METROPOLIS TRIPTYCH

By

Nathan Jones

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Composition and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts.

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Date Defended: April 20, 2016
Abstract

*Metropolis* is a German silent film directed by Fritz Lang, which premiered on January 10, 1927, in Berlin, during Germany's Weimar Period. The film is one of the finest examples of German Expressionism and tells the dystopian story of a futuristic city in which a humanoid Robot rallies the Workers against the neglect and excesses of the ruling class. Chad Jacobsen edited the 2 hour and 15-minute film into an abridged 33-minute version for this project.

*Metropolis Triptych* is structured in three large sections. These sections reflect Lang's original division of the screenplay into three tableaux: “Prelude,” “Intermezzo,” and “Furioso.” These are also the titles I used for each movement. A triptych is a type of visual art form in which a three-panel painting or carving depicts a scene in three sections or panels. I found it appropriate to mix this visual art form with the musical form since I am using a visual element for the piece.

The entire piece is written without a key center or key signature. The harmonic language is triadic and tonal and is often polychordal. The “Steam Whistle” chord provides the impetus for most of the root relationships in *Metropolis Triptych*. Some examples are the “City Views” music (Scene 5) which is a progression from E major to $A_b$ (G#) minor to F major (see Part 1, mm. 293-312). Each root is related by third, albeit enharmonically. The “Robot Music” in Scene 8 uses an alternating progression of $B_b$ minor to G major and later $B_b$ major to D major (see Part 1, mm. 392-416). Again, all three roots are related by third. Freder's theme is harmonized by alternating $E_b$ major and G major chords, a root relation of a third. Not only are the key relationships derived from the triadic relations in the “Steam Whistle” chord, as a practical matter, they are also key areas that are friendly to band instruments—mostly flat-key tonal centers.

Throughout the work, ic6 and ic1 represent the antagonists (The Robot, Moloch, Rotwang, Joh Fredersen, the Machines) while ic5 and ic2 represent the protagonists (Freder and Maria). Freder's theme prominently features ic5, and Maria's theme features two ic2s joined by ic4. The Moloch theme consists largely of ic6 while the Machines, Robot, Rotwang, and Joh Fredersen all share the $b^6-5$ motive (ic1) in their themes. To show the reconciliation of Fredersen to the workers, I transformed Fredersen's theme by changing ic1 in his theme to ic2. The excerpt below shows this transformed motive in the low brass which occurs in both Parts 2 and 3. This “reconciled” Fredersen theme is simultaneously paired with Freder's theme which demonstrates the two opposing forces finally coming together.
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METROPOLIS TRIPTYCH
Symphony for Wind Ensemble and Silent Film

Nathan Jones

Grade 4.5 Concert Band
(2016)

Approx. 33:00

Metropolis Triptych is based on the 1927 silent film, Metropolis, directed by Fritz Lang. It has been edited from its original version by Chad Jacobsen.

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Metropolis is a German silent film directed by Fritz Lang, which premiered on January 10, 1927, in Berlin, during Germany’s Weimar Period. The film is one of the finest examples of German Expressionism and tells the dystopian story of a futuristic city in which a humanoid Robot rallies the Workers against the neglect and excesses of the ruling class. Chad Jacobsen edited the 2 hour and 15-minute film into an abridged 33-minute version for this project.

In my wind band score for the film, I have created several leitmotifs that accompany the different characters and locations in the film. The following is a list of these themes:

**Themes**

**The Steam Whistle** - A complex harmony accompanies the Steam Whistle. This tutti, block chord is synchronized with the appearance of the whistle and its subsequent blowing during Part 1. The steam whistle signals a shift change for the workers. Most of the musical materials, if not all, are drawn from the “Steam Whistle” chord which first occurs in measure 37 of Part 1. The Steam Whistle chord is the simultaneous sounding of the entire OCT0,1 collection, made more consonant by stacking the collection in discrete triads. The collection is divided into a C major, Eb minor, and A major triads. The A major triad is in the lower voices, and the upper voices feature the C major/Eb minor clash. This relationship of harmonies by third (A – C#/C – Eb) is the basis for many of the progressions throughout the piece.

