MODULE 05

TOPICS

- Russian/Marxist reaction to Hollywood: Eisenstein’s and Eisler’s contributions

PART I

Eisenstein & Prokofiev

Eisenstein (1898-1948)

Latvian-born director. Battleship Potemkin (1925) established him as a revolutionary film stylist and technician. He was one of the first to see the possibility of structuring films according to musical principles \( i.e. \) cutting to music \( i.e. \) rather than spatiotemporal and causal demands of narrative structure (Brown, 1994: 134).

The version of the film you will be watching for your assignment includes a score by D. Shostakovich, written after the film had been completed and replacing the controversial original score by Edmund Meisel. For more on the original score see http://www.countercurrents.org/arts-bergan180205.htm

Film clips as well as the entire film (both versions) are available though OASIS. Battleship Potemkin is also available re-cut by Grigori Aleksandrov and with a score by N. Kruikov.

Shostakovich’s version has stayed true to Eisenstein’s basic ideas of image/music relationship reflected in:

- primacy of musical rhythm/form,
- avoidance of clear musical references and clichés,
- iconic resemblance between image and music (more towards the end of the course), &
- strong emotional musical impact.

Identifying moments in Battleship Potemkin where the above points are illustrated will help answer Assignment 2 of this module.

Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Ukrainian-born composer. He worked on Eisenstein’s last 3 films (Alexander Nevsky and Ivan the Terrible 1 & 2). Prior to Alexander Nevsky (1938), Prokofiev had scored one film (Lieutenant Kizhe, 1934), a few ballets (e.g. Romeo and Juliet, 1935-36), and several operas (e.g. The Love of three Oranges), gaining some relevant experience (Brown, 1994: 134).
Eisenstein / Prokofiev relationship

The Eisenstein/Prokofiev relationship and output are not necessarily ideal examples. Rather, they represent an alternative form of image/music interaction and composer/director relationship (Brown, 1994: 134). The collaboration of the two artists produced some of the highlights of early cinema thanks to the quality of the music (all scores stand alone as concert suites) and its imaginative pairing with the images (Brown, 1994: 144).

*Alexander Nevsky* demonstrated the development of a complex vision regarding the interrelationship among all filmic elements, including music. The film includes several sequences where the image has been cut to the music, along with the more traditional practice of music having been composed to match a specific scene. In addition, director and composer worked closely during the film’s creation, fine-tuning the final film through mutual adjustments (Brown, 1994: 134).

Prokofiev saw a symphonic element in Eisenstein’s montage constructions and respected Eisenstein’s musical suggestions.

[Symphonic in terms of a) exposition and development of visual “themes” and b) multi-layering and “orchestration” of action and scene-framing.]

Conversely, Eisenstein listened to Prokofiev’s filming/editing advice, was present at the recording sessions, and often cut his scenes to specifically accommodate musical (as he conceived them) demands (Brown, 1994: 135).

Hollywood versus Eisenstein / Prokofiev (Brown, 1994: 144-145)

Contrary to some researchers’ claims, not all music/image interactions resulting from early Hollywood have been dry products of an assembly-like, industrialized culture machine. At the same time, not all Soviet experiments have been inspired. Against Soviet formalist experimentation, Hollywood poses successful communication of psycho-mystic narrative subtexts/aspects, illuminated through music. Although uncommon, there are several productive director/composer collaborations that flourished outside (even though influenced, at times, by) the context of Soviet experimentations, including:

- Alfred Hitchcock & Bernard Herrmann (more in Module 06);
- Jean Cocteau & George Auric (France - accidental synchronism - 1940-49);
- Laurence Olivier & William Walton (England - *Henry the Vth* - 1940s);
- Akira Kurosawa & Fumio Hayasaka (Japan – Hayasaka studied with A. Tcherepnin – 1948-55);
- Jirí Trnka & Vaclav Trojan (Czechoslovakia - 1947-58);
- Federico Fellini & Nino Rota (Italy - 1950s &’60s).

