PROJECTING TOLKIEN'S MUSICAL WORLDS:
A STUDY OF MUSICAL AFFECT IN HOWARD SHORE'S SOUNDTRACK TO
LORD OF THE RINGS

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ABSTRACT

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In their book *Ten Little Title Tunes: Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media*, Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida build on Tagg’s previous efforts to define the musical affect of popular music. By breaking down a musical example into minimal units of musical meaning (called musemes), and comparing those units to other musical examples possessing sociomusical connotations, Tagg demonstrated a transfer of musical affect from the music possessing sociomusical connotations to the object of analysis. While Tagg’s studies have focused mostly on television music, this document expands his techniques in an attempt to analyze the musical affect of Howard Shore’s score to Peter Jackson’s film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy.

This thesis studies the ability of Shore’s film score not only to accompany the events occurring on-screen, but also to provide the audience with cultural and emotional information pertinent to character and story development. After a brief discussion of J.R.R. Tolkien’s description of the cultures, poetry, and music traits of the inhabitants found in Middle-earth, this document dissects the thematic material of Shore’s film score. The first part of the analysis focuses on Shore’s incorporation of the music and culture of Tolkien’s text into his film score through instrumentation and style. The second part of the analysis incorporates Tagg’s musematic analysis to argue the musical affect of Shore’s major themes that is projected on the
audience. Additionally, leitmotiv analysis is used to trace the major themes throughout the trilogy, and to investigate how Shore’s alterations of the themes modify their musical affect.

By comparing Shore’s film score to Tolkien’s text, considering the visual representation the score accompanies, as well as by comparing Shore’s themes to other music possessing connotations, an argument is made that Shore’s score does more than accompany Jackson’s screen. Since Shore’s score reflects music and culture as described by Tolkien, and the themes correlate appropriately to other music which reflect similar cultures, Shore’s score plays an integral part in influencing the audience’s perception of the inhabitants of Middle-earth. Additionally, Shore’s modification of established themes throughout the trilogy aid in the audience’s emotional understanding of the evolution of the characters of the films.
This thesis is dedicated to my wife and parents for their constant support.
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CHAPTER I

Musical Meaning in Film Scores

The whole problem can be stated quite simply by asking, “Is there a meaning to music?” My answer would be, “Yes.” And “Can you state in so many words what the meaning is?” My answer to that would be, “No.”

An intellectual snob is someone who can listen to the William Tell Overture and not think of The Lone Ranger.

There is an ongoing debate among scholars regarding music’s ability to convey meaning. Over the past decades, theorists and historians have explored music’s ability to act as a narrator, to tell stories, and to convey emotions, represent characters, or allude to their actions. Among these scholars, there are those who believe that the music itself can narrate; those who believe the composer is narrating through the music; those who believe the listeners hear the music as though it is narrating regardless of the composer’s intent; and those who believe that music cannot narrate due to its inherent lack of a narrator. Although this debate continues, I am of the opinion that music does have the power to communicate information to the audience, especially when the music is combined when visual representation. Film scores in particular provide an analyst with literal objects and stories to which the music’s meaning can be compared to. At the very least, a film score’s role as accompaniment to events occurring on-screen suggests the music’s ability to reflect some sort of meaning to the audience. However, it is possible that film music may do more than simply accompany the visual aspect of movies, that it is also capable of

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3 For a more complete overview of this debate see Michael Klein, “Chopin’s Fourth Ballade as Musical Narrative” (*Music Theory Spectrum*, 2004) 26/1, 23–56.
4 Klein, 24.
5 Among the scholars who share this view include Claudia Gorbman, as shown in her book *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).
producing additional emotional affect for the audience and of providing the viewers with information pertinent to the storyline and character development.

*The Importance of Film Music*

The evolution of the motion picture industry took significant strides in the 1920s with the invention of *talkies*, as the moving image was finally united with speech, music, and sound effects. Since then, film music has held a prominent role in the movie making industry, demonstrated by the inclusion of an academy award for best original film score since 1934. In fact, movies and their accompanying scores have shared a seemingly symbiotic relationship since their joining, particularly in the recent decades. Since 1970, thirty-one films that won the academy-award for best film score were also nominated for best picture, twenty-two best picture winners were also nominated for best film score, and eleven films that won best picture also won best film score (Figure 1-1). During the same period, there also has not been a year in which at least one of the five films nominated for best picture was not also nominated for best film score, and in almost every one of those years more than one film was nominated in both categories (save 1984, 1986, 1992, and 2002).

Such a close relationship between successful films and their accompanying soundtracks demonstrates the importance music plays in the overall movie experience, and justifies the increasing consideration of film music for theoretical analysis. However, questions remain as to what role film scores actually play in generating the audiences’ perception of a movie, whether or not the music is able to influence audience emotions or convey pertinent information to them, and if so, how?

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6 Table was generated from information at The Official Academy Awards Database at <http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org/ampas_awards/BasicSearch> (accessed February 10, 2007).
1970 – Patton*, Airport, Love Story+
1971 – Nicholas and Alexandra, Fiddler on the Roof+
1972 – The Godfather*, Cabaret+
1973 – The Sting*, A Touch of Class
1975 – One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Barry Lyndon+, Jaws+
1976 – Bound for Glory+, Taxi Driver
1977 – Julia, Star Wars+
1978 – Heaven Can Wait, Midnight Express+
1979 – All that Jazz+, Breaking Away

1980 – The Elephant Man, Tess
1981 – Chariots of Fire*, On Golden Pond, Raiders of the Lost Ark
1982 – Gandhi*, E.T.+,
1983 – Terms of Endearment*, The Right Stuff+
1984 – A Passage to India+
1986 – The Mission
1987 – The Last Emperor*+
1988 – Rain Man*, The Accidental Tourist, Dangerous Liaisons
1989 – Born on the Fourth of July, Field of Dreams

1990 – Dances with Wolves*, Ghost
1991 – Beauty and the Beast+, Bugsy, JFK, The Prince of Tides
1992 – Howards End
1994 – Forrest Gump*, The Shawshank Redemption
1995 – Braveheart*, Apollo 13, Il Postino+, Sense and Sensibility
1996 – The English Patient*+, Shine
1997 – Titanic*+, As Good as it Gets, The Full Monty+, Good Will Hunting, L.A. Confidential
1999 – American Beauty*, The Cider House Rules

2000 – Gladiator*, Chocolat, Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon+,
2001 – A Beautiful Mind *, The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring+
2002 – The Hours
2003 – The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*+
2004 – Finding Neverland+
2005 – Brokeback Mountain+, Munich

* denotes won best picture
+ denotes won best film score
** denotes won both

Figure 1-1: Best picture nominations since 1970 which were also nominated for best film score
Several psychologists have investigated the effects of film music on an audiences’ perception of a movie. For instance, Annabel Cohen\(^7\) used cognitive psychology to discuss how film music can add meaning to the film, aid the viewers’ memory, and cause them to suspend disbelief. A more elaborate psychological experiment was conducted by Marilyn Boltz, who sought to

…investigate whether the affect of music can also contribute to a story’s comprehension by guiding the course of selective attending and providing a more elaborative encoding of characters’ actions, motivations, and inherent temperament. These ideas were examined by presenting participants with three ambiguous film clips accompanied by positive, negative, and no music. Immediately after viewing each clip, some participants were asked to extrapolate the film’s ending, evaluate the personality and motivations of the main character(s), and complete a series of bipolar adjective ratings about the film’s actions. In addition, other participants returned a week later for a surprise recognition test that assessed their memory for certain objects within each film. Results revealed that relative to the control group of no music, positive and negative music significantly biased viewers’ interpretation and subsequent remembering of a film in a mood congruent fashion.\(^8\)

Both of these articles further the argument that film music has the ability to influence an audiences’ perception of a film, convey information to them, affect them emotionally, and aid in

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their memory of the events of the film. However, while these articles strengthen the idea that film music can somehow act as a narrator for the audience, neither of them outlines a method for determining exactly what kind affective response are generated by the music.⁹

Method

Some of the most significant work done in the past decades towards the analysis of popular music is that of Philip Tagg. Tagg was one of the early advocates for a serious study of popular music, and felt that

the serious study of popular music is not a matter of intellectuals turning hip or of mods and rockers going academic. It is a question of (a) getting together two equally important parts of experience, the intellectual and emotional, inside our own heads and (b) being able as music teachers to face pupils whose musical outlook has been crippled by those who present “serious music” as if it could never be “fun” and “fun music” as though it could never have any serious implications.¹⁰

Tagg’s approach to the analysis of popular music analysis has focused on what he calls musematic analysis. Musematic analysis breaks down musical examples into musemes, or “minimal units of musical meaning.”¹¹ The musemes of the musical example under analysis are then compared to those from other examples of music of the mass media which posses sociomusical connotations. Tagg’s concept of music possessing sociomusical connotations stems

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⁹ With the exception of the general categories of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ music discussed by Boltz.
from Piercian semiotic theory of iconic and symbolic representation. Iconic musical examples refer to music which literally reflects sounds of nature, such as Messiaen’s bird calls or musical gestures imitating water. Symbolic representation is more closely related to Tagg’s comparisons, as the music gains meaning through its place in society. Eero Tarasti relates this to the

Finnish national anthem…written by the German-born composer Fredrik Pacius…a mazurka-type German lied, it has no iconic relations with Finland, neither is there anything Finnish in the Finlandia hymn by Jean Sibelius. Only later, through subsequent conventions stemming from certain historical events, did these melodies assume their positions as national symbols.¹²

Such a description demonstrates Tagg’s concept of sociomusical connotations, in that music gradually achieves meaning due to its place in society. If the same musemes are found in both the object of analysis and in the examples possessing sociomusical connotations, then the object of analysis may possess those same sociomusical connotations.