**Freder** - Freder Fredersen, is Joh Fredersen’s son and a heroic protagonist. Freder’s theme is first heard in an immature and comical version in the Eternal Gardens in clarinets (see Fig. 2). The next time this material is heard, Freder is coming to the realization that he wants to help the workers and is

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2 All the examples given are transposed.
taking Worker 11811’s place. The theme is now fully developed and scored triumphantly in the trumpets (See Fig. 3). During Part 2, Freder realizes that he is the Mediator\(^3\) that must help the workers communicate with the city masterminds. A transformed version of his theme is found during the middle of this movement in a lush, tutti setting (Please refer to Part 2, mm. 100-118).

Fig. 2 Freder Theme 1, Part 1, mm. 114-118 clarinets, saxes

Fig. 3 Freder’s Theme 2, Part 1, mm. 370-380 brass

\(^3\) The epigram for the film states that “The mediator between the head and hands must be the heart!” Freder is the emotional link between the Workers (the hands) and his father (the head) and he slowly comes to realize this fact throughout the course of the film.
Maria - Maria is Freder’s heroic counterpart. While Freder has lived in privilege above ground, Maria is a part of the below-ground working class. She seeks to help the workers reconcile their differences with the city planners (chiefly, Joh Fredersen) and believes that a “Mediator” will arrive to help achieve this. Maria’s theme is a two-part theme and is first heard when Freder sees her for the first time in the Eternal Gardens. The first half of her theme is a compound melody that features a descent by third, balanced by an ascending quarter-note figure (See Fig. 4). The second part of her theme features two, expressive ic2 motives which are joined in the middle by an ic4 (See Fig. 5). Her theme returns in an expanded form in Part 2 and various parts of the 3rd movement.

Fig. 4 Maria’s Theme 1, Part 1 mm. 143-150 oboe

Fig. 5 Maria’s Theme 2, Part 1 mm. 151-157 oboe

Workers/Machine Hall - The Workers theme, played by the low brass, consists of parallel perfect fifths in the low brass which outline 1 - b3 - 1 - b7 and is usually centered around G minor, B♭ minor, or E♭ minor (See Fig. 6). The Worker’s theme is repetitive melodically and “empty” (ic5) harmonically to symbolize the empty and repetitive nature of their work. This theme also features another expression of ic3 and root relations of a third. This element is derived from the third-related stack of triads in the Steam Whistle chord.

Fig. 6 Machine Hall theme, Part 1 mm. 174-177 trombones and tuba
Moloch (and Machines, generally) - In the literary tradition, the character Moloch symbolizes a person or thing demanding or requiring a very costly sacrifice. This comes from the rabbinical tradition in which Rashi describes Moloch as “…made of brass; they heated him from his lower parts [with fire]; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out, the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved.” Here, Lang clearly draws a visual metaphor to show that the City Planners require a sacrifice of the workers. When the machines explode during Part 1, we very literally see the workers being fed to the machines, their lives being the sacrifice required to keep the city running. Appropriately, this section is scored with a loud, rhythmically dissonant drum part. Moloch’s theme is found in Part 1 most prominently during the Moloch Scene in Part 1 (mm. 201-211). This theme is primarily the tritone, usually expressed in cylindrical brass (See Fig. 7). This theme is used throughout all three parts in various ways.

Fig. 7 Moloch’s theme, Part 1 mm. 201-207

Rotwang - Rotwang is, by all appearances, a “mad scientist” who works for Joh Fredersen. He has developed a humanoid robot that will eventually replace the workers underneath the city. In the full version of the film, we are also led to believe that Joh Fredersen wishes this robot to be a recreation of his wife, Hel, who died giving birth to Freder. For this reason, Rotwang refers to False Maria as “My Hel!” once in Part 3. Rotwang’s theme is an ascending three-note motive which is harmonized by Bb minor and then G major.