Eisenstein’s concept of montage

Regardless of whether a “bringing-together” of elements is intended or not, the corroboration of these elements will generate meaning (remember the mention of the Kuleshov effect – Module 03 lecture notes, page 8). This meaning will be different from that of each individual component, thanks to:

a) the fact that the combined elements constitute new self-contained units and

b) the spectators/listeners/readers imposing meaning.
Framing, cutting, and visual pacing in Battleship Potemkin were truly revolutionary, looked like no other film of the time, challenged and completely changed what was considered acceptable/effective techniques towards realism in films, and continue to provide material and inspiration for film schools and film makers throughout the world. In many respects, this film has served as a model for most modern image cutting and pacing techniques.

In terms of music, many listeners find the experience of the Shostakovich version more rewarding than that of the Meisel version. It is interesting to note that the actually unintended score better and most effectively illustrates the potential of Eisenstein’s ideas on film music than Meisel’s score for Potemkin or Prokofiev’s score for Nevsky. Eisenstein’s intended accidental synchronizations often end up being either Hollywood-like or ‘wrong,’ with intermediate (and most ambiguous and potent) effects not being explored, precisely due to their ambiguous nature. Ironically, the intended effect of such accidental synchronization may only be achievable in truly accidental contexts.

Alexander Nevsky

Eisenstein’s excitement over the “vertical correspondence” between visual and aural elements, presumably accomplished in Alexander Nevsky, is clear in his book Film Sense (see the syllabus for full citation). Film Sense includes an entire chapter dedicated to the analysis of 12 shots from Alexander Nevsky and the corresponding 17 measures of music (“dawn of anxious waiting” episode of the “battle on the ice” sequence). The focus of that chapter is on correspondence between musical and visual movements, as illustrated in musical notation and static shots respectively (Brown, 1994: 135).

Eisler and others (Prendergast & Thompson) have criticized Eisenstein’s analysis as addressing not musical/aural and visual/graphical movement but visual analogies between photographic composition and notation, where both the visual and aural components have been stripped from their crucial temporal aspects.

Brown’s argument that the time necessary for the eye to scan through the 4th shot of the analysis corresponds to the rhythm of the musical passage is valid only if we assume viewing on a really large screen and consistent (across viewers) left-to-right visual scan of the projected image.

In a more valid argument, Brown suggests that, as long as a shot (even if static) remains on screen, it is built-up, enriched, and reinforced by the shape of the musical passage (Brown, 1994: 136).

Although Brown’s discussion on the synchronic and diachronic aspects of music perception (Brown, 1994: 137) can be largely discredited as unaware of the relevant -cognition in general and music cognition in particular- literature, it is important to note that the type of excitement aroused by art is indeed related to the synchronic/diachronic dialectic, with each art (and sense) approaching anti-diachronicism [i.e. focusing on individual parts/episodes of a whole rather than on the whole] in different ways.

Even at the simplest level, Eisenstein’s vertical montage of visual and aural components does involve simultaneous, layered presentation of a number of different elements, amounting to a
visual/aural fugue, \textit{e.g.} simultaneous presentation of augmentations/reductions/variations of the visual/aural themes\] that supports a synchronic/diachronic dialectic (Brown, 1994: 137).

For Prendergast (1992), the success of the image/music marriage in the “\textit{battle of the ice}” sequence is due not to abstract, graphic notions of shot development but to Prokofiev capturing the general tension of this pre-battle moment, speaking to the psychology of the scene and characters/spectators (apprehension / fear).

Brown’s disagreement with Prendergast’s statements is based on two unjustified arguments:

- Eisenstein’s discontinuous editing distances viewers from narrative flow and does not support music’s mood setting task and

[Can you point out why these two arguments by Brown are unjustified?]
PART II

Eisler & Adorno

Up until Eisler’s and Adorno’s publication of “Composing for Films” in 1947, the dominant criterion for evaluating film music had been ‘taste.’ The two authors were the first to systematically identify the implicit classical Hollywood model, articulate it using accepted musical-analysis techniques, and offer a rigorous (even if unfair, at times) critique to it.

Eisler and Adorno work within the framework of the Frankfurt School’s neo-Marxist theoretical debates and approach art in general and film/film music in particular as components of the ‘culture industry’ (Gorbman, 1987: 99).

