

# SoundEffects



An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience

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## Hearing things in music for films:

music, fiction and engagement

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## ABSTRACT

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*Film music is often thought of as something that adds to the visuals. Yet, this truism somehow obscures the complexity of how film music works. First, music has no single and fixed meaning that can be added to the visuals in the first place. Second, experiencing audiovisual meaning can be accounted for on several levels. For that reason this article proposes eight different but complementary ways of listening to music along the lines of ecological theories of musical perception in which it is argued that we hear things, that is, referential matters in music. The validity of this is demonstrated through the discussion of a series of scholarly interpretations of John Williams' music for the opening scene of Jaws (1975). Second, it is argued that music may add meaning on different levels and a three level model of film music analysis is suggested in which the music as an expressive device, the fiction world as a dramatic space and kinds of audience engagement are conceived as three separate, yet interacting, levels of the filmic experience.*

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In the context of film studies, film music is frequently conceived of as one device among others that film makers have at their disposal to make their stories come alive in front of a cinema audience. Film music is an instrument to achieve certain effects. For example, Roy M. Prendergast follows Aaron Copland in describing the contribution of film music as, among other things, creating 'a more convincing atmosphere of time and place' (Prendergast, 1991, p. 213) or expressing 'the unspoken thoughts of a character' (Prendergast, 1991, p. 216). Music can not only add emotions, but is, *per se*, 'a signifier of emotion itself' (Gorbman, 1987, p. 73), or it can simply 'modify' how we perceive a scene (Carroll, 1988, pp. 216-225). In other words, music is thought of as something that adds to the visuals. Thus, Michel Chion writes about the 'added value' (Chion, 1994, p. 5) created by sound effects and music that – somehow falsely – gives the impression that the filmic meaning comes from the visuals.

In a very straightforward sense this is true. Adding music (or sound effects for that matter) does make a difference to how we perceive a film. Yet, this truism somehow obscures the complexity of how film music works. First, there are many things that can be heard in a piece of music, and even listening to the same piece of music many times can never exhaust what can possibly be heard in it. Thus, music has no single and fixed meaning that can be added to the visuals in the first place. If this is so, it is an open question what it means that music adds meaning to the visuals.

For that reason, I will discuss music perception at some length and suggest a series of ways one may listen to or hear things in music. This line of argument (that we hear things – or referential matters – in music) is similar to recent theories on

music listening based on ‘ecological perception’ put forward by Eric F. Clarke (Clarke, 2011), an approach to musical meaning through which he addresses Ludwig van Beethoven and Jimi Hendrix alike. Thus, this theory is not bound to specific musical styles. Second, I will argue that music (through whatever someone may hear in it) does not add to the meaning in the film in one way only. Rather, music may be considered an expressive device that blends into the overall filmic experience, but music also, simultaneously, does this on different levels of perception. My one and only example will be John Williams’ music for the opening scene of *Jaws* (1975), but any other music in any other genre could have been chosen to make the same principal argument. This piece of film music has been analysed by several scholars and my major point is not to provide a new analysis, but to show how these analyses represent different, but coherent ways of listening to the same piece of music.

Aiming at analysing the workings of film music, in *Jaws* as well as other films, I will suggest three principal levels of description that may specify how film music makes sense in more detail and which allows for greater complexity in the analysis than simple ideas of ‘adding’ may provide. The three levels are: the music itself, the fiction world and, finally, the ways audiences are invited to engage in characters and situations.

## What does music mean? Music, reference and emotion

Viewed from a film scholar’s perspective, the question of music and meaning within music studies seems a contested area with somehow contrasting positions such as those of new musicology, music philosophy, music psychology and, lately, ecological perception (Kramer, 2001; Kivy, 1990; Juslin & Sloboda, 2001; Clarke, 2011). This has to do with the seemingly non-referential nature of music. Music does not refer to something specific in the way most other art forms do. In figurative painting it is, for instance, possible for us to recognise specific objects in the (mostly two-dimensional) patterns of colour and form.<sup>1</sup> What it represents is not inherent in the picture, but some properties (intended by the artist, I suppose) that most people are likely to perceive in a certain way, for example as representing some people on a beach. An artist can choose to paint in a non-figurative style in which we cannot recognise specific objects. (This can even be done with photography and film.) In most paintings, however, both the *how* (style and techniques) and the *what* (what does it represent?) are part of what is to be perceived and related to.