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The Robot (False Maria) - Rotwang uses Maria's likeness to create The Robot or “False Maria,” an automaton that he transforms from a machine to a humanoid. The Robot theme is a $b\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ motive that is harmonized by $Bb$ major and then $D$ major. This root relation of a major third is similar to Freder's theme, which is harmonized by $Eb$ major and $G$ major. Please refer to mm. 405-416 of Part 1 for the complete theme.

Joh Fredersen - Joh Fredersen is the “Mastermind” of Metropolis and Freder’s father. He is a cold, controlling person with little regard for the lives—let alone feelings—of the workers who are underground. His theme is tense and uneven rhythmically. It is a diminution of the Workers and Machine Hall theme (See Fig. 9) combined with a developed version of the Moloch theme (See Fig. 10).

Fig. 8 Rotwang’s theme, Part 1 mm. 395-400

Fig. 9 Joh Fredersen’s theme 1 Part 1 mm. 255-257

Fig. 10 Joh Fredersen’s theme 2 Part 1 mm. 267-270
Other considerations

*Metropolis Triptych* is structured in three large sections. These sections reflect Lang’s original division of the screenplay into three tableaux: “Prelude,” “Intermezzo,” and “Furioso.” These are also the titles I used for each movement. A triptych is a type of visual art form in which a three-panel painting or carving depicts a scene in three sections or panels. I found it appropriate to mix this visual art form with the musical form since I am using a visual element for the piece.

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Throughout the work, ic6 and ic1 represent the antagonists (The Robot, Moloch, Rotwang, Joh Fredersen, the Machines) while ic5 and ic2 represent the protagonists (Freder and Maria). Freder’s theme prominently features ic5, and Maria’s theme features two ic2s joined by ic4. The Moloch theme consists largely of ic6 while the Machines, Robot, Rotwang, and Joh Fredersen all share the b♭-5 motive (ic1) in their themes. To show the reconciliation of Fredersen to the workers, I transformed Fredersen’s theme by changing ic1 in his theme to ic2. The excerpt below shows this transformed motive in the low brass which occurs in both Parts 2 and 3. This “reconciled” Fredersen theme is simultaneously paired with Freder’s theme which demonstrates the two opposing forces finally coming together (See Fig. 11).
Part of the challenge of writing this piece was to keep the difficulty level at or below a Grade 5. Maintaining a grade level of 4.5-5 makes the piece more accessible to a broader range of high school and college ensembles. I accomplished this by using moderate ranges in all the instruments and by layering many simple musical elements together to create more complex and interesting textures. Two examples of this type of stratification of simple textures are mm. 212-223 in Part 1 and mm. 111-122 in Part 3 (See Fig. 12). Both of these sections sound quite complex and chaotic, but the component parts are very simple repeated patterns.
Final thoughts and considerations

When Steven Smyth initially met with me to talk about this project, our plan was of a much smaller scope. What has become *Metropolis Triptych* is something more engaging and involved than I think we thought was possible given the timeframe we had to complete it. During this process, I developed an efficient workflow for a piece this size, working in Logic Pro X and Finale 2014.5. This workflow consisted of setting up multiple virtual software instruments in Logic that corresponded to the instrumentation for the piece. I included anywhere from three to six “sketch tracks” at the bottom of my instrument list. Figure 13 shows what a “blank page” in Logic looks like and represents the point from which I started each movement.

Fig. 13 Blank Logic project

I watched each movement of the film and took note of visually impactful moments. This divided the movement into smaller formal structures and created “waypoints” to work within. I will be able to use this process for any future project in which there is either a dramatic narrative or film.
I developed a much more finely-tuned understanding of the wind band idiom and feel much more at home writing for the ensemble, which was certainly a goal for me during my DMA studies. This project resulted in a very entertaining piece of art which is operatic in scale. I think colleges and high schools alike will enjoy working on it and be equally and appropriately challenged. Working with a visual element provided a significant inspiration and particularly in ways that I didn't think that it would. At the outset, I thought the film would inspire some general themes or moods. It turned out that the film helped guide my decisions regarding form, meter, and even rhythm. As mentioned previously, the visual scene changes and intertitles provided formal structure. A good example of how scene changes had an effect on the structure of the piece is found in the third movement. On pages 168-170 of the score, within a span of about ten measures (339-348), there are three completely separate themes juxtaposed with one another in quick succession. This is because of what is happening visually. In mm. 339-342, the Huppertz Theme underscores Freder's horrified reaction to the burning of False Maria, whom he thinks is the real Maria. This is interrupted by a jump cut to the real Maria being chased by Rotwang which is accompanied in mm. 342-347 by a sequenced version of the first half of her theme (refer to Fig. 4). As Freder runs in to the rescue on screen, Freder's main theme in its original scoring from Part 1 (refer to Fig. 3) begins in measure 348. Again, these musical elements are rather disjunctly connected and I made this formal choice based on the quick editing of the film.