Eisler, H. (1898-1962)

German-born composer and philosopher; studied with Schoenberg.
Along with B. Brecht, Eisler believed in intervention through art to raise the working masses. Rejecting the hermetic intellectual isolation of Schoenberg, he composed several pieces that could be considered ‘functional’ music. His work with Brecht (starting in 1928) had the ‘bourgeois aesthetic’ as a common enemy. The two collaborated on songs and dramatic works for Die Maßnahme (The Measures Taken – political oratorio 1930), Kuhle Wampe (Slatan Dudow’s film championing worker solidarity, 1932), Mother (epic play adapted from Gorki, 1932), and on collections of political songs and other choral works. Starting in 1931 Eisler became involved in politically progressive documentaries in France and the USSR (former Soviet Union).

His compositional methods aimed at breaking the audiences’ identification and immediate rapport with musical sonority, by avoiding musical norms/clichés and working towards shocking the listener. In 1938 he moved to the US where he taught at the New School for Social Research (NY). His book “Composing for Films” was the end product of a Rockefeller grant while in New York (Gorbman, 1987: 100).

Adorno, T. (1903-1969)

German-born sociologist, philosopher, musicologist, and composer; studied with Berg. A pessimist, he believed that advanced capitalist society rules out any hope for awakening of the masses and was deeply concerned with the fate of knowledge under such a society.

For Adorno, capitalist society exerts an inescapable ideological stranglehold on its subjects. The regimentation and forms of deception it assumes alter human consciousness in such a way that this ideological domination can only continue irreversibly. He saw all spheres of life having been penetrated by a single logic of formal rationality, grown from the Enlightenment ideal of reason into something that operates on every level of social formation. As he states, in modern society, logic “is defined by the principle of orientation of human action to abstract, quantifiable and calculable, and instrumentally utilizable formal rules and norms.”
Adorno argued that the administrative rationalization of culture has led to the standardization of cultural production, where works share a ‘sameness’ as they serve and affirm the existing order. They have become commodities, judged solely in terms of their exchange value. Moreover, this “…economic machinery … sustains the masses, whether at work or at leisure, which is akin to work.” (Gorbman, 1987: 100-101).

Eisler’s and Adorno’s main standpoints (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: ix-xi)

“In advanced industrial age, the masses are compelled to seek relaxation and rest, in order to restore the labor power that has been spent in the alienated process of labor; and this need is the mass basis for mass culture.” (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: ix)

Although the cultural industry is not a product of 20th century, it is only since that time that it has been monopolized and thoroughly organized, becoming inescapable. Taste and receptivity have become largely standardized and, despite the multiplicity of products, the consumer has only apparent freedom of choice. Within the framework of the culture industry, there cannot be a direct spatial, temporal, or ideological interaction between the works and the consumer, because artworks are profoundly mediated by the economic machinery of their production, distribution, and reception.

All art, as means of filling out leisure time, has become entertainment. Although it does absorb materials and forms of traditional autonomous art as part of the so-called ‘cultural heritage,’ this very process of amalgamation abolishes aesthetic autonomy, since all consumer art is manipulated art.

Of all the media of cultural industry, films display most clearly and comprehensively this tendency towards amalgamation of drama, psychological novel, dime novel, operetta, symphony concert, and revue, which was already operative in the works of Wagner, Liszt, and Strauss.

In spite of their strong assertions, both Eisler and Adorno concede that the old, individualistic mode of production is not necessarily superior to the industrialized one and that technology should not be held responsible for the “barbarism of the cultural industry.” Rather, the blame should fall on the “monopolized” and “greedy” capitalist system and the individuals enforcing/taking advantage of it.

The authors’ discussion is aimed at examining the interaction between the future aesthetic potentialities of mass art and its present ideological character.