Music is less suited to refer to things in this specific way. Eduard Hanslick described the content of music as ‘tönend bewegte Formen’, that is, ‘tonally moving forms’ (Hanslick, 1975, p. 59). This is to say that what we hear is structured sound without a reference to something other than musical form. This view on music implies that the more music tries to become referential (a car honk, a cry), the less

musical it becomes. Thus, true musical appreciation has to do with perceiving *musical* events. Then, what about expressing or eliciting emotions? Actually, Hanslick admitted that it is possible to be emotionally overwhelmed by music, but such emotions are, in Cook's summery of Hanslick's position, just 'not the proper subject-matter for aesthetics' (Cook, 1998, p. 87).

This may seem more like normative aesthetics than a fully appropriate description of how most people experience music. I might hear sadness in the music or feel excitement or sudden happiness at a certain moment as I am listening. I suspect most people have had strong emotional experiences while listening to music, and, actually, much experimental research within music psychology confirms those intuitions: Emotions are an integral part of our musical experience (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001; Tan, Pfordresher & Harré, 2010).

However, Peter Kivy (1990) makes a sophisticated and quite twisted argument to back up his Hanslick-inspired music alone approach: We hear emotions and we feel emotions. However, those emotions felt are not those heard, and, further, there is no relation whatsoever between emotions heard and emotions felt. According to Kivy, our emotions have to do with being surprised by some musical development, feeling excited by a certain harmonic progression or feeling admiration for a piece of music. In short, the object of the emotions is the music itself. According to Kivy, we do not react to music because it is sad, but because of what music makes out of sadness as part of its material.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever critique can be raised against Kivy's 'pure music' position, his argument makes it very clear that there is an important distinction to make between the emotional quality to be heard in music and the kind of emotional experience we might go through when hearing music: They need not be the same. On the other hand, it is less obvious (and certainly counterintuitive) that they have nothing to do with each other.<sup>3</sup> In any case, the distinction between recognised emotions and felt emotions is important to how I will later conceive of film music and emotions.

## Things to be heard in music

For Nicholas Cook 'music alone' (or pure music) 'is an aesthetician's (and music theorist's) fiction; the real thing unites itself promiscuously with any other media that are available' (Cook, 1998, p. 92). In other words, music is almost inevitably experienced in multimedia contexts that co-create meaning. Also, Lawrence Kramer emphasises multimedia forms, but also how music is always embedded within larger cultural contexts: 'Music nearly always has potential meaning in an intersubjective or cultural sense, even if it rarely has meaning in a simple enunciatory sense' (Kramer, 2002, p. 170).

Recently, Eric F. Clarke (2011) has suggested how music perception can be approached from J.J. Gibson's theory on ecological perception. According to Gibson (1979), humans are attuned to their environment, an environment that provides certain affordances. As humans move around, they pick up information immediately as they recognise invariant features that allow certain affordances. To Clarke, listeners adapt to music in the same way as humans adapt to their environment. For example, listeners are attuned to *kinds of music* (genre, style) that allow them to recognise invariant features and pick up musical meaning, for example stylistic features and their cultural implications, in an immediate fashion. We directly pick up 'a variety of environmental attributes, ranging from the spatial location and physical source of musical sounds, to their structural function and cultural and ideological value' (Clarke, 2011, p. 46). In Clarke's view, stylistic details and ideology are not different stages in a processing scheme that decodes musical meaning; they are different things, that is, representational matters that we hear in the music in a direct fashion.

My previous discussion of musical meaning has had a certain focus on the relation between music and emotion. The reason for this has been that the emotions seem like a solution to problems of music and meaning with a long history within academia.<sup>4</sup> However, Clarke's emphasis on direct recognition of invariants that make listeners detect all kinds of meanings and Kramer's and Cook's emphasis on cultural and multimedia embeddings widen what can be thought of as musical meaning and reference. In the following I will suggest a series of things we can actually hear in music, some 'ways of listening' (Clarke), which I find especially relevant for film music. The list is far from exhaustive; it is only meant to suggest a variety of ways we can hear things in music in order to discuss how film music may do its work.

1. Hearing music as sound events. Music is first and foremost sound, and it seems plausible that there is some connection between the way we perceive everyday sounds and the ways in which we perceive music. One reason is that our basic audio processing is done by the same biological equipment (the human ear and different parts of the brain). Even though music can be said to develop and cultivate our listening abilities, it cannot overrule built-in elements in our audio-perceptual system (see also Clarke, 2011, p. 63). A sudden crescendo can be described as a dynamic change in intensity that parallels either an increase in activity or a sound-emitting activity that is moving closer to the listener. Also, a sudden cymbal crash is a sound event that in a non-musical context would imply an instant shift in our attention towards the sound source. Music can also make pauses, new beginnings, changes (like changing its instrumentation or its melodic shape). Music cannot avoid activating basic and automatically processed attention mechanisms.