All in all, I look forward to working with film again and continuing to refine my voice in the wind band idiom. I would like to thank the members of my graduate advising committee for their input during this project, Steven Smyth and Chad Jacobsen for what has been an excellent collaboration, and Dr. Forrest Pierce for his careful and inspiring guidance during my time at the University of Kansas.
Metropolis Triptych
Symphony for Wind Band and Silent Film
by Nathan Jones

film by Fritz Lang Metropolis (1927) edited by Chad Jacobsen

Instrumentation
3 Flutes
1 Oboe
2 Bassoons
3 Clarinets in B♭
1 Bass clarinet in B♭
2 Alto Saxes
1 Tenor Saxophone
1 Baritone Saxophone

3 Trumpets in B♭
4 Horns in F
2 Trombones
1 Bass Trombone
1 Euphonium
1 Tuba

4 Timpani
Bells, Vibraphone, Marimba (A), Chimes
2 Percussionists (Snare drum, Bass drum, suspended cymbal, crash cymbals, tam-tam, triangle)

Grade 4.5-5 Concert Band (2016)

I. Prelude 13:16
II. Intermezzo 7:46
III. Furioso 12:44
Metropolis Triptych

I: Prelude

Scene 1: Introduction & The Worker

Tempo I: $\frac{4}{4} = 120$

Flute 1

Flute 2/3

Oboe

Bassoon 1/2

Clarinet in B- 1

Clarinet in B- 2

Clarinet in B- 3

Bass Clarinet

Alto Sax 1/2

Tenor Sax

Baritone Sax

Trumpet in B- 1

Trumpet in B- 2/3

Horn in F 1/2

Horn in F 3/4

Trombone 1/2

Bass Trombone

Euphonium

Tuba

Timpani

Chimes (crash cymbals)

Bells

Marimba

Vibraphone (low tom tom)

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

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Scene 2: The Club of Sons
Scene 3: Maria
Fl. 1
Fl. 2/3
Ob.
Bsn. 1/2
B- Cl. 1
B- Cl. 2
B- Cl. 3
B Cl.
A.Sx. 1/2
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2/3
Hn. 1/2
Hn. 3/4
Tbn. 1/2
B-Tbn.
Euph.
Tuba
Timp.
Chm.
Bells
Mrb.
Vibes
Perc. 1
Perc. 2

166 Tempo II $j = 90$

Scene 4: Moloch!
Woodwind players should yell and cry out as if in extreme agony and pain.

There should be sporadic shouts of “Moloch!” as have been indicated in different parts. These shouts should become more distant as the scene begins to wind down.

The yelling should gradually dissipate in coordination with the film or by a measure before they must begin playing again.
Fl. 1
Fl. 2/3
Ob.
Bsn. 1/2
B- Cl. 1
B- Cl. 2
B- Cl. 3
B Cl.
A.Sx. 1/2
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2/3
Hn. 1/2
Hn. 3/4
Tbn. 1/2
B-Tbn.
Euph.
Tuba
Timp.
Chm.
Bells
Mrb.
Vibes
Perc. 1
Perc. 2

Tempo III \( \dot{=} 160 \)
Scene 6: Foreman Grot
Scene 8: Rotwang & The Robot
Solo, ad lib.
Like an old radio with the signal coming in and out.

Slightly, with great expression

Sweetly, with great expression

Solo, ad lib.
32

Fl. 1

Fl. 2/3

Ob.