Musematic analysis allows for the identification of musical signifiers and signifieds on the basis of two types of demonstrable consistency: [1] interobjective or intertextual, in the sense that the same or similar musical structures (designated at this stage of research in constructional terms) are used in different works by different musicians belonging to the same basic music culture; [2] the same or similar paramusical phenomena are linked

by different individuals, belonging to the same basic music culture, to the same or similar musical structures.¹³

Tagg’s two major works are his *Kojak*¹⁴ analysis, and his *Ten Little Title Tunes*.¹⁵ Both of these works use musematic analysis to determine what kind of affective response the audience experiences as a result of various title tunes, such as the themes for *Kojak*, *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*, and *Miami Vice*. Though Tagg did not analyze film music in either of these works, his method is quite applicable to film score analysis. When performing musematic analysis on film scores, we can compare the main themes of the film score to music with sociomusical connotations to determine what information is conveyed or what emotions may be felt by the audience. In an extensive film score, we can also trace any alterations of the main themes to investigate how modifications of the themes can change their affect.

One of the most significant film scores to appear in the last decade was Howard Shore’s score to Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Shore won two academy awards (2002, 2004) for best film score for the music he composed for Jackson’s films. The magnitude of Shore’s *Lord of the Rings* score provides an excellent arena in which to perform musematic analysis, due to Shore’s use of similar thematic material throughout all three installments. An additional benefit of *The Lord of the Rings* score is the opportunity to not only consider the meaning of the music as related to the visual representation on-screen, but to also compare the film score to the novels on which the movies were based. J.R.R Tolkien’s fantasy epic *The Lord of the Rings* has inspired thousands of musical works spanning the genres of rock music, folk

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music, and classical music.\textsuperscript{16} This probably stems from the important role of music within Tolkien’s novels. All of the novel’s installments include descriptions of instruments used in the different lands, poetry sung by the inhabitants, and exhaustive descriptions of the cultures present throughout Middle-earth, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

In this thesis I will explore several aspects of Howard Shore’s film score. First, I will investigate how the discussions of music in Tolkien’s novels are reflected in Shore’s music through instrumentation and style. I will then examine how motivic relationships between the major themes in the film correlate to the descriptions and relationships of culture within the text. Finally I will analyze the major themes of the film score using an approach similar to Tagg’s, and consider the impact of musical affect on the audience’s perception of the film. Through the interrelation of the above aspects of Shore’s film score, I will demonstrate that the music does much more than simply accompany the action occurring on the screen. It also serves as a narrator, conveying information pertinent to character development to the audience, and stimulates emotional responses in the viewers which correlate to cultural and characterial actions and personas suggested by Jackson’s film and Tolkien’s novel.

Due to the score being unavailable, the analyses will be based on my own transcriptions of the soundtrack, which will accurately depict the aspects of the soundtrack that I as a listener perceive and find relevant to this discussion. References made to and excerpts taken from any of \textit{The Lord of the Rings} film score will be referenced as: Name of Theme, \textit{Title of Movie}, Disc Number, Time of Movie.\textsuperscript{17} References to any other film score will follow the same format. All

\textsuperscript{16} Examples include the Beatles’ song “She Said, She Said,” Led Zeppelin’s “Ramble on” and “Misty Mountain Hop,” Rush’s “Rivendell,” and Johan de Meij’s first symphony, “The Lord of the Rings.”

references to Tolkien’s novels are to the recently released anniversary edition of the text,\textsuperscript{18} which contains pagination alterations from previous editions of the text.

\textit{Chapter Overview}

Chapter two will discuss music and culture as presented in Tolkien’s novels. Particular attention will be paid to instances where Tolkien mentions specific instruments that were played by the various cultures, references to singing styles of the cultures, or cultural traits which allude to what the music of Middle-earth may have sounded like in Tolkien’s mind.

Chapter three will demonstrate how Shore’s music represents Tolkien’s novels through instrumentation, style, and motivic relationships. This chapter focuses on the primary themes of each culture presented in Jackson’s film. Quotations of Tolkien’s poetry in the films will also be addressed. The goal is to suggest that Tolkien’s text served as a source of inspiration for Shore in developing the themes for the film.

Chapter Four will present an analysis of the musemes found in the major themes in the score, and will explain the emotions that are related to the audience through these themes. Through the musematic analysis, we will gain a better understanding of what information and emotions are related to the audience. Additionally, we will compare alterations of the themes to their originals to determine how changing the themes impact the affective response of the audience.

Chapter Five will present conclusions: that the score is firmly grounded in the source texts for the movie, and that the music does not merely accompany the on-screen action, but also conveys emotion and information to the audience. Chapter five will also discuss the effectiveness

of the analytical techniques used, how they are approachable for musicians and non–musicians alike, and provide suggestions for further study.

Obviously an analysis of the totality of Shore’s score would be far too large of a project for one thesis. Therefore, the themes selected in chapters three and four are those I believe to be the most pertinent to the overall film score. The themes selected are those which directly reflect a major culture or character in the film; those which appear extensively throughout the three films; and those which are manipulated in various ways by Shore to reflect contrasting situations within the film.
CHAPTER II

Music and Culture of Middle-earth

Anyone who has ever delved into *The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, The Silmarillion*, or any other of Tolkien’s works is aware that his books are much more than fantasy novels. Within his writings, Tolkien created an alternate world, rich with different cultures, historical accounts of those cultures, and intercultural relationships between the various lands of Middle-earth. A large part of *The Lord of the Rings* is spent explaining in detail the distinctive cultural traits of hobbits, dwarfs, elves, wizards, orcs, and men. Among the traits discussed, Tolkien describes the clothing, weaponry, government, education, history, recreation, and (most importantly to this study) the musical instruments and poetry of the inhabitants of Middle-earth. Tolkien’s descriptions of the cultures of Middle-earth are so exhaustive that several scholars have dedicated their careers to studying the historical interrelations of the lands, as well as to creating chronological successions of events and genealogical trees of the bloodlines the inhabitants.¹⁹

What follows here are a brief synopsis of the events that take place within *The Lord of the Rings* and a limited overview of the various lands and cultures of the novel, which focuses on musical instruments, poetry, and historical and cultural traits that relate to Howard Shore’s film score.

In its simplest form, *The Lord of the Rings* is the classic tale of the battle between good and evil. The story centers on a ring of power, which was forged by the dark lord of Mordor, Sauron, to give him the ability to control all of the lands of Middle-earth. Before the events of *The Lord of the Rings* began, there was a great war between the armies of Mordor and the free

people of Middle-earth, in which Sauron was defeated and mankind had the opportunity to
destroy the ring of power. However, the ring’s enchantment had already ensnared Isildur, the
man who cut the ring from Sauron’s hand, and he chose to keep the ring for himself. Two years
later Isildur, now king of Gondor,\textsuperscript{20} was killed and the ring was lost for nearly a thousand years,
until it was recovered by Déagol while he was fishing.\textsuperscript{21} He was killed immediately by his
cousin Sméagol, who took the ring and fled to the Misty Mountains, where he lived in isolation
for nearly 500 years.\textsuperscript{22} Finally the ring passed to a Hobbit named Bilbo Baggins, who found the
ring while he was aiding in the killing of the dragon Smaug\textsuperscript{23} sometime before the events of \textit{The
Lord of the Rings}. Bilbo brought the ring with him back to the Shire,\textsuperscript{24} and passed it on his 111\textsuperscript{th}
birthday to his nephew Frodo Baggins, beginning the tale with which this thesis is concerned.

Upon inheriting the ring of power from Bilbo, Frodo was advised by the wizard Gandalf
of the ring’s significance. Gandalf also told Frodo that Sauron had captured Gollum, who told
Sauron that the ring was in the Shire. Knowing that Sauron would not rest until he regained
control of the ring, Gandalf sent Frodo and Samwise Gamgee\textsuperscript{25} away from the Shire to the
village Bree, where Gandalf would later meet up with them. While leaving the Shire, Frodo and
Sam met up with two other hobbits, Meriadoc Brandybuck and Peregrin Took,\textsuperscript{26} and the four of
them traveled together to Bree. Meanwhile Gandalf traveled to Isengard to meet with the head of
the Wizards, Saruman, to seek his advice on what to do with the ring. However, upon arriving at

\textsuperscript{20} One of the Kingdoms of mankind in Middle-earth.
\textsuperscript{21} Déagol and Sméagol were Stoors, a kind of Hobbit.
\textsuperscript{22} After Sméagol’s jealousy over the ring lead him to kill Déagol, he was cursed by the ring and driven out of
society. His possession of the ring granted him long life, but its power consumed him, and his entire existence
revolved around the ring. His isolation in the darkness of the Misty Mountains caused him to evolve into a creature
quite unlike Hobbits, and he was then called Gollum.
\textsuperscript{23} The account of this adventure is told in Tolkien’s \textit{The Hobbit}, but has little to do with this paper.
\textsuperscript{24} The area of Middle-earth where most of the Hobbits lived.
\textsuperscript{25} Another Hobbit, Frodo’s Gardener and best friend.
\textsuperscript{26} Meriadoc and Peregrin were more commonly referred to as Merry and Pippin.
Isengard Gandalf found that Saruman had pledged allegiance to Sauron, and that the free people of Middle-earth would now have to fight the armies of both Mordor and Isengard.

At Bree, the four hobbits met Aragorn, the heir of Isildur and future king of Gondor. Aragorn led the hobbits to Rivendell,\textsuperscript{27} where they were reunited with Gandalf. At Rivendell, the Fellowship of the Ring was created with the sole purpose of traveling to Mordor to destroy the ring by throwing into the fires of Mount Doom.\textsuperscript{28} The Fellowship consisted of the four hobbits, Gandalf, Aragorn, an elf named Legolas, a dwarf named Gimli, and another man from Gondor named Boromir. The Fellowship traveled eastward to the Falls of Rauros where they were attacked by a group of orcs\textsuperscript{29} sent by Saruman from Isengard. At this point the Fellowship was divided. Boromir was killed, Frodo and Sam escaped to the east and continued their journey to Mordor, and Merry and Pippin were captured by the orcs. Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli set out after the orcs to rescue Merry and Pippin and in the process were rejoined by Gandalf who had been lost earlier in the quest. The four traveled to Edoras and joined the men of Rohan in battling Saruman’s army at Helm’s Deep.\textsuperscript{30} After defeating Saruman’s army, the four went to Isengard and found that it had been reclaimed by Merry, Pippin, and an army of Ents.\textsuperscript{31} Following their victory over Saruman, Gandalf and company convinced the army of Rohan to travel south and

\textsuperscript{27} Rivendell was one of the realms of the elves, the home of the elf leader Elrond.