2. Hearing other music in the music, or intertextual listening. A piece of music may quote another piece of music by playing part of it or by pastiche (see also on 'style indicators' in Tagg, 1992). This specific kind of intertextual listening relates the current piece of music to another. In this sense, music can actually 'depict' another piece of music. Other pieces of music may be listened to by some broader notion of intertextuality (musical genres, styles and basic forms). Salsa, waltz or blues will always activate our previous experience with those musical genres, styles and forms, and our recognition will activate a field of expectations, a kind of mental playing ground for that actual piece of music.

3. Contextual listening. We might hear some music as having contextual (other than musical) elements by implication, that is, by our familiarity with the kind of context in which that kind of music usually partakes. This presupposes (or coexists with) intertextual listening; we recognise some music as a specific piece of music or as a specific kind of music to which we attach certain meanings. Thus, tonality and vocal style might give us an impression of something 'Arabic' and a specific instrument might give us an impression of something Scottish (bagpipes). Music might evoke specific ideas about ethnicity, geographical space, social group and culture. Hearing context in the music is not some idiosyncratic phenomenon, but something culturally embedded and mostly intersubjective meaning (Kramer, 2001) that musical analysis has to account for.

4. Hearing emotions. We may recognise certain emotions in the music, such as joy or anxiety, or we may perceive a kind of emotional attitude, such as 'playfulness' in the music. Also, music can seem to convey a mood such as sadness or melancholy, or it can express more changeable emotional states of the kinds that have been termed vitality affects (Stern, 1985) or background emotions (Damasio, 1999), dynamic qualities and patterns that relate to how people move, talk and do things (see also Have, 2006). In the framework of Gibson and Clarke, these dynamic qualities can be considered invariants that we may recognise in music and human action alike.

5. Structural listening. The musically trained listener may listen for specific harmonic progressions, repetitions and variations, perceive structural patterns (not necessarily by the first hearing) and the like. This has to do with learned abilities. This is the 'music alone' way of listening and it usually requires formal training in a (western) educational system; that is, it is a specific culturally embedded practice. This is the Kivy ideal type of music listener. Related emotions are most often evaluative, like being surprised by or admiring a certain piece of music (Kivy, 1990; Kivy, 1993).

6. Hearing upcoming events, or prospective listening. This is how most people practise a kind of everyman's structural listening. It has to do with any moment-by-moment listening in which we foresee some change or repetition at certain

moments. Most popular music involves many repeated elements (with small variations) that most listeners will be able to anticipate and which are a central part of its attraction and defining quality, and most 'classical' film scores involve music with tension-release patterns that make us expect a musical change or the return of a motif. In other words, we hear (or sense) a directionality of time in the music.

7. Free, associative listening (or hearing whatever comes to mind). This is a free, imaginative and somehow idiosyncratic way of listening to music which is practised by most people, but hard to analyse in general terms. This is whatever people make of the music in the theatre of their minds, that is, any kind of representational spectacle they can imagine in relation to the music.

8. Hearing things in music in a specific multimedia context. Finally, much music is made for, placed within and consumed in multimedia such as film, television and opera, as Nicholas Cook, among others, has emphasised (Cook, 1998). In these cases, what we hear in the music is brought into a specific context that the music is about; that is, it becomes referential in a much more concrete way. This does not imply that the other listening modes – hearing things *in* the music – become obsolete.

This may finally get us back to film music and to how music can be said to 'add to' the visuals.

## Hearing things in film music

To consider music in a specific context, like a narrative film, somehow simplifies the previous discussion of reference and meaning. Typically, a film narrative is about some characters and their wishes, actions and problems. A narrative provides the music with a specific context, which it is about.<sup>4</sup>

John Williams' well-known music for *Jaws* (1975) can be a case in point to show how film music analyses tend to attach a specific referential meaning to music. For example, Claudia Gorbman describes the famous two-note, chromatic ostinato motif heard in the opening scenes and throughout the film in the following way: 'the menacing "shark" theme, heard even before the camera in *Jaws* reveals the deadly shark closing in on the unsuspecting swimmers, gives the viewer advance knowledge of the narrative threat' (Gorbman, 1987, p. 58).

