characters? When you're doing a

long-form show, do you have a strategy for the long-form show as opposed to a short-form show? Do you use leitmotivs?

Laura Hall: I have a CD for you. And this is for <u>song</u>-improv, for people... because in large part people don't have a musician. Because <u>we</u> are a very rare breed.

J: Yes we <u>are</u>!

L: And if you're doing improv in Rolla, MO, you probably don't have someone, a musician, so it kind of sprang out of that; people who don't have musicians. And, originally, I was just going to do the tracks, and then people started saying, "Well, it would be great to... like, the tracks by themselves... what if I don't know what to do with it?" So then I did these demos, and then tutorials. So, it's got... the first CD is all, sort of, the educational piece about approaching song-improv, and then, like, "Here's a demo of Keegan [-Michael Key, Bruce Greene, and Rick [Hall]] singing to a disco track, and listen for how they did <u>this</u>, listen how <u>this</u> worked for them." To, kind of, get some critical listening for singers.

J: Would it be fair to call them 'stylistic features' as a general wash? Like, in Disco, this is a feature <u>of</u> Disco?

L: I did <u>some</u> of that, but not a whole lot. I kind of went around and around about how much of that to do with it because: I was targeting it towards beginners and my feeling was that sometimes <u>they're worried </u>about getting the words out and <u>just singing</u>, and so I did give them some stylistic pointers, but I felt like it might be piling too much on; because then it feels like just one more thing to think about. Now, <u>other</u> improvisors find that having a <u>style</u> actually really <u>informs</u> what they do. You know what I mean? So they <u>like</u> playing with the stylistic elements. And when I've used it in classroom settings, it's amazing how intuitively most people respond to the styles. What's interesting about this is, they're <u>produced</u> tracks; they're fully produced tracks. So, it <u>really</u> takes you into the style; quicker than when it's just a piano-player. Because, right? You've got Disco, you've got strings, you've got the horns, you've got the drums, you've got the <u>whole thing</u> all produced. So, they go <u>right there</u> to the place, and it's <u>really</u> interesting, with very little instruction how much people start physicalizing, start singing, you know, like Barry Gibb. Do you know what I mean?

J: I do! Because I believe that <u>our</u> work is served by this collective musicological consciousness...

L: Definitely!

J: Regardless of how <u>deeply</u> you know a style you know, say, <u>three</u> features...

L: Yes! Exactly.

J: So when people physicalize they're not <u>necessarily</u> identifying with Disco, they could be identifying with John Travolta...

L: This sort-of cultural reference to Disco, in a way. Yes. Yes. Exactly. So it's been really interesting when I do it because, on the CD I just give a <u>little</u> tiny bit about the style. So, I'll usually give them references in case it's a style they're not familiar with. So, for Funk: Listen to James Brown or something. And I'll say, "Go to youtube and watch a video." And <u>that</u> will help if <u>you</u> need help <u>embracing</u> this style.

J: Right. Nobody knows Zydeco.

L: Yeah. On this CD, almost all of them are pretty straight-up, obvious; because it was the first CD and we wanted them to be [accessible]. You know what I mean?

J: If they're frustrated with the first one, the won't buy the second one.

L: Yes, exactly. So with the second one we can get into stuff like Zydeco that's a little more obscure but can be really fun. And that is the interesting thing too, because my husband Rick [Hall] and I do the tutorial stuff together and we teach together too. And he says all the time, "We've all grown up listening to music. We've <u>all</u> had radios on in our life. So we <u>all</u> have some intuitive sense of what Reggae is, <u>even if</u> I'm not a huge Reggae fan, I have <u>some sense</u> of what Reggae is, and so I can apply some of that sense stylistically.

J: This is very specific: I've had über-hetero[sexual] guys in my classes, and if they get Musical Theatre, they tend to get a little homophobic and [self-conscious]. <u>I've found</u> that having them make fun of the style gets them to engage. Is that an experience you've had?... I don't know if that's too specific or <u>leading</u>... Do you know what I mean?

L: I know <u>exactly</u> what you mean. And, actually, it's sort of a fine line anyway, because in a way we're always parodying a style anyway. We're <u>not</u> being one-hundred-percent authentic. Right? So, to some extent, we're <u>already</u> doing that. And getting people to, kind of, make fun of it is the back-door to get them to loosen up with it. And <u>I've</u>... Yes! I've definitely noticed that too. I mean, I had a <u>voice</u> teacher who would do that with me. When he was having me work on my upper register and I was intimidated by it he would say, "Pretend you're an Opera-singer. Make <u>fun</u> of an Opera-singer." And what it would do is, it would help me open my throat, because I was <u>imitating</u> what I thought of as an Opera-singer.

J: Because your focus was [one place] and your instrument went [to another place].

L: Yes. And I was able to <u>do that</u> in a way that I wasn't able to do before. So, I think there's <u>always</u> a way... it can always kind of bring you in the back door to have a little laugh about it, or a little fun. And I always tell people with the styles, "If the style helps

you, go for it. Dance like John Travolta. Sing like the *Saturday Night Fever* Soundtrack. But if the style doesn't help you, then don't! Just sing. Do what you want to do. Tell your story." And sometimes you get people who just go, "I can't go there." And then it's like, "Okay. Then just sing. Don't try and do a Jamaican accent for the Reggae thing. Just sing."

J: 'Cause then you're UB40.

L: Yeah, exactly. And it works, too, because... Especially if you're telling a story; you're telling a story.

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J: How did you get into improvisation? Was it an inevitability?

L: It was completely random. You know, I grew up in Chicago so I'd been to Second City, growing up, and I liked it. I mean, I do remember seeing Fred [Kaz] when I was a kid and going, "Wow! That's cool!" But I was never like, "Wow! Improv! That's the thing!" You know, I was playing in bands, and I considered myself a songwriter, a singer/songwriter. You know what I mean?

J: Yeah.

L: And so I was in college and getting my degree in music...

J: In performance?

L: I just got a general degree because couldn't decide. I liked composition, I liked performance...

J: You and me, both.

L: I was all over the map, which I think is a hallmark of people who do what we do.

J&L: (Laughter)

L: So, I was in college, and I was playing in bands. You know, I played in wedding-bands, I played in original-bands, I accompanied ballet-classes, you know, I did a little bit of everything.   And then my sister was working a [The Steak Joint] which was a restaurant next-door to Second City. The box-office manager fell in love with my sister, and... we were broke. We were both in college and we were living together, and both in college, and we were broke and I would go down there and eat because we could eat for free at the end of her shift. So, he's trying to get in good with my sister, I need a job, and he says, "Do you want a coat-check job at Second City?" And I said, "Great!" It's a

perfect gig for a student because most of the time you're just sitting there and I could study. And the money was pretty good. So I start there and kind of get into the culture and I go, "Well this is fun, but..." You know, I never envisioned my... and then I ended up waitressing. And, by the time I was waitressing, I was definitely more of an ear towards what Fred or Ruby [Streak] were doing. And, you know, oftentimes would find myself going, "Oh! That was really cool... Oh! Here's your drink!" You know, this part of my ear. And then I would, after work, you know how you just sit down and play? And people would sing. But again, I was never like, "I want to work here doing this." For one thing, Fred had been there for like a hundred years, and Ruby had been there fifty. You know what I mean? It just didn't even seem like there was... there wasn't movement like there is with the actors. You know, they were these <u>landmarks</u>. So that was fine. So, then there was a Touring Company started, and someone else got hired for that, but then they said, "Will you be the backup?" And I went, "[pause]Okay." I [did] a lot of different gigs. At that point, I was starting to teach at the Old-Town School, you know, I was doing everything. So I'm like, "Yeah, okay." It was like, maybe, one every six weeks. So I was kind of learning on the road while doing it. And it was not very many, but I was still good while I was in school. And then the Summer before my senior-year, we were getting ready for sort of the Fall season of touring. And the guy Tony who was the main guy; and I was just coming, again, to be the backup. I was just coming to a few rehearsals just to be prepared as backup... The first day of rehearsal, him and Ruby have a huge blowout. "Fuck you! Fuck you!" And he walks out. And she says, "So do you wanna go on tour?" And I'm like, "Uhhhh," (Laughs) "well, I'm still in college. I have my senior year to finish." And she says, "Well think about it." I went to, I was in a really small school. I went to the head of the Music Department and said, "Can we call this an internship? And I'll go on the road, because it's working in my field." And she was like, "Well no one's ever asked us to do that before." And I'm like, "But I <u>am</u>." So I kind of improvised by senior year, and I was keeping a journal about my work, and doing a lot of independent-study stuff. And by October <u>I was totally hooked</u>. You know what I mean? So at first it was like, "Oh it's just a gig." And after doing it for a month or two I was really it. I was really hooked.

J: Two or three magic moments?

L: Yeah. And getting past the initial... just... like, even the elements of being on the road and, just all of that was, like, a lot for me. Because, even though I had been gigging a lot, it had been mostly <u>local</u> stuff. So, to be, now, on the road for three weeks, in a crowded van with a bunch of people I don't really know... you know?

J: Yeah. I get that.

L: So once I, sort of, got past all of that, I was like, "<u>This</u> is really cool. This is a really cool way to do this."

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J: I found that my Music <u>History</u> classes helped me to develop my aesthetic for scoring.... Is there a particular area of <u>your</u> training that...

L: Well, I think the best part of, in terms of my degree applying to it was the ability to analyze music, in general. You know, so your theory classes where you're like, "Okay, so what makes this tick? What makes Alban Berg sound like Alban Berg? What makes Beethoven sound like Beethoven?" And being able to <u>do</u> that has definitely been a big help for me; figuring out, "Okay. What make's Bob Marley sound like Bob Marley and what makes..." You know.

J: Yeah!

M: So that analytical ability has certainly been useful for me. But the other things that, I think, were <u>really</u> informative for me were playing in <u>wedding-bands</u> and doing piano-bar <u>because</u> with wedding-bands you're playing <u>a lot of different things</u> and piano-bar too when you have to be quick on your feet, and you develop your <u>ear</u>. And when people ask you to play something that you <u>don't really know</u>, but t<u>hey've got a twenty-dollar tip</u>, you're like, "I can figure <u>something</u> out." So, those <u>two</u> gigs, which sort-of ask you to be a little all-over-the-map were really useful to me. And, then, the other thing is that <u>I did a fair amount of Theatre</u>. And, so, that really helped me with my sense of knowing how to underscore, and understanding the <u>rhythm of a scene</u>, and transitions between scenes, and that kind of stuff. So, just from having done Theatre and Musical Theatre, getting the sense... because, in some ways, I feel like it's less important <u>exactly what you play</u> then the, sort of, <u>rhythm</u> of what you play, or the <u>ins and outs</u> of what you play.