Bsn. 1/2

B♭ Cl. 1

B♭ Cl. 2

B♭ Cl. 3

B. Cl.

A.Sx. 1/2

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2/3

Hn. 1/2

Hn. 3/4

Tbn. 1/2

B-Tbn.

Euph.

Tuba

Timp.

Chm.

Bls.

Mrb.

Vib.

Perc. 1

(S.D., sus. cym., tam-tam)

Perc. 2

(Crash. cym.)
Scene 10: The Tower of Babel
Scene 11: "The Mediator Must be the Heart!"
Scene 12: “Until next time...”
Solo, ad lib.; like an old radio with the signal coming in and out.

soft, widely with great expression
Scene 13: False Maria
Scene 14: False Maria!
Tempo III \( \dot{=} \) 160

III: Furioso

Flute 1

Flute 2/3

Oboe

Bassoon 1/2

Clar. in B 1

Clar. in B 2

Clar. in B 3

Bass Clarinet

A.Sxs. 1/2

Tenor Sax

Baritone Sax

B: Trumpet 1

B: Trumpet 2/3

Horn in F 1/2

Horn in F 3/4

Trombone 1/2

Bass Trombone

Euphonium

Tuba

Timpani

Chimes

Bells

Vibraphone

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

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Scene 15: Stoking the Riot

Bass drum

Mute (Harmon)

Triangle

Perc. 1 (S.D., Sls., Cym., B.S.)

Perc. 2 (Tom-tom, Tri, Tam-tam)

Perc. 3 (Crash Cym.)
Scene 16: Kill the Machines!

Fl. 1
Fl. 2/3
Ob.
Bsn. 1/2
B-Cl. 1
B-Cl. 2
B-Cl. 3
B. Cl.
A.Sx. 1/2
T. Sx.
Fl. 2/3
Euph.
B. Sx.
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2/3
Hn. 1/2
Hn. 3/4
Tbn. 1/2
B-Tbn.
Euph.
Tuba
Timp.
Chm.
Blk.
Vib.
Perc. 1
(Perc. 1, S.D., Sus. Cym., Shaker)
Perc. 2
(Tom-tom, T.R., Tam-tam)
Perc. 3
(Crash Cym.)
Scene 19: Yes! You Are Maria!
Fl. 1

Fl. 2/3

Ob.

Bsn. 1/2

B. Cl. 1

B. Cl. 2

B. Cl. 3

B. Cl.

A.Sx. 1/2

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2/3

Hn. 1/2

Hn. 3/4

Tbn. 1/2

B-Tbn.

Euph.

Tuba

Timp.

Chm.

Bls.

Vib.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

(S.D., Sus. Cym., B.D.)

(Tom tom, Tri., Tam-tam)

(Crash Cym.)

Tempo I \( \frac{4}{4} = 120 \)
Scene 20: You Fools! Where Are Your Children?
Scene 23: Safe, At Last!
Scene 24: Head & Hands Want to Join...

Fl. 1
Fl. 2/3
Ob.
Bsn. 1/2
B-Cl. 1
B-Cl. 2
B-Cl. 3
B-Cl.
A.Sx. 1/2
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2/3
Hn. 1/2
Hn. 3/4
Tbn. 1/2
B-Tbn.
Euph.
Tuba
Timp.
Chm.
Bls.
Vib.
Perc. 1
(Perc. 1 (S.D., Snare Drum, B.D.))
Perc. 2
(Tam-tam, Xylo, Tam-tam)
Perc. 3
(Crash Cym.)
Fl. 1
Fl. 2/3
Ob.
Bsn. 1/2
B. Cl. 1
B. Cl. 2
B. Cl. 3
B. Cl.
A.Sx. 1/2
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2/3
Hn. 1/2
Hn. 3/4
Tbn. 1/2
B-Tbn.
Euph.
Tuba
Timp.
Chm.
Bls.
Vib.
Perc. 1
(S.D., Snare, etc.)
Perc. 2
(Tom-tom, Tri., Tam-tam)
Perc. 3
(Crash Cym.)

Scene 25: The Mediator Between the Head & Hands Must Be the Heart!