[The reduction of art to ideology describes art’s reification (i.e. its conversion into just a material commodity) and its limited view as solely manifesting some ideological construct, whether this is taste, consumerism, social struggle, etc. It is interesting to note that Marxist critique of art’s and music’s surrendering to the ideological constructs of taste, class, and consumerism led to no more and no less than art’s and music’s surrendering to the service of social struggle and related propaganda.]
Eisler’s and Adorno’s reaction to Hollywood

Film (in Gorbman, 1987: 106-107)

Contrary to most performing arts, film production is entirely divorced from a living contact with the audience, whose alleged will is manifested only indirectly and in a completely reified form through box-office receipts. For Eisler and Adorno the contradiction between the remoteness of a film’s mass production and the immediacy of its images is concealed from the Hollywood audience, who is not made aware of the monopolizing and “suffocating” role of the film industry. Hollywood’s pretense of immediacy masks the extent of the audiences’ alienated condition and obscures the contradictions inherent in film (i.e. administrative remoteness and technological shot-for-effect nature).

The wrong (i.e. profit based) motivations behind artistic production in film result in individual scenes being planned for their immediate audience effects rather than their position in the film as a whole, with films mediating pre-existing and established cultural values rather than offering anything new or even having any form of their own. Such approach reflects a wrong (for Eisler) assumption that audiences desire ‘formulas’ and tried-and-proven effects with details that can be consumed with ease and passivity.

Film Music (in Gorbman, 1987: 107-108)

Standard film music epitomizes the ideological efficacy of the culture industry and a degenerated aesthetic. Film music

1. aims directly at “sutting” effects and aids the standard film’s illusion of reality as well as the illusion that we are not mechanized. “It attempts to interpose a human coating between the reeled-off pictures and the spectators.”

2. has no autonomy; it just functions as advertising for the film in which it appears. Clichés of fragmented cultural signification “program” the audience and rely on conditioned reflexes and automatic responses. This constitutes an extreme case of the degradation of musical listening identified by Adorno in his general discussion on popular music. [Adorno, T. W. (1976). Introduction to the Sociology of Music. New York: Continuum.]

“Hearing is more archaic [than vision]. … This direct relationship to a collectivity is probably related to the sensation of spatial depth, inclusiveness, and absorption of individuality, which are common to all music. But this very ingredient of collectivity, because of its essentially amorphous nature, leads itself to deliberate misuse for ideological purposes” (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 20-21).

“Music’s lyrical and emotional nature can be made to serve regression ‘psychotechnically’ … as it deceives its listeners in regard to the reality of everyday existence” (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 22).
The authors criticize the fact that classical Hollywood film score encourages emotional proximity through the use of culturally familiar musical language and through matching between image and sound, positing a wholeness with which subjects identify without questioning the underlying motivations or anticipated effects.

“Identification with it compensates for the internal defeat that is the law of individual life. Just as poor old women shed tears at a wedding of strangers, the consumed music is the eternal strangers’ wedding for all.”

**Eisler and Adorno: “Prejudices and Bad Habits”**

(Outline and commentary on Eisler and Adorno (1947), Chapter 1)

**Origin of “old” (i.e. Hollywood) rules - need for change** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 3-4)

Film music has adapted to the immediate needs of the film industry and to whatever musical ideas and clichés about music happen to be current (in 1940s). The result has been a set of empirical standards or rules of thumb that correspond to ‘common sense.’ These standards/rules, closely related to the old film technology, have not changed, although film technology has. They represent a kind of pseudo-tradition that hinders the progress of film music and only makes sense as a consequence of standardization within the industry, characterized by a contrast between obsolete practices and scientific production methods.

[Underlying these statements is Eisler’s preoccupation with cinema as a tool for representing and configuring current (1940s) reality, characterized by technological revolution, challenges to humanity, and social change.]

**“Rules of thumb” (i.e. implicit Hollywood model)**

**Leitmotif** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 4-6)

Leitmotifs have always been the most elementary means of elucidation, the thread by which the musically inexperienced find their way about. Composers use leitmotifs to quote where otherwise they would have to invent.

It was natural to assume that this device, because it is so easy to grasp, would be particularly suitable to motion pictures, which are based on the premise that they must be easily understood. This assumption is unjustified.