J: Yeah.

L: It matters a little less than exactly what <u>notes</u> you're playing and exactly how authentic you are to a style, necessarily.

J: It's the <u>pulse</u>? It's the <u>beat</u> of the whole.?.?..
L: Yeah!

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J: Do you feel that, when <u>we</u> score, we score the moment, and the breath, and the tension of the scene?

L: Yeah.

J: Do you score the the moment-in-between-the-moments that happen between the actors have?

L: Yeah. But, I think that's also true of <u>good movie scores</u> as well. It's the, kind of,

underpinning that connects it. And then there's <u>also</u> the <u>rhythm of the scene itself</u>, and the way that what you're playing fits in... It's hard to put all of this stuff into words...

J: Tell me about it!

L: ...because so much of it just stuff that we've been doing <u>intuitively</u> just by doing it. And I <u>learned</u> how to do it by listening to Fred do it.   So, <u>no one</u> sat down and went, "Well, when a scene is doing <u>this</u> you do <u>that</u>. And then when a scene..." You know what I mean?

J: Because you can't!

L: Yeah, you <u>can't</u>!

J: Because, even the same scene, two nights in a row...

L: Right!

J: ...is, even if you have the same <u>general</u> score for something, you might, "Hey, I'm gonna come to my deceptive cadence on this," and you have to prolong your dominant...

L: Right!

J: ...for a half bar.

L: Right, because it's...

J: How do you tell your understudy that, "This is gonna be..." Yeah. You can't write the script out, and <u>bar</u> the script...

L: Right. "This happens; wait until he... and then he's gotta say this line, and then cross and be <u>almost</u> at the door, and then..." You know. Yeah.

J: "But <u>don't</u> play it until he turns around, but don't wait for him to turn around. <u>Anticipate</u> when he's gonna turn around, but if you do it too early, you're going to undermine you're gonna undermine the integrity of the scene because you're going to pooch the bit..."

L: Right.

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J: Backing up a bit: The analytical side that helps you say, "Why does Beethoven sound like Beethoven? Et cetera, et cetera. When you do genres... and I want to keep one of

these branches kind of short and explore the other one a little bit more, but... The shorter one is: "Genre as an indicator or signifier of a <u>character</u> or character <u>status</u>. Was that ever part of your practice? The pompous guy gets the March? The...

L: Oh, <u>certainly</u>. Like when you're underscoring a scene.

J: Yes.

L: Oh, <u>certainly</u>. Certainly. And there are definitely, you know, things that, you know, the sexy girl gets a bluesy thing. There are definitely things that characters will, sort of, <u>indicate</u> for me. And, what I <u>like</u> about scoring and having the opportunity to <u>score</u> is being able to... because you <u>are</u> adding color to that character. You're informing each other; the character is informing your playing and your playing is informing the character.

J: Yes!

L: Which I really like. And, it's one of the fun things. And when I, when you do a longer form like, have you seen 'Opening Night: The Improvised Musical'?

J: No, but I'm familiar with it.

L: So you get to impro... I've sat in with them some, and I really like doing long forms lik<u>e that </u>because y<u>ou c</u>an have a little motif-kind-of-thing for a character th<u>at can</u> develop.

J: Yeah.

L: And, when they come back you can use that musical motif to link it to give the overall structure. You know? And I <u>love</u> doing that. That makes me really happy. [Big smile. Laughs]

J: Right?! And then everyone in the audience says, "Well [of course] that's the way it's gotta happen." I mean, we can say, abstractly, that we can accomplish it. But sometimes it's very 'Pearls before swine.' And we're sitting at the piano going, "Do you know what it <u>took</u> to get to this point? To make this happen? So that this could come in..."... So, when your sexy girl as blues, pompous guy is a march, or Baroque, in the <u>scene</u> do you alternate? I mean, I would imagine [that] you <u>can</u> alternate between characters, right? Here's her bluesy, sexy riff;...

L: Oh.

J: And then play against his. [Josh] Funk, yesterday, was talking about his approach, or his take on it. And, his take was, "You <u>pick</u> who the scene's gonna be about, and then

you stick with them."

L: I would say I more often do <u>that</u>. I would say, more often, the, I guess, <u>dominant</u> character. Partly because it can get too schizophrenic if you're going back-and-forth. So I would probably say, oftentimes, that you pick who gets to...

J: Be scored.

L: Yeah.

J: Scoring the scene versus scoring the character. Just, whatever thoughts that <u>that</u> makes you think.

L: I <u>always</u> feel like it's more important to score the scene then the character. So, if, for example, the sexy girl, and you have a theme for her, but now she's suddenly in a life-threatening situation, you abandon the sexy music because it's not appropriate, even though she's still the sexy girl, but because <u>now</u> there's tension in the scene, and you need to play the tension of the scene.   So I think that the scene <u>always</u> trumps the specific, individual character. What <u>great</u> is when you can take their thematic music and <u>adjust it</u> to fit the scene.

J: Yes! So is it safe to say that might be the <u>ideal</u>? You have the sexy girl and the smoky-riff (sings), but now here comes the killer and it's (sings)?

L: Exactly! Heck, they did it on *The Brady Bunch* and stuff. You know, on TV Shows they'll take the Theme and now here it is minor cause we're in a [(laughing)] sad scene, or whatever. So, it's like that. And when you <u>can</u>, that's great. You can't always. You know what I mean? And you can't force it. But maybe now you've let go of her theme and you're just playing the tension of the scene and that may be what works for this now. But, it's cool if you can. It's <u>really</u> cool if you can.

J: That was the short fork. The longer fork is this: Genre Construction and Deconstruction. Someone say, "Country," and you've gotta play Country. Without laying out your whole bag of tricks, what are the elements? When you deconstruct any style, are three things you go for? Let's say, "What are three things you go for when you deconstruct a style?"

L: That's an interesting one. And, certainly, like, Country, there's several options within Country. Because you can do a Country Waltz. You can do a, sort of, Bluesy Country/Honky Tonk thing. So there's different ways that you can go. I don't know exactly if I could <u>analyze</u>... I <u>definitely</u> know that having the bass-line, having the underlying rhythm be good for that style makes a <u>huge</u> difference.

J: So, generically, the harmonic rhythm; how often the chords change? Or...

L: Yeah, but also the bass, you know, in Country am I playing, "One - , Five - , One - , Five -," but in Funk, I'm [sings bass-line to 'BrickHouse' by The Commodores]. You know, I'm playing scale-tones, and if I'm playing only ones and fives it wouldn't sound like Funk. Right? So it's not only the syncopation but it's also the trying to imitate, in some way, what a bass-player does; for Funk, for Disco, whatever those styles are.

J: So that idiomatic vocabulary of...

L: Yes.

J: So, bass would be...

L: So, I guess that is the one _for me_, at least, that helps me get in the _place_. [(Laughs)] You know. And obviously you're trying to think about chord-progressions that are typical. You know, and it _is_ that thing... this is... and _you_ know this, but this is the thing that people don't always get, that _really_ you're playing in a very cliché way. But you _have to_. Because if you want people to: A. Instantly recognize it as Country, and B. The singer to _intuitively_ be able to sing along, you want a pretty cliché kind of chord-progression. So, in a way, I think of it as a sort of _distilling_ process. You know what I mean?

J: I do! Because my mentor's wife is an ethnomusicologist, right? And I'm trying to conduct these interviews in a very hands-off kind of way. I'm totally sullying the process by telling you this, by the way.

L: (Laughs)

J: In ethno[musicology], it's _all_ about the cultural context. "This music is sacred to these people and it means this. But it doesn't mean to the same thing to them as it does to us Western folks. They don't name it this. We're the ones that call it this. Right?

L: Uh-huh.

J: So, in a way, in that world, that's verböten. You _don't_ do that. But what we _have to do_ is we have to give the _idea_ of a style. If we had ethnomusicologists in the audience judging what we do, they would find all sorts of stylistic inconsistencies...

L: Oh, of course.

J: Funk. Who plays Funk on just a piano?

L: Exactly! There's the huge one right there.

J: And there's no rhythm-section. And there's no scratchy guitar. And there's no horn

section.

L: Right. So much of that is idiomatic. If you were gonna analyze Funk, those would be the first things that you would point out. And yet, we can't do any of those.

J: Right!

L: So, we have to, like, distill it down in <u>some</u> way gives the, "Oh, it's Funk!" Even though, really, it's so different from <u>actual</u> Funk. [(Laughs)]

J: It's kind of like looking at a very pixelated picture but <u>knowing</u> what it is...

L: Yeah.

J: ...because you get the <u>idea</u> from it. It's the <u>idea</u>. I'm not playing you Ska. I'm not playing you Funk. I'm playing you the <u>idea</u> of Funk, and the listener connects all of the dots...

L: Yeah. And you know, that's been one of the things that been really fun with *Improv Karaoke*, is that you get to <u>do</u>, this, sort of, cliché, or the distilled version of stuff. <u>But</u>, you get to <u>produce</u> it. So you get to have the drums; you get to have the "cht-cht-cht"; you get to have all that stuff; you get the horns; you get the production part, but you're still doing the... it's <u>still</u> a distilled-down version of it and a chord-progression. And I always feel like it's <u>really important</u> to have a chord-progression that is going to be as <u>intuitive as possible</u> for the singer. Because, you know, unless they're <u>really good</u>, and they say, "Yeah, I'll do Sondheim," which goes all over the map, you want your chord progressions to be as intuitive as possible so they're not having to think about, "Wait! Where is the chord-progression going? Because they have <u>plenty</u> of other things to think about. And, so, I always feel like <u>that's</u> the other piece of it. You know? If you're thinking, "What are the most important elements?" That <u>that's</u> another <u>really</u> important one, is a chord-progression that's gonna be really intuitive, and I really tried to play a lot of leading-chords; leading bass-lines; leading notes? That are <u>telling</u> you what's coming next.

J: Sort of secondary-dominants?

L: Yes. Exactly. Walking up to things so it's like, "We're <u>going to the four</u>." You know what I mean?

J: Yeah.

L: Because that makes it, I think because the singer doesn't have to be <u>consciously</u> thinking about where we're going, you're being <u>led</u> there. And I think that's a really important piece of it too.

J: You would also use rhythm, right? Like a slight ritard to let them know that they're coming to a..? I'm stating this. I should actually be asking you.... Do you give the things that say, "Get ready to punctuate," and set it up for them like that?