This description involves at least three ways of hearing things in the John Williams music. First, the music is 'heard even before' we see a shark. As such it is a sound event that attracts attention in itself. It is a tuning mechanism alarming our attention system by saying that something new is going on. Second, the quote is about hearing emotions as the music is heard as expressive of some menacing quality. Third, this event and its menacing character are given a specific reference: the shark.

Russell Lack gives an almost identical description of ‘the distinctively menacing cue signifying the approach of the shark’ (Lack, 1997, p. 330), and also Anahid Kassabian writes that ‘it serves its purpose of signaling “menace” from the first time it is heard’ (Kassabian, 2001, p. 45). Actually, the result of the combination of musical motif and a series of actions is that in ‘the subsequent attacks, the connection between the minor-second motive and the action becomes Pavlovian in its reflexivity’ (Biancorosso, 2011, p. 307).

Others emphasise intertextual aspects of the motif:

The Great White’s music is a page ripped right out of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, echoing especially the vigorous polyrhythms of the ballet’s opening [...] that captured perfectly the primordial state of which the Great White is a part (Scheurer, 2008, p. 61).

Thus, Scheurer is not only hearing a certain style in the music, but he also hears it as reminiscent of a specific piece of music. This is to hear intertextual elements in the music, or detecting invariants in its style, with both prototypical and specific (Stravinsky) associations. Additionally, Scheurer’s straightforward association of ‘the vigorous polyrhythms’ as expressive of a ‘primordial state’ is hearing context (here: primitivism) in the music. In other words, the polyrhythms are not only recognised as a style, but also heard in terms of their cultural meaning. Finally, Kassabian notes that the motif ‘intensifies’ as the shark approaches (Kassabian, 2001, p. 45). This is a form of prospective listening in which the music gives the impression that a musical change (the end of the build-up) is about to happen.

However, hearing things in the music as such is not everything there is to say about film music, which, naturally, is hearing music in a specific multimedia context. Most feature films make up fictions, that is, a world of people, places and events that seems self-contained. In this, film music can be considered a device among others (acting, visual editing, sound effects) that is part of what makes up a fiction world. Even though underscoring (or non-diegetic) music is not an event taking place in the fiction, but outside, it is nevertheless a part of what makes up the fiction in the mind of the audience.

## Making up a fiction world

This is also evident in most analyses of the music in *Jaws*. William Darby and Jack Du Bois emphasise the two-note motif as a leitmotif: ‘Williams is consistent in never using his principal theme to mislead the audience [...] One can accurately predict the shark’s appearance from the music alone’ (Darby & Du Bois, 1990, p. 534). Royal S. Brown follows the same line of description: ‘the presence of the great white shark is forever announced and accompanied by Williams’s ominous, two-note motif’



(Brown, 1994, p. 10). By their emphasis on prediction of a later appearance and (unseen) presence of something it is presupposed that the music can make us know things about what is the case in the fiction, even though it is not visible. Jerrold Levinson notes a more principal aspect as he emphasises how the music makes something fictional (or fictionally true):

The motto [the two-note motif, BL] has an unarguable information mission, namely to signal the presence of the shark [...] it is clear that it is the presence of that motto on the soundtrack at a given point that makes it fictional that the shark, though as yet unseen, is in the vicinity of what is shown. (Levinson, 1996, pp. 260-261)

Also Kevin Donnelly has a similar point when he writes that the motif in *Jaws* ‘does not merely signify its presence, it is its presence’ (Donnelly, 2005, p. 93).

These quotes point to two different levels. We may hear things in the music and we may hear things in the fiction. To notice the shark motif coming up (new event), to notice that it sounds like Stravinsky (intertext), to detect primitivism (contextual matters) and a menacing quality (emotions) and, further, to register that the music becomes more and more intense (prospectual) are all ways of hearing different things in the music at once. When this music sounds in a feature film, those things heard in the music, or hearing-ins, as Giorgio Biancorosso phrases them (Biancorosso, 2011), are combined with other elements from the audiovisual film into a perception of a fiction world. We may hear menacing qualities and a build-up in the music on a purely musical level (hearing things in the music) and recognise that something terrible is going to happen in the fiction world. What the film does is that it allows whatever we hear in the music to become part of the fiction. We can neither hear, nor see, that a shark is about to attack the swimmer. Yet, together music and visuals (and some editing and sound effects) create this impression in the audience. To reuse the terminology that Levinson (1996) borrows from Kendall Walton (1990), the music makes it fictionally true to the audience that an attack is on its way.