The salience and brevity of leitmotif was due to its self-contained nature and its relation to the gigantic dimensions of Wagnerian and post-Wagnerian music dramas. Both features are absent in films, where continual interruption of one element by another inhibits continuity. The leitmotif is therefore unsuitable in films because of

a) the requirement that it must be complete in itself and
b) film music’s brevity of forms.

The Wagnerian leitmotif is inseparably connected with the symbolic nature of the music drama. It is not supposed to merely characterize persons, emotions, or things (although this is the prevalent conception). Wagner conceived its purpose as the endowment of dramatic events with metaphysical significance.
Leitmotifs have been reduced to musical lackeys, “announcing with an important air a master whose eminent personage is already clearly recognizable to everyone.” The effective technique of the past has degenerated into mere duplication, ineffective and uneconomical. In addition, because (within a film) it cannot be developed to its full musical significance, its use leads to extreme poverty of composition.

**Melody and Euphony** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 6-9)

Both are conventionalized historical categories, assumed to be obvious and a matter of public taste.

Melody was originally conceived in opposition to the Viennese theme. It denotes a self-contained entity, not a point of departure. The requirement for melodies to be singable and expressive stems from the German lied (song/tune), where an un-interrupted ‘natural’ flow of tones makes it possible to almost guess what will come next. Audiences now fetishize melody and are zealously looking for it.

The conventional (or ‘natural’) concept of melody is based on two crude criteria: a) harmonic and rhythmic symmetry and b) the use of small diatonic intervals. However, there is nothing ‘natural’ about such a construct, which represents one possibility among many. It is bourgeois culture that has designated it as natural, with poetic associations and melodic symmetry belying the objective technological and asymmetrical character of films.

Conventional demands for melody are at odds with
  a) the structural requirements of film and
  b) the film music composer’s position within the film production
     (film music’s main role is utility not lyric expressiveness).

[Eisler’s arguments against ‘naturalistic’ music echo again his preoccupation with the depiction of reality being cinema’s sole purpose, especially within the context of the atrocities that occurred during WWII.]

**Unobtrusiveness** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 9-11)

“I deck me with a beard and hide behind a fan so I won’t look too weird.”

The assumption of the need for music’s unobtrusiveness is based on the vague notion that music should have a subordinate role in relation to the picture. Music is tolerated as an outsider, while considered indispensable (partly due to genuine need, partly due to fetishistic idea of exploring all resources for the sake of doing so).

Moreover, the requirement for unobtrusiveness is usually met not by approximation of non-musical sounds and diegetic music but by banal non-diegetic music. In other words, such music remains “unheard” not because of its masterful concealment but because of its unremarkable banality.

Insertion of music should be planned during the script-writing process and should include a) music that is independent from the image, b) musical interruptions, etc. Whether the spectator should be aware of it or not should depend solely upon the dramatic requirements of the film, with music playing an active role in fulfilling these requirements.
**Visual justification** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 11-12)

The unnecessary fear that the presence of music may be unnatural, leads to attempts to justify it diegetically. This is a problematic solution, especially when there is a need for frequent and seamless move between diegetic and non-diegetic music.

[Our previous discussions have suggested that this shift between diegetic and non-diegetic is neither necessarily wrong nor confusing. Rather it can contribute significantly to a narrative’s dramatic development and emotional content. Eisler’s comments reflect his preoccupation against cinema’s “deceiving” potential, a potential that, as we have seen, can be creatively explored.]

**Illustration** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 12-14)

Landscape shots without action seem to call for music that conforms to stale programmatic patterns. Illustration is not necessarily wrong but it must not be overstated. The associations attached to musical illustrations are very strong and, like leitmotifs, illustrations end up eliciting automatic responses rather than illustrating anything. In contrast to their use in operas, where scenic arrangements were vague or indefinite, illustrations in films are reduced to stating the obvious since the combination of image and dialogue can be hyper-explicit. Music should therefore stick to its task of creating a mood (but not through the use of clichés) and should not repeat the obvious.

**Geography and History** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 14-15)

The old practice of re-arranging traditional tunes in symphonic style to denote place and time does not work and must be replaced by composing original pieces that stay true to the style desired. National characteristics can be captured not by loading a scene with national emblems but by proper stylistic arrangement.