L: Yeah. I think a lot of time you are. But, then, the other piece of it, and this is the give-and-take part of it... A lot of times I can tell that a singer is hearing something different than what I'm playing. And sometimes I can hear, and I'm going to the Four but, melodically, they're hearing Five there, for example. And so you adjust what you're doing, if you can, if it's not gonna make it sound worse. You adjust what your doing because you can tell they're hearing some sort of melodic line that's totally intuitive for them; I'm sure they aren't going, "I'm singing a melodic line that's going to the Five." [(Laughs)] Right?! So, there is that... it's like that push/pull of you leading them and them leading you.
And the better they are as a singer, the more they can do that. And that was one of the fantastic things about working with Wayne Brady, is that he was so good at telegraphing, like, "I wanna go to a Bridge, now," or, "Here's gonna be a punch, here." And so you could really get some mileage because he could see ahead and he could telegraph.... He would have his rhymes figured out in microseconds, and then he kind of fills in the lines to go to the rhymes. So he's kind of got that [glissando sound with upward hand gesture], 'cause he's got this kind of computer for mapping that out. So now he can be thinking about other elements. I guess that's what it is. So, yeah, he's got those things functioning pretty easy. So now he can be thinking about the other elements of style, of 'where are the punchlines?', of what's coming; let's go to a bridge. You know, some of the more sophisticated...

[Interrupted]

_____

J: Short-form versus Long-form. Do you employ a different strategy when you'r playing a short-form set?

L: Yes.

J: Can you describe your strategy? I don't know that strategy is the right word, but that's...

L: The approach, or yeah. Well, I have to say, at this point in my life I like long-form so much more. And I think it's just because I did so much game stuff. And on *Whose Line* [*is It Anyway*] I didn't get to do any underscoring and it was very specific, presentational song-games that we did. And I like so much more, for me, personally, I love underscoring. I love games like 'Scene to Song' where the songs are very integrated with character and scene. For me, that's, by far, the most satisfying. So then, when you extrapolate it out to a long-form like a whole 'Make-a-Musical' it's the best ever, because

everything's all integrated; the scenes, the characters, the songs. And even the way you g o <u>into</u> the songs can be more subtle. You can find them more organically with the actors, rather than, "Now we're gonna sing a song about farmers!" And although that's certainly fun and was my bread-and-butter on *Whose Line*, I definitely think, when you're playing a long-form, you have to have a more open mind about different, for me, styles, not even styles as much as <u>moods</u>, really being aware of the <u>mood</u> of the <u>scene</u> that leads into the song. Right? So it's not just like a, "Oh, we're gonna do this and the suggestion is 'Disco' and it's gonna be about farmers," and, "Go!" We play Disco. But, instead, now we have a <u>scene</u> where we have farmers and one farmer is mourning the loss of his favorite cow. So, <u>now</u> you have the stylistic element, and you can do Country, 'cause it's a farmer, and that's a style that goes naturally, <u>if you want</u>, but you don't have to. You can. But then, you're also playing the emotional content of what's happened in the scene.

J: The lament?

L: Exactly! So now you're not just gonna plop on any-old-Country, you're gonna be playing something... and you <u>might</u> even find that Country isn't right. Even though it's a farmer, how cool would it be for him to sing an Aria? Do you know what I mean?

J: Yeah. That incongruity is...

L: Yes! <u>That's</u> interesting because now he can <u>really</u> lament. If you do a minor, classical-kind-of-thing where he can <u>really</u>... you know what I mean? So you can use those <u>elements</u> very specifically in relationship to the scene and the mood of the scene. And so, it's much more organic, for me, and feels more creative and <u>way fun</u>. Whereas, in a game, it's more, when you're playing short-forms, and you're playing a game, and, "Now here's our song-game. We're gonna take the suggestion of a subject and go," it has to be... It's sort of like how games end up being a little more joke-oriented.

J: More like parlor tricks.

L: Yeah. Right. It's more like wham-bam and now you've gotta get to it, and get the laughs and get out. And so the music, in some ways, is that way, too. It's <u>more</u> cliché.

J: Is it more stilted? Like, whereas you can honor the moment in a long-form, you have to sacrifice the integrity of the scene in a short-form? I don't want to put words into your mouth. Is this a way to say it, "You'll get more bang-for-your-buck in a short-form scene by having a guy sing a tender ballad about his tackle-box than you will by having him sing a country-song, or a rock-song.

L: I'm not quite sure what...

J: That you can honor the moment more in a long-form...

L: Yes.

J: That you can respect the moment more...

L: Yes.

J: Whereas in a short-form, your goals are far less noble?

L: Yes. Yes. That's a good way to put it. And it also depends on, in short-form, if they're taking a suggestion for they style, or whether you get to pick. Because, even that, again... if all they're getting is the suggestion of an occupation, and they get a farmer, but they don't take a style you can play Country; you can play Opera. You can play against it. You can play with it. Or, play what's expected, I guess, a little more. But you just have a little less,... I guess because it's more presentational, and not as scenic you just have less ability to, sort of, feel the scenic intent and have it be, I guess, have it be the extension of the scene, that the song is the extension of the scene.

J: So that it's still a part of that fabric of reality.

L: Yes. Yes, exactly. You know, I've been working on this musical, and we did a reading, and Steven Schwartz, the ASCAP Music Reading, and Steven Schwartz was one of the guys, and he's so great. But he was talking about scenic-structure, and he was saying, you know, one of the scenes of ours that wasn't working right, he said, "It needs to feel like the scene gets to the emotional point where they have to sing." That the emotional content is so powerful that they have to sing it.

J: That they have no other choice.

L: Yes.

J: That seems to be, like, the underpinning even for the, "Don't have them sing unless they have to sing."

L: Yeah. And so, again, when you're doing a longer form, you can create those. That can happen. You can build to that, and then the song is the extension of the scene. When you're doing a short-form, it tends to be, "Go!" [(Laughs)] So there's that. And it also, because short-form's games and stuff don't tend to be as character-driven, they tend to be jokier. So, it's harder to, I think, to sustain because you're dependent on jokes rather than being dependent on character. And with character, a lot of times, there's a lot that you can spin out. Whereas, if, now, we're making jokes about farmers, we're gonna run out of jokes....

J: Let's loop back to the sad farmer for a minute. So we have the choices that we have to make: Aria versus Country versus Folk, or whatever, and we make these choices. Now,

let's look at this whole Musical. Let's look at this as one element in the whole Musical; there are two things that [come] off of this, and here's a brief one: If your actors continually make low-energy choices... now I know at that level of talent that you work with, that they understand the arc and this should just be a given, but sometimes it doesn't happen that way, sometimes the moments are continuously low-energy...

L: Or they're not building in the way that would naturally lead to a song. Yeah.

J: How do you shape that? Do you know what I'm saying? Do you continue to play the Dirges and the Ballads, or how do you raise their intent? How...

L: Yep. Well, you definitely try to if that is the situation. And I do know, I do know, like, if a scene's going, and, again, in a long-form, if a scene's going and it's a place where a song should come (?) that I'll, a lot of times, start underscoring them. And then, you know, I'm not playing an intro per se, but I'm underscoring them in a way to help them, like, "Okay, let's start moving towards a song."

J: Starting a pulse?

L: Yes. And that can really help them. But then also, in the content, once the song gets going, you can kind of push them.   You can, musically, kind of push them towards whatever heightened emotion. If they're kind of lying there. You can definitely give them the push. Especially if it's a place like, "Oh, we're almost to where the First Act would end." You know what I mean? Even in a long-form musical where you don't have an intermission, but there is there, structurally, the First Act closer; where you go, like, "Okay, we've got to get to this, because we're headed this way." You know? [(Laughs)] Yeah! So, definitely, you can push and, or, nudge, or, encourage(!) [(Laughs)]

J: Is this a thing you do where [bumping eighth-notes] or a modulation?

L: Yes, a modulation works. Or to up the rhythmic thing, if you start with something... I love, when it works, if you're starting with something that's sort of free and recitative-ish and kind of free... and so now they're in the key and we're going, and then but you get to a place where there's sort of a break, lyrically, Boom! Now we're in tempo. Come on! You know what I mean? And so you can be sort of meandering with them a little bit, but then it's like [thumps the table], "Okay, we're going." And you are making them jump on board. But sometimes that's exactly where it needs to be. And so it is your place to amp the energy up.

J: Because you're the Musical Director.

L: Yes. And, I have to say, when I was younger, I was much more shy about making those kinds of choices; about saying, "I'm gonna make a choice that you're gonna start a song now." Or, "I'm gonna make a choice that this song is going somewhere else

because it can't just keep wandering."

J: Because, "I'm getting bored here..."

L: Yes! So I'm sure the <u>audience</u> is. Yeah. And I didn't <u>trust</u> that, I didn't <u>trust</u> that, so much, in myself. But I've been doing it for so frickin' long now, you know, [(Laughs!)]. But, it's like, I definitely trust it in myself more. Although, every once in a while if you have <u>new</u> people you're playing with and you <u>don't</u> know the dynamic, it can get a little, like, "Oh, is this gonna be okay for me?"

J: "If I push them will they follow?"

L: Yes. Exactly. Exactly. Are they gonna be able to go with? And sometimes in a classroom setting you can just <u>flip people out</u>. But, it's a teaching experience.

J: Well, it's better they fail in the classroom than on the stage.

L: Exactly. That's <u>part</u> of what we're teaching, is to push beyond their comfort-zone.

J: Last component:

L: Okay.

J: Last component: Long-form tonal-strategy. Does that make sense?

L: Yes.

J: How do you handle the Long-form tonal-strategy over a Long-form-Musical?

L: Well, I <u>like</u>, one of my favorite things and, again, it doesn't always work out, I <u>love</u> it the closing number can reflect the opening number in <u>some</u> way. And I try to have that closing number be <u>at least</u> in that same key; and <u>sometimes</u> we can come back to the same chord-progression or same hooky part, or whatever, even though it will have new lyrics now. That little circular thing makes me very happy. But, I <u>do</u> try to <u>move</u>, if I have little motifs for different characters, I <u>definitely</u> have them in different keys and I <u>try</u> not to have the keys be even too <u>related</u>, because, it seems to me like, if you play a show and you start in B-flat and you have one character, and another whose is E-flat, and another whose is F, it still <u>almost</u> feels like the whole thing's in B-flat; because they're too close. So, I'll <u>try to</u>, "Okay they opening number's in B-flat, and now I have this kind of dark character; I'm gonna do, like, E-minor because it's... I'm not gonna do <u>C-minor</u>. I'm gonna do <u>E-minor</u> because it's unrelated."

J: Tritone!