\textsuperscript{28} A volcano in the middle of Mordor where Sauron forged the ring of power. They only way that the ring could be destroyed was to throw it into the lava of the volcano. Sauron’s life force was entwined with the ring, thus as long as the ring survived Sauron survived, and the only way to defeat Sauron was by destroying the ring.

\textsuperscript{29} Orcs were an evil race of Middle-earth, bred from elves but basically the opposite. They loved to kill and destroy all things, and served both Saruman and Sauron during \textit{The Lord of the Rings}.

\textsuperscript{30} Rohan was another kingdom of men located to the North of Gondor. Edoras was the capital of Rohan, and Helm’s Deep was the fortress they fled to when Saruman sent his army from Isengard to attack.

\textsuperscript{31} A cross between men and trees, Ents were essentially trees that could walk and talk. They were convinced by Merry and Pippin to join in the battle, and defeated Saruman at Isengard. The Ents attacked in retaliation for Saruman’s destruction of the forest during the forming of his army.
aid Gondor in protecting Minas Tirith\textsuperscript{32} from Sauron’s armies of Mordor. With the help of Rohan, Sauron’s armies were driven off, and Minas Tirith remained intact.

During this time, Frodo and Sam were making their way towards Mordor when they were ambushed by Gollum, who was attempting to recover the ring for himself. Frodo showed kindness to Gollum, and convinced Gollum to lead them into Mordor. When Frodo and Sam arrived in the heart of Mordor, they found it filled with orcs and impassible. However, Aragorn led an army, made up of the remaining members of the Fellowship and the remaining men of Gondor and Rohan, to the Black Gate of Mordor. The army distracted Sauron, and he sent every remaining orc in Mordor to fight against Aragorn’s army. The distraction cleared out Mordor, and allowed Frodo and Sam to make their way to Mount Doom and destroy the ring, forever ending Sauron’s reign of terror in Middle-earth.

*The Culture of the Shire and Hobbits*

This discussion of culture in Middle-earth will begin with the Shire. The Shire was located in the northwest of Middle-earth, and was generally secluded from the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{33} The main inhabitants of the Shire at the time of *The Lord of the Rings* were Hobbits, who were described in detail by Tolkien.

Hobbits are an unobtrusive but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favorite haunt. They do not and did not understand or like machines more complicated than a forge-bellows, a water-mill, or a hand-loom, though

\textsuperscript{32} The capital of Gondor.

\textsuperscript{33} A map of Middle-earth is provided in Figure 2-1.
they were skilful with tools...laugh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day (when they could get them). They were hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted. It is plain indeed that in spite of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives of [men]: far nearer to us than Elves, or even than Dwarves.\textsuperscript{34}

From Tolkien’s description we can gather that Hobbits were generally farmers or peasants who enjoyed a very simple lifestyle, filled with eating, drinking, and partying. The similarities in culture between Hobbits and men can be attributed to the existence of Hobbits before they came to inhabit the Shire. Before they moved westward, Hobbits “dwelt in the upper vales of Anduin, between the eaves of Greenwood the Great and the Misty Mountains.”\textsuperscript{35} During the time spent east of the Misty Mountains, the Hobbits had contact with “various kindred of Men living between Mirkwood and the Misty Mountains” as “the Rohirrim, the Men of Dale, and of the Long Lake, and the Northmen originally dwelt there.”\textsuperscript{36} We know from Tolkien’s description of Bilbo’s birthday that Hobbits had “trumpets and horns, pipes and flutes, and other musical instruments.”\textsuperscript{37} One other musical instrument that is strongly associated with to the Shire in \textit{The Lord of the Rings} is the fiddle, which Frodo sings about while reminiscing about his homeland while at the Inn of the Prancing Pony in Bree.

\textsuperscript{34} Tolkien, 1–2.
\textsuperscript{35} Tolkien, 3.
\textsuperscript{37} Tolkien, 29.
The ostler has a tipsy cat
that plays a five-stringed fiddle;
And up and down he runs his bow,
Now squeaking high, now purring low,
now sawing in the middle.\(^{38}\)

This poem not only tells us of an instrument Hobbits were familiar with, but it also provides a glimpse to what the music of the Shire could have sounded like. There are numerous accounts of Hobbits singing poetry throughout *The Lord of the Rings*. Another instance is Bilbo’s traveling song that he sings as he is leaving the shire after passing the ring of power on to Frodo.

I am being swept off my feet at last, he added, and then in a low voice, as if to himself, he sang softly in the dark:

*The Road goes ever on and on*

*Down from the door where it began.*

*Now far ahead the Road has gone,*

*And I must follow, if I can...*\(^{39}\)

The best indication of the style of the Hobbits’ singing comes from Tolkien’s description of Pippin’s feelings in the halls of Minis Tirith.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) Tolkien, 158.

\(^{39}\) Tolkien, 35.

\(^{40}\) Pippin had traveled with Gandalf to prepare Gondor to war, and volunteered his service to the Steward of Gondor in payment of his son, Boromir’s, death. At this point of the novel Gondor is about to be attacked, and the Steward asked Pippin if he could sing.
Pippin’s heart sank. He did not relish the idea of singing any song of the Shire to the Lord of Minas Tirith, certainly not the comic ones that he knew best; they were too, well, rustic for such an occasion.\textsuperscript{41}

Tolkien’s “rustic” description of the songs of the Shire leads us to imagine their singing to be akin to peasant folk tunes.

\textsuperscript{41} Tolkien, 807.
Figure 2-1: Map of Middle-earth at the time of *The Lord of the Rings*
Mankind of Middle-earth

The world of man as it pertains to the events of *The Lord of the Rings* can basically be divided between the kingdoms of Gondor and of Rohan. While both of these kingdoms were inhabited entirely by men and women, their cultures were quite different. Gondor’s cities were filled with more splendor and riches, in particular its capital, Minas Tirith. The Dúnedain were proud people, though their cities were constantly under threat of attack due to their shared border with Mordor.

The Dúnedain were superior to other Men in nobility of spirit and body, although they were of course capable of evil if corrupted. They were tall, with dark hair…possessed great wisdom and discernment, and occasional foresight…their descendants loved the elves and were liked by them…

The Dúnedain were, in a sense, the more urban of the two cultures, with more refined customs and lifestyles. Rohan was located to the north of Gondor, and their culture has often been compared to that of the Vikings.

The Rohirrim farmed and raised horse…and restored ancient fortresses…most of the Rohirrim dwelt in small villages or on farms. Their greatest concern was for their horses, which were the best in the world. The Rohirrim were tall and blond, with fair

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42 The inhabitants of Gondor are called the Dúnedain, and those of Rohan are called the Rohirrim.
43 Foster, 121.
faces…were culturally conservative, keeping even into the Fourth Age their ancient customs and language.\textsuperscript{44}

We can infer that the Rohirrim were more peasant-like in nature than the Dúnedain, and lived a simpler, more rural life.

From Tolkien’s text we gain some insight into what the music of these cultures was like. The main instrument of men was the horn, as is suggested in the description of the army of Rohan aiding Gondor, when the king of Rohan

seized a great horn from Guthlaf his banner-bearer, and he blew such a blast upon it that it burst asunder. And straightway all the horns in the host were lifted up in music, and the blowing of the horns of Rohan in that hour was like a storm upon the plain and a thunder in the mountains.\textsuperscript{45}

Tolkien also refers often to the Horn of Gondor, “a great horn tipped with silver,”\textsuperscript{46} that was carried by Boromir. Tolkien also alludes to the style of music men sang through his description of a song sung by Aragorn. “He was silent for some time, and then he began not to speak but to chant softly…Strider sighed and paused before he spoke again. ‘That is a song,’ he said, ‘in the mode that is called ann-thennath among the Elves…’”\textsuperscript{47} Tolkien’s description of men chanting is strikingly different from the folksong nature of Hobbit music. Rather than a lilting folk melody,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Foster, 423; 425.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Tolkien, 838.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Tolkien, 240.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Tolkien, 191; 193.
\end{itemize}
we would envision the chant to be more serene and formal in style, possibly similar to the sound of Medieval chant.

*The Evil Lands of Middle-earth*

Isengard and Mordor make up the two areas where the races trying to disrupt the peace of Middle-earth lived. The main inhabitants of these areas were orcs, who “were fierce warriors…tended to be short, squat, and bow-legged…were skilled in tunneling, in making weapons…hated all things of beauty and loved to kill and destroy.” In general, orcs were a barbaric race that was anti-nature. In fact, one of the underlying themes of Tolkien’s novel was the evil of industry versus the purity of nature. Nature was represented by the lives of Hobbits and Elves and their love of earth, whereas areas such as Isengard replaced “grass and trees with stone and machinery.” Less is known about the music of orcs than of other races, however we do know that they used drums and some sort of horn based on Tolkien’s accounts of the Fellowship in the Mines of Moria. “Doom, doom came the drum-beat and the walls shook…Another harsh horn-call and shrill cries rang out.” We would not expect a race as harsh as the orcs to possess any type of beautiful music. Rather, by Tolkien’s description, we would predict their music to be very percussive and march-like, as though constantly heading towards war.

*The Culture of Elves*

Of all the races of Middle-earth, Tolkien elaborated the most on the life, history, and culture of the elves. In fact, Tolkien was so enthralled with developing the tales of the elves that he went so

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48 Foster, 388.
49 Foster, 271.
50 Tolkien, 323.
far as to develop his own language, Elvish, which has been studied and mastered by Tolkien enthusiasts worldwide. Tolkien also wrote the book *The Silmarillion*, which recounts the complete history and genealogy of the Elves. Two groups of Elves play a key role in *The Lord of the Rings*, those of Rivendell and those of Lórien.\(^{51}\) *Elves* were the eldest of all creatures of Middle-earth.

They were the fairest of all earthly creatures…about six feet tall and somewhat slender, graceful but strong and resistant to the extremes of nature. Their senses, especially of hearing and sight, were much keener than those of Men…Elves loved all beautiful things, but especially the wonders of nature…Their curiosity and desire for knowledge was insatiable.\(^{52}\)

Elves are regarded as being the most intelligent and highest class of creatures in Middle-earth. Thus we would expect their music to be of a higher level than the music of Men or Hobbits. Through Tolkien’s description of the Fellowship’s journey through Lórien we know that elves sang, and that they played the harp.