[This suggestion is behind the later practice of narratively cueing time and place through traditional stylistic features rather than traditional compositions dressed in symphonic style.]

**Stock Music** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 15-16)

Eisler criticizes the overuse of the same ‘signpost’ pieces to accompany stock dramatic events. Although this practice is on the wane, the new problem is that newly composed pieces may not be of the same quality as old ones.

**Use of musical clichés to elicit emotional responses** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 16-18)

Standardized methods of arousing suspense are ineffective in eliciting powerful experiences. An even bigger problem than standardization of musical devices is the claim of uniqueness of films that are actually standard, and the related "individual" disguise of standardized patterns. We must rid ourselves from the frozen traditional resources, which are loaded with too many “petrified,” automatic associations (e.g. 4/4 = military; accented 3/4 = waltz/gratuitous joie de vivre; slow move from the 1st to the 3rd degree of a scale on a piano = religious; etc.). Cheap clichés in film music have their roots in the cheap melodramas, from where films originate.
Standardized interpretation (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 18-19)

Narrow dynamic range (originating in technological limitations and perpetuated due to supposed need for music’s unobtrusiveness).

Pseudo-individualization with exaggerated expression, wearing out “molto espressivo.” [Eisler’s dislike for overuse of musical contrasts goes as far as to support criticisms of Mozart’s work.]

Eisler’s and Adorno’s new resources

New musical resources (e.g. techniques elaborated by Stravinsky, Bartok, and Schoenberg) are more appropriate to film than haphazard musical padding. Their importance lays not on dissonance alone but on the dissolution of the conventional musical idiom. (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 32)

In new music, everything is a direct result of structural rather than cliché or tonal requirements. Even simple material sound novel when employed based on constructive requirements of the piece, rather than on the institutionalized flow of musical language, and when they are conceived only with regard to their intrinsic [as opposed to their associational] meaning. (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 33)

New, “objective” (i.e. absolute / non-associational) music has no room for clichés. It is rational, empirical, and based on “internal” structure, without necessarily being “cold.” Its dramaturgic function often consists in breaking through the objective surface of a picture and releasing latent suspense. Rather than assuming a detached attitude (as the term “absolute music” would imply) or using prefabricated emotionalism (as “old” film music does) it deliberately chooses musical elements required by the musical / narrative contexts, making music subordinate not to the image but to the dramatic task at hand.

[Eisler was the first to see image and music as equivalent, with both being subordinate to the narrative rather than to each other.] (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 33).

As music becomes more pliable (free from conventions) it also becomes more applicable to other media; the new music’s formal richness better fits to the ever-changing situations set-up in films. Listeners are stimulated to grasp a scene in itself, without relying on associations, and are able to see/hear films from a fresh point of view (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 34). In addition, new music can communicate an at once much wider and finer range of emotional situations than would be possible through “blanket” associations (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 35).

In old music, definite musical configurations acquire apparent expressive value solely thanks to repetition (akin to the ‘ding-slurp’ effect of Pavlov’s experiments). In new music, expressivity is closely related to musical context (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 35).

Only by using the element of surprise can motion picture disclose the essential meaning beneath everyday life. Sensational presentation negates everyday life through exaggeration and, when artistically true, reveals tensions that are blacked out in the conventional concept of normal average existence (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 36).
For example, dissonance in modern music reveals a “historical” fear that surpasses the measure of fear conceivable to the average middle-class. It is therefore better fit to express fear in films such as *San Francisco* or *King Kong*, which are diluted by the use of traditional music (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 36). [Eisler offers as an example the full sense of horror communicated in Schoenberg’s music for an imaginary film, “Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene”, Op. 34, (CD NAX8554371)] (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 37).

Contrary to familiar music, which is deprived in advance from the power to express the unfamiliar and unexplored, the new music is also better fit to express emotions such as extreme tenderness, ironic detachment, empty waiting, unfettered power, or even impassiveness, which have been communicated musically only since the works of Satie, Stravinsky, and Hindemith.