L: Exactly. You know what I mean? So, I'm going to try to do something <u>unrelated</u> because I want that... And then if I have another character who's brighter, I <u>might</u> put them in E-flat or something. Do you know what I mean? So, I <u>do</u>, kind of, think about those within the motifs partly because, a lot of times, once you start <u>scoring</u> with the motif, then that's what's going to turn into a song. So then that way my songs don't feel so much like they're all in one key, or too related key-wise. And then it <u>also</u> gets the singers to come up with different melodies. Because when you play in a lot of different keys... You know, when you're playing in B-flat and their comfort-zone range-wise is <u>here</u> [gestures with hand apart], they're gonna come up with one kind of melody. But if you'r playing in <u>F</u>, and it's <u>there</u> [same gesture], they're gonna come up with another kind of melody....   It helps <u>them</u> vary what they're doing, melodically, and range-wise, register-wise....

J: Because you make them go to the <u>top</u> of their range in one thing, whereas if they're at the <u>bottom</u> of their range...

L: It's gonna be a different kind of feel and a different kind of <u>tone</u> that they're gonna get.

J: And they have to <u>work</u> harder at the top of their range, so sometimes that's the effort the need to make as that character.

L: Right. Exactly.

J: You get them to express right at their break...

L: Yes. Yes. So they're gonna <u>sing</u> differently. I <u>definitely</u> try to do that and I <u>also</u> have different sort of scale, you know, like if the one in E-minor is like a modal kind of scale that I'm using and then for another one to use more of a Blues kind of scale in terms of the embellishments, and then for another one to be <u>very</u> major, and bright, and pretty. You know, so that you're using different kinds of scales for...

J: So that with your modal one it's got a folkier because there isn't that leading-tone...

L: Exactly.

J: ...which <u>so</u> defines major-minor...

L: Exactly. So that might just be <u>one</u> way to set that person's motif or theme apart. And, again, if it leads into a song, that <u>song</u> is gonna have a different feel. 'Cause I like it when the songs are varied.   It's <u>so</u> interesting because, I went, I played for 'Opening Night' like a month ago, and then two weeks ago I went and heard Michael Pollock play, and I had never heard him play that show before, which was just <u>dumb</u>. I'd only just done it.   I'd never heard it.   He has this <u>huge</u> depth of Musical Theatre-knowledge. I mean, you know how we were talking before about how you can sort of skim the surface,

so to speak, of styles. You know, I'm sure he's good at that too, but with Musical Theatre he goes <u>way deep</u>. So he plays the <u>whole show</u> very Musical Theatre, like, <u>Classic Musical Theatre</u>. But it doesn't sound boring or like, "Oh, this is all the same," because he has this <u>huge</u> depth-of-knowledge within this one genre. When <u>I</u> play a show like that, I have to move around more because I don't have <u>enough</u> depth-of-knowledge in Musical Theatre.

J: So, you are more <u>variegated</u> in your stylistic...

L: Yes.

J: So you use <u>style</u> and <u>genre</u> to help define...

L: Yes. To help define moments and characters. And I think it works in a <u>different</u> way. His, that show, the show that I saw, it felt <u>so</u> classic. It felt like it came from the era of *Oklahoma!*, or something, which was <u>sooo</u> lovely and <u>sooo</u> beautiful. And they got some very Musical Theatre moments. You know, where there were just two groups singing different things. You know, when I played the show, they had the suggestion that it was set in a nightclub so I used more Funk and Blues elements because that just felt right for the nightclub. And then we got interesting stylistic things that went with that. We were doing, they were doing little fake horn-sections. You know what I mean? So you can <u>still</u> get interesting group vocal things happening. But they were more, for me, just, again, because of my abilities and my <u>lack of abilities too</u>, with not having this hugely deep knowledge of Musical Theatre, I played all over the map, stylistically. And then, you know, the big love number, I just did sort of a straight-up Pop-ballad. Do you know what I mean? So, it's interesting. They both work, but in different ways.

J: *Tommy* is a full-blown Opera; but it's a full-blown Opera with electric-guitar. It's no less an Opera than anything by...

L: Yes.

J: I know that was the last question. Let's call this a codetta.

L: Okay! [(Laughs)]

J: Are there some improvised musicals where the music isn't improvised, but the lyrics are? And, do you consider that an improvised musical.

L: Oh. I don't know if there are. And if there are, I don't know <u>of</u> them.

J: Theoretically, if someone did a jukebox-musical with your *Improv Karaoke* CD, would that be an according-to-Hoyle improvised musical?
L: You know, I guess I would consider it such, <u>as long as</u>... The thing that I <u>never liked</u>,

is if you're just taking an existing song; I'm gonna take 'Take It Easy' by the Eagles and I'm gonna just stick new lyrics in. So that I would not. That's like song-parody now, which is a whole, different kind of thing. But I guess you could do, with pre-existing music, you could do a whole musical. You know, I envisioned my CD, *Improv Karaoke*, being for classes, but I know a lot of people, I know people who bought them are using them in performance because they don't have a musician. But they will just take, like this one group in Monterey is using it every week in their shows, now. And they have three styles that they really like; and so they ask they audience which one of the three styles they want and then they get a suggestion, and so they are improvising. Of course, they're super-familiar with the track, because they've worked with the track. In a way, it's a safety-net; and the fact that they're only using three to choose from really... But, this is new for them...

J: And it's no different than 'Make-a-Blues'.

L: Yeah, really! That's really true. It's so interesting, I went online, and I can't remember who it was, but there was someone who was teaching a song-improv workshop and all of the games he had were just fill-in-the-blank games. Like a Blues, but not only a Blues, but a Blues where you sing, "Oh my baby did blank, Oh my baby did blank." That filled-in. Or, like, 'Da-do-run-run.' That one's, you know, it's a fine exercise, but it's not about filling in the blanks. You know, it needs to have some, I think, it needs to have some...

J: I made a Blues-exercise, but it was an idiom. It went, "In the Blues you repeat the first line, In the Blues you repeat the first line. And then you sing something that fills out the story, but, In the Blues you repeat the first line."

L: Right!

J: It's like, "There you go." That's self identifying. And if you forget how to remember the form, then you just think, "How did I learn it? Oh."

L: Right. And, certainly, those kind of exercises, and for people who go, "Oh my God, I can't even think of how to approach song-improv," those kind of structured things really help people get a foot in the door. We do, with our classes we'll do those kinds of things. But I also want them to be able to move to, to expand out.

J: You use it as a warm-up, but then you want them to stretch out a little bit more.

L: But you don't want to just end there and have them go, "Oh, yeah. Now I know how to do song-improv." You don't want that to be then end-point. Yeah. That's an interesting question. One of the things that I've been fascinated about, with *Improv Karaoke*, is the different ways that people are using it. Because you create it and put it out there, and everybody who buys it I'm like, "Please give me feedback. Let me know what you find most useful. Let me know if there's stuff you don't like about it. Let me

know how you use it." Several people have said, "Oh, I just put it on in the car, and then I'll turn on the radio, and there'll be something on the radio," this is what one guy said, "an ad for cars. I turn [the ad] off, I put [the CD] in, and that's my suggestion, and I make up a song in the car." I'm like, "That's brilliant!"

J: That's a totally unintended use, right?

L: Exactly! And he said, "I have this really long car ride, and I fee like I'm really challenging and stimulating myself." And he has an improv group that's just starting to do music-improv, and this is his way of increasing his comfort-level and his skill-level so that as they're starting to get ready to introduce it into their shows, he feels like he's got a little practice under his belt. I'm like, "That's brilliant!" I love that. And it's so fun to see, like, people get very creative with how they're using it.

J: Well, they're improvising.

L: Yeah!

Semi-Abridged Interview with Mark Levenson
September 10, 2012
Goldfish Tea, Royal Oak, Michigan

John Edwartowski: Just some formalities. Name?

Mark Levenson: Mark Levenson

J: Age?

M: 44

J: Time with Second City?

M: Oh, from age 18 to age 23, Musical Director for the National Touring Company; from age 23 I helped open Detroit Second City, came back in 1995, went to New York for a while; came back to Detroit in 2001 to direct the Touring Company; 2007-2008, when you were gone, came in as Understudy Musical Director, and then Director.

J: You also have TV and Film experience.?.

M: Yeah, and I taught Musical Improv in New York forever and Improv Scoring and TV and all that crap.

J: OK, so all of this said and done: What are your general thoughts on scoring?; and then I'll get way more specific. What's your gut feeling on this?

M: Can I just tell a brief story?

J: By all means.

M: I just go my son a keyboard and he was playing it, and he intuitively, he just gets it. (?). So yesterday, we put on his 'Sonic' video game, turned down the sound and we took turns scoring the game.

J: Brilliant!

M: And this was HIS idea.

J: Really?

M: Totally.

J: Because he wants to be like Dad?

M: Yeah... although I don't know if he knows that I do that. It's just that he intuitively gets it. Which is brilliant.

J: Where does he get it? Do you think?

M: Technically I can't tell you. He has a very strong sense (and I can say this to you) of, he has a very strong sense of melodic rhythm. He has a strong sense of how repetition works in music; like phrases of two. But I don't... he probably intuits it from a dramatic point-of-view. He probably, I think he probably... I think he tends to score with mood. So he'll, like, play something that feels dark [taps out tremolo to left side of body], if he sees something.... I mean, I'm guessing on that.

J: That's fine.... How much of that comes from the video game itself? How much has he been cued in from the cues that the video game gives him?

M: It's interesting you say that. I sat down to play, and I literally haven't played in literally two or three years, and my hands were bloody stumps by the end..... So I'm playing, I'm scoring the 'Sonic' theme and I'm trying to keep up the tempo and keep up the action, 'cause it's fast and frenetic, thirty-second-notes. Ummm.... he didn't do that. He did like half-notes and whole notes... like almost slow whole-notes that carried the tension. So he maintained the tension through the whole-notes, and here I am trying this thirty-second-notes and not getting the job done, 'cause I'm outta shape.

J: And I would imagine that your playing read differently to the on-screen action and made the on-screen action x-something. Right?

M: Right.

J: Maybe yours was more, would it be fair to say, yours was more process and action driven, where his might have been, because it didn't go as frenetically, it gave you time to think that something else might be happening?

M: Well, it gave you time to trust that even though what you were doing was counter to the action, you were able to do that. I didn't have that trust. I felt like I had to keep up the action. And that's what I've always... I've always hid behind action. I've always hid behind the actors. You know? It's like, my biggest fear as a Musical Director, always, has been to be recognized. I never wanted to be noticed. (Which my Mom always hates that.)

J: Stand up and be noticed for what you can do.

M: Right. I hated being recognized. I didn't want it to be known that I existed, and as a default I would hide behind the actors. When I did *Strangers with Candy* I went out of my way, when I did the music, to just nest it right under the dialogue and to try to ride the

energy-flows.

J: So that said, there's a difference between scoring live, improvised theatre and scoring film.

M: Not...

J: Now I can be totally wrong, and you can totally ruin my thesis right now.