In the midst of the vessel sat Celeborn, and behind him stood Galadriel, tall and white; a circlet of golden flowers was in her hair, and in her hand she held a harp, and she sang. Sad and sweet was the sound of her voice in the cool clear air.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{51}\) Lórien was an Elven realm east of the Misty Mountains. The Fellowship rested there for a month before they were attacked by Saruman’s orcs at the Falls of Rauros. Lórien was the home of the Elven Lord Celeborn, and the Elven Queen Galadriel, who provided the Fellowship with several gifts to aid them on their quest.

\(^{52}\) Foster, 147.

\(^{53}\) Tolkien, 372.
Tolkien also hints that in contrast to the chant of Mankind, elves sang in polyphony. This is suggested by Tolkien’s telling of Frodo and Sam seeing the passing of the Elves in the Old Forrest.\textsuperscript{54}

But at that moment there came a sound like mingled song and laughter. Clear voices rose and fell in the starlit air…The singing drew nearer. One clear voice rose now above the others. It was singing in the fair elven-tongue, of which Frodo knew only a little…Yet the sound blending with the melody seemed to shape itself in their thought into words which they only partly understood.\textsuperscript{55}

Tolkien’s description suggests a single voice part singing a melody line against stationary harmony parts. Thus the music of the Elves was more complicated or educated than that of men and hobbits, as they were singing in polyphony rather than monophonic lines.

The focus of this brief survey of the main cultures of \textit{The Lord of the Rings} has been on the cultures that play a key role the Peter Jackson’s film adaptation of the novels and for which Howard Shore composed important musical themes. Also included is every crucial reference to musical instruments and styles Tolkien presents in his text. Tolkien’s elaborately designed word in \textit{The Lord of the Rings} provides a plethora of information that could influence a film score. Howard Shore had at his disposal as inspiration for his music texts to use for singers, knowledge of which instruments might best carry the main themes of each land, descriptions of musical styles for the various cultures, and information necessary to develop motivic relationships amongst the different characters of the storyline. As we will see in the following chapter,

\textsuperscript{54} The Old Forrest was on the Eastern border of the Shire. The Elves were on their way to travel over the Great Sea to the West of the Shire, and on to the blessed lands.

\textsuperscript{55} Tolkien, 78–79.
Tolkien’s novel did in fact appear to play a key role in the development of several of the main themes for Shore’s score.
CHAPTER III
Scoring Tolkien’s Novels

By the time Howard Shore was finished composing the score for *The Lord of the Rings*, he had written almost ten hours of nearly continuous music to accompany the film. Shore composed themes for nearly every character presented in the movie, in addition to multiple themes for some of the lands, themes for nature, and themes for the ring of power. Several of the motives for *The Lord of the Rings* are thematically related, connecting various characters to each other as well as providing for a more fluid film score. While the thematic relationships between the motives of this score provide an interesting topic, this discussion will focus mostly on how the motives were derived from Tolkien’s novel. In particular, I will investigate how Shore’s music is connected to the text through threads such as instrumentation, musical style, poetry, and thematic relationships which are supported by cultural ties established in Tolkien’s writings. I will also discuss the music that is sung by the characters in the film, and relate the styles of those songs to the styles suggested by Tolkien’s text. Through this study, I will demonstrate that Shore’s score not only accompanies the on-screen action of the film, but that it also serves as a medium through which information pertinent to character development within the film is passed on to the audience.

*The Shire Themes and Hobbit Songs*

Shore composed one main theme for the Shire (Example 3-1), which he varied throughout the movie either by altering its voicing or instrumentation, or by altering the melody and style of the theme while maintaining the same basic feel. One alteration Shore used involved having a flute carry the violin melody line of the theme (Example 3-2). This alteration debuts the first time we

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56 <www.lordoftherings.net> lists the lengths of the extended edition DVDs as: *The Fellowship of the Ring*: 208 min; *The Two Towers*: 223 min; *The Return of the King*: 250 min.
see Frodo on the screen, and returns throughout the three movies whenever Frodo reminisces about the Shire, correlating the flute Shire theme with Frodo’s character. Another alteration of the Shire Theme is a more playful fiddle solo which is played as Bilbo tells the audience about the Shire and the nature of Hobbits (Example 3-3). While the style of this theme is quite different from the others, the opening D-E-F-sharp motive connects all three themes.

Example 3-1: Shire Theme, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Part 1, 0:07:41

Example 3-2: Frodo’s Theme, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Part 1, 0:10:30
Even with the slight variations between each theme, ties to Tolkien’s text can be made for each. For starters, the main melodic instruments of the Shire themes (violin, fiddle, and flute) are all instruments correlated with Hobbits in Tolkien’s novels. The style of the music is generally similar to Irish Celtic music, which developed in the rural areas of Ireland. Similarities between the Shire music and Celtic music are found through instrumentation of the themes, and the ornamentation of the melody line. The rural nature of Celtic music is consistent with the rural, peasant nature of Hobbits described by Tolkien. There appears to be another connection to the descriptions of Hobbit music in the novel, in that the Shire Fiddle theme bears a striking similarity to Frodo’s poem about the “Ostler’s cat that plays a five-string fiddle” first “squeaking high, then purring low.” Not only does Shore’s theme feature a solo fiddle filled with “squeaky” grace notes, but the contour of the melody line moves from high to low. The fiddle theme accompanying the description of Hobbit life in the Shire parallels the events of the text, as Frodo was singing a song about his home while he was in the village Bree.

Further connections between the text and the film score can be found when we hear the Hobbit characters sing. The Hobbits sing twice within *The Fellowship of the Ring*: Bilbo and

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57 Fiddles and Flutes are common in Celtic music. Shore also uses the Bodhrán, the principal Irish percussion instrument, in the Shire themes.

58 Tolkien, 158.
Gandalf sing a traveling song (Example 3-4), and Merry and Pippin sing a drinking song (Example 3-5). Both of these examples echo what we would predict Hobbit music to sound like based on the novel’s description. The songs are rhythmically simple, have easy, diatonic melodies and harmonies, and represent the folk-song nature suggested by Tolkien’s “rustic” description of Hobbit tunes. Both of the melodies are settings of actual poems found within Tolkien’s novel, furthering the connection between the score and the text.

Example 3-4: Traveling Song, The Fellowship of the Ring, Part 1, 0:10:52

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59 Tolkien, 807.
Shore composed two main themes for the world of men, one for the realm of Gondor, and one for the realm of Rohan. The Gondor theme is first introduced during the Council of Elrond in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, while Aragorn and Boromir (the two main characters from Gondor) are arguing over the fate of the ring (Example 3-6). The theme is a simple, expansive melody played by a single French horn. The use of the French horn is likely a reflection of the Horn of...
Gondor\textsuperscript{60} referenced throughout Tolkien’s novel. The broad melody could represent the proud, noble spirit of the Dúnedain,\textsuperscript{61} represented in Tolkien’s writing.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{gondor_theme.png}
\caption{Example 3-6: Gondor Theme, \textit{The Fellowship of the Ring}, Part 1, 1:39:43}
\end{figure}

The Rohan theme plays a more central role in the films than the Gondor theme. In fact, the Rohan theme is basically the main theme of \textit{The Two Towers}. The first appearance of the full Rohan theme occurs when Gandalf is freeing King Théoden\textsuperscript{62} from Saruman’s spell (Example 3-7). The main theme features a choir of French horns, echoing Tolkien’s description of “the blowing of the horns of Rohan”\textsuperscript{63} during Rohan’s aid at Gondor. The main alteration Shore makes to the Rohan theme involves substituting a Hardanger fiddle for the horn melody line (Example 3-8). The use of the fiddle could suggest multiple relationships to Tolkien’s text. The most obvious relationship is the Hardanger fiddle’s Norwegian origin, correlating to the Viking culture that is often associated with the culture of the Rohirrim. A more distant connection to the text may also appear through Shore’s use of the fiddle in the Rohan theme. Connecting the two worlds of men through the use of French horns as the primary instrument seems logical. However the only other culture for which Shore uses a fiddle solo as the main melodic instrument is the Shire. The connection between Hobbit and Rohirrim cultures through instrumentation makes more sense when we refer to Tolkien’s novel: Tolkien states not only that Hobbits are more similar to men than any other culture of Middle-earth,\textsuperscript{64} but also that both the cross-references:

\textsuperscript{60} Tolkien, 240.
\textsuperscript{61} Foster, 121.
\textsuperscript{62} Théoden was the King of Rohan at the time of \textit{The Lord of the Rings}. His mind was under Saruman’s control until Gandalf traveled to Edoras to free Théoden from Saruman’s spell.
\textsuperscript{63} Tolkien, 838.
\textsuperscript{64} Tolkien, 1–2.
Hobbits and Rohirrim migrated from the same area of Middle-earth east of the Misty Mountains. Thus it would make sense for these two cultures to use similar musical instruments.

Example 3-7: Rohan Theme, *The Two Towers*, Part 1, 1:21:44

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65 Foster, 328.
The main characters of the world of men sing a few times within the films. We hear Aragorn sing twice, representing the realm of Gondor (Examples 3-9a & 3-9b), and we hear Éowyn\(^66\) sing once, representing the realm of Rohan (Example 3-10).\(^67\) Just as the main themes of men were related through instrumentation, man’s style of singing between the two lands is the same. As Tolkien describes in his novel,\(^68\) both Éowyn and Aragorn sing in a simple chant style that is strikingly different from the more folksong singing of the Hobbits. The modes of these chants are relatively difficult to determine, though the first Aragorn chant seems to be in Mixolydian, and his other chant and Éowyn’s chant seem to be in either Dorian or Aeolian. All of the chants reflect the stately traditions that were still being upheld by the world of men in Middle-earth.

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\(^{66}\) Éowyn was a woman of Rohan, the niece of Théoden.

\(^{67}\) The rhythms of these transcriptions are not intended to be literal, rather they try to show which notes are lengthened, shortened, and where pauses are taken within the score.