There is a difference here between what can be heard in the music or seen in the pictures and the kind of fictional reference that audiences immediately perceive during a film viewing. As I have already quoted from Gorbman, the motif ‘gives the viewer advance knowledge of the narrative threat’. Having knowledge about a narrative threat is no longer only hearing things in the music, but acknowledging and taking for granted a dramatic situation within the fiction. Hearing things in the music becomes part of what we know is the case in the fiction.

Nicholas Cook points to a reciprocal relation between how we perceive pictures and music and exemplifies this with Bernard Herrmann’s music for *Psycho* (1960) during the driving scene before Marion stops at Bates Motel. In this scene the music is ‘so to speak, “seeking out” and uncovering the turmoil in Marion’s mind, and thus

transferring its own qualities to her [...] The process works the other way round, too; heard in the context of the film sequence, the music acquires a specifically sinister quality that it does not have by itself' (Cook, 1998, pp. 66-67).

This reciprocal effect may also count for *Jaws*; our idea of what is the case in the fiction turns back on what we hear in the music when the motif becomes the shark (e.g. Donnelly's 'it is its presence'). In his analysis, Giorgio Biancorosso stresses the fact that the reference of the motif 'is established only gradually, as the creature approaches its victim' (Biancorosso, 2011, p. 309). Up to the attack the 'accelerating rhythmic subdivision of the two-note motive creates the dual effect, which cannot be conveyed by the visuals alone, of decreasing distance (between shark and victim and mounting intention to attack. Synchronised with the upward-moving camera, the motive has become the locus of agency' (Biancorosso, 2011, p. 313). What Biancorosso describes here is actually several things at once. On one level the increasing rhythmic intensity is something that can be heard in the music: as Stravinsky, as primordial and as a build-up to something. On another level this makes it fictionally true that the shark is coming closer and that it intends to attack. This cannot be heard as such in the music, nor seen as such in the film. It is the combination that creates our perception of something terrifying getting closer. Thus, our perception of the fiction is constituted, yet qualitatively different from music and visuals.

### **A third level: engaging experiences**

This may indicate a third level of film audience responses in relation to underscoring. Let us readdress the 'menacing' quality of the two-note ostinato motif that is often noticed in writings on John Williams' music for *Jaws*. Hearing the motif as menacing is not necessarily to say that the music listener is feeling this menace herself. Recalling Kivy's argument, it may be that someone hearing John Williams' music on her iPod recognises 'menacing' as an expressive property of the music; that is, she hears menace *in* the music. This does not necessarily imply that she herself feels as if she is under some threat, presupposing that she hears the music in otherwise friendly or safe conditions. However, running through a darkened forest at night with this music in her iPod is another case in which those expressive properties may musically animate the dark forest in such ways that our runner believes that there is something menacing in the dark. This (false) cognition may cause a high arousal state of anxiety and make our runner fear for all kinds of things along the way. In this imagined scenario the emotional properties heard in the music are somehow perceived as 'in' the environment. The point is that hearing something in the music (menace), believing that something is the case in the world (a physical threat) and feeling something (fear) are three different but highly related things.

These differences become more prominent in the cinema as we are dealing with vicarious experiences. This leads us back to *Jaws*.

In the opening scenes from *Jaws* we may hear, among other things, menace in the music. Second, the qualities heard in the music are appreciated as being about something in the fiction, that is, the shark. Musically it both gives existence to and musically colours our perception of the shark. Third, the menace is not something that threatens us as an audience, but something that threatens a person in the fiction. So, even though we may somehow vicariously feel the menacing quality through a kind of simulation, we are not part of the fiction. As audiences, we know more than the characters in the fiction. In other words, the menacing quality in the music is positioned within a complex web of character relations and audience concerns.

Noël Carroll points to this in his description of the very same scene from *Jaws*. He writes:

When the heroine is splashing about with abandon as, unbeknownst to her, a killer shark is zooming in for the kill, we feel concern for her. But that is not what she is feeling. She's feeling delighted. That is, very often we have a different and, in fact, more information about what is going on in the fiction than do the protagonist, and consequently, what we feel is very different from what the character may be thought to feel. (Carroll, 1990, pp. 90-101)

The menace we hear in the music is not related to how the character feels. Rather, it characterises the antagonist in the film, and this makes the audience fear for the destiny of the young woman in the water. As a result, hearing things *in the music*, perceiving what is going on *in the fiction world* and the (complex) *experience* involved when audiences engage in film narratives are three different but related levels of description.