M: There's no difference. Wait. There is.

J&M: (Laughing)

J: Characters on the screen can't react and change their reaction to what you just played.

M: Correct.

J: <u>You</u> can change what you've done and say, "Well, I'm just going to go here and punch in. I'm gonna do this." You can throw out a clunker during an improvised set and, sort of, blend it into the fabric. But there's also the very real possibility that someone on stage will recognize what you've done, and react to that. Talk about that.

M: It's the dance. I mean, you said a few minutes ago before you turned the tape on. In my opinion, the audience never had anything to do with it. It was always, from Day One, between me an the Actors.

J: An you never noticed the Audience.

M: No! In fact, we usually sat right in the middle of them.

J: Right!

M: I only noticed them when I hit the gong right in their ears. It was always about the actors. I mean when I started with [Chris] Farley. I mean literally, he was my first group. It was all about <u>improvising</u> with them.   In my opinion, the piano-player is a full improvisor. And, what would usually happen... it's like I'm preaching to the choir.

J: The choir isn't going to be reading this thesis.

M: So the actor would initiate something; I would pick up on something whether it was a genre, you know if they did some sort of Western thing, I'd go into my five stock Western pieces, or anything like that. Usually, I'd try not to, as I did this longer and longer, I'd try not to be as obvious; just 'cause I'd bored myself with that. And I'd try not to be cliché.

J: Right.

M: By doing that, that 'yes and-ed' that affirmed to the actor, "Oh, we're in Western mode. Okay. Mark made it official." You know, without thinking these thoughts.

J: Because you don't have time to comment on it. You just have to do it.

M: Bingo.

J: So they come out with their hands at their hips.

M: Bingo.

J: This is the interesting thing. They can come out with their hands at their hips.

M: Mm-hmm.

J: They can come like they're wearing chaps.

M: Mm-hmm.

J: They can come out with the twang. [Said with Southern-drawl.]
M: Mm-hmm. An their usually near toppers. And when they spit, you probably have a bell nearby and do the 'Ding!'.

J: So those three are signifiers that tell you...

M: Bingo. Yes!

J: ...we're in the West.

M: Right. Or, even if we're not in the West, to make a Western comment on that. Say two actors are onstage and they get into some sort of a draw, some sort of...

J: Stand-off?

M: Yeah. I can instantly go into the 'doo-dee-doo-dee-doooooo' ['The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly-riff], which wouldn't necessarily put them in the West but would still put a Western joke-flavor into it.

J: Because that's a signifier of a stand-off. Because we associated that with the stand-off in the West.

M: Bingo.

J: That's the meat of this [interview].

M: Oh! Wow! Yeah!

J: So it doesn't necessarily have to be West-ern. But it can be West. It's the idea of West.

M: Right. It can be two Girl Scouts, and one says, "You stole my cookies. Those are my cookies." 'doo-dee-doo-dee-doooooo'. And they usually know to walk away, take paces, to get ready to turn and draw.

J: Now. Part of them knowing to take paces, draw, and shoot is becoming familiar with the language of the Musical Director. Yes, no, or do you... I'm weighing this. I don't want to make it a statement saying "Yes, it's this. No, it's not that."

M: I mean, it's a level of trust. I'm sure you experienced this too. I mean when I went into your cast, they didn't really trust my musical contributions. But once they got to know me, then they trusted what I was doing wouldn't lead them astray and they could play off of me.

J: Yes! Looping back around, and then we'll take a little round about. Scoring with vs. Scoring against the scene. And I have another follow-up that will come many exits after this one. It's leading versus following. Are you following the follower? All that good [Viola] Spolin stuff. Scoring with the Scene versus Scoring against the Scene; are you scoring the Scene or are you Scoring the Character? Are you scoring both? That's all food for thought.

M: When you say "going against" what do you mean?

J: Say you've got a character that has been, through the exposition and a little of the development, has illustrated evil intent, ill intent through dialogue (think Quintin [Hicks; a mutual colleague] playing the Grinch or Dick Cheney); how does playing Children's Music effect...

M: His rendition of Cheney?

J: Yes. How does playing Children's Music against this evil character....

M: Oh! That's my favorite type of scoring!

J: Playing against the...

M: It's David Lynch films. It's 'Twin Peaks'. The most brilliant, one of the most brilliant scoring sequences; it's in the pilot to the TV show. It's like a whole ten-minute sequence leading up to when, I believe, the sheriff tells the family that their daughter is dead. It's

this growing thing that never resolves; it's just his dissonance, and then he tells the family, they collapse, and then it goes major. It's just this beautiful release.

J: So you could feasibly play minor over a happy scene, or major under a ...

M: Oh, that's may favorite; playing major over a twisted scene, or a dark scene. I love doing that.

J: Then it's the pedophile-clown.

M: Right. It's *Sesame Street* music. Deet-dee, deet-dee.

J: Exactly. Because everything else tells you that it's <u>not</u> going to be okay, except for the one thing that should most forcibly reinforce what the mood is. Right? Because we're conditioned to have the music tell us...

M: Yeah! Exactly. An it's such a wonderful combination, because the music tells you, "There's something fucked up going on here." You know if you have a happy scene with a couple coming together and you have a high dissonant string at the top, it tells you, "Danger!" Just think of a D-E-flat-E cluster an octave or two above middle-C, probably two octaves above, just soft, and just creating this harmonic-overlay of tension. So that tells an audience that there's danger. I'm not sure why <u>those</u> sounds represent <u>danger</u>...

J: I have some thoughts on that.

M: Yeah?

J: It's the idea that it's a very close, dissonant cluster.

M: Mm-hmm.

J: And they can't make heads or tails of it. So they, at least, have a heightened sense of awareness that this thing that isn't right is ever present.

M: But why, even if you just held an octave, an E-natural octave on the high strings, over this love scene, why would that still create a tension?

J: Well, that depends on what's beneath it, then. If you have that high E and score it against an F in the bass, now you're got this super-large tension.... But that major-seventh in Jazz doesn't necessarily play the same way if it's strummed or part of a harmony. It doesn't necessarily play the same as it does in Wagner,[sic] Brahms, Bach. It functions differently. That said, in one style of music it's totally acceptable because you <u>don't</u> handle it the way you <u>have to</u>. But in another style it can be super tense because <u>that</u> tone <u>wants</u> to, according to the counterpoint that we teach and learn, the seventh has

to come down by step. It has to.

M: We <u>think</u> it has to.

J: Right.

M: But, maybe, because we create that dissonance in the Audience's ear, by creating that suspension and <u>not</u> resolving, maybe that's inherently creating a tension.

J: Yes! And it's also something that you and I likely pick up from TV, film, radio, other music that we've listened to, watching other people play, playing other songs.

M: Totally.

J: So, it's part of this idea that's new to me, that I thought for a heartbeat that <u>I</u> invented...

M: I know, I thought I invented everything too.

J: It's this idea that there's this collective consciousness that we have that's <u>musical</u>.

M: Oh, yeah!

[Etta James' 'At Last' comes over the sound system in the Tea House]

J: Here's the musical thing. We know this song is 'At Last'. Now, is there anything significant about the way the music works? Is there a set of suspensions or dissonances that are created that finally, when it goes [singing] "At Last"; well, at last the note finally resolves.

M: That's a whole other common thing.

J: So in a scene if you're scoring a guy who's waiting and the thing finally comes, you can [sings the riff]; you can refer outside to texted music. So that's just one [technique]. But if you don't have a string-patch it's [alternating octave leaps]...

M: Or, [high octave tremolo]

J: Yeah. It's <u>maintaining</u> whatever that is...

M: Well, look at the scoring to *Eyes Wide Shut*.

J: Yes.

M: It was very minimal. But, something you said a minute ago. It think I agree with

you. There is a common knowledge of musical phrases. And I think if you take the actual idea and flavor of music away from them and create them as these invisible, yet tangible, objects; that 'doo-dee-doo-dee-doooooo', to anyone that's experienced it, knows that that goes to a showdown. Or, the 'Jaws' music. That's the standard "Danger!" I don't know that everyone is going to go to 'sharks', but they're going to go to 'danger', if they've ever experienced it.

J: And in this, it's two steps removed from, "The 'shark is danger'; Danger [with a] capital-D." So the shark is a substitute for mortal danger, so when people hear, "Da-Duhn, Da-Duhn" they think 'shark', but ultimately they think less about the means of their death, and more Their Death.

M: Right! But if you knew nothing about that reference and you just heard that music, would that still... and I think it would; if you were doing the rhythm of it.

J: Very likely so. Unless you heard it as [ti-do] in Db as opposed to [do-di] in C. It's context.

M: It's total context.

J: So now, these are musical gestures. The whole idea is holding tension over a scene, you can also create tension under a scene by doing that same tremolo with the...

M: Oh, yeah. When I was working on *Strangers with Candy* the producers always made me give them these low, we called them 'stings', but these low, bass drones on the string-patch; literally, where I would do nothing except just hold down this frickin' octave. And that bought me a lot of dinners, you know.

J: Because that adds weight,to the bottom of the scene? Gravitas?

M: It tells the audience to pay attention; there is something heightened, something extra-ordinary happening right now.

J: In improvised theatre, how would you know to do that? I'm not asking for a formula and a neatly buttoned way.... This [comes down to] reading the scene. In the same way we know that [Jaws Theme] is danger and [Good, Bad, Ugly] is Western gunfight or, just, impending conflict, you and I also know how to read the Arc of the Scene pre-emptively. Is that a fair statement?

M: Very fair. Yeah!

J: And part of the reason we know how to do that is because we just watch so fucking much of it. I tried counting, and it's somewhere in the neighborhood of three-thousand [improv] sets.

M: Oh, Jesus.

J: Even a thousand is a lot; even a <u>hundred</u> is a lot.

M: It's so funny. I get <u>tired</u> when you even say that.

J: You do that between Memorial Day and Labor Day, you've done a hundred shows.

M: Oh my God. Two on Saturday.

J: You do a hundred sets in three months.

M: Yeah, it's funny. People always used to tell me, when they see me playing a set, or improvising, they think I'm falling asleep, because my head's usually just kinda, like, cocked and I look bored. I'm not bored, though.

J: You're very engaged in...

M: I'm <u>very</u> engaged, without expending any more energy than I have to, and it's not conscious, it's just kind of my zone.

J: So how do you read the scene? And, I know there's not <u>one</u> way; talk a couple, two, three. How do you know when... say we've got three longer beats in a three minute scene, and we know we'll find these organically, through improvisation. Some beats might be more tight, right?

M: Right.

J: Some might be more succinct, more elegantly discovered and articulated. Other ones, they might be working their thing out to get to where they need to go. But in pure improvisation, how do you <u>read</u> those moments? And you don't necessarily have to be <u>musical</u> about this... How do you read those moments? How do you punctuate those moments? And, what is the effect of punctuating them?