\(^{68}\) Tolkien, 191; 193.
The Evil Music of Middle-earth

Isengard, Mordor, and the ring each have individual themes within Shore’s film score. Of these three themes, Isengard’s (Example 3-11) is probably the most reflective of Tolkien’s text. The theme is very percussive, and features a very harsh, low brass melody. Both of these traits are reflective of Tolkien’s description of Orc instruments in his novel. The Isengard theme also uses an anvil in the percussion part, and it is the only theme in the films for which Shore uses this instrument. The use of the anvil could represent the correlation in Tolkien’s novel between the evil areas of Middle-earth and their industrial tendencies. In addition, the 5/4 time meter and irregular three-bar phrase length contribute to Shore’s representation of the harshness of Orc culture suggested by Tolkien’s writings.

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69 Tolkien, 323.
70 Foster, 271.
It is more difficult to find textual relationships for Shore’s Mordor and Ring themes, as there was little (if any) discussion of music in Mordor, and the ring does not represent a culture, but is an entity in and of itself. Yet we do know of the strong bind between Sauron and the ring of power, as Sauron’s life force depended on the survival of the ring. Thus we would expect the themes for the ring and for Mordor to be thematically related, and indeed they are. The main ring theme (Example 3-12) is rather seductive in nature, representing the ring’s ability to control the minds of whoever carries it. The Mordor theme (Example 3-13) is more aggressive, and represents Sauron's terror, and Mordor’s drive toward war. Though stylistically different, the two themes are quite similar melodically, in that the first four notes of each theme have the same melodic contour, and almost identical intervallic patterns (Figure 3-2). While these two themes cannot be correlated with Tolkien’s text through instrumentation, Shore seems to have sought to connect the themes to the character relationships developed in the novels.
Example 3-12: Ring Theme, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Part 1, 0:00:57

Example 3-13: Mordor Theme, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Part 1, 0:32:07

Figure 3-1: Correlation of Melodies between Mordor and Ring Themes
The Themes of the Elves

As with the other lands of Middle-earth, Shore composed a theme for the elf city of Rivendell (Example 3-14a). The Rivendell theme debuts in The Fellowship of the Ring, as we see the realm of the elf city in its entirety for the first time, shortly before the founding of the Fellowship. The theme features the first appearance of the harp within the film score, as well as a women’s choir, correlating the theme to Tolkien’s connection between elves, singing, and the harp.\(^{71}\) Though the harp plays a minor role in the theme, the arpeggiated viola melody line imitates a harp part, furthering the relation to Tolkien’s text. For the Lórien theme, Shore again brings back the women’s choir and harp (Example 3-14b). This theme is more dissonant than the Rivendell theme, suggesting a more mysterious culture in Lórien than in Rivendell; however the connection to Tolkien’s text through instrumentation remains the same. The more mysterious music may reflect the Fellowships’ uncertainty about traveling through Lórien and the aura of fear they have regarding Galadriel.\(^{72}\)

\(^{71}\) Tolkien, 372.
\(^{72}\) Galadriel was thought to be a witch by several cultures in Middle-earth due to the elves of Lórien’s general abstention from society.
Example 3-14a: Rivendell Theme, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Part 1, 1:26:37

Example 3-14b: Lórien Theme, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Part 1, 0:47:41
There are also two instances within the films where we hear various groups of elves singing. The first occurrence happens while Frodo and Sam see wood elves passing through the Old Forrest outside of the Shire. Shore’s music is an almost exact representation of Tolkien’s description of this event in his novel of “one voice rising above the others.” Shore’s theme, which is performed by women’s voices, consists of two stationary harmony parts supporting one melody line (Example 3-15). The other instance of singing elves in the films occurs when the Fellowship was staying in Lórien and the elves were singing a lament for Gandalf (Example 3-16). Again Shore uses women’s voices; however this theme involves imitation at the fifth, rather than stationary harmony parts. Nevertheless, in both of these themes the elves are singing in polyphony. The elves are the only characters of Middle-earth for whom Shore composes in

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73 Tolkien, 78–79.
74 The Fellowship thought that Gandalf had died while battling an ancient fire demon in the Mines of Moria, but he was reunited with the Fellowship following the attack at the Falls of Rauros.
polyphony, reflecting Tolkien’s description of their singing, as well as suggesting the elves’ higher level of intelligence and societal class when compared to the other cultures of Middle-earth.

Example 3-15: Passing Wood Elves, The Fellowship of the Rings, Part 1, 0:45:04

Example 3-16: Lament for Gandalf, The Fellowship of the Rings, Part 2, 0:51:30

Obviously these connections between Tolkien’s novels and Shore’s film score are speculative, as the only way to know for certain whether the relationships between text and music were intentional is through direct communication with the composer. Yet with so many correlations between the score and text existing - for nearly every major theme within the film -
one must think that some, if not most of these connections were planned by Shore. If the themes of Shore’s film score are embedded with musical and cultural references from Tolkien’s novel, then the music enhances the audience’s knowledge of the life and culture traits of the lands and characters of Middle-earth.

Certainly much can be gained through Jackson’s visual representation of Middle-earth in the films. It is easy enough for an audience member to see that Hobbits are pastoral people through the green countryside of the Shire, or that the Rohirrim live a lifestyle similar to Viking culture through the physical appearance of their armies. Through Shore’s instrumentation the audience of course gets a taste for the types of instruments that were common in each of the cultures. The musical styles of the themes reinforce the on-screen depictions of the different lands. However, other connections to the text in Shore’s score not only enhance the information that is visually represented, but they also relate cultural traits to the audience that are not necessarily evident in Jackson’s visual representation. In particular, characters’ songs truly reflect the different cultures in the movie. For instance, recognition of the fact that the elves are the only characters who sing in polyphony, when compared to the monophonic chants of Men or to the peasant folksongs of Hobbits, establishes a ranking of societal classes within Tolkien’s Middle-earth. The audience learns that elves are the most culturally advanced race of Tolkien’s world, that the Men value tradition and order, and that the Hobbits are most concerned with drinking and having a good time.

If the music of the films conveys its own information to the audience, then the relationship of Shore’s film score with Tolkien’s text becomes a critical element in the audience’s immersion in the world of Middle-earth. However, in order to create a stronger argument regarding the information being conveyed to the audience through Shore’s themes, the
themes must be examined in greater detail. Chapter four will seek to further explain the impact the themes of The Lord of the Rings has on the audience by comparing those themes to other music with sociomusical connotations. In addition, I will trace the appearances of some of the major themes throughout the three films, and investigate how various manipulations of these themes convey different emotions to the audience.
CHAPTER IV
Audience Perception

We have seen so far how the relationship between Howard Shore’s film score and Tolkien’s text acts as a means to transfer information pertinent to character development to the audience. However, studying a film score’s ability to influence an audience’s perception of a movie would be incomplete without taking into consideration how the film’s music affects the audience’s emotions. To facilitate this investigation of emotional response, we will invoke Tagg’s musematic analysis. By comparing Shore’s themes to other music with sociomusical connotations, we can gain a better understanding as to themes’ affective impact on the audience, or what the audience envisions when they hear the music. In other words, it is one thing to say that the Shire theme sounds Celtic, but another to show why it sounds Celtic by comparing it to other examples of Celtic music or to music that emulates the Celtic sound. Film score analysis also provides an excellent opportunity for the extension of Tagg’s techniques due to the reuse and alteration of the film’s themes, a trait not often found in television music. Some of the major themes of The Lord of the Rings are used extensively throughout the films, however quite often the reoccurrences contain modifications of modality, instrumentation, or style. By tracking these themes throughout the films, we can not only gain insight of the emotional meaning of the major themes, but we can also investigate how the modifications of these themes alter the emotional response of the audience.

75 Tagg (2000).
The Shire Theme

Of all of the themes Shore composed for the three movies, the Shire theme is probably heard the most by the audience, and certainly serves as the central theme of The Fellowship of the Ring. As was already speculated, the themes of the Shire seem to be imitating a Celtic sound. By looking at the orchestration of the main Shire theme (Example 3-1), we find a single melodic line (most often played by fiddle or flute), played above sustained diatonic chords in the strings. Another popular film which firmly reflected Scottish and Irish culture was Mel Gibson’s Braveheart. In James Horner’s score for the film, we find a major theme that is quite similar to the Shire theme (Example 4-1). Shore’s orchestration is almost identical to that of Horner’s wedding music, a single flute played above sustained diatonic strings.

Example 4-1: Wedding Music, Braveheart, 0:35:24

In addition to instrumentation, melodically the Shire theme is also quite similar to the wedding music from Braveheart. The first four notes of each theme consist of two ascending pick-up notes, followed by a lengthened down beat that is skipped away from by an ascending

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76 Mel Gibson, Braveheart, (Hollywood, Paramount Pictures, 1995).
third. Granted, the first two notes of the Shire theme move by step, versus by skip in the
Braveheart theme; however, these ascending pick-up notes (whether in major or minor mode)
are traits that can be found in several examples of Irish folk music. The Magic Mist, Old Irish
Melody, The Blacksmith’s Hornpipe, and Shall We Ever be in One Lodging (Examples 4-2 a–d)
are all examples of traditional Irish tunes, each of which begin with stepwise ascending pick-up
notes. In fact, the first four notes of Shall We Ever be in One Lodging share the same intervallic
pattern with Shore’s Shire theme. Furthermore, comparison of basic reductions of the Shire
theme and of The Blacksmith’s Hornpipe reveals how similar these two melodies truly are
(Figures 4-1 a & b). Both themes consist of a prolongation of tonic, featuring an arpeggio to
scale-degree 5 and a concluding 2–1 neighbor motion. Horner’s music for Braveheart and these
traditional Irish folk melodies have obvious ties to Celtic culture, either through pre-existing
cultural significance, or through correlation to Celtic culture by accompanying on-screen
depictions. Because of these cultural ties, the similarities between the Shire theme, traditional
Irish music, and Horner’ music for Braveheart, strengthen the Shire theme’s ability to convey a
Celtic atmosphere to the audience.