## In conclusion

Even though music does not depict concrete matters, audiences can nevertheless hear things in music that makes it meaningful. Also, film music has a great influence on how we perceive scenes in a film. This goes for classical film music in all its varieties, for different forms of pop music and so on. Any kind of music seems to add different qualities to the pictures. Theories on film music focus on this in different ways, but often by either providing a (partly random) catalogue of film music functions or by using very inclusive terms (for example Chion's 'added value'). Thus, I have suggested that we, in both theory and analysis, separate what we can hear in the music, what it makes us recognise in the fiction and how it tones our attitude and emotional engagement in characters and towards dramatic situations. Therefore, I have suggested that we operate on three distinct levels:

1. Hearing things in music. Even though music does not refer to concrete objects, we can nevertheless hear meaningful things in music. Music consists in a series of events that are vital to the tuning of our attention; it refers to or paraphrases other music, sometimes specific pieces; and we may hear all kinds of contexts in the music. Further, we hear emotions and have future-oriented expectations. These ways of hearing things in the music do provide meaning to the music.

2. Hearing the fiction world in the music. This level is about how what is heard in the music becomes part of the fiction world. We might know something that the music reveals to us and which is otherwise hidden to the characters in the fiction. In *Jaws* the music focuses our attention towards and characterises upcoming events. In any instance, there is an important difference between what can be heard in the music and what it makes true in the fiction.

3. Audience engagement and experiencing a fiction (by help of music). A narrative is more than some characters, actions and events. It also contains an implied viewpoint on what happens to the characters in the fiction. In *Jaws* we are supposed to worry about what will happen to the characters (other than the shark). And yet, most of the things we hear in the music are connected with the antagonist.

Thus, there is no easy and simple relation between what we hear in the music, what is fictionally true and the kind of engagement in the narrative that audiences are supposed to enact. Yet, there seems to be analytic precision gained from being specific about the ways we hear things in music and how it influences audience perception on different levels.

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## Notes

- 1 Noël Carroll (1988) and Paul Messaris (1994) have both argued that even though pictures are not like reality in all aspects, it is nevertheless easy to adapt our perceptual skills from everyday environments to pictorial perception. Despite what some scholars have made out of Gombrich (1996), perceiving pictures does not require the kind of effort it takes to learn a language. For a survey of the field and an in-depth argumentation about pictorial perception, see Messaris (1994).
- 2 Kivy, 1990, chapters 8 and 9.
- 3 Jerrold Levinson writes: 'It seems undeniable that music has a certain power to induce sensations, feelings, and even moods by virtue of its basic musical properties, virtually without any interpretation or construal on the listener's part' (Levinson, 1997, p. 28). Also, empirical studies indicate a relation between the character of the music and the character of the emotions it evokes; see Rickard (2004) and Tan, Pfordresher and Harré (2010).
- 4 Susanne Langer claims a 'logical' similarity between music and forms of human feelings described as 'forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses - not joy and sorrow perhaps, but the poignancy of either and both' (Langer, 1953, p. 27). Also, Hanslick claimed that even though music cannot represent the content of the emotions, it can nevertheless represent their dynamic form (Hanslick, 1975, p. 26). Music cognitivists Dowling and Harwood agree that 'Music represents the dynamic form of emotion, not the specific content, as both Langer and Helmholtz point out' (Dowling & Harwood, 1986, p. 206). Others, such as Leonard B. Meyer, have argued that there is a casual relation between musical form and emotion. He writes that chromatic passages create ambiguity: 'Such ambiguity creates suspense and uncertainty which, as we have seen, are powerful forces in the shaping of affective experience' (Meyer, 1953, p. 220). Hence, there is a long tradition in music theory for discussing music and emotions, a tradition which is also echoed in many writings on film music, such as Claudia Gorbman (1987), Noël Carroll (1988), Jeff Smith (1999), Langkjær (2000) and Ben Winters (2008).
- 5 Noël Carroll has suggested that a film 'supplies the kind of reference required to particularize the broad expressivity of the musical system' (Carroll, 1988, pp. 220-221). The same goes for lyrics in pop music that may be perceived as being about some character in the fiction: 'In a filmic context, lyrics often perform tasks such as "speaking" for a character' (Anderson, 2004, p. 112). See also experimental approaches that suggest how music influences our perception of fictional agents, e.g. Cohen (2001) and Cohen (2005).