M: Brilliant.

J: What are the tells? If the scene is a poker game, if you look at <u>playing the scene</u>, as playing a poker game, what are the tells that tell you to punctuate?

M: Great question! I have found that I tend to read, I read action and conflict. I tend to read the dramatic qualities of a scene.

J: As represented by...

M: By whatever happens on stage. So, if an actor... And I'm kind of thinking this out loud...

J: That's <u>fine</u>...

M: Well, if an actor... if I notice that there's any variation between two actors, or there's any internal variation in a character where he starts to think, "Well maybe I didn't do that," or if two actors start to want the same thing, or start to have some sense of conflict, I tend to intuitively latch onto that. And it usually starts off soft. Unless there's an overall <u>joke</u> in it.

J: Like, "I just fucked your wife!"

M: DUHN-DUHN-DUHN! Or, [singing]"Hallelujah!"

J: Exactly.

M: And then they're pimped into following you.

J: "Well at least <u>someone</u> is."

M: Right. Bingo! And Blackout! But that's what it is. And [Director] Mick Napier actually said this, because I used to work for the Annoyance [Theatre] in Chicago. He said to the cast, when he was kind of introducing me, he said, "Mark,"... he said I was really good at scoring action. He said I was really good at finding the action, and then building with it. So that's, I think, what I've always latched onto. I mean, I come from a theatre background so that's what I enjoy.   So, literally, if any character, if any actor shows like theres going to be any tension... if there's any tension created through dialogue, or through action... and, I suppose, to break that down: if one character, not actor, if one character negates another character's reality...

J: If they deny them or put an obstacle to their want?

M: Bingo! Obstacle, perfect. That's actually what it is. Whenever I sense an obstacle come up, that's actually perfect, my hands, literally now, [fidgets with hands on table] will tend to react; and they usually react fairly minimally... if we're trying to keep some sense of reality. And I usually do that, and by doing that, that usually let's the actor know, intuitively, I think, that I've picked up on what they've done and it sort of gives them permission to keep going because they know they've been heard.

J: Do you also get the sense that that pushes them; that sometimes you may recognize it before they do?

M: Oh, sure! But usually...Sure. Yeah.

J: It doesn't have to be one way or the other... Because, sometimes you offer those gifts where you recognize it, and it's not picked up, right?

M: Yeah, it's completely like, "Never mind."

J: Sometimes you're like, "Hey, you've been doing dick-bits for [five minutes]."

M: Exactly.

J: Which is great!

M: And with Second City it's harder. And that stage in Novi was such a horrible stage; we couldn't be heard. At least, I thought.

J: Yeah. True.

M: But, like, in Chicago in the Mainstage... because the piano was mic'ed and they had the monitor going right down onto the stage, so they <u>always</u> heard, which was great. Even when I used to play Improv Olympic [now, iO] in Chicago, which is where I learned <u>everything</u>, they would hear you; because I usually had an amp because it was electric. So, I suppose, it's, kind of, up to us. If we're honest and we lay it in naturally, and we're <u>respectful</u> of how much space we're going to take up, then it'll be enough to confirm to the actor... you know, and you know what's fascinating? And tell me if I'm going off.

J: No, no. This is... I've got as much time as you do.

M: Oh, cool. Well, after twenty-five years, I completely changed professions and I became a therapist. And so, what do I do? I engage one-on-one with patients, clients all day. And I respond to the <u>exact same thing</u>. I noticed: I go into a zone [leans forward], and I respond to their emotional changes. If anything, that's what I respond to in actors too; I respond to their emotional changes. So... and it's all through the empathy-process, but go ahead.

J: That's perfect! You respond to those <u>emotional changes</u> as represented <u>by</u>: fill in the blank three times.

M: Watery eyes, slight change in vocal quality,maybe a break in vocal quality. And then, I know this is gonna sound hocus-pocus, almost like an intuitive sense that there's <u>depth</u>. Somehow, I sense that there's a <u>depth</u> to what they're saying. Maybe it's content. Actually, it would be the content.

J: Here's a couple more. Yes or no to these. Posture?

M: Oh, <u>yeah</u>.

J: Physical proximity?

M: Yeah!

J: If they back off, if they turn their back?

M: And usually, if they're talking and their foot starts to shake, I know, "Okay, we're onto something." If they start to turn towards me, or they start to close off, that means that there's something there.

J: Now I'm going to be totally aware of doing any of this stuff.

M: No. I already forgot it. Believe me. But that's what I'm saying: It's exactly what we do at the piano. I mean, I'm literally improvising with these people. Which, it's not <u>always</u> a good thing to do, as a therapist, but...

J: But you follow them on their terms, in therapy. You follow them on <u>their</u> terms. You can subtly guide, or suggest, or open doors that they can explore, but not <u>tell</u> them?

M: One of the golden rules as a therapist is, "You're supposed to meet the client where they're at."

J: Right.

M: So the client comes in, and they have all this backstory and they just want to talk about the weather, you're not going to say, "[You went through a traumatic experience] when you were fourteen. Tell me about that." You know? They're gonna...

J: Give you the finger.

M: Right.

J: So it's trust.

M: <u>Trust</u>. And it's <u>earned</u> and it takes <u>time</u> to get to that place. And I've noticed something; every time I sit like this, and you're the first person I've told; every time I sit like this with my arms folded I've always noticed that the client ends up matching me. I don't know what it means. I <u>do</u> know, and I studied this in grad-school, the empathy process; I don't know how much you've studied this, but it's how we, how the parent, trains the infant. I mean, that's what makes us unique from most, a lot, of other animals, is the ability to have empathy. And it's just simply a mirroring process.

J: And parents that are generally poor parents are less empathetic, and they tend to view their children as burdens? Yes?

M: Right! And how the child learns... so the child's like zero to five months old and they start crying, 'cause that's how they communicate. So, "I have this need; I'm hungry." So, the parent, the proper parenting, the healthy parenting would see that the child is in distress, maybe pick the child up to soothe her or to comfort her, and then, maybe, give her something to eat. What that teaches the child is that, her needs will be taken care of. And that perhaps eating, (you know, they can learn that the hard way, or whatever, solving every problem with eating), but that their needs will be taken care of. It's hard to explain...

J: No, I'm tracking with you. Also, when the baby is picked up, they're told [singing], "doooooo," in a vocal style that matches their own utterance.

M: Mm-hmm. Although, I would argue that it's the vibrations that are soothing them.

J: So, the vibration makes the baby feel good. It's the [singing] that puts the parent in empathy with the child?

M: It connects them. And I love it! It's a biological process.

_____

J: Did you know that the human ear is most sensitive to the pitch range where babies cry?

M: Wow! It's all about evolution. It's oxytocin. You know, that's the hormone that's released that actually makes you care [for] and love a baby. It also makes you love other people. It makes you find a spouse, to procreate....

J: So it's this empathy-process.

M: It's meet the person where they're at. So, meet the actor where they're at. So, if they're doing this subtle bit and I lay on this big, dramatic score, I'm gonna look like an idiot and it's gonna wreck the scene. I mean, we've all done it. I've fallen into that trap before, usually when I'm angry. And it's like, "Fuck you!", I'm just gonna pound... I mean, I really haven't done that much...

J: Fred Kaz talked about that. Not you doing it, just doing it in general. About, "Hey, look. I wanna go to the bar after the set too, but we're ten minutes into the set and you're [screwing around]. I'm gonna start playing over you, because if you're going to waste my time like that...

M: I've done that before. I'm sure you have.

J: Yeah! I'll lean on the piano.

M: Sometimes we have to steer the scene.

J: It's completely non-scenic, but it's communicative.

M: Right.

J: So, in that meta-moment during the set, you stop being 'the music', they stop being 'the actor' , and then they're a [person that's difficult to work with], onstage, naked, in front of the audience.

M: Right. Or, if you're completely wrong (which, I don't think we've been on that level), you're the asshole. But, I think if you have enough arrogance to direct, to guide, a scene for that reason, that's based on knowledge and experience.

J: Let's call those moments few-and-far-between. But if you're like, "Ink! Ink Ink! Come on! Let's get on with it..."

M: Like if you're playing for a Training [Center] show, or something like that.

J: [Let's talk about] A Training show versus scoring for a Mainstage Cast.

M: I have a great example. The show I was Musical Director for had two actresses in the cast, and they wanted to find a traditional female scene, as we know can sometimes be issues in Second City; and they were working and they couldn't find it and, frankly, to be honest, they weren't funny; they just weren't hitting anything. And, they finally found the seed of a scene; I realized they found a scene, and I tried to add as much as I could, as much obvious, melodramatic...

J: I remember scoring that when I came back.

M: I mean, I was all over that thing; doing stings and [gestures] duh-duh!

J: Yeah! That was a very intricate scene... musically.

M: Because, I don't know whether it's right or wrong, I felt responsible, if felt like I had to push every single line. And, again, that can be pure arrogance, but that's at least what I felt at the time. Because, when they wouldn't get a laugh... Because, I think, also what we do is: we cue the audience to laugh. I think we're glorified rim-shots. Which I love!

J: That said: Let's shred the fabric of reality for a second, and we'll run two, parallel

membranes to this universe. In one, they're playing the scene. Now it's just two girls arguing. Who wants to watch that?

M: No one.

J: Now, when they're arguing to a symphonic score, it suddenly becomes epic. You're not pushing them, you're providing generic, as in genre, context.

M: Melodrama! I'm providing more playroom for them.

J: Because you've made the game bigger by expanding the space.

M: Right. And, normally, it's two women fighting about a hairstyle. But by making it epic, and they sensed it, they could have fun. Because that's the fundamental question: Where does Theatre start and Life end? Where does Life end and then Theatre start? When it takes a step into the unrealistic. I mean, it has to get unrealistic, it has to get heightened. I suppose heightened is the word.

J: Yes!

M: But to go into your point: They're doing a normal scene, I bring in a melodrama, which then opens up their parameters; they know I'm in melodrama, which means they know how to act, because there's a certain way to act when you're in melodrama; and then they act that, and I create that and we just build...

J: And then, you can do the absurdist, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera...

M: Right!

J: Talk to me about scoring about scoring Absurdism versus Heroicism.

M: When you define 'Absurdism',?...

J: Take it as you will. Something is just a little bit off. The corners are just a little bit off. I'll play something major, but I'll play clusters in the melody; I'll chromatically alter the important notes.

M: Oh! Goofy music.

J: Yeah!

M: [Mimes playing piano] (singing) doo-doo-doo doot. Doot, deet-doo-deet

J: (singing) Blonk! Blunk!