Example 4-2a: The Magic Mist, mm. 1–2

Example 4-2b: Old Irish Melody, mm. 1–2

Example 4-2c: The Blacksmith’s Hornpipe, mm. 1–2
In addition to conveying a Celtic atmosphere, the Shire theme acquires meaning through its association with the visual aspects of the film that it accompanies. The first time we hear the Shire theme, the audience sees Jackson’s visual representation of the land: a peaceful countryside filled with farms, green grass, and trees. The Inhabitants are tending their crops, relaxing in the sun, and enjoying the calm environment. There is an obvious connection between the hobbits and nature, they appear to have few concerns in life, and are relatively simple, unobtrusive people. Through this opening scene, a connection is made for the Shire theme to represent peace, nature, and a simple lifestyle to the audience. In turn, any of the main characters represented by this theme (such as Frodo through the Shire flute theme) come to embody these same traits of being a simplistic, peaceful character with a fond love of nature. The Shire theme makes several other appearances throughout the films, though it is often altered through instrumentation, style, harmony, or melody. These alterations may change the affective meaning of the Shire music for the audience.
One of the first alterations of the Shire theme occurs as Sam is taking the steps which bring him “the farthest away from home (he has) ever been.”\textsuperscript{77} The main modification to this Shire theme (Example 4-3) is the change of the melodic instrument from flute to French horn. While this modification seems somewhat trivial, it may significantly alter the musical affect of the Shire theme. Tagg discusses the use of the horn as a melodic instrument of the orchestra in his analysis of the Kojak title music.

…the horn signals connected with hunting and “post haste” gradually became stylized with the incorporation of the horn into the European symphony orchestra and the specific cognitive messages of the original signals (e.g. “call off the dogs”, “fresh horses required”) obviously gave way to a general “affectivisation” of horn signal imitations when they found their way into the concert hall…\textsuperscript{78} It seems as though a sort of affective common denominator of hunting and postage remained attached to the horn since both areas of activity shared atmospheres of excitement, speed, action, energy and virility in “big” environments (chase through woods and over fields, post through towns, villages, woods, countryside). Indeed, it seems natural to transfer the personally experienced feeling of these situations to more general areas of affective experience which could also be connected with excitement, action, energy, speed and virility in big environments. Such a general area would seem to be the typically “heroic” experience according to the \textit{Pocket Oxford Dictionary}’s notion of a hero as “a man admired for great deeds”…\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{77} Peter Jackson, \textit{The Fellowship of the Ring} (Hollywood: New Line Cinema, 2001), disc one, 0:44:18–0:44:45.
\textsuperscript{78} Tagg (2000), 189.
Tagg’s notion of the heroic atmospheres created through the use of the French horn as a melodic instrument has significant implications for the definition of the musical affect of this occurrence of the Shire theme. This horn-Shire theme is also stylistically different from the earlier instances of the theme. It features basically no grace notes, limited syncopation, and a more active harmonic support. These stylistic differences, when combined with the use of the horn, seem to create a more noble feeling to the music. This nobler, more heroic Shire theme seems to relate to the beginning of the transformation of the hobbit characters. At this moment in the movie, the hobbits are setting out into a bigger environment filled with action and excitement, starting the journey that will ultimately culminate in their becoming heroic figures of Middle-earth. Thus the use of the French horn to carry the Shire melody serves to foreshadow the events to come.

Example 4-3: Farthest From Home, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Disc 1, 0:44:31

Another appearance of the Shire theme which may convey a different affect to the audience occurs during the Council of Elrond scene in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Following an argument among the members of the council over the fate of the ring, Frodo puts an end to the shouting by volunteering to carry the ring to Mordor and destroy it in Mount Doom. As Frodo declares “I will take it,” the audience again hears a French horn playing what seems to be a
variation of the Shire theme (Example 4-4). While the instrumentation is the same as the previous horn-Shire theme, this melodic variation is in a minor mode, and the harmonic accompaniment is quite different. While the use of the horn still reflects the heroic adventure upon which Frodo is about to embark, the style of this theme is much more somber than the previous Shire themes, and the horn’s sense of nobility has all but disappeared. In fact, the use of the minor mode horn theme seems to suggest that while the quest Frodo has volunteered to undertake will make him a hero, it will ultimately lead to his demise. From this theme the audience gains a feeling of how perilous Frodo’s journey will be, as well as a feeling that the peacefulness and innocence of the Shire is slowly disappearing.

Example 4-4: I Will Take It, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Disc One, 1:43:22

Yet another significant modified version of the Shire theme occurs near the end of *The Return of the King*. During this scene, Aragorn and an army of men have marched to Mordor to distract Sauron’s army. In response to the threat, Sauron sends the entirety of the forces of Mordor to fight against Aragorn’s army. Meanwhile, an exhausted Frodo is struggling to make his way up the embankment of Mount Doom to destroy the ring. Frodo collapses on the mountainside, and Sam tries to remind him of the Shire in an effort to boost Frodo’s spirits and give him the energy to finish the quest. Frodo responds to Sam by saying that he has no memory
of the Shire, and that he “can no longer remember the taste of food, the touch of grass, or the
sound of trees… and there is nothing between [him] and the way of fire.” Though one would
expect such a climatic scene to have a rather intense soundtrack, Shore’s orchestration is
practically the opposite. Amidst the heightened action of the film, Shore’s score is relatively
simple, featuring the return of a solo flute melody that is played above a mixed chorus (Example
4-5).

![Flute, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass]

**Example 4-5: No Memory of the Shire, The Return of the King, Disc Two, 1:15:54**

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Of all of the modified Shire themes, this occurrence is the most different from the original. However, despite the increased variance of this theme, there are still some significant ties to the Frodo flute theme through instrumentation, style, and melody. While the original flute theme was accompanied by strings, the substitution of voices in this theme is relatively negligible, and both of the themes’ accompaniments consist of sustained, diatonic chords. A further connection to the original theme lies in the fact that by this point in the movie the audience has been encouraged to associate the use of a solo flute melody with Frodo, and in turn with the Shire. Finally, while the two themes appear to be quite different melodically, the opening F-sharp-A-F-sharp motion of Example 4-5 seems to be a relatively clear reference to the first measure of the Frodo flute melody. The sort of close, but not quite relationship between this theme and the original Shire theme has important implications for the affective meaning of the music. Just as Frodo has lost all memory of the Shire, it is as though the Shire theme, too, has all but dissolved. While there is still a small chance of success in destroying the ring, the Shire is a
distant memory for the Hobbits, which is reflected to the audience through the flute playing a skeleton of the Shire theme.

_The Rohan Theme_

The most prominent recurring theme of _The Two Towers_ is the Rohan theme (Example 3-7). As discussed earlier, the instrumentation of the main version of the theme features a chorus of French horns, reflecting Tolkien’s text. In Tagg’s terms, the use of the French horn as a melodic instrument suggests heroism, energy, excitement, and speed. It would follow logically then for a chorus of French horns to represent a group of heroic figures, perhaps correlating to the armies of Rohan.

The main museme of the Rohan theme (Figure 4-2) is more affectively interesting rhythmically than melodically. Tagg describes this short-short-long rhythmic pattern as a galloping pattern, found in typical “equestrian Western themes” such as _The Lone Ranger_ or _Bonanza_ (Examples 4-6 a & b).\(^80\) The museme is also found in what Tagg refers to as “the most driven of cowboy hero motives,”\(^81\) Rossini’s _William Tell Overture_ (Example 4-6 c). Whether they are Western themes, or cowboy motives, all three of these musical examples are somehow connected to horses. Such a correlation to equestrianism makes perfect sense for the Rohan theme, due to the Rohirrim’s love of horses, and the important role horses held within the armies of Rohan. However, the minor modality of the Rohan theme contrasts with the cheerful western themes and seems to convey a different affective meaning to the audience.

\(^80\) Tagg (2003), 304.
\(^81\) Tagg (2003), 377.
Without rehashing the entirety of Tagg’s discussion of the convoluted affective meanings that can be displayed through minor modality,\(^{82}\) it is sufficient to say that minor modes do not always represent sadness/badness, but are also capable of (and frequently used for) reflecting happiness or jollity. Yet, when interpreting musical affect, Tagg also discusses the importance of the genres of music you use as reference material in relation to the piece you are analyzing.

If, as is the case here, our frame of connotative reference extends to that established in Hollywood film music, then the possibility of sad, solemn or “olde worlde” connotations for minor modes - the sad old days, so to speak - is far more likely, simply because early film music so whole heartedly grounded its semantic practices on those of European classical and romantic music.\(^{83}\)

Thus, rather than the upbeat, “here I come to save the day” feeling of the Western themes, the more somber, minor mode melody of the Rohan theme seems to suggest a more difficult lifestyle, which may reflect to the audience the Rohirrim’s state of unrest within the film.

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\(^{82}\) Tagg (2003), 307–330.

\(^{83}\) Tagg (2003), 313.
Melodically the Rohan theme almost always occurs in the same fashion, with the majority of the alterations involving slight changes in tempo or instrumentation. However, there are a few areas within *The Two Towers* where the Rohan theme is altered enough to warrant discussion as to how the modification of the theme changes its musical affect. In contrast to the Shire theme, where the main theme was established and then gradually changed over the course of the films, the significantly modified versions of the Rohan themes occur prior to the establishment of the theme’s primary form. These occurrences act more as foreshadowing music, and have an important relationship to the development of the storyline.

The first modified version of the Rohan theme is heard during the opening credits of *The Two Towers*, as the audience sees Frodo and Sam making their way across the rocky terrain outside of Mordor (Example 4-7). The melody of this occurrence is basically unaltered, aside from the final three notes sounding a third lower than the true theme. The main difference in this version of the Rohan theme is its pedal accompaniment. The use of the pedal adds dissonance to the melody through the whole-step clash of the melody’s B against the A of the pedal, and the half-step clash of the melody’s F against the E of the pedal. Tagg spent little time discussing the use of pedal points affect on music, other than to say that “it is not lack of harmonic movement which evokes peace and quiet, nor is there any lack of melodic movement, but rather the static
bass line, the soft dynamics and slow pulse rate." However, due to the wide use of pedal points within all genres of music, it is impossible to declare that their affect is mostly that of peace and quiet. In fact, particularly in minor keys, pedal points are often used to create harmonic tension.