For example, in “*Hangmen also die*” Hitler’s portrait is accompanied by a ten-note chord, an advanced sonority with more power than traditional sounds. Modern (1940s) cinema’s aim towards extreme tension is best matched by the new harmonies, whose essence is suspense. Old music cannot express present day reality just as 19th century poetry cannot express fascism (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 37).

**Musical form and characterization** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 38-40)

Tonal music favors long forms (a passage becomes tonal only through relationships revealed during an extensive whole) while cinema favors short forms. It is also “superfluous” in that each theme needs to be repeated frequently in order to fulfill its function within the tonal system of reference.

The brevity of new music is fundamentally different from the short forms developed by Chopin and Schumann’s (which base their expressive power on their fragmented, unfinished, suggestive character). New music passages are not intended for and do not require repetition because it is not necessary that they are recognizable. Their inherent flexibility can satisfy the technical principle of abrupt change elaborated in cinema. The emancipation of themes from symmetry and the need for repetition makes it possible to create more penetrating musical ideas, sharper expression, and wider characterization.

**Dissonance / polyphony** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 40-42)

The fragmentation inherent in cinema results in a tension between “fragments” and “whole” that is best matched by new music’s unresolved, dynamic character and is enhanced by its wealth of discords. One might say that film music is driven to atonality because there is no room for satisfactory expansion of tonality.

Melody, required by traditional music due to its inflexible harmony, becomes now unnecessary thanks to the “conquest of polyphonic freedom” in the vertical, non-melodic dimension. In films, the “melody” is the story and music can remain in the background while retaining its structural and expressive importance. It can add meaningful illustrations and genuine contrasts to the on-screen “melody” (*i.e.* story).
“Dangers” of the new resources and criticisms of Eisler’s approach

**Eisler’s warnings** (Eisler & Adorno, 1947: 43-44)

1. Advanced media may be used gratuitously, for their own sake
2. Their novelty may conceal their potential ‘stupidity’
3. There may be excessive complexity of detail
4. There seems to be a “mania” for making every moment arresting and a strong tendency towards pedantry
5. There is a lot of formalistic trifling, overuse of devices (such as the whole tone scale), and insistence on mathematical consistency, which does not necessarily map to perceptual consistency
6. The old routine may be replaced by a new pseudo-modern routine that dilutes new musical resources and destroys the meaning of new music.

**Gorbman’s criticisms to Eisler and Adorno** (Gorbman, 1987: 108-109)

Eisler’s and Adorno’s study clings to the questionable notion of and need for “autonomous” music (*i.e.* music free from non-musical/non-formal meanings). In addition:

1. There is no clear direction other than “compose music free from clichés”.
2. The practical suggestions end up resembling techniques similar to those used by Hollywood, such as the use of short flexible phrases that accommodate the image etc. [Gorbman forgets that the techniques she refers to became widely accepted after the book’s publication, suggesting that their implementation was influenced by Eisler’s and Adorno’s work.]
3. The implication that music alone can have an emancipatory effect on narrative film is unsupported because progressive music alone cannot raise consciousness within the classical Hollywood framework of expectations.

**[Coda: Imagination vs. Reason** (commentary on Adorno’s critique of “rationalized society”)

Common sense understands imagination as a mental activity that deals with things that are not really there. It is opposed to reason, which is consequently supposed to be dealing with things that are really there. At the same time, the observation that not all future events can be predicted based solely on past and present observations indicates that future things must include things that do not already belong to the past or present. If the future includes things that are not present (i.e. are not really there) or past (i.e. have never really been there) then reason, by definition, cannot address it. Such a limitation severely undermines the importance of reason to our lives, by stripping from it the power to, in any radical way, influence our outlook. The only way reason can address future things is by making believe that such things—things that are not really there—are present, so that it can subject them to determinate and reflective judgment. In other words, in order for future to be reasoned with it first has to be imagined. The conventional opposition between imagination and reason and the accompanying assumption of reason’s superiority leads, therefore, to a curious and paradoxical “reason” that is superior to imagination, but impotent without it.]