M: (singing) Wah-wah!

J: Yes!

M: Well, cartoon music, actually. If that's a genre...

J: Well, that's the draw for you. You say, "Absurd? Cartoon music." It's, "Bum-boioioioiong!"

M: Yeah!

J: And then approximating that on the piano...

M: Clusters... grace notes,]glissando].

J: I always play like this [leaning left], because it feels top-heavy, and I feel like my chi is off-balance. So I'm always gonna tend toward one end of the piano or another...
M: That's fascinating energy, because I tend to have that same energy, too, when I'm doing it. Just thinking about it, yeah, it is top-heavy. Now, I don't know if that's absurd to you. I think it's dangerous to play that, unless it's just absolutely absurd.

J: Well, that's the thing.... Timmy's [Tim Robinson] 'King' character is what I would call 'Absurd'. I'm just using that as an example of an absurd scene.

M: But, when I think it's absurd, I think my inclination is to ground it in the genre or reality. So, my impulse would be to play fifth, you know, like horns [Sings fanfare gesture]; royal music [does another].

J: That's very interesting that you say that. Because that is one of the signifiers of royalty, which, nowadays is at least a six-hundred-year-old trope.

M: Right!

J: And that goes back to this cultural-immersion that we have. It's these little tatters, and these little pieces that endure, in this collective, sort-of language that we have. And you and I can go there. Part of it is the fifths. Part of it is the [rhythmic figure].

M: Totally!

J: And part of this is... make-believe.... I'm looking for a way to couch this: So, you and I sit at a piano and we have to be an orchestra. And some of the gigs [we play] don't have a multi-function keyboard...

M: You don't have eighty-eight keys, sometimes.

J: Sometimes it's just a piano, but you get asked for [the music styles of] Country, Rap, Heavy Metal. How do imitate that style? How do mimic?

M: You take Music-Op [Option] off of the running-order. Sorry. Go ahead.

J: How do you mimic? Going back to the horn-fifths, you make that the reality. You have a king, you make him regal, you use these fifths, but you have to do it on a piano, and the audience buys that you're doing it on a horn. They suspend their disbelief.

M: Right?

J: Every time they hear [horn gesture] it's on [horns]. But when they hear it on piano [instead], they buy it. It's like when a cop walks onto the stage twirling an object-work baton, the baton's there.

M: Right.

J: Which is why when Margaret [Edwartowski] is doing object-work needlepoint, she can poke herself and the audience feels it.

M: Wow!

J: Because, if you're committed to your object-work...

M: It's that specific. It's empathic. It's mirror-neurons. Do you know about those?

J: No.

M: Oh my God! Mirror neurons. I mean, that's the root of empathy. And they've just discovered them in the last ten years. We have these neurons that mirror other people. Which is how I can know if you're laughing, you're sending out these [signals] that I'm reading as laughter.

J: Without devolving [too much], look at pictures of Ann Romney for the Republican National Convention, and cover her mouth. [Her eyes are] terrified, but [her smile is] composed...

M: Say you're scoring her. You notice that, but no one else does. What music would that be? Fear? How would you score that?

J: I would score, generally, I think, a patriotic tune, because that would say 'America'. It would activate peoples' 'America' signifiers, it would turn on their patriotism. But then, I would bury a note somewhere in there, in the interior. I would try to maintain the melody as it was. But as I did it, I would likely throw dissonant intervals somewhere in the

middle, so that the <u>outside</u> is everything you recognize, but the interior of the chord is.. not right.

M: Right. Wow, that's fascinating.

J: Where the surface truth is one-hundred-percent legit, because that's how she wants to to read it.

M: Wow.

J: But the interior game is what colors everything else on the surface.

M: Wow. That's a <u>fascinating</u> approach. It's cool, although I would have done it a different way.

J: How would you do it?

M: I <u>think</u>, I would just be high up and I would just start to score vulnerability like [reaching for notes]. I mean, I can <u>do</u> it, I just can't...

J: About where are you? Two octaves above C?

M: Two to three. And I would just be doing [apprehensively] dissonant, scary tinkles...

J: Like scratches of chromatic stuff?

M: Scratches, yeah. But just to lightly perfume the air with off-ness, and vulnerability.

J: Sort of like the Hall's vapor rub sound? [hand gestures arpeggio playing]

M: I'm not sure I know that sound, but it sounds right, the way you're describing it.

J: It's like a [sings close, chromatic arpeggio]. But that's a little to regular for what you're describing.

M: Kind of like [singing], "Liz-zie Bor-den, Liz-zie Bor-den," which is actually like... Yeah! Oh my God! That's what I would do. Kind of like a Horror. Like the *Shining* girls. So, something feminine and innocents, but with terror mixed in. And then if she recognized what I was doing, she'd build and then I'd start to build and I'd probably change the range and bring it down (not all the way down, because I need those for power), and then I'd gradually bring it all together in a mush, and then go for the kill.

J: That's awesome!

M: It's amazing! Though we're completely hypothesizing, that's fascinating, actually.

J: That's what I've been having a hard time nailing down.

M: Which?

J: In the thesis itself. How to describe it. There's no <u>universal</u> approach.... What I think is interesting in our hypotheticals, though, is that they share some features which [are] an element of stability but also that 'off' element. In your case: it's the element of stability brought on by this more playful, innocent melody...

M: And yours was the patriotic, or the American...

J: Right! That's thrown slightly askew...

M: But the common denominator is we start with the root of sort of a positive emotion, but then we just twist off of, or <u>counterpoint</u> off of.

J: Yes. And it's not a <u>consistent</u> counterpoint. But it's, "I know that this is about the wash of positive, innocent major scoring. But I also know that I can do <u>this</u>." And I would imagine, to one degree or another, without nailing it down, we also know pitches and areas of the key <u>not</u> to activate because they might...

M: Right. I'm not going to play [gesturing with two hands] GBD:GBD.

J: Right. Because that's just square.

M: Right. But I suppose the common denominator is that, and tell me if I'm wrong, is that there's the normal reality and then there's the divergence from reality. And the music represents that through <u>dissonance</u>.

J: And that's a very unique <u>character</u>. I have a favorite chord combination that I like to use for schizophrenia its c-minor (major 7, add 9) and a-flat-minor (major 7, add 9)...

M: That's so sad!

J: And what happens, if you were to psychoanalyze these chords: the third in the c-chord...

M: E-flat.

J: … becomes the fifth in the

M: A-flat?

J: The fifth in the c-chord becomes the major-seventh in the a-flat-chord and splits upward to become the root of the a-flat chord, as well, the root of the c-chord changes downward into the third of the a-flat chord, the ninth of the c-chord changes upward into the fifth of the a-flat chord.   So with all of this splitting, shifting, and double-meaning you have...

M: Psychosis.   What you're doing is you just painted a complete artist's rendition of schizophrenia, using musical language.   You're communicating

J: In words, what I've done with the notes match the symptoms of schizophrenia. Musically, I empathized with the symptoms.

M: You normalized that experience. You reflected that experience in music.

J: That's an isolated case.

M: Not really. It's just more specific. But, that's what we do. That's it, really.

J: It is very specific. Whether or not I'd choose to treat all other chord movement like that is...

M: But you're not going to do that when a couple is falling in love, unless there's something horribly gone awry.

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Playing for Laughs versus Playing for Truth

M: It's the time constraint. Everything is sound-bite, and you don't have time. There's the fear that you don't have time to let a scene play out. But that comes into what we're talking about. How much do you need to give to the audience or the actor to validate the style of what they're doing.

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Style as Character

M: Style as Character?

J: I have sub-headings: Stereotype, Scoring an Era, Scoring a Place. Is that something that you've considered?

M: I don't think anyone's written a book on this, have they?

J: No.

M: Say no more.

J: Have you used genre as a character-trait?

M: In film-noir it happens a lot. Or lights-up and you have this guy talking to this little girl, "Hi Janie. I'm Mr. Johnson. I'll be your teacher for this year." And, all of a sudden the piano-player starts this slap-bass with a porn-sound. [makes wah-wah guitar sound]. I mean, using porn sounds to suggest this ulterior motive.

J: Funk, rap, bluegrass?

M: Just porn.

J: Western has a cowboy feel?

M: Yes.

J: Do you have a character that you associate with Rock?

M: I think *Wayne's World*, but Rock is hard. Rock is usually a unified sound. And, I don't know if it works, but the scoring for Judd Nelson in *The Breakfast Club*. He had these two monologues, about his Dad or some high-school thing, and it was just this grungy guitar. So that's a quality of Rock.

J: Ragtime?

M: That was always my go to silent-movie music.

J: How about for the roaring twenties?

M: Yeah. I'd do something stride.

J: Saloon music.

M: Yeah.

J: How about Renaissance?

M: I would usually use an [A-minor], hopefully with a harpsichord sound, if I had one, or a steel-string guitar. Just sort of a minor, simple, pre-Mozart... [i-V-i]...

J: It's interesting that you said harpsichord.

M: Would you have gone to that?

J: Jackson [Marc Evan Jackson] said the same thing. "You obviously go to the harpsichord, and maybe it's Bach..."

M: Which probably didn't even exist in the time period... So what do you do with your thesis now, when you have a twentieth-century instrument that is associated with a fourteenth-century scenario?

J: I go to the mode, because if I can't get the instrument, I can get the language and the vocabulary. Maybe for renaissance, though likely I would do it for medieval or dark-ages music, I would use parallel fifths and a Gregorian style melody. I would try to, much like you would with the [horn fanfare] I would do harmony and chord-quality in there; modal stuff.... You and I think, chord-chord-chord-chord-chord. But in that style, it was more about...

M: It was about the lines.

J: Right.

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M: There's nothing inherent in a stop sign that says, "Stop!" It's just a red light.

J: But if you showed somebody a red octagon, they'd say, "Stop."

M: But that's just collective decision-making.

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J: Style or genre as an indicator of character or place.

M: But that's why you couldn't use [*Stimmung*] in an improv setting. Because there's no common vernacular. It's not... that music does not represent something to most people. But the question is: Can you use something like that for effect, or is the ear going to reject it?

J: Okay. So what about, say a fifth down in the bass? Think power-chords. [mimics riff]. What does the audience think?

M: What I think is, it makes me imagine a [gravelly voice] a rocker. Chest out; dense.

J: Now, is it because that's the kind of music that he would listen to?

M: Well, yeah. I'd imagine imagine him hearing that kind of music and [liking it]. That's my reaction.

J: What about the same guy accompanied by finger-picky guitar, or a banjo patch, if you have it? What does the actor think? What does the audience think? Are they the same thing?

M: I don't know what the guy thinks. Are you leading? Are you making the initiation?

J: Yes. Someone comes out, sauntering, swaggering, and you're just playing that.