Two examples of such occurrences possess strong sociomusical connotations to death. In the first example, the opening movement of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, the melodic line above the pedal seems to create a preparatory somber atmosphere, as though alluding to the impending crucifixion (Example 4-8). Tavener’s *Song for Athene*, which was sung at the funeral of Princess Diana, also conveys a somber, death-like atmosphere through the dissonant relationship between the melody and pedal-point (Example 4-9). The pedal point Rohan theme seems to function similarly to these examples in creating a somber atmosphere, as though alluding to impending doom.

Example 4-7: Rohan Pedal Theme, *The Two Towers*, Disc 1, 0:04:07

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84 Tagg (2000), 156.
Example 4-8: J.S. Bach, *St. Matthew Passion*, mm. 1–4

Example 4-9: J. Tavener, *Song for Athene*, mm. 9–15
The other significantly modified version of the Rohan theme occurs as Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are riding to Edoras for the first time (Example 4-10). Again the main alteration involves the harmony, which is not only less active than the full theme, but also has a descending contour, rather than the ascending contour of the full theme’s harmonic support. The final three descending notes of the melody line help to accentuate the overall descending motion of this version of the Rohan theme. The other major alteration of this theme is through instrumentation. Though the theme is still played primarily by brass instruments, there is only one instrument on each line, rather than the choir of brass instruments of the full theme. The descending contour of this occurrence, combined with the thinner orchestration, impacts the musical affect of the theme. When compared to the full theme, this occurrence no longer possesses the strength and uplifting hopefulness of the primary melody. Rather, the descending harmonic line and thin texture create a more depressing theme, possibly suggesting that Rohan has lost its inner strength, and is now calling out for help. Such a theme reinforces the on-screen action, as King Théoden was under Saruman’s control. Without their king, Rohan was unable to defend against constant attacks from Mordor and Isengard, and needed Gandalf’s assistance to free Théoden from Saruman’s spell.

Example 4-10: Descending Rohan Theme, *The Two Towers*, Disc 1, 1:12:42
The Gondor Theme

The Gondor theme is not brought to fruition until the third installment of the *Lord of the Rings* films. However, just as the Rohan theme in *The Two Towers*, the Gondor theme acts as the central melody of *The Return of the King* soundtrack. This role is announced in the same fashion the Rohan theme was in *The Two Towers*, with a basic version of the melody being played above a pedal bass line while the film’s title is displayed on the screen. Like the Rohan theme, simplified versions of the Gondor theme are used several times in the films before the first full version of the theme is heard. In fact, the Gondor theme is heard as early as in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, but does not reach its motivic significance until well into *The Return of the King*, as the audience sees Gandalf and Pipin ride through the streets of Minas Tirith for the first time (Example 4-11).

![Example 4-11: Gondor Full Theme, The Return of the King, Disc 1, 0:43:10](image)

The main museme of the Gondor theme is the initial ascending fifth of the melody line. As before, the use of the French horn suggests heroism, as Tagg argues; however the addition of the horn playing a fifth based melody accentuates this heroic feeling.

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85 *The Return of the King*, Disc 1, 0:09:48
Reveille signals preparing viewers and listeners for heroic action and excitement are based on leaps of an octave or a fifth played forte in middle or high register, preferably by a brass instrument (especially horn) at the start of a phrase, and landing on the perfect fifth or octave of the simultaneous harmony.\textsuperscript{86}

Several examples of art music that feature an open fifth melody line have infiltrated popular culture. These examples, such as Copland’s \textit{Fanfare for a Common Man} (Figure 4-12)\textsuperscript{87} and Strauss’s \textit{Also Sprach Zarathustra} (Figure 4-13),\textsuperscript{88} have come to reflect the notion of heroism in U.S. society. However, such melodies have also been used to reflect grandeur, expansiveness, and broad scenery. For example, open fifth melodies such as \textit{Also Sprach} or the title music to George Lucas’s \textit{Star Wars} (Figure 4-14)\textsuperscript{89} which accompany scenes that take place in outer space can also provide a feeling of vastness for the audience. Another example of open fifth melodies reflecting broad scenery occurs in the title sequence of Rolland Emmerich’s \textit{The Day After Tomorrow}, where an open fifth melody (which is strikingly similar to the Gondor theme) accompanies an on-screen shot of the majestic terrain of Antarctica (Figure 4-15).\textsuperscript{90} In this sense, the Gondor theme could affect the audience in a number of ways. Not only does the open fifth melody line suggest heroism to the audience (particularly when it accompanies screen shots of

\textsuperscript{86} Tagg (2000), 197–98.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Fanfare} was used as the theme for the 1976 Olympics, as well as for commercials for the U.S. Navy.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Also Sprach} was used during the Apollo 13 launch in Kubrick’s \textit{2001: A Space Odyssey}, the opening on Mel Brooks’ \textit{History of the World Part 1}, the first appearance of Hooch in Roger Spottiswoode’s \textit{Turner and Hooch}, and even in the \textit{Simpson’s} episode “Little Girl in the Big Ten,” where Lisa overcomes her ineptness at sports to succeed in gymnastics.
\textsuperscript{89} George Lucas, \textit{Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope} (Hollywood: 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Fox, 1977).
\textsuperscript{90} Roland Emmerich, \textit{The Day After Tomorrow} (Hollywood: 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Fox, 2004).
Aragorn), but the theme could also convey a sense of grandeur or expansiveness correlated with the city of Minas Tirith.\footnote{Minas Tirith was also called the White City, and was not only Gondor’s capital, but also one of the grandest cities of Middle-earth, “so strong…that no enemy was able to enter it until the (war of the ring).” (Foster, 336)}

**Figure 4-12:** A. Copland, *Fanfare for the Common Man*, mm. 13–16

**Figure 4-13:** R. Strauss, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, mm. 1–3

**Figure 4-14:** J. Williams, *Star Wars*, Title Music

**Figure 4-15:** H. Kloser, *The Day After Tomorrow*, 0:01:00
The most affectively interesting version of the Gondor theme actually occurs the first time the theme is heard in *The Fellowship of the Ring* during the Council of Elrond. This occurrence (Figure 4-16) exhibits the dichotomized relationship between the two halves of the Gondor theme. The melodic content of this theme varies only slightly between the first and second halves, as m. 6 involves an additional ascending gesture not found in m. 2. The more significant difference between the two halves lies in the harmonic support of the melody. The B in m. 4 is not supported by the A-minor triad of the accompaniment, whereas the melody line is always harmonically supported in mm. 7–8. While such a trait could be attributed to common musical practice (sort of an antecedent/consequent relationship), the opposition of unsupported/supported halves of the Gondor theme may do much to generate affective response in the audience. The unsupported Gondor theme is played during Boromir’s monologue, while the supported theme accompanies Aragorn’s monologue, as well as Legolas’s announcement that Aragorn is the heir to the throne of Gondor. The unsupported Gondor theme could convey to the audience the negative effect Boromir would have on the Fellowship, whereas the supported theme and ascending melodic gesture in m. 6 could allude to Aragorn’s nobility, and foreshadow his eventual reclamation of the throne of Gondor.

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92 While Boromir was by no means an evil person, his greed would lead him to try and take the ring for himself, which would result in the end of free reign in Middle-earth. Aragorn was the heir to the throne of Gondor, and was prophesized to reclaim the throne and restore Gondor to its former glory.
The Mordor and Ring Themes

The Mordor theme and the various ring themes appear sporadically throughout all three installments of The Lord of the Rings. As was mentioned earlier, the main ring theme and the Mordor theme share similar melodic content, as they basically represent the same entity within the films. Therefore, it will be sufficient to investigate the affective quality of just one of those two (the Mordor theme), and analyze the affect of an alternative ring theme later in this thesis.

The Mordor theme (Example 3-13) is basically in d-harmonic minor, however the melody line spends the majority of its time on C-sharp, creating excessive amounts of tension in the music. Tagg describes such dissonant harmonies as “the minor seconds, ninths, diminished fifths, etc… (resulting in) an expression of unreservedly ‘unpleasant’ affect.”93 The Mordor theme is quite similar in style and harmony to Hindemith’s “The Temptation of St. Anthony” from Mathis der Mahler (Example 4-17), which Tagg feels conveys “the insistent threat of the devil and his minions…expressed here by a forte e legato chromatic tune, consisting of reasonably bold intervallic steps…and accompanied by the driving 9/8 rhythm of quartal

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harmonies.”\textsuperscript{94} Granted the accompanying harmonies in the Mordor theme are not quartal; however, the theme still exhibits a loud, legato, chromatic melody in the trumpet, accompanied by a constant driving rhythm in the bass trombones, which can be correlated to Tagg’s “threat of the devil.” Yet another work exhibiting this chromatic Major-7\textsuperscript{th} harmony is Bach’s \textit{Toccata in d minor} (Example 4-18), which (like the Mordor theme and Temptation) has come to be correlated with evil or death in popular culture.\textsuperscript{95} Furthering the Mordor theme’s connection with death is the accompanying trombone line, which (though it is not an exact quote) could very well be a reference to the \textit{Dies Irae} chant (Example 4-19).\textsuperscript{96} It is relatively evident that the Mordor theme conveys a strong musical affect of death or the devil to the audience. This representation makes perfect sense in the film, as Sauron holds the role of the Lord of darkness, and was responsible for the majority of death and destruction within Middle-earth.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example4-17.png}
\caption{Example 4-17: Hindemith, “The Temptation of St. Anthony,” from \textit{Mathis der Mahler}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{94} Tagg (2000), 166.
\textsuperscript{95} Bach’s \textit{Toccata} has appeared in such films as Rouben Mamoulian’s \textit{Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde}, Freddie Francis’ \textit{Tales from the Crypt}, and Terence Fisher’s film adaptation of \textit{The Phantom of the Opera}.
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Dies Irae} has appeared in numerous films correlated with death. The most significant of those being Ingmar Bergman’s \textit{The Seventh Seal}, and Jerry Goldsmith’s score for \textit{The Omen}. 
Aside from the main ring theme, Shore’s ring enchantment theme occurs the most frequently in the films. The theme (Example 4-20) makes its first appearance in *The Fellowship of the Ring* as Frodo and Sam prepare to set out on their journey, and occurs each time the audience sees a character being entranced by the ring’s aura. The theme is extremely simple, made up of a melody sung in unison by a boy choir with no accompaniment. The simplistic nature of the monophonic theme could allude to the ring’s place in the eye of its beholder.\(^97\) By encouraging the listener to concentrate on just a simple melody line, it reflects the ring bearer’s insistent focus on the ring. Most significant to the affect generated by the enchantment theme is the similarity between the melodic content of Shore’s theme and that of what is likely the most widely used enchantment melody in popular culture, the Snake Charmer song (Example 4-21).\(^98\)

So similar are the two melodies that only one pitch of Shore’s theme (the C) differs from the

\(^{97}\) Every bearer of the ring of power (Isildur, Gollum, Bilbo, etc) bound their lives to it, and the ring became the sole focus of their existence. They often referred to the ring as their ‘precious.’