M: You're playing a banjo lick? They're gonna think hillbilly, country-western. I mean, banjo would be more hillbilly.

J: Would the audience think the same thing?

M: Yes.

J: If you played it on the piano?

M: No.

J: What would they think then?

M: It depends. If you actually played 'Dueling Banjos' [sings] da-na-na-na-na-na-na-na....

J: Then they'd pick it up.

M: Right. And then they'd go to *Deliverance,* because that's the common denominator. That's also a good anal-sex joke. I used to use that [trick].

J: What does the audience then think, when [the character] comes out to that? Do they think they're in the South?

M: Yes.

J: What do they think about the character?

M: That he's gonna be dumb, slow, have a drawl.

J: And the character, to yes-and you, if he hasn't spoken, will adopt the drawl.

M: Right. And he's gonna be 'off'. That hillbilly sort of 'off'. "You're reaal purdy."....

J: Now. Same guy walks out the exact same way and you play him on with Mozart...

M: He saunters on?

J: Well, let's say a neutral walk.

M: You're gonna think he's a conductor, or erudite; he could be a music-snob.

J: Where in society does he come from? The same place as banjo guy?

M: No.

J: The same place as power-chord guy?

M: No. He comes from the East coast. Well, they all come from the East coast. He comes from the city; he's urbane, upper-class. Snob.

J: What if he comes on to a Waltz?

M: I would say he was a Nazi.

J: Because of the Strauss connection.

M: Exactly. It would certainly suggest something in that genre. In that classical-historical perspective.

J: And you would expect his dialect to be a bit more refined?

M: Right. So, actually, the guy with the Mozart would be more clipped, and proper, and the waltz-guy would be a German. Jah!

J: The same guy comes out to a walking-bass, that isn't exactly film-noir, but...

M: I'd say he's an African-American Jazz musician. He's a cool cat. He's hep.

J: Here's where we get racist. Scoring on the black-keys only, does the audience read that as...

M: Asian? Yes. Chinese.

J: What are character traits that the actor would portray?

M: They would have their hands like this [folded]. Perhaps make a few grasshopper jokes. Or they can do the Japanese 'monster-film' schtick.

J: So now, I'm pooching my question here, what if they came out to Gospel.

M: Black. Church. Praise Jesus. Pass the collection plate. Doing the claps.

J: Do you expect the audience to read this?

M: Oh, <u>yeah</u>. That's the exact same thing as, "We take you to this Gospel Church, in the South-side of Chicago."

J: I've done some reading on this, in order to couch this, and add some depth to the subject of what we do...

M: You mean other than maintaining racial stereotypes?

J: Yeah.... Our <u>choice</u> to play Rap, Country, Heavy-Metal, Opera is a <u>signifier</u> to the audience and it [helps] them to what to think about the characters. It trips their semiotic network based on which kind of music.... A guy can just have a twang in his voice when he comes out, but absent the twang, or overalls, the music tells the exact same thing about him; and that's our job. Does that make sense?

M: That makes <u>total</u> sense. Unless he plays opposite.

J: An that's where the comedy comes from.

M: We set the foundation. Yeah. You're dead on.

J: Just by activating this one node in the network, that all of these other features, absent any other indicator, comes into play. And that's the unique power of music.... If people can rapidly identify a genre of music, fill in social cues cultural markers that are associated with that cue, then our job is essentially done before it begins. And all we have to do is pick the right kind of music.

M: You're dead on. Because, as animals, we're constantly assessing the environment to make split-second decisions. We, if I'm hearing you right, we play on that scanner, that evolutionary scanner so we can say, "This is the environment, or <u>this</u> is the genre."

J: And I'm saying it in terms of genre, but now it transcends genre. Now, it's all of these other encoded things. It's the recognized riff. It's the high, screaming thing. Maybe those three tones at the top are drawn from your experience of hearing the three tones of The Emergency Broadcast System.

M: And arguably means nothing to anyone else?

J: No. I'm just asking, "Where is the deep seed of this?" We're culturally cued in that

low music is going to mean something ominous.

M: Right

J: So, [you and I] know that when we read the scene as ominous, [when an actor makes a statement that their scene-partner doesn't recognize as important], and we play something low, our job is to help them to recognize these important moments. We have to be in the moment, but we also have to be ahead of the moment.

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J: All of these cues work in film. But the pit is a very unique place to test this hypothesis in real time. Not that the theatre is a laboratory...

M: It is!

J: These are things that we just do.

M: We don't even think twice.

J: You score differently <u>now</u>, than you did, like you said, because of boredom. So, at the beginning the tricks accomplish things, and then you say, "It's cliché." What's at the nut of what you're doing? And then you make those choice to score Ann Romney as kind of playful, but with this dissonance; which is likely <u>not</u> a choice you would have made in the beginning because that's too empathetic.

M: Mmmm-hmmm!

J: You're more concerned with playing the right notes the first time. But you have to do it for long enough before you <u>identify</u> your choices, and you <u>recognize</u> what you're doing, and you say, "Ahhh, this is too easy."

M: You sort of <u>habituate</u> your way of processing it or perceiving it.

J: So, in a nutshell, all of this is going into what I'm talking about. The stuff that we did at the piano requires, in a way, a more rapid recall...

M: Oh, yeah.

J: And it's reflex-based.

M: Completely.

J: Which doesn't mean that we're super-ninjas with heightened cognitive skills. It might

just mean that we listen to soundtracks differently.

M: I still can't figure out why John Williams wrote the *Jurassic Park* Theme, which is still one of my favorite, [sings] unless it's supposed to be epic creatures of beauty, towering over...

J: An island?

M: Yeah. 'Cause that music... I still can't figure out what that music has to do with dinosaurs.

J: The theme to *Harry Potter* is Faure's *Sicilienne*. But instead of A-B, the form is B-A.

M: Well, he writes most of his scores off of scratch-tracks....

J: *Mars: The Bringer of War* is *The Imperial March*. You hear the [hums].... It's the stratification [sedimentation] of culture that we have. If you want to do 'War' you'd rip off [hums 'War']...

M: Yeah!

J: Well, your not doing *Star Wars*, but you're playing a very deep, minor thing, down here, that's got some sort of etched...

M: Well it also suggests marching through blood, and guts, and mud.

J: Yes!

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M: What's our core job? Play tops and bottoms, and maybe some underscore if there's something in there. Tops and bottoms, that was always the, "set the scene up, and take the scene out."

J: And picking the way to articulate, because you have to find the way that the scene ends.

M: Ooh, yeah!

J: Sometimes just playing the end of the scene, just from the end, is <u>way</u> harder than playing into the end of a scene and then playing out.

M: There's no question. You have so much more <u>information</u> at the end of a scene than you did at the beginning.

J: If you're discovering it with them <u>during</u> the scene, that's one thing; because you can call back a riff from earlier.

M: Although, [if you play toward the end of the scene] you're also sending a signal out to the audience that the scene is about to end.

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J: Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think is important?

M: Well, we talked a lot about genre. And equally important to genre, I think, are emotional states.

J: I'll make this quick. Can we agree that melancholy, depression, and rage are all negative emotions?

M: They're all perceived that way, yes.

J: What is the difference between scoring 'Anger' and scoring 'Sadness'?

M: Anger is <u>active</u>. Sadness is not active. Anger is an energy that pushes you, that compels you to act.

J: So if you had to describe one versus the other, anger would be scored how?

M: More staccato, more punctuated. Double forte. Triple forte.

J: And sadness would be?

M: More elongated. More bleak. More whole-notes. Softer attack.

J: If you had to nuance the difference between 'Sadness' and 'Melancholy', how would you do that?

M: It's a flavor change.

J: Where does that change happen?

M: In the melody. I think melancholy has a bit more of an active melody.

J: Would it be fair to say that 'Melancholy' might <u>allude</u> to major more than sadness does because...

M: Well, because melancholy through <u>memory</u>. It's a memory thing. It's remembering.
So, there's the flavor of the event you're remembering with a tone of wistful longing.

J: This great! Thank you.

M: Well, great!

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ABSTRACT

FILLING THE GAPS:
PLAYING THE SEMIOTIC NETWORK IN THE EXTEMPORIZATION OF
SCORES FOR IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER

by

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August 2013

Advisor: Dr. Karl Braunschweig

Major: Music Theory/Composition

Degree: Master of Music

The Art of Scoring for Improvisational Theater draws on traditions whose origins are obscured by the fog of History and Myth. With no prior plan, a musician is tasked with providing accompaniment that creates or reinforces mood, era, location, or genre. Through such accompaniment, a musician reads and activates nodes in a semiotic network, to generate context, subtext, or both. Drawing from sources in Semiotics, Multimedia, Marketing, Sociology, Artificial Intelligence, Film Music History, Theater, Music Theory, and Musicology, as well as interviews with an array of Participants and the Author's personal experience, this paper seeks to articulate a framework of musical understanding that is uniquely in-the-moment, yet ever-present.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

John Edwartowski was born October 10, 1973, in Detroit, Michigan, to Margaret (Marge) and John Edwartowski. He began piano lessons in 1980, under the tutelage of Belgian-born organist, Pierre Toucheque, whose background in improvisation had an indelible impact on his student's musical future. The ability to extemporize music, and the rules which governed such extemporization led to Edwartowski's study of Music Theory as an applied discipline (*musica practica*), and he earned his B.A. in Music from Wayne State University, in 2004.

In 1999, John became the Resident Musical Director for The Second City Detroit; an improvisational theatre company. During his ten-year tenure with the company, he wrote music for more than a dozen revues, improvised scenic-scoring during nightly improvised sets, taught musical-improvisation and served as Musical Director for student-productions in the Training Center, and developed a theory of applied musical signification.

John wrote the score and co-wrote the lyrics for *Cancer! The Musical* which premiered at the Abreact Theatre in Autumn 2005, and has been since remounted at The Planet Ant Theatre (2006), The New York City Fringe Festival (2007), The Elizabeth Theatre (2011), and The Marlene Boll Theatre (2012). Additionally, he produced the soundtrack album in Autumn 2012.

Beginning his graduate studies at Wayne State University in Autumn 2010, under the guidance of Dr. Karl Braunschweig (who directed Edwartowski's exploration of musical meaning/signification toward the field of Semiotics), John completed his master's thesis, *Filling the Gaps: Playing the Semiotic Network in the Extemporization of Scores for Improvisational Theater*, during the Spring of 2013. During his time as a graduate student, John also served as a Departmental Assistant for Music Theory (covering the entire theory curriculum), and as a moderator for The History of American Popular Music. He received The Music Study Club of Metropolitan Detroit endowed-scholarship in 2012.

John is an active composer, accompanist, teacher, and theorist.