\(^{98}\) The Snake Charmer melody is also known as *The Streets of Cairo*, and has been used in numerous cartoons (*Might Mouse: Aladdin’s Lamp, Toon Factory Porky: Ali Baba Bound*, etc) to accompany snake charmers seducing a snake out of a basket.
opening of the Snake Charmer melody. The relationship between these two melodies accentuates the musical affect of a feeling of enchantment found in Shore’s theme.

Example 4-20: Ring Enchantment, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Disc 1, 0:43:10

Example 4-21: Snake Charmer Music, Attributed to Sol Bloom, mm. 1–2

The Themes of the Elves

The Rivendell and Lórien themes (Examples 3-14a & b) are used much less often than the themes already discussed in this chapter and have no significantly altered versions to compare to their full statements. One would expect, due to the elves’ inherent love of nature, for the Rivendell and Lórien themes to evoke images of forests, rivers, mountains, weather, or other aspects of nature. Such images may come to mind, however due to the wide variety of art music aimed at depicting nature, it becomes difficult to determine exactly what aspects of nature are intended to be conveyed, even when one focuses on the basic musemes of the elf themes. For instance, the flowing harp glissandi shared by both themes and the smooth melodic line of the Rivendell theme resemble several examples of art music, each of which reflect a different aspect of nature. The onscreen image accompanying the first hearing of the Rivendell theme consists of a waterfall, the centerpiece of the realm of Rivendell, suggesting that the theme should be connected to water. The Rivendell theme could easily be compared to the river feeling of
Smetana’s *Vltava* (Figure 4-22), or the serene lakes of Liszt’s *Au lac de Wallenstadt* (Figure 4-23), but also to the woodland feeling of Mendelssohn’s *On Wings of Song* (Figure 4-24). Regardless of which type of imagery the Rivendell theme best represents, its connection to these examples of art music suggests that it is intended to portray the elves’ love of nature to the audience.

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Without the reinforcement of the opinions of test subjects, as Tagg and Clarida used in their *Ten Little Tunes*, the conclusions of musical affect suggested in this chapter remain completely speculative. However, the relationships described between Shore’s themes and other music with sociomusical connotations are relatively clear and offer insight into the affect the film score has on the audience. Furthermore, since the affective connections established in this chapter are reinforced by the onscreen action of the film, as well as the social traits described in Tolkien’s novel, the conclusions made become even more theoretically sound. Once the affective meanings of the major themes are established, it becomes possible to compare Shore’s alterations of the themes to their original versions, in an effort to explain the various affective impacts on the audience as a result of the modifications to the themes. Thus, even though the conclusions of this chapter remain speculative, the arguments are often backed by Tagg’s research, and there appears to be little room for reinterpretation of the musical meanings of the themes without sacrificing the correlation to Tolkien’s novels and the onscreen action.
CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Much of the literature that attempts to find meaning in music or to develop a theory of semiotics in music has been greeted with some degree of skepticism or plain disbelief.\textsuperscript{100} Indeed, it is often treacherous to attempt to explain what a piece of music is trying to convey, emote, or narrate to the audience, particularly when actual text is absent. However, music is not the only art form in which critics and scholars attempt to define the abstract. Meaning is certainly sought after in poetry, novels, and (probably more closely related to music) paintings and sculptures. Additionally, music (possibly more so than any visual art) is taught in a manner that practically begs performers to discover the inner-meaning of a work. Naomi Cumming’s book, \textit{The Sonic Self}, addresses this issue, as she discusses her own experiences being constantly asked to “emote” on the instrument, as well as music critics’ tendency to critique musicians’ emotional output in performances.\textsuperscript{101} She demonstrates through Piercean semiotic approaches that there is in fact underlying meaning to music, that it is instigated in students through their teachers’ approaches to the instrument, and that the interpretation of the meaning of music is demanded by critics and audiences. Most importantly, Cumming’s book demonstrates that, regardless of skepticism of semiotic theory, the discovering of meaning in music engages not only music scholars, but performers and audiences as well, arguing for the expansion of techniques to explain musical affect.

\textsuperscript{100} Certainly recent books have been greeted with comparable approval, such as Robert Hatten’s \textit{Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, And Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
Theoretical Connections, Benefits, and Problems

Many of the arguments against semiotic theory in music stem from the question of whether or not the music being analyzed is meant to represent an outside object, idea, or emotion. However, due to their inherent nature of accompanying visual representation, semiotic analysis of film scores can avoid such scrutiny. As Eero Tarasti discusses in his book, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*,

The choice of a piece such as Musorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* for a semiotic analysis needs no extended explanation of justification. If one considers musical signs as obvious iconic cases where a musical motif or passage represents an object in the external world, Musorgsky provides a gold mine for a semiotician.\(^{102}\)

Film scores likewise are obviously representative, as we know that the music at the very least accompanies and represents events occurring on the screen. What this thesis aimed to do however, was to demonstrate how that music was conceived, and what kind of information and emotions, objects, and ideas it conveyed to the audience independent of the visual representation it accompanied.

The analysis of Shore’s extensive *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack allowed for a combination of different analytical techniques. The use of Tagg’s musematic analysis provided a slightly less technical approach to semiotic theory, in that the basic concept was comparing and contrasting musical gestures. Tagg’s theory certainly stems from Piercean semiotic theory of iconic and symbolic representation,\(^{103}\) however (especially with how it was incorporated in this

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\(^{103}\) See Tarasti, 54–55.
thesis) avoids much of the psychological aspects, and focuses mostly on aural recognition. The theory depends on the ability of the audience to hear correlations between motives in the film score and motives found within society possessing sociomusical connotations.

Leitmotiv analysis was also incorporated in this thesis. Shore’s repetition of established motives within the score reflects a Wagnerian style where

the motifs guide the listener (“I have already heard that!”) but they also create a complex world of relationships, forcing us after the event to ask “what connection is there between two completely heterogeneous scenes imbued with one or more motifs that are the same?”

While we did not necessarily ask what connection there were between different occurrences of Shore’s themes, we did assume a connection was present, and asked “how does the alteration of this theme alter its emotional stimulation?” In the leitmotiv analysis there existed an established motive within the film that possessed some sort of meaning. We could then compare altered versions of the motive to the original to explain the musical affect generated through changes of melody, harmony, and instrumentation.

In a way, Tagg’s musematic analysis is a more abstract version of this leitmotiv analysis. However, rather than comparing motives within one work, listeners are asked to compare them to outside sources. In other words, rather than the listener thinking “I have already heard that (in this score),” they are asked to think “this John Williams theme is a lot like Holst’s The Planets,” or, “this Nickleback song sounds exactly like that other Nickleback song.” Granted the

connections made in Tagg’s theory are not as literal as in leitmotiv analysis, however both depend on the listeners’ aural recognition of similar musical events. Unfortunately, this dependency on aural recognition is a major problem in using musematic analysis to explain musical affect. While leitmotivs acquire their musical meaning within a given work, the affective definition of musemes relies on outside sources. Such a dependency forces an analyst to consider “what if the connection between these works is not as strong as I think;” “what if this piece has different sociomusical connotations in my society than in another;” and worse yet “what if the listener has never heard the piece to which I am comparing this motive?” Certainly any one of these factors would prove detrimental (if not fatal) to any argument of musical affect derived from musematic analysis. However, many of these problems can be avoided simply by carefully selecting your pieces with sociomusical connotations to include works that are well known virtually world wide, as well as by selecting numerous pieces which generate the same affective feeling. The major benefit of Tagg’s theory is its approachability by both musicians and non-musicians alike, in that basically anyone can hear similarities between pieces. The next step is making the connection that if one of those pieces possesses an emotional, iconic, or symbolic identity, then any piece which sounds similar to that piece must also generate at least some of that affective response.105

Recommendations for Further Study

Howard Shore’s score for The Lord of the Rings is, in a sense, a rare find for the affective analysis of film scores. Not only does the magnitude of the trilogy provide the analyst with ample material through which to trace leitmotivs, but the source novels for the films are also filled with musical and cultural references to which the motives can be compared. By identifying

105 Similar to the transitive property, however much more abstract.
connections between Shore’s film score, Tolkien’s novels, and Jackson’s visual representation, as well as correlating the motives to other music with sociomusical connotations, a strong argument is made for Shore’s music to reflect textual, symbolic, iconic, and affective information to the audience. While it is unlikely that several other examples of films with such an involved web of material exist, Tagg’s techniques are applicable to virtually any film score involving leitmotivs.

The most applicable films for which similar analytical techniques similar to those used in this thesis would provide for interesting discussion include any multiple installment film in which the motives carryover between films. These would include Alan Silvestri’s score to the Back to the Future trilogy, Carmine Coppola’s score to The Godfather trilogy, and obviously John William’s score to all six of the Star Wars installments. However, musematic analysis could be used on a wide variety of film scores, stemming from the field’s interdependence on itself as source material, as well as its direct lineage from the late-Romantic era of classical music. This interconnectivity of film scores and the music of late-Romantic provide any semiotician with a wide variety of music with sociomusical connotations with which to compare the motives in the film score being analyzed. By incorporating the techniques used in this thesis, the analyst will not necessarily arrive at affective conclusions immune to skepticism. However, if the comparisons made are well-rounded, and correlate well to the music and screenplay, gainful insights can be made into the meaning behind the film score. The results will be presented in a relatively non-technical way, approachable by any film enthusiast.
REFERENCES

Printed Sources


**Film Sources**


